

Communications, information, Technology, and Management (CiTM)

May 2020 - Communications, information, Technology, and Management

THE EDITOR SPEAKS - Its All About Planning and Processes



I was born in Michigan, a beautiful state but home to brutally cold winters. As I recall, I did not mind winters there because when it was cold outside, you just put on more layers. There was a well-defined ritual that was employed when we had to go outside. First, you use the bathroom (god forbid you forgot this step). Next came the long johns, the thermal shirt, followed shortly thereafter by a warm pair of socks. The pants and shirt could then be layered on, before the sweater and snow pants. The chunky galoshes always came before the heavy winter coat, and finally, a scarf and mittens would complete the look. And, to the credit of my mother who had to complete the regimen on three other children, each step had to be completed for all of us before moving on to the next phase. If the process was not managed properly, the first child would be disrobing before the last child was ready and the cycle would continue indefinitely. Having a plan and a process was an important part of growing up in Michigan.

This is a nice story, and one we can all smile at in the summer months without having flashbacks to our own winter experiences, but it demonstrates the importance of proper planning and process. Think of an otherwise be a horrible situation can be made bearable, and perhaps even positive, experience. This is as true for a child in the middle of a Michigan winter as it is for business striving to increase revenue or a community trying to tackle a pandemic. In fairness, there has been no precedent that can serve as a model for what we have been through in the last three months, but it would be criminal not to learn from the experience and to prepare to combat a resurgence of the virus in the fall, or perhaps the appearance of

some new crisis currently beyond our horizon.

Many localities are beginning to relax the quarantine measures, a welcome relief as long as proper guidelines can be put in place to ensure the community's health is not being negatively impacted. Such a relaxation of social distancing requirements is markedly different from the elimination of efforts that helped us battle the disease. The focus on frequent hand washing has been a good thing and a practice that should be continued. Perhaps it is time we said a permanent good-bye to the business handshake and casual hugs. Maybe the bullpen office cluster and tightly packed conference venues should give way to more dispersed forms of interaction. It should be expected that the work-at-home situation will become the norm for many, even if only applied on a periodic basis. And, quite frankly, giving increased importance to online etiquette and protocols that are important for remote work is a change we should continue to embrace. By keeping these process tools easily accessible, we are able to increase our process agility thereby making our organizations more adaptable to changing conditions.

The concept of process agility is not just targeted at internal processes; we must utilize these experiences to ensure our organization is more customer agile, as well. In retail settings, our processes should anticipate and support potential customer behavioral shifts. Perhaps customers will do more online research before going shopping or they may begin to look at stores more as showrooms where they finalize their purchasing decision. Maybe the importance of the trusted personal relationship between the shopkeeper and the customer becomes more important and moves the market away from disconnected and impersonal shopping experiences. It is possible that the interest in al fresco dining and private dining experiences overtakes the crowded venues and salad bar settings. Maybe movie theaters will accelerate the move toward comfortable eating/dining experiences and sports arenas will move toward even more sports-box centric experiences. Today, there is a high degree of customer-experience experimentation being undertaken as we seek to uncover an optimal operating model given our new normal. Such experimentation is a good thing but while going through the process, it is important to maintain an ability to reactivate even the failed experiments. Each trial program represents a process tool that, if kept in our tool box, increases our process agility that will make it easier to adapt as business conditions continue to face periodic disruption.

In the end, we are living in uncertain times. We know our world has been dramatically altered and we are all working to adapt to our new normal. In doing so, we have to build into our plans and recovery process that will take place as a series of fits, starts, and resets. Knowing that our organizations must make periodic adjustments and possibly reset at times, we will need to be process agile throughout our journey. Process agility can be very difficult if each process adaptation requires a fresh start, however, the process can be simplified by holding onto the lessons learned during the current period of experimentation.

UPCOMING VIRTUAL EVENTS

- **May 26, 2020.** [The Home-Working Revolution and the Future of Business](#) (10:30am PST)
- **May 26, 2020.** [Leading Through Crises: A Virtual Town Hall Discussion with John Chambers \(11:00am PST\)](#)
- **May 25, 2020.** [Data Science Development Series | Machine Learning 101](#) (2:30 PST)
- **May 27, 2020.** [ProductCon: The Product Management Conference](#) (9am-2pm PST)
- **May 28, 2020.** [Webinar: Building the Autonomous Infrastructure](#) (noon PST)
- **May 28, 2020.** [Health: The Future is Digital](#) (noon PST)
- **June 2, 2020.** [Software Architecture: A Mature Discipline?](#) (10am PST)
- **June 3, 2020.** [Growing as a Data Scientist and the Role of Communication](#) (11am PST)
- **June 3-5, 2020.** [Global IoT Summit](#)
- **July 9, 2020.** [ProductCon Online: The Product Management Conference](#) (9am PST)

If you have an event that you would like us to include in our newsletter, please send an email to manager@i3-iot.net

READER CONTRIBUTION: Time to Double Down on Employee Development by Steve Shepard, President Shepard Communications Group



Business practices have evolved continually since transactions first came into being. Because of technological innovation, we don't do business the way we did in the Agrarian 19th century, or the Industrial 20th; we don't do business the way we did three months ago. So, as everyone adopts the phrase 'the new normal,' I think it's time to step away from it—the correct phrase is 'normal.' The sooner we accept that, the sooner we can begin the process of looking forward, into the future, instead of backward, at the way things used to be.

Like everybody else, I'm now faced with the challenge of doing my job without airplanes, during a period when the economy has come to a glacial standstill. Much of what I do I can do virtually, and in my conversations with others, it appears that we can all do a lot more, virtually, than we ever thought possible. So, in this article, I'd like to talk about doing business in this strange new virtual world.

When this pandemic ends—and it WILL end—companies will kickstart things quickly to get back to the business of participating in an active economy. There will be a focus on primacy: whoever gets to the market first, wins.

I have a friend who is a quasi-professional bicycle racer. She lives in Kelowna, in British Columbia, and we recently had a chat about the world of professional racing, during which she said something profound: bicycle riders don't wait until they crest the hill and start down the other side to pedal hard and accelerate. The time to accelerate, she told me, isn't on the downhill slope; it's as they approach the crest of the hill, the most difficult part of the ride. That's what creates distance; that's what creates winners.

How does this apply to the world of competitive business? Well, right now, things are economically flat. Conventional wisdom says that we should hunker down, cut all spending, reduce outflow of funds, cut to the bone. But the insightful companies that have been around for a while have learned to heed the lessons from people like my friend in Kelowna. When things are tough, when they're the hardest, companies should be developing their people, focusing on their markets, communicating more than ever with their current and future customers—not selling, but rather publishing thought leadership and advisory information, and freely distributing it to those same customers—in essence, doing everything in their power to be top-of-mind with their customers. This is not the time to retreat or go idle: This is the time to advance—and aggressively. Companies need to take steps right now to prepare for the end of the shutdown, to develop a deeper-than-ever-before understanding of their customers' markets, so that they'll be the first in line to offer what those customers want—but more importantly, to ensure that they're the company those customers think of first when the time comes to start spending money again.

Lest we forget, this isn't the first time this has happened in recent history. In 2001, when the telecom bubble collapsed and seven trillion dollars of market value evaporated overnight, the industry went into a year-long period of economic nuclear winter. The organizations that came out healthy on the other side were those that accelerated their efforts at market, employee, customer, and organizational development, when times were the hardest. In other words, pedal on the uphill.

The second thing I want to address is the often-overlooked issue of business communications. As the author of more than 80 books and hundreds of articles, podcasts, movie scripts, and white papers, I'm appalled by the slipshod quality of most business writing today. I have a fundamental belief that what you write, and then share, is part of your personal brand, and by extension, the brand of your company. If your writing is sloppy, poorly edited, ponderous, difficult to follow, poorly or illogically ordered, inconclusive, or weak, as so much business writing is today, the person who wrote it, and the company they work for, will be perceived the same way. And today, without the benefit of face-to-face contact, clear, crisp organizational communications are more important than ever before.

We live in a world where it's easy to throw words onto a screen and make them look pretty, with zero effort. But the downside of 'easy' is that proofreading doesn't happen, flow isn't checked, and key points aren't vetted. The document may look professional and polished but is often unreadable. That's a lost opportunity and a brand-damager.

We also live in a world where white papers, Word docs, blogs, Podcast scripts, instant messages, email, texts, social media posts, brochures, and a thousand other means of communication that start with a written word are equally capable of communicating poorly, either because people haven't learned any better, or because the pace of our professional lives is such that other priorities supersede the quest for quality. And because 'what you write' is representative of your personal and professional brand, especially in a world of increased digital communications, NOTHING should take precedence over quality.

In my book, 'Communicating the Write Way,' I make this point:

"Good writers are accomplished serial killers. They go out of their way to destroy anything that weakens, cheapens, or sullies the quality and power of what they write. For example, they avoid overused words and phrases. When industry terms and corporate babble-speak become the norm, they also become noise—they're meaningless, and they fade into the void of irrelevance. If you want to stand out in the crowd, if you want your writing to shine, there's a simple solution: glow brighter than everything around you. Rise above the noise floor. In other words, don't sound like everybody else. So, if, during a bio-break, your core values resonate, ping me and we'll run it up the flagpole just before we put a pin in it. I'll loop you in after I deal with the elephant in the room; meanwhile, you harness your core values by examining the key metrics of the ecosystem. I'll pick your brain before we drill down to uncover the bleeding edge as a way to move the needle." If your writing sounds like this, stand in front of your bathroom mirror and slap yourself, very hard, three times. Then do it again."

These are hard times, but they will change—they always do. It's the nature of business. Use this time—this slowdown—to double-down on customer impact, employee development, market presence, and all the other activities and responsibilities that we often complained about not having enough time to do before COVID-19 came a-knocking. Think of this as a sabbatical for professional and personal development—I know I am.

THE I³ CORNER (i3.usc.edu)

The I3 Consortium held its first VIRTUAL LUNCH in May 2020. It was a very informal affair with no defined agenda – it was more an opportunity to meet and interact with those who believe in the value of managed data networks that meld concepts from the IoT work, data governance, and community. With physical conferences and large scale meetings being canceled for the foreseeable future, we need a virtual way of networking and interacting with others in an unstructured setting. One of the suggestions from that virtual lunch was that we put a theme around each lunch, something broad enough to be germane to the community but targeted enough to give the conversation focus. For our next virtual lunch, "trust" will be our focus. Trust is an important concept in that it enables or inhibits what can be achieved within a team. It impacts interactions between divisions within an organization, success of partner programs, and customer interactions as well. I believe it will be interesting to explore how our new business climate has impacted our ability to build the trusted relationships that we depend upon for success.

While this is billed as a virtual lunch, if you are in a stay-at-home situation, feel free to have a beer with lunch. If you are on the east coast, maybe this might make a good virtual happy hour. And, if you are in Europe, feel free to join us for dinner and a glass of wine. Everyone is welcome.

Our next I3 Community Virtual Lunch:

Noon-1pm (pacific time). June 11, 2020

[Click Here to join the Zoom Meeting](#)

Meeting ID: 956 0396 3551

Password: 546478

Alternatively, you can dial into 669 900 6833 US (San Jose) or use a [different Zoom dial-in number](#).

If there are problems, you can email me at jerry.power@i3-iot.net

Finally, as a reminder, if you are looking for the I3 opensource code, it can be found at <https://github.com/ANRGUSC/i3-core>

Back to Basics: The Customer by Jerry Power

Every time the national news is broadcast, we hear the pundits declare our current situation as being the "new normal." What does that mean and what actions should we take to approach this new horizon? The concept of a new normal implies a market driven environment characterized by a series of untested frontiers. Established and accepted norms that characterized the legacy market understandings may need to be abandoned. The emergence of a new normal requires a return to marketing basics and demands that we re-test established tenants that served to define understood markets. Expected customer behaviors must be either disproven or revalidated.

Market intelligence can be developed iteratively or disruptively. Iterative market intelligence examines and influence known behavior patterns. At its core, iterative marketing attempts to educate, inform, and otherwise influence an established process that impacts the decision-making process. These efforts to 'nudge' the market in a specific direction have traditionally represented a significant amount of marketing spend. Under such a program, a trial or test is conducted, and the results are evaluated. If the trial made a positive change in market behaviors, the results are applied across a larger base. In many ways, such machinations are like a science experiment, where we are continuously striving to improve our knowledge and how we serve the market. Iterative progress always assumes there is a base case situation that provides a benchmark, which is meant to be surpassed in order to produce additive value. As an iterative process, progress is incremental and occurs as a series of positive gains over time.

In contrast, disruptive market intelligence programs focus on the need to shape customer behavior in order to create new situations that redefine how potential customers evaluate options available to them. When compared to iterative marketing, disruptive marketing programs are much more of an end-run. Instead of trying to modify the established decision-making process in order to achieve different results, it introduces new needs and solutions into the equation, giving the person a new framework for decision making. Disruptive market intelligence programs assumes new behavior patterns can be created that are distinctively different from legacy thinking. Rather than trying to modify established behaviors, it is best to totally reconsider the drivers and motivators that determine customer behavior. Under an incremental marketing program, the focus is on influencing as an established

decision making process, whereas under a disruptive marketing program the focus is on discovery of underappreciated customer needs that can be served with solutions resonate with emergent market conditions.

For example, this might be the perfect time for an automobile company that had focused its marketing energy at the long-haul soccer family to shift its focus to the intermittent short haul commuter. Or alternatively, maybe the meeting driven consulting company might shift its strategy to create a self-serve intelligence platform that supports the client's remote workforce. By shifting the marketing budget toward disruptive programs, new opportunities will be uncovered that otherwise would have taken a long time to discover through iterative marketing programs.

The pandemic has undoubtedly disrupted markets and as a result, we must begin our search to discover the market's new normal. The efforts must be much more heavily weighted toward disruptive marketing intelligence programs than have been the historic norm. With this shift, the need for solid market research must be increased. For some organizations, the discovered market's points of disruption will illuminate a path that goes beyond recovery and instead to heightened levels of success. The success stories that emerge from these efforts will come at the expense of the competitors who were unable to sufficiently respond to the momentous changes in market behavior.

READINGS FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

- [The Next Chapter in Analytics: Data Storytelling.](#) Data Analytics is not a fancy word for statistics or math. Any data analytics exercise must include a story telling component that contextualizes the findings into an inspired call for action or the analytics will have failed to drive the intended decision making process.
- [How Congress is Shaping Data Privacy Laws During the Pandemic.](#) Stay-at-home orders have flattened the COVID curve and saved lives but it has come at a significant economic cost. A more targeted prevention effort may be better for the economy and are indeed possible with more data. However, privacy rules impacts the ability to collect and utilize the data. Privacy rules are especially important when there is a lack of trust. Therefore, if we improve trust in private and public institutions we can position ourselves to minimize future damages.
- [From Thinking about the Next Normal to Making it Work: What to Stop, Stop, and Accelerate.](#) The 'new normal' is a call to reimagine customer needs, business objectives, and processes from the ground up. Everything must be questioned, not as a challenge to the way things had been done but to create a new plan forward that anticipates how things will be done.
- [Approach Your Data with a Product Mindset.](#) Data is too often treated as a consumable which is intended to support applications. If, instead, we treat data as an asset that must be managed to generate a positive return, we would take on a new perspective that produces even greater results. Such a new mindset would strive to leverage the value represented by existing data much like financiers work to leverage data for improved financial performance.
- [From Surviving to Thriving: Reimagining the Post-Covid-19 Return.](#) Covid-19 is causing companies to reconsider the future-of-work and customer-engagements in order to prosper in a "distancing world." These issues cannot be solved with the simple application of a technology Band-Aid. Organizations must accept that changes, enabled by technology, are driving a redefinition of the company's culture.
- [Digital Strategy in a Time of Crisis.](#) The pandemic is accelerating digital transformation programs across the board as companies move to better support their remote workers. The healthcare industry is ground zero for many of these efforts. In the healthcare industry new paradigms must be adopted quickly and without error because people's lives are literally at stake.
- [Digital Transformation is About Talent, Not Technology.](#) Transformation projects have been strategic projects that better positions a company in a changing world. The pandemic has changed that and made transformation projects a critical tactical need. This creates a high demand on adaptable people skills.
- [Seven Mistakes Leaders Make When Managing a Remote Team.](#) Remote workers and remote conferences should not be virtual replications of an in-person management process. The constructs and influencing factors that make these activities successful as an in person exercise are not easily duplicated in a virtual world. Managers should focus on the goal of these activities and rethink the communications methods needed to accomplish those goals. Managing a remote team is often fundamentally different from managing an in-person team.
- [Revisiting Agile Teams After an Abrupt Shift to Remote.](#) When work becomes virtual, the interactions that enable trusted relationships to form are lost. Collaborative environments are dependent on trust in order to be successful. Managers must find new ways to create these important aspects of team-building that support cohesiveness in order for the team to maintain its effectiveness.

LET'S CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

Please feel free to forward this email to your friends and colleagues who you believe would benefit from participation in our community. For those of you who wish to be included among those who believe that technology is a tool and that business success is achieved by skilled wielding of the tools available to us, feel free to reach out to us. If you have suggestions, topics you want to see included in future newsletter updates, or other general inquiries, feel free to email me at manager@i3-iot.net.

The ideas expressed in this newsletter are intended to stimulate conversation and dialog that will lead to a better understanding of our collective future. The opinions may not necessarily reflect the opinions of any other member of our community of interested people.

ABOUT CiTM

Originally founded under the guidance of USC, the Institute for Communication Technology and Management (CTM) was formed to support a deregulated telecom industry. Over time, computer and networking technologies evolved and grew changing the way we do business and live our lives. The CTM Newsletter was created as a vehicle to foster continued conversation about tech associated issues that transcend specific technologies and specific industries. CTM conducted foundational Internet-of-Things research and created a community driven IoT network vision. Working with the engineers at USC's Viterbi School of Engineering, the cities of Long Beach, Los Angeles, the County of Los Angeles, along with a host of supporting companies, academic institutions, and private individuals, this vision was turned into opensource software that was released in December 2019. Operational management of the I3 program is spun out of USC in 2020 as the I3 Consortium to allow the university to focus on research while the consortium supports the operational needs of the I3 community. The CTM newsletter evolved to become the CiTM Newsletter in order to continue the conversation even further.