Chapter 14
Evaluation, Management, and Support

Dane Conrad
Forrest County School District, USA

ABSTRACT

A technology leader’s day-to-day responsibilities and tasks can be divided into three basic categories: evaluation, management, and support. Evaluation involves making informed decisions and planning tasks when considering new technologies. Management not only maintains the infrastructure of technology systems, but also the data that flows through the system. Finally, support covers the responsibilities related to customer service for the technology leaders’ end-user environment. Each category poses a unique challenge to technology leaders and requires them to be both adaptable and consistent. This chapter explores these three areas giving detailed insights into topics and concerns within each.

INTRODUCTION

While other chapters in this book discuss broad topics and general discussions of technology leadership, this chapter provides information on more day-to-day responsibilities dealing with technology directly. This chapter focuses on the three aspects of a technology leader’s role and responsibilities concerning evaluation, management, and support that are constantly ongoing, consistently required, and core to the successful performance of his or her duties. These three terms are high-level descriptors of the day-to-day processes that technology leaders oversee. Evaluation is discussed as a result of consideration of important factors when dealing with several present-day technologies or scenarios. Trying to decide between two similar products like the currently popular Apple iPad or Android-based Motorola Xoom requires that technology leaders research
and compare the product’s pros and cons specifically in relation to their institution. Likewise, once the technology is evaluated and implemented, the technology leader is now charged with operating and maintaining the technology so that it provides a stable usability for end-users whether administrative, instructional, or student. Management of technology often requires the technology leader to not only gain special skills (or hire individuals with the skills), but also to strategize efficient monitoring and troubleshooting approaches in order to prevent potential problems or resolve existing issues. In relation to this management role, technology support is discussed and options are given for strategies in dealing with this aspect of technology leadership.

EVALUATION OF RELEVANT TECHNOLOGIES

Successful technology leaders implement technologies only after careful consideration and evaluation. In best case scenarios, the technology leader is able to establish a working test lab environment, garner demonstration copies of software or hardware units, complete an extended test of normal or expected user interaction over time, allow small sample of users to experiment with the technology, and then make an informed decision about whether to go forward with implementation or to look for another solution. Many times however, this scenario is not fully possible due to upper administration timelines, availability of test equipment, or lack of staff expertise. In spite of these challenges, there are many traditional factors to consider in the evaluation process. Common evaluation factors to consider in evaluating a solution include:

- **Total Cost of Ownership (TCO):** What are the hidden costs like having to upgrade existing server hardware or operating system, technical training, required peripherals, and proprietary components?
- **Fulfills Discovered Instructional or Administrative Need:** Does the technology actually do what people need that technology to do (when and how)?
- **Integration into Existing Authentication Scheme (Active Directory, Open Directory):** Will the technology allow for the existing user database to be incorporated for rights management, drive mapping, directory syncing, etc.?
- **Compatibility with Main Instructional or Administrative Software Applications or Hardware:** Will the new application run on existing hardware or will the new hardware run existing software?
- **Recommendations/Feedback from Existing Users in other Districts or Businesses:** What do other organizations who already use the technology say about its performance?
- **Availability of the Product During the Time Frame Needed:** Will the technology leader be able to obtain the item during a specific time frame that fits into the implementation or project management plans?
- **Ease of Use:** How much training will be necessary for new users to incorporate the technology efficiently?
- **Warranty/Support Mechanisms:** How will the user or administrator obtain or acquire timely support (e.g., phone, online documentation, onsite engineer, chat)?

Weighing all these factors, hopefully, does not totally fall onto the shoulders of the technology leader, but instead becomes a committee task at some level. In best-case scenarios, personnel from involved institutional departments, community members (where appropriate,) and other stakeholders provide some assistance and input into the evaluation process. Ground-level participation in evaluation and adoption processes provides
Related Content

Actor-Network Theory as a Socio-Technical Approach to Information Systems Research
www.igi-global.com/chapter/actor-network-theory-socio-technical/29331?camid=4v1a

The Interplay Between Human and Structure in IT Strategy
www.igi-global.com/article/the-interplay-between-human-and-structure-in-it-strategy/114593?camid=4v1a

New Trends and Futuristic Information Communication Technologies for Engineering Education
www.igi-global.com/article/new-trends-futuristic-information-communication/47382?camid=4v1a

#ConnectedYouthBrazil Research: Emerging Literacies in a Hyperconnected Society
www.igi-global.com/chapter/connectedyouthbrazil-research-emerging-literacies-in-a-hyperconnected-society/138032?camid=4v1a