
----- WHAT'S UP, DOC? -----

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"Creating Leadership Solutions for Profit and Growth"

THIS MONTH'S THEME: MANAGING TECHNOLOGY: 5 KEY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

How many times per week do you swear at your computer? For some of you, it's a daily event! How many of you struggle with your technology network service providers, whether your business is small or large? I'll bet a lot of you do. I've listed five top questions that lie at the heart of why many people struggle with IT service. If you manage IT for your business, or have a technology division in your business, you'll want to read this month's edition, or forward it to others in your company.

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THIS MONTH'S QUOTES:

"Never let the future disturb you. You will meet it, if you have to, with the same weapons of reason which today arm you against the present."

-- Marcus Aurelius Antoninus

"When two men in business always agree, one of them is unnecessary."

-- William Wordsworth

"Imagination is more important than knowledge." -- Albert Einstein

1. MANAGING TECHNOLOGY: 5 KEY QUESTIONS ANSWERED

DO YOU NEED TO KNOW TECHNOLOGY TO MANAGE TECHNOLOGY?

The short answer is: no, but learn as much as you can anyway. My clients who are leaders in operations, and who are not truly technology people, often feel frustrated by the “black box” of the tech world. Their technology people, or their CTO’s, will tell them that something cannot be done, or cannot be done easily, or cannot be done quickly, and the operations people become mystified. They often believe that the real answer is different, and sometimes, they are right. I once consulted with a major international securities firm, and working with one IT leader, we built a small, “guerilla” unit of programmers who were able to accomplish in eight weeks what a whole department had been unable to deliver in over a year. While most technology departments are not malingering when they promise dismal results or response times, some departments are just not very well run, and do not possess the right kind of talent to drive results. That’s why those who manage technology for a company should know as much as they can, and keep abreast of independent or outside entities that might possess expertise that your internal department does not possess. It helps to make your IT operation compete! So, you don’t have to be a technology person to manage a technology operation or segment of your business, but someone with a strong business foundation and business instincts should become as informed as possible, in order to ask the right questions, and get outside opinions when needed. Be sure your technology serves your business and its mission, and not the other way around. . . which brings us to our next question.

HOW CAN I MOTIVATE TECHNOLOGY PEOPLE?

There are three ways to get ahead in the world: through your family or tribe (by, say, inheriting money), through some credentialing or guild-type system (becoming licensed as a doctor, lawyer, or tenured professor, for example), and through talent and competition. Technology people face a dilemma: their expertise most lends itself to a credentialing based system of advancement, but the world of technology changes so rapidly, and is so diverse, that there are few if any consistent credentialing systems that can hold their value over time. Let’s take another look at the nature of technology people: they tend to like to solve puzzles, to enjoy neat and “sexy” new technologies and solutions. They like new toys! Learning new things is what turns them on, and that’s how they grow.

Here’s the challenge: that’s not always, or even primarily, what your business is probably about, unless yours is truly a technology business. You have to make a profit, or serve your members (in the case of an association), or serve the public (as government institutions are charged to do). You want technology to serve your mission. But how can technology people feel that they are growing, learning and advancing?

Beyond a certain point, the career ladders you can create for them in your non-technology company are limited. So, they get restless. You have a harder time retaining the best, most creative, most experienced technology people. And the technology people you do retain may not be as turned on by service to your business mission as they are by learning and applying new technology applications – whether you really need or can afford them or not! This is often why businesspeople and technology departments find themselves at odds: due to a combination of different personalities and motivators.

So, how do you motivate your in-house technology people? You've got to quantify and measure service and internal customer satisfaction, and make those measures part of the equation for advancement and access to new learning. Make service the ticket to admission for those who want to learn more and obtain more certifications. You may not be able to attract and retain the kind of talent that the technology consulting houses can attract, since those companies can offer expanded career ladders and diverse problems for consultants to solve. But you can begin to maximize the business output of your technology operation.

WHEN SHOULD I OUTSOURCE IT MANAGEMENT?

The old rule of thumb says, outsource that which is not core to your business. But how many businesses today do not have some element of technology that is core to the business? Perhaps the better, general answer is this: if your operation does not achieve a certain size – perhaps a threshold somewhere between 150-200 people, then you can probably do better to outsource your basic network IT management than you could to develop your own in-house IT department. This of course depends on the quality of the outsourced network IT management companies in your market, and there are certainly more players out there than there are quality players. But think about what we discussed in the section above: if you're a small to medium-sized business, you probably lack the time and resources to build and manage an internal IT staff that can truly meet your needs. Many of my clients of this size routinely accept flawed and incomplete system backups, networks and pc's that go down for hours at a time every month, and so on. And then they have two or three full time IT people on staff who are really not equipped or experienced enough to solve all those problems, or even attack them in a systematic way so as to prevent them from recurring. Unless you can really afford to devote resources to building a competitive, well run internal IT services unit, then you probably can do better by finding the right outsourced managed IT provider, allowing you to concentrate on building and growing your core business.

HOW SHOULD I BUILD MY IT DEPARTMENT TO GET RESULTS?

If you do have an internal IT department, and your company is of sufficient size to justify the creation and support of a professional, internal IT operation, then one thing you should do is create internal, credential-based career ladders for your service providers. Let the best people keep learning, and create a formula that evaluates service to the internal customer as a large part of the advancement process, as described above. But that's not enough. You've got to be very careful to select those who can provide good service before you bring them on board. Personality assessment tools are best for this: technology people, left to their own devices, will be better at selecting for technical acumen than they will be at selecting for service, so put the right tools and selection systems in their hand so they can make the right selection decisions. I recommend the tools offered by the company at this [link](#), since I know the company well and know its track record (I get no compensation for making this recommendation, or for any business you give to them). As a larger business, you can't just rely on the talent of a few good interviewers to give you consistent results: those interviewers may not always be available to you. I'm a strong proponent of using the right selection tools, since they allow for consistency and scalability.

HOW SHOULD I MANAGE DISRUPTIVE CHANGE BROUGHT ABOUT BY INTRODUCING NEW TECHNOLOGY INTO OPERATIONS?

This is a big topic, but let me summarize a few key points. First, designate a small transformation team made up of people from diverse parts of the organization who can all trust each other. They should lead the process of designing and communicating through your business transformation campaign. Don't put people in that group who will sabotage the effort, but do build regular consultation systems for that group to meet with key operational units and skeptics, in order to collect feedback and make continuous improvements to the new operational process. Give this transformation team the resources it needs to succeed, including a budget, support staff time, access to key leaders and middle management, and the resources it will need to develop new training materials or run potential off-site events. And then, stick with the process: don't begin it unless you are committed to seeing it through to the end, and through to its ultimate success. I'm covering these issues in much greater depth in my forthcoming book, "You Say You Want a Revolution: How to Transform Your Company from Within." Check future newsletter editions for news of its release in the Spring or Summer of 2005.

2. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS

BOOK: "Growing Your Business!: What You Need to Know, What You Need to Do," by Mark LeBlanc, Expert Publishing, Andover, Minnesota, 2003.

I saw Mark speak last month, and he has some terrific, well-seasoned, well-tested ideas. He presents them in this very little book that I highly recommend. You can buy it at this [link](#).

FILM: "Shattered Glass," 2003, available in DVD and VHS

This movie was not very long, and not very groundbreaking, but definitely worth a look. On the one hand, it's a character study of a pathologically lying young journalist in Washington, DC. But even more interesting, to me, was watching the process through which he is uncovered by management. A new and not terribly popular manager begins to smell a rat, and swims upstream against internal office resistance to restore credibility to his magazine and unmask the truth. That part of the story, for me, dramatized the challenges that some new managers face when they are promoted from within the ranks, especially to replace popular predecessors. And then, the film dramatizes what it's like to attempt to restore corporate credibility when others are against you. Not bad for a little, relatively low budget movie. Find out more about "Shattered Glass" [here](#).

3. CHUCKLES

(This month, I'm going with airline humor. Joke Number 1:)

Taxiing down the tarmac, the jetliner abruptly stopped, turned around and returned to the gate.

After an hour-long wait, it finally took off.

A concerned passenger asked the flight attendant, "What was the problem?"

"The pilot was bothered by a noise he heard in the engine," explained the Flight Attendant, "and it took us a while to find a new pilot."

(Joke Number 2 is one for my attorney friends:)

An airliner was having engine trouble, and the pilot instructed the cabin crew to have the passengers take their seats and get prepared for an emergency landing.

A few minutes later, the pilot asked the flight attendants if everyone was buckled in and ready.

"All set back here, Captain," came the reply, "except the lawyers are still going around passing out business cards."

(Finally, Joke Number 3 is just stupid, and it made me laugh more than I expected!)

On reaching his plane seat a man is surprised to see a parrot strapped in next to him. He asks the stewardess for a coffee where upon the parrot squawks "And get me a whisky you cow!" The stewardess, flustered, brings back a whisky for the parrot and forgets the coffee.

When this omission is pointed out to her the parrot drains its glass and bawls "And get me another whisky you idiot". Quite upset, the girl comes back shaking with another whisky but still no coffee.

Unaccustomed to such slackness the man tries the parrot's approach "I've asked you twice for a coffee, go and get it now or I'll kick you".

The next moment, both he and the parrot have been wrenched up and thrown out of the emergency exit by two burly stewards. Plunging downwards the parrot turns to him and says "For someone who can't fly, you complain too much!"

4. PROMOTE YOUR OWN GROWTH

You don't have to live near the Schuler Solutions main office in Alexandria, Virginia to benefit from my coaching services. Great work can be done for your own growth and development over the phone and through document review via email. To find out more about your coaching options and available coaching plans, just click [here](#) now.

5. ABOUT DR. SCHULER

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D., an expert on leadership and organizational change, provides consulting services, keynote presentations and seminars for client companies. His trademark is highly personalized service that leads to measurable increases in productivity, profit and growth. He also provides personalized leadership education and coaching for highly motivated clients.

Dr. Schuler, President of Schuler Solutions, Inc., has served diverse organizations in the private and public sectors, including The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Sony Development, Nomura Securities and the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

A graduate of the Wharton School of Business, Dr. Schuler has successfully led the profitable growth of a dynamic, international consulting firm while serving as Operations Director, and has successfully coached over five hundred CEO's and corporate executives.

6. HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE

If this e-Newsletter was forwarded to you and you would like to receive your own FREE subscription, just click [here](#) to become a subscriber. If you believe you have received this message in error, or to remove yourself from this mailing list, just click [here](#) to take your name from the "What's Up, Doc?" distribution list.

7. NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF ETHICS

NEWSLETTER ETHICS: This e-Newsletter will be sent to subscribers only upon REQUEST, though subscribers may forward this letter to anyone they wish. Subscriber identities or contact information will NOT BE DISCLOSED to any other persons or entities under any circumstances. (An attorney friend recently pointed out that, technically, I'd have to give up my list if compelled to do so by a court of law. He's technically right, of course, but let's face it: that won't happen!)

Have a great month. . .

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“Make each day your masterpiece.” -- John Wooden

P.S. - Remember to send in your comments and successes, and to forward this newsletter to at least one friend! Thanks . . . AJS