

# Introduction

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Undoubtedly there is something in the human psyche that instinctively instils in the majority of us a desire to live and work within frames of reference and conditions over which we have mastery and control. In childhood these traits manifest themselves in the creation of imaginary worlds over which we can preside in some god-like manner. For boys – and grown men when they revert to being boys again! – the archetypal construction has often been the model railway; for girls perhaps dolls and doll's houses. For many in our new high-tech society these traditional pastimes have been supplanted, with the most common manifestation of 'control play' now clearly resident (for the male of the species at least!) in the computer game. What is the desire to take on the persona of Lara Croft or Sir Alex Ferguson but to satisfy a need to enter into another realm where one can manipulate the 'world' around you to achieve the goals you have been set or have set yourself?

Within the world of work this is perhaps little different. To varying degrees, we each attempt to manage the environment that engages us daily, doing things in our own particular way to exert our individuality on the challenges that we face. For the vast majority attempts to influence their working world will be small-scale and utterly subconscious; for some, however, this is patently not the case. The realm of Information Technology (IT) offers those within it a greater freedom to express themselves – and thereby extend a degree of control over their domain – than many other professions. A Programmer, for example, although working within a defined set of rules, parameters, guidelines and standards, is free to code the program they are working on as they see fit, the proviso being that the final deliverable functions as requested. Indeed, even in its ultimate execution, it is an extension of the world-control theme as the Programmer will have effected a change in making something happen.

At the more senior level of IT management, creative opportunities can most often materialize in the definition of an entire system or – the Holy Grail – in the drafting of an IT strategy. Perhaps here there are tangible

parallels with the model railway or doll's house in the need to shape, steer, define and organize. At first blush there may seem little that winning the English Premiership or retrieving artefacts from an Egyptian tomb has in common with the definition of a systems strategy; but just break each of these challenges down into their component parts – goals, targets, phases, projects, assumptions, issues and so forth – and you will find the underlying structures are almost identical.

Having made this statement, I would argue that the most significant undertaking allied with a desire to stamp our own designs on a professional environment is, within the IT space, that of the definition of the IT organization. If there is a tendency when drafting an IT strategy for a fanfare launch followed by a failure to manage, monitor or execute, then this tendency is multiplied many-fold when it comes to the organizing of the most critical element of our IT delivery mechanism, i.e. its people.

As with an IT strategy, senior managers love drawing organization charts. It gives them a chance not only to articulate a vision, but also to impose it upon their world. Perhaps the model railway parallel is illustrative: it is akin to being given an enormous box of track pieces – straights and curves and points – and being told to 'build a layout'. There will be some constraints certainly; perhaps the space within which one has to work, the number of track pieces available, the controllers to hand, and so on. These limitations are mirrored in the IT world: the scope of the function, the types of resource employed, perhaps the numbers of man managers within the team. At the end of the exercise there will be either a layout that successfully facilitates the movement of model trains or an organization that allows one to provision computer systems.

Unfortunately, too many senior IT managers and directors – despite appearances to the contrary – approach the definition of their organizations in a haphazard fashion. The technological and business environment in which we now find ourselves demands a newer and more thorough approach to IT organizational modelling and control. Unfortunately, all too often the structures defined are based on old theory and out-dated experience, and are not moulded to the realities of the world in which we work. To conclude our modelling analogy, it might be akin to deploying clockwork models when sophisticated remote control is the order of the day.

The purpose of this book is to explore how one should go about the shaping of an IT organization in such a way as to ensure effective output

from the resource within that structure. This analysis is not focused on the drawing of 'organograms', but rather on precisely understanding the elements and challenges within such a definition. We will explore the IT-specific influences on organizational structure and consider how we can align our resource so as to maximize their contribution to the business community they serve. In doing so I will address a number of key topics:

'Considerations for the IT Organization' and 'What is an Organization?' – What are the issues and key considerations for IT from an organizational perspective, and why is the 'shape' of the organization important? We will look at various generic forms of organization, and unique IT components too. In addition to this, I will explore the notion of the 'organization life cycle' and the impact that this can have within the IT environment.

'Why Change?' – If 'traditional' methods of defining our resourcing structures and models continue to deliver business change and benefit, then why is there a need to consider revising our approach in this area? I will argue that business models and pressures in the early twenty-first century demand a new view and seriousness when it comes to shaping and maintaining the IT organization, and will consider topics such as portfolio management and the importance of customer engagement models.

In 'Solutions vs. Products' we will examine the organizational impact of moving from a product-based to a solutions-based business model. How are the various IT functions – such as operations or service delivery – effected by these changing approaches, and how can we ensure (and insure) that the IT organization is in place to meet these challenges?

'Outsourcing', in recognizing the increasing trend to place critical elements of IT's delivery capability external to the core business entity, argues that IT functions are poorly aligned to both manage these relationships and rise to the challenges that outsourcing offers. I will suggest how we can shape ourselves to address these issues.

Finally, in 'Resource Management' we go back to some fundamental questions about people. If we are to adopt a new approach to the shaping of IT organizations, then we need to recognize that we will also need to adapt resource management in the light of these. I will argue for a fresh consideration of skills, roles and accountabilities, and propose that if our new structural models are to deliver what is required we will need to take a radical approach to how we both manage and empower the people within those models.

Defining the shape of an IT organization is a serious business. It is much more than simply removing a set of components from a 'box' and laying them out in a fashion that might be esoterically pleasing but only semi-functional. And it is something we ignore at our peril.

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If there are errors or omissions within the book then, by and large, I suspect they will be of my own making. I plead for your understanding in such cases, and hope that you will find the final article useful, elucidating and – hopefully – not a little inspiring.

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