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Warring factions within the ranks. Architectural options that are more sand than foundation. Pressure from the top to achieve better ROI. Paranoia from below to adopt the next great trend or face technical oblivion. Labyrinths of vendor pricing issues requiring an Economics degree to decipher.

It's the bottom of the ninth and there are two outs. Your team is down two runs; there's never been a tougher time to be an IT executive.

The position of the CIO has morphed over the years from being one of leadership in technical knowledge and industry trends to being a member of the bottom-line business team who also happens to know that Java isn't found only in a cup.

CIO, SVP of MIS, IT manager—regardless of the title, this position has crossed boundaries from technical leadership to one of managing the most important, and frequently the most expensive, investment an enterprise has today. Gartner forecasted global IT spending in 2007 at $2.6 trillion. That's more than the annual Gross Domestic Product for all the countries in the world, except the top four—the U.S., China, Japan, and India! So, in reality, the collective top-IT buck-stoppers are managing an economy on an unimaginable scale.

When the economy falters based on one indicator or another, how often is wasteful spending pointed to as a travesty of finance? What's the true global impact when an investment portfolio totaling $2.6 trillion is misman-aged, or at best, the speculation didn't pay off? The contribution to the jobless rate, the profit margins of the largest companies in the world, the inability to enrich the world's supply chain—are all dramatically affected by the IT decisions that are made or missed.

Therefore, it's not enough to understand why XML may make sense for the business. It's less than adequate to debate: Java or .NET? IT managers are directly responsible for the bottom line in a way that's more profound than is realized.

The top IT exec's role is only to consistently demand one answer to every question: What is the ROI of this technology/change/effort/product in terms of money/time/personnel/upheaval? Since strategic vs. tactical thinking is aimed at the long term, what better strategy is there than to stay in business?

One of the most important challenges for the top IT exec is finding sources of information and input into their decision-making process. How do they feed the brain? There's a myriad of sources, but mostly all biased. Even turning to trusted in-house staff tends to invite only parochial views based on background and

experience along a particular plat-form—and often results in unwant-ed battles between groups.

So, where can IT execs turn for real input that might make or break their company and influence the global economy?

Networking and exchanging among their peers is the only real answer. Only shared pain and common challenges can set the table for a candid discussion of the real issues. Unfortunately, there has been no movement toward providing such a network, largely because this valuable "cabinet" post has been ignored, as hard as that is to believe.

For the mainframe IT executive, the challenge is multiplied even further. While there are scores of trade journals that address generic platforms and disciplines, there was no clear voice for the mainframe community with focused content until *z/Journal's* emergence in 2003. And although *z/Journal* has provided helpful information that focuses on the day-to-day challenges of IT, it doesn't fully address the need for bi-directional exchange of ideas and insight.

Mainframe Executive and Beyond

That's where *Mainframe Executive* is aiming. Recognizing that the CIO and IT management who sport a mainframe as part of their lineup need a source of independent information that will discuss not only how the mainframe fits, but how it might not, *Mainframe Executive's* publisher, Bob Thomas, is step-ping up to the plate. Anyone who has an at-bat with this magazine has reinforced Bob's underlying belief that keeping an independent voice while focusing on giving the mainframe IT executive the information he needs is the mission. The complexity of the industry we've all co-created requires focus, targeted discussion, and the facil-ity to network. And while some of the views may be controversial, they all represent valid, valuable input.

Beyond this magazine, look forward to the possibility of an industry event, where mainframe executives can sit in on sessions related to best practices, audit consider-ations, even learn how to calm the religious wars between technological factions. There's a groundswell of support to reach out to this long neglected community. Finally, the home team is getting some support.

That Sums It Up. **ME**

CIOs: A League of Their Own

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