

# LEADING IT TRANSFORMATION

*The Roadmap for Success*



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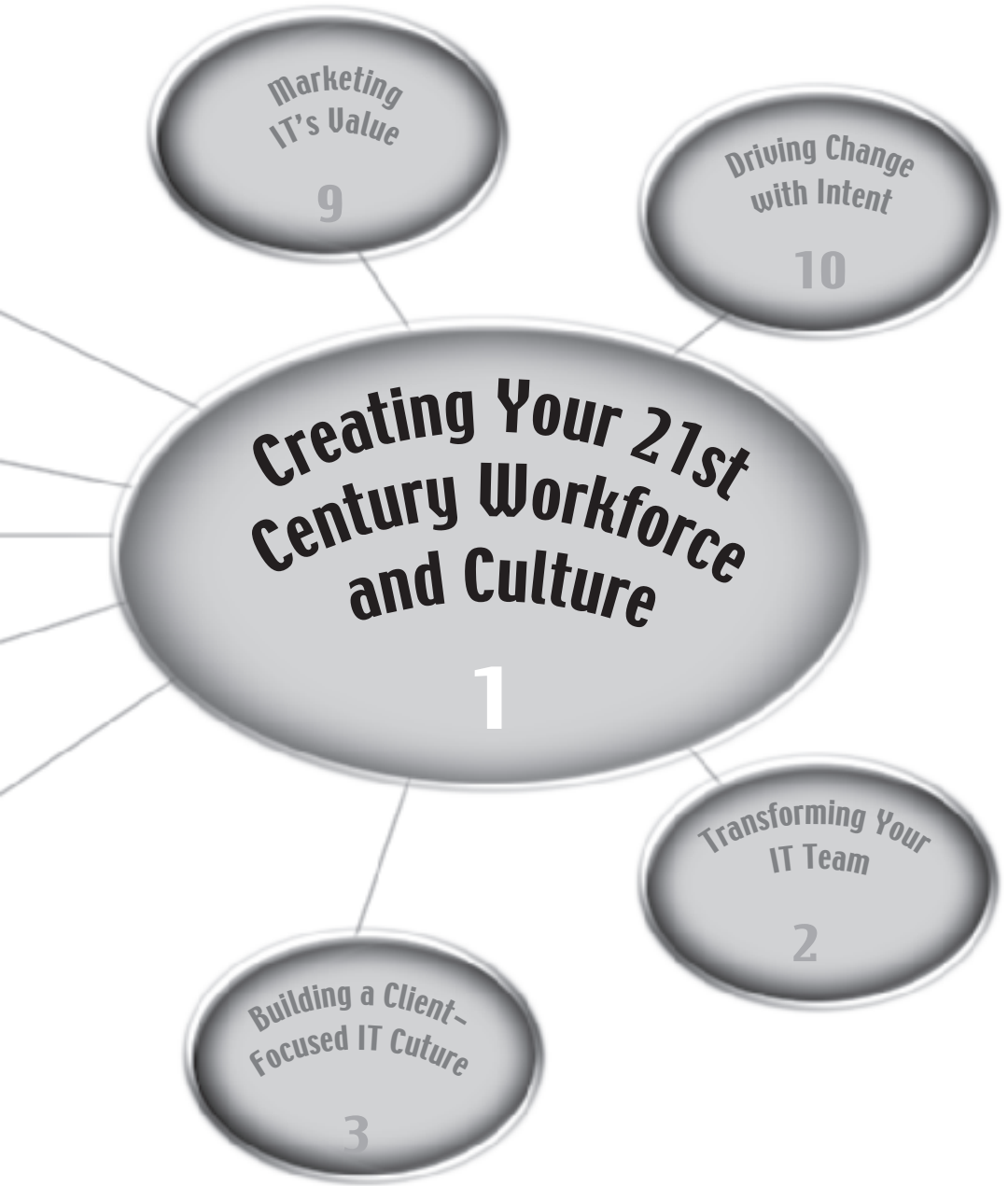
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**T**here has never been a better time to be an IT professional. That's right! While prognosticators have loudly predicted the demise of IT, I firmly believe there has never been a more exciting or auspicious time to be in this profession.

That may sound strange to some of you IT veterans out there. You may remember the good ol' days of Electronic Data Processing when IT professionals were safe behind the glass walls, free to focus on technology, without interference from those pesky "end users." Or perhaps you remember being the hero in the late '90s, riding in on a white horse to save the world from the Y2K coding debacle. Then there were the wild, early days of the Internet, when being a techie was suddenly cool.

For those who long for any of those days, I can appreciate your disdain for my optimism. You've weathered the lean years following the dot-com crash, the outsourcing that leveled many of your staffs, the questioning of IT's value and the ROI scrutiny that continues today.

But still, I don't think I'm being naïve. Though the last few years have been riddled with doubt, disappointment and discomfort, they also produced an awareness in most of the business world that technology can be a game-changer. From a business leader's perspective, globalization and other market forces have turned technology into a key differentiator as companies expand into international markets. Cut-throat competition is forcing continuous innovation, and government regulations are driving constant introspection – all fueled by technology. Meanwhile, particularly with the rise of consumer technology, business employees have no patience with "the computer guys" who say, "We can't do that."

At one and the same time, the people in charge of technology are expected to be technologically advanced, business-minded, customer-focused and financially astute. Technology leaders are expected to reduce costs, increase productivity, drive innovation and help the business identify and pursue new business opportunities. In the face of unforgiving competition, rampant globalization and demanding customers, business leaders now know that it's absolutely essential to have a strong, active partner keeping a firm hand on the decisions and strategies surrounding information technology.

Of course, there have never been more options to consider when it comes to doing just that. IT faces competition from internal shadow groups, vendors and consultants, outsourcers and offshorers, all promising to do it faster, cheaper, better. But still, I firmly believe that IT organizations can be well positioned to compete as their companies' value added provider of choice – IF AND ONLY IF they're ready to take a hard look at themselves and make some changes, both in terms of how they approach their work and the personal skill set they consider essential to tackling the demands of an ever-changing business environment. The bottom line is, the IT professional of the past won't cut it in today's corporate world.

## “CORE” SKILLS FOR SUCCESS

To remain viable, IT leaders need to proactively transform their organizations and cultures. In order to accomplish this, they need to develop an IT workforce that has the new mindset, skill set and tool set necessary for success, such as communicating, relationship-building, collaborating, managing change, marketing, negotiating and the like. These are the skills that are necessary for effectively filling the growing percentage of IT jobs that are business-facing. You've heard this before, but today, it's no longer just a suggestion; what have historically been termed “soft” skills are the very ones that will drive IT to the level it needs to reach in order to be viable in the future. In fact, savvy IT leaders no longer use the term “soft skills” when referring to these key capabilities. They call them “core skills” because they're the very ones needed to achieve “hard” results.

If you step back for a minute, the need to evolve shouldn't be surprising. The IT profession is really still in its infancy. It's only a few decades old – a new kid on the block, compared to its peers in other business areas that have had centuries to “grow up.” I can imagine a time in the future when we'll look back at the second half of the 20th century as the time when IT was just cutting its teeth.

In some ways, IT professionals are now living through the tough teenage years of their profession. They're wrestling with internal turmoil they don't often understand while defiantly ignoring the advice and experience provided by their external environment. Like teenagers, they want so badly to be independent and earn the respect of their peers and elders. However, their erratic, mercurial behavior and unpredictability continue to demonstrate their immaturity.

The exciting news for IT professionals is that they're poised to enter adulthood. And this new era will have less to do with a command-and-control or bits-and-bytes mindset and more to do with being collaborative and versatile business partners.

## POSITIONING IT AS PROVIDER OF CHOICE

That's why we at Ouellette & Associates Consulting, Inc. (O&A) chose now to write this book. We have a lot to offer IT leaders who want to prepare their staffs and organizations for the next phase of IT's evolution and a successful future. Since 1984, our tagline at O&A has been, "*Developing the Human Side of Technology*," and never has this mantra been more important to IT than it is today.

We've been fortunate to work with nearly 3,000 IT organizations representing all industries, led by progressive IT leaders who are dedicated to transforming their organizations, whether their staffs numbered 20 or 7,000. This book is based on these industry pioneers and their passion for and commitment to moving their organizations from reactive, technology-centric, order-taker cultures to ones that are consultative and business savvy – in short, organizations that position internal IT as the business's technology provider of choice.

While other managers immediately cut their professional/organizational development budget at the first sign of economic distress, these savvy leaders invested in their people during both good and bad economic times. By leveraging O&A's IT-specific professional development services, they initiated and sponsored their own personal transformations and then proceeded to help their departments reach their full potential.

## A UNIQUE APPROACH

Others have written about the changing field of IT, but O&A's approach is unique. For one, it's written by a team of O&A consultants, subject matter experts and workshop leaders, who for the first time have committed their insights and experience to paper. Together, these seasoned professionals represent more than 200 years of experience in the real-world IT trenches and as consultants and trainers, helping tens of thousands of IT professionals transform how they do business, both individually and organizationally.

Because they've walked the walk as IT practitioners, leaders and consultants, they write with a voice of authority that comes from experience.

On a personal level, I have contributed to several books that have been very well received by our industry. I am extremely excited about *Leading IT Transformation: The Roadmap for Success*, based on the reviews and feedback provided by several respected industry leaders, and am confident about the value it's going to bring to the IT industry and profession.

You won't hear us promoting the latest management fad, promising silver-bullet solutions to the challenges you face as an IT leader. In fact, we strived to write a book that was practical and immediately applicable. How many times have you read a business book, agreed with most everything it said and then discovered you didn't have much if anything tangible to apply? This book, like the proven workshops and services it's based on, is designed for you to begin applying what you've learned immediately. Rather than writing from a 30,000-foot level, we wanted to combine big-picture context with specific advice you can use in your next planning session, staff meeting or client interaction.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find a "top 10" list summarizing the chapter and providing you with immediate, actionable take-aways. We will also prompt you to note a few specific actions you plan to take based on what you just read.

This format aligns with O&A's overall philosophy of helping our clients "learn how to fish." At O&A, we've never been big fans of the traditional consulting model that causes clients to become dependent. This may be good for revenue generation, but it's an approach that's never sat well with us. Our focus has always been on helping our clients become self-sufficient. This book will seek to do the same.

This book is also not going to tell you everything there is to know about IT transformation. It would take several books and more time than you have to cover everything there is to know about this topic. Instead our goal is to help you be effective, to jumpstart your transformational journey, and to build and sustain momentum. If you've already begun this journey, then this book will add to your toolkit and help you continue your momentum. If you're one of those rare IT leaders who've successfully

transformed your IT organization, you already recognize that success is a journey and not a destination. I hope you'll meld our experiences and best practices with your own to take your organization to the next level.

We've based the book on proven approaches that generate results. O&A's clients have applied and sustained the teachings in this book, and by doing so, they've positioned their organizations for the future. They've chosen to focus on developing the "human side" of IT rather than "fixing" IT by applying the latest technology, methodology, framework or management guru fad. They've discovered that success is based not on a big-bang theory but by executing many little things every day. These small wins add up and build momentum from the top-down and from the bottom-up.

That's why we believe that by reading this book and acting on its advice, you too can build strong relationships with your business partners and earn a seat at the table of strategic decision making. You too will be perceived as an effective communicator, tactful negotiator and influential opinion leader across your organization. And your IT organization will also be positioned as IT provider of first choice.

## A CONSISTENT TERMINOLOGY

Part of the value we bring to our clients when helping them with their transformation efforts is the introduction of a consistent vocabulary. In this book, we will frequently use words and phrases that might mean different things to different people. Therefore, I want to define a few of these here for you:

- **IT.** We will commonly refer to *IT* as the organization responsible for managing and delivering technology and related services.
- **Client vs. Customer.** We will refer to *clients* or *business partners* as those who are the beneficiaries of IT's products and services. When we use the term *customer*, it will refer to the "Big C" customers to whom our corporations provide products and services.
- **WIIFM ("wiff-em").** *WIIFM* stands for "What's In It for Me," an expression we want every IT professional to think about when considering a

client's point of view. In other words, find out what matters to the client before expecting him or her to be motivated to act.

- **The Four Cs.** Each chapter is focused on helping you increase your staff's Competence, Confidence, Commitment and Consistency in each area addressed.

Throughout the book, we'll also reinforce some key concepts. For instance, you'll read a lot about the importance of teamwork and collaboration – not just with clients, but also with peers in IT. It's time for IT professionals to rid themselves of all notions of “us vs. them” because to meet the needs of the business, everyone needs to row in the same direction.

Interpersonal skills also come up a lot. In fact, one of our consultants refers to his project management workshops as a “three-day charm school!” Interpersonal skills, or “core” skills as previously described, lead to strong relationships, which lead to trust, and with trust, we can overcome even our most difficult situations.

IT professionals tend not to like the “touchy-feely” stuff, but you'll also read a lot about empathy, an area of weakness in the IT profession. You'll find that empathy is less touchy-feely than you think and is actually a key tool for working through conflict, building relationships and achieving your full potential. It's a matter of listening to the other person's perspectives and letting that person know you've heard and understand them. You don't even need to agree!

## WHO WILL BENEFIT MOST

A wide range of people will benefit from reading this book, including IT leaders holding titles from CIO, to business unit or regional information officer, to VP, to director or manager of IT. Whether you are the CIO of a 7,000-person IT staff that spans the globe or a manager overseeing a local IT team, I am confident that you will benefit from reading this book. We are excited to share the experience, best practices and proven techniques that other IT leaders are using to reorient, re-skill and retool their IT workforce and build a new culture.

It's not only leaders who will benefit from this book. Whether you work in applications or the technology infrastructure side of the IT business – and

whether you aspire to management or wish to be the most effective individual contributor you can be – this book will introduce anyone on the IT staff to the philosophies and skill sets that will help you meet the challenges of your profession. If you follow the latest research and read industry trade publications, you know that an increasing percentage of IT jobs and roles in the future are going to be client- and business-facing, and we will help you prepare for these new opportunities.

## LEVERAGING THIS BOOK

We believe that each of the chapters in this book is important for success. That being said, we appreciate that every IT organization is in a different stage of their transformation evolution and that some chapters will be more immediately applicable than others. We also appreciate that it isn't feasible to effectively tackle all of these areas at once.

Therefore, we recommend that once you've read the book, you identify the two or three chapters that address the areas most pressing in your organization today. Make these a priority in your organization and strategy planning. Demonstrate your commitment and sponsorship by taking every opportunity to “walk the talk” and communicating these priorities to your people.

We also advise that you engage each level of your management team in your transformation journey, because they play a critical role in building a new culture. Include them in establishing priorities and determining action plans, and hold them accountable for achieving these priorities. Don't allow them to revert back to their technical comfort zones. Be sure to position your people for success by investing in them and providing them with the new skills and tools they'll need to be successful. This approach will help you address today's priorities while building momentum toward the future.

Warning! Do not start down this path unless you are seriously committed to sustaining it. If your transformation efforts are not continued, you will add to the cynicism level created by past transformation attempts that ended prematurely or were pushed aside by yet another flavor of the month. Slow and steady can win the race, but starting and stopping is not an option, as it will negatively impact your reputation and the credibility of IT across the enterprise.

So, let me modify the statement I made at the very beginning of this chapter. I still say there's never been a better time to be in IT, but I'll add that there's also never been a more challenging time in IT's short history. The question is, are you up for that challenge? Because if you are, we at O&A wish you nothing but success and are excited that you have included us in your transformation journey!