Foreword

The management of IT systems is a subject with a history spanning almost 40 years; yet it is not a subject well known to business leaders. System administration is considered to be a technical subject, too low level for consideration by businesses. That perception is beginning to change today, largely due to an awareness of the services provided in the so-called public cloud. It is a perception that has to change in order for businesses to exploit the benefits of online services safely and economically.

This book presents some of those issues and challenges faced by businesses in the context of the IT landscape today. It offers managers an opportunity to understand some of the technical challenges presented by their IT systems at a conceptual level.

As online services become an essential backbone to businesses of all kinds, the infrastructure behind those businesses becomes an increasingly important part of the value chain. That means leaders need to get on board and understand IT services at a level where they can utilize infrastructure in a strategic role. The authors in this volume have covered some of those challenges here, and I add only a few simple words of encouragement to both sides of the business-IT divide, to build the bridge between technology and business and usher in the third wave of information technology.

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Mark Burgess is professor of Network and System Administration at Oslo University College. He was the first professor with this title. Mark obtained a PhD in Theoretical Physics in Newcastle, for which he received the Runcorn Prize. His current research interests include the behaviour of computers as dynamic systems and applying ideas from physics to describe computer behaviour. Mark is the author of the popular configuration management software package Cfengine and is the founder, chairman, and CTO of the Cfengine company. He led theoretical and practical contributions to the theory of automation and policy-based management, including the idea of Operator Convergence and Promise Theory. He is the author of numerous books and papers on Network and System Administration and has won several prizes for his work.