Episode 02: Virtualized Digital Workspaces with Aditya Kumar

Oindrila

Hi, I am Oindrila and welcome you all to a brand new podcast episode today.

In this episode wewill be talking about virtualized digital workspaces and more interestingly we will uncover how these digital workspaces are woven into today's corporate fabric.To help disentangle the complex world of virtualization at workplace and illuminate us with the infinite ways it benefits us, we have our guest, Aditya Kumar-Enterprise Solution Architect of Digital Workplace Services at HCL Technologies.

Aditya is an expert and a true technologist with almost 2 decades of experience in formulating bespoke virtualization solutions for businesses across industries. His unparalleled love for virtualization and digital transformation help customers solve their most complex problems.

He is the go-to person for all large and strategic level VDI consulting engagements.

Oindrila: Hi, Aditya.

Aditya Kumar: Hi, Oindrila

Oindrila: Thank you, for joining us today. We really appreciate you taking out time to talk to us.

Aditya Kumar: Thank you for inviting me. I'm always excited for some tech-talk!

Oindrila: Excellent! Then this podcast will surely be a fun experience for you.

So Aditya, we have been hearing a lot about how traditional workplaces are getting outdated and no longer suffice for users. And tech pundits have come up with what they call a virtualized digital workspace.

Could you help us understand what it essentially is?

Aditya Kumar: The concept of a truly digital workspace isn't new, the demand from the users' end has been around for some time now.
A Digital Workspace is nothing but a unified, software-defined workspace which contains everything that a user may need:
- all applications they use - be it corporate apps/ specific LOB apps/ present day SaaS apps; and their data- all in one place
- available for consumption whenever and from wherever users fancy
- and compatible with all latest devices such as the likes of smart watches, laptops, tablets, smartphones, rugged devices and so on

It is a win-win situation for all stakeholders:
- On one end, users enjoy utmost flexibility and a seamless experience. They are no longer constrained by the boundaries of their workplace.
- And on the other end, organizations have their tasks simplified- they enjoy easy, centralized and secure management of end points, corporate data and network.

Moreover, contrary to popular belief, digital workspaces are not only fueled by virtualization and mobility solutions but are also powered by next gen technologies such as AIOps, cognition, automation, predictive analytics and software-defined networking.

As a result, digital workspaces are fluid and deliver a connected experience which modern day users need to be truly productive.

Oindrila: Fascinating!

But, we have been functioning all these years and have been performing fairly well in traditional workplace settings. What has changed now that has activated this sudden shift in requirements?

Aditya Kumar: Well, this has happened because of two important factors:-

- First is the emergence of the "modern employee". The workforce demographics have evolved over the years. It is the first time in history that employees from five generations are working together. But with millennials constituting more than 1/3rd of the workforce, their needs shape the overall demand. This new breed of professionals is extremely tech savvy and lays the most emphasis on their flexibility. They don't want to be tied to their offices, devices or work during designated hours.
- WHEREAS -Intuitive workspaces that can be accessed anytime, from anywhere using any devices and still deliver consumer-grade, consistent experience is what modern employees truly desire.
- And the second factor is a complete change in organizations' focus area- they are moving away from "one size fits all" approach and are now striving for "micro-personalized" experiences. Companies are chasing superior user experiences while simultaneously keeping costs low. The emphasis is on aiding users with adaptive workspaces, maximizing resource utilization all the while deriving more value.

This new dynamic has put the CXOs in a dilemma- they are struggling to find a solution that is easy to manage, cost effective and at the same time also satiates what the users want. AND FINALLY TO ALL THIS REQUIREMENTS - Digital workspaces is the answer..

Oindrila: That clarifies a great deal.

But help us understand, what are the key technologies that drive digital workspaces. Why has it started gaining traction only recently?

Aditya Kumar: When I talk about Digital workspaces, I don't talk about different technologies working in silos but all of them coming together & working in tandem to deliver a true boundaryless experience. So digital workspaces are powered by enterprise- mobility, security solutions with enterprise grade virtualization cutting across all the technologies.

- Enterprise **mobility** management imparts fluidity so that workspaces adapt to user demands
- Modernized **security** provides a single control center to enterprises. Organizations can enforce user-specific, context-aware policies, controls and deliver tools/ processes in an aggregated manner.
- And the final driving technology is **virtualization.** Now, it has been around for the past 20 years, since the late 1990s, but only in concept. Implementing it on ground has been a long-standing issue.
  - Earlier, to see virtualization projects to fruition, organizations first had to build the underlying IT infrastructure ground up by themselves in their private data center. This was time consuming and required massive capital investments.
    And all this just to start off the virtualization journey. The on-going management challenges, in terms of support, compatibility, etc., that followed were another nightmare altogether.
  - And despite all these efforts, neither was performance satisfactory nor was it a cost optimizing endeavor for organizations.
  - But now with radical advancements in technology, virtualization projects have not only become feasible, but utilizing the technology has become crucial.
    - Improved protocols, hyper converged infrastructure, simplified management, superior network (5G, WiFi, software-defined network, etc.) now replicate, and in a lot of cases even supersede, the smooth experience that users enjoy on traditional laptops/desktops to virtualized workspaces.
    - And the availability of public cloud today gives enterprises the choice to do away with their own setups partially or completely and utilize these readily available resources

Owing to these reasons, demand in this segment has swelled as organization can finally exploit the technology.

Oindrila: I see! So, What I understand is that these new age digital workspaces would cater to all of the users' wants and deliver a consumer-grade experience to them.

But I think our listeners would be curious to know from a business standpoint, how will this impact organizations?

Aditya Kumar: Enterprises stand to benefit more, if you ask me.

- The first and foremost advantage is that they can entirely do away DC outlay by adopting various cloud models. This enables customers to move from a rigid, CAPEX model to a flexible, consumption aligned, OPEX model.
- In absence of resource constraints in a pure on-premise setup, organizations can enjoy a truly elastic environment where they can automatically ramp up or ramp down depending upon their usage requirements
- Rapid scalability of environment across geographies
- Quick setup and automated provisioning render much-coveted agility
- And finally, business continuity and service availability translate to maximum up time and no risk failures

So, it's only prudent that organizations incorporate cloud in one model or the other to achieve higher efficiency, agility and simply perform more with less.

Oindrila: Absolutely! So, a paradigm shift in the focus areas of organizations has brought about this change.

Aditya, we know that most enterprises are fresh on their cloud adoption journey, what do the delivery models of digital workspaces look like?

Aditya Kumar: Of late, customers are looking for a hassle-free, utility-based model. They need a single partner who can simplify as well as technologically transform their way of working so that they can focus on their core business.

To tackle this, technology providers have altered their traditional delivery model, where they used to build IT infrastructure for each customer and then support them in isolated environments, to provide "digital workspace as a service". In this managed service construct, hardware and software costs are bundled and then taken to customers as a complete service.

Customers no longer have to deal with multiple vendors with separate pricing for each component. Instead they now pay a single price for the service in a consumption aligned payout model.

Oindrila: That makes sense! Everyone wants processes to be as simplified as possible.

Aditya, you touched about these virtualized workspaces adapting to users' requirements. How will it happen?? Do you want to talk about other technologies that will be powering these workspaces.

Aditya Kumar: Modern day employees are very hard to please. To satisfy this bunch, we have to exceed their expectations by enabling them in ways they couldn't fathom.

To deliver supplemental capabilities, digital workspaces are personalized by leveraging built-in intelligence.
- Digital agents empower users with self-service capabilities. With cognition, users can get new virtual desktops, upgrade their existing workspaces, resolve their issues and get access to new applications as and when required without having to rely on the support staff.
- Users enjoy proactive support services. Predictive analytics aid in detecting anomalies in initial stages and puts an end to issues while they are still small.
- AIOps ensures self-healing of routine problems without the user's involvement
- Routine, task-based workflows which previously took users multiple steps, can now be automated by utilizing micro apps.

Also, strong security postures safeguard corporate and users' data even on-the-go.

Oindrila: That's really intriguing! Digital workspaces are fundamentally a medium for all cutting-edge technologies to amalgamate and make user experiences smoother.

With the sudden spurt of customer requests in this space, how is HCL Digital Workplace Services approaching such transformation asks?

Aditya Kumar: We closely work with all industry leaders to bundle the best of technology together and take a holistic "Workspace as a Service" to our customers.

Having been in the industry for more than 40 years, HCL enjoys privileged associations with all the key players. These partnerships get us access to technological advancements significantly prior to everyone else. As a result of which we are empowered to create distinct impact with our novel solutions.

Oindrila: Thank you very much, Aditya, for sharing your views and simplifying such a complex subject for our listeners.
And when we come back after a short break, we will ask Aditya for his take on some trending consumer tech. Stay tuned!

Oindrila: Welcome back. In this segment, we ask our guests to summarize their opinion about some exciting consumer tech. So, are you ready Aditya?

Aditya Kumar: Sure. Bring it on!

Oindrila: Autonomous Cars

Aditya Kumar: Self-driving cars have come a long way from "maybe possible" to now being commercially available. It is a great fit for countries having excellent network connectivity and where people strictly follow lane driving.

Oindrila: Windows Virtual Desktops

Aditya Kumar: Microsoft's latest offering that offers the only Windows 10 multi-session experience in a virtual environment. Right now, they are enticing customers by giving free pilots. But time will tell if it is truly a game changer in the digital workspace segment.

Oindrila: Smart Glasses

Aditya Kumar: The idea is refreshing that manufacturers are trying to bring wireless connectivity and imaging to eyeglasses. But I don't see it being an absolute success with people in near future.

Oindrila: Apple Watch

Aditya Kumar: The series 5 variant is hands down the best smartwatch available in the market right now. Heart rate monitoring, fitness tracking, sleep analysis are some of the features I find extremely useful on a day-to-day basis while the fall detection feature has proven to be lifesaving in case of emergencies.

Oindrila: Connected Homes

Aditya Kumar: Fascinating concept! Intelligent and fully automated homes. These are primarily IoT powered and rely on household appliances communicating with one another. I believe the market still has a long way to go before it reaches its full potential.

Oindrila: Aditya, It was wonderful having you on this episode. There was so little that we knew about virtualized workspaces and how it has become an imperative ask from employees today. Thank you once again for your time and we hope for an opportunity to host you again.

Aditya Kumar: Thank you. It was a delight talking to you.

Oindrila: I thank all our listeners for joining in! We want to hear from you. We need your feedback.

The contact information is available in the description. Comment, share, recommend and subscribe. See you all in our next podcast.