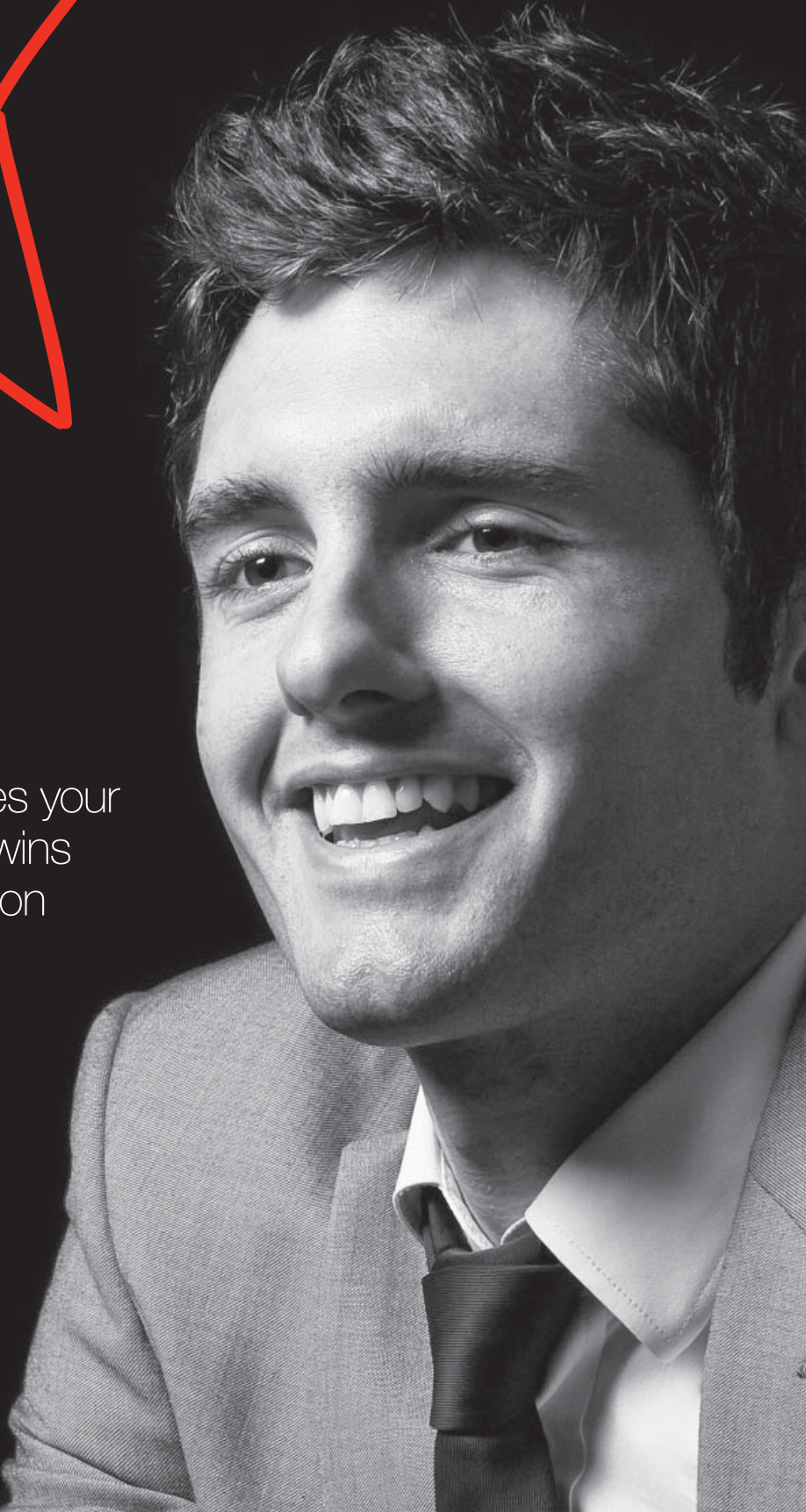




Win More

Technology that improves your customers' experience wins profits for your organization and recognition for your IT team.



Few in IT ever get to participate directly in the game of commerce—the bobbing and weaving in the marketplace, the scramble for competitive advantage, the thrill of victory.

Getting out in front of technology and participating on the front lines mean a different role for IT professionals.

No one calls the IT department with news that the sales team just completed a Hail Mary pass to score a major contract with a new customer. The IT team generally doesn't get the high fives in the hallways, much less the bonuses. No one thinks to reach out to the IT department after a big sales win and say, "Thanks. We couldn't have done it without you!" Traditionally, IT stays in the background, if not the back room.

Start warming up your social skills. Today's forward-thinking organizations are sending their MVPs into the play-offs for market share, and it promises to be a game changer. The name on the jersey is "Information Technology."

Whatever industry you are in, competitive advantage is determined by how your company's goods or services are experienced by the final purchaser. And the quality of that critical experience is increasingly determined by the quality of the technology employed across the entire sales cycle.

Faced with choosing between two similar sounding products, for example, customers will order the one they can get with a single click on a secure portal more often than the one that requires hunting through catalogs, leaving messages on someone's voicemail, and sending faxes for confirmation.

Similarly, a diligent project manager is going to give more business to a contractor who uses unified communications to launch an impromptu online work session with his entire team—complete with white boards, status reports, and even video—than the one who still thinks responding to a voicemail within two days is good enough.

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Technology has been insinuating itself into every business interaction for years. In these times of lean staffs and high productivity, technology has become the environment in which business takes place.

Getting out in front of technology and participating on the front lines means a different role for IT professionals. For one thing, it means crossing over the "us versus them" divide that exists between the IT department and everyone else in an organization. The incentives are strong enough to change attitudes. Collaborating with users not only can drive profit to the bottom line and pay dividends for your department but also can advance your status in the organization. The ladder to the CIO's job leads increasingly toward your organization's customers and away from data center operations.



Further Reading

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Read the case study at www.us.logicalis.com/BorderStates

Customer-Facing

The logic required for IT's role on the front lines can seem counterintuitive until you see it from the right vantage point.

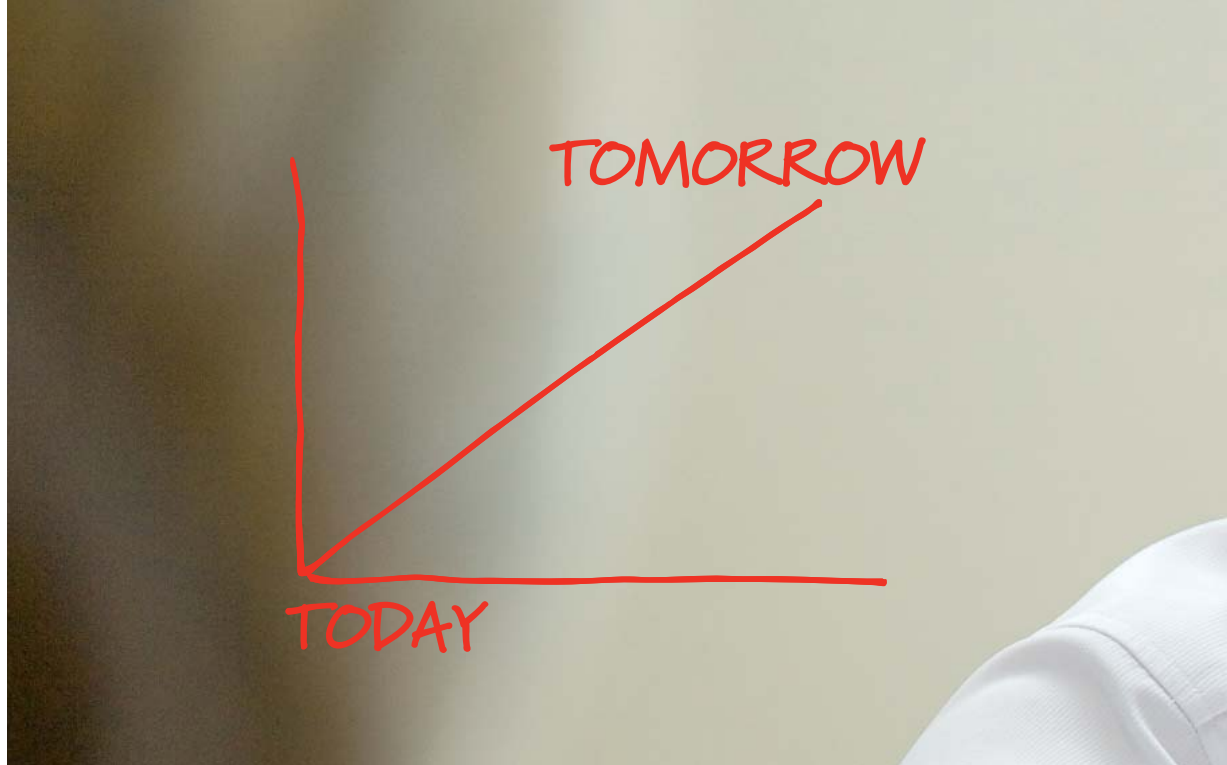
"You can't just look at technology solutions from what's sitting in your data center," says Logicalis Vice President Solution Sales Brandon Harris. "You have to look at it from the client's perspective and work back from there."

For example, for an end-run customer-facing portal that wins market share from your competitors, you can't start with sophisticated modular Web 2.0 software tools. Instead, you need to start with the people who will use it and decide on the technology after you've determined what they want to do.

The same goes for unified communications. Don't think of it first in terms of network protocols or Fibre Channel over Ethernet. Think in terms of shaving 15 minutes off the time it takes customer service to respond to a customer or prospect.

Technology research firm Gartner forecasts that by year-end 2010, 1.2 billion people will carry handsets capable of mobile commerce, providing a rich environment for the convergence of mobility and the Web. That's the new playing field. Think: How can mobility and collaborative applications make your organization seem as if it were just down the hall from customers... wherever they are at the time?

Several trends in healthcare, including the mandate for electronic health records (EHR), increasingly support engaging technology not just in providing health services but also in delivering them directly to the patient. Similar trends, and the mandate to be able to conduct business anywhere at any time, are driving the use of technology directly in the delivery of goods and services in virtually every other industry.



User-Driven

Although this approach can seem like the tail wagging the dog to IT traditionalists, this user driven approach is the most direct way to develop and implement effective technology solutions.

For example, a customer facing portal deployed by a regional provider of supply chain solutions makes it possible for customers to purchase its electronic products directly from their warehouses. One swipe of a bar code initiates an invoice through SAP.

Another example: A managed Internet television delivery service provides a portal where customers can upload and manage video content, view network status, track trouble tickets, set up and control service options, and conduct ongoing analytics of viewer trends. Customers can even develop the customer's own custom tools to tailor the portal to their exact needs and preferences. Other firms offer managed Internet television delivery services, but none are able to deliver their service with this level of customer control. If you were a potential customer, which experience would you choose?

Users have the distinct advantage, of course, of not having to think about how all of this enabling technology, which touches virtually everything they do, actually works. That's still IT's job.

Smart IT

This is the point where those IT departments that have been pushing ahead with virtualization and outsourcing selective infrastructure services are

going to look really smart. The management and automation capabilities, self-provisioning and self-reliance of virtualized IT environments supported by managed services, make it possible for these IT departments to give their users what they want to take care of business faster, better, and cheaper than those organizations that didn't have the vision or will to virtualize while the yellow flag was down on the economy.

IT departments that executed virtualization thoughtfully will have also engaged stakeholders across the organization, in the development of the strategy, aligned their priorities with those of the overall organization, and opened lines of communication that are as extensive as their IT infrastructure. In the process, they will know more than just what technology means to them. They will also know what it means to all of the users in their IT universe, from the CEO down and out to customers, vendors, and partners.

By seeing their organizations from the outside in, IT will have a clear view of everything that needs to happen all the way to the data center. They will also have an accounting of the IT services used by different departments in their organizations, enabling them to charge back the cost of services that are used by each department, as well as build financial justifications for those services that drive more business. Their IT departments will be seen as profit centers while the IT departments of their competitors will continue along as cost centers.



Proactive IT departments will have also undertaken an integration of their applications to facilitate data sharing and provide one place to look for everything. For example, Logicalis helped a major Midwest hospital complex transform its data center from a decentralized infrastructure that primarily served billing and administration to a centralized system that accommodates the hospital's full scope of needs, including one of the most advanced EHR capabilities in the healthcare industry.

The technology changes at this hospital were driven by the highest authority in healthcare: patient care. From one pane of glass, a physician can pull up a complete patient profile, including billing, insurance, X-rays, and lab tests—basically everything that is known about the patient.

Cascading Benefits

Organizations with this kind of integrated application environment will be able to use business intelligence to refine their internal procedures and enhance productivity. They will also be able to draw on transactional data in ERP systems and customer relationship data in CRM systems to develop profiles of their best customers as well as their most likely prospects. Predictive analytics can even help them see into the future and forecast new business.

When their CFOs feel the need to crunch numbers, companies will be assured that the numbers they crunch can be reconciled across multiple applications. When their department heads access their portals, they will know the information they are seeing on their custom dashboards is drawn from a

single version of the truth that accurately reflects the overall current status of the organization.

Beyond leveraging existing technology, forward-looking IT teams will be in a position to leverage evolving technologies, like software-as-a-service and platform-as-a-service—that can be delivered online and on demand. Cloud computing looming on the horizon won't be seen as a threat. It will be an extension of everything they have been doing already. They are already in the cloud and will be in a position to exploit it while their competitors are still trying to figure out what it is.

Technology has transformed the business world into an online, all-the-time digital environment. The pace of change in technology isn't going to slow. In hindsight, the place didn't even slow during the recession. As markets begin to grow again, organizations that have created a dynamic, intelligent IT environment able to respond to change will have a competitive advantage over their competitors.

And as this new business environment continues to evolve, organizations that are the most technologically fit are the ones that are going to win. Still, it is not enough to have the best technology. It takes a well-coordinated team of users and technology experts pulling together to use technology to its full potential. IT can't do it alone. Winning, in fact, will be determined by your IT department's skills as a team player.



Further Reading

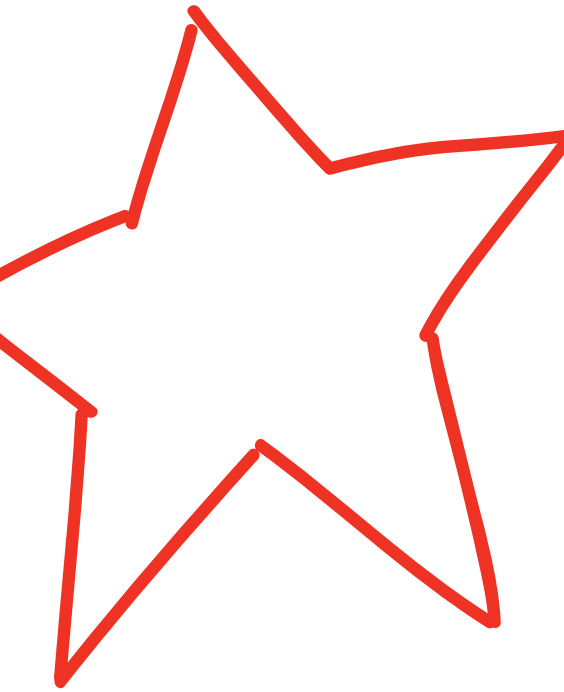
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About Logicalis

Logicalis is an international provider of integrated information and communications technology (ICT) solutions and services founded on a superior breadth of knowledge and expertise in communications & collaboration, data center, and professional and managed services.

Logicalis Group employs over 1,900 people worldwide, including highly trained service specialists who design, specify, deploy and manage complex ICT infrastructures to meet the needs of over 5,000 corporate and public sector customers. To achieve this, Logicalis maintains strong partnerships with technology leaders such as Cisco, HP, IBM and Microsoft.

The Logicalis Group has annualized revenues of \$1 billion, from operations in the UK, US, Germany, South America and Asia Pacific, and is fast establishing itself as one of the leading IT and Communications solution integrators, specializing in the areas of advanced technologies and services.

The Logicalis Group is a division of Datatec Limited, listed on the Johannesburg and London AIM Stock Exchanges, with revenues in excess of \$4 billion.