

Stop Buying More I.T. Products and Resources Than You Really Need

Shôn Ellerton, Aug 2, 2017

Check out your 'pantry' before buying more software and IT services for your business. You may be surprised what you already have.

CHECK THE PANTRY FIRST!



Not only do I enjoy slicing and dicing data; I also enjoy slicing and dicing onions, carrots and other food oddments to prepare a meal for the family. However, what I truly dislike is waste. With a meal in mind, it is all too tempting to go out and buy more groceries with scant regard as to what you already have in the refrigerator, freezer and the pantry. At the grocery store, you may have spent additional money for products which you already have, and by the time you realise that you already have the same product at home which is perishing, it is likely that the product in mind will have to be tossed out.

There is no difference in the corporate IT workspace in my opinion.

Here are some classic scenarios that many businesses experience:

- Senior managers are not getting clear and concise reporting; they want easy-to-read dashboards and analytics;

- There are too many disparate systems which ‘do not speak to each other’; the business wants a seamless work management system to integrate everything together;
- Non-standard and additional software licences are issued to employees as necessary tools of the trade without first confirming if the business has already purchased something suitable;
- Employees are confused and ‘not up to speed’ with the company’s processes and policies due to lack of training; businesses are keen to provide effective in-house online training programmes;
- Nobody knows where to find anything on the company’s servers; businesses yearn for effective documentation management systems.

Looking at the first scenario specifically, it is tempting for the business to invest in additional reporting software tools, many of which command high fees in terms of licencing and use. Often, a sales pitch, a classy presentation and a promise that this will do exactly what the business needs is all that it takes to start negotiating prices. What the business *may* not realise is that software already bought for the business could possibly be as good or even better than the products being spruiked during the presentation. For example, a business which has invested in Microsoft Office 365 may not realise that Power BI is a free add-on that can build amazingly professional interactive dashboard-type reports which anyone can use.

For any of the scenarios mentioned above, skills are required to implement them. Too many businesses are old-fashioned in their approach of selecting candidates possessing relevant academic qualifications rather than real work-related experience. For example, given the choice of two candidates, one of which has a civil engineering academic qualification and the other, an I.T. qualification, it is far more likely that the candidate with the I.T. qualification will come out trumps. Personally, I find this practice abhorrent as I am a prime victim myself. I have a civil engineering degree and I have never *landed* an I.T. job because of my ‘incompatible’ academic qualifications. However, I have always *shifted* into data analysis and I.T. management roles on *merit* of what I achieved for the business. What most businesses do to find that talent is to hire *new* staff completely disregarding the possibility that there could be a project manager with not much work on who just happens to have the skills that are required. This comes as exceptionally poor insight into what talents may be embedded in the business, especially if the business decides to let that project manager go due to lack of work. Such practices, sadly, equate to *realising* a loss in terms of skill to the business.

If the business put its chef hat on and scours inside the 'pantry' for resources, skills and tools rather than spending unnecessarily at the 'grocery store', imagine the savings that could be made.