ACTS CORPORATION

Is a Career in Information Technology Right for You?

While it is common practice for guests who attend a wedding to bring a gift, sit through a ceremony, and stay afterward for a reception and celebration, those who have never planned a wedding may not fully appreciate how much preparation went into the event.

The same is true for those who consume technology products and services. They are typically required to learn the user interface (UI), they may even know people who work with computers, but they most likely do not fully understand the many technical layers beneath the surface that exist to provide the products and services being used. Furthermore, there is an important distinction to be made between knowing how to use technology and knowing the business side of providing a technology-based service to consumers.

Managers of IT, project leaders, and lead technicians can be compared to wedding planners in that they are both expected to deal with a lot of moving parts behind the scenes... and must eventually pull everything together to achieve the desired results.

Let's first take a closer look at the scope of work involved in planning a wedding and then draw some parallels to managing Information Technology.

For every wedding, one or more people were involved making decisions about

- the wedding date, - the budget, - the bridal gift registry, - the attendants and what they would wear, - the guest list, - the announcements, - the invitations, - the wedding dress, - the venue and contingencies for bad weather (tent rental) - the rehearsal dinner, - the use of rental equipment (tables, chairs, tablecloths, - setup coordination, - the officiant, - the procession, - the ceremony, readings, vows	- The program handout - the flowers - the decorations and lighting - The caterers, food, beverages, serving choices, plates, utensils and place settings - the cake, - the length of the reception - where guests drop off gifts, - Music -band or DJ - song selection, sequence of special dances - speeches and toasts, - tossing the garter - Games or diversions for guests - Gifts for guests - the send off when the bride and groom depart

What's missing? Depending on the venue there may be permits required such as obtaining a Alcoholic Beverage Control permit. Local noise curfews or sound ordinances must be observed. Some hotel rooms may have been blocked for out-of-town guests.

I intentionally left out three extremely important items. One is easy to guess, the others are less obvious. The answer will be provided at the end of this document.

In the world of IT, it's one thing to use a technology solution or service as a tool to perform a task, it's another to oversee the tool's use among a group people to optimize utilization and minimize risk. You don't have to be a math whiz to work in IT, like a wedding planner, having good organization skills are important.

The first decision a company makes before acquiring an IT solution is whether to build or buy. Only very large companies or government agencies have the resources required to staff their own application developers and build their own applications in house. Many companies have outsourced application development.

Next, a lot of oversight goes into deploying new technology whether its bought or built. There a lot more to working with technology than just understanding functions and capabilities. It's similar to planning a wedding. There are a number of administrative decisions that must be made, starting with deciding who will be given authority to make the following decisions:

- Who will handle installation and maintenance
- Who will own the data
- How it will be integrated with existing technology
- Who can use it, and when, where, and how can they access it
- What business policies will govern usage
- How service level agreements are established between the IT department and the business users

That's why some businesses choose to hire an outside company to manage all or part of IT for them. This is called outsourcing or partial outsourcing.

Whether IT management is outsourced or performed in-house, those responsible for managing IT will often organize operations around
- an architectural steering committee to plan and approve purchases,
- having different specialists handling
    - system administration,
    - network administration,
    - data administration,
    - security administration, and
    - managing service delivery using Service Level Agreements (SLAs) which define in

writing how IT services will be provided to users and monitored.

Certain people are responsible for operations, performing backups, and restoring service when outages occur. Contingency planning includes how to recover from a disaster, how widely to disperse resources geographically, and what type of storage media has the longest shelf life for storing backups.

The larger the business, the more complex are the technology decisions and related policy decisions needed to provide IT services to the people being served. Cloud computing simplifies some areas of IT administration while complicating others. That's why larger businesses have hybrid environments and keep many functions in-house, i.e. on premises, and under their own control.

A large number of administration tasks are configuring products and monitoring their use with tools and utilities to enforce policy compliance and track performance metrics. Administration often includes editing configuration files or writing and editing scripts. Scripts are stored sequences of computer commands that can be executed to accomplish a task.

In conclusion, IT management and administration and wedding planning are similar in that there are lot of decisions to be made and attention given to lots of details for everything to go smoothly. Another similarity is that most of the decisions require common sense and understanding the goals and preferences of those involved rather than having deep knowledge about every aspect.

To use a different analogy, IT management and administration is more like being the conductor of an orchestra rather than the musician who has mastered one instrument.

Here are the things I intentionally omitted from the wedding checklist to get you thinking.

1. Photographers and/or videographers.

2. The marriage license has to be obtained, and each state or country has its requirements as to who can perform the ceremony. Also, the wedding has to take place within a certain time period of picking up the license, and the licenses has to be filed with the signature of the officiant within a certain time period after the wedding date.

Well, there is still one more important item that hasn't been mentioned:
The cleanup afterward, which can be a huge undertaking.

One last point about the wedding industry: Formal training and professional certification is available for wedding planners:

1. Wedding Decorating School | The Leader in Event Design
   Ad www.iwedglobal.com/
   Be An Accredited Event Designer. 100% Hands-On Education! Draping, Lighting & More. Self-Paced, Easy Courses. Learn From Design Experts. Materials Provided. Help Grow Your Business. Special Financing Options. Online Or In-Person. Highlights: Get 3 Free Lessons Online, Hands-On Education.

2. Wedding Planner Course Online | Finish in as Fast as 4 Months
   Adwww.ashworthcollege.edu/Wedding-Planner/School
   Get Professional Training with Ashworth College online career school. Get Info! BBB Accredited.

3. Become a Wedding Planner | Enroll Now | Stratford Career Institute
   Adwww.scitraining.com/Wedding/Consultant
   The Course Carefully Details All Aspects Of Event Planning and Consultation.

However, most wedding planners learned the trade out of necessity by planning their own wedding and/or helping with friend's weddings. They may have figured out a way to cut costs because the wedding industry has a terrible reputation for being overpriced. Also, making lots of contacts and knowing who is trustworthy is why some people will readily tell you that who you know may be more important than what you know.

The world of IT is full of people who have only mastered a small area of technology and are lacking breadth of knowledge. There are literally hundreds of IT certifications offered by professional organizations and vendors, at various levels, on numerous specific technical paths. These include broad categories such as networking, security, database, computer engineering, cloud computing, mobile development, user experience, software engineering, project administration, and many more. For example, one prominent networking products vendor, Cisco Systems, offers the Cisco Certified Entry Networking Technician (CCENT) certification as its first stage of certification. The CCENT certification is an interim step to Associate level and covers basic networking knowledge. It omits the advanced technical aspects of routing, switching, and design, but the certification does validate the skills needed to work in an entry-level network support position. More specifically, those individuals need the knowledge and skill to install, manage, maintain and troubleshoot a small enterprise branch network and including network security. There are four or five paths to become a certified network designer after being certified at Associate, Professional, and Expert levels.

There are nine different paths for the specific technical fields pertaining to Cisco certifications:

- Routing & Switching - Industrial Network - Network Security - Service Provider - Service Provider Operations	- Storage Networking - Voice - Datacenter - Wireless

Regardless of levels of technical knowledge, the world of IT is filled with highly skilled technical people who are lacking “people skills.” Effective IT managers and team leaders have the temperament and people skills necessary to work with others.

Also, it is difficult to find IT practitioners with a broad and wide knowledge base. Having breadth of understanding will help you to navigate the technical landscape more effectively in more situations because the world of IT has lots of layers and lots of components to deal with.

If you are comfortable with your ability to understand high-level technical issues and discussing them with others you possess an important skill needed to fill the role of IT manager or lead technician. Furthermore, those who are quick studies of problems brought to their attention, who can synthesize information and engage others in conversation to identify solutions to problems are much more valuable in their respective roles. Realize that it is when technical glitches or bugs are found that interrupt operations or impact deadlines, and such events determine the topics that need to be discussed while seeking a resolution. Thus, having the ability to review and assimilate information quickly is very helpful.

Regardless, whether you desire to work as an individual contributor or in management, the goal of our Mastering IT curriculum is to equip you in advance to discuss more technology topics at greater depth than the vast majority of professionals working in the IT industry. This will give you an advantage in interviewing for a broader range of jobs, and for competing for promotions after you are hired.

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