



MISS, WHERE'S THE RESTROOM?

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How many times have you looked anxiously around for a sign – any sign – that might lead to you to somewhere or someone who could provide you with an urgent answer to a vexing question?

When's the next plane leaving? I can't find my size? What have you done with my car? How can I pay this bill....?

It's surprising, but very few companies seem to realise that "communication" is the key to satisfying customer demands. It's also central to gaining more of them – customers, that is - over time.

But what is the secret to good communications? Is it technology?

Many companies have adopted so-called "state-of-the-art" information communication technology (ICT) solutions in order to improve their interaction with customers and hopefully their service levels too.

After all, it does seem that technology is all-pervasive these days. I mean, where would we be without our broadband Internet connections, Blackberry enabled cell phones and wireless home networks?

But is ICT providing the answers that customers need from their suppliers? And is ICT controlling the business processes that are central to delivering business value?

Perhaps it's time for a different approach?

For companies who are blinded by technology – and caught up in a hardware and software spiral – it's time to take control. "Management" should be the new watchword.

More specifically..... the management of technology.

To achieve this, some sort of link needs to be found between the business processes and the technology enabling these processes.

An improved relationship between technology and end user has, up to now, been as likely an improved relationship between Mike Tyson and Evander Holyfield.

But it is possible.

Those in the know are talking about a "fusion in the business-Information-communication-technology interface".



Let me translate that for you

What they're saying is it's possible for business decision-makers and technology boffins to both take a step back, put pride in their pockets and find some common ground upon which to improve service levels for the customer – you and me, and millions more like us.

"They need to take a service-centred approach," say the consultants.

Too many companies view service management as an internal issue that only technology can fix. They don't understand that service management is about assessing business issues, adapting to requirements and managing business expectations to ensure technology aligns with business strategy.

Does this mean that all companies need to metamorphosize into service-orientated organisations?

To a certain extent it does. Services should be linked to business objectives and be managed appropriately to provide real business value.

Unfortunately, this change could come with a problem. In future company ICT specialists will also have to have experience in service management.

This "new breed" will have to facilitate the interface between business and technology. They have to be skilled enough to translate business objectives into software, hardware and infrastructure requirements.

Where can these people be found? Do they exist?

There is little doubt that corporate South Africa is experiencing a dire need for staff with a good all-round knowledge of methods, software and technology blended with an understanding of service delivery.

The good news is they can be found, in growing numbers, in a quiet corner of the computer industry that focuses on ITIL – the Information Technology Infrastructure Library - and the service management techniques associated with this discipline.

Today, ITIL has evolved from a recommended best practice suite of activities to a global industry "given" for aligning IT services with business requirements.

Those associated with ITIL platform are able to create a framework within which IT objectives can be predetermined and best practice techniques applied to ensure long term business success.

ITIL also facilitates the monitoring of the results and the fine-tuning of business strategies along the way.

One of the keys to ITIL's success is its ability to delegate responsibilities and authorities to different players within an organisation - such as the board of directors, business and IT managers. Another is the ease with which students can be trained and sent out into the business world as ITIL specialists.



Today, ITIL training programmes address the “ten commandments” of ITIL which include “service support” processes such as Service Desk Management and the processes of Incident Management, Problem Management, Configuration Management, Change Management and Release Management.

Then there are the “service delivery” processes such as Capacity Management, Availability Management, Service Level Management, IT Service Continuity, Financial Management and Information Security Management for IT Services.

For successful ITIL students, there are certification programmes available to underline their proficiencies and abilities to work within the boundaries of technology disciplines and business processes.

What’s the bottom line?

Companies with ITIL skills will ensure that they not only provide best-in-class IT services for their customers, but that these are translated into measurable business delivery metrics that deliver sustainable value through the synergy of people, processes and technology.

With ITIL support, companies will be able to answer the vexing questions asked of them because technology will have adapted to their business requirements - and not the other way around, as in the past.

ITIL methodologies will give them the ability to examine their business processes and understand and measure them to gain true value.

In other words, the question of how to pay the bill will be taken care of well in advance of the need for its asking. Now, where’s that restroom?

Jürgen Müller is a director of Quintica, the local supplier of Marval IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) based service management solutions.

EDITORIAL CONTACTS

Quintica

Charles Osburn
(011) 575 4320
charles.osburn@quintica.co.za

HMC Seswa Corporate Communication

Christy McMeekin
(011) 704 6618
christy@hmcswa.co.za