

# Navigating the Future of IT

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# Overview

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- The state of Information Technology
  - ARM Concerns
  - TSC initiatives
  - IT in EDU
- IT Consolidation considerations
- Q&A

# The State of IT

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What is IT?

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IT is what you get as the result of combining

**Data - Technology - Humans – Rules**

optimized to achieve goals

Data  
Technology  
Humans  
Rules

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We live in a digital world

# The State of IT

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- Data is the new gold
- Increase of Business dependency on IT
- Increasing Regulations (Security and Privacy)
- The Threat Landscape
- Cyberinsurance
- Cancel Culture
- AI revolution
- Crisis of IT Professionals

March 18, 2024

By [Jonathan Reed](#)

3 min read

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News

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) — responsible for cybersecurity and infrastructure protection across all levels of the United States government — has been hacked.

# Crisis of IT Professionals

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- Salary
- Resources availability
- Ineffective recruiting strategies
- Lack of career paths
- Lack of work flexibility
- Motivation – Daniel Pink
  - Autonomy
  - Mastery
  - Purpose





How broad is IT?

## Current state of IT (Unions and Conferences offices alone – 68 offices):

- 53% have in house IT, that's 36 offices out of 68
  - 10/36 of these organizations with just a part time IT.
  - So, only 26 offices have Full time IT employees. That's just 38% of our offices.
- 14% of our Conferences rely on their Union for IT support
- 19% of our offices rely 100% on external contractors, non Adventist mostly.
- 13% of our offices don't manage IT or it's unclear what they are doing with IT, if anything.

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Our constituency members want more pastors and teachers, they don't want more IT people in the office



The church won't be able to build 59 + 9 (without counting EDU) Relevant and Competent IT departments for such a time like this.

We need new “creative” and strategic ways of doing IT

Technology is not the limitation; our culture and structure is.

# ARM concerns

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# ARM concerns

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- Cyber Security incidents
- Cyber Insurance premiums
  - And eligibility

Options:

- Centralized management
- Standardization

# TSC – Technical Standards Committee

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# TSC – Technical Standards Committee

**IT Policies**

## BA 73 Information Technology

**BA 73 05 Philosophy, Background, and Objectives** --- Technology is an integral part of the life of a denominational organization. Information Technology (IT) resources shall be used strategically to maximize the mission of the Church. Every organization has a unique set of risks, priorities, and constantly evolving technology needs; thus, organizations must plan for IT governance, data security, data privacy, policies and procedures.

**BA 73 09 Information Technology Governance** --- Organizational officers are responsible for all areas of IT operations, including its policies and procedures to ensure that the organization's IT priorities are balanced with focus on mission, resources are provided, and risks are managed.

**BA 73 10 Data Security** --- It is recommended that organizations implement data classification processes along with technical and organizational measures to enable Confidentiality, Integrity and Availability of sensitive data to protect it from being compromised and keep the reputation of the church from being adversely impacted, and the mission of the church from being interrupted.

**BA 73 12 Technical Standards Committee** --- A committee of the North American Division called the Technical Standards Committee (TSC) shall be responsible for the development and management of division-wide IT standardization guidelines and best practices. The TSC shall have the ability to create ad-hoc sub-committees as needed. The committee shall consist of:

- the Treasurer/CFO of the NAD or designee (chair)
- the IT Director of the NAD or designee (secretary)
- the IT Director or designee of each of the unions of the NAD
- a representative from the General Conference IT Services
- a representative of one of the Universities of the NAD.
- the President and Secretary of the NAD (ex officio)

**BA 73 15 Policies and Procedures** --- Organizations shall establish and implement IT policies and procedures in compliance with applicable rules and regulations within the organization's jurisdiction. TSC shall actively maintain IT policy templates that can be used by organizations to accomplish their IT goals. It is recommended that organizations implement the core IT policies as recommended by TSC.

**BA 73 25 Standardization** --- TSC is responsible for developing, maintaining, and continued revision of the TSC IT standardization guidelines document. These IT standardization guidelines will focus on how organizations can effectively and efficiently accomplish current best practices as recommended by the IT industry, adapted to our church practices, structure and needs. Organizations that adopt these standards will better position themselves to:

- Comply with regulations.
- Enhance our cyber security and privacy posture.
- Achieve compliance with cyber insurance requirements and lower premiums costs.
- Take advantage of economies of scale.
- Run more efficient IT departments.
- Improve synergy among organizations within the division, by being part of a network of professionals that share the same standards (policies, processes, software and equipment).
- Recruit and develop IT professionals.
- Improve business and ministry continuity objectives.

**BA 73 30 Union IT Role** --- Each union shall have an IT director, or at least assign the role of IT coordinator to an employee of the organization, who will participate in the development, maintenance, and continued revision of the TSC IT standardization guidelines document. The Union IT director, or the IT Coordinator, in coordination with the Union administration, will be responsible for implementing and maintaining adherence to the TSC IT standardization guidelines as best fit their local needs and strategic goals for mission. Standardization efforts will also enable better IT collaboration between Unions and Conferences allowing Unions to provide assistance where needed and desired.

# TSC – Technical Standards Committee

IT Policies

IT Standardization

# IT Standardization

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# TSC – Technical Standards Committee

IT Policies

IT Standardization

IT Assessments

## SDA IT Assessments and Audits

Discussion between Milton Sands, NAD IT Director, and Robyn Kajiura, GCAS Director  
September 19, 2023

**Needs/Concerns:** Each Seventh-day Adventist organization depends heavily on their IT personnel for daily operations. Some IT “teams” are just a single individual (part or full time), while others have multiple team members. Some organizations have a whole committee to support them. However, most organizations don’t have an oversight system which results in placing individuals and their organizations at risk.

NAD Technical Standards Committee (TSC) has expressed concern over the need for IT audits or assessments. Similar concerns were raised during the Adventist Technology Summit in Brazil in June 2023. GCAS agrees with these concerns and would like to partner with NAD in developing a program to meet this need.

**Conceptual framework:** (this is a rough outline of what we talked about along with additional thoughts as I started organizing my thoughts after we met. This is subject to further discussion and brainstorming with TSC and GCAS including the GCAS Professional Standards and Client Services personnel. But it can help get the discussion started.)

1. Develop “Best Practices for SDA Organization Information Technology”
  - a. Practices need to consider different industries:
    - i. Ecclesiastic (conference, mission, union, division, etc.)
    - ii. Education (Elementary, secondary, university)
    - iii. Retail (Adventist Book Centers)
    - iv. Manufacturing (publishing, food factory, etc.)
    - v. Media
    - vi. Health care/hospitals/clinics
    - vii. Others
  - b. Best practices should have some flexibility to allow for cost and benefit balancing for each organization:
    - i. Minimum requirements
    - ii. Good practices
    - iii. Better practices
    - iv. Best practices
  - c. We suggest the TSC develop these best practices as it is their area of expertise.
  - d. Resources: look at industry practices, programs within the church which appear to be functioning well,

- e. Goals: Consistency, efficiency, safety, quality...
2. Auditing & assessments
  - a. First level of assessment should be a “Self-assessment check list”
    - i. Checklist developed by TSC based on the identified best practices & customized to the applicable industry (organization type as listed above)
    - ii. Checklist should be performed by each organization (Frequency?)
    - iii. Completed checklist should be given to Administration (at least) but would be good to provide to Audit Committee/Governing committee as those bodies are responsible for assessing organizational risk.
    - iv. Checklist must be completed prior to having any external assessment or audit performed.
  - b. Second level of assessment could be an external assessment performed by GCAS.
    - i. First input would be the completed self-assessment checklist.
    - ii. Most cost-effective approach would be an “Agreed Upon Procedures” engagement.
    - iii. TSC could develop a recommended list of procedures to be performed.
    - iv. The organization takes that list of procedures and customizes it for their organization. That list would then be the basis for an engagement which GCAS could perform. The letter would include an estimate of the cost for the service.
    - v. This would not be an audit, and no opinion would be provided. However, for each procedure listed in the engagement letter, there would be a statement that the procedure was performed and the result of the procedure.
    - vi. Copies of the report would be given to the organization (we recommend it be given to the IT department, Administration, Audit Committee and Governance. If the organization agrees, a copy could be given to TSC. Alternately, GCAS could provide a generic summary of results at the end of each year to the TSC.
    - vii. TSC could use this information to further develop guidelines, and checklists and best practices.
    - viii. We suggest that the first year of performing these assessments, it would be good for the assessment team to include at least one person from the TSC Committee. After that, GCAS could perform the assessments alone, or continue doing them with a member of TSC.

- ix. At least initially, this level would be voluntary since neither TSC or GCAS could mandate it. Rather, it would be a service available for those organizations who request it.
- c. The third level of assessment could be an IT Audit, done in accordance with audit standards.
  - i. This is a much more time intensive engagement, and must be done in accordance with the appropriate standards so an audit opinion can be given. This is more costly, but for certain organizations on whom other organizations rely, this level of service is recommended. I’d suggest a report along the lines of a SOC 70 type 2 report OR an IT Audit Report as described in the article IS Audit Basics: The Components of the IT Audit Report. (See attached PowerPoint which provides a good explanation of SOC reports as well as the link to the ISACA website with an explanation of audit reports.)
  - ii. Programs on which many church entities depend, such as AASI, APS, AdventistGiving, eAdventist.net, etc. are some of those platforms where this type of service would be helpful.
  - iii. At least one of the personnel on this type of engagement needs to be a CPA, with additional training and certification in IT auditing. Such as:
    1. CISA (Certified Information Systems Auditor) or
    2. AICPA CITP (Certified Information Technology Professional)
  - iv. The appropriate qualifications for personnel for this work needs to be determined and then recruited for.
  - v. GCAS would develop the audit program for these types of engagements in collaboration with GC & NAD IT and TSC, as well as in collaboration with appropriate personnel in the industry. Likely, we could collaborate through our BDO Alliance contacts.
  - vi. At least initially, this level would be voluntary since neither TSC or GCAS could mandate it. Rather, it would be a service available for those organizations who request it.

# IT in EDU

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# IT in EDU

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IT Challenges facing Adventist Schools

All the same challenges mentioned before.

With the added challenge that small schools rely on already busy teachers or volunteers to do IT as they feel

# IT Challenges facing Adventist Schools

- MAP Testing
- Purchasing and Budgeting
  - Laptops, iPads, Classroom equipment
  - Software and services
- Identity Management
- All the apps!
  - Dreambox, Lexia, ReadingPlus, Typing Agent, Big Ideas Math, NWEA/Map
- Internet
  - Internet Access
  - Quality networks
- Cyber Insurance
- Privacy, security, and safety

# IT Challenges facing Adventist Schools

- AI unknowns
  - We are not AI ready
  - Who sets AI principles and vision?
  - How do we setup our AI ambitions?
  - AI security
  - AI projects funding
- Regulations
  - Data privacy, student online safety, etc.
  - TSC/TDEC policies and guidelines
- Cancel culture
- Parents expectations regarding the use of technology
- Teachers
  - Expectations
  - Retention strategy from an IT perspective
  - Onboarding new teachers

THE  
question...

How do we  
face the  
future as it  
relates to  
technology?

Do we keep trying to replicate efforts?

Or do we SCALE one effort that works?

# SWOT for scaling one solution

## Strengths

- Purchasing Power/Cost Savings
- Student data Security
- Better online Safety
- Communication Platforms
- Takes pressure off of small schools/teachers

## Weaknesses

- Local Support – Tech Leads
- Training
- Building a collaborative environment with school IT staff
- Less independence at the local level

# SWOT for scaling one solution

## Opportunities

- Collaboration with other conferences/unions
- Boarding new teachers
- New tools for teacher's productivity
- Teacher appreciation
- Reduce liabilities

## Threats

- Leadership Understanding of IT
- Below Market Pay
- Unwillingness to Evaluate, Learn, Adapt
- Not taking Legal seriously
- Response time / Staffing
- Individualism – not thinking for the better of the group
- Ego

THE question...

How do we face  
the future as it  
relates to IT?

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# Consolidation of IT

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We might still be at a point where we can afford to think: what happens if we consolidate IT services? –

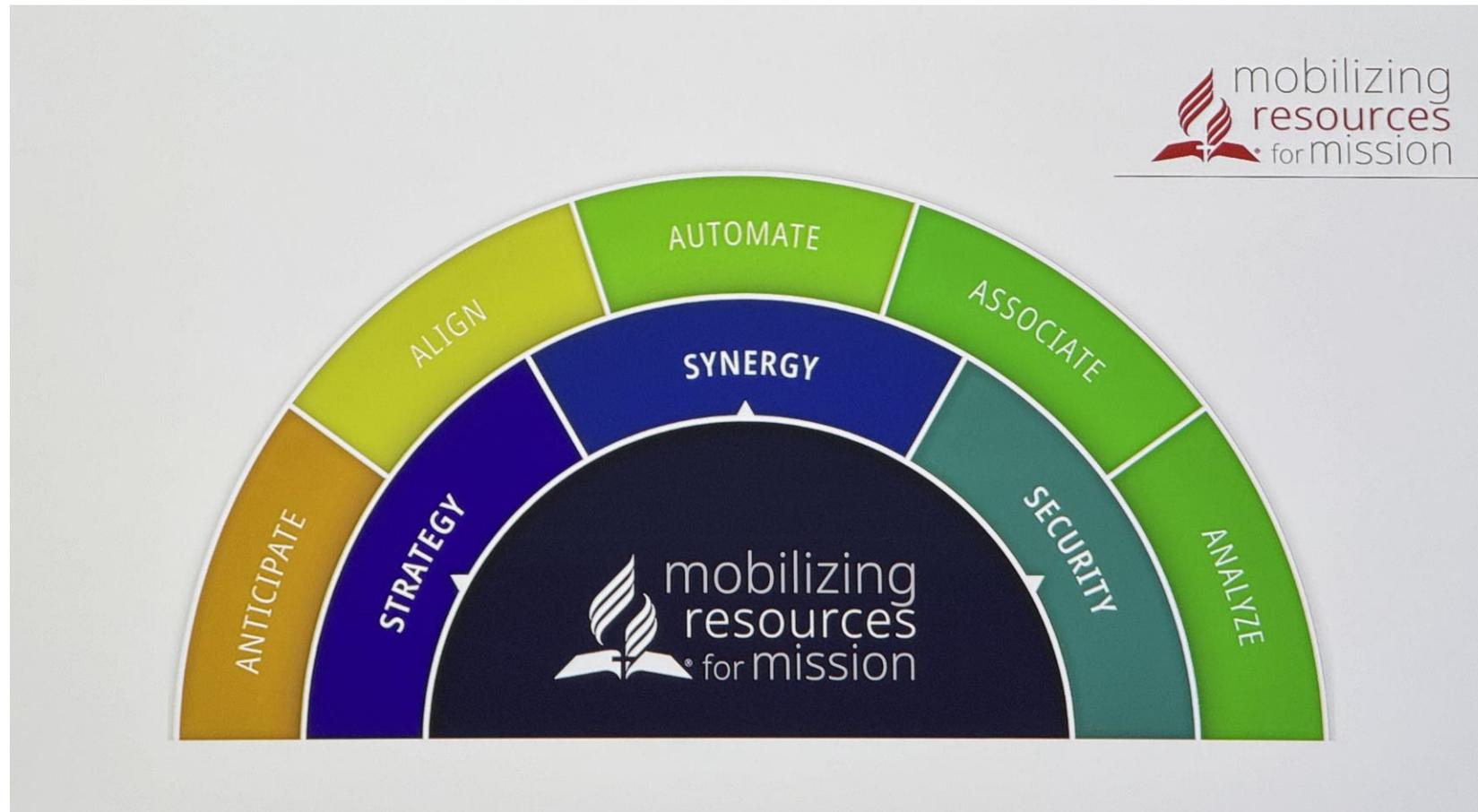
- The answer to that question will lead to proactive and creative solutions.

But soon we may reach a point where we will be forced to ask: what happens if we don't consolidate IT services?

- That will be a reactive solution.

# Paul Douglas – Mobilizing resources for Mission

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**Anticipate** | An essential business practice is to anticipate a variety of scenarios of what could have a positive or negative impact on the organization. By documenting a planned response to these scenarios or developing a response framework for unanticipated scenarios, the organization creates safeguards against the prospect of being caught flat-footed when there is a crisis.



**Align** | Organizational structures and systems have a shared purpose to be servants of mission. Therefore, it is imperative to align these structures and systems to ensure the effective and efficient utilization of resources. This should be an ongoing exercise that seeks as its goal to spend more on the mission and spend less on the machinery.



**Automate** | The abilities of technology increase exponentially each year and has long arrived at the capacity to perform numerous tasks without human intervention. Maximizing advances in technology to automate repetitive tasks will enable organizations to recalibrate staffing levels to control costs or repurpose personnel to more frontline mission responsibilities.



**Associate** | Church organizations pursue a common mission yet the suite of technical competencies necessary to do so are not universally available. Breaking through the veil of established geographic boundaries and finding ways to associate with other church organizations within the family allow for leveraging the best available competencies and lessening the duplication of effort to produce similar resources or perform standard responsibilities.



**Analyze** | There is a wealth of information trapped in the transactional data that is recorded by an organization. When organizations analyze this information in real time, they can unlock the stories of progress to be celebrated and understand the signals of problems to be corrected. Employing such a data-driven approach to management and governance keeps organizations on the leading edge of knowing what is happening, why it is happening, and what should be done in response.

Infrastructure for mission  
has become the mission itself  
rather than a mechanism to  
facilitate a cooperative effort

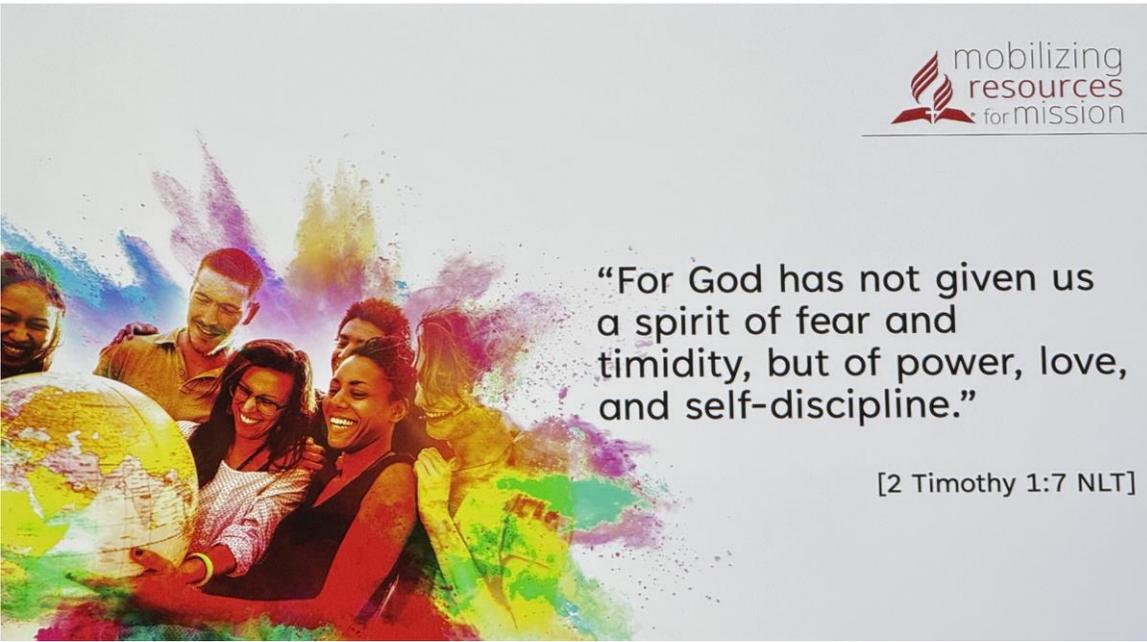
# Paul Douglas – Mobilizing resources for Mission

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- “We need to move from maintenance mode to strategy mode”
- Organizational structures and systems have a shared purpose to be servants of mission
  - “The mission won't be finished anywhere, until the mission is finished everywhere”.
- “Why can't we have centers of competence?”

# Paul Douglas – Mobilizing resources for Mission

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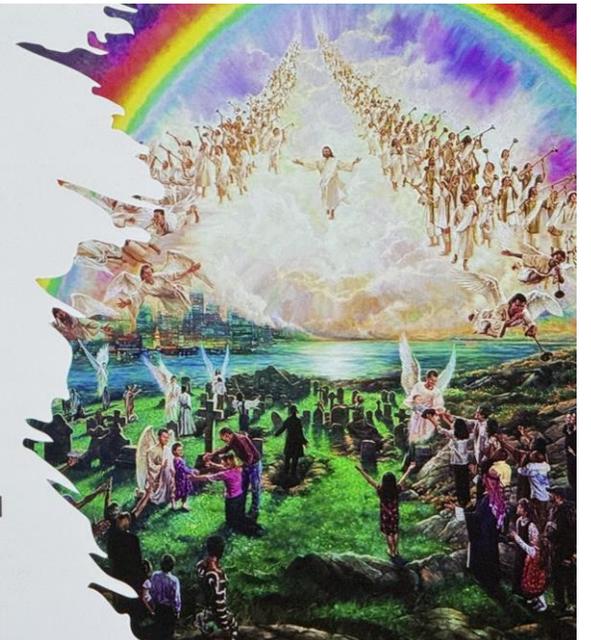
“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.”

[2 Timothy 1:7 NLT]

## Our work today!

As we near the final crisis, instead of feeling there is less need of order and harmony of action, we should be more systematic than heretofore. All our work should be conducted according to well defined plans. I am receiving light from the Lord that there should be wise generalship at this time more than at any former period of our history.

[Last Day Events, p.47]



You can not have what you want  
if you are content to remain what you are.

Robin Sharma.

# Consolidated IT

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What is consolidated IT?

A specific approach in structuring and managing IT services within our organization as a whole

Data - Technology - Humans – Rules

# Smart Consolidation

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## Data

- Data can reside anywhere, without affecting ownership, privacy or accessibility.

## Technology

- Why do we need datacenters and servers everywhere?
- Why aren't we taking advantage of economies of scale?

## Humans

- Why do we need the same IT expertise EVERYWHERE, in every organization?
- The stronger takes it all. There is no one left for the least of these.

## Rules

- Why do we have different policies and best practices in IT?
- Why are we re-inventing the wheel on how to do IT operations?

# Some concerns

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Leadership support.

Our organizational structure.  
It's easier to keep status quo

Control

Managing the centralized A-  
Team

Response time / Staffing

Flexibility

Job Security / job description

Cost for smaller organizations

I told you so... during bumpy roads

Ego is the enemy

# Why Consolidation

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- Cost Savings: By optimizing resources and reducing redundancy, organizations can achieve financial benefits as a whole.
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- Economies of scale:
  - \$500K at NAD, divided by 69 Unions and Conferences, represents \$7,246.38
    - Without counting schools, academies, universities, summer camps, ABC, etc.
- Example: NADcloud



# Why Consolidation

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Better and more uniform user experience.

More modern workspace experience

- Especially important for younger workforce
- The way they relate and interact with technology is very important

Better and uniform cybersecurity.

- Lower Cyberinsurance premiums.

Attracting and Retaining IT talent.

- We could build career paths for those at the consolidation point
- Mastery opportunities -> higher motivation
- Offshore talent
- Quality of life / balanced life

# Success Stories

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- Adventist Giving
- eAdventist
- AASI / APS
- EDU SIS
- FLCOE providing IT for all their schools
- Unions providing IT support to Conferences

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A ship in harbor is safe,  
but that's not what ships are made for.

J.A.Shedd

# Ministry value / Business value

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How much real business and ministry value is your IT department delivering today?

Are they just “keeping the lights on”, or are they helping you in the mission?

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“A bend in the road is not the  
end of the road...  
unless you fail to make the turn.”

Hellen Keller.

# Why Consolidation

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From Maintenance to Strategy

From Slow Response to Agile

From Re-inventing the wheel to Innovation

From Defense to Offense

# Thank you!

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