



IT Executive

CA's Mainframe 2.0 Initiative: Preparing the Way for the Next Generation of Mainframe Managers

Introduction

Just over 2 years ago, Gartner (an information technology [IT] research firm) published a report entitled “Impact of Generational IT Skill Shift on Legacy Applications” in which it suggested that a pending, projected decrease in mainframe-skilled managers and administrators due to an aging mainframe workforce *might* be a reason to consider moving to “more-modern application platforms”. And indeed, a major shortage of mainframe-skilled individuals *might* indeed be a reason to move to another platform (just as global warming *might* be a reason to move to Iceland).

But, at present, there is no catastrophic shortage of mainframe-skilled individuals in worldwide markets. If there were, prices for skilled mainframe managers and administrators would have skyrocketed due to supply and demand issues. Yet no spike in mainframe manager/administrator salaries and fees has yet occurred. In fact, IT executives around the world have told *Clabby Analytics* (that’s me) that they are currently able to find mainframe talent to staff open personnel requisitions. Further, they are actively and aggressively training next generation mainframe managers in order to ensure that no such catastrophic shortage of mainframe IT managers does occur.

In face-to-face interviews with *Clabby Analytics*, mainframe IT executives also indicated that:

- Finding mainframe-skilled managers/administrators is indeed difficult. But so is finding Java-, Linux-, and Unix-skilled individuals. In other words, the skills shortage issue that Gartner alluded to in its research note is not a mainframe-only skills problem - there is an overall shortage of IT skills across the entire industry.
- Mainframe executives are finding new mainframe managers and administrators from within their own organizations — as well as from all walks of life. These IT executives are enticing talented individuals who are managing Windows-, Linux-, and Unix-based systems within their own organizations to move to mainframe computing by providing better career paths (because mainframe managers are very involved in driving enterprise business logic) as well as financial incentives. And a few mainframe executives are hiring non-computer professionals to manage their mainframe environments (for instance, one IT manager told me he looks for people with philosophy degrees because they tend to be “logical thinkers”. And, incidentally, he has found a few such individuals who have become excellent mainframe managers), and,

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- Non-essential mainframe tasks are being outsourced to India and China. *Clabby Analytics* spoke with two very large India-based outsourcers this year that have added tens-of-thousands of skilled individuals to the worldwide mainframe resource market pool.

As a result of these interviews, *Clabby Analytics* observes that IT executives are not following Gartner's advice to abandon the mainframe. In fact, they are following quite the opposite path. The number of mainframe MIPS (millions of instructions per second – the commonest measure of mainframe workloads) installed has grown ten-fold since the year 2000, meaning that the mainframe installed base is still very happy with its mainframe computing systems and is growing that base. Further, IBM has added dozens of net-new mainframe customers over the past few years – including several who are running packaged Linux/SAP applications on mainframes. The adoptions of new Linux-based applications on mainframes indicates that IT buyers are starting to buy-into the messaging that mainframes can handle new types of workloads.

Mainframers Hitting Retirement Age: A Potential Problem

The Gartner report referred to at the outset of this article referred to a “generational IT skill shift” when it advised that IT executives consider moving to other, more modern platforms. And several IT executives indicated that they agree with Gartner that the number of mainframe IT managers on staff who are reaching retirement age does indeed pose a potential threat to their IT operations. Many IT executives intimated that the average age of their mainframe staff is “in their 50s” – which means that many of these people will need to be replaced over the next decade. And, in order to grow this new crop of mainframe managers, all of the IT executives that I interviewed this past year universally agree that a new generation of graphically-driven tools will be needed to provide up-and-coming mainframe managers and administrators with products that have a look-and-feel similar to management tools found in Windows environments.

What Is Being Done About This Situation

To simplify mainframe management, IBM is spending \$100 million as part of its “March to Simplification” initiative to graphically-enable existing mainframe management programs – and to automate management functions in order to reduce human-related labor costs. Long Island, NY-based CA (formerly Computer Associates), which has deep experience and expertise in mainframe environments, has also decided to invest heavily in the simplification of mainframe management by graphically -enabling and integrating many of its mainframe products – as well as streamlining management workflows. *Clabby Analytics* has seen demonstrations of CA's new mainframe management graphical users interfaces – and can attest that CA is moving in the right direction when it comes to simplifying its products for next generation mainframe managers and administrators.

Interestingly, some other mainframe management software makers have been slow to respond to IT executive requests for graphically driven mainframe management offerings (BMC, Compuware, and ASG also have mainframe management products). And the failure to address IT executive demands for simplified user interfaces has the potential to undermine the sale of these vendor's products over time – paving the way for the market

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being led by companies that are graphically-enabling their mainframe management products (more specifically, paving the way for IBM and CA establishing dominance.

A Closer Look at CA's Mainframe 2.0 Initiative and "May Mainframe Madness" Marketing Plan

To simplify mainframe management, CA has just announced its "Mainframe 2.0" strategic initiative (which articulates what needs to get done to help solve the mainframe professional skills issue); and CA is in the process of rolling out a bevy of new products and services as part of its "May Mainframe Madness" marketing program.

In short, CA's Mainframe 2.0 focuses on simplifying mainframe ownership by providing products and services that will help IT managers simplify mainframe management. Most notable in CA's Mainframe 2.0 plan is that its focus on finding ways for less-experienced support staff to "maintain, optimize, secure and govern" mainframe environments.

CA's May Mainframe Madness is a combination of a marketing program and a major revision release roadmap. As part of its May Mainframe Madness program, CA is announcing:

- A graphically driven management environment that can manage 143 of CA's 166 mainframe management products under the same umbrella;
- Enhancements to its HealthChecker environment (ability to check the health and status of various system and application environments — more and more automated functions);
- A compliance management environment (CA's new CA Compliance Manager for z/OS); and,
- A number of deployment, service and support improvements.

Along with being a strategic initiative, CA's May Mainframe Madness is also a go-to-market program — which includes a worldwide sales and marketing "blitz" featuring Webcasts, in-person seminars/training, latent value materials, Web presence, and more. CA hopes that this combination of direct, missionary go-see-the-customer marketing effort combined with Web presentations and written market materials will raise awareness that it is the company to call when it comes to addressing the mainframe professional skills set issue.

Summary Observations

CA's effort to simplify the management of mainframe environments is far more than just taking its green-screen, command line driven products and slapping on a web browser front-end. CA is spending big bucks to graphically-improve its products, to centrally manage those products under a common umbrella, and to create common approaches so management facilities operate in a consistent way across its various mainframe management functions. In addition, CA's Mainframe 2.0 strategy — and its May Mainframe Madness roadmap/delivery mechanism — also seek to address the customer requirements for greater CA-to-CA interoperability and integration; improving software distribution, problem resolution and management and documentation and training. IT executives around the world have clearly indicated to Clabby Analytics that they are aware of a potential skills shortage that could occur if a "generational gap" in skills occurs as older mainframers approach retirement age. At present, they are filling open requisitions with younger people from their existing organizations — as well as reaching out to

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individuals who have “logical minds”. These executives universally agree that new interfaces are required to simplify mainframe management for the next generation of IT managers and administrators. IBM has identified this requirement — and is also investing heavily in products to ease and simplify the management of its mainframe environments. And CA is now rolling out products that do the same. Given the level of investment that is taking place — and the ease with which we believe mainframes will be managed in the future — IT executives whose companies own mainframes should not be considering moving from mainframes to “more modern platforms.” In fact, the efforts of mainframe solutions providers like CA and IBM continue to demonstrate that mainframes can be managed like Unix and Windows environments, while fulfilling the most demanding requirements of even the most modern enterprises.

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