

The Bridge™



866-739-6129
info@agilenorthwest.com



an Executive Brief from Agile Northwest

April 2010

Welcome!

Welcome to the April issue of The Bridge! In this issue we'll discuss the IOgap™ in terms of a measurement, and how to turn that measurement - or score - into actionable information that will enable you to capture opportunity through innovation. We'll also share a success story, contributed by one of our clients, Von Hansen, about how he used innovation to better serve his clients and his bottom line. Thank you for taking your time to read our Brief, please let us know how we can serve you!



Regards,

Wendie Jones
President, Agile Northwest

Measuring your IOgap™

How big is the opportunity you're missing?

by Wendie Jones, CMC
April 2010

In our last newsletter we discussed innovation opportunity and your potential Innovation Opportunity gap score. What are the opportunities within your organization where innovation can be leveraged to decrease costs, increase revenue and improve customer service?

Innovation can enable you to streamline your business processes in order to better leverage your staff and resources so that they perform more efficiently. Businesses typically have a gap between the innovation required to capture an opportunity, and the current state. In order to measure this - your IOgap score - we have to identify the "pain" or "bottlenecks" in the day to day processes and what is causing them. The goal is to identify the opportunity for improvement that innovation can bring. The greater the opportunities for innovation, the greater your gap score, but also the greater your return on



investment from the innovation.

For example, we have a client that accepts credit cards and because of the nature of their business they receive thousands of transactions each day that need to be processed. When we began working with them several years ago they were hand keying every credit card number into their terminal, processing them one by one. They had a full-time person whose sole job was to key transactions. We identified the opportunity of streamlining this process, the innovation required to meet the need and evaluated the potential return on investment.

While their IOgap score was high, the technologies we had access to provided great options for innovation, providing a huge return on investment. They could reduce staff time significantly and decrease their turnaround time on their

Upcoming Events

What : 2nd Annual Marketplace Summit
Where : Sheraton Hotel, Portland Airport
When: April 16, 2010
Register at <http://www.ccnw.net>
Agile Northwest a proud sponsor of this year's event!

What : Biblical Entrepreneurship Business Training
Where : Agile Business Services Office, Beaverton OR
When: April 29-May 1
Topic: Wendie Jones will teach you how to grow your business despite today's economic climate.
Contact Agile Northwest to Register!

What : Nehemiah Project International Ministries – Partners' and Teachers' Conference
Where : Regent University, VA
When: May 17-18, 2010
Topic: Wendie Jones will be speaking on a panel regarding growing your business in lean times.

What : Agile Executive Briefing
Where : Webinar
When: June 10, 2010 11:30am PDT
Topic: Innovation Opportunity Gap™ – Assessment Tool
Contact Agile Northwest to Register!

Agile Northwest

P.O. Box 1956
Beaverton, Oregon 97075-1956
(503) 591-1100
info@agilenorthwest.com

charges by weeks, thereby more quickly getting the money in their bank account.

With innovation we were able to turn 8 hours of work into one hour and provide more time for the worker to track down information for declined charges. Their money was in their bank account within 48 hours instead of 3 weeks and their total collection rates were increased substantially. We have continued to work with this client over the years identifying areas in their work flow where IOgap scores are high, providing innovative solutions to lower it and earn their return on investments within the first year.

So how can we measure your IOgap score?

We assess your current software and technology usage, your current “pain” and your potential for innovation; this drives your gap score. We begin by considering where and how your critical operational data is being stored. If you process orders, how and where are you collecting your order information and storing order history. If you are managing critical sales forecasting data how are you doing this and how well is it working for you? Do you have a myriad of Excel spreadsheets requiring extensive manipulation by staff to keep them up to date and accurate? Do you have data in Excel, Access, legacy systems and other locations making it difficult to get critical information timely to help you make informed decisions? If this is the case then your IOgap score is probably high and your potential for streamlining processes, decreasing costs and capturing a significant return on investment are high.

Spend a few minutes thinking about where and how your data is stored and how you use it, and in our next issue we will release our IOgap assessment tool so that you can more clearly define your IOgap score.

Strategic IT Spending in Economic Downturns

During economic downturns it's critical for businesses to evaluate both their business strategy and their spending. Strategic spending should be directed to those items providing shorter turnaround times for return on investment (ROI). With lending opportunities reduced, quick turnaround is critical to keeping your business liquid and mobile in a stressed economy.

Your business strategy should reflect what you do best and capitalize on these strengths in the new market economy. Strategic spending should be driven by creative, out of the box business strategies that look at current economics and find solutions to current problems.

What should you be spending your IT dollars on in an economic downturn? Should you be planning major expenditures? Probably not, but you should be looking for those innovation opportunities that have a high IOgap score with a low implementation cost that can help boost productivity.

What technology improvements can you make that will reduce costs, increase revenue and improve customer service?

- ▲ Enhancements to software to streamline current business processes.
- ▲ Improved online customer tools to reduce support costs and build customer loyalty.
- ▲ Integration projects to reduce dual entry and repetitive work, improving efficiency.

What innovations will give you a competitive advantage and a leg up in the market?

- ▲ Online customer support functions that allow customers to place, view and track their own orders.
- ▲ Sales forecasting tools to expedite planning and free your sales team up to spend more time selling.
- ▲ Better reporting tools to improve visibility for timely decision making.

One of our recent projects was to develop an online photo purchasing module to extend our client's work flow software. They were paying a third party vendor 11% of sales to use their online tool with poor administrative functions which resulted in operational inefficiencies. Our custom solution handles their special photo and administrative needs; they will recoup their entire investment the first year and realize an ongoing 11% increase in sales with a 20% reduction in labor costs.

Strategic IT spending is thoughtful, well targeted and requires a short term ROI to keep your business moving forward, growing and improving even during uncertain economic times. What is your spending strategy?

The What, and the How, of Entrepreneurship In the 21st Century

May 25, 1961: "I believe that this nation should commit itself to achieving the goal, before this decade is out, of landing a man on the Moon and returning him safely to the Earth." – John F. Kennedy

The “What” had been declared by the President of the United States. This declaration became an invitation for the How of innovation and would come to fruition when on July 20, 1969 when Neil Armstrong took “One small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.”

Vision is the heart of entrepreneurship and without the roadmap called What, How has no foundation, no reason for being. The entrepreneur thinks and dreams at levels that are unproven and often unfamiliar to conventional thought.

The importance of What, is undeniable however without the How, there can be no progress.

In 1997 I began working as a sales trainer in the hearing aid industry. I thought the effective approach to the selling of hearing aids was the key ingredient for growing the patient base of one's hearing aid office.

continued on page3

I would discover six years later that effectively answering the telephone presented a way to tie advertising and sales together that had not been understood before. Thus I became keenly aware of the What, that would be a breakthrough in the hearing aid industry.

I created a script for handling incoming sales calls. Owners in legion printed those scripts into pads, placed them on their receptionist desks and sat back waiting for the inevitable appointments and sales that would result. Though appointments and sales did increase, I found that receptionists would skip around amongst the questions on the script or ignore it altogether, thus rendering it ineffective. The What remained solid; the How was ineffective; and my idea was another passing fancy.

Enter Agile Northwest. I wanted to make the script web based so that it would be paperless and impossible for the receptionist to randomly ask only the questions that they were comfortable with.

Agile led me each step of the way through the process of the How and Script on a ScreenSM was born. Agile Northwest made it possible for me to manage my script by adding or deleting customers from my computer. As customers have suggested important changes I have been able to implement them with just a phone call to the Agile Northwest team. Most recently they added a turn by turn map to my script that gives directions for patients from their home to the hearing aid office they chose to attend. This has been a big “Wow!” for my customers.

The future looks very bright for Script on a ScreenSM, and it is becoming a game changer for the hearing aid industry. I am certain that there will be changes in the script as time goes on, and I know that those changes can be implemented with a single call to Agile Northwest. Wende Jones and Agile Northwest are my How, and without them my solid What idea would simply have faded into that graveyard of great ideas that never quite made it.

*Von Hansen
Lebanon, Oregon 97355
vonhansen@comcast.net
541-259-1550*

The Bridge is a publication of Agile Northwest © Copyright 2010. All rights reserved.