Innovation in IT - Challenges

by Bill Poston

I was asked recently to speak to a group of large-company Chief Information Officers on the subject of innovation in IT. At first I wasn’t sure that I have anything meaningful to say, but as I thought about the challenges and opportunities I see in my corporate client base, I knew that IT is in need of a healthy dose of innovation.

If innovation is creating value from something new, then there is tremendous opportunity for IT in large corporations to innovate and, just like in product development, the function is at great risk if it does not. The most obvious widespread opportunity I see is in addressing “Sunday night to Monday morning” whiplash. The systems we use in our personal life are intuitive, mobile, and accessible. The applications we use at work require extensive training, are difficult to navigate, and are often not accessible outside the office. We hear a lot about the “always on” connected culture, but this is typically limited to basic communications like email.

The monolithic, integrated systems that many organizations have spent the past twenty years implementing are now feeling antiquated as software becomes more modular and moves to the cloud. I see business functions adopting cloud-based, software-as-a-service point solutions to enable their work. While this may not seem optimal from the CIOs perspective, often the motivation of the business function is to avoid having to work with IT at all. We may already be in a “wild west” era that produces a proliferation of unintegrated solutions while the CIO tries to control things and plays catch up with “business intelligence” that attempts to mine insight from all of these solutions.

In my next post I will discuss what I see as frameworks that the CIO can apply to manage innovation in IT.

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