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IT OCTANE Monthly Conference Call
May 2005 – Guest Mike Sisco
TOP 50 Questions and Answers

This month's call was so incredible because of our fabulous guest Mike Sisco. Mike and I take the time to respond to all of the wonderful questions posed for this call. This article alone has the possibility of becoming the MBA of IT Management! Read it and take your career to the top!

1) What direction is I.T. management taking?

MIKE: Technology is changing faster than anytime in history and it is becoming harder for IT managers to stay technically proficient. At the same time, companies around the world are in major pain due to the issue so widely discussed called the IT - Business alignment disconnect.

What I think it means is that IT managers are going to be expected to become more business oriented and stronger managers versus being allowed to continue to focus on the particular area of technology they are so familiar with that got them to the manager position. The transition from technology expert to manager is a difficult move, but to be successful we have to be able to relate to business executives on their terms and to focus our technology resources to meet legitimate business needs.

I sat in on a session this week that discussed some futurist predictions for technology. One of the predictions was that in 10 years or so, we would not find many CIO's as we know them today. What the presenter emphasized was that the CIO role is evolving from that of a Chief *Information* Officer to one of a Chief *Integration* Officer. His point was that in the future it becomes more and more important to integrate data that we will use to manage our businesses (much more than what we have access to and use today) versus work in a role of providing data. In the future he suggests that we will have access to so much more data than we do today and it becomes imperative that our IT organizations learn how to use the data to the company's benefit.

The point, I think is that as businesses and technology evolve, so too will the IT manager role and responsibility. One thing is clear though, we must become stronger business minded managers capable of providing value to the business as it evolves to be effective and successful.

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JOEY: I concur. In order to successfully support any business, the IT Manager has to become a business manager. This is not only a direction, but a necessity.

The IT field has grown so rapidly in the last 10 years which allowed technical people in management roles. As the industry matures even further, this will not be the case. I repeatedly state that it doesn't take rocket scientist to be a rock star in IT Management. It does however take a businessman. Rick Divenuti, Microsoft's ex-CIO once told me that it would be easier for him to teach technology to a businessman than it would to teach business to a technologist. If you are a technologist and want to be a successful IT Manager, get started now learning all you can about business because as Mike indicated, the CIO role as we know it today might not even exist tomorrow.

2) What is the best method for a CIO/director to communicate with key Staff members? Reports, metrics, etc.

MIKE: I don't know that there is a "best" method as much as you need to use several methods to communicate with your key staff. I tend to prefer a combination of reports, metrics, project status meetings, and employee staff meetings (both team meetings and individual meetings).

A manager must be a coach, a leader, an organizer, and a facilitator. We also must at times even be a "shepherd". Strong staff members need to hear a vision of where we want to go, work with management to determine how to get there, and gain an understanding of the state of things via status meetings, metrics, and reports. Every communication vehicle is important; the key is to communicate often and consistently and to use each communication format to support the objectives of what you want to accomplish.

JOEY: This depends on the dynamics of your organization, needs and industry. There are different metrics for each. For instance, a great metric to track and communicate is the "percentage of IT cost to revenue ratio." This is only measurable to your type of business. In a progressive and growing industry or organization, this number could be higher and acceptable. If you have end user support, you would want to track a client satisfaction score, or a ticket open to close ratio. I would recommend having a complete IT department scorecard. For an example, see: http://techrepublic.com.com/5138-1035_11-5670861.html . I would also recommend having regular communication meetings. I call these "FLASH" meetings. These are quick stand-ups to communicate metrics and status to peers, bosses and reports and can be done weekly and or even daily to keep everybody on the same page.

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3) What is the best way to put proposals of IT initiatives to companies?

MIKE: First, you need to have established a successful track record. Project initiatives tend to get funded when there is confidence you will get the project completed successfully.

Second, project initiatives need to have tangible justification. Senior management looks for initiatives that are cost effective and that have a quantifiable payback. The payback doesn't always have to be financial cost savings or specific employee productivity improvement, but that certainly helps. Payback may mean it helps you reduce the amount of downtime in a specific area, says a remote office or that it helps reduce the number of problem calls coming into your Help Desk in a specific area.

Developing an ROI (Return on Investment), whether it includes tangible and specific financial improvements or non-financial improvements always helps. Senior managers are much better equipped to make decisions on spending when they can see and understand the benefits. No benefits usually means no project.

Approach your recommendations objectively and take a hard look at whether you would spend the money and use resources to do the project if you owned the company. Just because it's logical to do from a technical point of view does not make it an appropriate business reason to go do it. Often times, we lose sight of that in IT.

JOEY: In addition to just calculating ROI, I would also include the action plan of obtaining the ROI in the project. In other words, if the ROI is based on reduced headcount, I would have a plan to not hire any more employees in the area of return to fulfill the ROI. Business managers usually have no problems making investments. As a matter of fact, if the proposition looks irresistible, they will jump. The problem with IT Projects in their minds is that they never seem to achieve the actual return and are therefore hesitant to approve even if an ROI is included in the project. Eliminating this concern by adding this to your project with exact specifics will help every time. Reading this may also help: http://techrepublic.com.com/5100-10878_11-5629880.html?tag=search

4) What would you do if all the incentives like salaries, bonuses, incentives etc. are in senior management's hands (its a family business) & you want to motivate your staff.

MIKE: Contrary to popular belief, salary is not the primary reason people leave a company. In virtually every study I have seen, it ranks between number 7 and 12 on the list. It doesn't mean that salary isn't important, but it points out that there

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are many other incentives for technical people.

One of the most powerful incentives that are always at the top or near the top of the list is training and education. Technology people have a burning desire to learn. People are motivated when there is forward momentum and they know there is a vision to achieve a specific goal or reach a destination. Success and a sense of accomplishment also motivate them. In addition, it's important for our technology staff to have a sense of their importance and the role they play in the overall success of the company.

Managers who know how to relate these things have highly motivated staffs even when the money for raises is tight. Little things can make big differences. It's amazing how much you get back from an employee by showing respect for the individual and a true interest in helping him/her develop skills to achieve higher levels of success. To do this, you don't always have to have a big budget.

JOEY: This is why I teach a great deal on leadership. The key here is to get employees from compliance to commitment. This is rarely done through salaries. The major reason is because employees may not even value money or wealth as much as they do family or time etc. The first thing I would recommend is to find out what each of your employees value and then work towards programs that bring them closer to those values. In other words, if an employee values family, give him or her a day off to spend with their family as an incentive. If they value leadership, give them the opportunity to lead a project, goal or team. For more information on leadership, read the series:
http://www.itoctane.com/newsletter233.html

5) What is the role of a CIO?

MIKE: The first book I wrote was "*What to Look for in a CIO.*" In it, I describe the CIO role to be more of a leadership role and a position where you need to be more strategic. A CIO needs to be able to rise above the day to day operational support issues to help forge direction the IT organization should take in order to maximize the benefits it can have for the business.

CIO's need to be organizers, resource developers, and excellent communicators in order to facilitate an appropriate direction for IT and to sell it to senior managers. They also must be strong business minded managers who understand the industry their company is in and know where the key business drivers lie in order to focus resources in these areas. Every industry has key drivers where technology and automation can help improve profitability. CIO's must know where these are and be able to help the company take advantage of them.

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JOEY: The biggest role in my mind is leadership. The difference between an IT Manager and CIO is influence. Since the definition of leadership is influence, then the primary role of a CIO would be leadership. Take steps to develop leadership skills, and you will be well on your way to becoming a valuable CIO. For more information on leadership, read the series:
http://www.itoctane.com/newsletter233.html

6) What are the basics of IT Manager Skills?

MIKE: My second book, **IT Management-101:fundamentals to achieve more** describes eleven key traits that make up successful IT managers. This material will answer this question the best. The ebook is free and may be downloaded by joining IT Octane at http://www.itoctane.com/ .

JOEY: This is absolutely the best book on the basics and should be read and owned by all. As a matter of fact, I will not even coach an IT Manager in the *Occupational Mastery* module until they have completed this book. This book is foundational IT Management and should be a prerequisite to any IT Management personal development program. I also recommend reading it more than once.

7) How do you overcome barriers to organization change when rolling out new processes or methodologies?

MIKE: Change is difficult for most people and one of the challenges we have in IT is that we introduce significant amounts of change to the enterprise.

If the change affects a department in the company, you want to try to develop an understanding as early as possible of what's coming, the benefits, and why the change is necessary. If the department is difficult to work with and the change can create an adversarial relationship, you should seek the help of senior management. If both you and the department manager report to the same senior manager, use this person to help facilitate the "buy in".

It becomes more difficult when the customer perceives the change as an "IT agenda". Although the idea and the push for a change might be from IT, you want the affected manager be the one who embraces the change and supports it. The only way the do that is if they sort of think it's "their" project. Using senior managers to develop the idea of the change initiative so the department manager can actually be the one to promote it and support it can be a big difference maker.

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Let's say the change is to automate a billing process and the benefit cuts out significant clerical expense. You won't get buy-in unless the Billing manager agrees with the benefit and can be the one who gets the credit when the initiative is completed. So, you try to orchestrate the commitment to the project such that the department manager is viewed as the champion and receives the accolades when the results are achieved.

Leading an IT organization is very much about finding ways to get things done so the real operators of the business can get credit. When we do these things, we gain a much stronger alliance with the client managers and senior management ultimately will be ale to tell what's really happening. The main thing is to help the company succeed. When it succeeds, we do as well.

JOEY: Again, the fundamental behind this concept is leadership. The real key here is 360 degree leadership, i.e. being able to lead your leaders, peers and reports. If you do not have the business leaders on your side, you might as well abandon the project. If you can influence them to become a partner in the process, then you are halfway to success. The second half is communication. The primary reason anyone bucks change is because of the fear of the unknown and feelings of insecurity about their environment. You can combat the unknown by continually making it known. Bring light to the darkness. You cannot lead and communicate enough. Over communicate. Over communicate. Did I say over communicate? Communicate some more.

8) How to align the IT and Company strategy

MIKE: My approach is simple and something I spend a good bit of time on in my 5-day Institute. It's also a fundamental basis of my IT Management Process that I use when managing any new IT organization. A summary of the steps follows:

Step 1 - Conduct a IT assessment so you are certain you know what the issues and needs are as well as the capability and capacity of your technology resources to provide technology support. I list any issue that has a technology implication associated with stability, supportability, scalability, or cost.

Step 2 - Quantify the issues discovered in the assessment into category groups, or major initiatives and list each as to whether they are risk items, items with opportunity, or simply issues that require technology support attention.

Step 3 - List each project within the initiative categories you defined in Step-2 that is required to address the full list of issues listed in the assessment.

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Step 4 - Prioritize the projects into two major groups: Immediate (30 to 90 days) and Strategic (over 90 days). I tend to list projects that have risk and stability implications very high. You also have to balance the cost of projects, how much effort is required, and how long the project takes with the benefits that will be derived from doing the project. None of us will come up with the exact same priorities if we are asked to prioritize a list of project initiatives. That's perfectly all right and not a problem. The key is to establish a logical set of priorities that you can present to senior management.

Step 5 - Develop your plan and prepare to present it to senior management.

Step 6 - Present the plan to create awareness and to gain concurrence that it is an appropriate plan to work on for the company. Once senior management agrees, you can move forward and your efforts are guaranteed to be in sync with the company's needs and objectives. If they do not agree, they can offer insight that will help you tweak the plan so you are in sync with their objectives.

Step 7 - Review the plan periodically to assure you are in sync with company needs. Business issues change so you have to be somewhat flexible and at least adaptable to modify the plan when things occur that dictate a change of plan is in order.

The important issue here is that senior management has to be aware of what you are going to do and they have the right to challenge your assumptions, your recommendations, etc. If you present it and they agree with your recommendations, you can usually count on the fact that your efforts are completely in sync with the business.

JOEY: I couldn't have said it better myself. This is the process I use as well. I have also attended the IT Manager Institute and highly recommend it. Mike goes into great detail on each one of these steps. If you are serious about IT Management, you must go to the Institute. For more information on the IT Manager Institute, go http://www.mde.net/cgi-bin/t.cgi?a=401872 and click on "IT Manager Institute."

9) Any IT Infrastructure procurement tips/strategy (negotiation, dual/single source)

MIKE: I viewed this question in two ways. First, I looked at it in terms of getting approval for infrastructure projects. Secondly, I looked at it in terms of buying infrastructure equipment and services from vendors.

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Infrastructure initiatives are generally hard for senior managers and executives to understand and these projects are often very expensive, which makes it even more challenging.

One of the things I constantly suggest to Infrastructure Managers is that you have to describe these projects in terms that the CEO and CFO can understand. That means they must be described in business and financial terms and not in technical terms. Start talking about routers and servers and you will lose most executives quickly.

Talk in terms of the benefits the projects have and discuss them in financial terms as much as possible. For example, the need to upgrade the wide area network (WAN) can be conveyed in terms of reducing downtime for remote office employees and the cost impact of improving their productivity.

JOEY: I interpreted the question differently. I would suggest a few things and maybe between Mike and I we can cover the question successfully. First, you need to conduct a vendor analysis. This includes creating a value matrix between all of the possible sources. Do not only think in terms of price. You must think in terms of value which includes price, quality, features, speed of delivery etc. With your specifications in hand, send an RFP (Request For Proposal) out to all of your chosen vendors. Based on what you receive back, you can build the matrix and put a point weight on what is most important to you. For example, you can give price a higher weight than speed of delivery.

The second step is then to pick a vendor(s) to negotiate with. I see this in a few ways. Depending on whether I have cash or time will determine my negotiating strategies. If I have don't have cash, then I will negotiate terms. If I have time, then I will negotiate price etc. There are numerous negotiation techniques when dealing with vendors. I would suggest going to a negotiation seminar or workshop to learn all of the possibilities, because there are numerous. This is an art in and of itself and is a primary skill of success in IT Management.

And if that didn't hit what you are asking, the other possibility in your question is whether you should have multiple vendors sourcing your infrastructure equipment. If this is what you are asking, I wouldn't recommend it. In other words, you need to develop hardware standards on servers, switches, routers etc. This doesn't mean you can't use Dell switches and Cisco routers. Just be consistent. The major reason is knowledge share and maintenance contracts. If you choose primary vendors, you can tackle both of these in the most cost effective way. Not having standards could lead to tremendous headaches.

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10) How do you change the perception of people so that you can take on more responsibility?

MIKE: People's perceptions, especially senior management's perceptions, are made up by the results we achieve, how we achieve them, and how we conduct ourselves. If you aren't getting assigned additional responsibilities and you think you should be, take a step back and try to objectively assess what the manager sees in your performance. You may be getting results but possibly the manner in which you are getting them is not quite what they want to see. You may not be getting the results they expect, as well.

Ask them why you are being passed over and be open to what they have to say and listen objectively. You may not like what you hear, but it is their perception that you have to deal with just like dealing with an unhappy client. Don't try to rationalize or build your case; listen to what they have to say and incorporate it within your approach to do a better job, whether doing a better job is getting better results or changing how you are going about getting the results.

My career took off when I stopped pushing senior management to give me more responsibility and to do more for me. When I truly focused on doing a great job for the client and the company and started getting results in those areas, more responsibility just started coming my way and it seemed that I wasn't even trying to attain more. Sometimes, you just have to "let it happen". It seems to happen easier when you aren't pushing so hard.

Two more tips that may be worthwhile:
First, raise your perspective to the senior manager level. They want managers to be mature and to think in terms of the client and in providing tangible business value. Being proactive in developing a strategy that's in sync with the client and business owner's needs is critical. Do things that reduce cost or improve productivity of groups of people and you endear yourself to senior management, especially if it helps achieve business financial goals.

Finally, I can't tell you how many times I have sat in senior management meetings to discuss the need to fill a senior management position and we have to turn potential candidates down because they don't have anyone in their organization who can step up to fill in their management position if we promote them. To move up, you have to be able to fill your position with as little ripple as possible. When we make management changes or promote someone, we look closely at the impact it's going to have, both positive and negative. Management Rule #1 is to find and develop your replacement. Many managers tend to avoid doing this because they are concerned it makes them vulnerable. That's

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completely wrong in my mind. It shows that you can develop a strong organization and positions you for more responsibility.

JOEY: There are a few keys here. Number one, you have to be willing to do what it takes to be successful. Ultimately, that means to pay the price to achieve success. It also means you have to volunteer quite a great deal and exceed expectations with these assignments. My question to you is _why_ do you want more responsibility? If you take the time to develop the why, you can develop the plan to achieve it. Be strategic about it. The perception of people is just a mere obstacle or implementation detail. Once you have the why, put together a self-awareness campaign to showcase your talent and or accomplishments.

Unlike Mike, I don't recommend sitting back and just doing a good job. I did that for years with no results. This only works if there are good leaders and managers above you. If you have bad ones, it will only lead to them taking your credit and could last for years. I also don't recommend harassing management either. I didn't start getting results until I took the bull by the horns and started an "outside" awareness campaign. This campaign led to numerous industry awards, magazine articles and recognition by even Bill Gates himself. I use to say to myself "how can I be a star and shine in a galaxy full of stars?" The realization came when I started to understand abundance thinking and that we all could shine. This pushed me to the top rather quickly. The perception that needs to change in my opinion is our own.

Number two, again you have to develop leadership skills. I hate to beat the dead horse on this one, but it is what Mike suggested in the last paragraph. A true leader builds the people underneath them. This is level four leadership. They have an abundance mentality and try to replace themselves continually. The more people you build the more responsibility you will have, plain and simple.

11) How does a small company determine how many IT people are needed to support the ERP/back office application? And does it determine how to compensate for each one of the position, since most of the data out there apply to public/large company.

MIKE: I conduct a staff needs estimate when I conduct an IT assessment. Needs will differ depending upon what's going on in the company. In other words, one size does not fit all. It may be that I simply need an expert capable of managing the support activities of the ERP application or I may need a significant staff including programmers and database administrator if we are customizing much of the output.

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At a minimum, I want to have some level of depth. That can be handled by using outside resources or beginning to develop the ERP knowledge within your staff.

Take a look at what you need to do with the ERP system and the amount of support activity taking place or expected to take place. Develop a staffing requirement that is sufficient to support the workload you expect to have and then make a decision how to best achieve the support staff (i.e., staff internally or use outside resources).

Compensation needs to be competitive for your given market. I always try to hire experienced employees except for entry level employees that I bring in and want to grow for the future. Many of the surveys use all types of companies for their data sources so it's not necessarily just from large companies. Local market conditions tend to dictate the salary levels more than anything so do some research to see what companies are paying for similar positions in your area.

JOEY: Ditto. The requirements are based on the needs. Also, you can use http://www.salary.com/ to find wages applicable to your size and location. I use this tool all the time to find specifics.

12) What are your top 3 personal talents?

MIKE: Nice guy, wonderful husband, and great Dad, , , just kidding.
That's a tough one. As I mentioned on the conference call, I'm really a very average person from a small town that has been afforded some nice opportunities. If I think about what has contributed to the successes I've had over the years, I would probably have to say the following three traits are the most important:

1. Strategic oriented - Whether it is for personal or business situations, I always look "down the road" and try to determine where I want to get. If you read my newsletters, you know I do New Year Resolutions every year. I take them to heart and use this process to help me establish personal and business objectives at the beginning of each year. Looking at the "cause and effect" of your initiatives or actions helps you do things that have higher levels of success.

2. Observer of others - I'm always observing and learning from others. When I see something that works well, I try to incorporate it into my management style. It was something one of my first managers told me to do and I have been very persistent in this for a long time; it pays big dividends when you can take advantage of someone's experiences rather than having to learn the hard way all on your own.

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3. Burning desire to achieve - I have always been a high achiever and have spent the time and effort to develop my skills. My library is full of self-help books rather than novels for "fun" reading. For some reason, a book that helps me develop my leadership or management skills is more appealing to me. Lots of people "want" to succeed, but most don't do anything about it. I have always taken steps that I thought helped position me for higher achievement.

JOEY: I am sure this question was geared specifically for Mike, but I will give you mine as an added bonus.

1. Passion For Success
2. Voracious Self Starter
3. Ability to See The Larger Picture and Distill It Down to Tangible Results

I too have a library dedicated to self-help, leadership, business, success, motivation, entrepreneurial, how to make money, etc.

I like Mike dedicate a significant amount of time to personal development. This discipline is absolutely crucial to your career and ultimate success.

13) How to manage and prioritize multiple tasks?

MIKE: In IT, you always have multiple issues to deal with. The key is to clarify what the issues are and the priority you plan to work on them. You have to quantify all the items and communicate effectively your priorities as well as the status of where things are with each active project.

I tend to prioritize things based upon the level of risk or opportunity that an issue has. If it is a risk item and has stability implications, it tends to get a very high priority. Likewise, issues that offer significant opportunity such as cost savings or improving client relations will get higher priority.

There is no set method to determine your priorities. The important thing is to develop a set of priorities and communicate your plans with key stakeholders of the company (senior management and department managers to give them the opportunity to validate your plans. After all, if it is not their priority, your plan is an improperly planned agenda.

JOEY: In addition, I would recommend building a daily disciplines list. This list would be the absolute critical things that you need to do daily that will help you accomplish your goals. I also use the "success six" system. This system is where you write down the absolute six things that need to be done the next day that cannot be pushed. This is not a "to-do" list. If the task isn't completed, you

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do not go to sleep. This will force you to prioritize the most important tasks that will get you closer to your goals. Try this for 21 days.

14) Mike published a paper on creating an IT strategy in 2001what has changed since then in the way IT strategies should be created for a large corporation?

MIKE: I don't know that my process would change but certain issues have become much more important since 2001. For example, security and regulatory compliance have gotten much more emphasis since the 9-11 attacks and since Sarbanes Oxley requirements have been established.

Strategies should still be created by IT and reviewed/approved by senior management to ensure the strategy meets company needs and requirements.

JOEY: Webster's dictionary defines strategy this way: n 1: an elaborate and systematic plan of action. Based on this definition, your strategy should and will change no matter what size organization you have and what year we are in. Successful strategies will be based on the current business needs and economic requirements.

15) Alignment strategies

MIKE: Alignment is all about developing a specific strategy and priorities and then allowing senior management and business department managers the opportunity to review and approve or suggest changes. If you communicate your plans and modify them as necessary so your client (department managers and senior managers) buys in, you will be aligned with company needs and objectives.

You must also review your strategies and plans periodically as things happen in business that require alterations t your original strategy.

The key is to constantly communicate with the management team and be willing to modify your plans when the need dictates it.

JOEY: Alignment begins when you join the agenda to further the business. As long as you remain in your own silo, you will not have alignment.

16) Internet Security ... Dangers & Challenges

MIKE: Obviously, with viruses and spyware it is important to maintain controlled access to the Internet. This requires both physical security measures such as

firewalls, passwords, access privilege, etc. but also requires a good bit of communication and education to your workforce.

Implement policies and procedures that protect your network and systems from dangerous issues that can be picked up from the Internet, both from email and browsing web sites.

JOEY: If you can afford it, I would also recommend a penetration test by a security expert such as ISS (Internet Security Systems – http://www.internetsecuritysystems.com). This company is a little expensive, but is fabulous at securing your environment. Helen Berg, the CIO for ISS is going to be our guest on July 2005's teleconference call, so if you are reading this prior to July, be sure to sign up for that teleconference.

17) What are likely to be the most significant issues, in say the next 12 months, for small to medium sized enterprises, that IT Consultants should concentrating on to maximize fees.

MIKE: In the US, Sarbanes Oxley will be significant and in healthcare there are always regulatory issues that must be addressed. I also believe that as the economy improves there will be many more company acquisitions. Being able to help companies conduct an effective due diligence or to help implement systems and network transitions to single platforms will be helpful.

I also believe there is significant opportunity for any consulting company that can walk into a company and conduct cost saving assessments that can help the client company reduce expenses while improving their business.

JOEY: To add to that, I would recommend changing your consulting fees from hourly to value-based. This will help get away from the 1-to-1 model where you are working solely by the hour. For more information on how to do this effectively, go to: http://www.computerconsultingkit.com/

18) How to gain company recognition quickly?

MIKE: Create results that provide tangible and quantifiable value to the business, especially results that reduce expenses, improve productivity, or improve client satisfaction. It's all about results.

JOEY: Exactly. I would add to that by doing the things above and getting outside recognition. Get outside recognition and you will get your company's quickly.

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19) How to create value for IT in BPO sector?

MIKE: Every industry has leverage points. Learn what they are and target initiatives that improve the business by improving the leverage items. If you aren't sure what they are, look at the successful companies in your industry and learn what they are doing to improve profitability; it usually has something to do with automating certain processes, generating information that allows them to manage their business more effectively, etc.

JOEY: First, let's bring to light BPO. BPO is business process outsourcing and is also associated with IT-enabled services (ITES). These are the new buzzwords of today and are taking place all over the world including but not limited to India and China. I am not totally sure how to answer the question because BPO is being used to provide business process to companies at an affordable cost. The processes being outsourced are commoditized and are not strategic. Therefore, the value is in providing commoditized processes to businesses that wish to save money on the non-strategic elements to their operations. Utilize IT in the BPO sector to automate and enable these processes. The caution here is to make sure that standards and procedures comply with the major laws of the US and Europe.

20) What new areas are the IT Administration scientists researching?

MIKE: One of the things I hear is that we are going to be capturing significantly more data in the future. Today, we tend to capture transactional data but there is a vast amount of data we might like to have to improve our business.

For instance, the Coca Cola Company would be able to do a lot if they had information on the consumer's actual consumption of Coke such as day of the week, temperature, situation causing a purchase, etc. Some estimates are that we will begin capturing much more sensory data in the future which will put significant pressure on IT to provide systems and networks that can handle the immense amount of additional data.

I'm sure there are hundreds, maybe thousands of new technologies being researched by small and large companies alike. One thing for sure is that the pace at which technology will change is going to pick up speed, not slow down.

JOEY: SIM (Society for Information Management) is always researching this topic. For more information see: http://www.simnet.org/ . Also, see the MIT website at: http://www.mit.edu/research/ .

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21) How to set the IT strategy to meet business requirement?

MIKE: This is like the business alignment question. Put a "stake in the ground" by developing your strategy and being very specific as to your plan and priorities. Review the strategy with key managers of the company and gain agreement before you start implementing. When they agree, review the status of your initiatives and gain validation at least every 3 to 4 months. Keeping senior managers and department heads in the loop as to progress and providing an opportunity to "revalidate" the strategy can benefit your efforts.

JOEY: Ditto.

22) How can I position myself to become an IT Manager/CIO?

MIKE: To be positioned for an IT manager, I would learn all I could about managing projects and gaining experience in this area. It's as close as to being an IT manager as you will get as a PM has responsibility for the project, budgeting the project, and managing people assigned to the project that are expected to complete the tasks of the project.

To be positioned for a CIO role, become more business minded quickly. Provide recommendations and generate results that have tangible value for the business (improve profitability, improve client relations, improve productivity). You must create a solid track record of delivering what you say you will do and when you say it will be done.

Learn the financial side of IT. A CIO must be able to budget and manage a company cost center's profit and loss. It's a requirement for a CIO to be able to discuss issues in financial terms with senior management, CEO and CFO.

JOEY: The fast track to success will be in devoting at least 30 or more minutes per day in personal development targeted at the right skills and finding a CIO/IT Manager mentor/coach as quickly as possible.

Also know the language and disciplines of the primary skills of value. They are:
(a)   How to sell
(b)   How to market
(c)   How to create products
(d)   How to manage profits

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23) How do you determine staffing?

MIKE: Conduct an employee staffing needs assessment based upon learning what the company's needs and issues are and what your capability and capacity needs to be to provide appropriate levels of support. Every company's appropriate level of support is different so you have to make some assumptions and gain agreement from senior management as to whether the budget will support your recommendation. The objective is to have the smallest staff possible but that can provide the support needed to run the business effectively.

I write an article for TechRepublic that might provide additional insight for you. You may read it at: http://techrepublic.com.com/5100-10878_11-5174092.html?tag=e106#

JOEY: Remember this phrase and you will be all right. "Automate not populate."

24) Who has my cheese?

MIKE: Joey Smith has it.

JOEY: Mike is right, I do have it. The reason for this is so you can taste and appreciate new cheese! (http://www.whomovedmycheese.com/)

25) Is there any reference resource that you find yourself using repeatedly that you would like to share with us?

MIKE: One excellent publication that I like is *The Power of IT: Survival Guide for the CIO* by Jan De Sutter of Belgium. His book does a very credible job of discussing many technologies we deal with at a management level that provides just enough detail to explain the technology but not so much to be boring. I highly recommend it. www.the-power-of-it.com/cgi-bin/affiliates/clickthru.cgi?id=Smith

I also like IT Business Edge a lot. ITBE's approach is to provide the best articles they find on the Internet related to specific technology topics directed to IT managers, CIO's and decision makers. I read most of ITBE's newsletters every week. Free membership is available at www.itbe.com .

TechRepublic is also good and their search feature has led me to many helpful topics when I'm looking for something. Access to their site requires free membership at www.techrepublic.com .

JOEY: For the techheads out there, also check out www.experts-exchange.com.

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26) How do I move up?

MIKE: Establish a track record of success, show that you understand the business needs and that you are conscientious about taking care of your client. Follow-up is key and "going the extra mile" without being asked to when resolving issues.

Attitude has a lot to do with it and positive results that take place with minimal to no supervision required shows maturity and are traits that managers want from people. Show traits of maturity, focus, and reliability and you usually gain more responsibility.

Determine what you want in your career. We are al different. Sit down with your manager and begin developing a career plan that allows you to be exposed to things that start positioning you for the next steps upward. Targeting what you want to be and working on the things that qualify you for the role is key. Be sure to focus on the type of work you like. Too often, people get a new responsibility to discover they really don't like that kind of work.

JOEY: In addition, be absolutely clear on your WHY. Know why you want to move up. Build a plan to get there. Then surround yourself with positive, encouraging and successful people. Avoid negative people like the plague. No matter how bad it could be or how bad it gets avoid talking negative about the company. Protect your attitude. Remember, your attitude determines your altitude. This will affect your career drastically.

Also find a mentor who believes in you, who will support you, and who will push you toward your goal. They will pull you up no matter what the circumstance is. If you truly want to move up, then deliver more than you are paid to and don't neglect the details.

27) What is the best way to monitor task due dates?

MIKE: Use a plan that lists all project tasks, due dates, and responsibility. Conduct weekly status meetings and inspect the tasks before the meetings. What gets inspected gets done. I use a simple tool and process that can be downloaded from a TechRepublic article at http://techrepublic.com.com/5100-10878_11-1027877.html .

JOEY: Mike explains this on the call towards the end during the Q&A. For more information go: http://www.itoctane.com/ConferenceCalls.asp

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28) What one thing do you feel will be the most important IT knowledge to acquire for the next 5 years?

MIKE: How to translate business issues to technology initiatives that provide real value for your company. We are going to see more and more emphasis in this area.

JOEY: What Mike said is important now and even ten years from now. Take steps now to learn business language, concepts and philosophies.

29) What is the IT security strategy in the present scenario?

MIKE: It varies by company and industry. Security is a huge topic with many elements that I don't think is appropriate to give in a general answer. Every company must assess its vulnerabilities and establish the threshold for pain and risk it is willing to take based upon the cost required to do certain things.

JOEY: See my previous answer on this topic in question number 16.

30) How to ensure continuous alignment between IT and business when IT is considered as mere supporting function?

MIKE: Being viewed as a "strategic" organization is not easy when senior management sees IT as just a support cost center. In order to become a strategic force, the senior IT manager must begin presenting recommendations that provide tangible value to the business and discuss issues in financial terms with senior managers. Senior managers typically do not understand networks, etc. nor do they want to. You have to present everything in terms they understand and that's financial or benefits related. Benefits that reduce cost, improve productivity, or help differentiate the company is what senior management wants in a partner. They also want to know that IT is not spending aimlessly and that IT is frugal in spending - i.e., we only buy what's necessary, not something that's nice to have.

Building strategies and gaining senior management support and commitment begins elevating you to that of a business manager, not a technology manager. To be viewed as strategic, you must be financially driven versus technology driven.

JOEY: This topic is presented over and over again, and the summary is that you have to join the agenda of the business. Stop thinking IT and start thinking business. IT is just a vehicle to get the business to its goals.

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I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but IT is only a mere supporting function if it is <u>not</u> focused on the business strategy. IT under this circumstance would be a commodity. If you are not growing revenue, reducing cost, reducing headcount and or giving competitive advantage etc you are not strategic. An ERP system or a network infrastructure is merely a support mechanism. I would love to discuss this. Email me at joey@itoctane.com if you disagree or agree.

31) What approach have you used to execute IT strategy as it relates to IT resources, we are fully engaged today in supporting the business but need to allocate resources to execute strategy without a head count increase, your thoughts or suggestions would be appreciated

<u>MIKE:</u> I determine what my baseline support requirement is and assign resources necessary to support the day to day operation of technology support. I have to be able to explain to senior management what our capacity to do things is, and that includes both the expertise we have on board as well as the quantity of staff. If I have extra resources, we target them on specific issues that are considered "special projects" or projects that will help me become more productive so I have more capacity to do things.

It is important to know that one area many IT managers have a problem with is being able to articulate your capability to do things. A staff needs assessment allows me to quantify what we can do. An IT assessment tells me what the company needs (base support plus special needs). The trick is to paint a picture of the 5-pound sack. What I mean is that your capacity in IT can be equated to a sack capable of holding 5 pounds of sugar. I don't care how good you are, the staff you have will not be able to do "10 pounds of work".

The need may be 10, 12, 20 pounds of IT resource. Your job is to be able to present what the need is, what the capacity is, and how much gap there is if you have one (most of the time there is a gap). The job, then is to determine how to narrow the gap. This only happens in one of two ways: reduce the need or increase the capacity. You can increase capacity without hiring extra resources (work overtime, provide incentive pay to do more, etc.). This works to some extent but major gaps require you to hire new staff or reduce the need.

<u>JOEY:</u> Also think of it in terms of constraints. If we use the "triple constraints" model, we have cost, scope and time. If you need to support the business and execute strategy without reducing headcount, you have to make a decision based on these constraints. In other words, if you can't increase cost, then you will have to either decrease scope and increase time, both or vice versa. You can't have it all. Show this to upper management and let them make the decision. In other words, find out what is important to them and execute. Is it

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cost, time or scope? Let them know they can't have it all like Mike indicated in the sugar analogy.

32) What are the one or two biggest mistakes IS managers make? What should they do?

<u>MIKE:</u> I believe one of the biggest mistakes they make is by focusing on the technology and what they know versus the learning the business and focusing on true business needs. It's one of the major contributors to the business - IT alignment disconnect we hear so much about.

The second mistake is that we do not communicate enough. If we communicate our plans, gain concurrence, and focus resources on those specific initiatives, there is no way for us to be out of sync with our company.

A third is that we tend to try to do things without gaining someone's help. I would much rather learn something using someone's experience who has learned how to do something already than learn it all on my own. The learning curve will be much faster and less painful and risky.

<u>JOEY:</u> This is outstanding because Mike's top three is in my top ten. Check out the new article I just wrote called "*The Top Ten Mistakes IT Managers Can Make and How to Avoid Them"* being published on Tech Republic in June 2005. Click here for a sneak preview:
http://www.itoctane.com/Articles/TopTenITManagerMistakes.pdf

33) What is the most important thing for a new IT manager to do when starting at a new company?

<u>MIKE:</u> Conduct a quick IT assessment for your area of responsibility before starting to work on things. It can take place quickly and you will have a much better idea of where to focus your resources than simply starting to manage the operation.

<u>JOEY:</u> I concur and would add to that by introducing yourself to every person in the company. (If this is possible) IT Managers and employees tend to be introverts and never truly meet everyone they support. IT Managers should know everyone's faces. If this is hard for you, force your self to do it.

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34) How do you get buy-in from business leaders for true IT governance in an institution with many different sources of revenue and authority (such as a teaching & research hospital)?

MIKE: This environment can be very difficult, especially when Department Heads are allowed a lot of autonomy. I would determine the areas where standardization is necessary to provide high levels of stability, security, etc. and go after those areas. I would also look at the places where centralizing certain services can have a material effect on overall budget. Every organization is concerned about budget and spending. Once you know where the "hot spots" or real benefit areas are, develop a plan of attack and map out the tangible benefits to the organization as well as to the individual departments. You won't get buy in without it being a considerable benefit in both the overall organization as well as the individual departments.

Seek the senior-most manager in the organization that can be a sponsor and gain their alliance to help you strategize how to present the recommendations. It usually comes across better if it's not an IT driven strategy as much as it is a company strategy and IT will be the facilitator to help make it happen so the organization can achieve specific benefits.

It can also be of help to go after key department heads and gain their support individually before rolling something out so they can help convince other department managers of the need to make the changes so all departments can achieve the benefits.

Initiatives that improve systems uptime and availability and that reduce expenses usually get people's attention.

JOEY: Mike said it well. Get the business leaders on the governance bandwagon and show them how you can save them money and improve their headaches. This will get their attention. Also, understand their personalities when communicating. If they are emotional, don't communicate using data and vice versa.

35) Can you really be a CIO in company of $50M or below?

MIKE: I think so although there are CIO's in much larger companies who are not operating as a CIO. To me, it all depends on how you are operating and whether you are providing tangible value for your business through technology support and innovation.

JOEY: Absolutely.

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36) What is the biggest challenge facing IT management today?

MIKE: The three things I see leading most surveys tend to be:
1. IT - business alignment
2. Delivering project initiatives successfully
3. Security

JOEY: The only thing I would add to that is leadership and bench strength.

37) How do I draw a comprehensive Business IT Strategy for the Regional Hospital?

MIKE: This requires much more space than we have for this response, but in summary I would do the following.
1. Conduct a thorough IT assessment
2. List all issues related to stability, scalability, supportability, and cost.
3. Determine if each issue has a risk or opportunity or is simply an issue that needs to be addressed.
4. Prioritize your list based upon what's most important for your situation. No two people will come up with the same strategy. That's ok and not a problem.
5. Develop a presentation for senior management.
6. Deliver your strategy for senior management and gain concurrence or modify the plan as needed to have commitment and agreement.

Two of my ebooks address this area much better:
   - IT Due Diligence
   - Building a Strategic IT Plan

JOEY: Read the books.

38) How can an IT manager work with non-IT Boss?

MIKE: This happens a lot and I've worked for many non-technical CEO's. The key is that you must be able to communicate with them in non-technical terms such as financial, ROI, benefits, etc. Don't expect your manager to learn technology if they haven't already. You have to learn the business side and how to apply technology to help the business. Discussions have to be able to relate to what your manager understands such as issues that have business connotations and solutions that can be described in terms of benefits versus technology.

JOEY: Another key is education. I don't think it can be solely one-sided. The CEO of the future has to have some technology knowledge. There are articles galore written on this subject. Let the CEO know that and that you are willing to

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show them the ropes. Schedule some technical lunch-n-learns or golf outings where you explain tech concepts to him or her. If they have time, also invite them to some seminars or tech briefings. I did this with my previous CEO and they became raging fans of our department!

39) IT strategies for National Audit offices

MIKE: I'm not sure I understand this question or don't feel knowledgeable enough to answer it without more information.

JOEY: Read what Mike said in Question 19.

40) Do you believe qualifications and certifications have made a difference/played a part in the success you have experienced?

MIKE: Certain skills have certainly made a difference in my career but certifications have not. Even though my company offers an IT manager certification, one of the first in the industry for IT managers, I'm not a big proponent of certifications for me personally. However, today's generation of technology people are very interested in certifications and a certification does indicate a certain level of knowledge. My hang-up is probably that I believe that just because you have a certification, it does not mean you are proficient and can deliver results. So, I tend to look at the person's track record and how they go about their responsibility more so than the paper hanging on the wall. You also have to remember than when I started in technology some 30 years ago certifications did not exist.

My ability to evaluate business needs and to focus technology resources on the true issues of the company is a skill that has probably helped me more than anything else. In addition, I'm not a strong communicator except I've made myself one because I know how significant this skill plays in being a successful IT manager and CIO.

Project management skills have always been strong parts of my delivery process. I learned the importance of it early in my career as an IBM SE and I bring a project management mindset with me in every new responsibility. It's a big part of what creates credibility and I understand this so I start quickly on creating credibility for my IT operation.

JOEY: For me personally, the answer is yes. Of course I got my MCSE back in 1997 when you could go from 30k a year with a bachelor's degree to 55k+ with an MCSE and no degree at all! Life was great during that time. I was a trainer back then and was teaching school teachers, stock brokers and construction

workers etc on how to manage a network! The problem is that this flooded the market like a gold rush and you got incompetent MSCE's out there devaluing the whole thing. The good thing is that they later got flushed out of the system with the market correction.

I agree with Mike, but I also like to see the certification. It shows me that the individual had the discipline and commitment it takes to get an MCSE or CCNA etc. It also proves that they know a little theory which I think is important. Does it insure success? Absolutely not. The only thing that can insure that is a proven track record and a significant reference.

On another note, I don't even consider MIS Degrees. I have seen some real winners and losers alike from very prominent schools. I once interviewed a guy with a Masters in IS from a University of which I will not mention, couldn't even tell me what TCP/IP stood for! This is the truth. (Hopefully this will not get me in trouble)

41) How do you maintain current service levels while drastically reducing costs?

MIKE: You have to quantify what your service delivery will be and that includes what you can do and what you can't do. If the capacity is shrinking, the expectations of other's dependency upon IT for support has to be managed so they don't continue to expect the same level of support for significantly less investment.

You also have to look for ways to become more productive. That might mean creating standards, improving programming quality, having users do more of the work, reducing Help Desk calls by implementing preventive solutions.

The answer is that ultimately, you may not be able to provide the same service level. In order to manage expectations, you have to be able to clearly and concisely quantify what your service levels are and what the impact is going to be. Remember the 5-pound sack model I use. If you shrink the capacity of what the sack can hold, you can continue pouring sugar into it but when it reaches its limit, sugar falls on the floor.

One option is to take out discretionary spending such that base levels of support are not impacted. That may mean that extra projects or strategic initiatives cannot be handled. The key is to know what skills are required and how much is needs to provide day to day support. Your ability to quantify this helps you in many ways and especially when you are cutting cost.

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JOEY: Look for ways to reduce costs in vendor contracts. There are always negotiation points and savings to be found. Mike also has a "100 ways to reduce cost" Power Point in his IT Manager class.

42) How would you go about IT strategy in a company without the business strategy defined?

MIKE: I tell IT managers all the time that it is unacceptable for you to not have an IT strategy because you don't have a company strategy. Let me repeat - unacceptable.

Interview senior management and ask about the business and what they plan to do in terms of growth, new offices, new product lines, etc. Ask them what the company's challenges are and learn about the business and the industry. Do the same with department managers. Understanding the management team's objectives, challenges, issues, and needs will tell you a lot. If you develop listening skills and can translate the business issues into things that have technology support implications, you are on your way.

Assess IT to determine capacity and capability and you will be ale to determine if there is a gap of need versus ability to support the need.

Develop your IT strategy to address the issues of what you heard and what you believe you need to do to support the technologies of the business. Present the recommendation to senior management to gain agreement and commitment. The CEO doesn't have to have a formalized strategy to review your plans to agree or disagree with them. You might even find that by being proactive in this area you actually help senior management develop their own vision of where they want to take the company.

JOEY: Excellent. Businesses have a strategy even if it isn't formal. It could be in the head's of the senior managers or board of directors, but they have financial goals etc. Is it possible a company doesn't even know what sales numbers they need to hit to be successful? I guess anything is possible. By following Mike's advice, you will be taking a step to get those goals and strategies down on paper in order to support them with IT.

43) How to advance without getting burnt out studying all the time?

MIKE: Maintaining a quality of life is important. If you find yourself burning out, it may be that what you are doing is not your true passion in life. For example, I work longer and harder than anytime in my career, and I always worked hard and

put in lots of hours. The difference is that what I do today doesn't seem like work because I like it so much.

It's important in any field to read and to stay abreast of what's taking place. However, it's impossible to keep up with everything. One of the challenges of most IT managers is that we are high detail oriented people and we want to know too much. I had a very difficult time letting go of the detail and still do at times. As a manager, however, you have to rise above the detail and be able to manage at the issue level and depend upon others to become the experts. That's a difficult assignment for many IT managers, but my sense is that it gives you the opportunity to become more strategic. You can't be strategic if you continue to stay in the detail.

Take time off when you can whether that's a 3-day weekend or vacation. Getting away from the office can be wonderful and give you renewed energy. Anyone who does not "take time to smell the roses" along the way will ultimately burn out. Take care of yourself.

JOEY: Mike's final remarks fit within my Top Ten IT Manager Mistakes. That being number 6 "Burning Yourself Out." Excerpt from that article:

"I can't tell you how many IT Managers I coach that have not had vacations in a year or longer and routinely work over 70 hours per week. This is not only a mistake, but is a formula for disaster. Sometimes the thinking is that your business cannot live without you. I hate to burst your bubble if this is your thinking. You are absolutely incorrect. Your business cannot live <u>with</u> you burning yourself out. This only leads to less productivity and eventually you quitting, giving up or getting disgruntled. Do yourself, business, employees and family a favor and take some time off. Recharging your batteries is extremely important for peak performance. Always remember to stop and smell the roses. If you don't, a train wreck is around the corner. It will not be a matter of "if", but "when."

With that said, you MUST devote time to personal development on a daily basis. I can't stress this enough. If you want to grow, you need to nurture that growth through information and training. This is just as important as taking time off. If you spent 30 minutes to an hour every morning, you will see drastic improvements and advancement. Mike said burning out is a sign of not doing what you enjoy, but I would like to add to that by saying that it is also a sign of incompetence. Defeat this with personal study. Develop a life-long commitment to personal development. This may not be what you are looking for, but it is a necessity. Also see the answers to Question 26.

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44) How to hurry up employees who want it perfect?

MIKE: IT employees are high detail and these types of people tend to be perfectionists. Over 80% are this way from what I've observed. To help them, you have to explain the balance between productivity and quality. Both are obviously important as we introduce change into the business. The challenge is to achieve balance.

For example, you can provide such high quality that you never get anything done. On the other hand, you can be so productive in delivering things that quality suffers and you end up fixing a lot of things. The key is to balance these two issues such that you minimize breakage but deliver in a timely manner.

If you have employees who do an excellent job in balancing these two issues, use them as role models to help those who are taking too long to "dot the "I's" and cross the "t's".

JOEY: This may not be the case, but is also a sign that the leader or manager has unreal expectations. They may be afraid to not be perfect. Do you allow your employees to fail or will they be fired or reprimanded if they do so? Also, if you want to see what you look like, observe your people. You are the leadership mirror. Look within first and then follow Mike's advice.

45) What are the most important skills a CIO needs to have to thrive over the next five years?

MIKE: Business understanding
Financials (budgeting and managing the financials of a cost center)
Developing strategy that's in sync with the business
Strong communication skills
Organization and people development skills

JOEY: Also learn the primary skills of value:
(a)   How to sell
(b)   How to market
(c)   How to create products
(d)   How to manage profits

46) Does IT really matters for doing business?

MIKE: Absolutely, the IT Organization is the one organization in the company that can help improve the productivity of virtually every employee in the

company. CEO's who understand the leverage IT has on improving the financials and productivity of the company spend more in IT, not less.

JOEY: This question has been of some controversy ever since Nicholas G. Carr wrote the article "Does IT Matter" in Harvard's Business Review. See: http://www.nicholasgcarr.com/doesitmatter.html for more information and his book on the topic.

His explanation is that IT is no longer strategic, but is a commodity. While I believe this is true in some cases, it is not true in all cases. What determine the value of IT are the business and the leaders in charge of it.

This question is like asking "Does Accounting Really Matter?" or "Does Marketing Really Matter?" Whether they are strategic entities or not, the simple fact is that you can't do business without them. Does IT really matter? Can you do business without it? If the answer is yes, then for that business IT doesn't matter.

47) What was the one main thing that motivated you to take action, creating your own business, to help train IT managers?
A couple of reasons actually.

MIKE: Our son, Eddie, suffered a traumatic brain injury in 1993 and I wanted to be able to work from a home office. Information is at www.eddiesisco.com .

Secondly, I wanted to create an Internet business that would essentially run on auto-pilot to leverage my time as opposed to having to work an hour to be paid an hour as a consultant.

Third, I have seen throughout my career how difficult of a time many IT managers have in making the transition from technology expert to IT manager just like I did. I started writing one book and midway in the writing, it dawned on me that I needed to share my processes and tools to help others be able to achieve more success. It took me 3 years to get to the point of providing classes, and the business continues to evolve as we gain maturity and exposure in the market.

I believe everyone essentially has a destiny in life. I'm convinced that I have found my destiny, but it took me over 20 years to prepare for it.

JOEY: This question is meant for Mike, but I will give you my reason. It was the lack of mentors and coaches in the IT industry. Since I found very little help

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except Mike of course, I vowed to help IT Managers around the world achieve their potential through leadership training, mentoring and coaching. My passion is to develop people to their fullest potential and I believe I have the formula to do that.

48) What one best thing did you ever do to elevate your career?

MIKE: This is very clear to me. In 1986 with a major company reorganization, I gained responsibility for a small IT group supporting 22 large hospital clients. In this business, we had support responsibility as well as a revenue responsibility in providing programming and training services.

Up until I took the job, I was always pushing to boost my career. Every opportunity I had with the Senior VP, I would emphasize my importance and provide input as to why I should be paid more and be included in a better bonus plan.

After the reorganization, I moved to a regional support office just down the road from my corporate office. In this new role, I focused on the client and doing what we needed to do for the company. I would say that for the first time in this company, my priorities were right. I've always been conscientious but for some reason felt that to advance, I had to push my value to others.

In the new role, I seemed to forget about pushing myself and why I needed to advance. And you know what, when I started achieving positive results for our clients and for our company, my career took off. It seemed that new responsibilities were coming my way all the time. Another reason they did was that I was quick to develop my replacement in every new responsibility so I could be positioned to take on more responsibility.

JOEY: For me it was submitting and winning the 1999 Microsoft Project of The Year. This spawned an endless amount of recognition, opportunity, elevation and success.

49) How does a leader maintain cool while in the line of fire?

MIKE: Step back, take a deep breath, and tell yourself that this issue will be resolved.

An IT manager has to be the person who defuses situations and does not escalate the concern.

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Consider the issues and the options and develop a game plan to address the situation. Be sure to over communicate status when systems are unavailable. The client wants to know you have a high sense of urgency but also needs to be reassured that IT is on top of the issue and is not panicked.

It also helps to anticipate certain problems and to have a strategy by which to address the issue when it comes up. Having a handy list of vendors and contacts to call when you need their help, putting into place escalation procedures for your staff to follow when certain issues take place, etc. can minimize your stress.

What I find is that getting a plan in place quickly to address the issue reduces my stress and gives me confidence in attacking the situation. Put processes and escalation procedures into place that will start the recovery as soon as possible, possibly even before you are notified of the problem.

Developing a responsive team is as much about the support processes you put into place as it is about the quality of the people you have.

JOEY: It takes confidence and inward security. It takes knowing that failure is not the end, but an opportunity for future successes. It takes a larger vision to be able to see past the fire.

50) Is today's CIO going to be the next CEO, and what key things do we need to do to get there?

MIKE: Maybe to some extent, but not as significant as you might think. CEO's are still going to come from the operations of the business. The reason we had such a surge of CIO's who became CEO's a few years ago was that so many of the young startup companies were Internet technology companies.

Traditional companies that provide products and services will still pull their CEO's from the operations and sales side of the business.

If your desire is to get there, you need to develop your business skills and learning how to manage the P&L (Profit and Loss) of a company. To succeed as a company, you ultimately need to be profitable and sometimes that's easier said than done.

CEO's also have to communicate well and manage expectations well, especially being able to manage their Board of Directors. You can get a lot of practice in this regard by developing and presenting IT strategy and managing senior management's expectations about what you can do and the impact that IT can have for the company's benefit.

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JOEY: The reason this question comes to the table is because of the necessity for businesses to be technologically savvy. Right now, this entire technical thought is funneled through the CIO and IT department. I believe the CEO's of the future will be strong technically. I believe they already are getting there. How many CEO's now operate a laptop, Blackberry, PDA or cell phone? How many now have wireless networks at home? My last CEO knew what SAN stood for and could spout more acronyms than our helpdesk tech.

The real answer to this question comes back to question number one in this document. That being that CIO's of the future may not exist because the entire globe will become as technologically proficient as driving a car. My 15 year old son is not going into technology when he gets out of high school, but he can already develop websites, code programs in C#, types 70 words per minute and administers our home network. He is the next generation CEO.

I strongly recommend any IT Manager who wants to survive in the next ten years to become extremely proficient in business language and leadership. The overriding theme of this entire document states such. The only way to become a CEO is to master the four primary skills of value. (See Question 45) Understanding those intimately will help you obtain the heart and mind of the CEO.

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