

# Focus on *Business Improvement*

using technology to drive business & process change

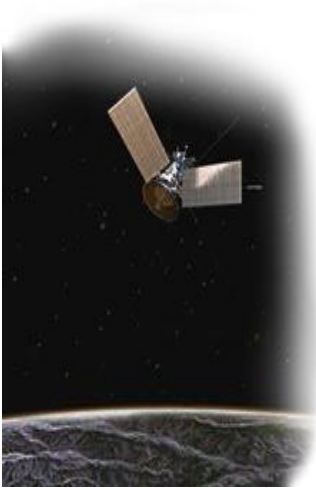
*The number one benefit of information technology is that it empowers people to do what they want to do.*

*It lets people be creative. It lets people be productive. It lets people learn things they didn't think they could learn before, and so in a sense it is all about potential.*

Source: Steve Ballmer, Microsoft Corp

Most businesses today invest heavily in Information & Communication Technology (ICT), but often this is only seen as a necessary cost of doing business. Business leaders need to be asking themselves:

## What value do we gain from investment in ICT?



The ICT Department is likely to focus on the uptime, speed and accuracy of transaction processing, or the ability to provide staff with instant access to email and office systems from wherever they choose to work.

Whilst this is very important the real value of ICT must go further if it is to help enable the business to develop and compete. For ICT to provide this next level of value companies need to focus on the use of technology to enable:

- Process optimisation and improvements in efficiency
- Information collection to improve customer insight, innovation and effective decision making
- Collaboration and interaction with customers, suppliers and partners

This is not just about the acquisition of new technology which, on its own is not enough to drive meaningful business change. It is about how that technology is deployed and used for the ultimate benefit of the customer.

## Technology as an enabler for efficiency

In most businesses technology is embedded in almost every process. It is at the core of a company's cost centre, and in particular sectors is inextricably linked to productivity. But in how many of these companies is this technology being used to its full potential and how does it serve the customer?



## How the ICT Team can support business change:

- Gain credibility by understanding the business
- Establish the real drivers for change
- Align the ICT strategy to organisational objectives
- Secure top level support from the business
- Seek ideas from people working at the frontline
- Break down silos in the business through knowledge sharing
- Use innovation to help the business grow and evolve
- Build solutions that are flexible
- Challenge the status quo

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## Technology to improve decision making

Businesses generate and store a mass of data. Data needs to be transformed into *knowledge* to make it useful to decision makers. This value-adding process relies on technology to:

- Aggregate, manipulate and organise data;
- Carry out analysis and evaluation; and
- Report the information in proper context for human use.

A business's ability to do this better than its competitors gives it a strategic advantage, particularly in the context of client behaviours, innovation and development of new products and services.

*A business that is consistently better at exploiting technology to drive newer and better products, services and business processes stands to gain a competitive advantage.*

## Technology to develop strategic relationships

In the global economy the ability of a business to take advantage of new ways of communicating and transacting business can drive value and lower the cost of interactions between a company and its suppliers, partners and clients. Technologies such as social media, open source, cloud etc can challenge the traditional ICT Department and require new ways of working.

## Increasing the benefit from investments in technology

In many cases companies already have access to the technology, but there is a lack of co-ordination between the business and ICT, and a lack of innovative thinking to make the most of these opportunities. Left to their own devices staff will serve their needs first and a plethora of mini-systems will evolve across the business. The culture of the company and a disciplined ICT department will ensure systems serve the company and its customers first.

The key to making more use of the technology already in the business is to harness the creativity of the technology users. They know the frustrations of inefficient processes, they know what data is collected and they know how their own jobs can be improved.

Solitaire Consulting can help unlock this potential within your people and technology systems. Large gains in productivity and process efficiency can often be achieved without having to resort to high cost, high risk IT projects. The aim is to help you achieve 80% benefit from 20% of the investment.

*"The first rule of any technology used in a business is that automation applied to an efficient operation will magnify the efficiency. The second is that automation applied to an inefficient operation will magnify the inefficiency."* Bill Gates

At Solitaire Consulting we are business people like you. We have all held senior, often executive, positions in the corporate and public sectors. We have all the appropriate academic credentials you would expect from any business consultancy, where we differ is our approach. We pride ourselves on providing a pragmatic service and prefer the label Business Practitioners. We can advise across many functional disciplines, and are always focused on measurable business outcomes. We believe that there is no real alternative to sound business experience! Sometimes our services are delivered as discreet projects – researching and testing new markets, negotiating major contracts, and managing change programmes for example; and sometimes our services are delivered through your people – as mentors, guides and coaches.

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