

SUBJECTIVITY IMPACTS TECHNOLOGY DECISIONS

Based Upon Beliefs, Philosophy, Experience and Underlying Principles

Personal differences play a major role in the selection, planning, success and failure of technology and the product implementations and investments that go with it. From decisions about whether or not to fund a project to all of the necessary steps that implement it, individuals make the difference in how things get done and how successful they will be. Good planning is certainly essential, but no plan will have enough detail to reflect all of the things that could occur and describe the possible responses to deal with every contingency. Within bounds, people who are involved must be experienced, flexible and capable of making adjustments that keep plans and schedules on track. After all, as Murphy said, "If anything can go wrong, it will, and usually at the most inopportune moment." Some people think that he was an optimist.

Even though kismet or divine guidance seems to be at work on a regular basis, it is important for everyone to do their part to recognize what is necessary and take appropriate actions to create project teams, get funding, marshal resources and move forward. It is essential for each participant to continually put him or herself into the shoes of others. This is how they can better understand the needs of others, create an esprit de corps and assure that every opportunity will bring a win-win outcome for everyone. Let's look at how this applies to:

- Funding
- Timing
- Market assessment and customer focus
- Resources
- Organization, team building and planning
- Management

Funding is like hiring

Those controlling the money are obviously in the driver's seat. They will not authorize expenditures or provide money unless they believe in what they are doing. It needs to feel right based upon a thorough study and chemistry between the participants. Expectations must not only satisfy the obvious objectives, but also things that are more qualitative and intangible. However, no matter how good the numbers look, do we really want to facilitate something that we would not buy ourselves or work with those that fail to demonstrate qualities that we hold dear? Conversely, when we really believe in something, are we not less likely to throw up roadblocks that tend to be exclusionary? After all, does anyone really have 100 percent certainty that what is in the business, marketing, financial and operational plans will happen exactly as stated? So what seems most important is to assure that nothing is undertaken without proper due diligence.

When the time is right

Money may be scarce right now. The economy is a mess and getting worse. Nevertheless, things will eventually get better and prosperity will come back. It always does, no matter how difficult things become or how long it takes. Therefore, now is the time to make improvements that will make an essential difference when things do improve. Work can also be accomplished more carefully and proactively now that output is not running near capacity. Results will then be ready to support new business, and no one will be able to use the excuse that they are too busy supporting regular business to be able to take on projects that improve it.

Markets and customers are what matters

They can turn on a dime and leave you in the dust if you allow it to happen. Customer Relationship Management means exactly what it says. It takes good communications, a willingness to listen and expectations that can be agreed to. Cut to the chase. Let customers do the talking; ask brief questions to get clarification of points that are being made. Keep things simple. Look for signs. Over selling or selling what isn't wanted will kill any opportunity. Make sure to assess "willingness to pay" when discussing product features and functions. Use an incremental improvement model to avoid overwhelming the audience with things that seem complicated and difficult to implement. However, make sure that each milestone has its own objectives and tangible benefits.

Interest can vary greatly from the purchase of a few units to test a concept to a large order for an enterprise-wide implementation. Never speculate. Watch out for those expecting free help; they will get it and give the large order to a no service discounter. Instead, make the customer understand that you offer a full range of services that they will need and cannot provide for themselves. You also have skills and capabilities that any competitors lack, too. Offer to help decision-makers prepare the justification to purchase from you without going through a bidding process that only involves price and availability. Stress your “total-value” proposition.

Dedicated resources vs. outsourcing

Major decisions involve whether to use dedicated resources or to outsource necessary work. Although these decisions have an impact on costs, there is much more to them. In fact, costs could even be considerably higher if it is necessary to bring in experts with skills that are not available internally. As an extension to employees, outsourcers must also be managed unless that function is also delegated to an outsourcer. These decisions should not be taken lightly as accountability and control can be impacted.

Getting started

It begins with top level support and encouragement. All stakeholders within the organization must become actively involved in team building and planning. An early deliverable will be the preparation of a Business Case to examine and present all of the considerations and alternatives that will justify the project. Participants must also include milestones with metrics that will allow the determination of successful completion of each and every task within the project diagram and schedule.

Assuring successful projects and investments

This requires accountability and regular tracking and reporting of results. An unbiased reporter is needed to collect data and assure the completeness and accuracy of reports. As important aids to the project manager and executive sponsors, reports serve as an important means to stimulate follow through on commitments including tasks performed and adherence to schedules. When project objectives appear in jeopardy, reports will help to anticipate and plan for remedial efforts.

Our new product/technology introduction services are customized to:

- Make technology investments more profitable
- Assess whether high-risk technology ventures are likely to yield billion-dollar rewards
- Prepare Business Cases that justify technology implementations including whether to make an advance commitment to buy finished products and/or contribute to manufacturing costs associated with customization
- Plan improvements in operations/business processes and introduce changes to employees
- Build manufacturing, distribution and support infrastructures and outsourcing relationships
- Translate customer needs and requirements into final design specifications
- Develop and apply metrics for product evaluation and testing
- Create images of visionary, entrepreneurial companies
- Provide regular advice and counsel (including second opinions) to vendors and end-users

Please contact us to learn how we will help you.

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