



CIO INTERVIEW

IAN METCALFE
DIRECTOR
MANAGEMENT
INFORMATION SERVICES

brother
at your side

Brother are a worldwide electronics and manufacturing business, founded in Japan over 100 years ago. Their sales and distribution operations span across 24 countries in Europe, with their UK headquarters

based just outside Manchester. Their product portfolio includes printers, fax machines, multi-function centres, word processors, typewriters, labelling machines and sewing machines.

Michael Page's Zoe Murphy met with Ian Metcalfe, director management information services, to discuss his current role and his vision to move towards a global or pan European IT service.

Ian was appointed to his role in 2005. Prior to this he held a number of roles in the business including R&D, after sales service and sales. In 2000, he embarked on a European implementation of SAP R/3 which was the first step in moving away from a local IT service. His rapid rise within the Brother's IT division has been just reward for a man that has been integral to the company's success over the last 20 years.

COULD YOU GIVE US AN INSIGHT INTO YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

As the European IT director, I am responsible for the strategy and delivery of IT services that support the business. This includes leading the day-to-day operations as well as introducing new technologies that allow us to drive down cost and ultimately increase revenue.

In addition to this, I have significant involvement in defining the overall business strategy as part of the senior management team.

I am currently working to a five year plan that aligns itself with the overall business strategy, with significant emphasis on transformation. With the emergence of cloud solutions and the consumerisation of IT, we are looking at how we use technology and how we deliver those services to the business. We need to be more innovative and forward thinking to meet the demands of a growing business.

The IT services in Brother have been traditionally delivered locally by individual countries. In 2000 when we implemented SAP across Europe, we were able to reduce inventory levels significantly and deliver more accurate and meaningful management information to

the business. Across Europe, we now have a headcount of 80 and a collective IT budget of £18 million. We are looking at ways in which we can move away from a local IT service to a pan European operation.

With continued expansion, cost efficiency remains a constant challenge. We are not looking to drive costs down as a whole, but we must streamline and free up resources from existing services in order to facilitate new initiatives.

WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT BUSINESS PRIORITIES?

Brother has traditionally been a business-to-business organisation but we are now looking at opening up direct sales opportunities with consumers. Consumers want to talk with the manufacturer and engage with us directly. This will incorporate further use of social media sites but with the right level of control to maintain our reputation and deliver customer service. We are also responding to consumerisation and the increasing use of mobile devices and tablets in business.

We are looking at a new business intelligence solution that will allow our business users to 'self-serve' their own reports, with the current difficult economic cycles, the importance of the right business information at the right time is now even more critical. We are also consolidating our data centre services across Europe, and looking to adopt some cloud based solutions.



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WHAT ARE THE KEY PRINCIPLES YOU APPLY TO YOUR BUSINESS?

Make the customer's life easier. At Brother there is a genuine shared belief, right from the top level management, that you should put the customer first. We try and embed this culture across the organisation; we want employees to make decisions based on what they think is right for the customer.

Perhaps the biggest challenge is conveying the overall IT and business strategy to mean something to individuals. It's important to engage with your employees so that they feel that they are a key contributor to the overall strategy and success of the organisation and that their contribution is valued. Having a good management team and good communication that is honest and open is crucial.

Internal customer service is every bit as important as external; last year we had a massive push on the working relationship between our helpdesk and the sales team. We outlined the importance of internal communication and subsequently the response over the last 12 months has been fantastic, something I expect to be extended across to other functions in the near future. How we interact with the business plays a major factor in making sure we deliver the right IT services.

WHAT ROLE DOES TALENT MANAGEMENT PLAY IN THE ORGANISATION?

People are the only assets we have and they are the number one differentiator. It's crucial to get the right people on board. The recruitment process plays an important part of finding the right culture fit.

Once we have the right skills on board, we can help develop those skills. For example, we now have a section on our intranet where employees across Europe can upload information containing their skills, competencies and interests. This allows the leadership team to tap into talent across Europe and utilises the skills and experience available to us. For the employees it means that they can nurture their skills and gain wider experience – this is really useful especially for some of the smaller offices we have.

Leadership is something I try to identify within my teams; someone who leads by example and takes the attitude to be willing is what I look for.

Succession planning is also crucial to talent management. Brother UK has an incredibly high retention rate and there are countless people, including myself, who have been with the company for many years; a key indicator that once we get the right people onboard, we ensure we have the right structures and working environment in place to retain and develop them. I encourage my team to take responsibility for self development and their own training. It keeps them invigorated and motivated to learn new things.



“ It's crucial to get the right people on board. ”

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHERS LOOKING TO PROGRESS?

My advice is to remember that every individual can bring value to a company, and initiate change within an organisation. So develop clear ideas on what can be changed or improved and back them up with action and clear conviction. Reputation comes from consistent delivery and if you deliver what you say you will, people will notice you in a positive way.

Don't worry about failure. Learn from your mistakes. My experience is very much self learnt and I would encourage others to take responsibility for their own self development.

Most importantly, remember that people are your most valuable asset and should always be treated that way.

WHO DO YOU TAKE INSPIRATION FROM?

I get inspiration from people all around me. Different people inspire me at different times, whether it's a particularly engaging speaker at a seminar or a member in my team who is flourishing and developing quickly.

WITH SO MUCH CURRENTLY GOING ON, WHAT DO YOU DO TO RELAX OUTSIDE OF WORK?

I love to cook. My background is in food and I originally studied for a degree in food technology and it's never really left me. Sometimes I can lock myself in the kitchen on a weekend and cook for hours and hours. You get a fantastic sense of achievement having family and friends round enjoying a meal that you've put real time and effort into.

I also own an old 17th century cottage that is in a constant state of repair. Again it's fantastic to be really hands on and fit in a new bathroom or carry out roof repairs.



Zoe Murphy, managing consultant at Michael Page Technology.

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