



How BITness are you?

The end of Business & IT as we know it

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Business and IT used to live on two different planets, like Venus and Mars. Both also speak different languages, live in different cultures and have diametric agendas. Hence, these opposites did not attract each other in the past. No, instead they led to a solid brick wall between them. But, did this help anyone in leading an industry or developing innovations? Let's put an end to isolation. Make room for a blossoming Business and IT love affair.

It is time to say 'Goodbye' to unfulfilled love. It is time to say goodbye to the separated concept of Business and IT as we know it. Let's say 'Hello' to BITness. Instead of fighting their own grounds as Business and IT they are far more powerful when merged together as one, as BITness.

Brick Walls

The lack of communication, collaboration and alignment supported the construction of a solid brick wall that is now running between Business and IT. How did it come so far?

The key to Business' heart is the same across industries: sales, growth opportunities, new solutions are among others just a few examples. IT, on the other hand, gets excited about implementing standardized solutions, coding endless lines of new applications or reducing infrastructure complexity. Indeed, it seems both do not have much in common.

Nonetheless, IT increasingly understands its vital importance for Business. IT has started to internalize its role as a provider of Business solutions. Therefore, IT serves as an enabler for Business to meet its customer demands. In an

ideal world the two functions would communicate and interact to fulfil each other's requirements. Thus far, Business insufficiently incorporates IT into its market demands. Hence, IT can only get a grip on Business' demands by catching a glimpse across the brick wall. And even that does not equip IT with an in-depth understanding of Business' needs, but rather leaves much room for interpretation as to what the Business side is really in need of.

Across various industries these attempts lead to similar results: IT just does not get it right! Instead of meeting Business' needs, IT is harvesting frustration by being too slow, too expensive, too complex or all of the above. Even if IT is trying to make it right, i.e. asking for clear specifications, Business is struggling to formulate its requirements in actionable and comprehensible IT conform language.

Since both parties know about their persisting dilemma, they have established bridges across their brick wall. These can be formal requirement gatherings, demand management and analysis frameworks or portfolio planning procedures. Although these bridges have been built in the hope of improved workflows and increased effectiveness, they have led to further separation. If either party wants to cross the bridge, a battle starts where each side has to prove that it is eligible of crossing.

One inherent characteristic of a bridge is its stability and duration. However, the bridges built between IT and Business do not constitute solid paths for collaboration, but are rather frail and prone to fraction. By no means is the fragility of the relationship sufficient for any future success.

Wind of Change

Historically the sales process was entirely governed by the Business side with IT assuming only a back office role. Clients and customers would engage with the Business to conduct the sales process and make purchases. IT's role was physically located in the back office. IT was not meant to presume a client facing role. For the Business side, IT was the necessary evil to cope with in order to finalize the sales process. With the internet and the triumphant success of the digitalization, IT has become the one differentiating factor. IT has overcome those old days

of insignificance and has amplified its selfesteem. IT has just become as important as the Business. Both functions are now fighting side by side for customer attraction. A fruitful relationship between the two functions has become of vital importance in striving for higher sales, more customers and increased service levels.

The digitalized world has led to an unprecedented height of comparability and transparency. Customers have never been more informed about purchase conditions and price quotations. The digital world renders a company, its products and services, fully transparent. Its entire offering is accessible on webpages or applications. Price estimates for various products are readily available with smartphones and their ability to read QR-codes. Product information, price quotations and performance ratings are unrestrictedly obtainable for all customers at any given time. Thus, a company has to prove its competitiveness, adaptability and market awareness continuously, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The result of the increasing digitalization is that a company's perception and real customer experience relies heavily on state-of-the-art IT. Digitalization, as the fourth industrial revolution, has reinforced the position of IT. The former laggard has climbed up the chain of command from a pure support function to a true business enabler that is at the core of a company's *raison d'être*. IT is Business. Although the relevance of IT for Business cannot be underestimated, companies and their decision makers tend to neglect the magnitude of change that comes with the advancement of the digital wave. Evidence suggests that the Business side still does not fully acknowledge the importance to be on a par with IT. That disparity is a fertile soil for the emergence of a competitive disadvantage. Competitors, who address the pressing need for a thorough collaboration between Business and IT, are able to deliver superior products and to achieve higher customer satisfaction levels. Nurturing a true relationship between the two functions, that is defined by equality and characterized by the shared ambition to boost company success, constitutes a differentiation in a company's go-to market aspirations. Hence, neither of the two should be in the driver's seat and dictate an agenda that allegedly forms the path to success. To resolve common misperceptions and to foster mutual

consent, solutions have to be addressed that enable companies to flourish and to utilize digitalization as a thrilling business opportunity.

Make Love not War

Digitalization marks the beginning of the BITness era with Business being more IT and IT being more Business than ever before. The digital wave with its disruptive impact on various markets imposes a new responsibility for partnership between Business and IT. In light of recent technical developments, the roles of Business and IT have altered and so must their relationship to pave the path for any future success.

Rather than focusing on the differences, both should engage in tearing down the brick wall and make collaboration and communication the focal point of their relationship. With mutual recognition and respect, the interaction between Business and IT can blossom. Therefore, both need to employ a language that allows Business and IT to find a common ground. That process is facilitated by establishing common goals that both parties have defined and mutually recognized.

Respect, recognition and communication, which are decisive factors for success, can only evolve if the stakes are high and the goals to reach ambitious. Becoming the leading player in a particularly industry in the digital arena can be such an ambition.

According to our findings, organizations that have clearly defined ways of collaboration, and do not impose or enforce boundaries between Business and IT, show greater levels of market effectiveness. The collaboration of Business and IT is crucial for any company in order to maintain its competitiveness, to successfully participate in market activities and to serve and anticipate customer needs. In that sense Business and IT share the same destiny. Is your organization already tearing down the walls between Business and IT? Are you leveraging the merits of an optimized Business and IT relationship? Are you BITness enough?

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