

management *insight*



⇒ Recovering from bad systems 2

PROVIDING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO COMPLEX BUSINESS CHALLENGES

“You have to understand, technology must be the enabler for the business, NOT a liability and It MUST generate revenue.” -Robert Majdak

...this network was costing the business \$300,000 per year...

I worked with a company that had serious technology systems problems that were so bad that manufacturing production and office operations was impacted daily. In fact, I will never forget the look on the face of the CFO in charge with the technology department supervision who told me that the last (as in x-); I.T. Manager measured systems performance by measuring the uptime in term of hours and minutes. I only wish I could have seen the look on my face too! Can you imagine your production facility performance effected daily by the subperformance of the technology infrastructure and systems supposedly created to support it? At that time, I certainly could not and to prove the point, I was given a tour of the technology department and its staff. WOW! That was an eye opening experience. A temp technician, three badly configured servers running on a

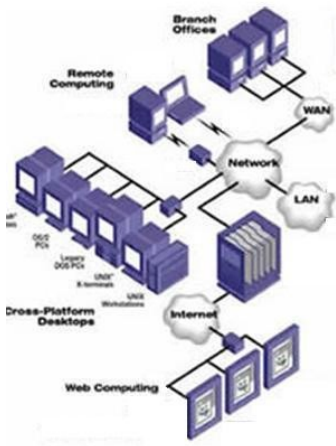
shoddily installed infrastructure feeding data to user PC s that were purchased from a local department store! To say that this was somewhat less than an entry level network is giving it a ton of credit! There was no way that this business was going to succeed based on it implementation of this technology. And it was not succeeding at that time. By the CFO s best calculations, this network was costing the business \$300,000 per year in lost opportunity and expense. The person who was responsible for this fiasco should write a book. Perhaps titling it *“Networks by Dummies”*. I have to say, my heart went out to this CFO and I agreed to design a reconstruction plan from top-to-bottom and bring this business back to profitability based on losses that technology was costing it. And that is exactly what I did.

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Getting back to Brainstorming

Informal brainstorming sessions are great for generating new ideas or elicit fresh ideas to begin creating solutions to problems. For best results, advise participants in advance of the purpose and time constraints for the session so they can prepare. Be sure to keep the group small and that you have invited people with a wide range of expertise and problem resolution approaches. Ask everyone to make contributions because this is really a teamwork situation. Maintain open-mindedness during the session to encourage participation and reserve judgment on feasibility for later.



...planning, design and implementation...

...this project was worth budgeting...

Recovering... ↓

I started applying direct pressure to the bleeding in the system. I identified the daily failures and repaired the systems enough to bring some level of stability. This allowed the system to be good enough to handle the immediate issues the business faced daily from a tactical point of view. It was NOT the system for strategic advantage by a long shot! So I then created a current map and relevant documentation describing the current system.

The next step was to compare the current systems to the business model that was at best, a dream for this business given the state of the systems at the time. I then designed a new system that could be relied upon to deliver the goods. In a nutshell, they needed manufacturing support with manufacturing process control and a business office performing normal operations in a timely fashion. (Ask me later for the details.) I took time to spec out the entire network including internet access, WAN connectivity, servers, infrastructure and end user components like PCs, network printers and handheld devices. Next, a formal presentation was

made to prove that this project was worth budgeting and will succeed. After corporate approval was achieved, purchasing and testing of equipment was accomplished. I also set up the new network as a duplicate of the original in an empty warehouse to demonstrate with copied data, that this new system will function better than the original. Then implementation plan was designed to transfer control of the business from the old system to the new system over a weekend. Old data servers ran in parallel for one week before shutting them down for good. Great planning, design and implementation turned this business to strategic advantage.

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