

Connecting IT With The Customer

There is a very good and long discussion going on in the CIOZone forums, called How to Motivate Workers in Tough Times, which is discussing ways employees can be motivated to perform without pay or financial incentives. Topics like relationships with co-workers and managers, frequent reviews, and recognition are all mentioned in that discussion. However, one thing I think may be overlooked is allowing IT employees to see the results of their work at the customer level.

We had an offsite meeting a few weeks ago where we covered the results of a survey we had sent out to our customers. The #1 best rating we received was in our expertise and understanding of the system. The worst rating we received was communication, or lack thereof. This survey was sent to and dealing with our direct customers, those groups in IT and the business, that directly consume the data we are managing.

With that customer being so close to us, it is easy to see the results of our efforts. However, I'm speaking about connecting the work that IT does with the results seen by the end customer.

In some organizations this may be difficult. It may not be apparent how the work which is being done on a CRM application is affecting the growth and revenue of the corporation. However, I think it would be a great motivator if the CIO and department managers could show a direct link between work that is done in IT and the resulting growth in revenue of the company.

As an example, I work in one of the largest financial firms in the US. I am in the data management department of the brokerage division and directly responsible for the data warehouse. In most cases there are a lot of layers between the work my group does and the end customer.

However, last week our senior manager went over the company statistics from our latest earnings, as well as other news articles which mention our firm by name. After we saw the information he said something that surprised me, and I'd never heard before as an IT professional. He said, "The growth of this firm, the success of our business, and the satisfaction of our customers, is directly related to the quality of the work that you do."

As IT professionals, we sometimes might not see the value of our work reflected in the success of our firms. However, we provide data, which helps the satisfaction of the customer who calls in and requests the status of his order. We provide the applications that allows HR to keep employees happy because their paychecks are accurate and on-time. We provide the reports to the sales managers that allow them to incentivize their salespeople to achieve higher sales goals. We provide the information to the executives who can show our investors and stockholders how well the company is growing and the trends for the future.

You might be justified saying that the growth and success of the business is directly tied to the work done by the IT division, because without IT the companies we work for wouldn't be able to provide the products or services that they do in such an efficient manner.

Please share your thoughts by leaving a comment below.