

BUSINESS @ THE SPEED OF THOUGHT

Using a Digital Nervous System

BILL GATES

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MAIN IDEA

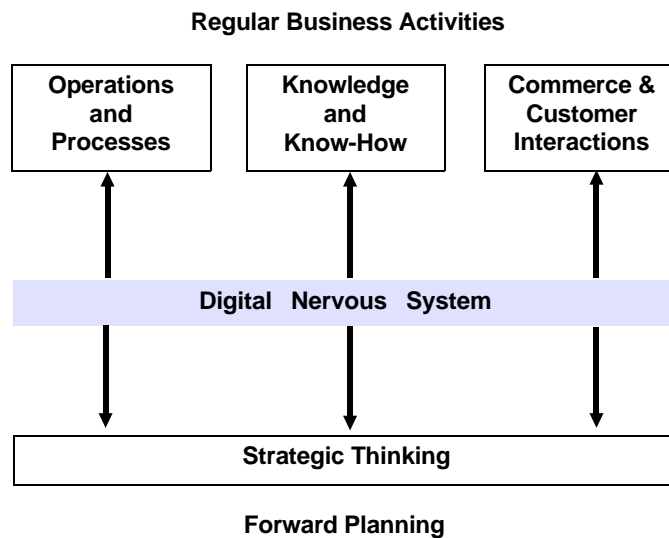
Competitive business advantage in the twenty-first century will revolve around an organization's ability to adapt to changing circumstances rapidly. To achieve this, information needs to flow within the business enterprise efficiently. The best way to achieve this is by building a Digital Nervous System.

A Digital Nervous System combines personal computer, Internet and communications technologies. It also includes, the management processes built around digital activities. In the final analysis, a Digital Nervous System will be the conceptual framework around which a better understanding of the challenges of the marketplace will be constructed -- and from which the company's response will be planned and implemented.

Any company that can integrate the transfer of information around the organization so completely that business decisions at all levels of the organization can literally be made as quickly as information becomes available will be ideally suited to the demands and requirements of the evolving business environment -- the "killer application" of business in the twenty-first century.

THE CONCEPT OF A DIGITAL NERVOUS SYSTEM FOR A BUSINESS Page 2

A Digital Nervous System is a set of processes by which a company gathers information and responds to it. In addition to the requisite hardware and software, it also requires the insight and collaborative efforts of the employees responding to the information they are supplied with.



OPERATIONS & PROCESSES AND A DIGITAL NERVOUS SYSTEM Page 3

The key steps in using a Digital Nervous System to improve ongoing business operations and processes:

1. Change single-task jobs into higher value-added jobs.
2. Create digital feedback loops and make them readily available to all employees.
3. Use digital communications to route customer complaints immediately to people who can action them.
4. Position your company as more substantial enterprise; or more customer intimate business.

KNOWLEDGE & KNOW-HOW AND A DIGITAL NERVOUS SYSTEM Page 5

The key steps in using a digital nervous system to improve the utilization of knowledge and know-how:

1. Move all internal communications to e-mail so that reaction speed can be maximized.
2. Analyze sales data online for patterns and insights, which can then be shared.
3. Automate basic business analysis processes. This frees workers to focus on other issues.
4. Use digital tools to form virtual teams within the company to share knowledge and collaborate together.
5. Convert every single paper process to a digital process for use by anyone.

COMMERCE & CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS AND A DIGITAL NERVOUS SYSTEM Page 7

The key steps in using a digital nervous system to improve the quality of customer interactions with the business are:

1. Digital transactions with suppliers and partners can decrease cycle times.
2. All intermediaries which do not add value can be eliminated.
3. Customer service transactions can be made self-help, thereby improving quality and freeing staff.

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