April 2001

Managing IT at Board Level

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Recommended Citation

Mittal, Monika (2001) "Managing IT at Board Level," *Management Dynamics*: Vol. 2: No. 1, Article 13.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.57198/2583-4932.1272
Available at: https://managementdynamics.researchcommons.org/journal/vol2/iss1/13

MANAGING I.T. AT BOARD LEVEL

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PUBLISHER : KIT GRINDLEY, PITMAN PUBLISHING

According to the author, Kit Grindley, who is a professor of Systems Automation at the London School of Economics and also a Price Water house consultant "We control the computer after all, we write programs. But once they' re up and running, we seem to lose the control we thought we had". The book discusses the view of the enthusiasts, people who think that there is no success without information technology and the pragmatists, people who think that information technology is a wasteful expenditure. The book is all about how to reap maximum benefits out of information technology and at the same time expect bottom-line control over runaway information technology (I.T.) enthusiasm.

The Author has discussed in detail about "Integrating IT with corporate objectives". The main objective of any organisation is making money, efficiency and effectiveness. There has been a great shift from information technology as a support tool (efficiency) to a strategic tool (effectiveness) Information technology can be used to even capture or defend market share, make money and not just save money.

Aptly named "Managing I.T. at Board Level" the book reveals the common problems facing I.T. implementation in organisations. With the investment in I.T. rising to millions of rupees, I.T, has become a matter for the Board. Some of the problems discussed in the book are cost escalation in I.T., systems development problems, conflicting attitudes of technicians and users, and the newness of I.T. and not meeting project deadlines.

The author has emphasised the need and the role of a person at the Board level to control and manage I.T. This person can be an I.T director or a CIO (chief information Officer) with management as well as a technical background.

The latter half of the book deals with how to measure system benefits. "The ultimate business drivers are not cost /benefit analysis but survival. Not balance sheets, but life and death".

The author has eloquently expressed the real life problems with I.T. implementation. Organisations invest millions of rupees in information technology and end up with bulky, incomprehensible and inflexible systems. People who run organisations do not understand I.T and the people who run I.T do not understand organisations. The book is a must for I.T professionals with a management background and also for anyone who wants to understand the real reasons for I.T being not as successful as projected.

By Prof. Monika Mital*

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