



## The Role of IT in Service Improvement for Business

### Introduction

This presentation has been organised by NACCIMA and is being presented by the Chief Technology Officer of Internet Technologies Ltd. (nettech). Nettech is an IT consultancy company that specialises in developing Internet and database applications. The company was founded in 1999 with the intention of sharing information, fostering technological advancement and using this as a base for promoting development and business in the Nigerian market. The directors, in addition to a business imperative, have a very strong desire to contribute in some meaningful and lasting way to development and regeneration in a new Nigeria.

### Data at the heart of business

At the heart of every business is data. It is often said that your data is just as important as your employees are, if not more so. Employees may, and will leave an organisation, but, except for sale or release, data is there for life. How a business manages its data, and the processes it builds on top of, and around that data, largely determine the quality of service that it can render to its clientele. In the management and processing of data, a vital toolbox needed by all businesses is that of Information Technology (IT).

It is pertinent at this juncture to restate that IT is to be seen as a tool, and not an accessory; this point could never be overstated. The philosophy and approach to IT is an important function of the possible outcomes to its employment. Like all other tools IT attempts to reproduce, or improve on, what humans already do without tools, or with lesser tools, or to do more (homogenous/heterogeneous) of the same.

### When and where is IT needed?

When and where then do businesses need to use IT in improving service to their clients? This question could be answered literally and specifically, or logically and generically. The latter approach would seem preferable because it imparts a more enduring knowledge of problem resolution than the former. An important prerequisite in determining the employment of IT in any organisation should be an exercise of Systems Analysis to identify data and processes in the existing system.

This becomes the basis for advancing recommendations of measured change in the pursuit of clearly defined business objectives, often expressed in an organisation's Mission Statement. The mission statement of our company (nettech) includes quality service to our clients and preeminence in our sector in the near future. This has helped us plan a strategy that guides our IT spend, to improve the quality of our inputs and processes so as to guarantee the quality of our outputs. The preeminence is the desirable by-product. The intention now is to introduce a number of slides that will illustrate these points better and provide a practical example relating technology to a business.

## **Presentation Slides**

**"IT in Business: From Components to Strategy"**

## Business in Nigeria

Nigerians by nature are a technology keen people; history tells us that we are always after the latest technology whenever we can get it. However, infrastructure problems have meant that the realisation of the full benefits of IT has failed to be achieved by aspiring persons and businesses in the country to date. Computers require electricity, which has been erratic till date. The government is now addressing this problem directly, but it is likely to be some time yet before we see uninterrupted power (24x7) always.

In addition to this, the great technologies relating to the Internet require efficient and reliable communication facilities. Here again, the scarcity and paucity of communication lines has hindered growth. The privatisation exercise that has seen NITEL sold off, as well as the introduction of a second national carrier should begin to address these problems in the near future.

Internally, businesses could do more to leverage IT for competitive advantage, despite the prevailing infrastructure problems. Businesses need to see IT as an important part of their overall strategy and should either train or recruit quality IT personnel who will be involved all through to management. It is important to have resounding faith in your IT consultant, whether they are permanent staff, contractors or expatriates. Once a relation of trust is established, a free hand should be given in advising on the direction of investment in IT to achieve clearly defined business objectives, rather than imposing decisions.

## IT Consultant as Visionary

The role of the IT consultant should be to bring vision and leadership to the management of limited resources in the pursuit of clearly stated business goals, and that requires knowledge and empathy, of technology and the business context. There is a requirement that businesses have very clear goals that they are able and ready to articulate. Distinguished technology consultants take time to investigate the business environment of their client, and to find ways in which current and emerging technologies could be used to further the client's interests. In my experience, even in Europe, those of that ilk are thin on the ground and as such closely guarded and highly priced. Having found one of such, most companies do their best to retain their services.

In Nigeria we face not only the global problem of the scarcity of distinguished IT consultants, but we also struggle with an active and aggressive brain drain of our professionals to countries where immediate rewards far outstrip what we can offer today.

There is hope yet. Nigerians need to grow our own consultants. Here and now, we have a great advantage: the Internet. Never before has it been so easy to tap into global expertise as is now possible using the access that the Internet medium affords. It is clear that there is no monopoly of knowledge in any part of the earth today, in fact, we in IT sometimes describe current expert knowledge as being no more than a distillation of widely spread common sense. By opening our minds to new ideas we can assimilate the knowledge of experts the world over, and dissipate a distillation of that knowledge to our brethren at home.

## Conclusion

This presentation is a step in that direction. I have come here today to share with you a few of the ideas and technologies I have been exposed to in my twelve year sojourn in the United Kingdom, and how some of these may be applied to business to improve service. You will notice that I have avoided speaking directly of particular applications or products. I believe that it is more important to understand the thinking behind the use of technologies than to understand how to use or implement one or more applications and/or products.

It is my earnest hope that you will leave here, having apprehended one or more new ideas and technologies, and that you will either use or share those ideas with your employees, colleagues, or partners sometime in the future. I want to take this opportunity to thank you all for your much-valued time, spared to attend this presentation, and for giving me your undivided attention for the entire duration. I wish you every luck in all that you heretofore undertake and GOD's blessings wherever you go. GOD bless Nigeria. Amen.