

## IT Production Services Function

Building the ideal infrastructure

By: Harris Kern's Enterprise Computing Institute.

One of the main reasons that 70% of all IT organizations today are still labeled as cost centers and are failing miserably is because of their infrastructures. Infrastructures are in horrible shape as we depict in our IT assessment data. We share with you the data compiled from over 350 IT assessments from Fortune 500 and Global 2000 companies but more importantly how an effective Production Services organization resolves many of those issues.

Some of the primary functions of Production Services are:

- Provide second-level production support
- Participate in the disaster recovery process/drills
- Reject new applications or major revisions to applications in production prior to thorough testing and documentation
- Breed technical resources
- Maintain scheduling requirements
- Design and implement enterprise-wide processes
  - Provide centralized ownership/accountability for key processes such as change management, storage management, etc.
- Maintain system management tools
- Assist senior systems programmers in installation, support, and documentation
- Provide training to other groups within IT on newly installed systems and system management tools

Table 1 lists some of the common IT infrastructure-related issues, which category or categories (people, process, organization, etc.) are affected, and issues that conceivably could be resolved with a Production Services function. This table is based on actual data from our infrastructure development workshops.

**Table 1: IT Infrastructure Support Issues**

Issue(s)	Category(ies) Affected	Resolved with Production Services Function	Potentially Resolved with Production Services Function
Lack of defined metrics for measuring the effectiveness of IT	Process		X
Lack of standards and adherence to standards throughout the infrastructure or enterprise	IT management Process Organization		X
Three levels of technical support (system	Organization	X	

administration) not defined			
Difficult for staff to learn new technologies - too preoccupied with daily fire-fighting	Organization	X	
IT shops organized based on technology (mainframe, AS400, NT, UNIX, Novell, etc.)	Organization		X
Lack of RAS in production environment	Organization Process People	X	
Lack of coordinated responses to problems; inappropriate escalation or inability to respond	Communication Process Organization		X
Lack of service levels between operational support and applications development, and between IT and its customers	Process Organization		X
Difficulty Recruiting and retaining technical resources	Organization People		X
Not enough staff to cover all support requirements	Organization People		X
Separate infrastructure support groups, causing power struggles between infrastructure development and production support	Organization		X
Inefficient enterprise-wide change control notification	Communication Organization Process		X
Lack of coordination between end users and support groups	Process Communication	X	
Inadequate management of customer expectations by IS management and technical leads	Communication		X
Irrational organization structure - responsibility without accountability	Organization		X
Centralized IS group perceived to be in a glass house or ivory tower environment	Process Communication		X
Lack of respect for IS from customer base	Organization Communication Process		X
Unclear centralized ownership along with scattered responsibilities of technology and process	Organization Process	X	
Customers driving technology decisions more than they should	Organization Process Communication		X
IS needs to market/sell services corporately	Organization Process Communication		X
IS not seen as a strategic business partner	Organization Communication		X

Lack of (or unenforced) enterprise-wide system management and monitoring tools	Organization IT Management People Process		X
No internal QA process for IS	Process Organization	X	
More technologies deployed than can be supported efficiently	Process People Organization	X	
Poor communication within organization on all levels/barriers, walls between groups	Process IT management Communication Organization		X
No formal level two support structure	Organization Process	X	
Lack of testing or pre-production environment	Process Technology IT management Organization		X
Lack of technical resources – inability to pool resources	Organization People	X	
Lack of an effective enterprise-wide change management and control process	People Process Organization	X	
Poor communication of standards	Communication		
Poor alignment of technical resources with business drivers and requirements	Communication IT management Process		
Tactical, not strategic approach	Organization	X	
Lack of a process to market and sell IT services	Process	X	
Lack of an effective benchmarking function	People Process		X
Lack of senior resources to mentor lower-level technical support	People Organization	X	
Lack of a production control function	Process Organization People IT management	X	
Duplicate system administration and management functions	Organization		X
Lack of storage management process	Process		X
Lack of definition of what is mission-critical and levels of importance to the business	Process		X
Lack of strategic IT marketing and sales of IT services	Process Communication		X
Lack of asset management	Process		X
Lack of capacity planning	Process		X
Ineffective global coordination	Process Communication		X

	IT management Organization		
Lack of an effective release management process	Process	X	
Lack of internal and external Service Level Agreements	Process Organization	X	
Lack of a disaster recovery process	Organization People Process IT management		X

The best enterprise IT organizations have discovered the secret to high-performance infrastructure management: build a Production Services function. By doing so, they've achieved outstanding reliability, availability, and serviceability... transforming themselves from overpriced support centers into world-class service providers.