THE TOP 10 ISSUES FACING MANAGERS OF DBAs

And how outsourcing your DBA function, even partially, is almost always the most cost-effective and reliable way of optimising performance.

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OVERVIEW
POINTS OF DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTION

In our guide, Reasons to Outsource your DBA Function, we highlighted the perennial issue of hiring highly skilled in-house DBAs. It's expensive, and they inevitably end up dealing with routine requests and system issues that could be dealt with by general IT staff.

Your DBA function is essential for the minimisation of risk associated with data loss, hardware breakdowns, network failures, cyber-attacks, and power outages. Failing to guard against these risks quickly lead to loss of business, damage to reputation, and heavy fines for breaches of legislation.

This is why, amongst other reasons, outsourcing to dedicated Database Experts is almost always the most cost-effective and reliable way of optimising business performance. You can even outsource to assist or upskill your internal DBAs.

To prove this, we highlighted the most common issues faced by managers of internal DBAs - and how outsourcing can help.

1. THE NEED FOR 24/7 COVERAGE

Database disasters don't run on a clock. At any point, it could fail, suffer a cyber security breach, or experience a range of other serious issues. In these situations, a rapid response is paramount.

But this isn't always possible with an internal team. They may be on holiday or otherwise engaged outside of their contracted hours. In any case, calling a DBA in the middle of the night or forcing them to rearrange holidays plans is a catalyst for aggravation and resentment.

Outsourcing DBA services for out-of-hours can greatly reduce the burden on your internal team. A well-organised outsourced team will take the time to learn as much as possible about your systems, so that they can provide ad-hoc support when required.

Relieving the pressure your internal DBA team reduces stress and allows them to focus on areas which put their deep skills and knowledge to good use.

2. RECRUITMENT OF HIGH QUALITY DBAs

The IT skills shortage in the UK is well-documented. Extend this to the highly specialised role that DBAs perform and the problem is compounded further.

Because of this, those with comprehensive database knowledge, and a proven ability, command very high salaries. Because if you don't pay them, another organisation will, such is the demand.

Another challenge is the lack of time available to ensure your in-house DBA develops their skills, due to the rigours of daily maintenance. Failure to nurture these skills could cause your DBA to leave. Plus, if your DBA team is not afforded the time to learn the latest skills, your organisation may find itself at a disadvantage.

An outsourced team can provide essential database services during your search for candidates with ideal credentials, and even help to train new employees. At Xynomix, all of our DBAs are equipped with the latest knowledge which in turn empowers the businesses we support.

3. EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

Even after you've managed to identify and recruit a suitable full-time DBA, retention remains an ongoing issue.

Given the relative shortage of DBA talent, it's quite likely that your competitors will attempt to lure the top talent with offers of increased salaries and career development. Departing DBAs are also likely to leave a significant gap in terms of knowledge and productivity.

Outsourcing may be the only option for the plugging of this gap in the short-medium term.

In addition to the 24/7 support and management of varying workloads, a third-party DBA team provides a safeguard against unexpected internal changes. The arrangement of outsourced DBA services may also allow you to grant established staff members greater flexibility.

4. GAPS IN TECHNICAL KNOWLEDGE

The increasing complexity of database technology means that there's a far higher chance of your DBAs running into major, seemingly insurmountable, problems.

Perhaps there's a need for enhanced encryption or the integration of new cyber-security software. A significant training investment may be required in order to suitably increase the knowledge of your internal DBAs.

The third-party DBA provider will be able to draw on a range of expertise and provide support beyond the immediate scope of your internal team. You might be particularly thankful for the expanded support, if you routinely use Oracle databases but require the exclusive use of an SQL Server database, for example.

It will cost far less to arrange dedicated third-party support than to recruit and train a brand new staff member to work exclusively in the SQL environment.

5. DEVELOPMENT & INTEGRATION OF NEW DATABASE PLATFORMS

The provision of round-the-clock support and handling of routine database maintenance tends to leave in-house DBAs with very little time for professional development.

However the rate of change within database technology means that they could be left behind. Not only is this frustrating for your DBAs - it's also not in your organisation's interest.

Perhaps your internal staff have a sound knowledge of relational database management systems (RDMS), but this knowledge might not extend to Apache Hadoop or other open source platforms required for effective data assessment and analysis.

Offloading of routine database tasks to an outsourced team gives your established staff members increased opportunity for the investigation of new technologies. You can also rely on third-party DBAs for specialist assistance in the use of new platforms and the transition of data.

6.LACK OF CAPACITY FOR PROACTIVE ACTION

A lack of capacity means that the adoption of automated technologies and improvement of existing documentation may have to be set aside in favour of emergency tuning, patching, and issue resolution.

This lack of proactivity means an unfortunate downturn in overall efficiency and productivity for your business.

This is where co-managed outsourcing truly finds its value. An outsourced DBA team frees up your internal team to focus their attention on fulfilling long-term requirements - adding further value to the role they perform for your business.

The assurance of third-party support, guarantees that your full-time team has more time for proactive data analysis and data mining in coordination with other departments, for example.

Such proactive focus will allow for the streamlining of business operations and efficiency-gains.

7. RELIANCE ON THE TECHNICAL SUPPORT OF SOFTWARE VENDORS

It is quite unusual for support for the use of software to be included under the terms of vendor contracts. Such support is typically deemed "training", only to be provided on additional payment. The amounts charged may be considered prohibitive in addition to the price of the standard software package.

The knowledge and skills of in-house DBAs is usually such that they don't require support in use of the software. However, cover may have to be arranged in the event of major system maintenance or repair. Colleagues may also be required to assist in the generation of ideas for database enhancement.

The outsourced DBAs will be on hand for the provision of support not covered under the vendor contracts. They will assist in the resolution of troubleshooting issues, configuration questions, and other means of support which would otherwise have to be paid for separately.

Third-party DBAs may also work in collaboration with the vendors to address bugs and patching issues; leaving your in-house team with more time for the management of business data.

8. FLUCTUATING WORKLOADS

It is common for businesses to have a range of data requirements across different departments, with a lack of clear coordination.

This often results in a considerably stark variation in workload from one day to the next for DBAs. This inevitably means that some projects must be shelved as a result, despite workload organisation and prioritisation.

Deploying an outsourced DBA team on hand enables the option for additional support as and when required.

Their ability to work across multiple projects at once, performing key operational tasks and ensuring your estate is running efficiently, reduces the immediate pressure on your internal staff.

This allows you to put their expertise to best use.

"68% of DBAs manage between 11-500 database instances."

Spotlight Cloud

9. CHANGING SKILL REQUIREMENTS

DBAs are often hired for the fulfillment of immediate needs.

As an example, you might hire an Oracle expert for the effective management of schema objects including tables, indexes, and views.

Alternatively you might employ a Microsoft SQL specialist for the transition of an SQL database from offline to online. However, there's no guarantee that your specialist DBA will be as effective in the resolution of other issues.

With a full team of experts in different fields, outsourcing your DBA function guarantees a full range of database skill requirements.

This addresses any technical issues that might be beyond the scope of your internal team. Plus, some external database management companies, such as Xynomix, offer training and guidance for the development of your internal team.
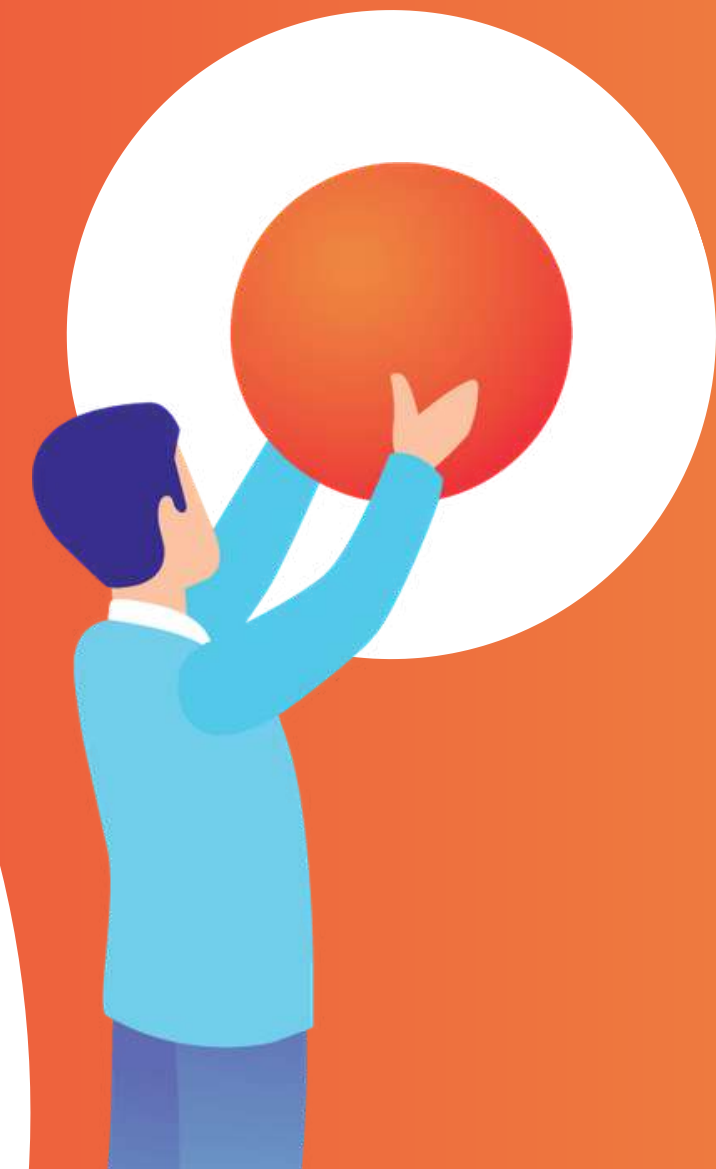
10. SHORTAGE OF TIME FOR THE RESOLUTION OF CHRONIC ISSUES

Chronic issues can and will negatively impact the efficiency and effectiveness of your database systems.

Temporary solutions may be found for the maintenance of business-as-usual in the short-medium term. However, a significant investment of time and finance may be required for a full resolution.

A third-party DBA services provider will almost certainly have access to the resources necessary for an in-depth investigation and fixing of chronic problems.

Alternatively, there's the option of enlisting the regular day-to-day support which will allow your in-house team to properly get to grips with such issues.

"72% of DBAs says managing database performance is their most important responsibility"
Spotlight Cloud

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