Subject: The Flyswatter Strategy of IT?

From: "Wheeler, Bradley C"

Reply-To: The EDUCAUSE CIO Constituent Group Listserv

Date: Sat, 9 Apr 2016 12:47:48 +0000

Colleagues,

This is forwarding a message to our CIO list that I originally sent back in Feb to a group of R1 CIOs. It follows up on the thread that Nick recently started on coordinating systems / cloud sourcing:

From: Wheeler, Bradley C
Sent: Monday, February 29, 2016 7:17 AM
To:
Subject: The Flyswatter Strategy of IT?

All,

In the great arc of that thing called IT, I can't help wondering where this one goes while we are at the helm? Pick your year, but the buildup of "the new IT thing" became an over-reliance on costly mainframes that we all rushed to finally wheel out the door. Follow that with the arc of Mini's, PCs, Client-Server, Thin Clients-Thick Clients/Apps (rinse and repeat), and now the magic of The Cloud.

On the current page of the current chapter of this great university IT novel, it seems to be titled "The Flyswatter." There is no problem at our institutions that cannot best be solved by a contract with the most clever niche application by some 3 year old innovative start-up. We see them parade in one-by-one as each is, in fact, a truly better mousetrap than its rivals. We roll it out and implement with great fanfare to hand-waiving throngs of users. See Fly? Swat! Repeat. Swap recurring staff cost for recurring contractual cost. Celebrate.

Beyond the flies, there are the larger varmints to that dig in deeply – ERP, CRM, ABC, DEF, GHI, etc. They are truly amazing now as they vastly outpace any other option for innovation. Yet with them, we lock in a recurring cost footprint for certain as we chase with great hope the promised value through organizational transformation to leverage their many wonders.

If we are lucky, some clever lawyering will protect us from the bumps ahead, and it is an immutable law of Nature that all IT paths have bumps. But where does this novel go three chapters ahead? Does it matter? In all past eras, we looked back with wonder of how to get out of the problematic, non-strategic, high cost, inflexible choices of that *idiot* who preceded us (ahhm, but not in my case for obvious reasons ;-).

No one ever ran headlong in with a goal of creating a legacy system mess. I wonder what our successors will think when they look back at all the dead flies?

Time for that 3rd cup of coffee.

--Brad

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