

DON TENNANT

Dear John

AN OPEN LETTER to John Swainson, president and CEO of Computer Associates. Oops. I mean, CA.

A couple weeks ago you placed a full-page ad in *Computerworld* in the form of an open letter to describe your “new vision for enterprise IT.” You call your vision “Enterprise IT Management.” EITM, you say, is a “new approach to

managing technology in which CA software and expertise enable customers to unify and simplify complex IT environments across the enterprise.”

Good grief, John. That’s embarrassing. You should have told the marketing genius who sent that one up the pipeline to go back to the drawing board. Or back to marketing school. Or anyplace where his brilliance can be con-

tained before it causes too much damage. Enterprise IT Management? That’s not a vision, John. That’s what your users do. All the time. It’s their job description. Referring to it by the goofy EITM acronym doesn’t elevate what they do to a vision. It reduces it to marketing blather. It cheapens and debases what users devote endless hours of hard work to.

“We believe that systems, processes and people should work in sync, securely supporting your strategic mission,” you say. “We believe you can get more out of your current investments in IT. We believe you should have the control you want to fully align existing IT capabilities with your business priorities.”

You call all this a “compelling difference.” Can’t you see that there’s nothing new there, John? All of that has been hashed and rehashed for years. The last thing your users need is more cliché-riddled vendorspeak, wrapped in an acronym, couched in a “vision.”

Forget all the nonsense about what you believe. You need to focus on making your users believe. You’ve



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done a good job of shedding a lot of the resentment and disenchantment that defined your customers’ relationships with CA for so many years. Last April, I gave a keynote speech at another software vendor’s user conference in which I talked about “miracles” in the IT industry. I showed a slide that declared, “It is a miracle that Computer Associ-

ates, once the most intensely loathed software company on the planet, is now widely seen as a trusted business partner with valuable technology.”

I stand by what I said to that crowd. But make no mistake, John, there’s still plenty of ill will among your users. And it won’t take many missteps on your part for those who have been

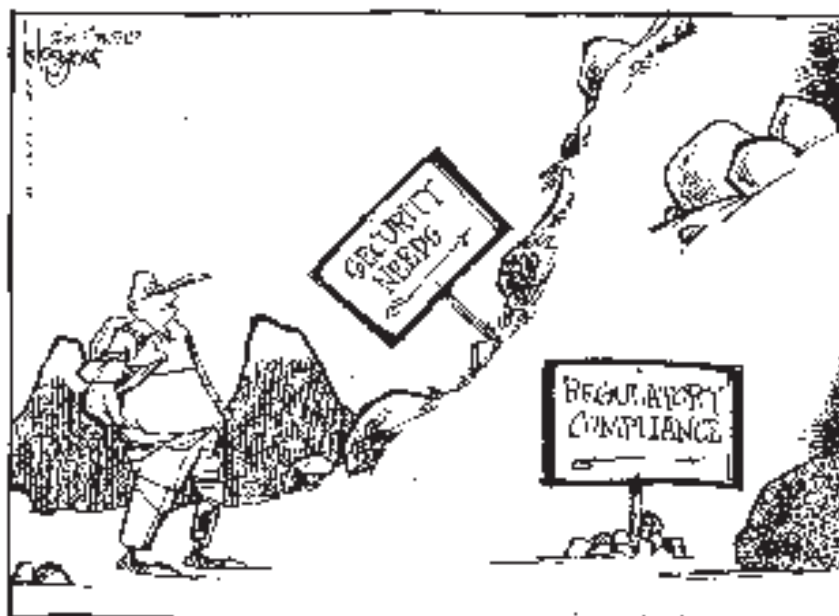
converted to stop believing in the miracle.

This ridiculous EITM thing is a misstep. So is your outrageous decision to eliminate all 300 of your customer advocate positions worldwide. Can’t you see what an awful message that sends to your users? Your explanation is that you want the sales reps to be held more accountable by requiring them to be the main points of contact for users. I have to think Jarrid Magalich of Pennsylvania retailer Sheetz Inc. spoke for a lot of other users when he said losing his customer advocate is a “black mark,” as Matt Hamblen reported in last week’s issue (“CA Gets Credit for Tools but Faces Questions”).

Magalich noted that he had a great working relationship with the advocate, who he said acted like a “commissionless sales rep.” He said CA told him that the advocate’s role would be replaced by phone support. That’s scary, John. It sounds like something Charles Wang would have done.

You can’t allow that user-betrayed attitude to resurface. Because if you do, you’ll be getting more Dear John letters than you know what to do with. ▶

Don Tennant



THORNTON A. MAY

Innovation Enters the IT Conversation

INNOVATION LOOMS large on the radar screens of all IT leaders.

Every month, researchers supporting the CIO Solutions Gallery at Ohio State University and the Value Studio at the IT Leadership Academy talk to and/or e-interview a large number of IT leaders (recently it was 1,500) and ask, “How have your conversations changed?”

About six months ago, respondents started telling us that the conversations they were having with CEOs and C-level peers have changed. For example, one respondent said, “They are now asking me, ‘How can IT help us grow the business? How can IT differentiate my products and services in the minds of my critical customers?’”

This was new. Historically, the conversation has revolved around how IT can drive down costs.

Recognizing a trend, we immediately launched a research project. We discovered troubling information. In many organizations, IT is not perceived as being particularly innovative. It isn’t attached to centers of innovation in the enterprise. It isn’t perceived as being supportive of innovation. And it isn’t attached to the big innovations going on in the industry or society.

The empirical evidence seems to indicate that while CEOs, investors and investment analysts have shifted their mind-sets to a new era of innovation, differentiation and growth, many in the IT community are still mired in the cost-cutting mind-set.

In a world where innovation is the new new thing — the secret ingredient of strategic success — not being innovative or not being perceived as being innovative is dangerous.

IT’s image regarding innovation is in bad shape. The road back to being perceived as a positive force involves



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adjusting our mental model around innovation and getting smart about it.

The researchers aggregated this quick drive-by list of the best thinking on innovation going on at the companies thought to be the most innovative:

1. Operational effectiveness and excellence *are not enough*. Research indicates that in a very overcrowded marketplace (sound like yours?), investments in operational excellence *do not* over time change relative competitive position. As you are working hard and investing much in trying to materially improve your performance on a particular dimension, so too is your competitor. You are on a treadmill. Innovation gives you the opportunity to change the game, whether you are experiencing a Dunkirk moment (exiting the field) or a Normandy moment (establishing a beachhead for future victory).

2. Without a corporate culture that visibly and vocally supports innovation, backed up by a measurement system that defines and rewards innovation, innovation becomes an unnatural act. Indeed, properly functioning control systems in large organizations label early-stage innovations as “waste” and early-stage innovators as “failures.”

3. Game-changing innovation requires a process that manages ideas from raw form to commercialization.

The chief innovation officer at one of the world's top companies shared his definition: “Innovation is the art, science and discipline of finding new ideas, or generating new ideas and converting those ideas into new business opportunities. Fundamentally, what we believe in at the end of the day is that every business looks for two things: Protect my business, and grow my business. Innovation is all about both of these.”

A big part of protecting your career and expanding your employment opportunities is tied to whether your workplace identity includes some innovation mojo. ▶

VIRGINIA ROBBINS

Thriving in The Postsale Phase

LAST MONTH, my company was sold. Integration activities are under way but won't be completed until

next year. For managers, the postsale implementation period is perhaps the most challenging one in an acquisition. Here are five things that you can do to thrive in this phase.

First, identify your motivation for working. If you work so your kids have a roof over their heads, know that. In the short run, say, six months or less, most of us can do what we need to do to keep our families happy. In the long run, most of us need more than just a paycheck. Know what you want and what you are willing to sacrifice. Make sure that those you care about agree or at least understand.

Second, expect to mourn the death of the old company. No matter how badly your old firm was run, the postacquisition period brings out nostalgia for the good old days. The more emotionally involved you were with your old company, the worse this will be. Once the acquisition was signed, your old company died. Recognize this. You'll hear some employees contending that this change is stupid, and you'll see



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others who will withdraw and choose to move on, even when it is financially inadvisable to do so. As their manager, you need to recognize that these behaviors are a natural reaction to death. But don't let staff members wallow in self-pity or become obsessed with “them.” If appropriate, help workers find new projects or assignments. And it can be helpful to set up sessions, after work or late on Fridays, as designated wine times.

Third, expect an abrupt change of command. When a change at the top is required, experienced acquirers make it happen quickly. It can be jarring, but abrupt change is for the best. If your old boss is hanging around, feeling more and more like a lame duck every day, help him move on. If you're the old boss, ask for a new assignment, and if one can't be found, ask to be allowed to work from home. The sooner you've made way for the new manager, the better off your staff will be.

Fourth, remember your commitments. Even if you're working from home, don't forget those who are still at work. They

will still need you to help answer questions or provide background. Find the balance between letting the new boss run things and providing support to your old staff. If the acquirer expects you to read e-mail and answer your cell phone, then do it. If you're expected to call in and pick up messages daily, then make it clear to everyone when you will do it. Make sure that those who need to know your schedule know it. If you have a contract, abide by its terms, and do so warmly.

Finally, as before, look for opportunities to do meaningful work. If you don't know what you want to do, let people know that you're ready to help. Realize that your role is to support the new company and assist those who are overextended. As people leave, your peers may find themselves doing the work of two or three people. Most likely, the acquirer's staff members are doing at least two jobs — their regular jobs and integration work. Who knows what opportunities will be uncovered by those willing to help? ▶

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READERS' LETTERS

Innovation Alive and Well in IT Industry

IHAD AN unusually strong reaction to Don Tennant's editorial “Parallel Processing” [Oct. 3]. I think the fault in his logic when he compares the IT industry to the auto industry is that he paints the IT industry as a monolithic entity, and it's anything but.

Like us humans, companies can be at vastly different stages of maturity and so exhibit different behaviors. New companies are innovative but would be choked to death if they adopted the efficient but restrictive bureaucracy of a big corporation. Mature, successful companies can't tolerate the chaos of true innovation, so they concentrate on efficiency and process standardization. Dying companies exhaust their last resources trying to reinvent themselves and spend their last years cannibalizing their customers and their wealth.

I agree that one major difference between the auto industry and the IT industry is in how fast things change. But a bigger difference

is that the auto industry has no real innovation, while IT continues to sprout a bumper crop of new products and young companies.

Doug Lewis

Managing director, Edge Consulting Group, Atlanta, edgeconsulting@bellsouth.net

Outsourcers Must Focus on Security

JAY CLINE'S excellent online article on privacy as competitive advantage [“What's Your Company's Privacy Strategy?” Oct. 10] does a nice job of laying out the foundation for developing a privacy strategy.

Privacy protection may be the canary in a coal mine in the realm of offshoring or outsourcing. Service providers that are entrusted with nonpublic information and intellectual property in digital form, such as personal financial data and source code, are figuring out that data protection is

inexorably tied to shareholder value. A person in the marketing organization of a large outsourcing service provider told me that they conducted a brand study with a large marketing firm and Gartner and discovered that their ability to protect customer data was more important than the quality of their service. They have since made data protection the cornerstone of their brand and marketing.

Tom Grubb

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Putting Job, Family In Perspective

I'M CURRENTLY working overseas making good money, working long hours and with plenty of stress and responsibility.

My wife and I have decided that she needs to start premed studies in Kansas. I was debating whether to stay overseas or go back with her once my contract is over, but after reading C.J. Kelly's Security Manager's Journal “Quality of

Life Influences Decision to Stay Put” [Oct. 10], I think going back to Kansas is the smart thing to do. Sure, it will be less money and less stress, but I'll be with the woman I love and cherish. Thank you for putting what should have been in perspective back in perspective. Family is the most important thing we have, and time with them is very short.

Gregory W. Jones

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