

Getting "Gigs" from Gigs

by Tricia Steege

Information Technology (IT) projects occur continuously in organizations as more information systems flood the marketplace. Many fail. OD consultants are often called in after the project is complete and the failure is on the table! The author enumerates five characteristics we need in order to help clients deal with the human side of systems technology projects so they can succeed.

We know that technology is reshaping how businesses do their business. Certainly in light of global market forces such as industry consolidations, globalization, customer sophistication and deregulation, companies seek ways to increase shareholder value and are using advances in technology to help them do so. One only needs to watch a Sunday afternoon golf event to be subject to the barrage of system integration options available in the marketplace today. IT functions no longer just enable the business strategy - **THEY ARE THE BUSINESS STRATEGY!**

However, the rate of return of millions of corporate dollars invested in technology systems has not yet been realized and CEO's are discouraged. Some 30% of technical implementations fail with missed deadlines and budget overages. Many projects require ongoing rework and only end up with dissatisfied clients, staff de-motivation and increased turnover.

As agents of change, we know that technology alone doesn't get an organization to where it wants to be. How the individuals within the organization master its use is the telling factor. It is at this point that most organizations predict their decreased rate or return because they fail to pay attention to the most critical "moment of truth" in the implementation process - the "**human side**".

So how can we as change consultants provide help?

1. Be "Technically Savvy"

Become familiar with the technologies that your clients are implementing within their organizations. If you don't know what a CRM or ERP system is, grab hold of the nearest internet search engine and learn about them. Understand how these software applications are changing the ways your client organizations do their business. These technologies are driving cross functional operations in organizations in a way that's never been done before.

2. Be "Business Minded"

Hold dear the phrase "don't be so heavenly minded that you are no earthly good!" Your client needs to have confidence that you understand their business challenges and how technology improves their revenue generation goals. Make cost saving suggestions that go a long way to building your internal credibility. Provide solutions that incorporate

e-learning, groupware and web conferencing tools that can save on travel costs. Change the perception of OD consultants being "touchy-feely" to "practical and value add".

3. Be "Thinking About Your Client's Client"

Ultimately, the work you do with your key client has implications for their key clients. Think about your client's client and ask "How will the work I'm doing with this client help their clients" and then speak to that. If your client is in the midst of a Peoplesoft implementation, help them understand how it helps their clients succeed because it allows your client's organization to have the right folks in the right place at the right time to provide services. This is not about technical training but rather enabling your client's culture to understand what's in it for them and how helping their clients help themselves.

4. Be "The CIO's Right Hand Man"

As the change expert, one of the most strategic relationships you can build is the partnership with the Chief Information Officer (CIO). Larry Olson, former CIO of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, has said that "one of the most underestimated roles of the CIO is leading the change management process inside an organization". More than likely, s/he does not have the change management expertise (much less the time) but s/he is held accountable for the success or failure of the implementation. Coach and educate the CIO with what you know about change and provide the solutions that create wins - make the CIO look good! His or her job is tough enough!

5. Be “Accountable”

Exhibit a mindset of accountability by recommending solutions that integrate measurement methods. Find out how the client organization measures its productivity and integrate those measurements into your consulting engagement solutions. This shows your commitment to being held as accountable as the next guy or gal. Turn around cycle times decrease with effective supply chain processes which are only as effective as the humans using them. Be held accountable and show your value add as an agent of change.

Technology introduces limitless opportunities for our help on the human side! Don't be afraid of it - explore it, learn about it! Carpe Diem!

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