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Infrastructure Requirements and Outsourcing

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Introduction- Out-of-band Management, or Lights-out Management, is an important tool to manage devices like servers, core routers, and switches. This is facilitated by a secondary card in the device that has an IP address assigned to it and it typically accessible over the network via a web browser even if the device is powered down, assuming of course that the power plug is connected to an electrified outlet. This functionality is very important for a WAN environment. Without this ability to control these devices remotely, the company would either have to employ a resource in the local offices or spend a large amount of time and money on technician travel. This is therefore a cost saving measure as well as a management tool and strategy. In initially pitching and gaining approval for projects, cost savings is often the larger selling point for management. In addition to and as an add-on to the Lights Out management, I also like monitoring the systems through SNMP, using a tool like What's Up. The Lights Out system is very valuable, but you also need a system that informs you when systems go down, and when they are responding to ping again after a restart. Network performance is very much related to network monitoring, however, monitoring is a task that we perform in service to performance, among other things.

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INFRASTRUCTURE REQUIREMENTS AND OUTSOURCING

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"Increasingly, organizations are jumping onto the information technology (IT) outsourcing bandwagon in an effort to create value. However, evidence indicating the positive economic consequences of such initiatives has been limited. This study attempts to fill this void by synthesizing the process-oriented research in IT business value literature and the resource-based theory to develop an integrative research framework for assessing the value proposition of IT outsourcing."

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(Wang, Gweba, Wang, & Zhu, 2008) I have been through an IT outsourcing project, and I can say from my experience that the business value created through IT outsourcing is typically exaggerated. Not even taking into consideration the negative stigma and the damage to the reputation of the company or organization, but in house assets are more valuable and it takes multiple outside resources to make up for one in house resource. Communication by itself is a major issue with outsourcing, and the lack of communication ability might stand in the ways of resolving issues. Everyone has a story of dealing with a tech support person from India who is so hard to understand that many give up. So this supports the idea that some things are better left in house. Wang, Gweba, Wang, & Zhu (2008) make this point by separating who does better with outsourcing and to some degree what functions are more outsourceable, "With a process-oriented lens, the framework suggests that the effects of IT outsourcing are best documented at the process level and hence, it is imperative that one takes into consideration the impact of IT outsourcing on performance at both the process level as well as the firm level. Grounded in the resource-based view, the framework also accounts for the complementary role of firms' core IT capability as a critical condition for the value creation of IT outsourcing. Consistent with the process-oriented prediction, the findings suggest that the positive effects of IT outsourcing appear mostly at the process level, but not at the firm level. Moreover, it is found that the level of business value created by IT outsourcing is contingent on firms' core IT capability. Firms with superior core IT capability are found to enjoy an advantage in leveraging their outsourcing initiatives to enhance firm value" (p. 01).

My current company does outsource some specific functions, but only to local resources that have good communication skills. We also have the "core IT capability" that Wang, Gweba, Wang, & Zhu (2008) mention. For instance, we have an IT resource on retainer in one of our remote offices that has a limited need for onsite support. This location is too far away to service like we do our corporate location. We are able to handle most things remotely, but this office performs critical functions for the company so we need to be able to provide same day service. We do not outsource our core functions, nor do we give any external resource sole access to any of our systems. For us, outsourcing is a function of augmenting, not replacing. I have observed many companies use the model of

outsourcing as a replacement and this can be dangerous. I was recently working with a third party who had outsourced their phone system to a consultant. When the relationship was severed to the consultant, the company lost all access, passwords, configurations, etc. to their phone system. This was very short sighted on their part. I know that this was done on the direction of the management who thought that they were saving a few bucks, but look at the eventual cost.

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