

Stop wasting time managing staff, start delivering superior IT services

The PicNet Model - White Paper November 2011 - Marco A. Tapia

It is a well known fact that information technology workers - aka computer people (mainly IT Support and Developers) are professionals with superior skills developed over time with keen intentions of keeping them up-to-date.

Unlike many other fields, IT changes almost daily. On the infrastructure front, new communication technologies emerge all the time (GSM, 3G, 4G, Frame Relay, MPLS, IP, etc) , this also occurs with hardware - Intel is releasing new processors all the time, Apple is not far behind with iPhones, iPads and IBM is always innovating. On the Operating System (OS) front, new OSs are generated or upgraded (Windows XP, Vista, 7, Server 2003, 2008, Linux, etc), Databases DB2, Oracle and SQL do not cease to innovate, Cloud Computing SaaS applications, new development tools such as .NET and Java, HTML5, and the list goes on and on.

This is extremely exciting for IT professionals and who can blame them? In order to keep their skills up-to-date, most IT professionals tend to be very mobile, resulting in high staff turnover in IT departments when compared with other (non IT) departments. This is particularly and anecdotally true for 'bricks and mortar' companies where IT is not their core business. One commonly held view is that IT professionals belong to a generation that need to be entertained constantly and this need also applies to their work environment as well. They get bored easily and have no qualms about moving on to another job. Loyalty to an employer is old hat.

In general, bricks and mortar companies have another role in life and they use IT as a tool to improve efficiency, reduce cost or increase revenue, however in most cases, IT is not their core business but merely an enabler. As such, they can't change their technology as often as technology changes or can't upgrade as often as technology upgrades. They can't introduce new technology until a business case justifies it and or a business requirement demands it.

More often than not, for obvious reasons, their technology is not the latest. Due to budget, lack of business justifications, other projects, etc, they struggle to introduce blackberries, iPhones, iPads, the latest Windows OS, the latest database, the latest HTML standards, the latest browser, etc. This can be frustrating for many IT professionals, whose self interest is to stay

ahead of the game and motivated by the exciting changes in technology. This creates the need for IT professionals to constantly chase opportunities to work with the latest technology and seek higher salaries, creating mobility and high staff turnover.

Paradoxically, as a CIO or IT Manager you are tasked by your company to deliver a service, a support service to your customers (usually internal customers), who need your IT support to perform their activities, being production, sales, marketing, finance, etc.

So, irrespective of what technologies you have in place, you are tasked, among other things, to provide that support:

- Continuously, i.e. regardless of situations like sick leave, annual leave, staff on training, etc
- After Hours, i.e. regardless of situations like public holidays, weddings etc
- With motivated staff that deliver superior customer service

So while your internal IT staffs is worried about the next technology, how to learn it and how to get into it, your customers are not being serviced. That calls for you to worry about staff retention, staff motivation, staff training, staff salaries, staff performance review, staff attitude, staff sick leave, staff backfilling, staff weddings, staff firing, staff recruitment, etc. i.e. You only worry about 'staff, staff, staff...' and your customers want a service! It's no wonder that many estimate the real cost of an internal IT professional is at least as twice as much as their base salary (a separate paper on this estimate is available from our website)!

It gets even worse in large multinationals where increasingly, due to technology improvements, all of the 'interesting' IT is being centralised in other countries, leaving only the 'boring' stuff like supporting desktops, basic comm. gear and comm. links and interfacing between the internal customers and the overseas IT functions.

The Solution: The PicNet Model

So, how do we solve this paradox? You are tasked to deliver a service irrespective of technology changes with motivated IT professionals. There's also the additional need for you to think strategically for the long term and not implement technology for technology's sake. How do you leave the 'staff' management to others and deliver the service required instead?

A solution to seriously consider is to refocus on your core business and leave the IT to a company whose core business is IT e.g. PicNet. The PicNet model combines our strengths of 'people, information and collaboration' to bring to you the following benefits:

1. People

Motivated IT professionals

PicNet rotates its staff across customers, projects and skill requirements, keeping our IT professionals motivated, engaged and always working at the highest level of demand of their skills.

Motivated by innovation

Because PicNet is an IT company, IT is our core business. As such we invest in continuous innovation generating new products and services like our Risk Shield® SaaS solution, our Mouse Eye Tracking SaaS and others. These innovations demand our staff to be always using the latest technologies in software and infrastructure, SaaS, cloud computing, HTML, etc.

The PicNet Mouse Eye Tracking™ service has a growing reputation in the usability space, with hundreds of users worldwide and a win at the NSW innovation iAwards, hosted by the Australian Information Industry Association in July 2010.

The PicNet Table Filter solution is a jQuery solution developed and provided to the open source community. Since it's release thousands have downloaded and benefited from its functionality.

Stringent recruitment process

PicNet has a comprehensive multi tiered approach to recruitment with the whole process handled by IT experts and experienced IT managers. All technical and senior positions are scrutinised by technical tests that challenge the applicants to prove their technical knowledge.

Customer service culture

PicNet has an entrenched culture of providing superior customer service. We do not talk about it, we practice it.

2. Information

IT expertise at different levels

Should you need support at Level 1 or 3, PicNet has IT professionals tailored for that level. Should you need a software application re-engineered or architecture from scratch, we also have the capabilities, knowledge and expertise.

Up-to-date IT professionals

In order to fulfil new project requirements, PicNet's IT professionals are always learning the latest technologies and are ready to step in and perform the service required by that customer or project.

Motivated by experimentation of technologies

PicNet has a lab for engineers and developers to install, test and learn any new emerging technology giving our staff true knowledge and hands on experience of the latest and greatest.

3. Collaboration

Microsoft Gold Partner

Being a Microsoft Gold partner is not just another logo on our web site. We have access to all the Microsoft software, their personalised support and beta technologies. That gives our IT staff access to the latest developments from Microsoft to experiment, learn and to stay ahead of the game.

PicNet Users Group

By engaging PicNet you obtain immediate benefit of the PicNet network and our collaborative approach. Our 'PicNet Users Group' is a forum that allows customers to share ideas and learn from other real practitioners. The exchange of ideas, talent, skills and knowledge is facilitated by PicNet senior management with access to multiple resources that ultimately add significant value to our customers.

So, by having access to multiple customers under our rotation scheme of projects and customers, access to the latest technologies, by having other peers doing the same and motivated by these developments, having that expectation of next time working for another exciting project at a new customer or returning to base to complete that MCSE or another certification - Working at PicNet creates an environment where people want to work, people want to stay and people want to deliver superior customer service.

Additionally, PicNet has an entrenched customer service culture, policies and practices that develop in our staff that extra level of superior service that the customer wants. This includes the use of our PhD™ (PicNet Help Desk system) for issue and tracking of jobs, monthly reports, monthly meetings and regular strategic review of customer systems and IT.

So, our unique processes, people, policies and practices, coupled with unique commercial models facilitate a culture of superior service and value for our customers.

In other words a win-win for everyone.

By engaging PicNet you will achieve the delivery of IT to your internal customers with motivated IT professionals that are rotated between projects and customers. Our people continue to be accessible to you if required without having to force their stay in your company and wasting your time with staff management issues. Ultimately, with the PicNet model HR risk associated with managing complex IT staff is transferred to us, allowing you to focus on your core business outcomes.

You will save time and achieve results for your business.

About PicNet - People, Information and Collaboration Network

We add value to organisations, utilising a unique IT management model that is a combination of quality people, IT expertise and collaboration. Our range of IT services, including IT Support, Software Development and IT Consulting - are driven by superior customer service.