information
management

IT Should be an Enabler to the Business

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Let's start with my basic opinion: Information Technology [IT] is not the business, it is an enabler. That being said, there are businesses' where Information Technology is the prime area of the business (Google, Microsoft, Sun, SunGard, etc), but the business process is different for each – and the intellectual property is what is valuable.

Intellectual Property [IP] is what a business owns (copyrights, patents, etc.) that makes it valuable. We in IT are not commonly aware of the IP of our business – so we are not always aware of what drives or makes up the business.

By enabling the business, I am noting that the IT strategy, architecture and projects should be dictated by the business strategy, architecture and programs. I have to often seen a disconnect between these or that the IT strategy is driven by an IT project.

It is also my opinion that IT is perceived as not providing value to the organization. Why is this? Industry critics have noted that:

Inhibitor to corporate progress – IT systems cannot be changed fast enough to meet market demands, seize opportunity or comply with a new requirement.
Weak alignment between IT and business strategy – marked by an intractable language barrier.
Not strategically aligned – IT does not know or follow corporate strategy.
IT is almost never the source of innovations.
Harris Interactive recently polled 23,000 U.S. employees in key industries and functional areas and found that:
Only 37% said they have a clear understanding of what their organization is trying to achieve and why
Only one in five was enthusiastic about their team and the organization's / corporation's goals
Only one in five said they have a clear "line of sight" between their tasks and their team and organization's goals
Only 15% felt that their organization fully enables them to execute key goals
Only 20% fully trusted the organization they work for
If a football team had these players on the field, the following would result:
Only 4 of the 11 players on the field would know which goal is theirs
Only 2 of the 11 would care
Only 2 of the 11 would know what position they play and what they are supposed to do
9 players out of 11 would, in some way, be competing against their own team rather than the opponent
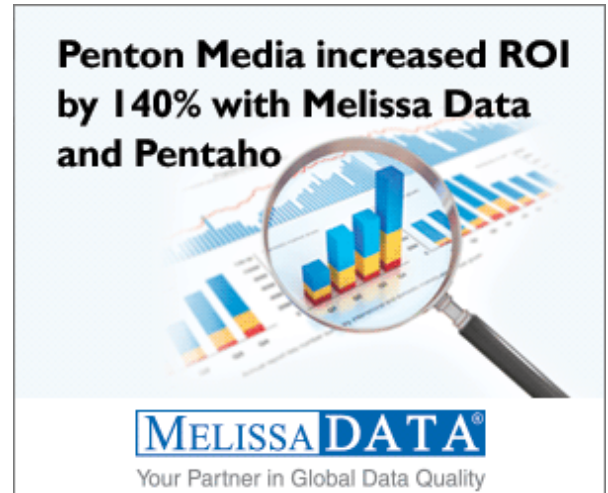
CIO's today realize that IT provides an increasingly vital role in the delivery of business processes – including internet orders, business intelligence, applications integration (including master data management and customer data integration), data governance, and project management to name a few. The alignment of IT with the business happens with a common language implemented using architecture models (in this authors opinion).

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