



Transforming Corporate Culture through IT

by Steve Tilkens, DSA Technologies, Inc.

Meet John. John is an IT Professional. John does not enjoy interacting with people. Meet Jane. Jane is a Chief Financial Officer. Jane does not enjoy interacting with technology. John and Jane both work at XYZ Corporation, an engineering firm that consists of 75 employees. Jane has several hours ahead of her entering data into an Excel spreadsheet which then needs to be manipulated and entered into the accounting system; however, she is unable to open any applications—including her e-mail. Jane calls John for assistance but he does not feel like answering so she leaves a message. John checks his voicemail and decides to e-mail Jane telling her to reboot and let him know if that corrects the issue, but then he leaves for the day. Let us not forget that Jane cannot open her e-mail application! Does this sound familiar?

Scenarios like the one above are not uncommon in the workplace today. Bridging the gap between IT and the rest of the organization starts with a change in IT corporate culture. Let us take a step back and look at what IT is. Information Technology is the development, implementation, and maintenance of computer hardware and software systems to organize and communicate information electronically. In many organizations the role of IT stops once the basic business technologies are implemented such as e-mail, file sharing, printing, and desktop systems. At this point, the focus of IT turns to maintenance of these systems and nothing more. While this approach is adequate for some organizations and appears to have become the norm, a clear disconnect exists between IT and the rest of the organization.

It is my belief that the role of IT should include all the things mentioned above in addition to many other critical functions that will ensure the success of the organization. I typically make it a priority to periodically sit with business users and ask them to show me how they do their job so that I can get a sense of the challenges they encounter. It is not until I understand how a job is being done, and for what purpose, that I can make recommendations for improvement. Once I know their challenges, I can suggest ways to improve or even solve them by utilizing software/hardware technologies. An important role of IT is to be aware of, and understand, the value of new technology solutions available in the marketplace. If a new technology solution can solve a significant business challenge then additional research and evaluation is justified. Making the jobs of business users more efficient through the use of technology is crucial to organizations not only for productivity purposes, but also for allowing more time spent on important tasks and career development. A thorough understanding of what an organization provides its clients (products or services) is essential in developing strategic IT goals for driving business development.

When new business users begin their career at an organization, I enjoy working with them on their first day to not only show them the basics of the organization from a technology standpoint, but also to assist with how to use the software applications they will be using every day. Offering keyboard shortcuts, tips, and tricks can make their job easier as well as reassure them to know that you truly do care and are available if help is needed. It is easy for IT professionals to forget that most users have not been using these applications as long as they have; and more importantly, most users do not enjoy using technology in general. Imagine the amount of productivity that can be achieved when users know how to efficiently use the applications that drive their day. An IT welcome package for new users is an invaluable tool that I have used with success for many years. The welcome packages I have developed for my clients explain how different technologies in the organization are used, different methods for engaging the assistance of IT, and IT policies which helps set expectations of new users early in their career.

Corporate culture has a direct impact on the overall success of an organization. The implementation of internal strategic IT initiatives is the catalyst for achieving that corporate culture. The integration of younger generations in the workplace has led to an increased need for internal social media avenues for collaboration and communication of knowledge. Technology can provide the medium for these social interactions – whether for collaboration or training purposes. Online training methods ranging from video to interactive sessions helps cater to the different ways people learn and absorb knowledge and leads to career development. An intranet site provides the company with a “voice” – a place where employees can learn about each other, success stories, employee recognitions, and overall business direction. Connecting employees to one another through technology enhances the company morale and leads to increased employee satisfaction.

John’s attitude from the scenario above should not have been “leave me alone”, but “challenge me to improve your job with technology”. IT organizations should make it clear that they have an open-door policy and users are encouraged to come to them for help when needed. A proactive attitude within IT is essential for solving business challenges that users do not even realize exist. As an IT consultant, I do not get excited about new technology; I get excited about how new technology can solve business problems. I start every day with one question in mind, “What business challenges can I solve for my clients today?” The philosophies and methods mentioned above will lead to a change in corporate culture within an organization and are the essence of what “Business Vision. Technology Focus” embodies.

Steve Tilkens

DSA Technologies, Inc.

Business Vision. Technology Focus.

Maritime Office Plaza | 2372 Maritime Drive | Elk Grove, CA 95758

Office 916.567.4444 | Direct 916.753.1132 | Fax 916.567.4440