

# Shaping instead of managing – *a new role for IT departments.*

Business managers are demanding more and more from company IT departments. They are always banging on the door, asking for special solutions, more elbow room, new tools – all delivered yesterday, if you don't mind. How do you explain to a non-expert the consequences of switching to a new IT infrastructure? Exactly! And yet, thanks to smart solutions, IT and business can work wonderfully well together.

## Urs, IT manager

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Urs is the IT manager at a large Swiss insurance firm. He has just heard that the company directors have decided that he must develop new solutions for customer advisers: new tools should make their administrative tasks easier and enable them to work on whatever devices they choose. Urs doesn't fully understand the point of what he is being asked to do – and he has no capacity to do it. But he has no choice.

Urs wants to find out more about the background to the decision, so he meets Anna, sales manager for Switzerland.

**Urs:** «I've heard that the directors' request came from you. You've really landed me in it here!»

**Anna:** «Yes, I know, sorry. But I've got good reasons. My customer advisers have convinced me that they can't carry on like this any longer. They say that, compared to our competitors, it's like

*working in the Stone Age. Our advisers want to look good to the customers. They want to show that they are working with state-of-the-art tools and devices in order to make a good impression with the customers. We can then position ourselves as a future-oriented company and, at the same time, move nearer our objective of increasing turnover by 10%.»*



**Urs:** «OK, I've got some figures for you too: I have to cut IT costs by 20%. This project does not fit with that target. What exactly do your people want?»

**Anna:** «It's not just my people, it's the directors too! The advisers want to be able to access the company network and our systems from anywhere. If they are out with a customer, they want to be able to amend or enter data live – and come up with a definitive offer there and then. It will mean they waste less time in the office. They also don't want to have to print out and compile documents before each customer visit, as this would save them having to go via the office all the time. And we also want the advisers to be able to work on whatever devices they choose, as heavy laptops are impractical.»

**Urs:** «That's all well and good, but so far we have always operated a no-risk policy. That means having a standardised IT environment and letting it run of its own accord, without any extras. And what about security? How can we ensure that nothing goes wrong when our data is accessed externally?»

Urs bites the bullet and works out two possible solutions: DIY or buy it in. He gets some advice from Orlando, an outside specialist.



«The admin has become so time-consuming that our customer advisers hardly have any time left to look after their customers and canvass for new ones.»

**Urs:** «If I understand you correctly, we are killing three birds with one stone. Firstly, devices. We no longer need to worry about buying and standardisation. I can buy in the complete lifecycle management process, including installation and upgrades, for a fixed service charge. That sounds good and saves me a lot. We can offer our people a selection of devices that suit their needs better: laptops, tablets, whatever. Secondly, security.»

**Orlando:** «Sorry for interrupting you. In the virtual work environment, you no longer install anything locally on the devices. Your advisers will access data from a central server. That will give you much greater stability and comply with your security guidelines.»

**Urs:** «Exactly. And thirdly, our people can work anywhere. And your concept gives us really secure, fast connections to our own central systems.»

A few months later. The new solution has been implemented in record time. Everyone is happy – except Urs, who has realised that there are many more possibilities to try out. He puts some interesting ideas to Anna.



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**Urs:** «Your people could work much more efficiently. There are smart collaboration tools and a central data store. Meetings with customers can also be held online and experts from the company can join in via video-conference and so on! In the end, we would have a perfect, complete UCC solution, which would really help you to increase your turnover.»

**Anna:** «Sounds great. Could we meet up to draw up a UCC proposal for the group directors? By the way, our advisers have been giving good feedback since they have been using tablets to access their data on the move. Well done, you did really well with that!»