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Sharpen Your Company's IT IQ

WHITE PAPER



Hopefully you had the opportunity to attend the “Ask the Experts - Sharpen Your Company’s IT IQ” event, hosted by the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, on March 27, 2013. The Indiana-based networking and learning event was an enormous success, attracting nearly 100 participants interested in improving their IT knowledge and efficiency. For those who didn’t make it, we’ve published this white paper to summarize the key points.

With more than 30 years of IT experience, Tony Valasek (executive IT director at American Structurepoint) was one of three panel members invited to play a leading role in this learning and networking event. The panel discussion was part of a brand new series hosted by the Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce. Tony’s presentation focused on today’s hot-topic IT issues and divulged valuable best-practices for sharpening a company’s IT IQ.

What is IT IQ?

Since the early 1900s, the intelligence quotient (IQ) has been an important measurement. It not only provides an indication of brainpower, but it’s actually been a predictor of educational achievement, special needs, job performance, and even income. But what is an IT IQ? During the panel-discussion, Tony defined it as “an organization’s intellectual ability in the information technology realm.” When running a business, the IT IQ of an organization can predict efficiency, productivity, and profitability.

Do you ever wish your IT department could think faster and solve those complex technology problems with greater ease? Good news: the current IT IQ at your company is only the starting point. Here are a few of the best practices Tony discussed, and if implemented correctly, these can help your organization sharpen its own IT IQ.

IT Engagement

The first step to increasing IT IQ involves more engagement. In other words, IT departments need to get engaged in business processes more than ever before. IT is evolving into an embedded business function, and it’s becoming the responsibility of business leaders (CEOs and COOs), rather than the technology-minded leaders. When American Structurepoint’s IT staff works with companies, they insert themselves into the trenches of the firm’s business processes and, as a result, are able to form a deeper sense of ownership and commitment to the organization. This extra effort of engagement spurs innovation as our IT consultants look for ways to use technology and applications as a competitive edge for our clients.

Red Teams

Too often, IT departments make rushed decisions that compromise the reliability of an organization’s technology. They hope to be heroes by offering a quick solution, but instead they cause a ripple-effect of problems for other IT systems, devices, and applications. A company can increase its IT IQ if it makes more use of “red teams,” especially when working with business-critical systems. Historically, a red team was a group of military personnel playing the role of the enemy. This independent group is a “devil’s advocate,” and its primary goal is to fiercely challenge an organization to improve effectiveness, enhance decision making, and avoid surprise. Similar to a military red team, the technology red teams at American Structurepoint help their clients become



smarter and learn more about their own IT strengths and weaknesses. Their red teams also work diligently to ensure any system/application upgrade or implementation is thoroughly tested in a controlled lab environment before it's rolled out to the organization.

Communication

Just communicate better. Sounds easy, right? Well, the fact is many IT professionals struggle in communicating with non-technical business leaders who don't live in the convoluted IP, WAN, Mbps, FTP, and WEP acronym world. IT departments can help increase a company's IT IQ if they just remember that communication is a two-way street.

Instead of spewing the latest acronyms and buzzwords, try to make listening part of your IT culture. Communicating is an exchange of information through thoughts, messages, or information. Listen for technology challenges that hinder your company's growth and also look to seed new and innovative ideas by listening to peers in your industry. Organizations will find that a focused effort on improved communication (listening) will bump-up their IT IQ a few levels.

Choosing an IT Environment

Should I outsource IT services or hire my own staff? This is a common question for organizations today; for most business leaders, choosing the appropriate IT environment is not as easy decision. If done correctly, outsourcing can really help to bolster a company's IT IQ. The correct IT environment allows a company to quickly adapt and scale the technology as market conditions and opportunities change. Any trustworthy consultant should walk their client through the various options to help them determine what best fits their business model. There are three very common IT environments that exist today.

Organic In-House Model – This IT environment often requires a significant upfront investment, because it's cultivated from within. An IT director is hired, they establish the forward-view technology plan and then hire an IT staff to implement the systems, equipment, software, and applications. This is the same model American Structurepoint implemented more than ten years ago, and it's been tremendously successful. The organization has experienced zero downtime, and the technology is fully integrated into the firm's business plan, which promotes efficiency, growth, and profitability.

Non-Organic Outsourced Model – This IT environment requires less of an upfront investment but involves a great deal of vendor management. If properly executed, this model can also be particularly beneficial for the right organization. American Structurepoint has helped clients in the financial services, healthcare, education, and manufacturing industries manage their IT services through a complete outsourced model just like this. In these instances, American Structurepoint becomes the IT department for the organization. From servers and desktop support to mobile device management, our experts help businesses take IT completely off their plates, allowing employees to focus on their core competencies, without technology being a distraction. The success of this scenario relies heavily on finding a true IT consultant who has the organization's best interest in mind. It is important to look for the consultants that don't have a sales-based bias, which means avoiding the consultants that immediately begin the relationship with a product/software sales pitch.

Blended Model – This IT environment can offer the best of both worlds. It allows organizations to pinpoint the perfect mix of in-house talent with outsourced expertise. Again, the key is finding a trusted partner who can bring



value to the company's forward-view technology plan. American Structurepoint has seen clients thrive in this model as well. When choosing a blended model, it is critical to work with an IT vendor that is versatile in its skill set. American Structurepoint often fills this role, as many of our IT professionals have held leadership positions at other companies and bring an assortment of industry knowledge. They can become simply an extension of a current in-house IT department or provide support on unique project-based assignments.

With any of these IT environments, it's important to remember that if you locate a trusted partner, they should have the capability to deliver IT performance at a lower cost, and with higher quality. If an organization is able to identify the best-fit IT model and collaborate with a trusted IT consultant, then the company has a really good chance of increasing its IT IQ.

We hope this white paper has provided you with some insights into boosting your organization's IT IQ. Be sure to seek advice from a technology expert so your company can integrate IT with your business plan and objectives.

There are exciting business opportunities on the horizon when you decide to make technology a competitive advantage. American Structurepoint has seen it happen within our own company, and we've witnessed it with our clients. We'd like to share these stories with you and help make your own story a success.



Request a free consultation to boost your IT IQ today!

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