

ITAnalysis - Task 1: Adopt simple but effective process

By Rob Bamforth, Principal Analyst, Quocirca Ltd

Often the simplest approach yields the best results. A little while ago a study in hospitals in the UK found that one procedure was having a dramatic positive effect. Did it involve complex technology and years of painstaking theoretical research? Not really, it was a checklist that asked two basic questions – is this the right patient, is this the correct organ/limb/procedure? It might seem a bit simplistic and too obvious, but the moment's thought to stop, check and, crucially for audit purposes, make a record of that simple process has many benefits – not the least of which is improving the outcome for the patient.

The alternative, which one might imagine being proposed by the IT industry, could have been somewhat different. It would need months of meetings, big spending on external consultants and would have led to an all-embracing project on the 'best-of breed' (aka most expensive) hardware. Suitable effort would have been placed on ensuring the return on investment case stacked up, or at least that the blame could be easily dumped on the external consultants when it all inevitably went wrong. It's not whether you win or lose, but how you place the blame.

Once the system was deployed, the use of appropriate key performance indicators (KPIs) and service level agreements (SLAs) would then show that all the objectives of the project had been met. Whether things like treatment figures had improved or not would not be noted, as these probably would not have been captured. A case of making important what is measured rather than measuring what's important. That might seem cynical, if only the anecdotal evidence of our experience did not show it to be all too often true.

The problem is that IT projects try to be both standardised and future proof in order to justify investment, and that pushes up the price and complexity as a 'higher common factor' is used. For example, in the automation of business

processes with mobile technology that means giving everyone the same high specification laptop, which may be perfect for some workers, but completely over the top for others.

In many more challenging environments, mobile deployments may be even more expensive to run and support, meeting initial return on investment criteria, but looking overly expensive for the total lifetime cost of ownership. It would be much better to take into account the more intangible costs, like impact on staff, and outcome like saving patients, as well as the tangible running costs beloved of analysts and bean counters.

This does not mean opting for the lowest common denominator, as that may not really improve the business process. For example, in the case of ticking the checklist above, it is pretty important to record who ticked and when as part of security, validation and compliance processes. Keep it simple, but not too simple to lose its effective value.

It is best to start with the business needs of working procedures, look at the big picture indicators (BPIs) that really matter – peoples' lives for the healthcare sector – and use these to guide the definition of the IT needs for automating the tasks. Then consult with the individuals directly involved in the procedures (not just their managers or the IT department), and find the simplest technology that supports them. Finally, justify the costs using a total value proposition based around measuring the improved effectiveness of the process, impact on individuals, reduced risk to the organisation and true lifetime costs of the technology.

It will still be laptops for some, an off-the-shelf handheld gadget for others, and some more specialised mobile device for still others. But with the communications between all types of mobile devices becoming increasingly commoditised and standardised, the choices can now be made on what best follows the script of

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the business process, and not the whims of the IT industry.

For a more detailed look at keeping mobile deployments simple and effective, please download this free report "[Light touch, firm impression](#)"

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Through researching perceptions, Quocirca uncovers the real hurdles to technology adoption – the personal and political aspects of an organisation's environment and the pressures of the need for demonstrable business value in any implementation. This capability to uncover and report back on the end-user perceptions in the market enables Quocirca to advise on the realities of technology adoption, not the promises.

Quocirca research is always pragmatic, business orientated and conducted in the context of the bigger picture. ITC has the ability to transform businesses and the processes that drive them, but often fails to do so. Quocirca's mission is to help organisations improve their success rate in process enablement through better levels of understanding and the adoption of the correct technologies at the correct time.

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