

## Corporate IT: A New Normal?

### The IT challenges and opportunities of COVID 19

Through their experience of operating in the difficult situation created by the COVID-19 virus many organisations have discovered that wide-scale remote working is not only possible, but desirable - **welcome to the 'new normal'**.

Some surveys suggest that almost half of employees are in no rush to return, and many want to continue to work remotely, at least a part of the time. Employers are seeing an opportunity to increase productivity, cut office-based costs and improve employee satisfaction.



Secure access to Cloud-based corporate systems and collaboration tools such as MS Teams and Zoom via home broadband have enabled remote working. These are mature tools and COVID-19 has accelerated their adoption. ISPs and mobile operators have largely adjusted to the changed pattern of demand imposed by remote working.

But businesses and IT organisations have had to face two major challenges beyond access, scaling, performance, and compliance:

1. **Increased access to corporate data**, especially to siloed application-specific data. Employees and executives struggle to get answers to new questions the exceptional circumstances dictate – and users do not have access to all essential data. They may not know who to ask, or whether permission is even possible. If they get permission, they may not know how to access it, what the structure and format is, what tools are available, or needed. More fundamentally, they may not know the data exists. The more fragmented the data across business units and functions, systems and external partners, the more challenge this is.
- **Automating processes and developing new integrations.** With remote working, there comes a need to quickly fix, integrate and develop new applications. Manual and fragmented processes are no longer viable. Delivery time frames compress from weeks and months to hours and days. But access to business analysts, project managers and development resources becomes a whole lot harder. Cost is no longer the primary driver and responsiveness, agility and effectiveness also come to the fore. The adoption of automated workflows and AI bots is now a priority.

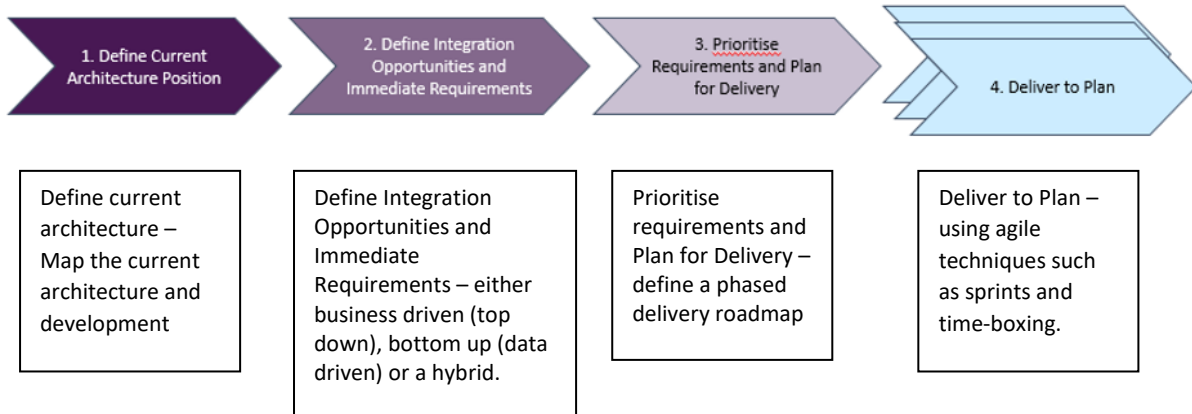
## 4 short term strategies to embed the 'new normal'

We have identified 4 short term IT priorities to quickly adapt your organisation to the new realities of COVID-19. Together these mitigate the challenges of remote working, and improve resilience and productivity:

1. **Executive Dashboards.** Management need to fully understand their business operations and avoid feeling vulnerable when away from the office environment. New information needs to be available and accurate to enable effective management decisions. A PC and smartphone-based dashboard, with supporting data 'drill-down', meets this need. We use domain knowledge, UX expertise and agile techniques such as short sprints to elicit the KPIs. We use Tableau or MS Power BI to build the dashboards via available APIs or alternative data access techniques.
2. **System and Data Integration.** Business users should not have to worry about where data is or the mechanics of obtaining it. Disparate and complex data types, sources, varying storage formats and locations, GDPR compliance and data governance are real issues but data must be entered once and flow seamlessly across systems and processes. This is the perfect time to launch targeted business-driven integration and data initiatives previously not a top priority - unlock access, improve efficiency, and generate new business value. We provide data and integration expertise in MS Azure Logic Apps, Oracle, and other technologies, including Cloud based. See below for more on our best practice approach.
3. **Off-shore Systems Development & Maintenance.** Off-shore development came of age a long time ago and is now a proven and effective approach to speed quality software delivery, improved agility, and lower costs. Remote working and collaboration are inherent in the offshore model so present no challenges for us and businesses are quickly adjusting to these realities in the 'new normal'. This opens the benefits of outsourcing to a new wave of clients who have previously seen it as something for larger organisations, or not an option that could work in their organisation or culture. Our proven on and off-shore hybrid model ensures we can deliver the benefits of off-shore whilst retaining the quality and control clients demand.
4. **Data Lab, Engineering & Management support.** We can supply the data platforms, tools, data engineers and scientists for the remote development, support & maintenance of a 'Data Lab', or support or replace our existing analytics capabilities. This can incorporate both operational and management and internal and external data and deliver 'Analytics as a Service' (AaaS). This removes your dependency on scarce and expensive internal technical expertise and enables business users to quickly get answers to their questions without extensive data engineering. Our solutions are built on Amazon AWS, MS Azure and Open alternatives, integrated with end-user BI tools such as MS Power BI and Tableau.

## System and Data Integration: How we work

The diagram below is an overview of our 4-stage delivery approach for system and data integration projects:



Key to getting this under way is obtaining a view of the current architecture in Stage 1. Two alternative ways of doing this are:

- 1. Start with what you have.** An application architecture document, systems map, corporate data model or similar? Anything that provides an overall view of your IT systems and data will help, even if it needs updating with limited help from your local systems experts. An updated version will be one useful deliverable as a by-product from the project.
- 2. Build from scratch.** We can review documentation and, if essential at this stage, map your systems to provide a view of the current architecture, either in totality or by priority domain, or function.

Whichever approach is taken we can use our DATASPRINT™ workshops (see below) in stage 2 or 3 to engage stakeholders, identify priority use cases and roadmap a way forward that meets unmet needs and reduces data pain points. Once the scope and focus are agreed we can quickly move through the remaining stages with each stage a Go/No Go decision-point. This ensures continued focus on delivering the promised value to the business with iterations when needed.



The C-BIA DATASPRINT™ workshop identifies and prioritises the compelling BUSINESS USE CASES that can only be answered with the better use of data.

We run our INFORM, ILLUMINATE & INSPIRE model to identify these use cases, deliver answers and surface the constraints you need to address.

## Why C-BIA: Business Intelligence today

**About Us** Founded in 2006 as Genisys Consulting, we specialise in improving decision-making through the smart use of complex data. We partner with clients to design and build Big Data, Business Intelligence (BI) and advanced Data Analytics applications and platforms in the Healthcare, Education, Research, Investment and Retail sectors. Clients include Wellcome, Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children, University of Oxford/Saïd Business School. We are a UK company and have a dedicated offshore capability with the Center for Business Intelligence & Analytics in Pune & Mumbai, India. Together we have completed more than 50 projects since 2010. See [www.c-bia.co.uk](http://www.c-bia.co.uk) for more.

We quickly surface options, identify, and propose solutions with high business impact. We are familiar with a wide range of technologies and can quickly provide practical solutions. We can map your systems and their supporting data and rank data and integration options with the biggest business impact. We can host our unique DATASPRINT™ workshops to engage users and identify use cases. Once identified, priorities can be assessed, estimated, resourced, and quickly delivered.

**Business Intelligence capabilities and experience.** C-BIA has been in the business of intelligent applications and advanced analytics, analysing and building BI solutions for 16 years. We have experience from simple reports to complex dashboards, data warehouses, data marts and related data engineering and integrations. We have worked with large and medium size clients across the healthcare, education, retail, investment and research sectors. We create new value from their internal data assets - structured, unstructured, and semi-structured – and combine with external data sources to deliver value-added services. Some examples are:

- *Grants Management dashboards* for a UK based multi-billion healthcare research funder consolidating data from their internal Grants system, external research data, Excel, SaaS applications and Events using Databases, FTP, APIs, and other tools,
- *Finance KPI Dashboards* for a leading UK based top ten Business School consolidating data from financial and budgeting systems with Excel based data,
- *Retail Sales Management Information System (MIS)* for a global Petroleum company with data from their ERP, Excel and bespoke applications,
- *Industry 360 themes* for a private investment bank in sectors such as Cement and Insurance and combining structured and unstructured data from public and in-house research and internal application systems,
- *Procurement and Production dashboard* for a leading accessory manufacturer with data from their ERP and Excels systems,
- *Investment and Portfolio Analysis* for a leading Share Broker using their Trading platform, back-office systems, online and proprietary applications and Excel
- *Sales & Merchandising dashboard* for a fashion watch manufacturer with data from ERP and Excel data

**A flexible hybrid capability.** Challenges will arise and you will need a partner that can adapt with you and support you rapidly when needed. We operate on a hybrid on and offshore team with staff in London, Mumbai, and Pune. Whilst development and support are largely off-shore, account management, project management, business analysis and first-line support is UK based.