

DEVELOPMENT OF THE IT DEPARTMENTS IN ROMANIAN ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract: The information is a fuel which provides the organization with functioning capacity. The basic objective is to turn the information into action by the decision making process. The way of using information depends on its quality, presentation and promptitude. The current informational managerial systems must develop into decisional support systems in order to offer the managers the possibility of making rapid and efficient decisions. The main objective of the decisional support systems is to offer the manager the necessary information for taking the intelligent decisions.

Together with the occurrence of the new computational and communicational technologies, the entire structure of the organizations began to change. This fact was felt by a series of companies, expressly those of medium and large size, through the introduction in their hierarchic structures of a department in charge with the informational technology (also known as IT). The number of employees in this department varies according primarily to the size of the organization but also to the field of activity (Table 1). The people employed in this IT department may occupy the following positions: Head of IT Department / Manager IT, System or Network Engineer, System or Network Administrator, IT Counselors Supervisor, Jr. System Administrator, IT Counselors.

It is necessary to rationalize and improve the informational subsystem, by rethinking all the informational circuits and fluxes, in the circumstance of using new equipment, absolutely necessary nowadays.

Besides the informational circuits and fluxes that are going to be altered and improved, the other elements of the informational subsystem will undergo changes as well, thus the data and information that will enter the system will have to fulfill certain criteria before entering the informational circuit, some automatic applications and equipment being used in order to block the access to the system for data not in accordance with pre-established standards. For instance we can note that instead of introducing the figures of the price in the cash registers, the cashier will input the customer product in the system using the bar code reader. But for this to be possible, it is absolutely necessary that all products are introduced in the system and each has the corresponding bar code on its package. Of course the informational procedures will undergo changes while the equipment for managing the information will be of recent generation but not the latest type as these will be subjects to the highest moral depreciation of all equipment owned and used by an organization. This implies providing each department, office, compartment or employed person, according to the field of activity, with purchased equipment mainly or with internal products where possible and worthier. (Table 2). The distribution will be done according to some pre-established rules and following a rationalisation both of the informational system and of the organizational one, using, where possible, methods and techniques specific to the field of management.

Employees in the IT department according to their field of activity.

Table 1¹

Field	Employees in IT Department (percent of the total number of employees)
Financial services	19,90
Insurance	11,88
Informational technology	7,56
Banks	7,35
Telecommunications	7,34
Media	6,58
Tourism	5,91
Utilities	5,47
Health	4,53
Energy	4,23
Consumer products	3,61
Electronics	3,28
Chemical Industry	2,84
Retail sell	2,54
Professional Services	2,39
Production	2,37
Constructions and engineering	2,31
Alignment / beverages	2,16
Metals / natural resources	2,08
Transportations	1,90
Average / Total	4,63

It can be noticed (Table 2) that besides the hardware equipment it comes as imperiously necessary to use applications (representing a higher and higher percentage of the sum used for the purchase of IT equipment) which though fairly complex become easier and easier to use, facilitating the access to information for people with weak or even minimal knowledge in the IT field.

Equipment and applications used in the IT Department

Table 2²

Category	Technology
Computers, terminal servers	Desktops Laptops PDA (personal digital administrator) Servers
Software applications	Applications packages (MIS, ERP, CRM, Office, DSS) Applications created internally Applications for communications (e-mail)

¹ J.Baschab, J.Piot – The Professional Services Firm Bible, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2005

² J.Baschab, J.Piot – The Professional Services Firm Bible, John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 2005

System applications	Operational systems Antivirus applications Monitoring system and network ensemble Monitoring system performances Configuring system ensemble Internet services
Development	Programming languages Data bases Design Standards for data bases Programming conventions
Infrastructure and facilities	Cable network Stocking equipments Environment conditions control
Networks	Rooters Switches Firewall Hubs
External devices	UPS (universal power sources) Network printers Local printers Data stocking equipments
External services	Consulting concerning applications Service concerning cabling

From the points presented in Table 2, a great importance, maybe the most important from the point of view of the management, is represented by the applications packages MIS (Management informational system), ERP (Enterprise resource planning), CRM (Customer relationship manager), DSS (Decision support system) and their variants, as well as those of Office (MS-Office, Lotus, Corel-WordPerfect, Star Office, Open Office etc.).

These applications have evolved so much that they come closer and closer to the expert systems, often influencing a great deal the managerial performance. From this point of view, of organising the department in charge with the informational technology (IT), the literature of specialty provides a series of landmark references.

Thus, J.Baschab and J.Piot outline some points concerning implementation of an efficient IT department that could really support the organization and its management system. Such are the following: establishing directing committee which should provide the IT manager and the other departments with the guidance and advice necessary for sorting out problems arisen in various situations. This committee should be made up from the head of the departments that encountered problems. The IT manager should be chosen from the managerial staff not from that of the employees or the persons directly involved in the IT activity (programmers, designers etc.). From the point of view of the IT management, each employee in this department should have a list with the roles and responsibilities assigned to them posted at their working place.

Another remark drawn by the same authors suggests that work should be projected as follows: first, establishing a well-prepared inventory of the projects followed by an assessment of the benefits brought by each project to the management and to the organization itself, with a view to cease the projects that are not bringing about an additional income, a cost reduction (even by reducing the production time) or an improve in the control and administration of the company's business. Then, the projects will be

classified according to various criteria as for instance the degree of difficulty implied by their implementation, the benefits they would bring about, or to what extent they are adequate for the actual hierarchic system of the organization. The following step would be limiting the number of active projects to the actual capacity; even if eventually a smaller figure is to be obtained, it will be clear that these projects shall be finalized. As a final step, each project will be assigned to a person within the IT department, who will be in charge with the project's process and will report the situation to the directing committee on IT matters. The person in charge with a project will form a team that in order to carry out the project will produce a well-organized plan, containing what should be done, deadlines and of course the necessary resources.

The next observation concerning the management of the IT department refers to the relationship with the suppliers of IT equipment and service and their management. First it shall be seen which suppliers are the best, both in respect of products and service offered and in respect of their due qualities as business partners, turning away those that offer poor quality products or services or that invoice outgrown manufacturing prices. A special concern will be to focus on concluding low-cost contracts profitable for the organization, against its exclusivity to the agreeable supplier. In what the equipments are regarded, they will be purchased such way that they are compatible with one another and with those previously acquired, both as hardware and software, in order to facilitate data transition from the old into the new equipment and to be of help for those working at various projects, by establishing certain standards. Aggressive negotiations will be held in order to achieve best prices and the development of the contract after the purchase will be closely supervised. The suppliers will also be required to describe the way in which they measure the degree of customer satisfaction, requesting a periodic report in this respect, at the same time offering a feedback that would help improving their own activity, and in the event of non-fulfillment of this clause the respective supplier will be turned away from.

As for the costs of maintenance and service of the IT department and in fact of the whole IT infrastructure (equipment, applications etc.), it will be observed that the budget initially established is not overrun. The IT management will suggest the upper management new means of cutting costs by using more advantageous IT solutions.

Another important aspect regards the way in which the IT departments and its members relate to the other departments and subunities within the organization. Thus, the idea of rotation is promoted, this meaning in fact assistance over a certain period of time, a day, two days or even three, offered by the employees of the IT department to the colleagues in other departments regardless of their hierarchic position, in order to avoid reciprocal incrimination and to find most advantageous solutions in all respects. The head of the IT department should convene less formal meetings with other members in the leading staff of the organization and at various hierarchic levels, or with members of the directing committee, concentrating on the met or anticipated problems involving IT. Finally, it will be observed that each member of the IT department receives the appropriate training that should help them understand and see the business and the organization as a whole.

The IT department and in fact the very use of new technologies, a right management combined with the enthusiastic involvement of the superior management and not only, can lead the organization towards an efficient process of management as a whole and can considerably improve performance in management up to the level of excellence.

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