Bright Shiny Objects and Three Basics of Service Optimization

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For many CIOs today, driving fundamental change in business and operating models is a top priority. The potential ability of intelligent automation, Big Data analytics and process reengineering to enhance productivity and flexibility is unquestioned. Benefits can include agile business models that adjust to new market conditions, as well as new ways of engaging with customers.

The challenge lies in the execution. Finding the optimal path to the desired end state presents one obstacle. At a basic level, "transformation" is a big and potentially scary word that by definition implies dramatic, disruptive and (very likely) expensive change. Most businesses, moreover, have invested significant resources in deeply ingrained legacy systems that prove resistant to change. There's also the vexing chicken-and-egg question of whether to start the change process by applying automation or with process redesign.

Another issue is the allure of technology innovation. CIOs risk becoming so enamored with the amazing capabilities of intelligent tools that they lose sight of the fundamentals of service management. In doing so, they neglect the critical components of skilled people and process improvement. This results in a limited return on existing technology investment, as well as a missed opportunity to smooth the transition to digital models.

Recognizing this disconnect, many businesses are re-committing to a disciplined service management approach, one characterized by a more formalized and structured methodology, as well as clearly defined linkages between provider teams and business users. By adopting this approach, businesses can reap significant benefits in terms of cost savings and enhanced agility – without significant investments in new technology.

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Three characteristics of a mature service delivery model are outlined below.

Integrated Global Service Delivery

Enterprises today increasingly must operate on a global scale, and the trend is not confined to large multinational firms. Managing multiple providers across an extended service delivery chain and ensuring seamless consistency poses a challenge, however. Despite the broad acceptance of process standards such as ITIL, as well as clearly defined best practices, standardized service models remain elusive. Indeed, discrete silos of providers and poor communication between vendor partners continue to be more the rule than the exception.

From a buyer's perspective, it's imperative to understand what a provider's ecosystem looks like. Questions to ask include:

> How integrated is the service delivery model?
> How are multi-vendor relationships structured to facilitate collaboration?
> How does the provider ensure compliance up and down the chain of service deliverey?

Modernized Shift/Left

Mature service delivery should aim to transition from the traditional "shift-left" program of reduced ticket volume through end-user self-service to a more advanced model of remote access and configuration. This includes standard Service Desk functions of onboarding new employees, configuring devices and conducting ongoing monitoring and management.

While most organizations have implemented some level of remote service capability, in most cases they're underutilizing the functionality of "over the air" device configuration, particularly in terms of application access and cybersecurity. Here again, the issue is less about technology investment than it is about having the processes and methodology in place to scale the functionality across the enterprise.

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Predictive Analytics

In addition to enhancing service efficiency through remote access, an optimized service delivery model leverages governance and standardized management practices. The result: a virtuous cycle of data collection, analysis and insight that drives continuous improvement. Rather than merely resolving an issue efficiently, a mature enterprise eliminates the root cause of the issue to prevent it from arising in the first place. Businesses can identify and address security vulnerabilities related to technology or processes. Aging equipment that costs more to maintain than to replace can be retired.

Ultimately, having the latest and greatest widget isn't enough. Effective operational performance requires the integration of people, processes and technology. For many organizations, that means a return to the blocking and tackling of service delivery management.

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