

Successful CIOs in this new decennium

What appreciation is all about

Business almost ‘flies by the seat of one’s pants’, dealing with challenges that emerge constantly in today’s world. When TCO is lowered fast in economic uncertain times, IT needs to support and facilitate this. Deep cuts alone won’t do the trick; like Tom Peters said, “you can’t shrink your way to greatness.” When the business booms again, IT is therefore expected to enable business growth. In order to be a sparring partner for the business, the IT department has to make anticipation part of its DNA.

To earn a seat at the boardroom table and, more importantly, to earn the trust of business managers as that strategic partner, the IT organisation has to prove they care about the business and its users. The ultimate reward is customer delight. To reach that, IT has to transform into a more service-centred organisation. In IT we love the word ‘service’ – just think of abbreviations such as SOA and SLA – but for our customers the connotation remains too technical. The aim should be to (over)deliver on services your users and the business expects.

Along the way to prove IT actually cares, another thing besides superior service is important. And that is to relate service levels to the impact of IT systems on day-to-day business. When IT fails, the business suffers. In how many lost production hours does that result? And in how much money lost? A difficulty here is, business talks business, IT talks tech. KPIs for IT should be in plain business language, like the impact of IT performance on online sales, customer loyalty or production cycles. When you are aware of this by the hour or even by the minute, you can manage your relation with only a few SLAs left, since IT can then make informed decisions on how to solve incidents as fast as possible and so prevent business-related problems.

The key to credibility is winning your users’ hearts and minds by delivering superior service. From helpdesk to business project, being a successful IT department is all about user experience. Send them a card to show you care. When IT staff eventually receives a Valentine card from the business, you know your IT department is on that right track. Until then, happy Valentine hunt!