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Research

Publication Date: 14 September 2005 **ID Number: G00130462**

The IT Professional Outlook: Where Will We Go From Here?

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By 2010, IT professionals will need to possess expertise in multiple domains. Technical aptitude alone will no longer be enough. IT professionals must prove they can understand business realities — industry, core processes, customer bases, regulatory environment, culture and constraints. Versatility will be crucial.

Key Findings

- Four megaforces — global sourcing, IT automation, consumer IT and business reconfiguration — will reshape the future landscape for IT professionals.
- "Versatilists" — people whose numerous roles, assignments and experiences create synthesized knowledge and context that fuel business value — will emerge.

Predictions

- By 2010, the IT profession will split into four domains of expertise: technology, information, process and relationships (0.7 probability).
- By 2010, six of 10 people affiliated with the IT organization will assume business-facing roles (0.7 probability).
- By 2010, 10 percent to 15 percent of IT professionals will drop out of the IT occupation (0.7 probability).

Recommendations

- IT Professionals: Choose the area of expertise that best suits you. Learning and relationships fuel growth.
- Employers: Develop growth paths and career opportunities for the four domains of expertise and bolster those domains with identification and reward for versatility.

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STRATEGIC PLANNING ASSUMPTION(S)

- By 2010, the IT profession will split into four domains of expertise: technology, information, process and relationships (0.8 probability).
- By 2010, six of 10 people affiliated with the IT organization will assume business-facing roles around information, process and relationships (0.7 probability).
- Through 2010, 30 percent of top technology performers will migrate to IT vendors and IT service providers (0.8 probability).
- By 2010, IT organizations in midsize and large companies will be at least 30 percent smaller than they were in 2005 (0.7 probability).
- By 2010, 10 percent to 15 percent of IT professionals will drop out of the IT occupation (0.7 probability).
- Through 2010, enterprises will recruit IT and business professionals as much for business and behavioral competencies as for technical aptitude (0.9 probability).
- By 2011, 70 percent of leading-edge companies will seek and develop "versatilists" while de-emphasizing specialists (0.8 probability).

ANALYSIS

1.0 Introduction: Setting the Stage

For many IT professionals, the remainder of the decade will bring uncertainty. Business skepticism toward the effectiveness of IT, the rise of IT automation, worldwide geographic labor shifts and blended service-delivery models mean that IT professionals must prove that they can understand business reality — industry, core processes, customer bases, regulatory environment, culture and constraints — and contribute real business value to their enterprises.

Increasingly, successful IT professionals will identify themselves not just by occupation ("I work in IT"), but also by the industry, process and change programs in which they participate ("I lead a global customer relationship management team in chemical manufacturing" or "I spent two years helping to design an Internet selling process that boosted revenue by 20 percent"). IT professionals will be expected to demonstrate versatility, initiative and business knowledge.

Regardless of whether IT professionals work in a corporate IT organization, in an outsourcing team, in product development or in business units, their areas of expertise, knowledge and skills will change — some will be bolstered, some will be carved up, some will be redistributed and some will be displaced.

Five Strategic Planning Assumptions provide context for the future of the IT professional:

- By 2010, the IT profession will split into four domains of expertise: technology, information, process and relationships (0.8 probability).
- By 2010, six of 10 people affiliated with the IT organization will assume business-facing roles around information, process and relationships (0.7 probability).
- Through 2010, 30 percent of top technology performers will migrate to IT vendors and IT service providers (0.8 probability).

- By 2010, IT organizations in midsize and large companies will be at least 30 percent smaller than they were in 2005 (0.7 probability).
- By 2010, 10 percent to 15 percent of IT professionals will drop out of the IT occupation (0.7 probability).

For the most part, Gartner clients agree with these projections. Based on recent conferences and engagements, the clear majority of people — anywhere from 60 percent to 95 percent — thought those projections were on target, a smaller percentage thought they were pessimistic and a fraction thought they were optimistic.

Through 2010, IT professionals will have to decide whether they wish to remain in the realm of "pure" technology or whether they will, like many corporate IT organizations and vendors, transform their competencies and expertise toward information, business processes or alliance building. Many IT professionals will redirect themselves to new domains of expertise and develop practical experience in industries, market segments, core business processes and unique challenges.

Although some employers will continue to reward technical prowess, the buyers and consumers of technology, information and services will eagerly seek well-informed people who understand the financial implications of decisions, who communicate clearly, and who can handle and drive change. Indeed, the changing employment picture calls for behavioral competencies that involve driving change, demonstrating leadership, analyzing external trends, focusing on results and acting ethically.

> Professional preparation, a track record of success and teamwork will fuel IT professionals' credibility. IT professionals must also learn to enhance their identities in new industry sectors, new types of challenges and organizations outside the traditional for-profit business model.

2.0 Four Megaforces Will Change the Landscape for IT Professionals

The IT profession as we know it is on the verge of discontinuity. Four megaforces will change the IT profession through 2010: global sourcing, IT automation, the growth of consumer IT and business reconfiguration.

2.1 Global Sourcing

Enabled by high-speed global networks, global sourcing will put many IT professionals in competition against their peers in other markets. Companies are proving that certain IT skills, knowledge bases and services can be competitively delivered across borders, time zones and business entities (see "The Organizational Implications of Offshore Outsourcing").

Traditional assumptions about job security — through higher education, specialized skills and intrinsic intellectual value — have been exploded. Geography will not be any protection; IT professionals in Asia and other areas that are now booming will also be squeezed as other countries compete for global revenue.

2.2 IT Automation

Automation will transform the IT organization and the IT profession. Chief targets will be software development, testing, remote system monitoring, operation centers, technical support, storage and networking (see "Support Automation Framework Shows Areas Needing Improvement").

In data centers and operations, the promise of utility-based computing and the emergence of virtual and standardized infrastructure — that is, the IT factory of the future — will halve the number of IT operation jobs during the next 10 to 15 years. Some IT jobs will be displaced by tools or by remote management, and then will disappear. The art of design, synthesis and integration will remain. The challenge will be in differentiating what *can* be automated from what *should* be automated in each company.

2.3 Consumer IT

The proliferation of consumer IT devices will continue to demystify IT, challenge the esotericism of IT organizations and reduce tolerance for technical arcana. Indeed, business IT and consumer IT now converge in a new focal point, the "worker-consumer." Consumer technology and online service companies emphasize usability, personalization and customer intimacy.

In contrast, business IT service providers, and, often, internal IT organizations, emphasize security, central control, compliance, cost-efficiency and "one-size-fits-all" standards. Using the worker-consumer as the focal point, IT professionals must learn to design services and products that are intuitive, personalized, technically transparent and easily supported (see "The Human Impact of Business IT: How to Avoid Diminishing Returns"). For that, they need a consumer-focused mind set and strong skills in ergonomics, information design and service bundling. IT leaders will look to consumer service companies for talented people who understand consumer behaviors, usability and personalization.

2.4 Business Reconfiguration

Consolidation, globalization, expansion, outsourcing, downsizing, re-engineering, and mergers and acquisitions will all challenge IT professionals by weakening employee commitment and putting pressure on individuals to adapt. Companies will continue to reconfigure themselves, likely with greater frequency, as they pursue the elusive targets of business agility and organizational effectiveness. Many will do so clumsily, without understanding what the organization can absorb and frequently without orchestrating the numerous changes affecting people. Reconfiguration disrupts roles, relationships, performance and workloads, and can lead to months of organizational paralysis as people jockey for position (see "The Modular Organization Emerges").

3.0 The IT Profession Splits Into Four Domains of Expertise

Strategic Planning Assumption: By 2010, the IT professional will split into four domains of expertise: technology, information, process and relationships (0.8 probability).

When it comes to the type of people they look for, CIOs, service vendors and technology vendors have a common theme: They want people with breadth and depth of skills and diverse experiences. Based on that perspective and the four megaforces, Gartner expects the IT profession to split into four domains of expertise. IT professionals must decide which domain or domains of expertise interest them and what kind of experiences will help them develop expertise in that domain.

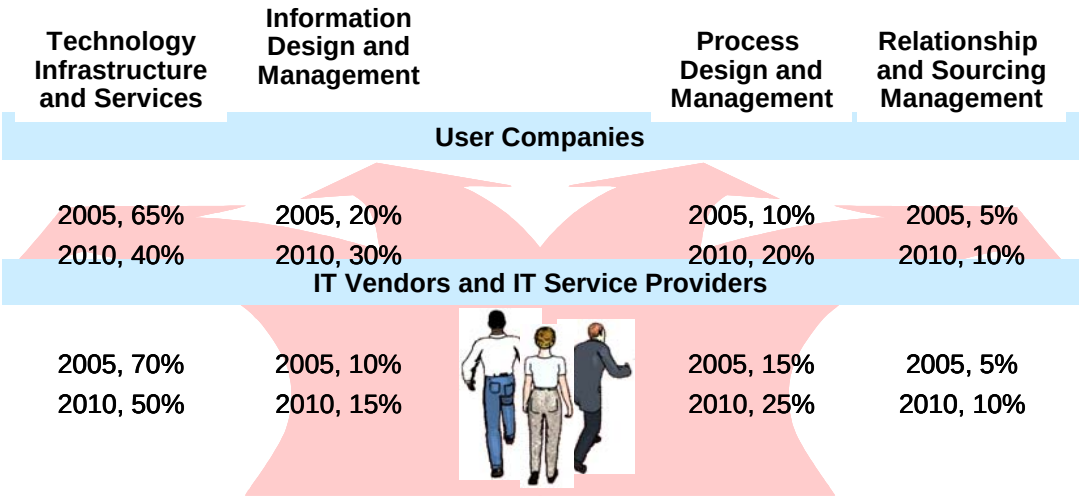
- *Technology infrastructure and services*. Opportunities in technology infrastructure and services, the historical foundation of the IT occupation, will grow in service, hardware and software companies, and will wane in user companies. Network design and security will remain strong everywhere, while routine coding and programming activities will gradually shift to developing economies.
- *Information design and management*. Business intelligence, online consumer services, workplace enhancement, search-and-retrieval practices and collaboration will grow in

user companies, and in systems integration and consulting companies. Linguistics, language skills, information design and knowledge management will be fertile ground for this domain.

- *Process design and management*. IT professionals can look at process opportunities from three angles: standard operational processes, competitive business processes and design of process automation software. The first, standard operational processes, will be the "sweet spot" for outsourcing vendors; the second, for user companies; the third, for software vendors.
- *Relationship and sourcing management*. Far afield from the traditional skills that IT professionals pursue, relationship and sourcing management will gain ground, demanding strengths in managing intangibles, negotiating among different parties and coordinating outcomes among geographically distributed parties with different work agendas and cultures. Already, boutique recruitment firms are emerging to find and place people who can serve as relationship managers between foreign service providers and their domestic customers.

Figure 1 shows Gartner's forecast of what percentage of the IT workforce will work in each of the four areas by 2010. For user companies, as well as IT vendors and service providers, the workforce in technology infrastructure and services will shrink, while the workforce in the three other domains will increase.

Figure 1. IT Professionals at the Crossroads



Source: Gartner (September 2005)

Gartner clients expect similar patterns. When invited to identify the domains of expertise that would experience the greatest growth or decline, nearly 100 percent expected growth in the process and relationship domains, and 100 percent expected the greatest decline in technology infrastructure and services. Mixed feelings abound. People working in infrastructure, operations and software programming are comparatively pessimistic, while people working on enterprisewide projects, Web services and relationship management are comparatively optimistic.

3.1 Types of Knowledge in the Four Domains

Strategic Planning Assumption: Through 2010, enterprises will recruit IT and business professionals as much for business and behavioral competencies as for technical aptitude (0.9 probability).

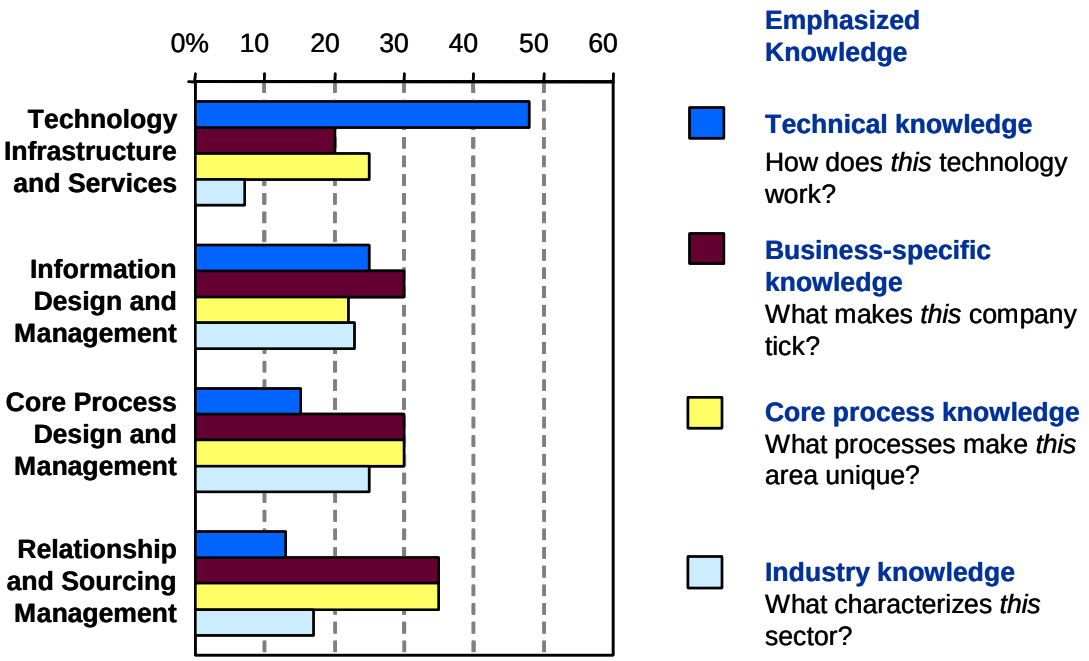
Faced with the four primary forces that challenge the profession, many IT professionals are taking a long, deliberate look at the occupation and whether it represents opportunities or dead ends. As they consider the future domains of expertise, they wonder where and how they can prepare themselves.

Four chief areas of knowledge inform and enrich the four domains of expertise.

- *Technical knowledge*. How does *this* technology work? What are its effects? How does it interact with other technologies? What are its dependencies?
- *Business-specific knowledge.* What makes *this* company tick? Business-specific knowledge breaks down further into knowledge of enterprise objectives, operational activities, social and knowledge networks, and cultural behaviors.
- *Core process knowledge.* What processes fuel *this* company's competitive edge? In other words, which processes make this company unique?
- *Industry knowledge.* What forces, markets and models characterize *this* industry? Which parties or industries are traditional or emerging buyers and sellers? How does regulation affect this industry? Which industries does this industry resemble?

Figure 2 shows the relative importance of different types of knowledge for each domain. Technical knowledge dominates the domain of technology infrastructure and services, but it is less important in the other three domains, where business-specific, core process and industry knowledge are comparatively more important. In general, IT professionals who expand their expertise beyond technical knowledge will have an advantage over their counterparts with purely technical expertise. IT "technicians" — people who pursue only narrowly defined technical skill sets — will be at high risk. Preliminary analysis suggests that as many as 10 percent of IT technicians will lose their jobs annually through 2010.

Figure 2. Which Knowledge Should You Emphasize for Each Domain?



Source: Gartner (September2005)

IT professionals should start now to assess and build their business-specific, core process and industry knowledge. The greater the professional's grasp of the core strengths and contextual realities of a business, industry, process or market, the wider and more durable the opportunities.

3.1.1 Domain 1: Technology Infrastructure and Services

Tactical Guideline: IT professionals who pursue or remain in the technology infrastructure and services domain must develop or demonstrate mastery of complexity, operational consistency and standardization.

Technology infrastructure and services are the underpinnings of today's business. This domain of expertise embraces these areas:

- Enterprise architecture
- Infrastructure
  - Networking
  - Operations
  - Desktop computing
  - Security
  - Wireless and mobile
- Systems integration
- Applications

    - Programming and coding
    - Application design
    - Web services development

Several issues will shape the technology infrastructure and services domain through 2010:

- Global competition will heat up in application development and maintenance, particularly within India, China, Russia and Eastern Europe.
- IT services and activities that can be easily specified and codified will move to other markets, be automated or be rendered obsolete. IT automation will be subtle and steady in this domain.
- Domestic or geographically proximate outsourcing will rise for infrastructure, operations and desktop support. Routine operations and system management will move toward automation.
- Expertise in mobile, wireless and personal technologies will be sought in software, services and networking vendors more than in IT organizations.
- Demand for architecture, systems integration, application integration and security will remain high-demand areas within user companies, service providers and vendors.

IT professionals who choose to pursue the technology infrastructure and services domain must adhere to three principles: They must be excellent in their grasp of a technology and its implications, they must learn about related technologies and their applications, and they must reinforce behavioral competencies regarding communication, influence, adaptability and team building.

3.1.2 Domain 2: Information Design and Management

Tactical Guideline: The information design and management domain requires a deep understanding of when and how a particular business needs, uses, manages, analyzes and distributes information. Many IT professionals who pursue this domain will assume business roles.

For more than 20 years, information and technology have been wedded under the banner "IT." Through 2010, information design expertise will increasingly separate from technology expertise. In other words, the "I" will split from the "T," attracting people from outside the technical ranks who understand how different businesses, process owners, employee groups and roles use, mine, retrieve, classify and organize information.

The information design and management domain includes these areas:

- Information integration
- Information design
    - Data warehousing
    - Data management
    - Internet design
    - Data mining

    - Database administration
    - Web aesthetics
- Information management
    - Business intelligence
    - Knowledge management
    - Taxonomy and ontology
    - Content management
    - Privacy

Information design and management will be grounded in the knowledge of the enterprise's employees, culture and information flows, and in those of its customers and markets. Many IT professionals who pursue this domain will assume business roles.

Opportunities will be greatest in corporate performance management, business intelligence, customer and supply chain management, and distributed decision making. In developed countries, information privacy will become a reflection of corporate social responsibility.

IT professionals who choose to pursue information design and management should work in business areas, core processes or new business intelligence programs to learn what constitutes the right information.

3.1.3 Domain 3: Process Design and Management

Tactical Guideline: The process design and management domain will grow as companies seek consistent ways to run operations or harness innovation. The domain will attract multifaceted, versatile people who can visualize and understand process components.

Processes permeate all areas of the business and IT. Many processes are considered *core* because they keep the business running smoothly. *Strategic* or *competitive processes* fuel differentiation, innovation and growth. Gartner estimates that through 2010, one to three IT professionals out of every 20 will pursue the process domain.

The process design and management domain reflects these areas:

- Business process
    - Business analysis
    - Business process modeling
    - Workflow modeling
- Operational processes
    - Business continuity
    - Quality, continuous improvements
    - Service portfolio design
- Project management

- Innovation management

Process expertise is not for the faint of heart. Process discussions tend to be arcane, abstract and ambiguous. Process expertise comes with experience, insight and perspective of how businesses, departments and customer markets interconnect. Moreover, in process-heavy areas such as operations and software programming, standardization and automation will shrink job opportunities substantially during the next 10 to 15 years — perhaps by 50 percent.

As industry standardization increases, processes that support operations will move toward IT outsourcing, business process outsourcing, consulting companies and automation design houses. Processes that fuel differentiation, innovation and competitive advantage will remain within user companies.

To prepare for this domain, IT professionals should learn as much as they can about established, critical and strategic processes. Anywhere from one to three people out of every 20 will pursue the process domain.

3.1.4 Domain 4: Relationship and Sourcing Management

Tactical Guideline: The relationship and sourcing management domain brings nontechnology "soft skills" to the fore. It will appeal to people who can work closely with others on intangible issues and who can drive behavioral change across organizational and business entity boundaries.

Furthest afield from the traditional technology domain of the IT profession is the expertise domain of relationship and sourcing management. It emphasizes nontechnology "soft skills" and tends to be the least comfortable for pure "techies."

Domain 4 embraces several areas:

- Internal relationships
    - Business relationship management
    - Demand, supply analysis
    - Shared-service alliances
    - Resource management
- External relationships
    - Service provider relationship management
    - Process partnering
    - Vendor management
- Customer experience
- Workplace behavior programs

Relationship and sourcing management is the domain of negotiation, alliances, intangibles, persuasion, behaviors and social networking. It is driven largely by the need for business and IT service providers to work together effectively and by rapid growth in external sourcing, shared services, global service expansion and business value chains. Technology expertise is not essential for the relationship and sourcing management domain. More important are experiences

in driving significant change, arbitrating conflict, overcoming customer skepticism and communicating clearly.

To prepare for this area, IT professionals should participate in projects, programs, process design and engagements that demand cooperation among multiple parties with different agendas.

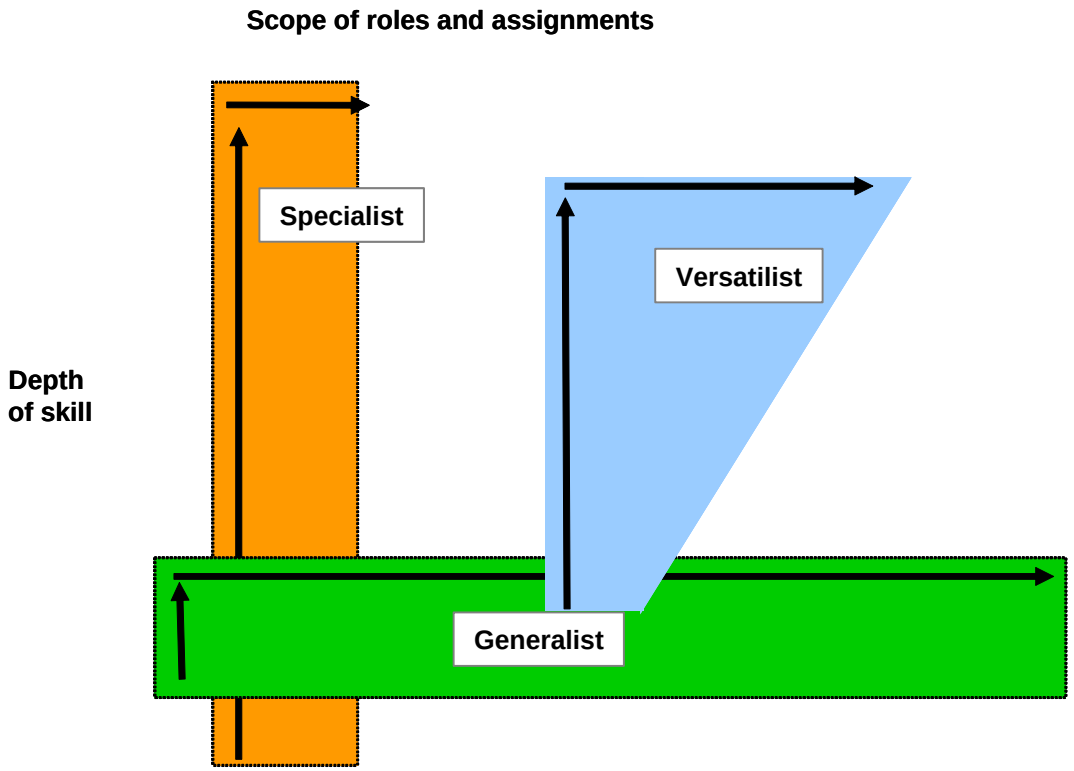
4.0 The Rise of the 'Versatilist'

Strategic Planning Assumption: By 2011, 70 percent of leading-edge companies will seek and develop versatilists while de-emphasizing specialists (0.8 probability).

If 1990 through 2005 was the era of specialists, the coming decades will be the era of "versatilists," people whose numerous roles, assignments and experiences enable them to synthesize knowledge and context in ways that fuel business value.

Versatilists play different roles than specialists or generalists (see Figure 3). Specialists generally have deep technical skills and narrow scope, giving them expertise that is recognized by peers, but it is seldom known outside their immediate domains. Generalists have broad scope and comparatively shallow skills, enabling them to respond or act reasonably quickly, but often at a cursory level. Versatilists, in contrast, apply depth of skill to a rich scope of situations and experiences, building new alliances, perspectives, competencies and roles. They gain the confidence of peers and partners.

Figure 3. Specialist, Generalist, Versatilist



Source: Gartner (September 2005)

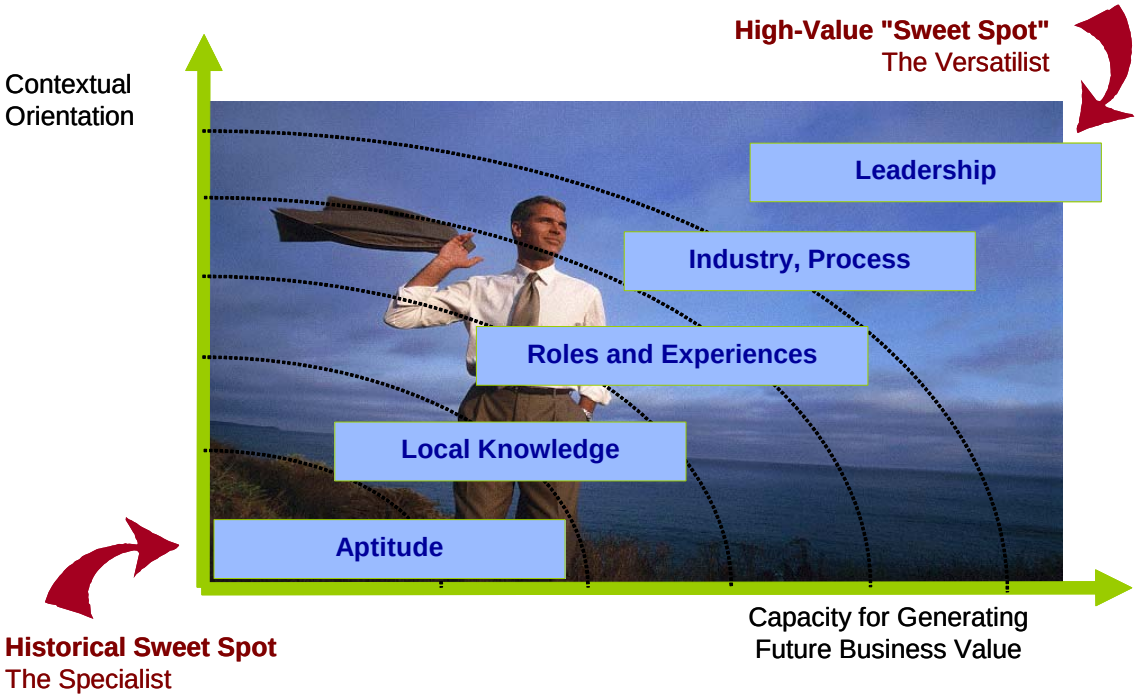
Versatilists can fulfill multiple roles in multiple projects, often providing greater insight than specialists. As businesses and service providers move toward processes and services,

versatilists apply their cross-organizational insight to flesh out teams and fill competency gaps. Finally, with versatilists on staff, businesses and service providers can stretch their expertise budgets further than they could with specialists. IT and business professionals with broad insight and deep process- and industry-oriented competencies will help companies incorporate innovation and multiple perspectives into IT-based processes, products, services and technologies.

4.1 Becoming a Versatilist

The future role of the versatilist will be to anticipate, analyze and quickly respond to forces, changes and opportunities. The versatilist will do this through a diversified set of skills, roles and experiences, including technical aptitude, local knowledge, knowledge of industry processes and, finally, leadership ability that comes from mastery of these areas (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Versatilists Reflect Diverse Perspectives, Experiences



Source: Gartner (September 2005)

To attain versatilist skills, IT professionals should:

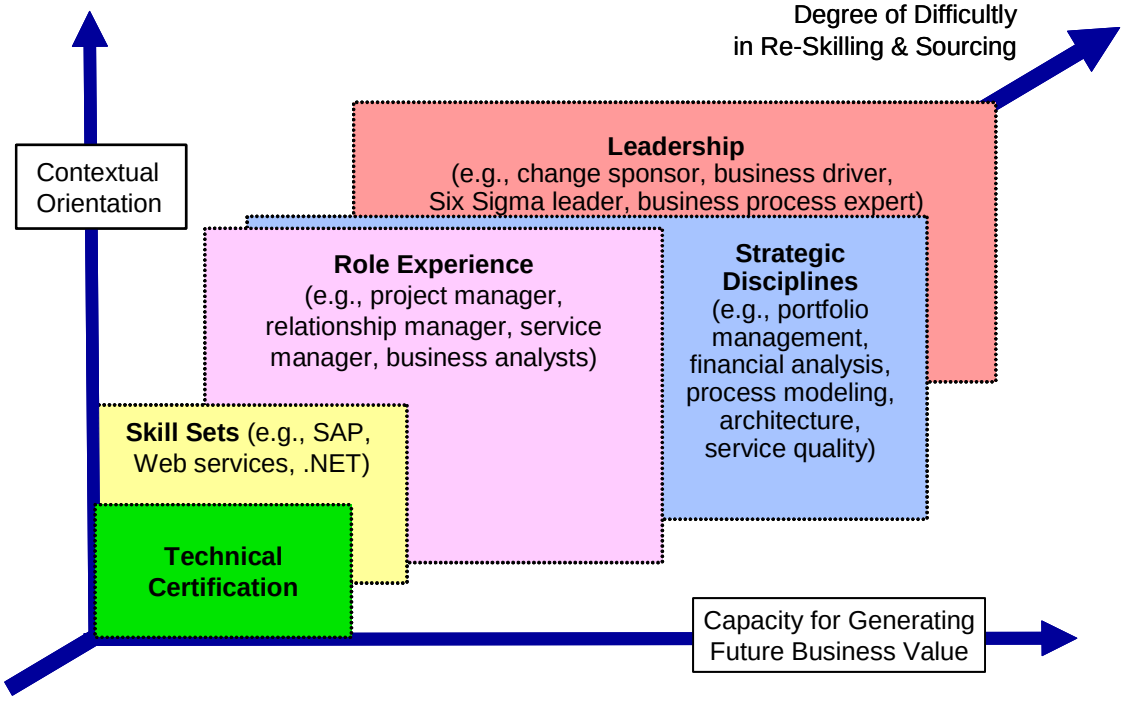
- Objectively view experiences and roles.
- Look outside the confines of current roles, regions, employers or business units. The more informed a professional is about a company, its industry segment and the forces that affect it, the greater the contextual grasp.
- Lay out opportunities and assignments methodically. Focus on the areas and challenges that fall outside the comfort zone; those areas generally will be the areas of greatest growth.

- Explore possibilities outside the world of corporate business. Not-for-profit ventures, startup companies, government agencies and consumer IT service providers offer powerful ways to bolster experiences, behavioral competencies or management skills.
- Enroll in advanced degree programs or in qualified education courses to expand perspective.
- Identify companies, projects, assignments, education and training that will increase professional value.

4.2 Building a High-Value, High-Context Learning Portfolio

To distinguish which disciplines and roles will provide the greatest value, IT professionals start in the future, work back to the present and continually ask the question: "Which disciplines, roles, skills and domains of knowledge will I need, and for how long?" (see Figure 5). In particular, they look at the challenges faced by the business, and figure out which skills, competencies and areas of knowledge will be needed to drive the changes. Then they create a personal development plan that uses their *current* role and position to develop those skills and competencies. The plan serves people well, encouraging them to expand what they are doing without distracting them to jump jobs.

Figure 5. Building High-Value, High-Context Experiences



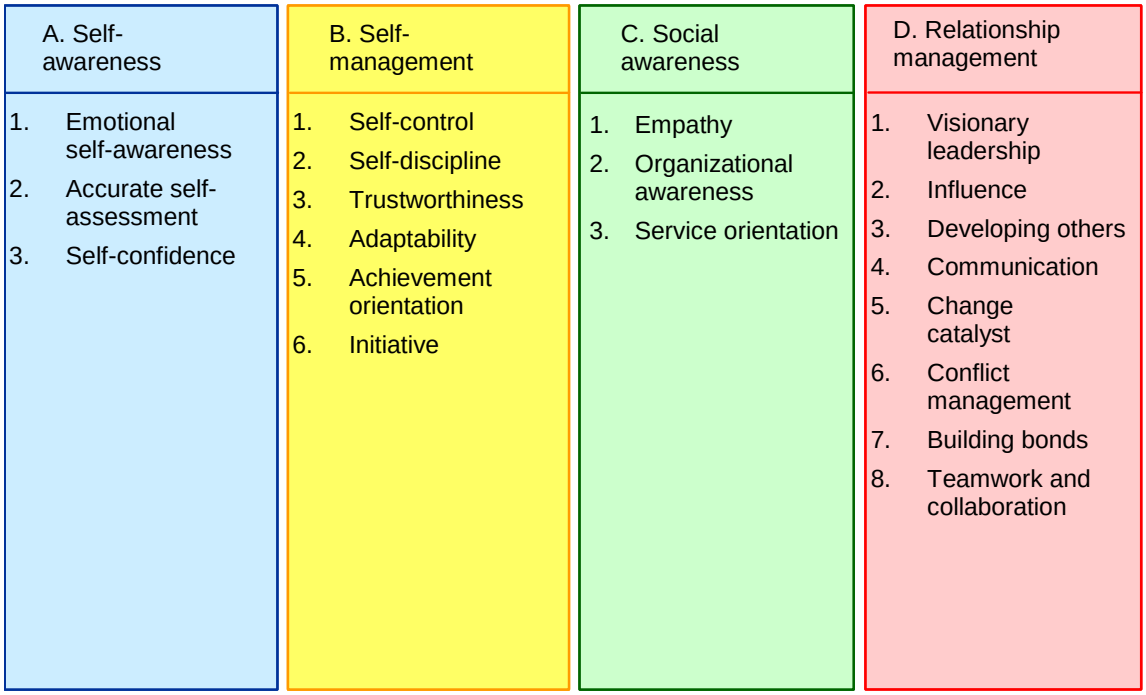
Source: Gartner (September 2005)

Context and future contribution are lenses through which we view today's and tomorrow's skills. At issue is the question of organizational versatility or specialization. As companies expand their outsourcing, their internal emphasis shifts toward context (vs. content) and toward capacity for generating future value. Companies that are weak in workforce planning will also lack many of the roles and competencies identified here earlier. Those companies will often adopt outsourcing out of desperation. In so doing, they weaken short- and long-term value and credibility.

4.3 Getting a Grip on 'Emotional Intelligence'

The wide acceptance of the concept of "emotional intelligence" has led Daniel Goleman and others to continue work on the subject since the publication of Goleman's book of that title in 1995. Today, emotional intelligence provides an explanatory framework for many of the soft issues of leadership. Twenty competencies group into four clusters assessing self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management. (A competency is a set of characteristics or traits that cause or predict superior performance.) The 20 competencies are shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. The Behavioral Competencies of Emotional Intelligence



Source: D. Goleman

In a growing number of enterprises, the set of competencies for CIOs and senior leadership teams plays down technical competencies in favor of business and behavioral competencies. Credibility and influence can be directly tied to the strength of the nontechnical competencies. Understanding the 20 competencies of emotional intelligence can help you see how and whether they manifest themselves in you, in your leadership team, and in your hiring and promotional criteria.

5.0 Prepare Yourself

IT professionals' sense of their own identity and what kind of difference they want to make is central to their attitudes about their work. Many IT professionals will design and define themselves in distinct ways, creating "personal brands" that evoke impressions of the way they work, where they work and on what they work. They will then broadcast those brands on personal Web sites and through social networks.

5.1 Know Thyself

Ultimately, IT professionals will choose opportunities and experiences that reflect and strengthen their personal brands. Individuals, not the companies that seek them, will define their self-images and seek employment experiences that match those self-images. IT professionals who can answer these five "know thyself" questions will have the best chance of identifying opportunities and assignments that shout, "This is for me!"

- What differentiates you?
- What should you hold on to?
- What must you develop or learn?
- What excites you? Stimulates you?
- What keeps you clothed and fed?

5.2 Know the Industry

Investigating the world will help IT professionals assess whether their expertise, knowledge and priorities are on the rise or on the wane. In other words, they should be "scouts" who identify new uses of technology. As businesses seek an irrefutable link between investments in technology and business and financial performance, they need people to be scouts. The aim of scouts isn't only to identify new technologies, but also to look outside the company to detect and envision how, when, where and with what impact certain trends, technologies and employment models can be applied to industry sectors, strategic initiatives and core business processes.

Among the questions IT professionals should ask in assessing industry trends are:

- What's happening to this industry?
- How are consumer behaviors affecting IT?
- What's happening in online services? Consumer electronics?
- What kind of education is required?
- What technologies are emerging?
- What industry sectors are growing?
- What new roles are emerging?
- How will global markets affect IT?

5.3 Know Employment Opportunities

IT and business professionals are wholly responsible for pursuing opportunities, watching for changes in skills and knowledge, and building on new experiences, roles, industry perspectives, relationships and behaviors. They must watch for changes in the marketplace, understand how those changes will enhance or weaken their professional stance, prepare and position themselves for career flexibility, and watch for new opportunities.

Where should IT professionals look for the next round of employment? Gartner's analysis points to several roles and industry areas:

- Roles requiring face-to-face interaction

- Informatics — contextually meaningful combination of practice (such as nursing), information, computer science and management disciplines
- Industries that build or require physical infrastructure (for example, construction or energy)
- Services that converge around businesses, home, leisure and entertainment
- Public-sector services
- R&D in biotechnology and healthcare
- E-learning, simulation and games
- Leisure, entertainment and tourism

5.4 Tap Into Social, Knowledge and Learning Networks

The concept of community is powerful, yet simple: People seek and connect with other people through common purposes, peers, goals and interests. Whether face-to-face or virtual, a community of connected people generates trust, passion, learning, relationships and opportunities. Community gains additional momentum as people change employment models and move toward projects, assignments and groups that assemble and disassemble. Moreover, community creates a bond among professionals across varying work situations, enabling people to stay personally connected to other professionals without being physically in the same location. By joining and actively participating in professional, regional or online associations and communities, you can tap into meaningful opportunities.

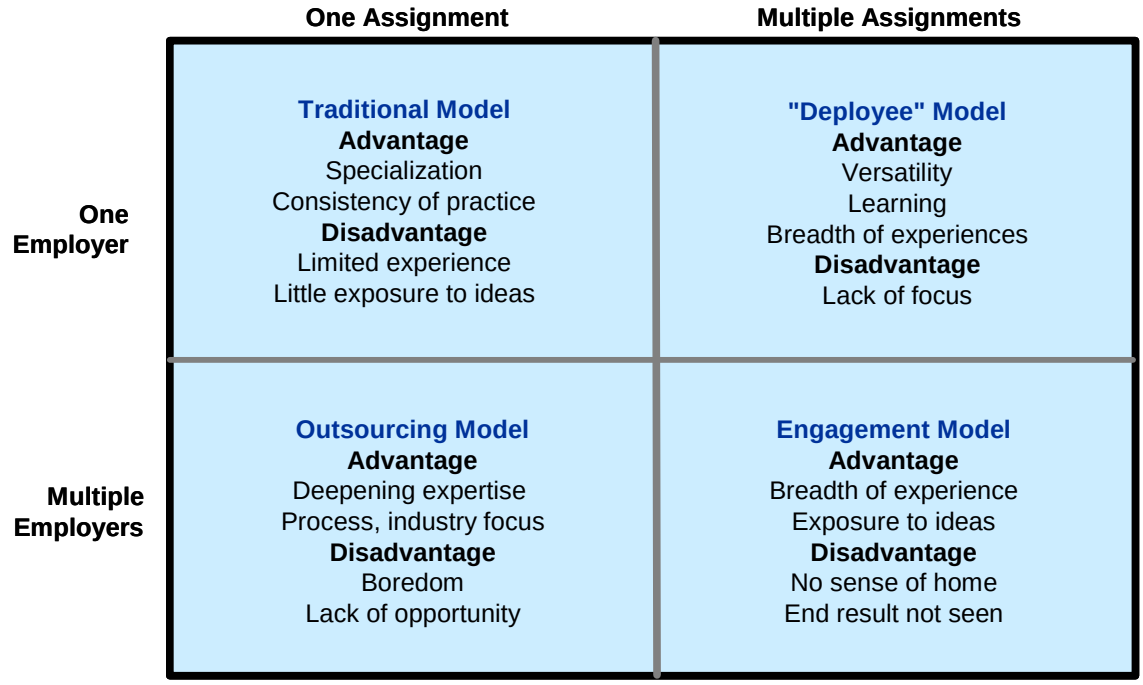
5.5 Choose the Right Employment Model

In our parents' and grandparents' generations, a person typically worked many years for one company. Today, the combination of global communication, personal devices, place-independent technologies and dwindling employment security has introduced new employment options, each with advantages and disadvantages. The options vary by number of employers and by number of assignments. Four models emerge:

- *The traditional model* — one assignment, one employer — promotes specialization and consistency
- *The outsourcing model* — one assignment, multiple employers — enables specialized people to refine their skills and expertise in multiple companies
- *The engagement model* — multiple assignments, multiple employers — requires a sense of adventure, tolerance for risk and a free-agent spirit
- *The "deployee" model* — multiple assignments, one employer — deploys employees through reassignment, internal mobility and repertory-like roles within one company

As shown in Figure 7, each model has its advantages and disadvantages. For example, an IT professional who wants to pursue technical specialization will likely have two options: the traditional employment model of one assignment and one employer or the outsourcing model of one assignment and multiple employers. In both cases, the individual gets the opportunity to specialize and deepen skills, but often at the expense of feeling pigeonholed or constrained.

Figure 7. The Four Employment Models



Source: Gartner (September 2005)

Similarly, someone who wants to broaden his or her experiences can choose multiple assignments through an engagement model or through a deployee model. The engagement model provides variety, but often without a sense of belonging anywhere. The deployee model, which aligns most closely with the notion of versatilists, provides breadth of experience, but may lead to a lack of focus as the deployee moves from role to role and assignment to assignment.

IT professionals should assess their resumes, looking for breadth of discipline, project scope and experiences, then analyze which employment model best matches their professional, personal and family priorities. People should ask themselves: Do I want to pursue specialization or versatility? Stability or mobility? Understand one company or multiple companies?

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 For IT Professionals

- Choose which domain of expertise best suits you. Learning and relationships will fuel growth.
- Figure out what appeals to you. Look at industry segments, business processes, service delivery models and company sizes.
- Look outside the world of business IT for new challenges and emerging roles. Leisure, gaming, entertainment, not-for-profit and government offer numerous challenges.
- Get business training and education. Business education will boost professional credibility.

- Network. Tap into professional, personal and social networks, whether face to face or virtual.
- Keep an objective eye on your career path: Are you doing what you want to do?

6.2 For Employers

- Use imagination to develop and redirect professional opportunities.
- To augment technology infrastructure and services, develop growth paths and career opportunities for the domains of information design and management, process design and management, and relationship and sourcing management.
- Anticipate that some IT professionals will want to move out of technical domains and into new areas.

RECOMMENDED READING

IT Workforce Context:

"The Gartner Scenario 2005: IT Leaders' Next Big Decisions"

"IT Workforce Management: Prepare for a Future Unlike the Past"

"U.S. Offshore Outsourcing: Structural Changes, Big Impact"

Versatility:

"Unlocking the Business Value of People: Building Versatility"

"SMB Staffing Strategy: Versatility Over Specialization"

"The Deployee: At the Forefront of Workforce Transformation"

"Business Forces Spur Career Changes for IT Professionals"

Domains of Expertise:

"The IT Relationship Management Role Advances"

"E-Sourcing Competency Centers Keep Buyers in Control"

"Capitalize on the Evolving and Expanding Role of the Business Analyst"

"Organizations Must Standardize and Consolidate BI Tools"

"Companies Must Seize Control of Their Processes to Stay Competitive"

"Experienced ITIL Consultants Are Few and Far Between"

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