

Institutionalized Insanity

Consider the following scenarios



1. A teenager comes to parents and asks for a new car. The justification is that the current car is old, doesn't go fast enough and costs too much in maintenance. The proposed solution is to buy a brand new Ferrari. It's expensive, but will go more than fast enough for any foreseeable situation and the dealer will include the first 3 years of maintenance with the purchase.
2. A woman goes to her pharmacist to pick up a prescription. The pharmacist provides the medication and informs her that the drug company skipped most of the testing in order to meet their market release date. However, if she encounters any severe side effects, the drug company will make sure that she's first in line for any corrective medications or required surgeries. He also provides her with a 1 month supply of disposable undergarments as a "workaround" for the known gastrointestinal issues.
3. A contractor is brought in to build a new house. The customer worked out a deal with a tool vendor and a local farmer and used the construction budget to purchase supplies for the contractor. The contractor is given 3 months to build a house using nothing but a truckload of arc welders and 75 tonnes of hay bales that the customer bought. There is no budget for alternate materials or tools.
4. A family is expecting a new baby and decides that they need an additional bedroom added on to the house. Unfortunately, they determine that they have no budget for it and they'll have to wait until next year. Since they're going to have to build the add-on eventually, the father decides to forget about hiring a contractor and he'll just "do it in the margins". He cuts a hole in the side of the house and starts building the addition out of branches, twigs and scraps of lumber out of the garage. He occasionally raids the food budget and sells gas siphoned from his neighbor's car to buy tools and nails.
5. A customer orders a new vehicle. At the time of the order, the customer decides that they want a basic 2-door flatbed truck. The estimated delivery time is 6 weeks. After 1 week, the customer realizes that they'll need an additional row of seats to accommodate the kids. After 2 weeks, they realize that they need the cargo area to be covered. After 3 weeks, they decide that they need a 3rd and 4th row of seating for shuttling around extended family members. After 4 weeks, they determine that there won't be enough cargo space with the extra seating, so they need a trailer as well. After 5 weeks, they realize that the whole arrangement isn't going to fit in the garage, so they need to build a carport. Of course, since they already agreed to buy the car from the dealer, they expect all of this to be done for the original price and on the original schedule.

Ridiculous, right? No sane person would ever consider these scenarios to be even remotely realistic.

Now let's rephrase this in terms of IT and the Business:



1. IT wants to replace the current infrastructure because it's old and expensive to maintain. They propose a solution with 5000% of the current capacity. It's expensive, but will meet all foreseeable future needs and will include the first 3 years of maintenance in the purchase.
2. Application Development delivers a solution. Unfortunately, to meet the production date, most of the testing was skipped. However, the AD group will closely monitor the helpdesk and correct issues in production as they occur. A spreadsheet for recalculation will be issued as a workaround for the totals being wrong in the reports.
3. The business decides that it wants to implement a new IT Services infrastructure. They meet with tool vendors and hardware providers and pick a set of products. Unfortunately, the tools and hardware aren't compatible with the existing environment. IT is given 3 months to create custom interfaces and deliver an integrated IT Services Infrastructure. Since the entire hardware and software budget has been spent, there is no money for alternate hardware or tools.
4. IT determines that it needs additional functionality in a vendor-provided Help Desk product. The requirements are documented and the proposal is submitted. Unfortunately, the executive review board decides that there isn't funding or resources for the project this year. Since they're going to have to add the functionality eventually, IT decides to forget about paying the vendor to make the changes. They'll just "do it in the margins". They start writing modules in a free web-based tool called QuickiApp and patch the helpdesk application to call out to the tool. They divert resources from operational activities and skim resources from other projects to do the development.
5. The Business provides a set of requirements for a new marketing system. IT reviews the requirements and estimates a production date 6 weeks from now. After 1 week, the business realizes that they need additional features to support a customer group that they overlooked. After 2 weeks, they realize that nobody considered the reporting requirements. After 3 weeks, Legal informs them that they need to retain 7 years of detailed transaction records for compliance. After 4 weeks, security identifies gaps in the way that the customers access the system. After 5 weeks, IT determines that the new product is going to require additional infrastructure to support all of the new requirements. Of course, the business expects all of this to be done for the original price and on the original schedule.

Think about these scenarios the next time that you request or accept a project or change request. A little bit of conscious consideration and open dialog could undo years of "reflex" bad behavior. It certainly couldn't hurt