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# OnTech

A Wilson Allen technology trends report

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# In this report

Introduction	2
Issues and Strategies	3
Common Challenges	5
Needs Assessment	7
Response	10



# Introduction

In late 2021 Wilson Allen conducted a series of interviews with CIOs, CFOs & other key staff from professional firms around the world to gain insights into current market conditions that will help shape existing and future services to better serve our customers.

The questions focused on the current information technology challenges and the strategies each firm leader is developing and planning to execute.

This report summarizes what Wilson Allen has learned and how Wilson Allen plans to respond to the key unmet needs raised by the firms interviewed.





# Issues and Strategy

An overarching theme affecting the information technology strategies and tactics of the firms interviewed is the impact of the Covid pandemic. Important projects and technology initiatives have been put on the backburner. The pandemic changed technology priorities and did so suddenly. Firms moved quickly to support a work-from-home workforce and have had to implement hybrid work-from-home arrangements and policies to establish a new normal. The priority focus over the past two years has been on enabling the digital experience and collaboration. This has been critical to client engagement and success.

Now firms are starting to come back to that original list of “backburner” technology projects and re-evaluating and re-prioritizing what needs to be done.

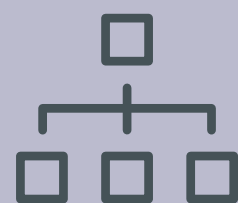
The projects discussed can be categorized into three broad topics:



**Business applications moving to the cloud**  
(e.g., Intapp, iManage), with some having already deployed Microsoft Office 365, and all are eyeing the eventuality of practice management systems moving to the cloud, too



**Deployment of new business applications**  
especially in the marketing technology category (e.g., Foundation, Introhive, Vuture)



**Enterprise data governance and architecture**  
as well as building a strategy and roadmap to utilize that data for advanced analytics (e.g., data science). Also:

- Cyber security, and the impact of client demand on technology and data storage strategy
- Cloud cost optimization relating to storage and compute of the data across the enterprise.

# Issues and Strategy...

The leaders highlighted that all of these initiatives require experienced experts to achieve successful outcomes. There is an acceptance that there are large, strategic projects looming on the horizon. And, although there is awareness of the reality that strategic software vendors currently offering on-premises solutions will, at some point, migrate those to the cloud (and force the customers to go with them), there are difficult issues around sequencing and what should move first, how the firms will integrate on-premises solutions with cloud solutions in the interim, and how to ensure there is no service or solution degradation in the process.



Enterprise data strategy was much discussed, both as a challenge and a major opportunity. Firms are looking for ways to join currently disparate application data together to help reveal more insights about the firm. There is particular interest in how to join data from emerging marketing applications (e.g., Introhive, Foundation, Vuture, etc.) to financial data to drive more insights into the business development efforts of the firm. Another use case that surfaced as a theme was the use of enterprise data governance for risk discovery and profiling during the new business intake process. There is a rising concern that tactical progress on selling new business more efficiently could clash with or undermine strategic decisions around the long-term quality of new business. For example, the firm could take on new business that counters and perhaps limits its growth potential.

Data Science was called out several times as a challenge. On the one hand, there is broad recognition that machine learning and AI hold huge potential in building out taxonomies from unstructured data (e.g., client clusters, client teams, human capital, and DEI development), as well as in identifying complex but critical patterns in performance to support better decision making. On the other hand, attracting, recruiting, and retaining perhaps a single data scientist and keeping him / her engaged is probably beyond most firms' capabilities.

*“The leaders highlighted that all of these initiatives require experienced experts to achieve successful outcomes.”*



# Common Challenges

Firms are struggling to find, attract and retain technology and business application talent. There are many facets to this problem, but the outcome is the same: firms are struggling to find the resources they need to fulfill the needs of the business both in the short term and to deliver longer-term strategic initiatives. This increase in demand from the backburner projects is putting a strain on the current resources and slowing the pace at which the firm can progress.

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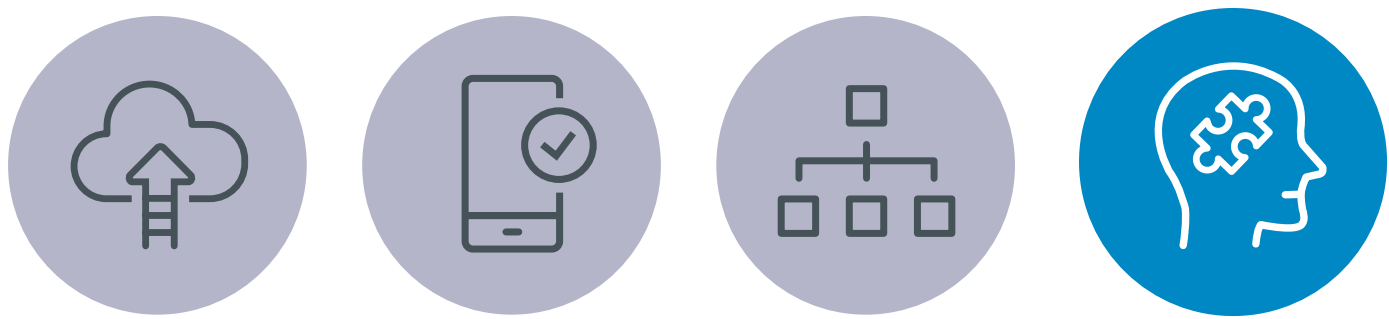
From a talent perspective, firms are struggling to find the right talent in the market. The resources with the knowledge of industry-specific technology are difficult to find. The scarcity of the resources is further driving up the price for those resources, making some unable to compete in the market. And the talent on more horizontal technologies (e.g., cloud tech, AI / ML) are more attracted to industries utilizing and applying these technologies more aggressively. The result is that the supply of talent is waning just as the lift of demand is strengthening.





# Common Challenges...

Then we add on top of this the “Great Resignation”. The impacts have been real. Firms that can afford to compete for tech talent, have been. However, the talent pool is now actively seeking better opportunities and better pay. There is a feeling that employees have an inflated sense of value that is causing them to go to market. Some firms are considering compensation increases to counter this issue, and a few are actively reviewing and deploying those efforts. As a result, there is increased strain on the budgets and the affordability of hiring new experienced resources. This is perhaps the greatest challenge in the market.



Another common theme has been in the area of client demands and the impact on technology strategies. The movement to the cloud is largely impeded by perceived cyber security risk. There is no doubt that the firms’ leadership sees the need for and the inevitability of cloud migration, but there is a heavy burden that client RFIs put on these leaders. The risk and opportunity costs of non-compliance are still just too high.

*“There is a feeling that employees have an inflated sense of value that is causing them to go to market... As a result, there is increased strain on the budgets and the affordability of hiring new experienced resources. This is perhaps the greatest challenge in the market.”*



# Needs Assessment

There is a major shift in attitude towards using business partners to help address the talent gap. The ability to access the right resources at the right time is seen as critical to the success of ongoing technology roadmaps in firms.

Today, firms are using managed service providers for outsourcing lower level, high volume work such as desktop setup, distribution, and support. Further, the firms are using these services to fully outsource their facility management needs. This trend is now starting to transition upwards to other, highly skilled resource needs. Examples include the setup, maintenance, and administration of business applications, including the resources to help 're-engineer' the business processes these applications address. Firms are looking for a true partnership where they can develop a trusted, long-term relationship to help them deliver on key initiatives.





# Needs Assessment...

Based on initial discovery, the experience and expertise that is needed in these firms are largely the same. However, the priorities and proper mix of those resources are different.


Themes discussed in nearly all the interviews:

- Training and adoption
- Data and business analysis
- Data science and data engineering
- Business process augmentation
- Application support



## Needs Assessment...

The ability to bring the right resources to the table for firms requires a relationship that is open and transparent. It is difficult to assess and scope needs from the outside and thus requires that relationship to be on-going. The need to have resources that can conduct periodic business process reviews and advise on areas of need and priorities, as well as on successful outcomes, is seen as critical. It is no longer enough to come in project per project. The need is becoming much greater, and the firms would appreciate a deeper partnership relationship based on a deeper understanding of their needs.



*"The need is becoming much greater, and the firms would appreciate a deeper partnership relationship based on a deeper understanding of their needs."*



# Response

## Wilson Allen's Response to the Changing Needs of Our Customers

Wilson Allen has for many years worked directly with our customers and technology partners to help them successfully execute on many of their most complex and mission-critical projects – systems migration projects, implementation of new systems, business redesign, and solutions development.

For all of the factors highlighted in this report, we know our customers have emerging and new needs, and that these are not always project related. Customers want to access deep expertise to extend that of their in-house teams – to address staffing and skills challenges, to meet operational cost challenges, to have greater flexibility and responsiveness in a rapidly changing landscape.



## Response...

**Having heard these signals**, we are working with customers now to provide Wilson Allen's expertise in new ways – bringing together the right mix of specialist resources to meet specific customer needs, packaged under a subscription to ensure responsiveness and reduce friction. Right now, the need seems greatest in two key areas:



### Digital Enablement & Adoption

A full service to manage, maintain and deliver training programs for onboarding, tech skills & adoption, tech rollouts – including eLearning courseware and tools.



### Data Science / Data Analytics capability

Combining data science + data engineering + advanced tech know-how + domain expertise to enable customers to rapidly develop capability in data analytics and thus, a fast-track to being a data-driven business.



# Author Bio

**Justin Farmer** is Wilson Allen's Senior Director, Strategy. Justin brings extensive legal technology and product management experience in designing and creating world-class solutions most recently at Thomson Reuters. He has led numerous projects that uncovered unmet needs and created products that were built from the ground up to deliver revenue renewals. Throughout his career, he has been at the forefront of the shift from on-premises solutions to cloud-based solutions that offer reduced product support and maintenance costs. Farmer believes the key to success in product development is an empathetic orientation that yields a deep understanding of customer challenges and relentless focus on solving customer problems.

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Wilson Allen’s specialists are trusted by the operational leaders of the world’s largest law firms and professional services organizations. We deliver the projects, consulting, and the ongoing services our clients need to run their businesses more profitably by optimizing their business applications, technology, and data.

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