Absence of the Human Element in Information Technology Management

The technological advancements in hardware and software development, of the past decade, have assisted many organizations in improving their utilization and management of information. At the same time, these hardware and software advances far outpace the development of the human element.

Today despite the availability of advanced and relatively inexpensive information technologies, many organizations are still facing the challenge of how to manage the human aspect of information systems. One can reason that management’s overemphasis on both the hardware and software components has kept them too occupied to recognize and develop the human element. It is about time for management to devote the necessary attention to developing information systems which can be utilized by the masses and not a few computer experts.

Furthermore, it can be argued that this lack of adequate emphasis on the human element has forced many organizations to have only a limited use for this technology. Organizations in general still spend only a very small fraction of the total systems costs on programs dealing directly with human resources training and development. This deficiency in information technology training is made evident by the low growth level in the training industry as compared to the phenomenal growth in the hardware and software industries. The result is a tremendous gap between the implementation of emerging technologies and the full and effective utilization of all related resources. By neglecting to address the needs of the technology users, organizations are failing to realize the optimal utilization of their information technology resources.

One common pitfall and a major obstacle to improving this situation is that most organizations make the mistake of hiring technologist to solve human problems, needs, etc. This practice causes an overoccupation with the technical elements at a cost to the human element and has prevented many IT managers from integrating IT innovations into organizational functions. It is sad that in many organizations, IT is still viewed as a resource used only for number crunching tasks, ignoring the fact that this technology should be treated as the most important resource of the organization - INFORMATION RESOURCES.

Dealing with the related issues of the human element perspective of information technology requires a tremendous dedication on behalf of all parties involved (IT managers, training specialists, researchers, and educators). In particular, IT educators should begin instructing future IT managers to think like the end user. They should be trained to understand all aspects of human involvement related to this technology and recognize this interaction as important to the technology itself. The point is that technology is only a tool in the hand of its user. Realistically, the technology should be adjusted toward the needs of the user not the other way around!

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