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# **Dyads as an important cornerstone for IT teams to provide quality service and support**

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## ***Abstract***

*In order for the IT department to provide quality service to its end users (customers), it is important that IT managers and team members first understand the nature of teamwork. Research in this regard shows that all participants (team members) in a IT team, of which the end user forms a part, should be seen as part of a relationship which exists between IT and its end users. Furthermore, an important element of such a relationship is a dyad which is defined as the "...the smallest relationship unit, involving a one-on-one relationship between two parties." (Pitt & Bromfield (1994)). Dyads are therefore seen as an important cornerstone in terms of the soundness and sustainability of an IT-end user relationship and should be managed as such.*

## **Introduction**

The core message in the literature on action of giving service and support, normally outweighs most or all of the positive results that have been gained by previous actions. "All too often a small error makes an out-of-proportion effect on the quality of the whole. The drive to do everything well gives a sharp edge. Successful managers relentlessly search for better ways to do things, and they constantly build pride in the job. They adopt the value: *do things right*." (Woodcock & Dave (1989, *op. cit.*)).

Research in the form of case studies has indicated that in order to answer the question of what quality service and support is, it would be reasonable to say that one of the important characteristics of service and support actions, policies, and ideologies should be that a value of *do things right* should be adopted. This is sanctioned by the work of Leonard (1993), Peters (1989), Stokes (1991), Sprague *et al.* (1993), Woodcock & Dave (*supra*). Furthermore, it is argued that the IT department must have a thorough understanding of the fundamentals of quality service and support as well as how IT-end user relationships should be constructed in order to provide quality service and support to its end users.

## **Dyads as an important cornerstone of it-end user relationships**

Research has shown that IT-end user relationships could be defined as consisting of two dimensions, namely a *physical dimension* and an *abstract dimension*. The physical dimension should describe those elements which are necessary in order to enable contact between IT and its end users, whereas the abstract dimension should describe the characteristics or soft issues of a relationship. These two dimensions enable one to fully describe the *holistic* nature of such a relationship and encapsulate the important elements

of a support-oriented organization, namely mutuality, belonging, and connection as mentioned by Pheysey (1993). The elements which make up a relationship as a whole is more than relationship should be organized together as a whole. If any of these elements are disturbed in a negative sense, the whole relationship between the IT department and its end users is undermined. In other words, the the sum of its elements and therefore one can say that it has an *holistic* nature. In the marketing research area much research has been done in the field of relations between manufacturers and customers. Pitt & Bromfield (1994) state, for example, that managers interact in a number of so-called *dyads* in their everyday work which they define as: "...the smallest relationship unit, involving a one-on-one relationship between two parties." It follows that in the case of a project team, consisting of IT professionals and end users, a number of dyads (*subrelationships*) exist between the different individuals in such a team.

Furthermore, because of the *holistic nature* of an IT-end user relationship, it means that if any *dyad* is not of a *sound* nature, the whole relationship will be damaged. One of the important elements in a relationship which plays a prominent role in the continuity of a relationship and which also has a direct influence on the soundness of a relationship is *trust* (Anderson & Weitz (1989); Humphrey (1990)). Research in this regard indicates that elements like the "end user type", the "culture" and communication have an influence on the soundness of relationships and therefore form determinants of trust in a relationship. In other words these elements may be described as those that help to establish trust or mistrust in a dyad. Anderson & Weitz (1989) state that the following are important determinants in building mutual trust levels in a dyad and therefore in a relationship:

- Reputation
- Support
- Goal Congruence
- Cultural similarity
- Age
- Communication
- Power Imbalance

With regard to IT-end user relationships soft issues like *end user type* and *culture* also have an important impact on mutual trust between the IT department and the end user and should therefore be added to the abovementioned list.

## **Conclusions**

It is clear from the abovementioned that *trust* forms a *pivotal facet* in the establishment and continuity of stable IT-end user relationships.

Furthermore, it is important to take note of the fact that if any dyad is not of a sound nature, the whole IT-end user relationship could be damaged because of the holistic nature of IT-end user relationships. Dyads therefore form an important cornerstone in terms of the soundness and continuity of IT-end user relationships. As such dyads has a

direct influence on the commitment of participants to the project and their productivity in the team.

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