Chapter VI

The Management Conversation - It Still Needs To Make Sense

Here’s what we’ll discuss here:

• Measurement – or do you know where your computers, processes and skeletons are? Without benchmark data it’s impossible to converge anything: measure or fly blind.

• The standardization of your computing and communications technology. If people want to buy non-standard, non-supported hardware or software make them pay for their own support. Watch three infrastructure levels: access, coordination and resource, and measure everything so you know what works and what doesn’t, and what things cost.

• Outsourcing, or the love/hate relationship you should have with the people inside that are good/bad and the people you hire from the outside who are good/bad/expensive/cost-effective, and why you should outsource only to partners willing to share risk.

• Funding, or figuring out who pays for what at your company, and dealing with the inevitable conflicts between the “enterprise” and business units.

• Return-on-investment (ROI) and total-cost-of-ownership (TCO), the “I-see-no-compelling-reason-at-all-to-fund-this-project” twins – who really are your friends (so long as they stay on their medication).
• Business Cases, or the “OK-I-guess-we-have-to-do-this-one” police.
• Project/Program/Portfolio Management – the once-and-always business technology management champ.
• Governance – or the way we decide how to organize ourselves, regulate ourselves, comply with regulations and legislation and otherwise tell ourselves what to do.

You Still Think So?

We’ve talked about organization structure in Chapter V, so let’s talk here about some business technology convergence management priorities. Let’s stipulate that the practice of business technology management is seldom as “professional” as it ought to be. On the one hand, we know exactly what to do – and not do – but on the other hand, we seldom do what we know is right. For example, we don’t always develop solid business cases for large technology investments. Nor do we measure the variation in our computing and communications technology environments in order to standardize as much gear as we can. Nor do we insist upon project management best practices. Our total-cost-of-ownership (TCO) data is often incomplete and we tilt with windmills on the importance of return-on-investment (ROI) calculations, not to mention all the flavors of ROI and TCO methods we like. We don’t require our vendors to share risk and our partner management skills are far from adequate. Why am I whining? Remember that the probability of a successful technology project is somewhere around 25%.

You still think you can manage?

How Much Do You Know?

Let’s start with the basics. How much do you know about your business technology? Why is it so important to know what you have, how you get it, what you do and how you keep it all going? Years ago someone asked me where we disposed of the machines that we upgraded out of existence. I did not know the answer, so I began asking around. Turns out that we actually “stored” some of the obsolete machines in the drop ceilings of our offices. Intrigued, I then...
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