

# THE PURSUIT OF STRONG IT FOUNDATIONS



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Few would argue about the importance of strong foundations to the integrity and performance of a system or structure. Look at the Leaning Tower of Pisa as an example. Its quirky lean has made it a huge tourist attraction, but its flawed foundations compromise the building.

In a technology context, we adopt the term IT Foundations to describe the disciplines and capabilities required to deliver reliable and secure platforms. These foundations are imperative in the quest to deliver an efficient and effective infrastructure.

## What do we mean specifically?

Businesses of all sizes face the following challenges:

- The need to efficiently acquire and exploit technology assets
- A lack of complete visibility of existing assets (Hardware and software), creating stranded investments, duplication and other inefficiencies
- Aged systems that can no longer keep pace with business demands, or pose a constraint to future opportunities
- The ongoing need to reduce the cost of “Keeping the lights on” in an IT delivery context

Our response to this is the **IT Foundations** portfolio, comprised of the following:

1. Procurement and Asset Management
2. Platform Design and Build
3. Technology Management and Support

## Procurement and Asset Management

IT resources and assets must be managed throughout their entire lifecycle. There is often an imbalance in the investment in time of product evaluation and selection, and the attention given to the optimisation, enhancement and management of those resources throughout their lifecycle. Most businesses suffer a lack of visibility of assets (be they hardware or software) through inefficient purchasing controls and systems, generating duplication, inefficient processes, and introduction of business risks as key systems and processes are reliant on technology that is ageing – unsupported and potentially exposed to increased security risks.

A full lifecycle management system for all IT assets is required. From initial selection and evaluation to the subsequent deployment, enhancement and retirement or re-harvesting at the end of their useful life, all investments need to be visible, accessible and exploited – enabling controlled and data informed decisions.

## Platform Design and Build

Effective IT architectures are enabled not only from strong core foundations, but in the flawless implementation of the system or structure. Implementing and integrating technology has become both simpler and more complex over recent years, a difficult juxtaposition to reconcile. Choice, flexibility, and modularity of infrastructure, mainstream adoption of cloud technologies, and the requirements to service of distributed workforces and organisations have all made defining architecture a complicated task.

There are many new architectural ‘Best Practice’ approaches being defined from different technology providers, and modern technologies and platforms becoming a more defacto standard. Technology generally is becoming more modular than monolith as was its past. It’s imperative to take an impartial approach in the design and build phases to ensure that the technology deployments are effective and efficient, leveraging best of breed capabilities where required, but also exploiting broader platform solutions. The Reference Architectures approach is shifting more towards a ‘design pattern’ approach as each organisation forges its own architecture to suit their needs and drive to compete.

## Technology Management and Support

You rarely consciously consider the presence of foundations. You take assurance from their existence; they fade into the background. Operational management and support of core technology systems should take this approach, but over the years the complexity of IT has created disproportionate burdens to business in ‘feeding and watering’ IT systems; a distraction from the core business agenda.

Technology has matured dramatically, so the management and support of the IT foundation has become a less cyclical process (periodic bulk investment and years of asset ‘sweating’) to a flatter, more BAU pattern. We see this occurring in the transition towards as-a-Service models, but also in management practices with a more Evergreen approach inherent in many modern platforms.



### **Reviewing Your Foundations – Action today!**

Over the past 12-15 months, businesses have wrestled with the pressures of home/hybrid working creating a boom in workplace technology. A by-product of this, is that many core infrastructure projects and investments have been deferred or cancelled. This creates challenges and risks in maintaining reliable and performant systems to service users (the demands of which in many instances have grown dramatically – look at online retail), and broader commercial and security risks. With many core technology components reaching the end of their life, but complicated transformations and upgrades still to take – there is a need to further optimise, assure and secure the current platforms for continued use.

The maintenance and support of those assets is not something that tends to capture much attention but is imperative to ensuring that key platforms and systems remain online and functional. There are significant opportunities to optimise the support model and commercial model for these technologies, as well as enhance the support services to provide enhanced protection and mitigation to the inherent risks that exist in aged technology. The modernisation and transformation will need to happen, but ensuring your current platforms are well supported can offer you the assurance required to afford the time to plan and implement your foundations for the future.