The Expert's Opinion

An interview with
Lewis Temares
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Interview by Beth Green
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Dr. Temares is the Vice President and Dean of the College of Engineering at the University of Miami. He has degrees from CUNY, Columbia University and City University Graduate Center (Ph.D.). He has published in numerous national publications, delivered papers at a variety of national conferences and has consulted for both government and corporations.

IRMJ: How is the concept of centralized management different in your IS department?

Temares: We have an integrated database management system. One of the things that people talk about in terms of client server is the accessibility of the information they need and the ability to utilize the data as knowledge they want to exhibit to others. Since we have an integrated database management system, we already have the data and the ability to access the data. The question that we have with regard to our systems and with regard to our distributed customers is “How can we make it easier for them to get the data in a format they need so that they can utilize it to perform their job better? There are a couple of things involved. First, we make sure that anybody can access the network. Our responsibility on the network is to take anybody regardless of type of equipment. With this mentality, we have found that very often the kind of people that go off on their own (distributed computing with a midsize computer) no longer want to operate independently. What they are now doing is creating their own local area network and a local server. Typically they are not uploading the data themselves but only accessing flat files in a report writing mechanism.

We have found that some academic units are similar to some business units which thought they would take over running their own computing operations because the central unit charged too much overhead for the performance. However, in the event of a catastrophe they quickly realize they have to be computing center directors and they are just not equipped to act in this role. First of all, most often in an academic environment the person responsible for computing in a unit such as that described is usually either a faculty member who does this on the side or graduate students, here this year and maybe gone next year. Therefore, there is no one mentally dedicated and who has a true interest financially to run these networks. The disaster recovery on the network is very often neglected when a catastrophe occurs. Instead of finding an outsourcer to handle the limited operation, many units are turning to insourcing. The management mentality is now saying “We are working in partnership and let’s see what it takes to get the job done”. The business school here is an example. One full–time person who is a regular employee of the central computing area is dedicated to the school of business. The business school is responsible for the salary of this individual but in return they have a person dedicated to their operation. This allows the business faculty time to do their own faculty work, research work, and the kinds of work they are good at without the worries of their operating network.

IRMJ: What are the major managerial issues regarding information technology management in your organization?

Temares: One of the most important issues is selecting the right technology for the right job. Secretaries using WordPerfect do not need pentium chips in their machines. And more and more, because it is on the desk in the next office does not mean that the person has to have that type of computer. The evaluation of the technology necessary to do the job is critical.
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