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CIOs Hang On In Management Of Company MIS Function

Why is it so hard to succeed?

In management, the tightrope that many CIOs hang onto is meet the short term, and real needs of the company versus implementing the architecture of the future. If the CIO succeeds, he keeps his job but violates the integrity of all the planning and commitments that have been made. The line he had to hold is extremely fine and his fall from grace would be terminal. What does a CIO do to resolve this dilemma — a successful company, a working IS architecture, and an ongoing career?

The first focus must be the company and its day to day operations. The architecture does not matter if the company fails. The challenge the CIO and the organization face is how to survive this crisis with least organizational and architectural damage. The CIO must be pragmatic and able to turn on a dime. The CIO has to do three things to survive:

- Implement multiple solutions for the same business function
- Act quickly to get solutions to business units
- Do not follow conventional wisdom

The actions that the CIO can take are clear:

Have an MIS team in place that has the capacity to deal with business driven events while supporting day-to-day operations.

Most failures occur because people are taken out of line operations that are stretched

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New Discrimination Legislation Is Now The Law - What Risks Do You Face?

Ramifications of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 are just starting to be understood

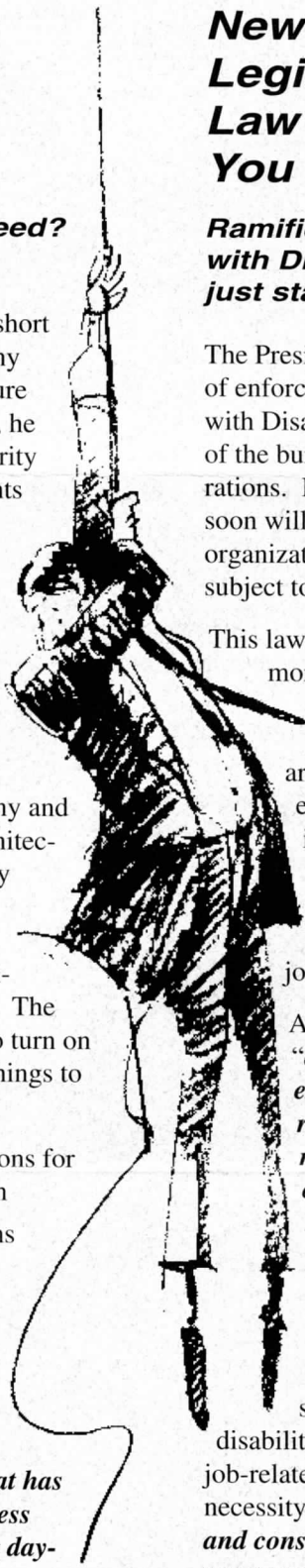
The President has delayed the implementation of enforcement of Title 1 of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1992 (ADA) because of the burden that this will place on all corporations. But the clock is running out. ADA soon will be the law of the land. Many organizations do not know that they are now subject to these new regulations.

This law requires that any enterprise that has more than 25 employees make reasonable accommodations to see that qualified Americans with disabilities are not discriminated against. An employer is not required to hire an individual that does not have the ability to meet essential job function requirements. It is up to the employer to prove what the essential job functions are.

ADA defines a qualified individual as "one who satisfies the requisite skill, experience, education and other job-related requirements of the employment position such individual holds or desires, who, with or without reasonable accommodation, can perform the essential functions of such position."

Qualification standards or selection criteria that screen out or tend to screen out an individual with a disability on the basis of disability must be job-related and consistent with business necessity. "Even if a standard is job-related and consistent with business necessity, if it screens out an individual with a disability on the basis of disability, the employer must consider if the individual could meet the standard with a reasonable accommodation."

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CIOs Hang On In Management Of Company MIS Function

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too thinly already. When all the good managers are working on one problem the rest of the house may appear to be made out of cards. If there is one thing that the CIO has to do before this happens, it is to have identified resources available who can get things done quickly while not degrading ongoing service levels.

Have a rapid response team that gives the user a solution now and tells the architects of future systems what should be included in the future.

Quick hits that the users can use are much better than efficient order processing systems that are twelve months down the road. There is nothing wrong with creating a throw-away solution.

For example, a complex distribution organization was trying to service new customers while the perfect system architecture was being defined. Orders needed to be processed today. They put a working prototype in place for the operating groups and then had another team implement the same solution, in a more efficient manner, in the general system architecture.

Maximize Success Factors

- Implemented multiple solutions for the same business function**
- Act quickly to get solutions to business units**
- Do not follow conventional wisdom**

Act quickly and decisively to get to a result — even if the result is no better than 80% right.

Understand what it will take to make the company successful in twelve to eighteen months. When the business drives change, conduct a quick assessment and planning process. It should take a day or two and no longer than two to three weeks for any company. If it takes longer the CIO will fall off the tightrope. For example, in a merger, quickly access the capabilities of the infrastructure of both old companies and the new merged company. Define an action plan to merge the companies that will minimize reliance on the old ways of doing things.

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New Discrimination Legislation Is Now The Law - What Risks Do You Face?

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One striking example that was listed in the federal publication that described this new regulation was frightening at best.

An employer has a job opening for an administrative assistant. The essential functions of the job are administrative and organizational. Some occasional typing has been part of the job, but other clerical staff are available who can perform this marginal job function. There are two job applicants. One has a disability that makes typing very difficult, the other has no disability and can type. The employer may not refuse to hire the first applicant because of her inability to type, but must base a job decision on the relative ability of each applicant to perform the essential administrative and organizational job functions, with or without accommodation.

The employer may not screen out the applicant with a disability because of the need to make an accommodation to perform the essential job functions. However, if the first applicant could not type for a reason not related to her disability (for example, if she had never learned to type) the employer would be free to select the applicant who could best perform all the job functions.

It may be job-related and necessary for a business to require that a secretary produce letters and other documents on a word processor. But it would be discriminatory to reject a person whose disability prevented manual keyboard operation, but who could meet the qualification standard using a computer assisted device, if providing this device would not impose an undue hardship.

The ADA does not require an employer to develop or maintain position descriptions. A written position description that is prepared before advertising or interviewing applicants for a job will be considered as evidence along with other relevant factors.

A written position description may state that an employee performs certain essential functions. The position description will be evidence that the function is essential, but if individuals currently performing the job do not in fact perform this function, or perform it very infrequently, a review of the actual work performed will be more relevant evidence than the position description.

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CIOs Hang On In Management Of Company MIS Function

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We have learned one thing in the last twenty-five years. Perfect and elegant solutions do not work in crisis situations. Solutions the users can implement quickly work — even if they do not fit in the long term application architecture.

Conventional wisdom does not always work — achieving economies of scale is a road doomed to failure.

Develop an action plan that will depend on a small cadre of responsible people. A good example of this was the Wickes Companies when it was coming out of bankruptcy. People were a scarce resource and the natural thing to do would have been to combine the MIS functions of multiple groups and achieve economies of scale.

They did not do that. Rather they assigned one team to the accounting and bankruptcy reporting functions. Another team was assigned to the IBM platform and they were assigned the business applications including Distribution and Accounts Payable. A third team was responsible for construction of the “legs and bridges” between the systems.

This eliminated the starting and stopping of the entire organization as priorities changed. This is not the case in most organizations today. As priorities change many are in a state of turmoil because they have not adapted to the changing business world.

In summary, clearly the rate of change will continue to increase. The conflicts we all face are real and must be solved now. We need to break out of the mold of the perfect solution using the bureaucratic processes that have evolved in MIS organizations. SDM and system architecture are the reason MIS has succeeded in the past and will be the causes of many failures in the future.

New Discrimination Legislation Is Now The Law - What Risks Do You Face?

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- If an employer uses written position descriptions, the ADA does not require that they be limited to a description of essential functions or that “essential functions” be identified. However, if an employer wishes to use a position description as evidence of essential functions, it should in some way identify those functions that the employer believes to be important in accomplishing the purpose of the job.
- If the employer intends to use a position description as evidence of essential functions, the position description must be prepared before advertising or interviewing for a job; **a position description prepared after an alleged discriminatory action will not be considered as evidence.**
- If an employer uses written position descriptions, they should be reviewed to be sure that they accurately reflect the actual functions of the current job. **Position descriptions written years ago frequently are inaccurate.**

This is an area that everyone will be focusing on once the recession is over. Will you be ready for it?

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Forecast Of The West Coast MIS Job Market

Some Bright Spots But All In All The Recession Drags On !!!! -- George, Do Something!!!!

by M. Victor Janulaitis

The recession of 1990/91 has turned into the malaise of 1992. Every time that it looks like the recession is over one more brick hits the West Coast economy. First is was the "disturbances in Southern California", then it was the 7.4 earthquake, then Hughes and Amoco each announce another 9,000 people are going to be laid off, then the state of California has no budget, and then George says 9.5% unemployment is a lack of consumer confidence, not a recession.

There are a number of areas where the recession has not caused the sky to fall in. The problem is that there are so many places were everyone is just not sure of what is going to happen. Therefore they are doing little and just going to wait and see. Once the turn around starts - I am betting on late fourth quarter or first quarter of next year - there will be no stopping it for at least a while.

We now are in a time warp. Most organizations are experiencing the loss of some good people to other firms. This is leaving some gapping holes that need to be filled.



Published by:

M. Victor Janulaitis

In trying to fill those openings, it is next to impossible to get people to move. We heard of one middle level consultant at a "Big 6" firm that was enticed to go to work for their client at a 100% pay increase. Not a very good sign. Companies are now starting to think about coming out of the recession with no increase in head count.

A limited number of MBAs from major schools who graduated in the spring are still without the job of their dreams. True to form, they are taking whatever they can get and will jump once the job market changes.

One of the real bright spots is the Entertainment Industry. With several block busters and the best box office year ever, they are on the move. The only down side is that the parent companies of the major studios are not doing too well. They are trying to use the improved earnings of the summer to fund the rest of their businesses. Disney has found the Far Eastern capital market tight and they have been having some difficulty trying to get the

capital pool for the next set of production syndication fees. This also is putting some dampers on the "business".

With the earthquake and the King affair the insurance companies have been hit twice. Now as employment continues to stay low the health care

The recession of 1990/91 has turned into the malaise of 1992.

industry will start to feel the pinch. Low interest rates will help but the typically fourth quarter holiday demand is going to be dampened again. The recovery will continue to be slow and I bet that the election will garner a few more surprises.

The job market remains spotty at best. There is a movement out of larger organizations to smaller ones. There also has been a movement of a number of good people out of our market and to the East Coast and Mid-West. That is a short term problem. I would not want to be one of those people when they try to get back into our market. ☛

Vic

Industry	Prospects Short Term	Prospects Long Term
Aerospace	Worse	Worse
Distribution	Good	Excellent
Entertainment	Excellent	Excellent
Financial Services	Poor	Worse
Health Care	Excellent	Good
Insurance	Good	Good
Manufacturing	Good	Good
National Consulting	Good	Excellent
Service	Good	Good