A discovery approach that drives successful modernization

Whether you've started modernizing your business, or are in the process of determining where to start, the question most stakeholders are asking is "How long will it take?" Wrong question. The question you should be asking is, "What are we trying to accomplish?" and "What are our modernization goals?"

That isn't usually an easy question to answer. Truth be told, it's complicated! Modernization efforts are not one size fits all.

Before we talk about the factors that contribute to that complexity, let's first talk about the different types of modernization. And yes, there are different types of modernization.

At a high-level, there are four types of projects:

1 REHOST	**2** REPLATFORM	**3** REPLACE	**4** REENGINEER
Rehosting of technology and functionality to a new system. **Example:** Moving from on-prem to cloud hosting (lift-and-shift)	Replatforming of business logic to a new platform with new technologies **Example:** Moving from on-prem to the cloud, including modifications to take advantage of PaaS offerings **Example 2:** Using a company like Asysco to migrate code from COBOL to .NET	Replacing the application with a COTS application **Example:** Replacing a homegrown ticketing system with a helpdesk solution product like FreshService or Dynamics	Reengineering and/or rewriting business logic completely **Example:** Creating new functional areas of the application to replace older ones, implementing new business processes and/or logic within these new functional areas.

If you have already started your modernization effort, then you probably know which type of modernization your company is undergoing. But, what if you haven't started? How do you know what to do?

Why Discovery?

The goal of the Discovery is to review the current state of your organization's systems and business processes. During this phase, it is ideal for that analysis to be performed by people outside of the organization. An outside party has no biases or preconceived opinions about what is or isn't working at your organization. The analysis would review the current architecture of the system, high-level business flows, integration points, and possibly even the codebase itself.

At the end of the Discovery, you would have a modernization type recommendation as well as a prioritized list of epics, services, or tasks to embark upon.

Below are the common steps taken in any type of modernization that is deemed necessary for your business, along with type-specific steps.

The Discovery Process

Regardless of the modernization type, we will work to gain understanding in the following areas early in the discovery phase:

✔ Goals of the modernization effort	✔ High-level value that the existing application provides
✔ Pain points of the existing application	✔ High-level business needs the new application should fulfill

To achieve understanding in the areas above, these are the types of activities we work with you team on:

Current state review

- Review of code/systems
- Review of business processes
- Review of architecture
- Review of documentation (requirements, user guides, system support docs, etc.)

User interviews

These are examples of the types of questions we might ask:

Executive stakeholders

- Are there any major business milestones that the new system needs to be ready for?
- What are your goals for the new system?
- What metrics would you use to measure the success of the new system?

Architects / Tech leads / Developers

- What are the pain points with the current system?
- What are the major areas of complexity in the old system?
- What are the major areas of complexity that you foresee in the new system?
- How are you providing governance to dev teams? (architects)

Business Analysts / Subject Matter Experts

- What is the high level feature roadmap?
- How are features written? Prioritized? Broken down into tasks for developers?
- What are the pain points with the current system?

Operations / IT

- What is your team structure?
- What is the release/deployment process?
- What deployment pain points do you have?
- What monitoring/support pain points do you have?

Users of the application

- What work is completed in the application?
- What work is completed manually (outside the application)?
- How long does it take to complete a task?

So What's Your Type?

Once we have a solid understanding in the areas listed above, it's time to decide on the type of modernization that is right for your business. In many cases, a couple of types of modernization efforts can be done in parallel, or sequentially. Our team will identify that process as well. Here are the key considerations we take into account when identifying your type and process:

HOSTING COSTS	COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE	COTS OPTIONS	FUNCTIONALITY
If you're paying large hosting costs to support the current system, then an initial rehosting effort could shore up immediate savings.	If the current application is providing a competitive advantage, we would want to retain that business value and suggest replatforming or reengineering versus replacement.	If a COTS application fulfills the majority of your system needs, replacing your current system may be the most efficient and effective option, along with some custom development to fill in the gaps.	If the main functionality needs to drastically change from the current system to the new system, then a full reengineering effort is warranted, to ensure your future vision is met.

Phasing it Out

After we've identified the type (or types) of modernization that makes sense for your business, we shift our focus to laying out a modernization roadmap with tactical steps to achieve it. We start by defining the major phases of the modernization effort, then focus on the tactical details of each phase.

A high-level modernization roadmap might look something like this:

PHASE 1	Rehost the application from on-prem to the cloud
PHASE 2	Re-engineer a subsection of the application (service) and deploy it in the cloud, deprecating that functionality from the original application
PHASE 3+	Continue breaking out sub-sections of the application until the original application can be fully deprecated

We'll then look at each individual phase, starting with the first one, to put together a tactical plan to execute the phase. Some of the key information provided for the initial phases includes:

- Recommendations for the scope of the MVP for each service
- Overall architectural recommendations for the new system
- Development language and framework recommendations for the new system
- Epic/feature backlog for the initial service
- Prioritized roadmap of features for the first service based on dependencies

So let's tie that all back together. How long your modernization efforts will take is dependent upon the type of modernization effort you undergo. And depending on the type(s) of modernization we embark upon, it could take anywhere from 1 month to several years.

The Discovery Phase is a *critical* part of the process: It equips our team with the in-depth knowledge of your business and systems that we require in order to ensure the solutions we recommend are tailored to your needs. Without a Discovery, you're liable to spend significant time and money, only to become blocked down the road. In the end, modernization is always an ongoing and iterative process. But knowledge is power: A partner who knows the ins and outs of your business, teams, and technology can pave a clear path to success.

Are your ready to discover how we can help you?

Get in touch