



## IT's Role as a Centre for Business Innovation

As we begin – albeit slowly in the UK – to emerge from this recession, innovation is increasingly getting back on the business agenda. Whilst cost-containment remains an important focus, companies are seeking innovative ways to grow, deliver greater customer value, integrate acquisitions, make disposals and generally re-shape their business operating models. IT has a unique role to play as not only is it the custodian of the IT installed base – changes to which often determine the feasibility of an innovation idea – but it can take a cross-enterprise, rather than a business-unit, perspective. This positioning in the enterprise requires it to fulfill three important roles:

**Facilitator** – Not only can people in IT identify and share ideas and best practices across the enterprise, they are also uniquely placed to ‘look outside’ to a variety of vendors and partners who are only too willing to share their technology-enabled innovations. The reality is that most long-standing innovations are technology-enabled and IT's role must be to identify, evaluate and facilitate their successful application for business value.

**Enabler** – IT has a unique role to play in enabling innovation whether it be through the introduction of Web 2.0-based collaboration platforms, access to cloud-based applications or implementing business platforms based upon integrated packages. For years, businesses have sought the ability to be agile and adapt quickly to new ideas. All too often, legacy systems prevent this and by implementing agile enterprise architectures business colleagues can get closer to their objective.

**Guardian** – The reality is that not all new ideas or ‘innovations’ are good ones – so IT has a ‘duty of care’ in terms of preventing bad things happening. Information access and security are obvious examples. Also, we can all cite examples of where business colleagues were encouraged to ‘go and innovate’, acquired an IT application, got it up and running and then handed it over to IT, without any consideration given to service delivery, scalability or disaster recovery. Whilst business colleagues should not be discouraged from being innovative, sometimes IT has a legitimate right to say NO, not this way, AND we could achieve the same outcome in a different – and safer – way.

## About Formicio

[Formicio](#) was formed in early 2010 by a group of thought leaders and practitioners. We help our clients around the world address tough strategic problems, and develop the insights and organisational capabilities needed for them to successfully implement their chosen strategy.

We use innovative experiential learning approaches to develop the insights and capabilities needed by today's business and technology leaders. Our focus is always on outcomes, not process.

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## Parting Thought

“Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful.”

Buddha 563-483 BC

All IT leaders need to assess how well their organisation is supporting innovation and whether their people have the ability to 'sense and respond' to key technology trends and innovative ideas emerging in the business.

To read my full article, click [here](#).

I welcome your thoughts.

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