



A platform for new business tools

Senior's tools

Decision Maker's Toolkit

is a collection of simple tools that are very easy to get started with and yet hit key business targets of focussing on issues, considering alternatives and following decisions through with actions. There is a lot of depth in these tools which can be exploited by those interested in using simple, practical decision making tools.

Operations Room

is an information centre for senior managers based on the idea of a room with four walls (resources, projects, environment and ourselves) for factual information and a table for policy and discussion. This is a much more structured and controlled environment than a private newsgroup and combines reference with discussion. Facilities are provided to allow users to post-but-not-read and to notify managers of changes.

Chairman's aide

is a collection of wizards and templates for organising all sorts of meetings. One element helps the chairman set up the meeting for maximum effectiveness according to its nature. Another deals with the clerical work and follow-up activities.

Progressive business brand

New thinking

is a new brand of 'tools for modern thinking' and co-ordinated business activities.

New markets

There are two key reasons why NBT will have its own niche in the market place - and therefore make it easier to market successfully.

- As computer programs NBT is significantly different from existing software.
- As business solutions NBT is aimed at D-I-Y modernising of any business.

Good reasons to change

It is not too difficult to show up those who don't convert to 'proper decision making' (its so easy!) or use a 'word processor that just does words and pictures' (for goodness sake!) as 'unable to change' and 'not with-it'.

People won't ditch MS Word because there is something cheaper, or because there is something 'better', but *because it is obsolete*.

Training and education will be another source of income.

A platform

Document

is a 'how do we process documents' architecture rather than a 'word processor with bells on'.

Typing and printing are only a small part of what processing documents is about.

For example as soon as we select a name of a recipient (in conjunction with rules for the document type) we are quite likely to know things like who has to authorise this, the communications medium, where and how it should be filed, cross references to other documents, the number of copies, do we need to digitally sign it and perhaps the native language of the recipient.

Trust manager

Managing access to electronic resources, whether for purposes of confidence of competence, is too complicated for everyday people. Trust manager addresses this. When the issue is addressed properly it turns out that the concept of an operating system is not sufficient - a complete operating *environment* is required. This has interesting technical and commercial implications.

Quickly to market

Start with simple tools

The tools aimed at seniors are simple to create and so can be used as an advanced guard and immediate revenue earner.

These tools are aimed at the 'thinking' business, are obviously fresh, are obviously worth a try and easily adopted. They come with 'how to improve your business in five minutes' written all over them. There is plenty of management meat on the 5-minute skeleton.

These tools will prepare an audience for the tools that need more thinking about.

These tools are accessible to anyone with any projects or decisions.

1st stage tools

OM, Factors, Hurdles, DMT

2nd stage

OR, Chairman's aide, Document Version 1

3rd stage

Operating environment, Document version 2, Trust manager

Develop the new view

Operations room and **Chairman's aide** are not particularly difficult to create. They will underline the 'efficiency in business' nature of NBT.

These are aimed solely at business.

Businesses will need to think a bit about their processes rather than 'buy a box and plug it in'. Nevertheless the concepts are so easy to grasp and the benefits are so obvious that this shouldn't be a problem.

Document (ver 1) is a different animal. The danger is that most potential customers will see it as a word processor. (Different maybe, but as they've never seen anything else they have no other category.)

The object oriented interface is very different to a traditional WP - Weird at first!

There is up-front preparation required before typing starts - This is efficient in a structured business environment - but still sufficiently different to require a change of mind-set.

But businesses should see that they should be thinking about all the things they do with documents not just the typing. Also automation and standardisation are highly desirable business objectives.

Exploit the architecture

The operating environment is a layer which doesn't deliver a benefit to a business in itself. However we need something better than a plain operating system to be able to implement Trust Manager and the authority-based aspects of Document (such as signing and publishing.)

The nature of the operating environment has yet to be decided and there are many grey areas where operating systems interact with applications that will need careful design in a complex area.

Version 2 of Document will use the trust mechanisms made available through the Trust manager/Operating environment to complete document life-cycle functions and enable collaborative working. It is also likely that the core operations will be enriched.

The Trust manager is another easily accessible everyday idea implemented electronically. This is overdue because the user interface is so difficult to manage. Hiding the technical bits while giving the necessary flexibility will require careful design and tuning.

Tool catalogue

Decision maker's toolkit

This is a collection of simple tools that are very easy to get started with and yet hit key business targets of focussing on issues, considering alternatives and following decisions through with actions. There is a lot of depth in these tools which can be exploited by savvy people in personal or team situations. These are practical decision making tools suited to amateurs but with deep management potential.

All these tools are ideal for focusing a group's attention using simple to understand layouts and concepts.

Objects-Methods

Starting as a back-of-the-envelope 'What are we trying to do? - How shall we do it?' This can be developed into a method for structuring policy decision making and allocating then following through tasks.

Factors

What are the Success, failure and chance factors affecting a project? A simple table that is particularly useful for keeping tight control of weak spots and making big wins on the margin.

Hurdles

A simple but flexible project progress tool. The main aim is to maximise the ease of understanding while minimising the effort required to maintain it.

Other tools

To suit various types of decision making.

Business management

Operations Room

An information centre for senior managers based on the idea of a room with four walls and a table

- resources
- projects
- environment
- ourselves
- policy

The walls are for factual information while the table can explicitly be used for opinion. The walls are sub-divided to suit and access can be controlled. Discussion threads can be overlayed over the factual content.

This is a much more structured and controlled environment than a private newsgroup and combines reference with discussion. Facilities are provided to allow users to post-but-not-read and to notify managers of changes.

Chairman's aide

A collection of wizards and templates for organising all sorts of meetings. One element helps the chairman set up the meeting for maximum effectiveness according to its nature. Another deals with the clerical work and follow-up activities.

As well as the obvious clerical benefits from structuring and re-use, the business gains by better preparation for meetings while less able chairmen get some hand-holding.

Document processing

Document is quite a big project addressing all document life-cycle issues.

Creation

- Use standard components in OO fashion
- Develop rich components. For example that 'know' the ways to reach recipients and their foibles, or import appropriate data.
- Team development and updating

Publishing

- Many standard documents will have authorisation requirements built-in
- Many organisations will want levels of digital signatures and traceability
- An OO system can physically publish using different media as appropriate
- Export

Filing

- Typically a disaster area in many organisations.
- This can be addressed by putting rules into document templates.
- Documents often need to be accessed in groups

This is the soft face of business process engineering applicable to almost every aspect of the way an organisation works. (Think of say a staff appraisal . . . Last year's; the points to be covered, the limited and confidential distribution. While this happens on paper we're comfortable but without it there could be lots of mistakes.)

Conclusion

Strategic plan

1

Tools to whet the appetite and establish the calibre of concept

2

Platform for business processes that makes difficult to implement IT issues accessible.

3

Evolving environment.

Success factors

The NBT is not a 'look what computers can do' program but 'look what you can do with the right tools in a suitable environment.'

NBT is a complete business environment for small, medium and large organisations that provides infrastructure support for management and daily operations.

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