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Rethinking People Costs in Enterprise IT

**THE FINANCIAL PERSPECTIVE ON IT LABOR IN
A NEW TECHNOLOGICAL ERA**

CONTENTS

Summary	2
Introduction : A Financial Inflection Point for Corporate IT	2
The Impact of Customer-Facing Technology	3
The Financial Manager's Perspective.	3
Customer Success Story: Data Morphosis™.	4
Understanding IT Labor Costs	4
IT Staff Reallocation: Releasing the Potential Energy of Innovation	5
Measuring the Financial Impact of IT Staff Reallocation	8
Customer Success Story: Jordan Lawrence	10
Conclusion: Staying Cost-Focused While Moving Beyond the Cost Center.	10
Appendices.	11
About Rackspace	11
Notes	12

Rethinking People Costs in Enterprise IT

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SUMMARY

IT spending is seldom popular, and IT managers typically face constant pressure to pare down their cost centers. Within the IT budget, however, there is the potential to allocate people costs more strategically. IT staffers sometimes complain that all they can do is “keep the lights on,” though with certain highly valued, highly compensated administrators, those can be some pretty expensive lights to keep lit. Valuable resources, such as database administrators, can be better deployed to the strategic advantage of a business. This is, of course, a lot easier said than done. Indirect costs and the business impact of IT employees are notoriously difficult to quantify. This paper gives IT managers and financial managers a way to assess their IT people spend and understand new options for making central IT a driver of enterprise growth, rather than a support function. Rethinking the people costs of IT opens the door for reallocating the time and efforts of valuable human resources as well as adding new, strategically-focused IT headcount.

INTRODUCTION: A FINANCIAL INFLECTION POINT FOR CORPORATE IT

The financial view of corporate information technology (IT) is at a moment of inflection. IT has traditionally been seen as a cost center that needed to be trimmed or a subjective place to put strategic dollars. IT spending as a

percentage of total U.S. corporate capital investment grew from 35% in 1990 to over 47% today¹, but a generation of business leaders often found these expenditures difficult to justify in financial terms. This is no longer the case. As the McKinsey Center for Business Technology notes, “Over the past 20 years, we have heard frequent declarations that technology and information will transform the way businesses compete, but until now, these predictions have never fully come true. However, reality is finally catching up as years of promised technology benefits take root and the pace of technology change accelerates.”²

Today, new customer-facing technologies, such as mobile devices, are changing the way that businesses engage with their customers. The companies that master customer-facing technologies are poised to reap strategic advantage and financial benefit. To this point, Forrester Research’s Katyayan Gupta observed in his blog, “In order to compete and win in the age of the customer, organizations cannot be simply ‘customer-centric’ anymore—they must become ‘customer-obsessed.’ To do so, firms must embrace the mobile mind shift and build mobile systems of engagement.”³ Adapting to these new technologies, however, requires a commitment from both business and IT managers and a fresh look at IT spending. Tackling customer-facing technologies need not necessarily mean an increase in spending, though. The way that spending is allocated, particularly in regard to spending on staffing, is key to making IT a strategic partner in the technology-

driven customer experience revolution. IT staffers can do much more than just “keep the lights on.” This paper gives IT managers and financial managers a way to assess their IT staffing budget and understand new options that exist for reallocating the time and efforts of valuable human resources.

THE IMPACT OF CUSTOMER-FACING TECHNOLOGY

Consumers today are using technology to engage more intimately with corporate brands than ever before. In reaction, business managers now seek and expect a new, ultra-fast system development and deployment life cycle. Competitive advantage often hinges on how rapidly high quality customer-facing systems can be introduced. Indeed, a Forrester Research/Watermark Consulting study that compared customer experience “leaders,” with “laggards” found that focusing on customer experience has a direct benefit on market capitalization. Companies that made a priority of attaining a high level customer experience realized a six year stock market return of 43%, compared to -33% for laggards.⁴ The leaders outperformed the S&P Index for that period by a factor of nearly 3X.

Awareness of the financial payoff from good customer experience has led to an increased emphasis on customer-facing systems. IT spending on customer-facing systems is projected to double this year, to 62% of IT spend this year, up from 31% in 2014.⁵ This is putting additional stress on the IT/business relationship. Customer-facing systems are different from traditional enterprise “systems of record,” such as ERP or CRM. They demand agility and evolve quickly, with direct involvement by business stakeholders. Business stakeholders typically want to be consulted, or even be in the driver’s seat, for multiple iterations of a solution that touches the end consumer. Even mature companies are starting to act like “lean startups” in this regard—quickly trying new ideas and testing concepts, learning, and then improving what they’re putting into the customer’s hands. This is good and bad, from an IT perspective. While it’s a positive development that business wants to be closer to IT processes, 78% of developers today are saying “pressure to deliver faster” has made their work harder.⁶

THE FINANCIAL MANAGER’S PERSPECTIVE

The challenge for a business today is to enable IT to be agile, cranking through fast-moving development and deployment cycles without overspending. It is not necessary for companies to spend more on IT to rise to the challenge. Solving the financial puzzle of generating more agile systems output at the same, or even a lower, budget level involves intelligent reallocation of IT spend. The same dollars, if spent strategically in the right areas, can have the desired effect of increasing the speed of innovation.



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY: DATA MORPHOSIS™

Data Morphosis is a global software company with a SaaS-based workforce analytics platform designed to help organizations better understand their human capital data.

Data Morphosis originally hosted its SaaS offering in a local data center. However, the company wanted to focus its internal technical resources on application development, rather than data center infrastructure. They looked for a Tier 1 hosting provider that could manage their sensitive client information.

Working with Rackspace®, Data Morphosis moved its ComplIndex™ application to a hybrid cloud that combines public cloud with server virtualization powered by VMware®, a physically isolated solution. The application was secured with RSA SecurID to ensure data privacy. Data Morphosis is able to support the strict requirements of its clients, while focusing its internal resources on application development rather than data center operations.

“As a fast-growing global company, we’re committed to best-of-breed solutions that enable us to scale seamlessly and rapidly meet growing client demand. Rackspace reputation for excellence and Fanatical Support® made them an obvious choice—and they’ve exceeded our expectations.”

—Sam Jones, Founder & CEO,
Data Morphosis

Infrastructure outsourcing can be a tool to help financial managers realize the goal of better customer experience with the same IT dollars. Outsourcing makes this happen on two levels:

- **Reduction in capital expenditure (CapEx)** on equipment, infrastructure upgrades, and data center facilities.
- **Potential reallocation** of IT personnel from routine “keep the lights on” work to the development and deployment of agile, customer-facing systems.

This is easier said than done, of course. Outsourcing and reallocating IT staff can be challenging. However, it is possible to produce results in terms of business agility, revenue growth, and customer engagement if business managers collaborate closely with IT to make it happen. The first hurdle to get over is the traditional cost-center model of IT. IT is a cost center and there is no way around that fact. However, that doesn’t mean that IT has to be looked at as some kind of budget dragon that must be slayed at any cost.

IT budget dollars are not uniform. Some dollars go towards hardware, facilities, power, and cooling. Some dollars go to basic, required systems such as email and local area networks. Others go towards maintaining enterprise applications such as ERP. Others still go to new innovations, drivers of business agility, and enhanced customer experience. To get past the cost center model, financial managers should question how many IT budget dollars are going to where they can strategically benefit the business—without compromising on any of the core systems that make the whole organization tick.

UNDERSTANDING IT LABOR COSTS

The cost center model of IT finance views IT staff headcount and payroll as line items on a budget. It is not ideal for understanding what specific IT personnel actually do and what their value might be to the business. Consider the following example, which is typical for many mid-to-large sized American corporations. It takes the equivalent of five full-time employees (FTEs) to run an enterprise application that has multiple servers and complex database and storage requirements. As Table 1 shows, not all of the administrators are full time. While there are two dedicated FTEs working as server administrators and two more FTEs on the job as database administrators (DBAs), the network, storage and backup administrators are fractional. The storage administrator can handle the system with half of his or her time. Overall, it is as if five FTEs were responsible for handling the application.

For more information: <http://stories.rackspace.com/customers/data-morphosis/>

TABLE 1: TOTAL ANNUAL PAYROLL COST AND PERSON-HOURS FOR THE FIVE ADMINISTRATORS REQUIRED TO RUN AN ON-PREMISE SYSTEM WITH COMPLEX DATABASE AND STORAGE REQUIREMENTS.⁷

SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATION STAFF	NUMBER OF STAFF (FTES)	AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARY	FULLY-BURDENED COST PER ITEM	TOTAL ANNUAL COSTS	PERSON HOURS PER YEAR
Server administrators	2.00	\$83,385	\$110,485	\$220,970	3,600
Network and security administrators	0.40	\$83,385	\$110,485	\$44,194	720
Database administrators	2.00	\$93,195	\$123,483	\$246,967	3,600
Storage administrators	0.50	\$79,800	\$105,735	\$52,868	900
Backup administrators	0.10	\$67,000	\$88,775	\$8,878	180
Total	5.00	\$560,644	\$114,775	\$573,876	9,000

Table 1 shows what this system costs to run on an annual basis. The salary data is industry standard, based on Rackspace total cost of ownership (TCO) modeling process, which is derived from the Alinean® methodology. The server administrators earn a fully-allocated salary of \$220,970. The highly-paid DBAs earn \$246,967. If the DBA work were done by contractor, the cost might be as high as \$360,000 a year.⁸ The 1/10th backup administrators earns \$8,878 working 180 hours a year on the system. The IT staff budget for this system should also factor in training and recruiting of replacement workers based on turnover. The Alinean TCO process, as detailed in the Appendix would add \$34,650 for training and \$16,742 for turnover.

The total staff cost for this system is \$625,268 per year and the staff spends 9,000 person-hours per year running it. Is this a lot of money and time? Perhaps yes. Perhaps no. The system may be handling \$50 million a year in commercial transactions, so the staff cost might seem small. Still, is it the best use of those staff dollars and hours? Administration of a core system like this is a great example of IT “keeping the lights on.” It’s important work. The business can’t run without it, but it’s not necessarily advancing the strategic interests of the business. What else could those administrators and DBAs be doing with their time?

IT STAFF REALLOCATION: RELEASING THE POTENTIAL ENERGY OF INNOVATION

The IT staff that’s keeping the lights on in your business is packed with potential energy. There is a wealth of innovation and financial impact latent in the endless hours that IT staff spend on basic administrative duties. It is now possible to unlock this potential energy. Outsourcing of infrastructure and related moves enable you to reallocate IT staffing resources to projects that serve the strategic mission of the business.

To understand how outsourcing enables reallocation, consider what a server administrator does with an on-premise system. As Forrester analyst Richard Fichera points out in his article, “How Many Servers can Dance on the Head of an Administrator?”, the work schedule of a server administrator gets filled up with tasks that span the life cycle of a server. As shown in Figure 1, the server administrator’s workload is determined by how much work he or she needs to do to procure, configure, and install servers. Then, the provisioning of operating system and network takes additional time. Change management, application configuration and monitoring, storage provisioning, and so forth, fills up their time as well. The more intense the work, the less time the administrator has for other duties.

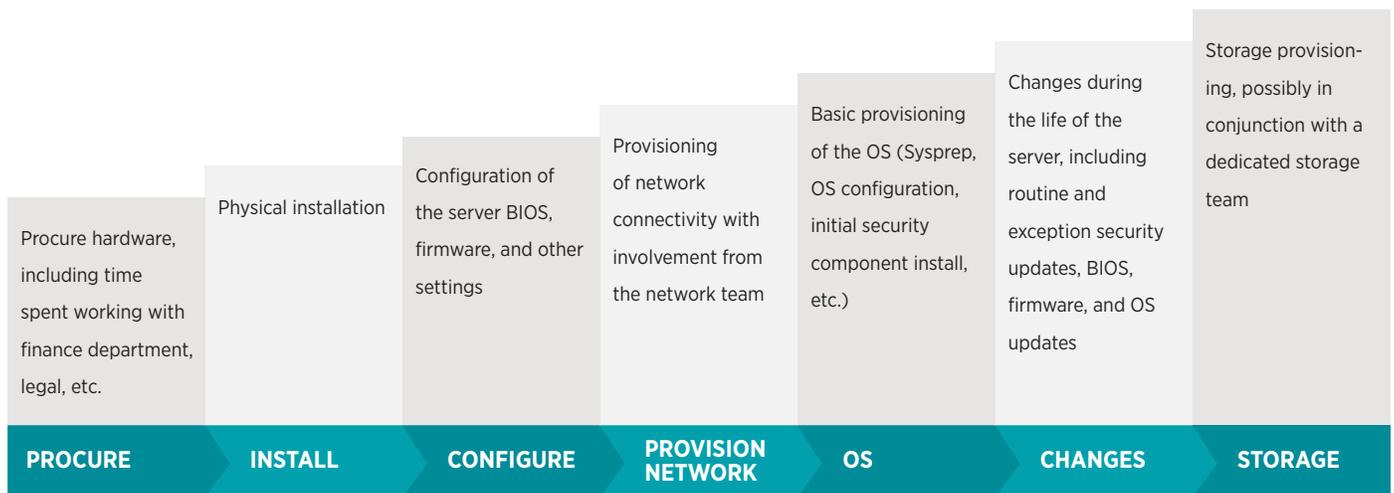


FIGURE 1: THE “SEVEN STEPS TO SERVER SUPPORT” FROM “HOW MANY SERVERS CAN DANCE ON THE HEAD OF AN ADMINISTRATOR?” –RICHARD FICHERA, FORRESTER RESEARCH, 2013.

Outsourcing removes some or all of these work tasks from the administrator’s schedule, as shown in Table 2. This is an estimate, shown for informational purposes. Specific results will depend on each client’s unique circumstances as well as how far up the stack the hosting provider is working. In general though, procurement, installation, BIOS, OS configuration, and network configuration drop off entirely. Other tasks become less time-consuming as the outsourced infrastructure provider takes over routine maintenance and lower-level administrator functions. Administrator hours per server per year drop from 355 to 72.

The specifics of the outsourcing might vary depending on business and technical factors.

TABLE 2: COMPARISON OF SERVER ADMINISTRATOR HOURS BEFORE AND AFTER OUTSOURCING OF INFRASTRUCTURE. (FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY)

	ON-PREMISE (HOURS PER YEAR)	OUTSOURCED (HOURS PER YEAR)
Procurement	10	0
Physical installation	20	0
Configuration of BIOS, firmware, etc.	20	0
Provisioning of network connectivity	5	0
Basic OS configuration	15	0
Changes to server configuration	100	10
Storage provisioning	10	2
Server monitoring	100	10
Application configuration ⁹	35	15
Application change management	40	35
Total hours	355	72

Table 3 shows how the staffing requirements for the system depicted in Table 2 would change after its hosting is outsourced. The specifics of the outsourcing might vary depending on business and technical factors. For example, the entire system could be migrated to a public cloud on virtual machines (VMs) with connections to public storage. That is probably not the likeliest move, however. The system could be transferred to a hosted private cloud that would prevent the underlying infrastructure from being shared by other entities. Alternatively, with the new [Rackspace Dedicated VMware® vCenter Server™](#) offering, the system could be ported to an outsourced hoster but remain part of the company's existing VMware vCenter administrative setup.

TABLE 3: TOTAL ANNUAL PAYROLL COST AND PERSON-HOURS AFTER INFRASTRUCTURE OUTSOURCING ALLOWS SYSTEM IT LABOR TO BE REALLOCATED. (FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY)

SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATION STAFF	NUMBER OF STAFF (FTES)	AVERAGE ANNUAL SALARY	FULLY-BURDENED COST PER FTE	TOTAL ANNUAL COSTS (YEAR 1)	PERSON HOURS PER YEAR
Server administrators	0.1	\$83,385	\$110,485	\$11,049	180
Network and security administrators	0.1	\$83,385	\$110,485	\$11,049	180
Database administrators	1	\$93,195	\$123,483	\$123,483	1,800
Storage administrators	0	\$79,800	\$105,735	\$ -	-
Backup administrators	0	\$67,000	\$88,775	\$ -	-
Total	1.2	\$91,560	\$121,317	\$145,580	\$2,160

The outsourcing, however, it's done, will have the effect of reducing the amount of administrative time and expense needed to keep the system running. It's not a complete elimination of administration on the client side. There is always some system management that needs to be performed, but the extent of it is dramatically lower. In this case, as Table 3 shows, after outsourcing, the system will need .1 FTEs for system administration and security and one FTE for database administration. The outsourcing provider takes care of the storage, backup, and network, as well as many basic "plumbing" aspects of database administration. With 1.2 FTEs now spending 2,160 hours a year running the system, the company can reallocate 6,840 hours of IT staff time to new projects.

MEASURING THE FINANCIAL IMPACT OF IT STAFF REALLOCATION

What are those 6,840 newly-recovered person-hours worth to the business? Setting aside intangibles, such as increased innovation and better team morale, it is possible to estimate the financial impact of staff reallocation in real dollars. If staff are taken off of "lights on" duty, they can be assigned to customer-facing, revenue-generating projects. When combined with the faster-moving deployment cycle made possible by outsourced infrastructure, the result is a dramatic increase in agility and related revenue.

Table 4 describes how an improvement in business agility, brought about by outsourcing infrastructure and staff reallocation, can result in increased revenue growth. Assuming that the company, which has just outsourced the infrastructure for its commercial system and now has 6,840 administrator hours to reallocate, plans to create and deploy 10 new customer-facing applications in a year. Each application has the potential to bring in \$5 million in net new revenue. Under the self-managed, on-premise approach to infrastructure, it would have taken 30 days to provision each application. In contrast, with infrastructure outsourcing, it now takes just two days to do the same work.

TABLE 4: THE REVENUE IMPACT OF INCREASED AGILITY, DRIVEN BY OUTSOURCING INFRASTRUCTURE, FASTER APPLICATION DEPLOYMENT CYCLES, AND STAFF REALLOCATION. (FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY)

SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATION STAFF	SELF-MANAGED ENVIRONMENT	PROPOSED HOSTED SOLUTION	EXPECTED BENEFITS WITH PROPOSED SOLUTION
New application projects per year	10	10	
Average system provision time per application (days)	30	2	\$110,485
Average annual revenue value per application	\$5,000,000	\$5,000,000	
Average lost revenue per system provisioning	\$410,959	\$27,397	\$383,562
Annual value of potential revenue losses due to system provisioning	\$4,109,589	\$273,973	\$3,835,616
Net incremental contribution	25%	25%	25%
Annual incremental margin contribution	\$1,027,397	\$68,493	\$958,904

The financial payback from this increase in agility occurs on two levels:

- The five-person team liberated from “lights on” duty can easily handle the hours required to provision the new applications under the outsourcing scenario. Whereas it would take 12,000 person-hours to provision 10 applications on-premise, it takes just 800 hours with outsourcing. (10 applications X 8 Hours a day X 5 staff X 30 days = 12,000 hours).
- As Table 4 shows, bringing each new system online 28 days earlier than would have been possible on-premise, puts the company into positive revenue territory a lot faster. The financial benefit of this speed-up in application deployment can be measured in revenue dollars. The faster deployment brings in \$3.8 million in extra revenue, which translates into \$958,904 in additional gross margin. Faster time to market is a strategic benefit that usually translates into greater revenue, earnings, and sustained competitive advantage.



CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY: JORDAN LAWRENCE

Jordan Lawrence develops records management and information governance programs for companies of all sizes, helping them comply with records retention and privacy laws while reducing their information management costs and risks.

The company wanted to find a hosting provider to facilitate delivery of their unique SaaS services to customers worldwide. The goal was to focus Jordan Lawrence's team on their core, strategic competencies while relying on a trusted partner with specific infrastructure expertise. The challenge was to host their service in an environment that met their stringent security and compliance standards.

Jordan Lawrence moved its SaaS service to Rackspace's Managed Cloud, combined with server virtualization powered by VMware. They are also using hosted Microsoft® Exchange and Microsoft SharePoint®.

Jordan Lawrence now has a scalable platform that allows them to serve customers in an environment that is secure enough to pass the most stringent information security audits and meets SSAE16 standards.

"Knowing that Rackspace keeps our data and our customers' data secure allows Jordan Lawrence to focus on our core business strengths, which has had a profoundly positive impact on our business."

—Executive VP of Technology,
Jordan Lawrence Exchange

There are several other ways to quantify the financial benefits to the combination of outsourcing and IT staff reallocation. It is possible to estimate the return on investment (ROI) for the reallocated IT staff time. The time is worth \$475,203 (76% of \$625,268). The ROI is 117% on the outlay for staff hour—hours that were already being paid for to “keep the lights on.” Now, those hours are adding to the bottom line. On the cost side, outsourcing helps cut the expense required to provision the new, revenue-generating applications. The average fully allocated administrator cost is \$63.76 per person-hour. Shaving 28 days off of deployment with a five-person team translates to a cost savings of \$71,411 per application that is provisioned.

CONCLUSION: STAYING COST-FOCUSED WHILE MOVING BEYOND THE COST CENTER

Our new era of technological promise in business is an opportune moment to rethink the people costs of IT. It's a moment to go beyond the traditional cost center model of IT and look at the value of IT staff resources, not just their costs. You have new ways of managing your IT spend. New alternatives, such as infrastructure outsourcing, promise to liberate talented IT staff from routine “keep the lights on” sorts of work. Instead, it is possible to reallocate IT staff to much-needed work on new customer-facing, revenue-generating applications. Outsourcing can also help with one of today's biggest challenges: Discovering the most profitable way to invest your IT budget, achieving the best financial return on human capital. Indeed, investing in the people who make effective customer-facing technology is proving to be essential for strategic advantage and financial rewards. It's time to take a fresh look at the people costs of IT.

As one of the largest VMware Service Provider Program (VSPP) partners, Rackspace has expert VMware Certified Professionals available and experience that comes with managing over 45,000 VMs. To find out more how Rackspace can help you have the most profitable and innovative investment in your IT budget, call 800-961-2888.

For more information: <http://stories.rackspace.com/customers/jordan-lawrence/>

APPENDICES

TRAINING COSTS FOR ADMINISTRATOR TEAM (FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY)

SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATION STAFF	NUMBER OF STAFF (FTES)	AVERAGE HOURS OF TRAINING PER YEAR	AVERAGE ANNUAL COURSE FEES AND EXPENSES	TOTAL ANNUAL TRAINING COSTS
Server administrators	2.00	80.00	\$7,000	\$14,000
Network and security administrators	0.40	80.00	\$7,000	\$2,800
Database administrators	2.00	80.00	\$7,000	\$14,000
Storage administrators	0.50	80.00	\$7,000	\$3,500
Backup administrators	0.10	40.00	\$3,500	\$350
Total	5.00	396.00		\$34,650

TURNOVER COSTS (FOR INFORMATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY)

NUMBER OF IT SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATION STAFF	5.00	
Average annual turnover rate for IT staff	15%	
Number of new IT staff per year	0.75	
Average annual fully-burdened salary	\$86,623	
Average recruitment cost per position	\$17,325	20%
Average on-boarding period for IT staff	3.00	weeks
On-boarding costs	\$4,997	
Total annual IT staff turnover costs (Year 1)	\$16,742	

ABOUT RACKSPACE

Rackspace® (NYSE: RAX) is the global leader in hybrid cloud and founder of OpenStack®, the open-source operating system for the cloud. Hundreds of thousands of customers look to Rackspace to deliver the best-fit infrastructure for their IT needs, leveraging a product portfolio that allows workloads to run where they perform best—whether on the public cloud, private cloud, dedicated servers, or a combination of platforms. The company's award-winning Fanatical Support® helps customers successfully architect, deploy

and run their most critical applications. Headquartered in San Antonio, TX, Rackspace operates data centers on four continents. Rackspace is featured on Fortune's list of 100 Best Companies to Work For.

For more information, visit www.rackspace.com

NOTES

- 1 : McKinsey Center for Business Technology, "Perspectives on Digital Business," January 2012
- 2 : Ibid
- 3 : http://blogs.forrester.com/katyayan_gupta/14-02-13-build_mobile_systems_of_engagement_to_thrive_in_the_age_of_the_customer
- 4 : Fenwick, Nigel, "Winning the Customer Experience Game" – Forrester Research - 2013
- 5 : Rymer, John, "The Age of the Customer Changes Everything" - Forrester Research – 2013
- 6 : Forrester ALM Survey, Q1 2013
- 7 : Alinean TCO model
- 8 : <http://www.indeed.com/salary/Oracle-Database-Administrator.html>
- 9 : Based on Rackspace's client experience with its Critical Application Services

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