

## What Does "IT Transformation" Mean to You?

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When talking with people over the past few years, I have discovered that the term "IT Transformation" means very different things to different people. So I thought I would try to provide a common understanding of what is really meant by "IT Transformation".

When I first heard the term "IT Transformation", I had visions of a fleet of eighteen-wheelers converging on a data center and unloading tons of state of the art equipment. But in thinking about it, how is this really a Transformation? OK, the new equipment runs faster, has more memory, more storage, takes less power, more fault tolerant, etc. However, what has really changed in how we are delivering service to the IT customer?

Let's take the example of driving to work every day. We will take your car and replace the engine with a new hybrid; the transmission with a 5-speed; the suspension for a smoother ride; run-flat tires to prevent outages; ergonomic seats; etc. But what has really changed about your drive? You still drive the car the same way; take the same roads; take the same amount of time. Your company sees you arriving at the same time and does not notice any difference. Fundamentally, nothing about the drive has really changed.

Now, let's take the case of an IT Organization that has decided to offer the same services to other Business Units. By taking advantage of "economies of scale", they can offer these same services to all customers at a lower cost. But is this really a Transformation? Let's go back to our car and suppose you decide to start a car pool. People pay you for ride and it helps to lower the cost and make travel more economical. But has anything changed? Your company sees you (and other people) still arriving for work at the same time. So, what is different?

Let's reverse this example and have you join an existing car pool. You can now spend the time during the trip to do other things; get caught up on reading, return emails, etc. A real word example is a company deciding to outsource a service. Hopefully this provides lower costs, better service and gives people time to work on more strategic tasks. This definitely sounds like a Transformation. But does the Business Unit notice that the service has changed? Maybe a lower cost, but the core characteristics of the service remain the same. I have come to consider this an "Internal Transformation" whose primary impact is felt by the IT Organization and not the Business Unit. In many cases, this is what people are talking about when you hear "IT Transformation".

But let's take this example one step further. If we truly want to **Transform**, we should ensure that the Business Unit customers also benefit from this Transformation. This means we need to improve the characteristics of the service that we are delivering. Let's go back to the example of traveling to work every day. Suppose the company made a policy that allowed everyone to work remotely. They have read all the studies that say people working from home tend to work more hours, be more productive and are happier. The next day you sit down at your home computer and find that you cannot connect to corporate systems. The only phone calls you are answering are boys calling your teenage daughter. (Hmmm, need to look into that.) You can't walk to the next office and talk to your neighbor, because you don't know where he is today. Everything about the way you do your job needs to change. You need a home office, a VPN to your corporate network, a business line, IM to chat with co-workers, conferencing facilities for meetings, etc. But after all of these things are in place, a difference in service should be visible.

Let me give you a real world example. About two years ago, a VP of Service Delivery asked us to help him change his organization. He was experiencing way too many service interruptions. His organization had become experts in restoring service. In his own words, "They just reboot the server." In working with the company, we found that people really cared about their customers. They felt that the best thing they could do for their customers was to restore service as quickly as possible. We started to implement best practice methodology around Incident, Problem and Change Management. At the same time, we started to work with the culture and the people. We wanted to take their dedication to Customer Service

and refocus it from problem resolution to problem prevention. Once the people understood this was a better way of serving the customer, they enthusiastically supported the change. After six months teams were able to improve service delivery by:

- Reducing critical infrastructure incidents by 85% through adoption of consistent impact and risk assessment criteria
- Reducing emergency changes by 92% through the standardization of change classification

## Summary

In short, they totally *transformed* the way there were handling changes and outages. This provided a very visible and positive impact to the service being delivered to the Business Units. They went from reactive to proactive; from fighting fires to preventing them. That same IT Executive said, "You have no idea how much you've changed my organization." Because that new philosophy was permeating the organization and changing much more than the original services that we worked with.

So my definition of IT Transformation is a fundamental approach on **how** the service is being delivered that significantly **improves** the service characteristics. Think about this when you start planning your next "IT Transformation".

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