

Accepting Chaos

Sir,

Jim Quiggle's feature on 'Enterprise Architecture' (Issue 3/4, 2010) needs to be showcased because of two factors, both of which are rare in the IT world: to make a case for the fact that our business is still more art than science, and secondly, that like good artists, we must understand and accept chaos. After all, one of the most cutting-edge areas of modern science is called 'chaos theory'.

Indeed, his opening paragraph – on the massive differences in definition by IT professionals about just what enterprise architecture is – demonstrates this truth. Actually, I wonder if the story would not be similar with any other conceptual framework, or buzzword – how about Medicine 2.0, or Software as a Service. How about opening up the pages of your magazine to have readers give their definitions of either? In reality, we IT professionals are called nerds, and nerds do require something neat and sexy to tell just what they are doing, for example to impress someone at a dinner date. I, for example, work at a hospital network support centre. Many of my calls are for people who have, for example, forgotten their log-in passwords. Now guess what I told a girl I took out for dinner – that I am a call centre techie, or an encryption firefighter?

The only issue I have with Mr. Quiggle is that of technology lifecycles.

In healthcare, mainstream hospital-directed areas, technology lifecycles are completely disconnected from market forces – and of course, often, from commonsense. This is not the case with the consumer goods he cites. What we healthcare IT have is a serious problem of being permanent first movers, with no signposts, no lighthouses, but still dealing with a very serious business – one where life and death go hand in hand.

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