

From Legacy to Leading Edge

Compelling Insight into the Pitfalls and Promise
of Modernizing Your Applications
Can You Finally Make The Leap? Or, Are You Doomed to a Life with Legacy?

There is a tremendous amount of speculative debate about what the future holds for some of those very old, legacy software applications. This examination has been fueled by the continuing high cost of application maintenance, the accelerating loss of skilled resources and the promising viability of emerging technology standards such as service-oriented architecture (SOA). By some accounts, the total current value of legacy applications residing on mainframes alone exceeds one (1) Trillion US dollars¹.

Given a choice, most technical managers would relish the idea of moving their applications to a modern, industry standard environment written using one of the latest development languages & tools. As evidence, in a recent survey conducted by Forrester Research¹, over 64% of IT decision makers acknowledged a strategy to eliminate or migrate their legacy COBOL applications. Of course, it's not all that simple or the decision would fall into the category of the proverbial "no brainer" due to the underlying business factors. Any IT manager with legacy applications who has ever tried to make the transition will, in all likelihood, vouch for the level of difficulty & distress and point directly to the enduring scars.

In addition to the horror stories of legacy transformation failure that abound, IT managers are often faced with the ultimate Catch-22 situation in which they literally cannot afford the status quo and they also cannot afford to move, i.e. they don't have enough money to move forward with new projects or to properly replace existing legacy applications because the current cost to operate & maintain the legacy applications is too high; their budget won't support both at the same time. A recent research survey of North American and European IT decision makers found that the average budget spending was 75% for ongoing operation & maintenance, thereby leaving a mere 25% for new investments². The result is the organization remains stuck in a precarious state of "damned if we do and damned if we don't". If this scenario sounds familiar then, rest assured, you have lots of company.

Is there a way out of this dilemma? Or, do you have no recourse but to live the rest of your work life relegated to endure the chains of legacy? What are the options available today to attain modernization and what makes them so viable after decades of obstacles and disappointment? This paper outlines the problems, the options and the potential tipping points for your decision. Be forewarned - there is absolutely no panacea or magic potion that will lift you painlessly out of this particular den of misery. However, there are proven approaches and emerging technological paradigm shifts that make it possible to journey safely and successfully across the divide from legacy to leading edge.