

# Know your environment to drive innovation

**G**ETTING support for information technology change in a bureaucratic risk-averse environment is, perhaps, one of the biggest challenges IT managers face.

The speed at which IT is moving and changing direction requires businesses and IT systems to be agile and responsive — two words that do not spring to mind when I think about bureaucracy.

So what's the answer? How do IT managers overcome the red tape and manage a risk-averse leadership team?

My advice is to invest wisely

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in your initial platforms — choose IT platforms which you can build on in stages. If you've made the initial investment with development in mind, you only need to make incremental investments to bring about massive change. Incremental change reduces the likelihood of barriers and roadblocks from staff who don't see the need to

invest a large amount of money in IT systems.

Choose your pilot department carefully — preferably one that has raised a specific problem and will embrace any IT solution you put in place and so champion your new software.

Finally, create an environment where it is okay to fail. If change is small, then the amount of time and money invested will also be small if the pilot fails or does not live up to expectations.

It also helps to know the lay of the landscape and use it to your advantage. By that, I mean IT managers should understand the

political and cultural environment in which they work.

In a risk-averse environment, finding individual drivers can help your team implement change. Ask yourself what the IT changes mean to productivity and culture. Wanganui District Council has mobilised its workforce with new technology that allows frontline staff to work from the field more effectively. Staff need different tools to get the job done, and IT managers need to listen to their concerns and needs.

The IT requirements for staff in the art gallery are quite different from parks staff or

those in customer services.

It is all about evaluating staff needs, and listening carefully while being aware there are handbrakes out there that just don't like any change. The politically savvy IT manager needs to determine which concerns are legitimate and which can be managed.

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