

## **The CIO Must Contribute to Improving Business Performance.**

*Peter B. Giblett's reply to John Stoa's article " THE CIO IS DEAD; LONG LIVE THE CIO" published in Information Week March 25<sup>th</sup> 2008.*

More CIOs are reporting to CFOs these days, fewer to CEOs – tell me what is new about this. I am used to this type of culture, but it is a fatal mistake because it ignores the positive impact the CIO can have on improving business results.

Too few organisations truly value the information that they hold. If I ask the CEO or CFO how valuable they consider their data to be and I guarantee that they do not have a clue that their corporate data is the glue that holds their organisation together. This is a key corporate business asset, yet too many organisations do not invest the necessary business time in ensuring that data both clean and functional. This is an operational duty, that is key to the successful deployment of this asset.

Other than maintenance costs and some requirement for internal development (mainly data integration these days) I would agree that there is no reason for IT to have a budget. Any projects that teams deliver should be business based projects, and therefore based on a business budget. IT's role is to facilitate business improvement.

It is agreed that business people are becoming more tech-savvy today but technology is NOT their main role and they do not always understand all of the nuances involved. For every smart person there is a corresponding dumbo who thinks they know what they are doing but gets it wrong, leaving a mess behind themselves.

Software purchasing decision making needs to be handled by both the Business and IT as a partnership. The complexity of new solution provision demands both technical and business know-how for any purchasing decision. It is important that all purchase decisions are accompanied with adequate due diligence in the selection process, that must consider both business and technical fit. Corporate guidelines and standards MUST be met for the solution to succeed.

Agreed that "keeping the email running" must not be prime reason for existence of the CIO or even to focus on the day-to-day operational components for the business community. Individual experts in the IT team should deliver these results.

**The CIO IS NOT DEAD!**

However to succeed the CIO must focus on a more strategic role – Improving Business Performance, this is where they will add value to the organisation. The problem is that most CIO's have no experience in this arena – if their background is even in IT (and too many are not) it is focused on the operational applications! Too many CIO's lack an understanding of Business Intelligence and how it can contribute to an improved understanding of the business, corporate growth – this is the strategic contribution they can make.

I agree that the state of economy will force CIOs to decide between the nice-to-have projects and the must-haves, but I have been advocating this for years in good economic conditions as well as bad. Put a business case together for every change project proposed then an executive level decision can be made for, or against, this proposal.