



Welcome to Berry, Dunn, McNeil & Parker's Public Sector Advisor, the newsletter designed with professionals like you in mind. Our newsletter contains useful information concerning your work -

from important information management trends to the latest innovations in technology and information systems.

The articles in this edition address important topics including:

- ◆ Best practices in IT Management
- ◆ Performance Management
- ◆ Managing E-mail SPAM

Successful managers, whether in private enterprise or the public sector, need to understand current trends and issues. Public sector organizations must maximize taxpayer funding for business and IT initiatives more than ever before, given the current fiscal environment.

In our role as advisors, we bring technology, business, and industry expertise to bear. We do not sell computer hardware and software. Our goal is to provide objective and independent consulting services to help our clients achieve their business objectives. The articles in this newsletter have been written by the staff in our Consulting Group. The information and perspective is relevant and timely. I encourage you to contact us with any questions. We would be pleased to discuss these and other technology and management matters you may have.

Tim Masse, Principal  
Berry, Dunn, McNeil & Parker  
Public Sector Practice Leader

## MANAGING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: BEST PRACTICES

By Charlie Leadbetter

In today's budget-conscious environment many government organizations are cutting back. In some cases, those cutbacks have resulted in technology initiatives that fail to involve key individuals in the planning process, lack sufficient understanding of the business needs of the organization, and provide no method by which to evolve with fast paced changes in the industry.

Some IT management best practices that should not be forgotten in these cost cutting times include:

1. **Inventory hardware and software assets.** Maintaining a current state of information technology architecture is critical when planning a technology initiative. A fundamental understanding of the current environment is necessary in order to plan for change.
2. **Focus on business needs.** Start by getting key stakeholders involved in assessing your current technology status and then strategize on what steps to take. Count on spending time discussing your assessment results and plotting an action plan for future technology initiatives.
3. **Establish an IT plan for the organization.** The development of an enterprise plan is more about the planning process and building consensus than it is about producing a plan document. Failure to involve the organization in the planning process can lead to an ineffective plan that does not meet the business needs of the organization.
4. **Align technology initiatives with the organization's strategic vision.** Technology initiatives need to be part of a larger picture for the organization; specifically, the initiatives need to clearly align with the mission, vision, and goals of the organization.
5. **Establish executive sponsorship. Involving executive management is critical to achieve success.** Not only is their vision of the organization essential, but their commitment to organizational change is necessary to provide leadership and continuity for the entire organization.



6. **Evaluate the IT management performance regularly.** IT management processes should be put in place. Key measurements that tell management how well IT is being managed is a requirement for success.

Sound technology management should lead to greater productivity, increased staff morale, and improved service to clients by having software applications that solve current business needs, networks that provide reliable access to the right information, and hardware infrastructure that makes it all work.

For more information on best practices in your organization please contact:  
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## PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND THE ROLE OF IT

by Laurel Harris



Constituents ask, "Why waste money upgrading to the latest operating system when I make do just fine with Windows 95 at home?" Legislators sometimes fail to see how out-dated legacy systems affect the work of public employees and the people they serve. Often, technology spending is erroneously viewed as superfluous or extravagant.

In order to change this perception, management needs to be able to objectively demonstrate how information technology products and services, including the information infrastructure, are supporting the delivery and effectiveness of agency programs. Performance management can provide this ability.

Performance management is a discipline that allows managers to provide hard facts on mission and program results. It includes set-

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## IN THIS ISSUE

- Managing Information Technology: Best Practices
- Performance Management and the Role of IT
- Managing Spam

*Performance Management, cont'd*

ting performance targets, designing efficiency and effectiveness measures, systematically and accurately measuring outcomes, and then using the results readily available for informed decision-making.

In the public sector, organizations are implementing performance measures to operationalize mission goals and objectives, quantify problems, evaluate alternatives, allocate resources, track progress, and learn from mistakes. Program authorizations, resource decisions, and oversight requirements increasingly hinge on how well departments and programs perform against expectations and improve performance over time. In these organizations, operational customers and IT managers are working to form partnerships to design, manage, and evaluate IT systems that are critical to achieving improved IT and business performance.

There are several popular approaches to performance management. The "Balanced Scorecard" approach is used by some, while other organizations prefer a "Results Chain" or a custom developed approach to performance management. There is no single "best" approach to performance management. The

selection and success of one approach over another is typically driven by the organizational culture, the strength of sponsorship received, available technology tools, and the structure of the organization.

In an effective performance management approach, performance information must link to strategic management processes. An effective performance management system uses measures to create and facilitate action to improve performance rather than assigning blame.

According to experts cited in the GAO's IT Performance Measurement Guide<sup>1</sup>, an effective performance management program will produce information that delivers the following benefits<sup>2</sup>:

- ◆ Provides an early warning indicator of problems, and the effectiveness of corrective action.
- ◆ Provides input to resource allocation and planning. It can help organizations prepare for future conditions that likely will impact program and support function operations and the demands for products and services, such as decreasing personnel, financial resources, or changes in workload.

- ◆ Provides periodic feedback to employees, customers, stakeholders, and the general public about the quality, quantity, cost, and timeliness of products and services.

- ◆ Perhaps most importantly, measures build a common results language among all decision-makers. Selected measures define what is important to an organization, what it holds itself accountable for, how it defines success, and how it structures its improvement efforts.

Performance management, if implemented well, can provide tremendous benefits to your organization. Information technology needs to play an integral role in your plans when implementing a performance management program.

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1 GAO/AIMD-98-89 IT Performance Management Guide  
2 Jack A. Brizius and Michael D. Campbell, Getting Results (Washington, D.C., Council of Governors' Policy Advisors).



## MANAGING SPAM

By Greg Klein, Systems Administrator

In today's marketplace SPAM (unwanted and unsolicited e-mail) has become an increasingly important problem for many agencies. The national percentage of e-mail considered to be SPAM has risen to over 50%. Users attempting to main-

tain personal junk lists find it not only time consuming, but ineffective because spammers use sophisticated tactics, such as frequently changing domain names and relaying SPAM through unsuspecting hosts to mask the true origin of the mail. There are currently three different types of products available which you can use to filter SPAM.

- ◆ Client side software is the cheapest but least effective solution. Not only is it necessary to install it on every computer in the domain, the engine is static over time, meaning the amount of SPAM that gets through is going to increase unless you install updates regularly. This solution is only viable for small networks on a tight budget.
- ◆ In-house solutions are available that require a dedicated server to filter all mail before delivering it to the end-user. A server updates a SPAM filter daily to keep up with the latest threats. Since the filter is constantly being updated, the effectiveness should not diminish over time. Licensing is usually on a per site basis so larger departments with an on-site administrator available to maintain the system could find this solution the best fit for their needs.

*The national percentage of e-mail considered to be SPAM has risen to over 50%*

- ◆ An off-site third-party hosted service solution is usually the easiest to set-up and maintain. E-mail is routed through the service before ever making it to your e-mail server and therefore does not require any changes to be made to the network. Quarantined mail never reaches the site so considerable savings can be seen in bandwidth and processor power on the e-mail server. Like the in-house solution, block rates are promised at 95% with less than 1% of false positives (messages that are blocked that should not have been). Licensing is usually on a per user basis so small to mid-sized organizations with less IT resources might be attracted to this solution.

In addition to the obvious benefit of implementing a SPAM solution, there are a few benefits that may not be initially considered. SPAM solutions include an option for virus scanning as well. Depending on the topology of the network, current anti-virus systems can either be removed because the SPAM solution is filling both needs, or strengthened because you can have multiple sources scanning your mail. The reporting features of the software allow you to see how much SPAM you are blocking and analyze the e-mail that is being sent to your organization.

A good SPAM solution should not only remove SPAM but should be an effective tool for administrating all aspects of incoming e-mail. In today's marketplace, managing e-mail and SPAM is an integral part of systems management.

*If you have questions concerning the appropriate solution for your organization, please contact your BDMP Management and Information Technology Group advisor at (207) 775-2387.■*