Understanding the User

written by Manoj Khanna | February 27, 2005

This is a very touchy subject. No one wants to be in a position where they are not able to fully support a user. An IT Manager's worst nightmare is the inability to meet the expectations of the users. In a functional organization where the earnings are through the functional means, more or less the It department is on the mercy of the main department. And in order to keep the IT shop running – IT people have no choice but to meet their expectations and fully understand them.

At times, where the IT staff is fully supportive – a user understanding is very poor. Couple of years ago I interacted with a user via phone and when asked to hit the "escape" key the user got a shock saying that "is there an escape key on my keyboard? Where is it?". Now if the IT department breathes in and out the facts of the computing world it doesn't mean that the rest of the world is also on the same boat. That incident taught me a lesson to never underestimate the user – user can be as intelligent as a freshman or as naive as in junior school.

The expectations and the objectives which the user community has from the IT department is large. At certain point IT department is a magical world where everything and anything can take place as per their needs. No necessarily as it sounds like. But some folks do not want to understand. Some user completely underestimate what IT does. Well, there is no easy way to resolve these mutual misunderstandings.

Thus, in order to avoid such scenarios some of the good approaches is to have a middle-person. A person who knows well about the users and at the same time about the technology. A person chosen not for the technology skills but for the ability to interact successfully with others in their

language.

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