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IT and business mix vital for general management skill

Integrating business and IT strategy is seen as an important general management skill for IT managers.

This was ranked as 'essential' by 93% of the members of the BCS Effective Leadership in IT Group who responded to a survey on IT management competencies by the BCS and Henley Management College.

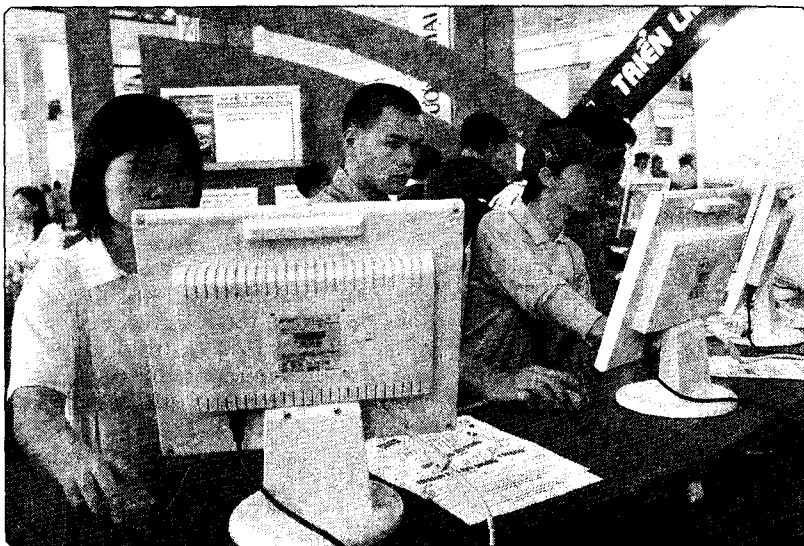
It was some way ahead of change leadership, voted essential by 57% and very important by 37%, people development (46% and 46%), and project and programme management (39% and 39%).

Some way behind again came financial management, seen as essential by 28%, business risk management (20%), supplier management (19%) and business process management (19%), with e-business strategy coming bottom, seen as essential by only 9% and very important by 43%.

These findings were confirmed by responses to other questions.

For example IT policy and strategy was the clear leader in a question about professional competence areas, with 67% ranking it as essential and 30% as very important. There was then a big gap to service delivery (39%) and skills development (37%), with a further gap to the more technical issues of security (28%), information systems processes and quality (20%), IT architecture (20%) and IT infrastructure (15%).

The IT managers also saw the IT and business mix as important for their careers. When asked about the factors which had contributed most to their careers, 78% mentioned strong IT experience and



74% strong business experience, with 67% also mentioning cultural fit with their organisations.

These were ahead of training (28%), academic qualifications (26%), career planning (15%) and other issues.

These findings reflected their view of the key priorities of their chief executive and senior management: getting value money from IT was thought to be top of the list, mentioned by 70% of IT managers, followed by the related issue of using IT to improve business efficiency (69%). Senior management were also concerned about IT performance and continuity, IT managers believed: this was mentioned by 65%. They felt senior management were less concerned about exploiting IT more effectively than competitors (22%), or about security (33%).

Leadership came top in the list of

personal qualities needed for success, with 81% listing it as essential. It was followed by the related attributes of communication skills, seen as essential by 70%, influencing skills (65%), professionalism (54%), drive and resilience (54%), and integrity (54%).

There was then a gap to intellectual capacity (28%), and pragmatism (26%). Being a team player at this level was rated as essential by only 24%.

Follow-up case studies with a leading international oil company and a UK-based charity have been carried out by researcher Sharm Manwani of Henley Management College.

These have confirmed and expanded the survey findings. Results will be presented at a conference run by the BCS and Henley Management College later this year.