IT JEDI MIND TRICKS:

USING THE FORCE TO ACHIEVE YOUR HIGH SPEED NETWORKING DESTINY

Your CFO is a numbers cruncher. You're a data cruncher. The tasks seem pretty close. But the differences are just enough that the two of you can't see eye-to-eye on the value of your proposed high speed networking project.

Discover how to share your vision and help your organization achieve its high speed networking destiny.

CHAPTER I
Conquering Defeatism – Do or do not. There is no try.

IT Professionals at every level know the feeling. They've gone to the company brass and pitched a project that will help change the way the organization does business only to be shot down…yet again. Don't let this pattern of rejection hold back your great ideas.

When your CFO tells you that there's no budget for new high speed networking technology, that doesn't mean that there's no budget. It means that you haven't sold the technology in a language that coveys the bottom line impact. The technical aspects of your project may mean little to the people who hold the purse strings. When they hear you talking about new technology, they're seeing dollar signs. Change your expectations of "no" into thoughts of "yes."

- Have a vision
- Understand Your Audience
- Know the BIG PROBLEMS

Read on to learn about a proven path you can take for not only getting your high speed networking project approved, but getting your team to make technology a budget priority at your organization.

The tips we lay out here will turn "there is no budget" into "where do I sign?"

CHAPTER II
Have a Vision – These ARE the projects you're looking for.

Thinking like a CIO can help you gain inroads and help you hear "where do I sign?" the next time you pitch a big IT project. Ali Yallah, CIO at River Edge Behavioral Health Center in Macon, Georgia advises IT professionals to sell the vision, "Companies that don't have a CIO don't have a clear technology vision that marries business and technology," says Yallah. "The challenge for an IT professional is to convince the senior leadership of the organization to view IT as a partner."

Yallah stresses evangelization on the overall strategic vision of technology as a key selling point. "Think of IT like a car that helps someone get to work. If they don't have a car they can't get to work. If they don't have good technology then they can't do their work like expected." Yallah recalls his own battle to get a high-speed networking project approved. "We went from having cable modems to T1 and Fiber networks, we now have VOIP and a telemedicine system."

How did he do it? He laid out the case for telemedicine by pointing out the inefficiencies of sending doctors on the road to drive hours out of their way and see patients in remote locations. He made the case that an advanced telemedicine system on a high-speed network could reduce driving time, driving risk, fuel costs, and increase the number of patients seen. Yallah also worked to get River Edge to move to VOIP from a conventional landline based system. He was able to show the full benefits of having a telephone system integrated with the company's computer system, as well as a relatively short period of ROI for VOIP. In both of these cases Yallah was able to outline the clear benefits and lay out a vision for the project. This allowed him to easily get his leadership team to ask, "Where do I sign?"

Doug Olson, IT Manager at Chief Container in Acworth, Georgia, voiced similar advice. "If you go to the CFO with high level technon the newest networking solution, don't expect to get your budget approved," says Olsen, "You have to make the case for the technology and how it actually impacts bottom line efficiencies."

Olson acknowledges that when you're trying to implement systems that run in the background—like storage and networking— funding can be a bigger challenge. Management is more in touch with technology that they can experience first-hand, like phones or computers. "It's more difficult to get projects like high speed internet systems implemented because they can't be touched, felt, or used in the conventional sense," says Olsen.

According to Olsen, you need to make sure to lay out the risks associated with these projects to get management to take notice. "Not having good networking and storage means risks for your data. Lost files, lost computers, lost thumb drives, not having data stored and readily accessible inevitably leads to lost productivity. That's something management cares a lot about."

Olsen encourages that you to take the vision to management on the advantages of making proactive instead of reactive IT decisions as proactive decisions will help them save money in the long run. "Getting the money can be tough, and they may say no, but you have to lay out the vision and be persistent to get buy in."
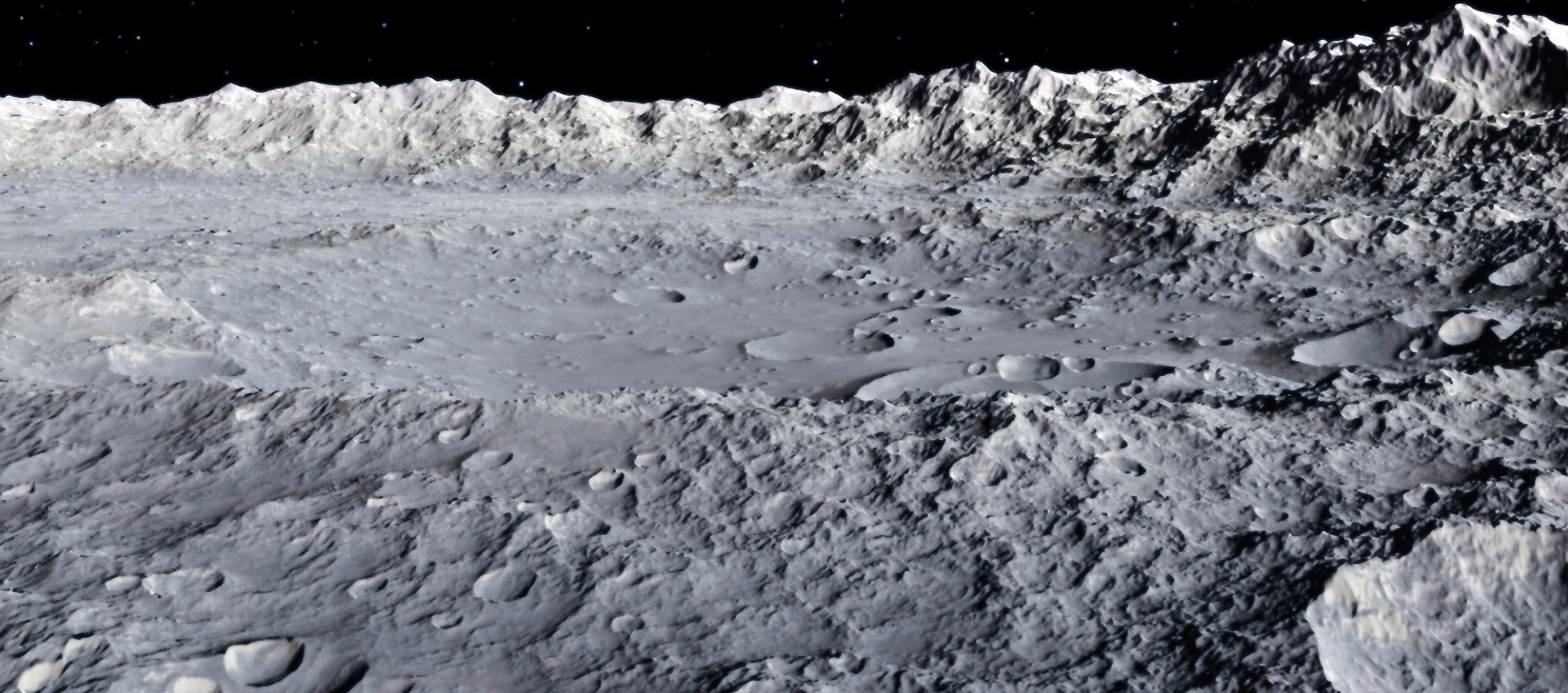
CHAPTER III

Know Your Audience - In my experience, there's no such thing as luck.

As the old saying goes, "proper planning prevents poor performance." Part of your plan to promote your next IT project has to be understanding your audience. Here are some tips to help you take luck out of the equation:

- Make sure you're pitching your project to someone with the authority to make the decision. While persuading influencers can be helpful, at the end of the day, they don't have the final say.

- Know who you're talking to and what their priorities are. When you're pitching an idea to a CFO, you're going to want to take a different approach than pitching to the owner of a company. A CFO may want to get to bottom-line costs or ROI discussions quickly. A president or CEO may want you to lay out a grander version of the plan to show how it fits into the big picture.

- Know what the most important problem is for the person that you're speaking with. Don't be afraid to get a deeper understanding of that decision-maker's business vision for the organization so you align your technology vision appropriately.

- Avoid technical explanations and remember to tone the tech talk down. Once you start talking about network latency, dynamic routing, buffers, and bit rates, you'll lose their attention. Be clear about how the technology will help, but take a business and financially minded approach.

Take the time of year into account. Some projects may be easier to get approval if you bring them to the table during a certain point in the budgeting season. Your CFO may not be as receptive to your pitch if they're bogged down in a project due to the cyclical nature of their work. Figure out the best time of year to approach your team with your projects.

CHAPTER IV
Know the BIG PROBLEMS – What is the biggest disturbance in the (Work)Force?

Your job as an IT professional is to understand the technology and to keep it up and running. Your company relies on IT to fix what's broken and to maintain the technology. They don't expect you to solve their business challenges. You're well-versed on the technology and how it works, but how do you get a budget conscious decision maker on board with your recommendation?

High Speed Networking – Bottom Line Benefits

- **Cost Savings Analysis and ROI**– Your CFO is seeing the top line numbers on the solution costs, so you need to make sure you're showing them how much you can save. What are the costs of your current networking services and what are you getting for your money? If you can double your bandwidth and pay less, that means more services for less money. Finding savings in networking costs can be in the thousands of dollars on a monthly basis. Show your team that you're not just bringing costs to the table; you're bringing them money-saving solutions. Map out the payback on the initial investment. Show the CFO how the long-term cost savings will help you mitigate the upfront costs, and how the investment immediately saves money on a monthly and yearly basis.

- **Reliability and Disaster Recover** – The ugly truth is that your network will go down at some point in time. But new technology like 4G Wireless backup provides redundancy if your main location goes down. This ensures that other sites still have access. Your CFO knows how much downtime hurts and is going to be interested in hearing about solutions that keep the business running when your network is down.

- **Speed** – What's the benefit of a faster network? For a numbers person like your CFO, network speed may not seem like direct benefit to the organization. However, a closer look reveals that faster networks increase productivity by cutting the time it takes to download, upload, send, and receive files. Doubling your bandwidth can cut down machine and man hours. Find out the bandwidth that's right for your company and make sure you can lay out the case for your need for speed. The CFO will appreciate your diligence in making sure that the company isn't underpaying and underperforming.

- **Hidden Costs and Rate Increases** – Hidden costs and unexpected rate increases can be a headache for your finance team. Show your senior leadership team that you're working with an open organization, and if possible, investigate a company that offers their services at no cost. Be watchful for companies that offer low upfront costs but tack on outlandish fees for consulting and service time. The savings you realize from making a switch and incurring lower upfront costs could be eaten up by a firm looking to take advantage of the situation after the initial savings. Protect your team by finding an organization that locks in their prices and doesn't have rates that drastically increase over time.

- **Benefits of Enhanced Connectivity** – Technology has taken giant leaps in the last decade and has enabled your employees to stay connected like never before. Your CFO understands the costs of people time. Modern high speed networking can connect your people to the information they need to stay productive even when they aren't onsite. A robust high speed network lets employees stay connected and operate seamlessly even when they're on the go. From tablets to smart phones to mobile devices, your team can gain access to the files and systems they need. You may already have a mobile infrastructure in place, but making sure that you have a network that can keep pace makes sense from both a technological and financial standpoint.

- **Staying Current**– Even if your organization is using today's most current technology, you may not have the right bandwidth to support that technology. Don't let your network lag behind new technology advances. If you don't have the right bandwidth that's going to allow you to transmit your data quickly like everyone else, you risk falling behind the competition. Some of the new offsite computing technology may allow you to acquire additional savings that hit a bit closer to home for the numbers crunchers. Your CFO understands the costs associated with the maintenance, management, cooling, and power needs of your IT storage infrastructure. Deploying a high speed network and moving physical applications and devices to the cloud can help you become much more efficient. Cloud backup combined with high-speed networking not only improves efficiency, but it can help your organization get back up and running sooner.

- **Staying Compliant** – The costs of compliance may not be simple to lay out for your finance team, but there are often clear terms—in the form of fines—for regulatory non-compliance. If your organization maintains data on financial transactions or health records, or has requirements for the retention of corporate communication, then the potential costs of non-compliance could be financially devastating. Ensuring that you have a fast and secure way to transmit and maintain your sensitive data is essential. Making this argument shows your CFO that you're forward thinking and looking out for the bottom line of the company.

The team at OneStop Communications is here to help you make the case for your next high speed networking project. Going from "no" or "maybe next year" to "where do I sign?" may not take Jedi Mind Tricks, but it won't be easy. You don't have to go it alone. Reach out to us for help mapping out your next Cloud Services, Internet & Data, Voice, or IT Services project.

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