

How fit is your IT?

Fit versus unfit

IT needs to be fit. You could spend unlimited time and money ensuring your IT infrastructure is at the peak of fitness, with the latest software, super-fast hardware and robust security, but that's not revenue generating. The aim should be to focus on business objectives and goals - IT should be fit enough to reliably support business needs and disappear from management's radar.

The alternative is unfit or unhealthy IT. Just like a sick patient, regular treatment is required. We learn to live with these symptoms and even perform regular operational procedures – rebooting a server here, restarting an application there. And if we're not sure of the outcome of a procedure, we adopt an 'if it ain't broke don't fix it...' mentality, and brace ourselves for consequences later on. And those consequences often manifest into serious symptoms, such as;

- Frequent failures of IT (management, systems or service delivery) disrupt business operations and have a detrimental impact on customer service
- Poor quality or obsolete systems present an untenable risk to business operations
- IT departments are constantly fire-fighting instead of providing consistent, high quality services which support business needs
- Reactive, short term investment decisions are made which leads to waste and encourages a culture of throwing money at problems
- Problems are not permanently resolved – the norm is to paper over the cracks

When technology gets in the way

IT is still an immature industry. And, as with any maturing industry, rapid change is a fact of life. Technology has advanced at a lightning pace. But with innovation comes complexity – and the more there is to manage, the more there is to go wrong.

Mid-market companies often fail to align IT with business goals and objectives, leading to technology focussed purchasing decisions to address short term issues. Capabilities, management and processes are overlooked.

But if you are not familiar with all of the elements contributing to fit-for-purpose IT how can you make good business decisions..?

How fit is your IT?

Assess – then address

As with any fitness regime, assessment is the first step towards improvement. To plan your journey, you need to establish your starting point. This is best conducted by an independent expert who will offer an objective and comprehensive view.

It is all too easy to think about IT as a physical entity – an arrangement of hardware and software assets that form the physical platform supporting your applications. But concentrating solely on these physical elements is a fundamental cause of unhealthy IT because it only takes into account what you have, and not what you *do* with it – that is, how you operate.

Sufficient capabilities, good management and sound operational processes are an intrinsic part of fit-for-purpose IT. When you assess your level of fitness, these are key factors in determining how you are positioned and what changes need to be made in order to achieve IT fitness.

Profile of a healthy IT infrastructure

So what makes IT fit and healthy? For a start, it's not only about current hardware, operating systems and application software.

Outages will be rare and scheduled to ensure minimal or no loss of service. Service levels and costs will be predictable and appropriate. Business critical systems will have sufficient resilience to component failure. Updates will be accommodated without disruption. Information will be protected and security breaches unheard of.

The way IT is perceived by the rest of the business is often an accurate indicator of the overall health of your IT function. Unhealthy IT is usually accompanied by stressed users arising from a constant stream of 'surprise' unscheduled events. In contrast, healthy IT is characterised by an ordered and harmonious environment, with content staff and structured activities.

Accurate diagnosis

Diagnosing problems so they can be permanently eradicated used to be a time consuming and expensive business. As well as the right diagnostic toolset, you need experience, knowledge and expertise.

Insite uses a diagnostic technology from ITAC Group called it-e-rate to accurately assess the effectiveness of IT as a business function. The premise of this assessment technology is that the value contributed by IT to the business is frequently misunderstood and that IT priorities are rarely aligned with business objectives.

How fit is your IT?

it-e-rate is an expert system in which the judgement and tacit knowledge of decades of top tier IT management consultancy experience has been embodied in a set of assessments and analytical mathematical models. *it-e-rate* makes these available to organisations in a more cost effective form than using a traditional consultancy based approach. Furthermore **it-e-rate** is entirely consistent in its assessments and provides a totally independent analytical framework.

Before improvements can be made, it is imperative to understand how IT is performing and how well it is supporting business goals. *It-e-rate* provides this information – enabling management to gain control and adapt IT to suit the changing needs of the business.

Results are presented as quantified assessments of IT capabilities that provide a management agenda of value to both IT and business management. This assessment is designed to;

- Identify strengths, weaknesses and risks
- Prioritise areas for improvement based on business objectives
- Enhance awareness of business risk presented by IT
- Focus IT spend on the right areas and reduce waste
- Improve IT service delivery and end user perception
- Ultimately allow an organisation to achieve its business goals through 'fit-for-purpose' IT

In house or outsourced..?

Today, *all* companies need to make decisions about how much effort they want to invest in the onward management of their IT infrastructures in order to make them fit for purpose.

For large corporations who can justify the additional investment to develop their in-house skills, it's a relatively straightforward decision. But for small to medium-sized companies, it means deciding whether IT is a core competency and, therefore, a priority for investment.

It may be that IT is such an intrinsic part of a company's competitive differentiation that it is seen as a core competency. But if this is not the case, there are many benefits to be realised by outsourcing some or all of your IT to a specialist.

How fit is your IT?

Insite – a perfect fit for mid-market companies

Insite has a long track record in the IT infrastructure business. We have built our practice based upon sound design and operational experience, linked with established IT industry standards.

With a long list of satisfied clients, our reputation speaks for itself. When you choose Insite, you benefit from a specialist who:

- Takes the time to understand our client's needs
- Only engages when we know we can offer real value
- Has made significant investments in operational resources and hosting facilities
- Specifically employs experienced consultants of the highest calibre

Get in touch

To find out more about how Insite can help your business, please call 01892 686000 or email James Barden at jamesb@insite-europe.co.uk.