



BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY – WORKING TOGETHER ?

You have invested a lot of money in personal computers, network equipment, printers, software and various other tools so that your company can run efficiently. However, with everything you have done, you are still not servicing your customers, invoices are not being sent out on properly and your financial records are not current. You wonder why your technology is not making your business run smoother. You might even find out that the tools, software, hardware and infrastructure are making your business **less efficient**.

Integrating business and technology is considered by many to be the next step in the evolution of technology. If the integration is executed properly, technology becomes more responsive to the company's growth. But how do you go about integration business requirements and technology solutions needed to support the company. And as a small and medium company how do you figure out where potential operational problems are and make rapid decisions as to how to improve the operation.

The first thing every business needs to agree on is the business goal, the destination. Once you know what the goal is, it is easier to change how you are operating your business and reach the end.

Analyze from the bottom up.

Workflow drives your business – not the software, hardware or technology. Identify the changes that can be made to streamline your

operations. How do you know if a workflow needs to be changed?

An easy way to determine if a change is necessary is to think about a complex thing that you do in your business. Describe the process to a person that is not familiar with the process. Write the process down. Look at the process. Have you documented everything involved in the process?

Now, look at the level of detail you have documented. Is there too much detail? Are there unnecessary steps? Can you eliminate some steps? Do some of the steps seem wrong? This is **basic business process reengineering**.

Working with your employees, change the process. Involving the employees enables a level of acceptance and understanding. As you change the process, you are able to implement best practices for your business and outline the requirements needed for a successful business.

Review your need for the integration of business processes, data and systems. Few companies are able to find an application that does everything for them, but it is possible to determine what data and application functionality is adequate for the business to operate efficiently.

Also, look beyond your internal systems when you look at your needs. What do your customers, vendors and partners need from you to work with you? What is your “best guess” as to what are your future needs?

Embrace flexibility and change. If your business has been around for ten years, it is unlikely that you are still operating as you did ten years ago. And with continuing regulation changes, technology advancements and the introduction of new products, your business most likely has changed. Businesses need to be flexible and periodically review how they are operating and assess the processes, people and technology being used. The results of the review might require a change to the business to assist with continual growth.

Train your people. For an integrated, flexible system to be adopted, each employee needs to understand what he or she needs to do as well as the functions others perform within the organization. They need to understand the business functions and how to resolve problems. A classic mistake is people are trained once – when a new system is implemented. Ask your employees if they know what the person who works alongside them does. If not, consideration retraining your employees.

Choose the right software. A common mistake is to believe that if a piece of software worked for the company down the

street, it will be the right solution for your company. How the business needs to interact with technology needs to be understood first. Requirements need to be analyzed and processes articulated and documented.

Selecting, implementing and modifying software should be the next to last step when it comes to aligning business and technology. The last is the hardware, operating system, networking equipment, security and everything else that is required to make the software work. Regardless of what companies such as Microsoft say, the proper application software should be driving your hardware and not the latest operating system or tools.

SUMMARY

If your company is using the proper technology to get work done, you cannot help but be more efficient and grow. After a few of months of having your business and technology aligned, ask your employees and customers for some feedback. Hopefully you will hear that they are more efficient, it is easier to find information, they are responding to customers quicker and they have time for additional value added activities to be performed.

[For More Information](#)

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