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360°IT – Ask not what projects can do for IT...

By Clive Longbottom, Service Director, Quocirca Ltd

Too often, IT departments are told to make greater savings, do more with less or put projects on the back boiler as the business tries to balance the books while still leaving money for what is seen as more important business investments.

But hang on - isn't IT a business investment? If an organisation sees it as something separate, only there as a 'nice to have', it deserves everything that happens to it. Moreover, any IT department that has allowed this situation to develop should hang its head in shame - it has effectively managed to divorce itself from the business and is essentially viewed as an external provider. And, as we all know, when times are bad it's external providers that get squeezed.

But, for any organisation to manage its way through a recession and be ready for the good times again, certain investments must continue through the bad times. Firms just have to manage these investments more effectively and ensure they get the best bang per buck from any project given the go ahead.

This is where I see many IT departments suffering. They may recognise that some new technology or architecture could be of use - but they don't know how best to get this across to the business. After all, they are getting little help from the vendor community, who still spout a mix of technology gobbledeygook ("The new X-B200T runs at 3.6GHz, supports 1Pb of in-line memory and manages 2 Bronto-FLOPS!") and marketing non-speak ("The X-B200T offers the lowest TCO of any item on the market, and has an average ROI of under 7 minutes...").

Such messages are less than compelling to the business - particularly if the main benefit is that life will be easier for the IT function because of better management systems, modelling or whatever. These areas can still have a positive impact on the wider business - but benefits need

to be teased out and communicated in the best possible manner.

Any change should only go ahead if it has an overall positive impact on the business - not just on a particular individual or group. Of course, the domino effect can mean a change affecting one group also has a significant impact on the overall business - but we shouldn't confuse the two. Any arguments for changes to the IT platform should be couched in terms that make sense to the business as a whole.

It is certainly possible to create a business case rapidly and effectively, but you need to look at what Quocirca calls the Total Value Proposition (TVP). Any change in an organisation will be aimed at lowering cost, lowering risk and/or increasing value to the business. Cost and risk are the easy ones to understand, but how about 'value'? Value can be more ephemeral, yet it should ultimately lead to one of two things: selling more of the same (at the same or greater margin), or selling something new at an adequate margin.

If a proposed change in the business can be shown to move these value/risk/cost variables in the right direction, it becomes far easier to get the go-ahead for any investment. You can download a paper here which uses data centre infrastructure management as an example of how a business case can be built up in this way.

Through the use of such an approach, IT can not only gain the ability to run more projects but can also be seen by the business as being central to core decision-making and business change. All it needs is the capability to talk more of the business's language - and to present any change in the terms that the business understands.

Quocirca has a free report available on the subject [here](#).

About Quocirca

Quocirca is a primary research and analysis company specialising in the business impact of information technology and communications (ITC). With world-wide, native language reach, Quocirca provides in-depth insights into the views of buyers and influencers in large, mid-sized and small organisations. Its analyst team is made up of real-world practitioners with first hand experience of ITC delivery who continuously research and track the industry and its real usage in the markets.

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.

Quocirca has a pro-active primary research programme, regularly surveying users, purchasers and resellers of ITC products and services on emerging, evolving and maturing technologies. Over time, Quocirca has built a picture of long term investment trends, providing invaluable information for the whole of the ITC community.

Quocirca works with global and local providers of ITC products and services to help them deliver on the promise that ITC holds for business. Quocirca's clients include Oracle, Microsoft, IBM, O2, T-Mobile, HP, Xerox, EMC, Symantec and Cisco, along with other large and medium sized vendors, service providers and more specialist firms.

Details of Quocirca's work and the services it offers can be found at

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