Communications, Information, Technology, and Management

- From i3 Sytems and The I3 Consortium -

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THE EDITOR SPEAKS - Business Continuity

Before the COVID pandemic, conversations about business resiliency often focused on malware prevention, detection, and isolation strategies. These concepts are still ongoing points of concern but an increasing amount of attention is being focused on Business Continuity Plans (BCP). While cyber security remains an ongoing concern, while cybersecurity is focused on maintaining the integrity of the network and data infrastructure that support the organization, BCP concepts take the next step by creating responses that allow the organization units that rely on the network to continue operations during a disaster and while the organization begins the recovery process.

A fully developed BCP is not so much a technical plan as it is an operations plan. Yes, there is a technical component that addresses issues such as network outages, the impairment of a key data center, or loss of access to key support services. The BCP plan assumes that the occurrence of a catastrophic component of the IT infrastructure will force the restructuring of essential IT services. A BCP generally assumes these recovery processes will operate as designed and focus on how the operational departments outside of IT would alter their operations and continue to support customer needs after the recovery plan has been activated.

Business continuity planning processes reexamine the operational processes that define how a company operates and offers alternative processes that might be used during a time of peril. They consider key assets, both digital and human assets, in order to identify alternatives should those resources no longer be available. These plans also take into account key business partners, both customers, and suppliers, to imagine if those partners were no longer viable options.

For example, consider the situation where a company email system has been hacked. When the Sony email system was hacked in 2014, the recovery process required Sony shut down the entire email system and then methodically began the process of disinfecting portions of the system before they were allowed to come back online. Some

employees were without email for several weeks and for any company where email represents the chief form of corporate communications, this implied many people were effectively incommunicado. Employees scrambled to find alternate communications vehicles which included social media, private email accounts, and old-school telephony. Instead of being able to communicate instantly with other employees, employees had to navigate a patchwork network of alternative communications systems to carry out what had been a standard business practice.

Another example would be the city of Atlanta which was hacked in 2018 and virtually shut down city services including police services, maintenance, utilities, and judicial services. The city was able to recover by issuing several emergency services contracts to outside vendors which helped restart essential city services but normal department operations were severely impacted until these activities could move the city toward recovery.

More recently, the COVID pandemic forced many employees to work from home while the virus hit dangerous levels. This forced many IT departments to rapidly deploy new technology and systems to support a significant number of work-at-home employees. While a debt of gratitude is owed to the IT departments that often worked long hours to enable their organizations to continue operations with legacy operational procedures. While such a statement is a compliment to the IT professional, it also contains a sheepish acknowledgment that most operational procedures were developed under the assumption that most people would be working out of the office.

While it would be nice to assume we have learned from these historic disasters, the war in Ukraine is still a very real issue that has disrupted the idea of a global and fluid marketplace and made the specter of a fragmenting and isolated world a potential future reality.

The increased interest in BCP is a welcome and needed acknowledgment of the fact that while we have shown time and again how technology can help automate processes and even allow those processes to occur remotely, they do not eliminate the need to reexamine those archaic processes to streamline operations in a digital world.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- June 14-15. 2022. Reuters Auto Tech. An online conference.
- June 21-24, 2022. The Smart City Event, Fort Lauderdale Florida.
- August 13-14, 2022. DataCon LA. Los Angeles, California
- August 16-18, 2022. AI4 2022, Las Vegas, Nevada.
- September 26-29, 2022. Smart Cities Connect, Washington DC.
- October 5-6, 2022. AI and Big Data Expo, Santa Clara, California
- October 27-28, 2022. International Conference on Public Health Informatics Management, Los Angeles CA
- October 27-29, 2022. International Conference on Smart Home for Health and Elder Care. Los Angeles CA.
- November 9-10, 2022. Intelligent Cities Canada.
- November 15-17, 2022. Smart City Expo, Barcelona Spain.

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

THE i3 CORNER

I3 Systems, with the City of Los Angeles, has won a Go Smart award from the Global Organization of Smart Cities. The award was given to us based on our efforts with the LA's Department of Sanitation to create a video-based situational awareness system that allows the City's sanitation trucks to use AI technology to identify issues of concern while the trucks traverse the city streets. Identified situations can then be forwarded to the impacted operational departments allowing them the opportunity to take proactive action in support of the city's citizens. I3 has been working with the Department of Sanitation, ITA, USC, and several other companies to create and modularized and programmable system that is (1) managed so data only flows to those with a need-to-know and (2) adaptable so the system can evolve to adapt to changing data privacy, usage policies, and regulatory guidelines. This project has been extremely difficult to tackle because we had to create a solution that embraced the fact that technologies in this space are evolving rapidly and the systemic requirements are changing even faster. Rather than describing our efforts on this project as a solution to a defined need, it would be more accurate to view the project as a data fabric that is structured to support the city's current and long-term data needs. During the presentation ceremony, the judges pointed out that the award winners were given to young companies where the full effects of the project were still in the emergent stage but had demonstrated the potential to significantly impact individual smart city programs coupled with an ability to be replicated in other cities around the world. The entire i3 Systems team is highly honored to have received such a prestigious award.

Winning an award from a third party is a gratifying experience. However, an even more rewarding experience occurs when you can sit down with a CIO or CTO and they lay out their concerns about whether their infrastructure can withstand the evolutionary pressures they have to deal with. I3 Systems' ability to say "we can help with that" completely changes the conversation. Today's CIO/CTO has had to become a master firefighter, running from fire to fire while the forest around them is ablaze and there is no end in sight. When firefighters are up against a forest fire that is spreading, a team has to create a firebreak to halt the expansion of the fire and compartmentalize the blaze. In the world of data, I3 Systems builds digital firebreaks. In this digital era, each new request for data, services, and analytics represents a fire. The organization's tech teams are being pressed to the maximum to serve these requests but no matter how hard they work, the number of requests keeps coming in and appear to be accelerating. The technology the i3 team has developed compartmentalized these fires to managable tasks. In the end, our goal is to allow the CIO to transform themselves from being a fire jumper into a tactical and strategic commander.

READER CONTRIBUTION: Legal Implications of a Ubiquitous Metaverse and a Web3 Future

by Jon M. Garon, Professor of Law and Director of the Intellectual Property, Cybersecurity, and Technology Law program at Nova Southeastern University, Shepard Broad College of Law (www.garondigital.com)

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Lessons from Ukraine
by Jerry Power

The war in Ukraine is a major issue on every news outlet and a topic of many conversations. Prior to the escalation in hostilities, many considered the Russian buildup of troops on the Ukrainian border as an example of brinksmanship. The expectation was that the mere threat of an invasion would cause the Ukrainian people to capitulate and bend to Putin's demands. In 2014, Putin annexed Crimea without firing a shot with few consequences. While some experts expected Putin to withdraw once it became clear he could not simply absorb Ukraine, Putin's experience with Crimea appears to give him license to boldly initiate a conflict that the world would condemn but not actively oppose.

It is impossible to say how the situation in Ukraine will work itself out. While Putin expected polarized politics to hobble any response from the west, the west has rallied against his actions and presented a united front in support of Ukraine. Putin attempts to justify his actions based on what he considers to be NATO's expansionist policies despite the fact that his activities actually increase the importance of NATO. While there might be hope that diplomacy might lead to a peaceful resolution of the situation, the expectation should be for a long and bloody conflict. Outwardly, the situation appears to be one where the rules of logic and reason are overruled by emotion and force.

The western consensus is that Putin's actions are unacceptable but there have been a few that have spoken positively about Putin's leadership style. From their perspective, they see Putin as a leader that has been able to pursue what he sees as Russia's manifest destiny by the suppression of internal opposition and by sowing the seeds of dissension among the international community. Putin's government has proven itself masters at pushing these principles to the extreme and unless he is stopped we have to expect these practices will continue in an effort to rebuild the soviet block by force. Ironically, one of the outcomes of Putin's actions has been to unite a world that has normally been divided on issues ranging from economics to climate change to face a common foe. Authoritarian governments can only succeed against a fragmented and disorganized opposition. Putin has been effective at leading his country (and the world) to the point of destruction and expects that by demonstrating his resolve, the world will back down and give him free rein.

Forbes and others have tried to examine Putin's authoritarian leadership style in an effort to learn from his management style. It is hoped that by better understanding Putin as a leader, we can avoid situations where business leaders take their companies to their own point of destruction.

One immediate observation is that Putin's efforts to stifle internal dissent might initially be characterized as an effort to eliminate distracting and counter-productive ideas. Externally the leader might appear to be solidifying the organization behind a common purpose. In a sense, this is true as dissenting voices are quickly put to heel.

However, when debate and cooperation are discouraged or eliminated outright, options and opportunities that should be an integral part of the decision-making process begin to disappear. When a mistake is made or an unforeseen incident occurs, minor issues quickly turn into colossal failures. Good leaders have to believe their organization is robust enough to root out the good from the bad once presented with all the options. Elimination of dissension, whether within a company, a political party, or a country opens the door to potential disaster.

A sad observation is that authoritarian leadership styles are not instant disasters, in fact, initially they appear to be successful as they are able to align resources toward a common goal. Authoritarian leaders often trumpet these efforts as justification for further repression. Unfortunately, the damage that is done to the organization is overlooked or denigrated as being inept and inefficient. The net effect is that the organization begins a downward spiral which is difficult to recover from.

It is important for employees, partners, stockholders, and even customers to look at the leaders that head the companies they deal with. If the leader shows a tendency toward being an authoritarian figure, it should be understood that these people cannot be counted on as a partner for a long-term relationship. Their authoritarian tendencies will lead to the downfall of their organization. Perhaps this is why authoritarian leaders are attracted to other authoritarian leaders – they both know their relationships are short term and neither side can count on the other as a true partner. For those who labor to build a better future, we have to be willing to look beyond the short-term actions which create a façade of progress to understand that organizational integrity is the true measure of forward-looking progress.

READINGS FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

- The Future of Business Leadership. Deloitte points to 5 discontinuities that are changing business fundamentals. Tech progress is included along with movement toward a more equitable definition of value creation, more active government oversight, and data-driven collaborative ecosystems.
- Capturing the True Value of Industry 4.0 The manufacturing industry is focusing on the limitations associated with the deployment of application-driven silos. To derive max benefit from data, data cannot be treated as an application consumable but has to be managed as an organizational asset.
- New Business Models in HealthCare: Building Platform-Enabled Ecosystems. The healthcare system is in the midst of a radical transformation where they shift from purpose-built siloed systems to one which embraces platforms that bring down operational costs while increasing collaboration through data sharing.
- Building Data Products as a Competitive Differentiator. Accenture points out the folly of use-case driven projects that lead to siloed systems. It is much better to take a platform-driven approach where the goal is to create technology that helps solve multiple problems by reusing modularized components.
- Can You Measure Trust Within Your Organization? People accept that we are having a trust crisis. A smaller number of people understand that our lack of trust impairs business opportunities. Even fewer people have attempted to devise a process to address a real and growing issue.

About I3 and I3 Systems

Originally founded under the guidance of USC, the Institute for Communication Technology and Management (CTM) was formed to support a deregulated telecom industry. I3 Consortium spun out of CTM based on the position that

increased technology collaboration must be married to increased business and data collaboration. I3 Systems was formed to develop software tools and pursue commercial opportunities based on these concepts. This Newsletter was created as a vehicle to foster continued conversations about issues that transcend specific technologies and specific industries. When the CTM organization was shut down, support for this newsletter was picked up by I3 Systems to ensure these valuable conversations continue to occur.

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