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Don't forget about transition management

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29 Jun 2011, Alan Pett , CRN



The language of ICT is broad and complex, encompassing many standard terms often overlaid with acronyms and abbreviations, many of which may need further explanation.

There is also a number of words and phrases that people readily accept and use without stopping to think what they really mean.

Project methodology frameworks such as ITIL, PRINCE2 and Six Sigma are well established, but sometimes conflict and are open to local interpretation. One phrase that I am often asked to explain is "transition management".

The dictionary definition of "transition" is a passage from one state, stage, subject or place, to another. This does make sense, but why is it important?

I use the phrase "transition management" to mean something specific, of enormous importance and significant value, that is often overlooked or taken for granted.

For business, transition management has a value that, once understood, customers are prepared to pay for. It is a kind of revenue generator.

For us, it describes the activities required to bridge the handover to the operational teams from all sales and pre-sales efforts that went into selling a new or complex service proposition. The former then has to

deliver that service, and do so efficiently, effectively and within the agreed timescales.

In many organisations, I see vast efforts going into winning business, which is then handed over to delivery via the processing of a sales order. A wad of documentation is emailed internally to service delivery and operations.

It is simply thrown over the fence. I am sure that phrase will be familiar to many operational people reading this.

It is an interesting mindset, however. Project management is surely required when selling complex infrastructure or application development to a client.

A pure service solution should not be any different. Good service delivery does not just happen. It takes process mapping, documentation production, information sharing, training, communication, education and strong management to ensure expectations are aligned, understood, agreed, and can be met. In fact, all of this is very similar to what is needed for good project management.

The next time you sell services-only, you must ask who is going to make it all happen. Chances are you already have people identified for such occasions. Ask yourself whether you factored the cost of this individual into your quote to the customer.

Transition management is important both to your business and to your customer. Do not give it away lightly.

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