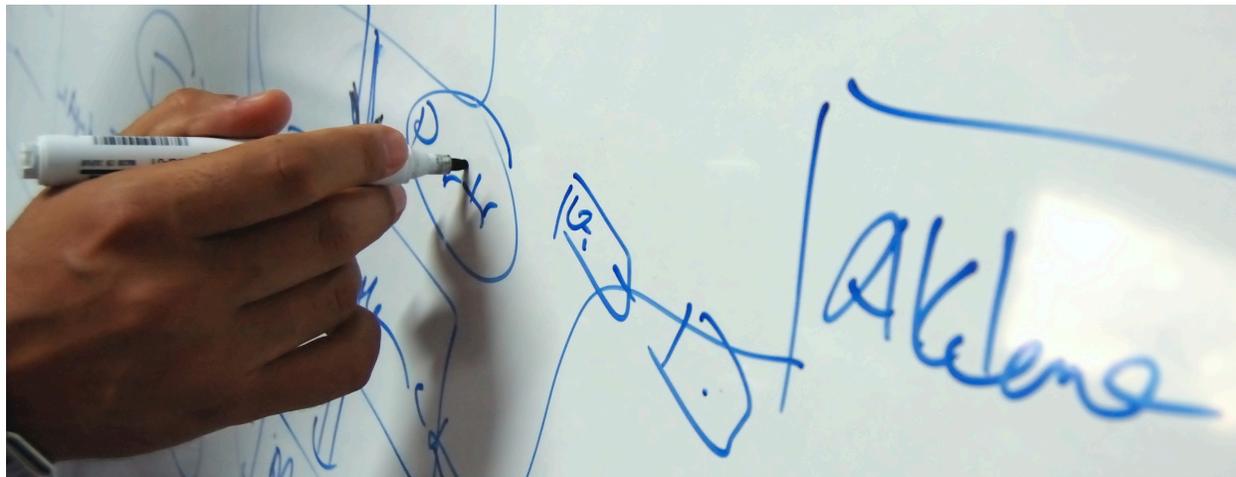


Now you're leading application management What were you thinking?



Remember way back when...back when you were a sharp, young developer on the move? You knew the technology from the ground up and loved helping others find solutions to their problems. And now you're running the show.

You've gone from having a fanatical focus on doing the work to managing a small army of others doing the work of developers and support resources—leaving behind a lot of the good stuff that used to get you excited. Social media, cracking code, adding value, solving business problems. Is that what you had in mind?

Where does it hurt?

Some who find themselves in an applications management leadership role think that bringing an AMS provider on board is critical to getting some breathing room. But that's not always true. In some cases, providers simply generate another set of problems to solve.

- At the top are production challenges involving accountability, management and metrics. You know you're in trouble if you find yourself working with multiple vendors who are finger-pointing.
- Availability and retention of a critical mass of resources is vital—and hard to manage cost effectively. A static model is the wrong model.
- Getting AMS resources that can face off against the business is a perennial problem. Many providers don't have the people in place to add value in business discussions where insight about the range and limits of application functionality can be critical.
- The sheer weight of applications management transactions can be oppressive and all-consuming. Some leaders get sucked so deep into the weeds that they lose sight of the bigger picture opportunities.

Dude, don't tell me you've gone legacy.

It's hard to get proactive in thinking about applications when your task box of things to fix reloads every hour, every new batch of changes pushing you further behind in delivering the next set of enhancements the CIO is looking for. And that doesn't take into account business customers, who want what they want yesterday, and they have a hard time understanding why everything is a four-month process. The hard truth is, we've become what we used to complain about—legacy.

Life on the front lines

You've seen it all before, but just in case you think you're alone out there, here are two samples of real emails from real AMS leads in real companies that might seem familiar.

Issue 1: Users in OCC office are unable to access system

Ticket #: INC776225 has been opened.

AMS lead response: The CRM Help Desk is researching the issue. Root cause has not yet been determined. In accordance with our standard SLA, this ticket will have its status updated within the next 24 hours.

Comments: Then what? Who's going to talk our client down off the ledge?

Issue 2: Clients are unable to access self-service

Ticket #: 778260 has been opened.

AMS lead response: I am on PTO right now but I would like to receive a summary of how this issue was identified and the management of communications and escalations. I know your contract doesn't mandate messaging and managing expectations, but I was made aware of the issue again by the business and the business managed communications. Can the team please provide a summary? In words I can pass along to the business – not their typical "in the weeds," gory technical detail.

FW: SELF SERVICE DOWN – Ticket # 778260

Good Morning.

The Global Application Support Team received emails this morning from clients advising that they are unable to access self-service.

Attached is a screenshot of what they are seeing. This is a SEVERITY LEVEL 1 issue.

Comments: Arghhhh. So much for PTO. Who's going to explain this to "the business" in terms they understand?

Eight important questions: No magic answers

It would be sweet if there was a simple way to reset expectations for applications leadership to keep your job focused on exciting things that are new and different. Unfortunately, that's not how it works. You can get there, but it's not a simple path. It requires making a whole array of AMS choices—about systems, processes, and people—each aligned with a vision of keeping applications maintenance tightly connected to ongoing improvements and innovation. That's what we mean by "build to run, run to improve," and it's the smart way to keep your hands on the value levers that matter most.

Some providers are operating at such scale that it's almost impossible to reshape their models to fit your specific needs. On the other hand, some design their solutions to align with the metrics you've decided are important. The best resources thread that needle, of course. As you explore options for AMS support in your own organization, here are eight important questions to keep in mind:

1. Is your strategy still relevant? Do you still care?

Take a step back and dust off the original blueprint for your end-state destination. If it doesn't exist, dig in and create that blueprint right now. Create a vision that helps get you out of bed every morning. Audit your current structure against your desired end state, and figure out how you're doing to close the gaps. This isn't something you want to outsource. Strategy is the highest value work—and it's the fun part of your job.

2. Which contract provisions create the most leverage and value?

Preserve the option for resetting contract terms to drive improvements. Vendors want lock-in and offer substantial incentives for longer contracts. That's a big leap of faith.

3. What's the right mix of resources for your unique needs?

Assess the range of onsite, offshore, and in-house resources that are available and design a model that can evolve to the most effective mix. One size does not fit all when it comes to AMS. Choose the approach that fits your needs—which could change over time.

4. Is value-pricing an option? Talk to your vendor about value-pricing arrangements that encourage collaboration and risk sharing. Continuous improvements should benefit both your organization and your vendors. Look for win-win models that keep your "best and brightest" talent engaged.

5. Are you measuring what matters most? Step back and revisit your approaches to metrics. Recommit your organization to full transparency, clear communications and honest assessments of what's working—and what's not. Make sure you're measuring how you personally spend your time.

6. What's the best way to reset if problems arise?

Don't course correct the levers you've selected just because things aren't going right. What may appear as an onshore/offshore issue could be something else hidden by poor business skills. Many organizations make the mistake of assuming that communication gaps can be resolved only by bringing work back onshore. Take the time to get to the root cause of the problem.

7. How are you keeping yourself and your top talent engaged?

Don't overlook the importance of team building and leadership activities—regardless of where your resources are situated. Building a high performing team is critical to AMS effectiveness—and to your personal satisfaction.

8. Who's in charge of your career?

We are all responsible for our lots in life and AMS is no different. If you want to stay connected to the higher-value dimensions of applications management, establish real checkpoints with the business where you'll personally get involved in innovations. Look for ways to hold your provider accountable to the metrics you most care about. Now you're having fun again.

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