

eSubnet Fragment Article

IT Roles and Responsibilities

No matter the size of the organization, whenever Information Communication Technology (ICT) is involved there are certain roles and responsibilities which must be fulfilled. The larger organization may have more people able to fill the roles, take on the responsibility, however, the same tasks need to be accomplished regardless of company size. The tasks which the IT department is saddled with generally fall into two basic categories: IT management who plan for what is ahead and IT helpdesk who fix what is broken.

Helpdesk is more than just the support of end users and their company computers. The main function of helpdesk is to maintain the status quo. When a computer breaks, or software becomes corrupt, the task of helpdesk is to put it right. Of course there are varying levels within helpdesk. These levels, referred to as tiers, typically align skill level to problem difficulty. Tier 1 take on the simple break/fix while tier 2 is handed the more difficult tasks. Depending on the size of the organization there can also be a tier 3, which typically specializes in the area required. IT management is all about understanding the technology and aligning technology to the business goals which are to be achieved. This involves strategies, tactics and policy creation. At the IT management level you find the broad plans which encompass all aspects of ICT. In the best of all possible worlds, IT management creates guidelines for the rest of the department, guidelines which are as rigid or as flexible as the business requires.

A quick shopping list of subject matter that IT management team is responsible for can include: capacity, data retention, data availability, security, computer usage, budget, end-user needs, services availability, business goals, emerging technologies, compliance, project management and of course helpdesk. There are two approaches for IT management: the proactive and the reactive. The proactive approach is to take the steps required to ensure that all of the ICT requirements for the organization are looked after. This means making time to schedule meetings where you will discuss and assign the action items which are important to the sustainability of the organization. The organizations ICT stability will be directly proportionate to the effort put into this proactive approach.

The reactive approach is to go about your busy schedule until something demands your attention.

Here are two examples:

- Someone requires that a file be restored from back-up, this IS the test of your tape back up solution.
- You have suffered a data leak, so you go on a search for the weak point in your security.

The proactive approach will provide for a predictable increase in the total cost of ownership (TCO) for the ICT environment. Whether the increase is measured in staff wages, the time of C-level executives to participate, or increased spending on out-sourced help. The reactive approach will increase costs in completely unpredictable and potentially expensive ways, loss of staff productivity, loss of sales due to systems being down etc. Very much like the Champion spark plug ads from years ago where the mechanic says, "Pay me now, or pay me later"; a little preventative maintenance will save you the cost of a major overhaul later.

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