

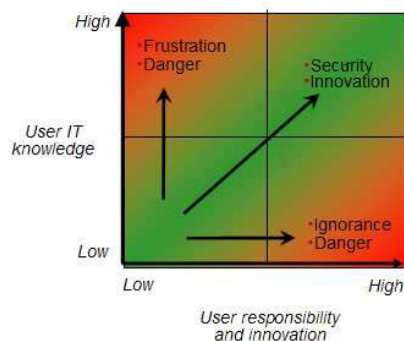
LEF Executive Programme Point of View on Service Innovation

Our capacity for service innovation is driven not only by the education that students engage in, but by the reception they receive once they enter the work force. In business schools today great emphasis is placed on the students learning to work as collaborative teams. Since this is an internet generation it is not surprising that internet-based collaborative tools, such as instant messaging, are an integral part of how these students learn to work together. Lightweight laptops with wireless connections of various sorts let them work as a team regardless of location. This technology and connectivity also lets them reach out to others beyond the team for additional expertise and problem solving.

However, what happens when these highly motivated, problem solving, service innovating students enter the corporate work place?

They go from being trusted, highly regarded team players, to those whose computer is typically locked down, not wireless, and often cut off from the web. They are forced to retreat back into the corporate cave. They have gone from being treated as adults to being treated as children. Is it a surprise that we fail to innovate our services to the degree that we could when management, especially IT management, acts as if Douglas McGregor's Theory X that top-down, command and control, is the way to deal with employees in any and all situations?

Improved education in service innovation will have to include current management, not just students. Fortunately we have a forcing function that is on our side. As long as employees were unfamiliar with IT they could be comfortably kept in the lower left hand corner of this two by two of IT competence and business responsibility and innovation.



However, without any action by IT organizations, employees, new and old are headed north in this table. The consumerization of information technologies has created substantial understanding and investment by users. A recent survey by the LEF and the Financial Times indicated that more than two-thirds of respondents had as good or better equipment at home as they did at work.

What is needed is a stair step approach that gives employees new responsibilities and expectations for innovation as they demonstrate new competencies. Only then can organizations avoid having employees wind up in the upper left quadrant where they are capable, mistrusted, and likely to be dangerously angry.