



White Paper 2018-06

Why an Information System Management Function is Required That Is Different from an IT department

In a series of White Papers, based on our extensive experience in this area, we cover challenges of Information Systems in project-driven organisations: from the overall architecture to systems implementation, development and ongoing management. In this fourth and last White Paper we cover the specific issues related to the ongoing maintenance and management of the evolution of Information Systems. A specific function, Information Systems Management, is required, that is different from the usual Information Technology department. This White Paper explains why and what should be the remit of the Information Systems department and of Information Systems Engineers.

Information Systems Management, the missing link

We often observe that organisations have IT departments that are very focused on the technical operation of the Information Technology infrastructure, and business users. The IT personnel often lacks awareness of business needs and knowledge of the specific business software running on the infrastructure, while business users are fully ignorant of the implementation aspects of the software they are using daily.

Most organisations are missing an intermediate link which we call Information Systems Management: while the IT department looks at the hardware, the Information Systems Managers look at the software. They build the bridge between the business needs of the business users and how to implement solutions in the organisation's IT framework.

The role of Information Systems Management

Information Systems (IS) management acts as a bridge, an intermediary between the business and Information technology (IT):

- Ability to transfer business needs into system requirements and specifications,
- Ability to translate for business users the new capabilities offered by IT technology,
- Sufficient understanding of the business processes and needs to propose new systems to respond to evolving business needs,
- Overview of the entire organization systems architecture and map, and ability to assess evolutions in terms of interface impacts and coverage of the entire scope.

It is at the same time, the role of an intermediary, and the role of an architect.

The profile of Information Systems Engineers

The profile of successful Information Systems Engineers and Managers is diverse. Because this position is at the

interface between business and IT, both origins are possible

- Business users with an interest in IT,
- IT personnel that develop an interest in the business or have held a previous business role.

Most successful candidates are from the first category since a keen understanding of the business is paramount. In any case the profile is quite rare. It is not really fostered or identified as such in many organisations, therefore successful IS personnel are generally self-made.

In reality we encounter many people that have this role without seeing their role formalised. It can be a real disaster for the organisation when they leave because of the unrecognized strategic role they are playing for the success and the continuity of operation of the organization.

We encourage organizations to identify and formalize the role of Information Systems Managers; and to have them organized separately from the IT department.

The issue of not having an Information Systems role in the organisation

Not having an Information Systems role in the organisation creates multiple issues in terms of reactivity to business or technology change. De facto it also creates a dependency on system vendors, as the organisation lacks the resource and the credibility to drive systems implementation projects. Huge wastage of resources (financial and human) often result from this dependency as systems that are developed and deployed neither properly fit in the overall systems architecture of the organisation, nor really respond to business needs. The cost of having in-house Information Systems specialists would be very much offset by this wastage and the lack of effectiveness of having unsuitable systems supporting the organisation.

As consultants we often have to provide Information Systems specialists to some of our clients who are missing them, in an effort to help them streamline their systems landscape and improvement efforts. Our intervention is often to support specific systems implementation. In the long term this is not sustainable unless the organisation builds its own IS capabilities to produce value in the long term.

Conclusion: Formalise and foster the role of Information Systems Manager

We encourage organizations to identify and formalise the role of Information Systems Managers; and to have them organised separately from the IT department. This should be a small group of personnel that drive the systems transformation of the organization. In these times when digital transformation is a motto for most organisations, this need becomes even more urgent.

References

White Paper [2018-03 'How to Build the Systems Architecture Project-Driven Organisations Need'](#)

White Paper [2018-04 'How to Implement Information Systems in an Effective Manner in Project-Driven Organisations'](#)

White Paper [2018-05 'How to Develop Information Systems in an Effective Manner for Project-Driven Businesses'](#)



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