

Business Extra

It's time to quiz your company's IT manager

Are you an IT-savvy chief executive?

Here are some basic questions you can ask your information technology manager to gauge how effective your IT roadmap really is.

As a chief executive, how do you know you can trust your IT manager? How do you know the systems and investments being made are in the right areas? Can you trust your IT manager not to drive your investment into a blind alley?

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The IT Guy



In short, is your IT manager wasting money?

Here are five key questions to tackle your IT manager with:

- How are you going to address security requirements?
- How are you going to address more contractors — we want them to access our information but we don't want to expose it?
- How are you doing that quickly?
- How are you shortening your time to market so that when a business unit says we need this, you can deliver in a reasonable time frame — and that reasonable time frame is shortening all the time?
- How are you addressing our

security requirements?

■ How are you going to address the fact that we're employing more contractors — we want them to access our information but we don't want to expose it?

■ How are you doing that quickly?

■ How are you shortening your time to market so that when a business unit says we need this, you can deliver in a reasonable time frame — and that reasonable time frame is shortening all the time?

If your IT manager cannot answer these questions easily and with confidence, you may not have the right expertise in-house to get your company to a place it needs to be.

Chief executives are constantly making strategic decisions, and they need to be aware of the benefits IT can bring to their organisation. Chief executives also have to manage their leadership team. A team that is averse to change, regardless of what that change is,

should be a red flag.

IT staff are very much change agents, and barriers at leadership team level can stymie an entire organisation's growth and development.

■ *Wanganui District Council information technology manager Jason Simons has worked around the world delivering IT solutions, including providing encrypted systems for governments, banks and corporates. Follow his blog at jasonsimons.nz*

Let's generate right types of economic growth

I'm hearing a lot about encouraging some of the tidal wave of baby boomers to live their later years here.

The idea has merit, but why not instead focus on backing existing local businesses and young entrepreneurs? They could live here for a lifetime (their kids too).

You can generate economic growth in many ways but the key is to generate the right types of growth.

I was pleased this week to assist two local businesses who have come up with something innovative and exciting and are

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moving quickly to take a strong foothold in the market.

As with most of these types of endeavours, there will come a time when many will say: "Gee, I could have thought of that." Well, guess what — they thought of it first.

So when I think about their ideas, my ideas and some of the

projects and start-ups appearing here, I get excited that maybe Wanganui can become established and embedded as the place for business ideas to grow.

Despite the naysayers — there are a few — our city could be in a unique position to give rise to a new wave of economic growth.

From the completion of the UFB roll-out to being recognised as an "intelligent community" to our existing manufacturing power base (Heads Rd etc) to harnessing and supporting innovation in the many and varied forms in which it

arises, Wanganui has advantages

which should be capitalised on.

Last week I was in Sydney. One of the recurrent themes there is how micro-businesses are popping up and filling gaps caused by the attrition of traditional business models. Australia is experiencing tough economic times but travelling through Sydney and its suburbs you would not believe it. I lost count of the logos and signage advertising e-businesses and web-commerce entities.

With the support of economic development programmes and locals, these new businesses can become successful in places such

as ours. Community groups can also work to attract businesses and our natural resources can give rise to the development of "value-add" products.

The environment must be right for local businesses to thrive. It is time to focus on allowing the opportunities and possibilities to dominate our collective thinking. Then Wanganui can become renowned as a place where good ideas become great business.

■ *Russell Bell's Zenith Strategic Solutions is a specialist Wanganui business advice and consultancy practice — 021 2442421.*