

# Career Advice: The Buying Patterns of the Business Leader

“I don’t care what it takes, I need this NOW!”

Those of us who’ve held senior (or not so senior) positions in IT for any organization have heard this phrase from the business owner. Usually, this follows after a careful detailing of all the complexities, costs and timeline on our part, and a frustrated look and throbbing vein on our counterparts forehead.

One of the greatest things that an IT professional seeking an upwardly mobile career can learn is to NOT be an IT professional. It has been the bane of our industry for the IT Professional to be relegated to position of the servant, rather than the peer.

Don’t be confused here. You are a valuable member of your organizations staff. You solve complex operational problems and provide a necessary service. However, at the end of the day, if a magical machine came along and replaced you and your entire staff in providing the same service, rest assured, your absence would be unnoticed shortly after your going away party.

I’m usually a pretty diplomatic guy, so please forgive the bluntness with which I’ve phrased the above statement. It’s important for you as the professional to be exactly that, a PRO-fessional.

Successful business leaders evaluate almost all decision in a similar fashion. Cost vs. Return divided by Time. This is true of new business initiatives, hiring decisions, and purchases of every sort.

Why, you may ask, am I bringing your career into the purchasing make up of the revenue generating side of the shop? Because a full understanding of this crucial decision process can either incredibly propel your career, or keep you locked into the world of “the others”.

Technology, in and of itself, is simply a means to an end. (Is that an angry mob I hear out the window?). The idea of Information Technology is radical innovation of the last century. Simply stated, the core tenet is that Information is a raw material, much like steel or cotton that can be refined or combined with other materials to form an asset that is more valuable than its original material.

Whether you are the IT Executive, the Technology Entrepreneur, the consulting professional or an upper-middle-up-and-comer, it is vitally important to the health of your company that you produce value far in excess of your weighted cost (and the cost of

the group you manage and its entire infrastructure). If you’re not sure how to measure this from the vantage point of the business owner, may I advise you to quickly figure it out or get out the want ads. There’s a nice selection at the end of this magazine, if you’re looking for a place to start.

The best way to help yourself and your company is to separate yourself from the pack of “tech operators / designers” and become a valuable part of the team creating profit for your company. When looking at the work you and your group is doing, continuously re-evaluate it through the vantage of the buyer of goods and services of your company. If you are more than 3 steps away from serving the customer, seriously reconsider the approach of what you’re doing, and formulate well thought out plans to streamline the infrastructure to get it closer to the customer.

Support and internal operations are important, to be sure. Yet they are only points of investment in time and money when they will better the company in its ability to be the best provider of “its thing” to the customer.

Let others be the “cost center”. If you want your career to soar, become the one that the line of business or divisional leader looks to for common sense on how to better the top and bottom line (adding sales and cutting costs).

Business Leaders buy in a pattern. They buy what makes them money. IT is the same way, and so are IT Professionals. Figure out that buying pattern and fit yourself into it, and your career will prosper.