

WHITEPAPER

Driving Costs Out of IT: Modern Strategies for Mid-Sized Companies

A practical guide for IT teams to reduce costs, minimize risk, and stay competitive.

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Introduction

Mid-sized and growing commercial organizations face a perfect storm of IT challenges: tight budgets, fragmented control, and ever-increasing risks—while shaking off the outdated notion that IT is just a cost center. In reality, IT can be an engine of business growth, innovation, and competitive advantage. But to seize this role, IT teams must overcome pressures from every direction: profit-driven leadership, relentless competition from larger enterprises, and adversarial business units deploying their own software. The cost of standing still (which is still a decision), is increased technical debt, inefficiencies, and missed opportunities that quietly erode your company's edge.

This paper explores the paradox at the heart of mid-market IT: Driving down costs without sacrificing agility, security or alignment with business goals. We reveal why inaction often carries the steepest price—hidden risks, mounting technical debt, and operational fragility—and share proven strategies to cut expenses while driving efficiency and innovation. Finally, we address the ultimate question: how to achieve meaningful savings without compromising security, performance, or competitiveness.



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John Clark brings over 25 years of experience in enterprise technology strategy, specializing in ITSM, Cloud architecture, AI integration and digital transformation across commercial and public sector—including defense, intelligence and civilian agencies—as well as healthcare, finance and manufacturing.

Over his 13 years at Microsoft, John led modernization programs and cloud adoption initiatives for clients, introducing AI-driven services, strengthening governance models, and delivering multimillion-dollar cost savings. Recognized globally as a subject matter expert in ITSM, Operations and Governance, John is trusted for translating emerging technologies into secure, compliant and business-ready solutions that drive measurable impact and cost-savings. His expertise ensures organizations adopt innovation with confidence while safeguarding critical operations.

IT Challenges for a Mid-Sized Company

Business Alignment and Profit Motive

IT leaders understand that success comes from aligning technological initiatives with business objectives. A KPMG study found that 92% of CIOs and CFOs report collaborating regularly.¹ Yet misalignment persists—often driven by tech-centric agendas, poor adoption planning, different ideas of success, and fragmented systems and data silos. The consequences are costly: higher operational expenses, redundant systems, wasted resources, missed opportunities, and declining employee and customer satisfaction. In business, profitability is always the ultimate goal. Mid-size companies can feel this pressure more acutely with IT typically required to justify every expenditure or investment in terms of direct profit impact or cost avoidance. This constant scrutiny becomes a barrier to adopting innovative solutions and modernization.

Budget Constraints and Rising Service Expectations

IT is the backbone of every modern organization, regardless of the products or services it offers. As technology evolves and adoption accelerates, expectations rise. Mid-sized companies face a unique challenge: they're held to enterprise-level expectations without the resources to match. Their IT departments operate with smaller budgets, while the C-suite demands enterprise-level service and capabilities. The result? Lagging capabilities with a constant mandate to do more with less. Meanwhile, maintaining skilled teams is costly and enterprise-grade software adds expenses for features rarely used. This creates a vicious cycle—delayed investments, reduced headcount, lingering legacy systems, and mounting technical debt—leaving little room for innovation.



Siloed Organizations and Integration Complexity

Most organizations remain siloed, with systems and teams misaligned around services, capabilities or value streams, leaving IT perceived as a cost center rather than a driver of business value. Mid-sized companies face this more acutely, as departments often adopt disparate SaaS tools with little IT involvement, creating duplication or islands of data, costly and complex integrations, and limited visibility across the enterprise. Unmanaged shadow IT flourishes, workflows stall across departments, and fragile integrations multiply with every new application, forming a web of interdependencies that is difficult to manage when issues arise. With smaller IT teams and limited specialized resources, mid-sized companies struggle to harmonize solutions, often having to rely on enterprise-grade platforms burdened with unnecessary complexity, leaving IT in reactive, firefighting mode.

Resource Limitations and Outsourcing

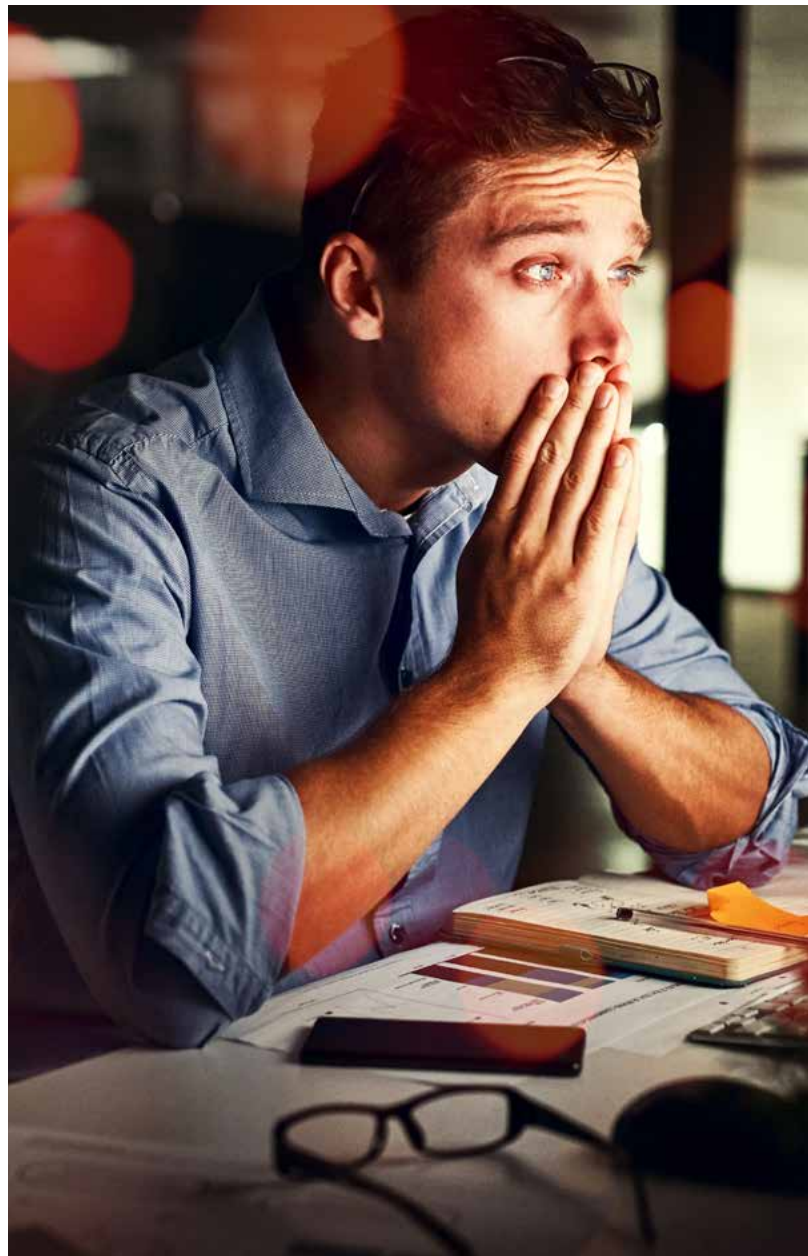
Unlike large enterprises, mid-sized organizations typically operate with lean IT teams of generalists, which is economically practical but leaves them dependent on outsourcing to fill critical skill and resource gaps. While outsourcing provides access to specialized expertise on demand and enables rapid scaling, it also introduces risks such as hidden costs, compliance violations, and exposure to security breaches and reputational damage. Outsourced IT often prioritizes maintenance over strategic growth.

Reputational Risks and Compliance Obligations

Security risks are significant for mid-sized companies, which face an onslaught of cyberattacks. According to the UK's Cyber Security Breaches Survey (2024), 45% of mid-sized businesses have experienced cybercrime in the past year, yet only 55% have a formal major incident response plan in place.ⁱⁱ While larger enterprises may be high-value targets, mid-sized companies often have more vulnerabilities, making them attractive to bad actors. Many postpone investing in security until a breach occurs, only to discover that recovery costs far exceed the investment required for proactive protection. Beyond these challenges, regulatory compliance requirements such as HIPAA and GDPR remain, while limited internal skills and resources push many IT teams toward outsourcing, manual processes, or basic tools—approaches that further increase risk.

Technical Debt and Legacy Systems

For mid-sized companies, reducing technical debt and modernizing legacy systems is an uphill battle, as budget pressures make it challenging to secure leadership support for upfront investments. Replacing outdated systems is seen as risky due to unknown dependencies, organizational resistance and outsourced expertise. McKinsey research shows that CIOs divert 10 to 20% of their new product budget to resolving technical debt.ⁱⁱⁱ Legacy systems depend on outdated skills, with fewer experts available to maintain them, driving up costs. As a result, mid-size companies spend scarce resources on maintenance, manual processes, and integration complexity, leaving little capacity to drive growth and sustain competitiveness.



The Hidden Costs of Doing Nothing

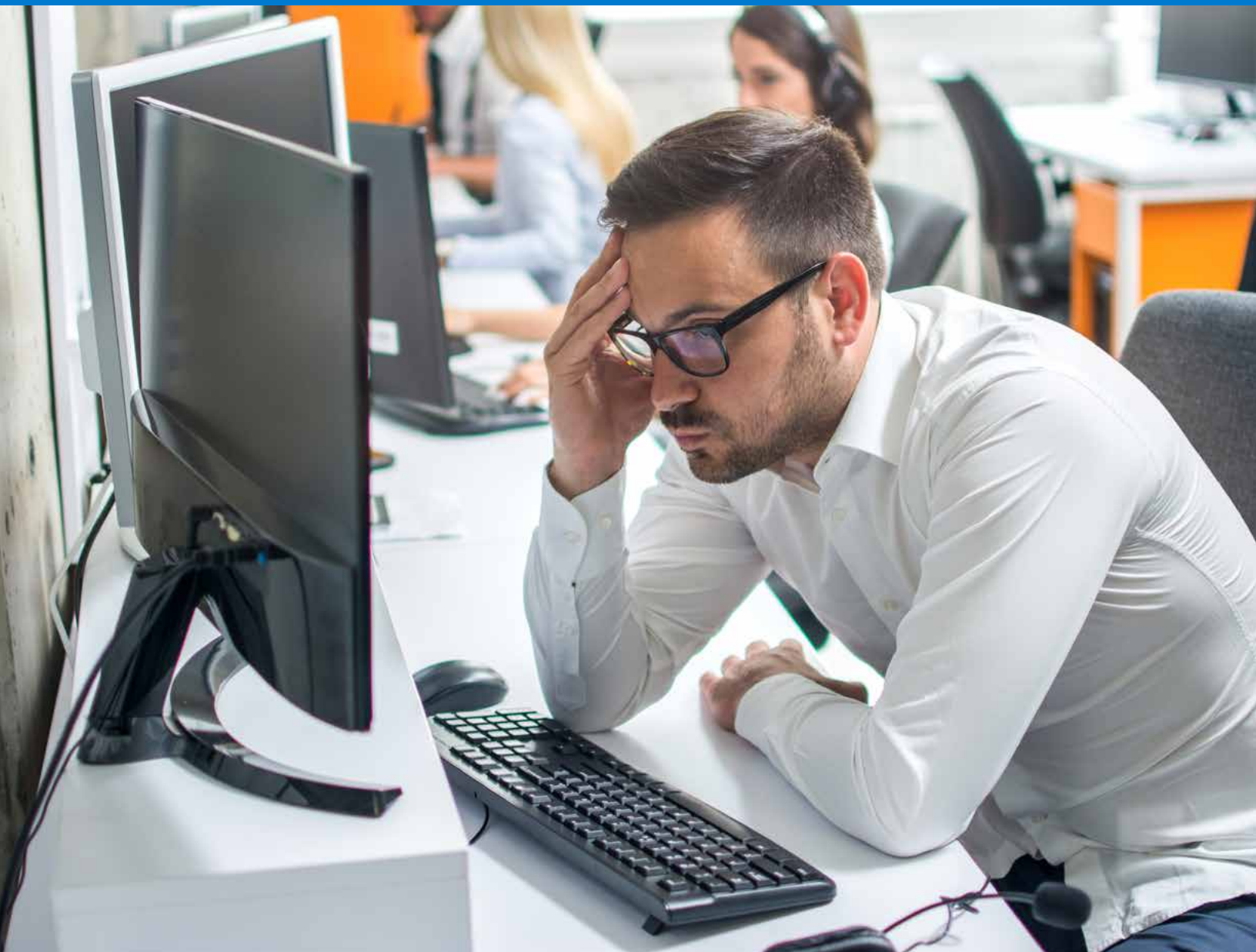
Cyberattacks on mid-sized companies are rising, even if they don't always make the news. At-Bay's 2025 InsurSec Report—compiled from their own claim data—revealed that ransomware attacks grew nearly 20% in 2024, with severity up by 13%.^{iv} Mid-sized companies generating \$25 to \$100 million in revenue were hit the hardest, facing a 46% increase in attacks. These numbers underscore a critical reality: cyber threats are no longer just a big company problem.

Mid-sized companies are especially vulnerable as they can't invest as heavily into cyber-security as large enterprises. Yet, their data is just as valuable.^v As mentioned in the previous section, challenges such as limited budgets, fewer or no dedicated IT security staff, and reliance on outdated solutions leave mid-sized

companies especially vulnerable to phishing, ransomware, and other cyber threats.

Beyond security risks, the true cost of inaction is the gradual erosion of the business. Delaying modernization leads to mounting technical debt, escalating operational and support expenses, and drains resources that otherwise fuel strategic, transformational initiatives.

Legacy technology also slows innovation and reduces agility. Manual processes, higher maintenance expenses, and fragmented systems lead to inefficiencies that limit scalability. As competitors modernize, your business risks losing its competitive edge, missing opportunities, and falling behind in a market that demands speed and resilience. Ultimately, doing nothing costs far more than modernization—both in dollars and in lost potential.



Strategies to Drive Costs Out of IT

IT as Governance, Security and Operations Partner

Traditionally IT has been seen as a cost-center, fulfilling service requests and functioning as a service partner. This model has led to fragmented systems, duplicated efforts, and higher risks. To truly drive costs out, IT must adopt a governance-driven approach. IT has to set the direction on how technology is used rather than just managing day-to-day tasks and crises. Acting as a governance, security and operations partner rather than an inefficient IT monopoly allows IT to align initiatives with business strategy, increase agility and flexibility in resourcing and partnering, enforce standards and embed compliance and security controls across the company. This proactive stance reduces risk, prevents costly breaches, and ensures technology investments deliver maximum value.

When IT becomes a strategic partner, it centralizes oversight and eliminates inefficiencies such as shadow IT and/or siloed solutions. By guiding technology decisions, IT avoids expensive support for incompatible products and reduces technical debt. Ultimately, governance-driven IT transforms the department from a reactive cost center into a value creator and risk mitigator—freeing budget for innovation and positioning the organization for sustainable growth.

Adopt a Platform-Centric Approach

Mid-sized companies significantly reduce IT costs by moving away from fragmented systems and adopting a platform-centric approach. Modern platforms offer built-in integrations and access to a wide range of business applications, making deployment faster and less expensive. This consolidation lowers long-term maintenance costs, simplifies upgrades, and reduces the complexity of managing multiple disconnected solutions—freeing IT teams to focus on strategic priorities rather than troubleshooting siloed systems.

A platform-centric strategy also optimizes workforce requirements. Because platforms share a consistent interface and functionality, and wealth of pre-built integrations, companies leverage a single skill set across multiple services instead of hiring specialists for each solution. This makes recruiting and training easier, reduces reliance on external vendors, and accelerates innovation—especially when low-code/no-code or AI-enabled tools are part of the platform. Beyond cost savings, platforms enable standardization and interoperability across departments, eliminating duplication and integration challenges. Built-in governance and security features strengthen compliance while supporting modular, reusable services. While replacing legacy systems requires upfront investment, the result is a modern, scalable environment that improves operational efficiency, enhances customer experience, and delivers measurable ROI.

Leverage Automation and AI

The benefits of automation are well known—eliminating repetitive manual tasks, streamlining operations, improving quality and consistency, and improving resource utilization.^{vi} It is also a force multiplier by accelerating service delivery and boosting productivity without requiring proportional increases in staffing or infrastructure. For mid-sized companies, the key is to flip the script: automation with human intervention as needed vs. human work effort augmented by automation when needed. Too often, businesses do the opposite—building processes around manual work and sprinkling in automation as an afterthought. By taking an automation-first mindset instead of propping up inefficient manual processes, mid-sized companies reduce errors increasing quality, optimize workflows, and free up resources for strategic initiatives.

AI takes the advantages from automation even further by introducing learning, predictive analytics and optimization capabilities. Implementing both automation and AI enables organizations to identify inefficiencies and redesign processes for cost savings. Studies show the financial impact can be significant. Microsoft and IDC found that for every \$1 invested in generative AI, organizations are seeing an average return of \$3.70.^{vii} Similarly, process automation cuts time spent on routine tasks like scheduling by more than 50%, driving measurable savings.^{viii} For mid-sized companies, this is a game-changer: automation and AI level the playing field by enabling smaller teams to achieve enterprise-grade efficiency without enterprise-scale budgets.



Standardize and Streamline IT Service Delivery with Modern, AI driven ITSM

For mid-sized businesses, IT Service Management (ITSM) isn't just an operational framework—it can be a growth enabler or growth inhibitor. ITSM provides a structured way to design, deliver, and continually improve IT services, helping companies simplify complexity and cut costs. However, when IT processes are scattered across multiple tools and teams, duplication and inefficiencies drive up expenses, which inhibits growth. By adopting modern ITSM, and centralizing workflows, mid-sized companies eliminate redundancies, create economies of scale, and gain a single source of truth for all IT operations. This clarity improves visibility, accelerates decision-making, and reduces costly downtime.

ITSM goes beyond cost savings when it delivers consistency and predictability in service delivery, optimizes resource utilization, and fosters collaboration across departments. Integrated workflows allow teams to share tasks seamlessly, boosting efficiency without adding overhead. For mid-sized companies competing with larger enterprises, modern ITSM is a strategic advantage: it reduces technical debt, frees IT teams to focus on innovation, and enables faster, more reliable service delivery. In short, modernized ITSM transforms IT from a reactive cost center into a proactive business partner—helping mid-sized organizations operate with enterprise-level efficiency and agility.

Optimize Asset Management

Cloud adoption makes sense for flexibility and scalability, but not every asset lives in the cloud—and unmanaged assets quickly become a hidden cost driver. That's where a modern, proactive IT Asset Management (ITAM) strategy comes in. For mid-sized businesses, ITAM isn't just about tracking hardware and software—it's about gaining full visibility into your environment, understanding total cost of ownership (TCO), and making smarter decisions cohesively, with your cloud-based service capabilities. By factoring in performance history, incident trends, and vendor ratings, IT teams avoid overspending on assets that look cheap upfront but carry high maintenance costs later. Accurate asset tracking optimizes purchasing, enables license reclamation, and strengthens vendor negotiations. When integrated with procurement systems, ITAM ensures timely renewals, avoids penalties, and leverages vendor performance data for better purchasing decisions—critical for organizations operating with lean budgets.

The benefits go beyond cost control. ITAM improves operational efficiency and service delivery by giving IT teams detailed asset data—warranty coverage, support contracts, lifecycle status—so they resolve incidents quickly and cost-effectively while being able to spot trends across vendors and technology. Knowing a device

is under warranty prevents unnecessary replacement expenses, while automation and real-time dashboards reduce administrative overhead and shift IT from reactive firefighting to proactive management. This means better resource allocation and higher service quality for end users.

Finally, ITAM strengthens compliance and security—non-negotiables for any business handling sensitive data. Centralized tracking minimizes audit risks and ensures regulatory adherence. Done right, ITAM becomes a strategic enabler, driving transparency, accountability, and data-driven decisions for resource planning and risk management. In short, optimized ITAM transforms IT from a cost center into a value driver.

Leverage Enterprise Service Management and Multi-Discipline ITSM

One of the most effective ways for mid-sized companies to reduce IT costs is to extend the proven principles and practices of ITSM throughout all IT departments and across the organization. Multi-discipline ITSM^{ix} and Enterprise Service Management (ESM)^x spread cost savings by standardizing processes, centralizing data, and enabling self-service across the organization.

ESM extends proven service management practices beyond IT, reducing duplication and manual work, while Multi-discipline ITSM unifies workflows and communications within IT.

Together, these approaches minimize operational overhead, accelerate service delivery, and foster collaboration—allowing teams to identify and eliminate wasteful practices and leverage automation for routine tasks, which significantly lowers labor and administrative costs.



Both ESM and Multi-discipline ITSM enhance accountability and transparency, ensuring resources are allocated effectively and services are delivered consistently. Integrated workflows and centralized data help organizations avoid siloed operations that often lead to redundant spending and inefficiencies. These improvements not only reduce direct IT costs but also optimize the performance of other business units, amplifying the overall return on investment.

Ultimately, ESM and Multi-discipline ITSM transform service delivery into a unified, streamlined experience that benefits employees and customers alike. By leveraging AI, automation, analytics, and shared solutions, organizations achieve higher productivity and better outcomes without increasing costs—making the implementation of these disciplines strategic tools for cost control and operational excellence.

Plan for Value Realization

Mid-sized companies succeed when technology investments align with business objectives. To achieve this, companies must develop a roadmap that captures and tracks the benefits outlined in the business case. This approach also supports gaining C-suite buy-in by demonstrating clear value and providing the justification needed for upfront investments in modernization.

A critical component of this planning is understanding how to calculate the value of risk versus the value of productivity gains or return on investment. This is often nuanced because risk mitigation functions like an insurance policy: if the adverse event never occurs, the investment appears as pure cost; if it does occur, the avoided impact represents significant return on the investment.

While it is challenging to demonstrate that a negative outcome was avoided, defining measurable success metrics—such as cost savings, efficiency gains, improved customer experience, lack of security breaches and faster service delivery—makes value tangible. Financially, risk analysis frameworks are commonly accepted as a means to calculating the value of risk mitigation investments. Tracking these metrics after implementation also ensures accountability, transparency and creates a foundation for benchmarking future initiatives. This allows the C-suite to compare performance across projects and validate that investments deliver consistent returns. Ultimately, embedding performance tracking and continuous improvement into the roadmap, mid-sized companies ensure that technology initiatives remain aligned with strategic goals and deliver sustainable value.





Strategies to Reduce Risk, Keep Performance & Competitiveness

If you haven't already adopted the Power Platform and Azure

Technology serves as a transformative enabler. Adopting Microsoft Power Platform and Azure enables mid-sized companies to modernize operations and achieve substantial cost savings without compromising security, performance or competitive strength. By leveraging a low-code, AI-enabled platform solution, companies streamline workflows, reduce manual effort, and minimize the need for highly technical skills and custom development. A recent Forrester Total Economic Impact study found that organizations deploying Power Platform realized a 224% ROI over three years and an \$81.7 million net present value (NPV), with up to 25% savings per impacted employee.^{xi} These savings come from improved operational visibility, direct IT cost reductions and enhanced customer engagement, while, incidentally, reducing shadow IT and fostering a culture of digital innovation.

Standardizing on Microsoft's ecosystem allows mid-sized companies to retire redundant systems, eliminate overlapping licenses and reduce support costs. The Power Platform's AI, automation and low-code/no-code capabilities, further reduce reliance on costly external contractors and IT teams, while modern and user-friendly capabilities such as portals and chatbots improve customer and employee satisfaction. Microsoft's ongoing commitment to innovation—over \$30 billion in R&D in 2025 alone^{xii}—will empower mid-sized companies to stay ahead with continuous innovation and be able to challenge larger competitors, without relying on extensive resources or specialized talent.

Security and compliance are paramount, and Azure provides a robust, compliant foundation for Power Platform, protecting sensitive data and meeting regulatory requirements. Trusted by over 95 percent of Fortune 500 companies^{xiii} and many government organizations worldwide, Azure is recognized as one of the most secure cloud platforms available. Like Fortune 500 companies, small to midsize organizations can leverage Microsoft's \$80B investment (FY2015–FY2025)^{xiv} in cloud technology and security. You pay only for what you use—gaining enterprise-grade benefits, value, and scalability without the cost or risk.

Microsoft invests over \$1 billion in cybersecurity research and development per year,^{xv} employing more than 3,500 security experts to protect customer data and infrastructure. Microsoft's Zero Trust strategy^{xvi} combined with Azure's multi-factor authentication, encryption (including double encryption) and proactive monitoring, supports companies to minimize vulnerabilities and respond swiftly to threats, while maintaining authorizations like HIPAA, GDPR and other compliance certifications.^{xvii}

By choosing Power Platform and Azure, mid-sized companies gain a foundation of resilience and agility that was formerly only available to larger Fortune 500 organizations. This unified approach delivers measurable cost savings and enterprise-grade security, while enabling mid-sized organizations to adapt quickly, integrate seamlessly with a broad ecosystem of business applications, and deliver modern, efficient, and secure services to customers and employees.

If you have already adopted the Power Platform and Azure

If your IT team has already embraced the Power Platform and Azure, you've already laid the groundwork for even larger cost savings, risk reduction, and operational efficiency. These platforms are built for seamless interoperability, making it easy to connect data and processes across Microsoft 365, Dynamics 365, Azure, and hundreds of third-party solutions. By eliminating data silos and creating a single source of truth for customer information, you're already reaping the benefits of a unified, secure, and flexible digital environment. Azure's support for a wide range of programming languages, frameworks, and systems—both Microsoft and non-Microsoft—means your company builds, deploys, and manages applications in whatever way best fits your needs.

Now is the perfect time to build on that success incrementally, by extending these capabilities to additional business applications such as ServiceTeam ITSM and ITAM that leverage this same infrastructure. By deploying solutions on top of your existing platform investment, you further streamline service delivery, automate routine tasks, and apply best practices across departments. These purpose-built applications are designed to maximize the value of your Power Platform and Azure investments, helping you achieve even greater cost savings, reduced manual workloads, while maintaining the highest standards of security and compliance. Most importantly, they empower your IT department to keep innovating and adapting—allowing your company to compete more effectively with larger enterprises.

Implement ServiceTeam for ITSM and ITAM

ServiceTeam ITSM and ServiceTeam ITAM stand out as cost-effective business applications that fit seamlessly into the Microsoft ecosystem, making them an ideal choice for mid-sized companies seeking to drive down IT costs without increasing risk. During many of my years at Microsoft, I worked alongside Provance and I've seen firsthand how ServiceTeam delivers real value—not just in theory, but in practice as demonstrated by successful deployments in many mid-sized companies (check out [Provance.com](https://www.provance.com) for more information).

ServiceTeam ITSM is built natively within the Power Platform, allowing it to fully capitalize on the platform's low-code/no-code, standardization, automation and AI capabilities. This means that mid-sized companies benefit with ServiceTeam ITSM from simplified configuration, powerful analytics and intelligent service delivery, all while following proven ITSM and ITAM best practices.^{xviii} Companies end up with the best of both worlds. Because ServiceTeam operates within the Azure ecosystem, Azure capabilities and benefits “flow-through” to Serviceteam, bestowing enhanced security, greater flexibility, scalability and reliable backup and disaster recovery to name a few.^{xix}

Deploying ServiceTeam ITSM and ITAM as part of a platform-centric strategy ensures companies modernize IT service delivery, reduce operational overhead, and maintain compliance—all while minimizing risk and maximizing value.



Conclusion

For mid-sized organizations, the pressure to deliver enterprise-grade performance without enterprise-level budgets or resources is very real. By standardizing in Microsoft's ecosystem and leveraging solutions like Power Platform, Azure, and purpose-built applications such as ServiceTeam ITSM and ITAM, IT departments transform from cost centers into strategic enablers of growth.

This approach doesn't just reduce redundant systems and operational overhead—it creates a unified, secure, and scalable foundation that empowers agility, innovation, and measurable business outcomes. With embedded

performance tracking, continuous improvement, and a clear roadmap for value realization, mid-market companies confidently align technology investments with business objectives, maximize ROI, and mitigate risk.

Provence helps mid-sized organizations achieve these goals—delivering ITSM and ITAM solutions that simplify complexity, optimize costs, and enable IT teams to compete effectively with larger enterprises. The result? A modern IT environment that drives efficiency, fosters innovation, and positions your business for long-term success.



Endnotes

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