How to sell ITSM to the Business

By Rick Lemieux

If the old rule of selling ITSM was to *talk it up* until the business *bit*, the new rules say you've got to start by *listening* and then helping the business executive connect the value of ITSM back into his or her business unit value chain.

A recent Gartner report examined long-term trends in IT. It concluded that over the next five years IT would transform itself into a business focused, process-oriented organization delivering the agility and innovation enterprises need to maintain their competitive advantage in the marketplace. In effect, IT would be delivering Business Technology solutions that would exploit technology in support of business objectives.

The successful adoption of any new IT standard or technology can directly be attributed to many factors, including the vision and drive of its creators to IT's ability to persuade business executive that it can solve problems executives didn't know existed. In the traditional selling of new IT standards or technologies, product knowledge was the magic elixir and when coupled with glibness could turn the most recalcitrant buyer into a willing victim.

With the advent of the world wide web and low cost managed IT solutions, business executive have evolved into a more sophisticated buyer with a much clearer understanding of their IT/business needs. This doesn't mean your product or service is unimportant. It means it is secondary to the business executive perception -- not of you or of your product -- but of his or her own situation.

We refer to that perception as the Customer's Concept, and attending to the customer's concept is the very foundation of a philosophy that might be referred to as No-Sell Selling. The following newsletter outlines the four steps to successfully integrate the business unit executive team into the ITSM value chain using a No-Sell Sell conceptual selling model.

When examined in detail, the Gartner report predicts that IT as we know it will evolve into a Business Technology organization (BTO), integrating itself into the enterprise or mission value chain. The enterprise's focus will shift from Return-On-Investment (ROI) on technology projects to total business value delivered to the enterprise or mission. In turn, IT will shift its focus from the internal delivery of technology to the brokering of services in a multi-source environment.

In order to support this new BTO model, IT must help the business executive conceptualize the value IT Service Management (ITSM) brings to this transformation, IT must position ITSM using terms and concepts that will help connect the value of ITSM back to business executive's perception of his or her world.

Step 1: Integrate the Executive Team into Each Others Value Chain

IT executives need to integrate themselves into the business value chain and business executive need to do the same on the IT side. This approach will enable both organizations to understand each others perception or situation which in turn will enable them to build solutions that deliver the most business value to the enterprise or mission.

Step 2: Create a New Business Focused IT Language

In order to support this new IT/business model, IT needs to create a new business focused IT language. This language can be depicted by some of the following attributes:

Traditional I/T	becomes	Business Focused - IT
Technology Focus	→	Process Focus
"Fire-Fighting"	→	Preventative
Reactive	→	Proactive
Users	→	Customers
Centralized, Done In-House	→	Multi-Sourced
Isolated, Silos	→	Integrated, Enterprise-Wide
"One Off", Ad Hoc	→	Repeatable, Accountable
Informal Processes	→	Formal Best Practices
IT Internal Perspective	→	Business Perspective
Operational Specific	→	Service Orientation

Step 3: Connect the ITSM Value Dots

Take the time to educate the business unit executive on the business value associated with each process area. Use examples that will make it easy for him or her to connect that value back to his or her perception or situation.

Step 4: Create a Marketing Plan for the Business Unit

Take the time to create a business unit marketing plan to help them advertise how these new process controls will benefit their clients. Be sure to share the glory and be seen sharing the glory.

Summary

Today's multi-faceted business world demands that Information Technology provide its services in the context of a fully integrated corporate strategic model. This transformation becomes possible when IT, through a No-Sell Sell conceptual selling model, is able to help executive management connect the business value of IT Service Management (ITSM) to terms and concept that are essential to the success of the business.