

Miriona's Message – no. 10

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Introduction

Cutting Back Costs?

With the credit crunch continuing, most organisations are still very cost conscious. A recent article in Computer Weekly focused on the idea that businesses cutting back IT costs because of the recession are risking their future. According to Deloitte, 84% of cost cutting is being driven from outside the IT department. The danger is that businesses will not be in a position to respond once the market starts to recover.

Although NFPs don't have the same drive to remain competitive, the potential issues of having out-of-date IT can be similar. In order to maintain the required level of service to the organisation and clients, IT needs to be kept reasonably current and IT staffing needs to be right to meet service needs. It's always a difficult balance between budget management and what you would like to do with your IT service; a task not made easier in these economic times!

Hot Topic

Out with the old and in with the new!

Most of you will probably be aware that XP has now gone out of mainstream support (a couple of months ago). Extended support is available until 8 April 2014 and Microsoft says they will continue to develop hot fixes. This won't affect most organisations unless there is a major malware outbreak but it's worth considering when you could be looking to upgrade, especially if you need to review a strategy plan.

After an overhaul of its own, PRINCE2 has now been re-issued in its 2009 version. One major change is that it's been split into two books: Managing Successful Projects (for Project Managers and teams) and Directing Successful Projects (for Sponsors and Boards). Most of the major concepts are largely unchanged but it aims to be streamlined and easier to apply, with more guidance on tailoring. As everyone will have a tailored version anyway I'm not sure how much streamlining the main books will help! There is also a greater emphasis on soft skills which should be an improvement on its previous task-oriented focus. Those of you with PRINCE2 qualifications will be reassured that our qualifications are not invalidated (phew!).

For more information, you can call Miriona on 07766 948470 or email newsletter@miriona.co.uk.

Working Smarter

TNTUJ (Try Not To Use Jargon!)

There was an article in Computer Weekly earlier this year concerning an attempt by the Local Government Association to ban certain words and phrases when communicating with the public. Included in this list were some very common IT ones such as baseline, benchmarking, best practice, capabilities, early win, enabler, functionality, interface, outsourcing, stakeholder, transformational and vision.

The article was fairly scathing and pointed out that this jargon is indispensable in precisely describing IT activities and initiatives. However it also points out that some terms were very vague, obscure and should really be avoided, such as conditionality, coterminosity and place shaping (?!).

It concluded with some guidance from The Economist: technical terms should be used in their proper context only and jargon should not be used to obscure the truth. If you need to use jargon, you should explain what you mean. And avoid jargon that tried to dignify nonsense with seriousness (and I suspect we've all come across some of those!).

This is a useful reminder to all in IT, but especially those who have to communicate with non-IT people. We do get so used to certain phrases that it's easy to forget that people outside IT may not be familiar with them. If in doubt, explain! Or use a clearer phrase to make sure your point gets across.

Want to discuss this further? Contact Miriona on 07766 948470 or email newsletter@miriona.co.uk.

Hints & Tips

Word: Easily Move a Paragraph

If you want to move an entire paragraph up or down a document, click once anywhere in the paragraph to be moved, hold down the Shift and Alt keys and use the up and down arrows to move the paragraph through the document.

Outlook 2007: Shortcut Keys

If you want an alternative way of moving around the different panes in Outlook 2007 to clicking on the navigation panel, use these shortcut keys: Mail: Ctrl-1; Calendar: Ctrl-2; Contacts: Ctrl-3; Tasks: Ctrl-4; Notes: Ctrl-5; Folder list: Ctrl-6; Shortcuts: Ctrl-7; Journal: Ctrl-8.

The Lighter Side of IT!

Beware of the Heckler...

(I'm assuming this is an urban myth, but I love the idea! J)

At a recent Sacramento PC User's Group meeting, a company was demonstrating its latest speech-recognition software. A representative from the company was just about ready to start the demonstration and asked everyone in the room to quiet down.

Just then someone in the back of the room yelled, "Format C: Return."

Someone else chimed in: "Yes, Return!"

Unfortunately, the software worked.

Thank you for reading!

Any comments or ideas for future newsletters are welcomed – please send to newsletter@miriona.co.uk.

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