Do You Have IT Organisational Clarity?

There are many analogies for illuminating what is meant by, and the importance of, Organisational Clarity. One that works particularly well is boat racing. When all the rowers are in perfect harmony and staying on course there is enormous power in the boat. If the coxswain screws up, or any of the rowers don't follow the instructions, havoc reigns and the boat slows down or goes way off course. IT organisations that lack Organisational Clarity become that slow boat or, even worse, the fast boat heading in the wrong direction!

The symptoms of a lack of Organisational Clarity are common and prevalent. How often do you or your colleagues say or hear:

- "We don't communicate well"
- "We don't have clear accountabilities"
- "We exist to support the business".

It is essential to recognise that these are symptoms and not root causes. You cannot solve the communications issue by mandating or even organising for better communications.

Communications problems are symptomatic of a lack of Organisational Clarity – not just for the IT organisation as a whole, but for its 'moving parts' such as IT infrastructure, enterprise architecture, solutions delivery and so on.

Similarly, you cannot address the accountability issue by simply trying to mandate accountability. Unless there are clear goals, service definitions and guiding principles, and the appropriate processes, roles, competencies, tools and technologies in place, it's little use trying to tie accountability to anything!

Equally, simply existing to support the business leads to an 'order taker' mentality, and to an IT organisation that is always extremely busy (to the point of rampant overwork!) and yet is seen by the business as adding little to no value.

Improving Organisational Clarity must be tackled by firstly defining 'IT capabilities', of which there are typically 7-9, including IT infrastructure, enterprise architecture, opportunity discovery, solution delivery, portfolio management and so on. And secondly by defining capability characteristics, including purpose, commitment, ability and accountability, which can be assessed, gaps identified and ultimately, closed.

Soft Skills for CIOs and Aspiring CIOs

There are many studies showing that leaders who have greater Emotional Intelligence (EI) outperform those who rely on technical skill and cognitive ability alone. None more so than in the world of IT.

Whilst the components of EI are widely understood, and include Self-awareness, Self-regulation, Empathy, Social Skill and Motivation, Diann Daniel advocates some novel ways of developing this capability, including:

- Mastering public speaking
- Practising yoga and meditation
- Taking a class on comedic improvisation.

To read Diann's article click here.

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More Insights

Our Insight articles aim to inform and inspire. They cover a range of business operations, technology, people and change topics, including:

- Alignment is Good, But Misalignment Can Lead to Better
- The Four Facets of Information Strategy
- Lean Change Management
- The Net Generation Has Changed Everything

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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.

A capability can be thought of as everything that takes place behind the scenes that makes a service possible. But not all capabilities are equal as they serve different purposes:

1. Value Chain Capabilities – Think of these as capabilities that the end customer appreciates and is willing to pay money for.
2. Enabling Capabilities – Value chain capabilities typically draw upon other capabilities that enable them. Examples of IT capabilities that might enable the value chain include project management, IT operations and IT supply.
3. Alignment and Governance Capabilities – The value chain also typically depends upon other capabilities that ensure that the work is aligned to the interests of the enterprise. For example, prioritisation, staff resourcing and budgeting.

By distinguishing between these types of capabilities it's possible to build a 'normative' IT Capability Model that in itself significantly contributes to building organisational clarity, and which can drive continuous improvement activities.

To read my full article where I discuss these IT capabilities in more detail and give an example of a 'normative' IT Capability Model, click here.

I welcome your thoughts.

Vaughan Merlyn
vaughan.merlyn@formicio.com

Parting Thought

"The source of real discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes."

Marcel Proust, 1871-1902