



leveraging business performance through technology

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## The Future of IT: We are “The Platform”

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“We must transform ourselves.”  
- Steve Yatko  
Head of IT R&D, Credit Suisse

Every generation of Information Technology professionals undergoes a transformative shift as our existing technologies (servers, software, toolkits) become commonplace, and a new era of computing potential emerges. Many of us struggle to hold onto “the old way of doing things,” debating the value of our commodities with those who understand the passage of time but cannot see what lies ahead. However, there are always “early adopters” in every industry who not only visualize the challenges of the next decade, but also investigate the emerging technologies and begin the groundwork for the next stage of transformation.

I have friends and colleagues on both sides of the shift, and many who remain in the wide spectrum between. The focus of this essay is aimed on the transformation itself, and the challenges that we will be facing as our institutions begin to embrace services-oriented architectures, utility applications and infrastructure, and Grid Computing – the next generation of compute strategies for the enterprise. My observations are based, to some extent, upon recent research that I have completed for Cassatt Corporation ([www.cassatt.com](http://www.cassatt.com)) in which our case study for Grid Management Theory was the excellent work being done at Credit Suisse First Boston.

Steve Yatko's compelling statement above underscores my primary observation that *we must transform ourselves to the same degree that we transform our enterprise architecture*. Subsequently, any shift toward services-oriented infrastructure (SOI) requires that we become a "services-oriented enterprise" (SOE)<sup>1</sup> in which our business processes and IT management protocols are adjusted to meet the needs of our very different approach to data, applications, and foundation systems.

The decade of the Grid is already upon us, and to be successful (i.e., agile, cost-effective, value-driven) IT executives and our executive sponsors throughout the business must think differently about technology. We cannot manage New IT with Old IT methodologies.

Defining services-oriented applications, infrastructure, and enterprises is beyond the scope of this column, and there is a great deal of excellent literature available from vendors and independent research groups, should such a definition be needed. What is not yet available to the general IT audience is a clarification of Grid Management Theory, the specific techniques that can (and should) be employed in your organizations to gracefully "cross the next chasm" in our industry. Some key principles in Grid Management Theory, more fully explored in my upcoming book, *The Prime Theorem: Stories from the World of Information Technology* are:

1. The systems will not "talk to each other" if the people are not talking to each other.
2. To address problems in our information systems, we must address the problems in the organizations that build and maintain them.
3. Data and server relationship management (virtualization) cannot be fully comprehended without understanding and managing the business relationships that surround them.

It is not uncommon, in CIO conferences and panel discussions, to hear the well-worn but still accurate statement that technology is not the problem (in the world of IT), the people are the problem. The absence of protocols for bi-directional communication throughout the organization, the cultural differences between departments that prevents alignment, and the rarity of clear requirements – all of these issues, plaguing IT in every generation and on our list of "shoulds" are now becoming "musts." To adequately improve our enterprise architecture and drive our institutions toward the agile enterprise, we can no longer ignore the significance of people.

Last year's breakthrough concept was that "the network is the platform," and that is the basis for today's implementations. Next year's breakthrough concept will explain that the network is simply an enabler, and that *we are the platform* around which our technology revolves, and the basis for moving into the next decade of IT success.

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<sup>1</sup> Robbins, "Grid Management Theory," Cassatt Corporation, 2004.