



## WORKING FROM YOUR DESK IS A GREAT WAY TO GET OUTSOURCED

You may be a technically gifted guru, but if you rely on electronic communication rather than personal engagement, your role is in danger of being outsourced.

Technical skills are available more cheaply from other parts of the world.

Success depends on meaningful engagement between practitioners and decision makers. That's you and your stakeholders.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGAGING

For most of us, our role is about achieving outcomes that involve other people.

We need to engage with those people. We need to make sure that the outcome we provide is the outcome they are seeking. We must ensure we understand their requirements before offering solutions.

Here we run into a complication, which is that people typically don't discuss their real problems and issues with 'strangers'—colleagues they don't know—hence the need for a personal connection. This doesn't come from sitting at your desk and communicating electronically.

It stands to reason that you can achieve much better rapport by engaging in person. I refer to emails as rapport-filters because they are so effective at filtering out any chance of rapport.



JOHN WILLIAMS  
JHW FOUNDER & DIRECTOR

## REACTIVE MANAGEMENT IS NOT APPRECIATED

When our action list is compiled from our inbox, we are being reactive.

Several problems arise from this approach. First and foremost is that the more we brand ourselves as someone who reacts, the more we will get used in this capacity.

As a result, we will acquire a long list of things to do, with limited time to do them in, so creating a master-servant relationship between our stakeholders and us.

There is an issue of recognition here as well. If stakeholders throw stuff at us to fix, and it goes back to them fixed, even if it's been done really well, there's not a great deal of recognition.

If all we do is what we are told to do, we need to acquire a reputation for doing it quickly because there is little else, other than the speed of response, for the stakeholder to judge us against. Whatever we did, was simply what they expected us to do.

## FAME AND RECOGNITION COMES FROM BEING PROACTIVE

The way to get praise and recognition is to do something above and beyond the initial requirements.

As valued service providers we need to be more proactive. By meeting your stakeholder face-to-face, and proactively moving the issue along by contributing thoughts and ideas on the big picture, your value is more easily recognised and attributed.

We need to take the trouble to go and find out what people want, not this week or next week, but where they want to be in two years time.

If we do this, we win the opportunity to be involved in the interesting stuff rather than maintaining the legacy systems.

Being proactive and adopting a proactive state of mind is about believing in ourselves and believing we can make a difference. It's about getting ourselves into the stakeholder's calendar and making sure we understand their challenges.

If we move into a more proactive space we get more time and more opportunity to add more value.

This type of added value is hardly what the stakeholders will wish to outsource. It stands to reason that the introvert, who might be doing a thorough job, may not be getting the recognition they deserve and although unfair, may still get fired or outsourced.

Of course there are reactive parts to everyone's role, but if our role is dominated by reactive requirements and we can do all of that from our desk then why should our employer fund this type of work in an expensive location like Australia.

The only real way to get recognition is to exceed expectations. It's your choice. If you are seeking to be outsourced, then buy yourself a really comfy chair but one that can be exported at low cost.

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## BEING CORE TO THE BUSINESS, NOT COMMODITY

An overseas subsidiary of a major Australian institution had become the "client from hell" for the IT Support Group.

Shortly after attending the Engagement Skills Workshop, the account manager found himself providing this client with an update on process changes.

He decided to change tack. Rather than telling the client what he was going to do next, he spent the first hour asking about their needs, their priorities, their business destination and their support requirements.

The relationship immediately warmed. Historically there had been little interest or time given to understanding these needs or challenges. The account manager later said, "Without realising it, we must have come across in a rather arrogant way when we were telling them their solution, without taking any interest in their needs. We have more work to do but I am optimistic."

## BEING CORE TO THE BUSINESS, NOT A COMMODITY

The ERP Support Group of a major international corporation attended the Engagement Skills Workshop, and then as a group made a point of applying some of the messages of the workshop.

In particular they each made greater effort to build stronger engagement with their stakeholders, and listen more to their problems and needs.

Some months later, due to economic downturn, the organisation decided to downsize the entire Shared Services Division, with the pain to be equally shared across the board.

The business stakeholders of the ERP group, made an impassioned case that the ERP Support Group was providing a vital service to the business and that business would be severely compromised should the cutbacks occur.

The ERP Support Group was the only part of the Shared Services to escape the cut. They had lifted their perception from a commodity, or necessary but inconvenient cost (like the rest of Shared Services), to value adding and part of the core business.

## REACTIVE OR RESPONSIVE

A new starter joins an organisation and tells IT, "I need a laptop connected to the Internet. The IT technician promptly provides a laptop with a connection to the Internet.

One week later the new starter is thoroughly frustrated because they still have no permission to access some of the systems required to do their job properly, and blames the IT technician for his incompetence.

The IT technician says, "You didn't ask for access to those systems." The IT technician gave his stakeholder what he *asked* for (reactive) but didn't take the trouble to understand what he needed. (responsive).