

<http://markkobayashihillary.computing.co.uk/2009/06/breaking-the-helpdesk-bottleneck.html>

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## **Breaking the helpdesk bottleneck**

I was wandering around the Gartner outsourcing summit in London today and I bumped into Christoph Neut, the European head of Techteam.

Techteam was founded in the US in 1980, so it has been around for a long time, but I'm not really familiar with the company. Christoph explained to me that they have been working in Europe since 1996 – which is when he joined the company.

Techteam focused on helpdesks – the poor guys and girls who get the brunt of users' anger when their IT falls apart. But they have an interesting angle on the old helpdesk model.

Christoph explained to me: "We all know the egg timer. Microsoft uses it extensively and we all love the symbol because we need to look at it so often when waiting for applications to open. I want to use it as an analogy for business and IT though. The top of the egg timer can be considered to be the business, and the bottom is the IT organisation. The bottleneck in the middle is the relationship between them two and that is usually through a help desk."

Christoph's analogy is certainly true, and IT staff are forever being asked to try behaving like the business – especially in anything that advises them on their career. What Techteam seem to be offering though is a re-organisation of the way the helpdesk is structured, so the technical team is completely aligned with the business.

Christoph went on to explain: "Helpdesks are rarely staffed with the A-team. However this needs to change. You need to reposition the role of the helpdesk and to change so it moves away from just being a part of the IT organisation. Helpdesk agents often report to a helpdesk manager who reports to an infrastructure manager who reports to the CIO. It makes the helpdesk team feel like they are stuck at the bottom of the IT organisation!"

He added: "Business owners need to operate with the helpdesk, creating a combined business and IT function. This results in the neck of the egg timer widening. It can change the whole way of dealing with IT and it becomes more of a service desk approach."

Their approach seems very interesting. I even heard a couple of the IT suppliers from India talking about the Techteam approach with some grudging respect.

When Christoph was explaining his analogy he added: "You know that TV show The IT Crowd? That's a lesson in how NOT to run a help desk!" I tweeted that comment after the interview only to find that minutes later the writer and creator of The IT Crowd, Graham Linehan, had tweeted a message back saying: "They're right!"

Techteam has a new fan thanks to the wonders of Twitter.