Where Is The ROI To Leave IBM i In Favor Of Another Platform?

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Bob Losey

Certified IBM Advanced Business Partner at IBM POWER (iSeries/AS400) Specialist | IBM i (i5 OS/OS400) Specialist

Last week I was talking with an IBM iSeries IT Manager. Specifically, we were talking about his IBM 9406-520, the end of IBM hardware support January 31, 2019, and what his plans were when there would be no more IBM support.

Possible Move To New Platform When IBM Support Ends

"Bob, my management expects to move to a Windows solution by the time IBM hardware support is gone," he said.

I asked what Windows business applications his company was considering.

"We haven't even started looking yet," he responded.

Windows-Based ERP Conversion In 2 Years? Not Likely

Sheepishly I asked him how his company could successfully convert from his 9406-520 to a new Windows-based ERP in about 2 years.

He thought it would be very unlikely. He volunteered that over the years he witnessed many companies move from the IBM i/OS400 platform to other systems. He shared several cases where the transition took 5-7 years and huge sums spent before their systems were working. He told me of others that failed and these companies sold out to competitors.

IBM i To Windows Move 5x-6x More Expensive: Software, Hardware, Infrastructure, Staffing

"Bob, what most people don't understand is that when they move from the IBM i server to Windows, they spend 5-6 times more on software, hardware, infrastructure and staffing than with IBM i. Worse, they are vulnerable to viruses, hacking and ransomware. I am now a 1-man IT shop that supports everything. Moving to Windows will be like Mario Andretti who needs a pit crew to compete. This company will need at least 3-5 more people to manage the new Windows environment. The new

environment will be far more fragile than the IBM system we have now," he explained.

I then asked what this would mean to him when his company moves to Windows.

IBM IT Manager Chooses Retirement Over Windows Project

"I will most likely retire. By that time I will be 70. My company will no longer have an interest in our IBM i system. And, I don't want to be part of the Windows project which I expect will take way longer than they think, cost far more than they will be told, and not work like they hope. I have seen and heard this story all too often," he concluded.

I agreed with him. I explained that over the last 20 years, those companies we worked with that moved off the IBM server took between 7-11 years to fully move to something else.

Fortune 1000 ERP Consultant Agrees

I wrapped up the phone call. Afterwards, I called a friend who consults major Fortune 1000 companies to help with software selection and implementations.

I shared with him this recent case of this user's company planning to move off the 9406-520 to a Windows solution.

Where Is The ROI?

I told him that I must be missing something, but I could not understand the ROI in the decision to make this change.

Straightforward, he said, "Bob, there is **no ROI** for these kinds of changes."

What? I was stunned by his blunt response.

Experienced ERP Consultant Explains

I asked, "As an ERP consultant, you have worked with big, successful and global companies. In your experience as a consultant, you say there is no ROI for these kinds of changes. How come?"

"That's right, Bob. The people who make these decisions don't understand the differences between Windows server and IBM server characteristics. IBM servers are designed to handle lots of transactions and big databases quickly and efficiently with a small staff. Windows servers can't keep up with the IBM server capabilities. So, you have to add more Windows servers, which leads to server sprawl. That leads to more complexity and more staff.

"These decisions to move away from IBM i are generally political instead of based on technology or business. *There is __NO ROI__.*

Missing Ingredient – IT Education For Management

My friend continued, "What is often missing is the IT team does not educate the management team about their systems. When I was an IT manager, we would have an annual presentation to our management to educate them about the basics – what is a record, what is a file, what is a database, what is a transaction, and how things work. We would also explain how the IBM i managed the system to avoid the staffing issues and the problems common with Windows servers. My management team

understood what they had and continued to invest in their IBM i system with confidence – and with an ROI."

My friend continued, "I think the missing ingredient is IT education. If business managers had a clear idea of technology, their business goals and how to measure ROI, you would not see these types of sweeping changes to move to new systems. I also believe you would have far fewer delayed conversions and out right failures."