

Lead with People and Processes; Follow with Technology

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Have you ever heard an executive say that they are going to “**lead with technology**”? I heard a senior executive say this once and I didn’t know if he was brilliant or if he was out of his mind. It turns out that he kind of had the right idea, but it didn’t really work. It didn’t work because technology alone cannot help him, or you, lead or manage the business.

I see leaders make the mistake of leading with technology all the time. They assume that the technology is the single cure for the problem currently facing them. They get too narrowly focused on just one component of the solution and begin an **expensive process** of implementing an incomplete remedy. When you combine technology with people and processes, then you can start to gain competitive advantages. That is if you do things in the correct order.

Information Technology organizations fall into the trap of leading with technology all the time. Far too many IT shops are reactive, rather than proactive, to the problems they are presented with. This is not always their fault, but it can still **cause some real problems** for everyone involved.



When a technology “solution” is thought of as the first, or only component of a total solution, then the “square peg” gets well positioned on top of the round hole and the hammerin’ starts to fly. And let’s face it; many IT workers enjoy working with technology. So when left unmanaged, that big IT hammer starts to swing and the intended “solution” can spiral out of control. A wrong solution can begin to be shoved down the throats of the people it is supposed to serve and unintended consequences ensue.

IT organizations exist to support the business through the use of technology. Really successful IT organizations embrace this and cultivate relationships with their business partners that gives them a seat at the table when the process and people discussions are happening. Successful organizations view technology solutions as a servant to the people and processes, not the other way around.

Don’t try and lead with technology. Lead with people and processes and then look for opportunities where technology can help.

If you ever hear somebody talking about how they can lead with technology, simply start asking questions about what affect the technology will have on the business processes and people involved with them. If you are a leader and you want to make more use of technology, first understand your business processes first. Then go understand your workforce skills. Doing this will give you the advantage of starting to see some areas that technology can help streamline activities and save some money.

Have you ever been subjected to a “technology first” disaster? How much did it cost in hard dollars, in lost time, in lost opportunity, and in lower morale? Have you ever been responsible for organizing such a disaster? We we love to hear how it went!

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