

How to Tell If Your Data Center Is Losing Momentum - IO



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Every business wants to have the best possible data center. Yet perfection, and even “really good performance levels,” are elusive goals. Furthermore, many organizations that do manage to reach a state of data center nirvana eventually discover that they’re unable to stay atop the pinnacle for very long.

Pushing a data center to new heights, achieving increasingly higher performance and efficiency levels, requires both hard work and constant vigilance. Fortunately, data centers don’t usually slide off the peak overnight. Subtle warning signs indicating that dry rot is beginning to set in can often be detected weeks, even months before the damage becomes obvious (such as when overburdened systems lead to costly errors or missed project deadlines).

As you strive to keep your data center up to speed and on track, here are five warning signs that indicate the wheels may actually be starting to spin off your operation.

1. Complacency. When data center management and staff feels that things are rolling along “well enough,” there’s a good chance they really aren’t. To maintain operations at optimal levels, data center administrators should always be looking to improve services, systems and business practices. Like a shark, the only way a data center can survive and thrive is by continually moving forward.

2. A Lack of Innovation. Trends like virtualization and cloud computing are sweeping across the IT landscape. But if your data center hasn’t even started evaluating these important new technologies, or has reflexively rejected them, it’s time to take a closer look. While you certainly don’t want to leap onto every emerging trend or fad, failing to take advantage of important new tools and practices is bound to lead to data center stagnation and, inevitably,

backsliding. Promising new approaches need to be fully evaluated and tested. Technologies that are deemed premature for immediate adoption should be placed on a schedule for future consideration.

3. Poor Data Center Planning. Data centers are usually designed to scale to an organization's anticipated requirements over several or more years. Yet even the most carefully considered projections often fail to match long-term reality, falling victim to unexpected new technologies and practices. After all, how many data center planners in the 1980s or early 1990s anticipated advancements like cloud computing or virtualization? Back then, it was easy to find experts who viewed the Internet as an unimportant technology with relatively little commercial potential. Today, with a growing number of former data center-based services now heading directly into offices and onto the factory floor, it's important to view the data center in a new light. Fresh approaches, like modular data centers based on a service-oriented model and data centers in multi-tenant facilities, with fast, easy access to enhanced network services and other essential resources, help businesses improve IT performance, scalability and flexibility while lowering costs.

4. Failing to Automate. Inefficient data centers waste staff time on routine tasks that could be easily and cheaply automated. Automation and remote monitoring and management are now accepted IT practices. Besides allowing staff members to focus their efforts on business-critical work, automation and remote management services let businesses explore the possibility of creating data centers positioned at less costly and more efficient sites and to develop remote backup facilities that require only minimal human supervision.

5. Inadequate Strategic Analysis. If it's been years since your company's management has taken a serious look at its data center strategy, including the role IT plays in both supporting business operations and creating new revenue opportunities, it's time for a fresh start. IT leaders need to interact with other company managers and officers to alert them to future needs and opportunities. Most successful business have standing IT strategy committees or hold planning sessions at least once a year.

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