Intel IT Business Review

Accelerating and transforming product design

Creating new products. Accelerating time to market. Expanding and evolving a worldwide design organization.

Supporting these efforts is hard enough. Driving them forward is even harder.

Some 20 years ago, the product design team at Intel consisted of about 40 people, focused solely on processors. Today, there are dozens of product development teams and thousands of design engineers around the world, developing everything from silicon to software to services.

As these groups grow and evolve, the Intel Product Development IT team is tasked with helping them. We provide the technology resources that facilitate the creation of world-class products and services.

Availability and uptime—our previous measures of success—are no longer enough.

Our goals have shifted over the past year from running a compute environment to partnering more closely with design groups. From providing systems and support to delivering IT best practices, new ideas, and higher-value consultation.

Two main directives guide our path: acceleration and transformation.

Because time is of the essence in all Intel programs, we must support—and ultimately drive—the pace of change and the rate of progress at every stage of every project.

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Dan McKeon,
Intel IT Vice President and General Manager of Product Development IT

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This means helping our engineers get up and running, test designs, find bugs, and deliver products to market faster than ever before. It requires better collaboration between globally distributed teams. And it demands new techniques and tools that help transform the way they do their jobs.

Beyond hardware and software provisioning, we are increasingly discussing the "art of the possible" with our design counterparts. We are helping them take advantage of automation, design flow optimization, and business intelligence. We are introducing new emulation tools and environments, and new clustering and integration techniques. We are also deploying real-time collaboration tools, such as virtual conferencing and remote diagnostic capabilities, which bring our design teams closer together even if they are continents apart.

Most important, all of this is being developed in collaboration with our design engineers. To effectively improve the speed and quality of product development, we must proactively engage Intel design teams to better understand their pain points and critical paths to success. We must do this on the program level—but more importantly, we must do this for each job and workload. And we must align our efforts and priorities accordingly.

For those reasons, we have shifted our operational goals and measures of success. Instead of sheer availability and number of incidents, we now quantify the partner impact (mean time to recovery and the criticality of the workloads being impacted).

For example, two hours of downtime can have a four-day impact, if it derails the tail end of a three-day job. We are working to identify these contingencies and prevent such impacts. We are creating an environment that is "always on"– one that can support and drive ongoing change without perceptible downtime.

If 2013 is any indication, these efforts are working. We have been partnering closely with Intel System on Chip (SoC) design groups in the past year, and have proof that we have taken weeks off of their development schedule. Our goal in 2014 is to accelerate their efforts by 12 weeks or more, and we hope to take six months off of every Intel design cycle in the years to come.

To do so, we will continue to align our efforts with product development teams and continue to promote the use of IT best practices, collaboration tools, and new techniques. In essence, we are blurring the lines between Intel IT and the design groups we support. And that means more than running a data center and ensuring high availability.

For us, true success is all about business alignment, acceleration, and transformation.

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