Apps

You need to be thinking about your clients, firm and the technology you use to serve those clients. Hardware, software, data, procedures and people all work together to transform data into information.

Randy Johnston • Aug. 29, 2012

"*Think.*"
"*Failing to plan is planning to fail.*"
"*Garbage in, garbage out.*"
"*Work smarter, not harder.*"

These common phrases should remind us to apply common sense to our technology

In prior columns, we have asked you to consider your strategic business plan and to develop your tactical plan to accomplish the strategic goals. Likewise we have asked you to build a technology strategic plan that aligns with your strategic business plan and then choose IT tactics that accomplish your IT strategic goals. This year we have observed an unusually large number of irrational decisions made about IT based on vendor promises, unrealistic expectations from many directions, false claims and numerous other factors. Don't fall into this trap. Think about how you want your firm to operate, and make plans to convert from the way you are today, your "as is", to your future vision of the firm, your "to be". Once your "to be" vision is in place, decide what tools can help you get there. Often, the applications you use help you change the way your firm acts and thinks.

Your applications can make you more effective and efficient. Applications continue to evolve to support your firm and clients. The effectiveness of the software tools you need to run your practice and support your clients should be evaluated at least once a year. If an application no longer fits your strategy, elimination of the application or a replacement should be considered, selected and implemented. Today's applications are commonly in one of four forms: 1) Client/server, 2) Desktop, 3) SaaS, or 4) an "app" – a small, single purpose application that typically runs on a tablet or smartphone. All four of these styles of applications can have their place in your strategy. Once you have chosen good fits for your needs in applications, hardware and infrastructure, learning to use your applications well can pay big dividends. Note that SaaS and Apps are automatically Cloud solutions. The way you implement traditional Client/server or desktop applications can make them part of your private cloud.

Think Globally, Implement Locally OR in the Cloud

Client Server and desktop applications still dominate the market. They are robust, mature and stable. You can install these applications on-premise, or these

applications can be installed in a data center. Your IT team or hosted provider can

problem. Each app will have requirements of your other applications and infrastructure.

The applications that you select will determine the type of hardware that is required. No matter what application solutions you choose, at your office you will need: redundant communication lines, firewalls, switches, good cabling and end-user devices including copiers, printers, scanners, computers, tablets and smartphones. If you have local storage needs, then you have two major choices: On-Premise Private Cloud or a Hosted Private Cloud. An on-premise private cloud could be built using traditional local area networking technology, virtualization of servers, Terminal Services, Citrix Services or Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) using tools like Citrix XenDesktop or VMware View. Wise installers are making all applications run conveniently and securely for remote users.

More Than One Right Way To Do This

We muse over consultants, pundits and experts who strive to convince you that their way is the "only way" or solutions based on their experience is "best practice" for the industry. We are more convinced than ever that there are multiple right ways to solve both client and firm problems and that your knowledge of your client base will lead you to look for solutions to these issues. The way you select and implement solutions will lead to your success. Focusing on the smooth implementation and training of your people to get your procedures right can pay the highest reward.

Consistency of procedures will contribute the most to quality work products that are reproducible and have a minimum amount of time and effort involved. If you can focus some of your attention and expertise on reducing the steps and effort to solve a problem, document and teach team members about these processes, and help all team members understand the philosophical approach you are using to solve the problem, you should get better decisions made at all levels. A checklist approach may

work, but fewer flexible steps with smart guidance and training will promote better

then expect profitability to be lower. It is your business and you are welcome to make that choice. We just want you to be acutely aware your choice is likely causing you and your people to work harder while your income is lower.

Perhaps one of the easiest ways to think about the issue of planning for the future is to assume that you were starting your business today and had no clients, hardware, software or employees. How would you build the firm to accomplish what clients want and what you want? Most of us would not choose what our tools have evolved into. Why not start the transition with a vision of what you want your firm "to be", and begin the migration now? You and your firm will become what you dream of sooner than you "think".

Technology