Consultancy for IT Production Management

Dennis Adams Associates provides a **_Specialised Management Consultancy_** Service to Managers who have responsibility for the day-to-day running of the IT Infrastructure Support Teams (a function which we describe as "IT Production").

Our approach is based on a conviction that Technology, alone, will not deliver improvements in IT Production.

What is needed is a **_Strategic Management Approach_**.

This Approach must include Metrics, Operational Tools, Processes and Procedures, and Standards, to facilitate **_Pro-Active IT Production_** teams.

## IT Production: the Engine Room of the IT Department

An IT department typically consists of two teams – "Development" and "Production".

The Development teams are the most visible side of IT – they are responsible for putting in new projects, deploying new solutions, developing new code, etc.

But there is another, less glamorous, often forgotten, side to IT.

These are the **_Operating Systems engineers_** on call-out, the **_DBAs_** having to keep databases up and running, **_Operators, Help desk_** team and **_Network_** engineers.

These are the people who "keep the show running". This is the area that we call "IT Production"
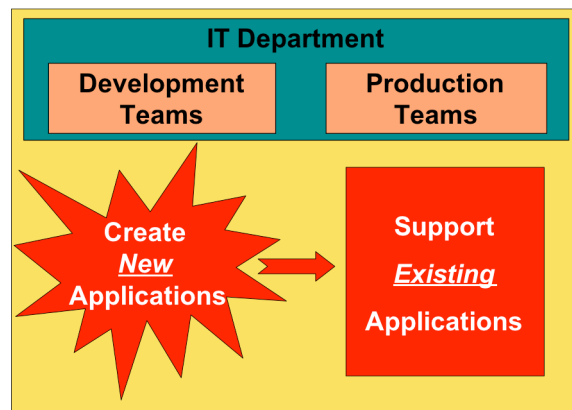
Dennis Adams Associates specialises in providing Consultancy to help IT Production Managers, based on many years experience in this field, in many sectors, including Finance and Investment Banking.

Challenges facing IT Production

A recent study by HP showed that, in some organisations, as much as ***80% of the IT Budget is required to Support and Maintain the Existing Infrastructure***. The majority of this cost is manpower-related.

At the same time, the number of Applications going Live increases year on year.

Faced with the pressure to ensure that systems remain up and running, and solving urgent Support Issues, IT Production can be tempted to respond with a "reactive", short-term "Mr. Fix-it" approach.

- Concentrating on solving urgent Support issues, it is tempting to neglect Management techniques such as Activity Reporting.

- Adopting a short-term viewpoint, they can become less client-focused.

- The Support Culture can be reactive. Forward Planning can be neglected.

- They become the team that gets blamed when things go wrong.

- Without a client-focused approach, neither the IT Development teams (nor the Business Teams who sponsor them) are aware of IT Production Costs or Activity.

- If Costs and Activity are not visible to clients, then it becomes difficult to justify further Investment in Infrastructure or Headcount.

- Lacking in visibility of the true Nature, Activity, or Costs of IT Production, it is not surprising that some Businesses see Outsourcing as an appropriate solution.

Whilst significant time and effort is put into managing the IT Development (in terms of tools, processes, management controls etc.), the IT Production side can sometimes be neglected.

IT Production Managers sometimes need external assistance, in order to put in place a more Strategic Approach to Managing IT Production.

Client-Focused IT Production

In our experience, many of the conflicts facing IT Production originate from a proper desire to deliver the immediate end-user requirements (i.e. Short-term resolution of Issues and Support for Applications).

Unfortunately, short-term resolution of issues can lead to long-term lack of client focus.

**Strategically, IT Production needs to become a client-focused team** in order to survive in the modern work. In order to achieve this, IT Production should be able to:

- Generate metrics to identify the "problem applications" that take a disproportionate percentage of support effort. This enables the Business as a whole to understand the true lifecycle costs of all Applications.

- Predict Cost growth (such as headcount), and Infrastructure costs (such as CPU, memory, disk storage etc.), so that resources and infrastructure can be purchased in good time, with appropriate cost savings.

- Define Clear Infrastructure Standards and Service Levels. So that IT Development can understand what technologies can be supported by IT Production, and at what costs.

- Smooth deployment of Projects, as a result of clear handover procedures to IT Production, and IT Production's involvement with Projects at Initiation side, to ensure that Support is viable.

- Justify the IT Production Budgets, against clearly agreed Performance Metrics.

- Engage with the Business sponsors, and successfully argue the case for increasing IT Infrastructure Investment, rather than fighting up-hill budget reduction policies that don't take into account Infrastructure needs.

- Function as a "managed team', rather than just event-driven "bodge and fix".

**Using a Strategic Approach, IT Production Managers can make their teams more Pro-Active, more Client-focused, and be in a better position to justify IT Infrastructure Investment.**

Creating an IT Production Strategy

Dennis Adams Associates works with IT Production Managers, to ___Audit the existing Management Environment.___

Our Auditing Approach is based around four key elements, all of which need to be in place if an IT Production team is to succeed. These elements are known by the acronym "MOPS", since they consist of the following headings:

Category	Description
Metrics	What methods are in place for collecting and publishing key performance indicators, including man-hours, technical metrics (such as CPU, disk utilisation etc.). These are essential in order to explain to the Business what the IT Production Team is doing, to justify expenditure, to identify "problem applications", and for future planning.
Operational Tools	This includes tools for collecting the metrics, above, and also for delivering the Support function. In addition, we look at the extent to which tools are integrated (Help Desk fed from Asset Management, into Time Tracking etc.) Tools should have historical analysis (e.g. help-desk should include problem resolution, so that subsequent callouts are not duplicated). Tools are required to report current investment utilisation by user department or Application team, to capture man-days, and activity tracking within the team, to ensure that activity is aligned with the IT Production strategy.
Processes and Procedures	How do the existing processes and procedures facilitate the day-to-day running of IT Production, and it's relationship with the Business Sponsors and IT Development. Processes should be in place to facilitate Deployment of Projects to live, upgrade, change controls processes etc. Also, processes to support the changes to Production Standards (hardware & O/S upgrades etc., and procedures to ensure that IT Development work and Business Sponsorship is visible to the IT Production team. ITIL guidelines can be used to review this.
Standards	Are there technical standards within IT Production against which developers should develop solutions? How are these Standards updated? What processes are in place for engaging with other technical teams to discuss emerging technologies?

Having created an IT Production Audit, this document can be used as a reference, in order to design and implement ***an IT Production Strategy*** to move the team from a "Re-Active", to "Pro-Active" state.

Working alongside the Client Manager, we analyse the "MOPS" matrix, to determine where the gaps are, and prioritise the requirements..

Given our experience of IT Production, we can help the Client Manager identify the most appropriate Metrics, Operational Tools, Processes and Standards categories for their Organisation.

This results in the final ***IT Production Strategy Document*** that outlines how IT Production can be changed from its current state to a more Strategically managed state.

Dennis Adams Associates can not only facilitate the creation of this Strategy, but also ***provide ongoing assistance and support in implementing the improvements to IT Production.***

For further details:

For further details about how Dennis Adams Associates can help you take a Strategic Approach to your IT Production Environment, you can view our web site at http://www.dennisadams.net, or email us at info@dennisadams.net.