

Citrix defines its North Star:

Delivering a great employee experience

Citrix CIO Meerah Rajavel emphasizes the importance of the stars aligning – workstyle choices, employee experience and corporate culture

When she was tapped to be the new Citrix CIO, Meerah Rajavel already was passionate about the problem that the company was trying to solve: holistically delivering a highly productive work experience to every employee – getting relevant information to each employee when they need it, on the devices of choice and from any location.

“Our employees are living proof of the Citrix value proposition. As a corporation, we’ve defined employee experience as our North Star,” Rajavel enthusiastically explains, gently sketching a beacon in an imaginary night sky. “It’s about freedom of choice,” she says. “CIOs can promise to give employees a great experience, but we have to chase that promise with a caveat. Typically IT mandates that users operate on a prescribed network, or use a specific type of device or work in a particular kind of environment. We’re changing all that without compromising security.”

Her first few days as Citrix CIO were pivotal. Rajavel and her team began shaping the project that ultimately would be known as ‘Citrix on Citrix’.

Achieving elegant simplicity while allowing freedom of choice

For IT, offering freedom of choice adds complexity. The challenge is how to architect ‘elegant simplicity’ without compromising security, and severely limiting users’ choices. Add to that the fact that employee experience is largely dependent upon people seamlessly working together. To facilitate those interactions, Citrix offers a number of collaboration platforms and capabilities.

“The catch is that our solutions must be compatible with essential business partner technology such as Microsoft Office 365 – the primary platform for collaboration at Citrix. Or solutions must work with Jira – a staple for engineers – or with Salesforce, which is heavily used by sales personnel,” Rajavel says, providing these key examples. “If the technology doesn’t all work well together, then the ecosystem isn’t functioning well,” she elaborates. “To that end, Citrix is constantly refining a rich set of technology partnerships that are growing and evolving over time.”



Industry
Technology

Location
USA

Citrix products
• [Citrix Workspace](#)

Key Benefits
• Citrix Workspace drives digital transformation with an intelligent digital workspace platform

Citrix on Citrix: each employee exemplifies the digital workplace experience

The Citrix CIO isn't out to reinvent the wheel: the concept of the digital workplace already is becoming an industry-standard approach. By bringing technology, the space for work and culture together, employees get a consistent experience that is tailored to them. This is the kind of aspiration that started the process, and it continues to be top-of-mind.

Rajavel and her team have a clear outline of what the Citrix on Citrix project involves:

- Providing a secure world-class employee experience
- Fostering productivity and innovation
- Amplifying the use of Citrix products as enablers
- Building a culture that maps to the vision and anchor statement for employee experience.

“We homed in on the idea that every Citrix employee must be a walking example of our digital workplace experience. When asked, ‘where do you work?’ each employee should make a point of explaining what the company does,” Rajavel explains.

The Digital Workplace Team, formed to help Citrix in its transition toward being a leader in the employee experience marketplace and charged with leveraging Citrix technology when possible and appropriate, engages and provides insight to help form a feedback loop that simultaneously improves products with real-time and real-world user experience – even as the products are still being developed and refined. In spearheading the project, the team closely partners with other teams – HR, Product and R&D. Now, in any Citrix product or solution release, Citrix itself is the first customer.

“Success is not solely about promoting our own technology; it's about building a viable well-functioning ecosystem that supports the future of work,” Rajavel declares.

Employee experience by persona

The Citrix on Citrix project has netted a key insight about employee experience: personas matter. What is valuable to a salesperson may not be as important to an HR professional or engineering team member. With that in mind, the team first focused on building out scenarios for two key personas. The sales persona included microapps relevant to Salesforce, Concur and other apps on which sellers heavily rely on. The engineering persona included microapps relevant to Jira, Confluence and the workflow for building products. Other personas would follow: for example, now, a similar approach is being taken with HR personas. “We are rapidly shifting the view from technology-centric to people-centric. This is completely aligned with our value proposition,” Rajavel concludes.

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Meerah Rajavel
CIO
Citrix

Security that protects but doesn't hinder

“Security and experience are two sides of the same coin. A realistic way to look at security is to make it frictionless,” she emphasizes. “That means that you have guardrails; you have the control; but security does not get in the way of the employee experience. It’s the container that we in IT can manage – so all of the controls can be implemented. Yet users still have the freedom to work on an iPad, mobile phone, laptop or device of their choice.”

The Citrix Zero Trust security model is another crucial part of protecting the enterprise. Zero trust is a security concept based on the idea that organizations should not automatically trust anything inside or outside their perimeters. Zero trust relies on contextual awareness to adaptively grant access to authorized users. It capitalizes on patterns based on identity, time and device posture. This tightens the reins on access.

The Four Cs: important considerations in the transition

As part of the Citrix on Citrix transition, Rajavel and her team identified what she calls the Four Cs: Connection, Content, Collaboration and Culture. All of these areas are essential in the delivery of a great employee experience. Specific components in the Citrix portfolio address many of them.

When employees need to work from anywhere and any place at any time, the first of the four Cs comes into play: workers need to be securely connected to the assets that enable them to get work done. Citrix has assets in the cloud, in the data center and under the control of various departments in the company. “Once users connect, virtualization comes into play,” states Rajavel. “Employees can connect to virtual desktops, or they may be working on a desktop that is managed by the company.”

Another C is Content. “When we virtualize our apps and desktops, the container is important, because we are providing employees with something that is going to be the same regardless of where, when and how they access it. The content that goes inside the container comes from different places inside Citrix, or from other external content repositories,” she clarifies.

The third C, Collaboration, is an important component. Citrix simplifies access to data no matter where it’s stored. Citrix technology is integrated with that of long-time strategic business partners including Microsoft, so that highly popular productivity tools work seamlessly with Citrix solutions.

“Collaboration is inextricably tied to Culture, the last of the four Cs,” Rajavel explains. “You need to set the tone to be successful in this kind of transition. Your company’s culture must be conducive to enabling the workforce to embrace digital workspaces. You can’t force it just from the top down – it has to come from top down and bottom up. There has to be something in it that makes it easier for each employee to be productive.”

“The technical components – content, collaboration and connectivity – are the easy pieces,” she says, ticking off the three categories. “Culture has to be a top priority – knowing why you want to embark on a project such as this is crucial. Who is coming along with you? How will you achieve alignment? How will this work in your unique corporate culture?” she contemplates.

Cloud computing, reallocating workloads and what lies ahead

Rajavel notes that now she would like to see the team move a significant portion of the workload to the cloud. “I have a dynamic and elastic way to manage my workloads now,” she shares. “Moving workloads closer to the user base – reallocating them – will net better performance and they will become more cloud conducive.” She continues, “By matching workloads to the demand in the regions, we can realize better return on investment and transition from CapEx to OpEx. This enables better scalability and easier management of the environment.” At this point, Citrix already has moved its control plane to the cloud.

“We need to lead by example,” Rajavel summarizes. “We need to show the world exactly what’s involved in delivering the preferred way to work for more than one billion people,” she summarizes. “That starts with the Citrix global workforce – and our guiding light that is leading the way: delivering a great employee experience.”

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