wavemaker

App modernization

Debunking popular myths

The myths of modernization.

The need to replace a legacy system is usually strong and immediate. But the success rate of modernization projects is marginal. Reasons for failure are various - ranging from general organisational impedance to change to wrong expectations of vendor products and technology. In most cases, the latter gives rise to a documented case study approach that may not pull out your enterprise out of its dilemma. Standard prescriptions to modernization have created many myths. Here's busting the top six myths of modernization

Myth 1

There is a silver bullet
for modernization

Vendors and industry analysts recommend moving to new systems to usher in modernization. But for enterprises, the business imperative is working application, not just any new application. Modernization attempts might look like quick fixes that can suit everyone, for e.g., quick UI facelifts.
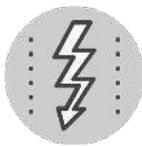
But soon these initiatives are expected to deliver a longer-term, higher business value. That's where actual modernization begins. Modernization can't have a one-size-fits-all approach. Each modernization effort has its unique factors to consider. For example, do the modernization needs align with business goals, what are the incremental tactical solutions, can the existing application architecture adapt to modernization efforts, etc.

Most RAD platforms today have a wide range of modernization utility -- from just wrapping to re-architecting. However, there are some that can provide quick fixes but can't impact any deeper change in your applications. Enterprises need to be cautious and pick platforms that can enable reuse of existing systems and are based on open standards for seamless extensions and customization. Technology services capability is a necessity too. Because, in modernization, a big chunk of work is in preparing existing systems.

Myth 2

Modernization is disruptive

One key reason organizations delay modernization efforts is the notion that it will disrupt business.

However, with an array of new technologies and platforms today, a wrapping approach is possible instead of a replace strategy. And wrapping is not majorly disruptive. Wrapping can be done in two ways. One by adding a layer of API on top of the Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) in the legacy system. This will enable the legacy with new capabilities, eliminating the need to install any special infrastructure. Another way is by connecting an API directly with the back-end legacy system. It will give each system a separate wrapper, and eliminate the need to integrate local service data with other services. Not all modernization scenarios need a platform switch. Often, existing services can be simply exposed as RESTful APIs. This way, newer functionalities can be enabled by migrating just the applications.

RAD platforms today follow this path. API documentation gets fully automated and they enable centralization/ reuse of such APIs using developer portals. This way enterprise developers and external vendors can leverage these RESTful APIs across many application modernization requirements.

Myth 3

A UI facelift amounts to modernization

A common app modernization fix is to revamp the UI. The assumption: It will work good because it looks good.

This could very well work for simple applications. But most enterprise grade applications are extensive and have workflows spanning multiple systems. A simple UI fix won't have any end-user impact. UI takes care of only the usability component of UX. Other components, like accessibility and extensibility, are largely dependent on the app's tech composition. So modernization initiatives also require intervention at the tech layer to have any meaningful impact at the app experience levels.

RAD platforms automate UI creation by offering HTML5-based templates, widgets, and themes. For a start, this can help in a quick UI facelift and ensure a consistent/ responsive UI with zero front-end coding effort. But broadly, automation of UI leads to greater app experience and better tech composition, areas where business impact is maximum.

Myth 4

Modernization requires a strong internal IT team

Often, it is considered that staff with in-depth technical knowledge is a prerequisite for application modernization.

In order to undergo application modernization, business leaders can engage external vendors to handle IT backlogs. Otherwise, they can adopt a smart combination of low-code platforms and services to reduce dependency on strong in-house IT teams. With low-code platforms, one can build and update apps quickly allowing developers to share fully functional features with stakeholders within days or even hours.

RAD platforms' automated capabilities (security, cross-platform support, and data integration capabilities, etc.) can encourage developers to shift their focus on solving business issues rather than rectifying mundane, error-prone technical requirements. This drastically reduces the risk of failures.

Myth 5

Modernization is mostly expensive

Yes, but only if you don't have a priority.

For eg: In certain modernization scenarios we see almost 70% of the legacy COBOL code is unused, modernizing without a priority here is sure to drive up costs and complexity.

Today's modernization don't require expensive engineers working on T&M mode, because 3-5 year roadmaps are dead and modernizing to quickly change direction in the light of new opportunities is key. Smart modernization is a platform-service interplay. While the platform helps to accelerate and economize modernization, the accompanying service gives the right level of personalization.

RAD players today give a platform-plus-services approach to modernization. By restricting skilled engineering only to complex business logics, the platform works in parallel and help develop all other necessary app functionalities like shared logics, DB services, and UI elements. Additionally, RAD platforms offer deployment capabilities out-of-the-box, thus reducing IT frictions. Yes, you would trade convenience for cost and speed, but the overall returns outnumber the concerns.

Myth 6

Sets you free from proprietary software

Proprietary and closed software is deeply embedded in larger enterprises' systems. It is a common belief that modernization using such software transcends the limitations of the software itself.

Truth is, modernization may not set an enterprise free from the lock-in devil. This means the speed at which businesses move may still be determined by the speed at which the proprietary vendor moves.Upgrades and revamps take place by a single vendor but fail to transcend their narrow benefits. True modernization doesn't mean upgrading from 2GL to 3GL. Worries related to mounting licensing costs, scope of use, coding requirements, device, data, and integration incompatibility still remain. Actual modernization is being flexible enough to incorporate an all-encompassing change – with lesser cost and in shorter time.

Open standards is the future. RAD platforms with open standards technology stack can benefit both open source and proprietary (closed) players. With this versatile and hybrid model, developers find it easier to enter the competition, integrators find it easier to integrate open source software into their offerings, and users can enjoy easier choice and easier platform maintenance. Open standards is collaborative, economical and future-proof.

RAD platforms today provide a flexible, incremental approach to modernization. This balances cost, risk, and time in a way that suits each customer's unique requirements. More importantly, it leads to a mindset change in the technological landscape by dispelling myths -- the stepping stone to adopting a true-blue modernization approach.

WaveMaker Inc, provides RAD platform and services to enterprises, who are looking to jumpstart their modernization efforts.

Try WaveMaker

Visit www.wavemaker.com for more information.