BUILDING A WORKFORCE TO SUPPORT THE FUTURE OF SAAS ENTERPRISE IT APPLICATIONS

From doubters to believers, it has been exciting to watch utility company leaders embrace SaaS (Software as a Service) enterprise IT applications in a relatively short period of time. Today, SaaS systems have claimed a solid position in the utility industry because they:

• Eliminate hardware maintenance tasks;

• Simplify implementations and software updates because systems are already installed and configured in the cloud; and

• Push the burden of customizations to your SaaS provider.

All of this means that your internal folks have more time to focus on bigger picture digital transformation goals that have become critical to managing evolving customer expectations, budgets, and growing product and service portfolios.

THE FUTURE OF SAAS

But, like all technologies, SaaS is maturing. When we look at the developmental work being done, SaaS is becoming more intelligent through automation, AI, and the ability to perform predictive analysis.
This is monumental because—today—your internal folks aren't completely off the hook with SaaS. They are still spending a lot of time prospecting, curating and inputting data large and growing data. In the future, SaaS systems will automatically fetch data and transform it into highly relevant, actionable intelligence. Moreover, human support for customer inquiries will be reduced because customer-facing systems will feature automation including embedded AI chatbots and voice assistants.

"We see new advancements being made all the time. People continue to experiment alongside large mission- critical implementations. As people become more knowledgeable and familiar with SaaS, they will embrace new methods, new ways of working," says Rob Bonavito, CEO of JAGGAER, who offers a cloud-based business automation system for spend management. "We think this will translate into sustained growth, increased spending and plenty of opportunities for those who were quick to embrace its potential."

BUILDING FUTURE READY TEAMS

When you talk about the future of SaaS, workforce planning should be at the forefront of your discussions. Think about your internal teams, SaaS provider, and Managed Services Provider. What skill sets will you need as SaaS becomes automated, artificially intelligent, and able to perform predictive analysis?

The table below provides an overview of roles—as they look today. Those with check marks will be significantly lessened or completely eliminated as your SaaS system matures.
utility industry because they:

SaaS Provider Roles	Managed Services Provider	Internal Utility Team
Ensuring network connectivity	Guiding utility-specific IT strategy and growth management	✔ Performing predictive analysis
Managing data security including malicious software and viruses	✔ Conducting Business Impact Analysis	✔ Prospecting, curating and inputting large and growing data sets
Conducting backups, disaster recovery and business continuity	Implementing new rates	✔ Supporting live chat
Implementing upgrades and proactively managing and center calls	✔ Answering contact patches communicating changes	Introducing new ways of working
	Advising how to achieve the most benefit from available features	
	Serving as the middleman between the SaaS provider and the utility	
	Introducing new ways of working	

TODAY'S IMPERATIVE

According to the OCED Employment Outlook 2019: The Future of Work, approximately half of all jobs will be materially impacted by automation in the next 15-20 years. This clearly includes the folks supporting SaaS systems. Organizations that understand the blueprint of their current workforce and the future of SaaS enterprise IT systems are well positioned to build future-ready teams that include the right combination of internal folks and third-party SaaS and Managed Services providers.

Mike Cocroft, Chief Strategy Officer, Red Clay

As Managing Partner of Red Clay, Michael Cocroft sets the company's strategic vision based on his keen sense of current trends and the real goals of the Utilities industry. After his professional experience in various consulting roles, and in the Utilities industry for over 20 years, Michael offers a global perspective on energy technology. As the visionary behind service improvement at Red Clay, Michael has a strong track record of building the best team and providing a unique approach that results in a strong and reliable customer base. Cocroft has worked in various technical roles in education, healthcare, manufacturing, and utilities.

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