



## Information Technology Staffing – Five Key Roles

Determining the appropriate staffing level for the Information Technology function is a key success factor for businesses of all sizes. It is particularly a challenge for mid-size businesses that can't justify a large permanent staff. Effectively supporting the technology products key to the organization's success is a first priority. However, costs in the form of salaries for internal staff and fees for outsourced services must also be closely managed.

The following are Five Key Roles recommended for mid-size companies to ensure a reliable technology infrastructure, maximized employee productivity, and continuous improvement of key business processes.

### 1. Technology Vision

Given the rapid growth of technology products, developing a comprehensive technology strategy for your business is a vital success factor. This should include not only an initial strategy but frequent updates as the technology and business landscapes change.

The role of strategist / visionary should encompass an understanding of your business strategy, knowledge of emerging technology products applicable to your industry, and the ability to determine which technology products can actually produce the desired return on investment.

### 2. Infrastructure Management

The growth in complexity of the technology environment over the last decade has resulted in multiple technology specialists being required to maintain the "backoffice" technology infrastructure. This typically includes specialists in file, print, and authentication servers, storage area networks (SAN's), server virtualization, firewalls, routers, remote access servers, database servers, e-mail servers, and Voice over IP (VoIP) equipment.

Due to the specialized knowledge required to manage each of these technology components, multiple individuals are often required to cover this breadth of technology. Because of this, external service providers are often used for organizations that can't field an infrastructure management team of at least two to three individuals. A trend even for those businesses with large internal IT staffs is



to outsource the management of the highest complexity components to companies that specialize in these skills.

### **3. Technology Support**

Providing prompt help to employees in their use of technology products is, without question, critical to the success of your business. This role typically encompasses answering help desk calls, providing prompt equipment repair, installing new equipment, providing training, and coordinating complex problem resolution with other technology resources.

Best performers in this role have both great technology skills and great interpersonal skills. They should also be able to effectively help employees of varying technology experience.

While occasionally outsourced, this employee-facing tends to favor utilizing internal staff members for quick access to knowledge and prompt problem resolution.

### **4. Application Support**

All Information Technology components (e.g. servers, networks, individual computers, etc.) exist for one purpose: to support the application software used to improve business operations and profitability. This application software may include “foundation” products used by everyone in the business (e.g. E-Mail) or it may be “specialty” software used by just a few individuals (e.g. order entry, financial budgeting, or project scheduling).

Providing an adequate level of support for all of these products is a requirement for your business to reach its full potential. This support includes on-going training, prompt response to “how to” questions, and coordinating complex problem resolution with the software provider.

For products used across the organization, this support usually is provided by the “Technology Support” role. For “specialty” products it often is provided by the individuals utilizing the product in their daily work, often in the form of a “super user”.



## 5. Business Process Improvement

The key objective for this role is to work collaboratively with operations staff to design and implement improved processes. This may include implementing new technology products or improved utilization of existing products.

This role will identify how candidate business processes can be improved, build a plan to implement the improvements, and communicate a vision for the plan with others in the organization. Being most effective in this step requires both operational knowledge and credibility with operations staff. Knowledge of technology products is helpful as well.

A key requirement is the ability to reinforce with all those involved in the organization how the new process benefits the organization, ensure compliance with the new process, and deal with any objections to the changes in a productive manner.

Process improvement sometimes requires bringing new technology products into the organization. In these cases, this role may identify and select these products, develop budgets and schedules for their implementation, and track progress of the project in relation to budget and schedule.

### *Conclusion*

Every organization is different, due to both size and complexity, and these roles can be adjusted based on the specific needs being addressed. Some roles may be combined. The “Application Support” and “Business Process Improvement” roles are often encompassed in one individual

While the “Technology Support” and “Application Support” positions are typically staffed with internal employees, other roles may be augmented with outside providers. As an example, the “Technology Vision” role is often facilitated with consulting assistance and components of the “Infrastructure Management” role are increasingly outsourced. The “Business Process Improvement” role can also be facilitated with consulting assistance if needed.



***Technology Topics*** is a series of communications by Mike Davidson for clients and friends of OnCourse Technology Group, LLC. To be placed on our mailing list, please visit our website at [www.OnCourseGroup.net](http://www.OnCourseGroup.net) or e-mail us at [info@oncoursegroup.net](mailto:info@oncoursegroup.net).

*About OnCourse Technology Group - Headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama, we provide consulting services for businesses seeking to improve operations and profitability through the application of Information Technology. Our goal is to become the trusted advisor to our clients in all matters relating to the usage of technology products. Our services include strategic planning, software selection, and implementation project management for a wide range of businesses.*

*About Mike Davidson – As founder of OnCourse Technology Group, Mike has over 25 years experience bringing value to business through the implementation of Information Technology. His specialties include strategic planning, IT project management, business application strategies, business process design, IT infrastructure design, IT organization design, IT staff development, and vendor management. Mike may be contacted at [mike@OnCourseGroup.net](mailto:mike@OnCourseGroup.net).*

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