

Summer 2006

Janke talks about ZyQuest's new services

In the Spring issue of Innovention, we announced ZyQuest's newest services: Strategic Business Systems Planning and Strategic Technology Planning. Now, ZyQuest Senior Consultant Len Janke talks about these services and how they can add value to your business.

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You hear it all the time: IT needs to work more closely with business executives and managers to align its strategies and goals with those of business. And it has to happen *now* if companies hope to maintain their competitive advantage and grow.

You may be thinking, "Aren't we already aligning our IT and business goals?" Perhaps. But how effective are your strategies? Are you really getting the most out of your IT investment?

The process of aligning IT and business strategies and goals is two pronged: strategic planning and tactical planning and implementation. For the most part, executives and managers are aware of the need to involve IT in strategic planning, and IT departments are aware of the need to align their

goals with those of the business. Depending on the culture and size of the company, strategic planning has been accomplished through executive approval of annual business planning, steering committees, or simply working with the users to define the business needs in a less formal way.

The second part of the process – tactical planning and implementation – is a

"The system doesn't meet our needs." "The project is going to be delayed." "We've had cost overruns on the project." "The project has been cancelled."

Why do we hear these comments so many times? Because we forget that the process of aligning IT with business does not end once strategic plans and goals have been established. Collaboration must be

maintained from the initial stages of tactical planning right through to final implementation. Both IT and business need to focus on and be



much more difficult task. At the heart of the difficulty lies the problem of getting IT and business on the same page for effective collaboration to achieve the desired results of the strategic plan. When IT and business don't collaborate, the results are predictable:

responsible for implementing strategic plans. And both IT and business need to remember that the focus is not on technology, but on improving business processes to bring value to the company.

Here are some questions

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“...the focus is not on technology, but on improving business processes to bring value to the company.”

~~Len Janke

that may help spur some thoughts for improvement in your company.

1. Do IT and the business user shy away from identifying metrics for project success and expected return on investment?

2. Are customers, suppliers, and other business partners involved in projects when needed?

3. Once strategies and goals are in place, do business users stay involved with IT to complete projects initiated to meet strategic objectives?

4. Does IT drive all the planning for projects, or are the business users involved in planning projects? Is there a formal methodology and process in place for managing project portfolios and project planning?

5. Are IT and the business user involved in all changes? Do they keep abreast of changes that do or do not impact them, or are they uninformed and resistant to change? Is there a change management program in place to plan and implement change?

6. Do IT and the business user collaborate effectively to define business and system requirements to evaluate and select

business systems and technology solutions? Is this part of the standard systems methodology?

7. Are IT and the business users proficient at re-engineering business processes for improvement? Is there a formal process in place to plan, benchmark, design, and establish a business case for improvement?

8. Does IT base systems solutions on functional needs and requirements and not on a specific technology?

9. Does IT get distracted by technology for technology's sake? Is IT implementing changes simply to use hot technologies rather than staying focused on strategic directives?

10. Are IT and business users able to consider outsourcing systems or business processes as alternative solutions?

If your answers to any of these questions suggest that your IT and business processes could use some improvement, ask yourself one more question. *Does my company have the resources, knowledge, and experience on staff to address these areas?* If the answer is “yes”, great! Get started on working towards improvement. But if your answer is “no”, call ZyQuest to ask about our

new services.

ZyQuest, with solid industry expertise and a portfolio of consulting, business process, application, project management, and managed services, blends proven methodologies with timely deliveries to create business solutions and technology infrastructures that maximize the return on your business systems and technology investments. Using our experienced resources and through solid business planning and collaboration, ZyQuest can help you implement projects that contribute to your long-term strategic plans and goals for competitive advantage, growth, and profit.

Are you planning to implement a new business system or technology, a new practice or program within the organization, an acquisition, merger, divestiture, joint venture, or process improvement? Or, maybe you're thinking about outsourcing part or all of your information technology infrastructure, or just want to improve the effectiveness of your current IT infrastructure? Here is what ZyQuest can offer.

Tactical Planning Services. We perform feasibility studies and planning to align information technology with strategic

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government watch net neutrality

Net neutrality is fast becoming the “hot button” issue in the federal government’s regulation of the telecommunications industry. Who gets to push that button may well shape the future of the Internet.

Network neutrality, a term coined by Columbia University Law School professor Tim Wu, refers to the fact that no one exercises central control over the Internet. By design, the Internet has no gatekeepers to decide who can put up a site and who can access it.

The three generally accepted aspects of net neutrality are interconnection, non-discrimination, and access. Interconnection may be the most important aspect of net neutrality. Simply put, it means that network operators can and must connect to any other network operation. Without interconnection, there is no Net. Non-discrimination means that the network treats all traffic in the same way. And access means that any end user can connect to any other end user.

The opposite of net neutrality is network discrimination. In this scenario, all traffic flowing over network “pipes” is not treated in the same neutral fashion. ISPs can offer different services to different customers. For a fee, you can get faster speeds and better access across the Internet.

Proponents of net neutrality equate neutrality with Internet freedom and argue that the Internet’s success is a direct result of that freedom. Innovation is guaranteed, because no one controls content or services. The flexibility of a neutral Internet, according to this argument, is responsible for innovative technologies such as Open SSL, Voice-over-IP, Web-based e-mail, and instant messaging. Net neutrality proponents warn that a discriminatory network would freeze innovation, which is ultimately disastrous for the national economy.

Opponents of net neutrality – a group that includes the major telecommunications companies AT&T and Verizon – insist that service bundling and discrimination is necessary

to encourage investment. And, they say, it is the only fair way to deal with bandwidth congestion. Furthermore, opponents of net neutrality argue that maintaining neutrality will require federal government intervention, which could become the basis for more intrusive regulation of the Internet. Opponents also claim that the network isn’t truly neutral anyway, because it currently favors simple data applications over real-time and media applications that require low latency and low jitter.

A major proponent of net neutrality is Vinton Cerf, Chief Internet Evangelist for Google. In a letter to the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Cerf wrote, “Allowing broadband providers to segment their IP offerings and reserve huge amounts of bandwidth for their own services will not give consumers the broadband Internet our country and economy need. Many people will have little or no choice among broadband operators for the foreseeable future, implying that such operators will have the power to exercise a great deal of control over any



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~~Vinton Cerf

applications placed on the network. As we move to a broadband environment and eliminate century-old non-discrimination requirements, a lightweight but enforceable neutrality rule is needed to ensure that the Internet continues to thrive. Telephone companies cannot tell consumers who they can call; network operators should not dictate what people can do online.”

Joining Google in advocating net neutrality are such Internet giants as Amazon.com, eBay, Microsoft, and Yahoo. A recent letter to Congress on behalf of these companies urged Congress “to adopt network neutrality requirements that are meaningful and enforceable.”

Public action groups, such as “It’sOurWeb”, are taking the same position. Operating its campaign through – predictably – a fairly sophisticated website, It’sOurWeb warns that network discrimination will allow ISPs to decide which sites we can access and how quickly they load, making it “a lot harder to reach your church or school, your local businesses or online communities you care about.”

Despite lobbying by constituents and Internet giants, Congress has

shown a reluctance to get into the business of regulating net neutrality. In late April, the House Commerce Committee rejected an amendment offered by Congressman Ed Markey (D-MA) to strengthen the net neutrality provisions of a bill to update the nation’s telecommunications law. Shortly thereafter, Markey introduced his amendment as a free-standing bill – The Network Neutrality Act of 2006 (H.R. 5273). The Senate is poised to consider the problem of net neutrality as part of its bill to update the Communications Act of 1934.

The FCC appears to share Congress’s attitude to net neutrality. In a recent statement, FCC Chairman Kevin Martin said it was “premature” for the agency to issue rules on net neutrality. During a question-and-answer session at the Globalcomm 2006 Conference in Chicago, Martin stated, “Consumers need to be able to access all the content that’s available over the Internet without being impeded by the access provider. But at the same time, we recognize that the people that are deploying these networks may offer differentiated speeds and differentiated products to the consumer. And if you offer different tiers of speeds, a consumer

chooses the lowest tier, and he wants to access content that would require higher speeds than he has purchased, he’s not being blocked from access. He just hasn’t purchased the speed that’s necessary.”

At this point, partisan issues and a short election-year congressional calendar make it unlikely that net neutrality legislation will be enacted any time soon. That may be a nail biter for network users and providers, but a gold mine for lobbyists. In the long run, the question of net neutrality could boil down to, “Who should control the Internet – big government or big business?” Whatever the answer, it may be safe to assume that the Internet of the future won’t be quite the same as the free-wheeling Internet of the past.

To learn more about legislation of importance to the IT community, visit the government news page of the ZyQuest website, www.zyquest.com.

consultant watch

Ken Ebert

Take a few minutes to talk to Ken Ebert about his career, and you'll soon realize that you're in the presence of a man who really loves what he does.

Did I say a few minutes? Prepare to settle back and listen for a while. Because Ken has a lot to say about his career in particular and the computer world in general.

It all started...

The satisfaction of building is what drew Ken to computers at an early age. "I saw the personal computer early on as an erector set, if you will. It was a way to build something you can tear down easily without too much worry. So I just looked at it from a constructionist standpoint early on. It was always a challenge to build something new that nobody had done before. And I guess I was lucky to grow up in an era where computing was early in its development as opposed to other engineering disciplines," he explained.

At the age of 17, Ken entered a community

college in Iowa to study computer programming. After graduation, he launched his career at Employers Health Insurance, working as a mainframe developer in the claims administration group. "My background through school was actually personal computers. When I joined the job market, the mainframe platform pushed me into thinking from a different perspective and provided me a appreciation for that scale of hardware," Ken recalls. From working in the claims area, Ken quickly branched out into Executive Information Systems, PC support, R&D, and working with collaboration systems that manage unstructured text.

The next step

After several years with Employers Health, Ken entered the world of consulting with an IBM business partner in Brookfield. Two years later, Ken joined ZyQuest. The fit was perfect for a man who truly enjoys everything that a computer career has to offer.

When asked what he likes

most about consulting, Ken answered, "There are lots of different things, but I think the thing that stands out is change. I'm not one to really settle for one particular activity. Like most systems integrators, I get to wear a lot of hats. Have I done mainframe development? Yes. Have I done data base administration? Yes. Have I done web site development? Graphics design? Networking? Router/firewall administration? Security? Have I had to be a trainer and technical writer? Yes. I've worked for Fortune 500 firms, 500 employee shops, and single owner businesses in a very diverse set of industries. I don't mean that to sound like boasting. I'm really grateful for the wide range of opportunities I've been offered in my career. It's helped me form a unique perspective on looking at business and technical problems and coming up with creative architectural solutions."

Of course, knowing a lot about a lot of different areas isn't always enough. In the computer world, new software, technologies, and



Ken Ebert

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“Companies need to look at digital assets the same way they look at other pieces of equipment...”

~~Ken Ebert

platforms are always emerging. Being a good consultant means being willing to be a perpetual student. That works out great for Ken, who admits, “I may not know everything, but I’m willing to learn on my own. I enjoy researching answers to deliver on a business solution. Some of my colleagues also refer to this as the ‘digger mentality’. You can give them a general abstract concept or a general task and they have an intuition about what needs to be done and they can derive and dig up the rest.”

The long view

The scope of Ken’s computer interest and experience makes him uniquely qualified to comment on the computer world in general – where it’s been, what it’s doing now, and where it’s headed. Like many of his colleagues, Ken sees a lot of uncertainty in the IT world because of outsourcing. With our global communications infrastructure, the commoditization of computer services has become a fact of life, according to Ken, who noted, “Either you’re going to become part of that commodity market or you have to strive to differentiate your service or product where it’s not a commodity. This is really

not just about where IT is headed, but where business is headed. You’re always looking at how you differentiate yourself in order to demand a premium rather than sitting with the rest of the pack.”

As for hot technologies, Ken suggested that his current interests lie in technologies surrounding the Web 2.0 and ajax movements. “A lot of developers in the Java (and even .Net) space are growing more frustrated with the bloated frameworks that continue to grow year after year. That’s really fed some interesting innovation for smaller players to feed a movement whose mantra is to provide simpler systems that don’t do everything.”

He also said the “semantic web” is an important breakthrough still waiting to happen. Ken explained that the semantic web classifies content. “Today, if you do a search on ‘tank’ you’re going to get tank tops, Sherman tanks, all these different hits that really don’t give you the context of what your intent was. There are great services that attempt to find out what you want. But there isn’t really a good way for search engines to analyze content and put it into a context of what you’re interested in. I think the semantic web is a hot technology, but it’s

really in its infancy. It has been for about 8 years!” he said.

For the business world, Ken sees Digital Asset Management as an important, untapped IT technology. Simply put, digital asset management refers to the process of organizing and making accessible digital files, such as logos, promotional material, advertising shots, and multimedia content. Ken explained that digital asset management allows companies to fully capitalize on the creative work they’ve invested in. “If you spent \$5,000 or \$10,000 in developing an advertisement – in the marketing and market research, acquisition of licenses for actor images, basically that whole production – if you lose something like that, you not only lose the ability to reproduce, you lose the ability to re-purpose it in the future. You’ve already spent a significant amount of capital in developing this. Many companies don’t realize they already have this sitting in their back pocket. And they pay to have it developed over and over in a different form,” Ken said, adding, “Companies need to look at digital assets the same way they look at other pieces of equipment – capital investments they use to do their business. I think if companies looked

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directives set by your organization to facilitate market growth, manage economic change, implement competitive strategies, improve operations, and enhance employee relations.

Project Management Services. We manage and control projects across business units to minimize budget overruns, meet project schedules, and ensure success in meeting project goals and objectives.

Business Systems Consulting Services. We evaluate and select technology-enabled business solutions across your organization,

automating business processes and transactions and providing real time access to the information needed for strategic, financial, managerial, and operational decisions.

Information Management Services. We evaluate and propose an information management framework focusing on integrating and controlling information to better direct your business, from interacting with employees, customers, suppliers, and business partners to making strategic, financial, managerial, and operational decisions.

IT Infrastructure Services. We evaluate, select, and

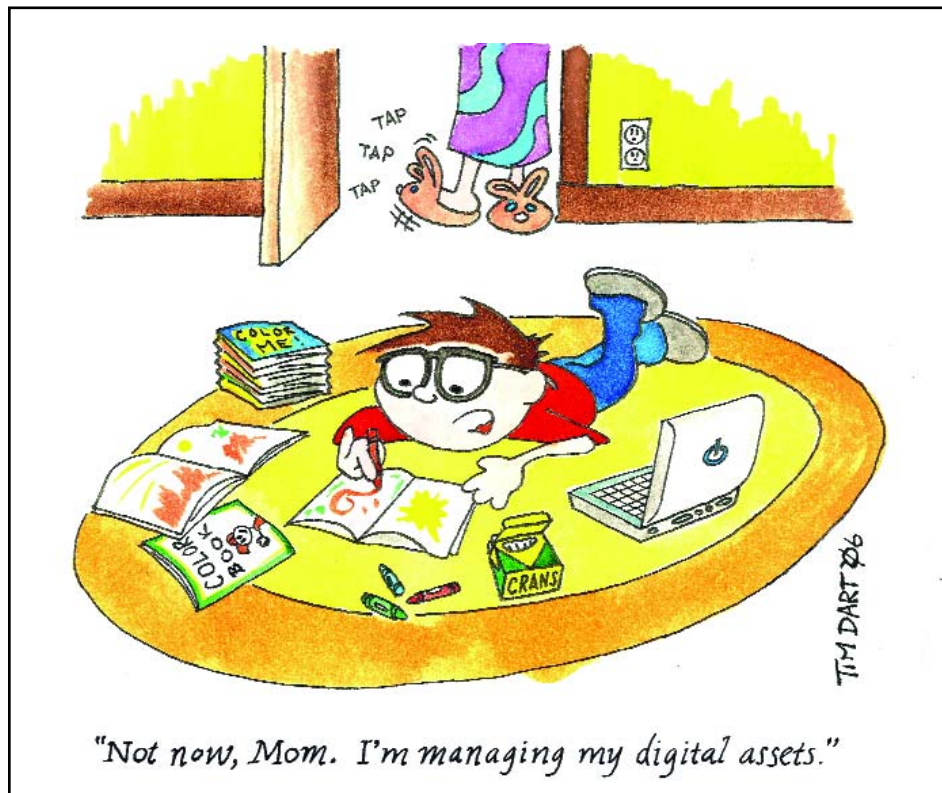
implement technology infrastructure solutions to improve the management of technology initiatives, streamline and improve operations, improve systems development practices, manage costs, and optimize performance and reliability to effectively support your organization.

Managed Services. We evaluate the feasibility of outsourcing applications, IT infrastructure, or business processes to maximize IT investments, lower costs of IT management, and improve operational efficiencies, allowing you to focus on your core business plans and goals. As needed, we

assist in the planning and migration of your IT infrastructure to a managed services environment.

Today start looking at how you can improve the alignment of IT with the business for the most critical part of the journey: tactical planning and implementation. This is not an easy task to achieve and needs total involvement from both IT and business users. You have to work at it, and of course, it is an ever-changing process that must evolve as time goes on. Remember, improvement is change and change is constant.

On the lighter side...





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at their bottom line, looked at what they spent on advertising or development of media, I think they would probably invest more time and money in the management of that.”

And when he grows up?

While Ken has a lot to say about the computer industry, when asked what he'd be doing if he weren't working with computers, Ken is at a loss for words. “I can't see myself doing anything else at this point,” he confessed after a

long pause. “Maybe being a professional dad? I guess my ideal would be to have a combination of things. I would love to be a Mr. Mom but I still like the challenges that IT poses. It's constant learning, exposure to new technologies, and being able to apply those things to meet a business need.”

Even independent wealth wouldn't dissuade Ken from pursuing his interest in the computer world. “If I were independently wealthy, what would I do? I would probably start a company with some

friends, doing the same sort of thing, looking for untapped opportunities. I'd probably be doing more design/development and more creative type activities. I'd like to switch to a smaller, agile frame of mind, where we had a more single focus. I'm a big believer that many of the really valuable applications today don't require an “enterprise-level” design or infrastructure. But to be fair, I also think that many small business solutions could be designed better to support change. You should match the tool to

the need. I would be looking for those smaller situations where you can be more nimble, and deliver a lot of value” he said.

And with that, Ken is off and running, expressing his excitement over the latest computer conference he attended, the creative possibilities inherent in new technologies, the value that IT can bring to business. Ken is truly a man who loves his career. And ZyQuest is the fortunate company that benefits from Ken's passion!