

# STRATEGIC IT:

5 Ways IT Pros Can Collaborate with Leadership to Increase Business Influence



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Introduction**

**Meet the IT Pros**

**5 Ways You Can Collaborate with Leadership to Increase Business Influence**

1. Make yourself an expert in the work your organization does
2. Effectively communicate the value of solutions to leadership
3. Advocate for IT solutions that align with business goals
4. Optimize your process for adopting solutions
5. Evaluate service levels—before closing the deal

**A Smart Document Productivity Solution for Strategic IT Pros**

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## INTRODUCTION

**You know firsthand how technology helps drive the success of your organization.**

However, your involvement with that technology may not always translate into influence during IT planning and purchasing. It's possible that you're viewed as someone responsible for making technology work after it's in-house, rather than a strategic resource in the decision making process.

Organizations that fail to address IT's perspectives when vetting new technology miss opportunities for innovation and efficiency. How can you as an IT Pro position yourself as a stronger strategic partner to help the organization achieve objectives?

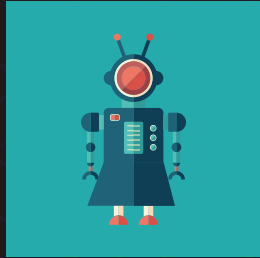
We've compiled expert tips from a wide range of in-the-trenches technology professionals who have thrived in diverse IT positions. Use their advice to better collaborate with leadership and increase your influence—whatever your role in the business.

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# MEET THE IT PROS

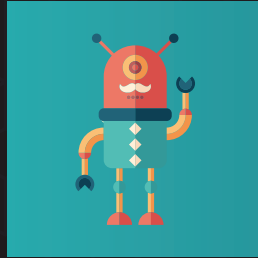


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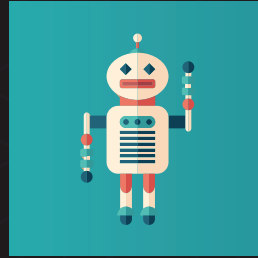


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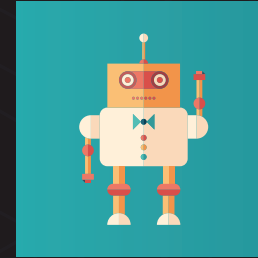


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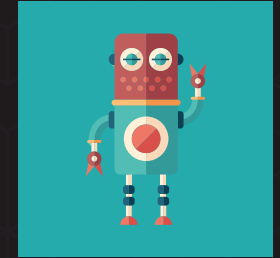


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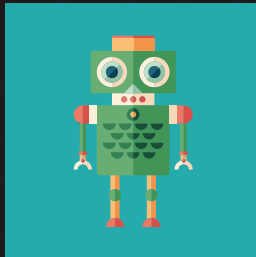
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**Elsworth Pascoe**

Network Monitor at  
Roman Catholic Diocese  
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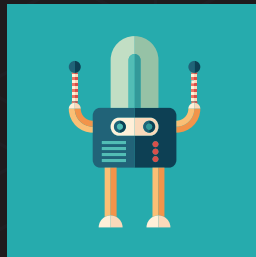


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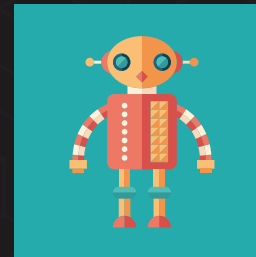


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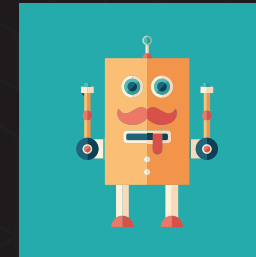
 [@tonys2009](#)



**Jeremy Thompson**

IT Manager at Caddo  
Parish Sheriff's Office

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**Alex Wittig**

Systems Software  
Analyst II at TSYS

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# 5 WAYS

**YOU CAN COLLABORATE WITH LEADERSHIP  
TO INCREASE BUSINESS INFLUENCE**

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# 1. MAKE YOURSELF AN EXPERT IN THE WORK YOUR ORGANIZATION DOES

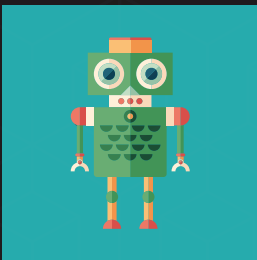
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# 1. Make yourself an expert in the work your organization does



**Greg Schulz**

Founder of StorageIO

Twin Cities, Minnesota

 [@storageio](https://twitter.com/storageio)

## LEARN MORE ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Learn more about the organization—its core functions, what it's there to do. Don't just focus on the technology, but understand the business functions that the technology has to support. Then figure out how to bring in technology to address different opportunities.

It's a two-step process. First, understand the technologies available, then examine how they can facilitate solutions within the organization. Some situations may require technology, but others might call for changes to processes, communications, or workflows.

Immerse yourself in the organization. Talk to people in operations on the business side. You'll not only be exposed to their pain points, but you'll learn how to speak their language.

When you understand organizational needs and can speak in terms that resonate with leadership, you can justify technology solutions by demonstrating how well they address objectives. Management may well recognize that you're solving problems and pull you into other conversations about how to do things better.

#StrategicIT tip from @storageio: "Understand the business functions technology has to support."



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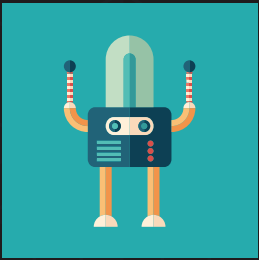


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# 1. Make yourself an expert in the work your organization does



**Anthony Sutcliffe**

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## YOU CANNOT GO OFF ON A TANGENT

The first thing to know is that you really need to learn more about the organization itself—what its views are and its plans for the future. It's critical to align what you're doing in IT with what the business is doing.

You cannot go off on a tangent and do your own thing, completely ignoring the greater business. It's important to be on the same path. I've seen it happen where the organization is very clearly trying to go in one direction and the IT department isn't on the same page.

"IT must be on the same page as the broader organization," says #StrategicIT Pro @tonys2009.

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**While over half of surveyed IT professionals said their organizations would see increased revenues in 2015, IT budgets are still running at their 2014 pace.**

The 2015 IT Budget Report, Spiceworks Voice of IT®



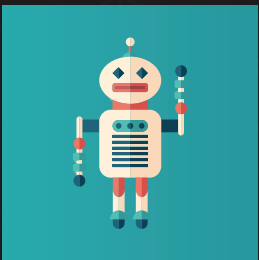
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# 1. Make yourself an expert in the work your organization does



**Thomas Lee**

Owner of  
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## YOUR BUSINESS IS NOT TECHNOLOGY

For IT professionals, I'd recommend learning your business as well as you can. Remember: your business is not technology—it's whatever your organization does.

From the organization's perspective, it's important to get IT people more involved on the business side.

Assemble more multi-disciplinary teams and find the right methodology to communicate in a way everyone understands. Using common language and forcing people to talk to one another allows IT professionals to get the business perspective they need to ensure technology initiatives are aligned.

"Learn your business as well as you can" to achieve #StrategicIT, says @DoctorDNS.

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## 2. EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE THE VALUE OF SOLUTIONS TO LEADERSHIP

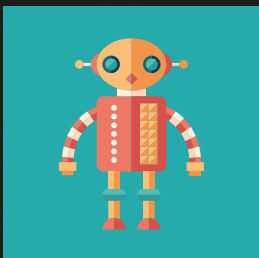
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## 2. Effectively communicate the value of solutions to leadership



**Jeremy Thompson**

IT Manager at Caddo  
Parish Sheriff's Office

Shreveport, Louisiana

### RECOGNIZE THE ORGANIZATION'S NEEDS

Recognize the organization's needs, come up with a clear plan to meet those needs, and then present it to management. We needed extra storage for a cluster-based system and it was about \$20,000. Our management team looked at that expense and wondered whether it was worth it, so I created a cost benefit analysis to prove that it was.

In another example, we needed core routers at our main location. I got our leadership to sign off on buying a product with high-quality switches. We could have gone with a much cheaper option, but we would have had to replace them sooner. I showed the cost-effectiveness of

spending the extra money on a tried-and-tested solution in a mission-critical area.

By demonstrating the value of adopting the right technology, I've even gotten upper management interested in the actual helpdesk ticket count and seeing where issues lay. In one situation, I was able to show a 30%+ category on printer issues so we could migrate to a more centrally managed printing system—instead of having printers on every desk. As an IT Pro, it's pretty much your job to train upper management on why they should care about a ticketing system and prove its value.

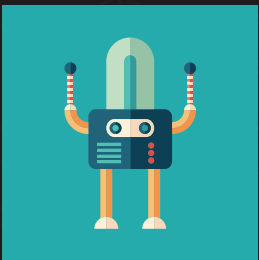


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## 2. Effectively communicate the value of solutions to leadership



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### IT IS ABOUT COMMUNICATION

When it comes to addressing management, a lot of it is about communication. The IT manager and staff have to be talking to other departments in the business. It's important to be familiar with the barriers keeping people from achieving what they need to get done, and you'll only find out what those are if you're in communication with other departments and understand what it is they're doing.

Build trust. You need to be in a position where the people in those other departments know that you are actually trying to help them, rather

than trying to stop them from doing what they need to do. Give them the reasons behind technology decisions that are made.

It's important to be honest and up front, but equally, to talk in a language others understand. If you're giving a lot of technobabble, it's likely management and users alike won't understand it and will switch off. If you talk to them in a language they understand, they will listen and engage.

How to build #StrategicIT? @tonys2009 says "IT should work to build trust with other departments."

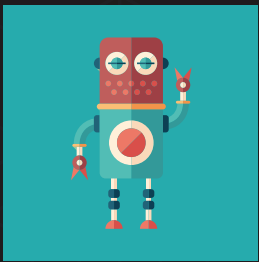


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## 2. Effectively communicate the value of solutions to leadership



### Elsworth Pascoe

Network Monitor at  
Roman Catholic Diocese  
of Albany

Albany, New York

### COMMUNICATE WITH MANAGEMENT IN A WAY THEY UNDERSTAND

It's up to you to be familiar with the products and technology out there that can benefit the organization. Look at what's new and how solutions might help do things better—whether it's operations, network security, or whatever the case might be.

Being up to date on the technology is critical. For example, I went to a seminar and came back much better informed about how a certain

technology could benefit our organization. Have the information in hand to help management make decisions.

Being able to communicate with management in a way they understand is critical. If you use jargon or language that is too technical, you won't be able to influence them.



**Top considerations for IT pros purchasing hardware this year: reliability, value, and service/support (in that order). Those buying software called out the importance of features first, followed by value and efficiency. For services, support was seen as most important with value and reliability following.**

The 2015 IT Budget Report, Spiceworks Voice of IT®



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### 3. ADVOCATE FOR IT SOLUTIONS THAT ALIGN WITH BUSINESS GOALS

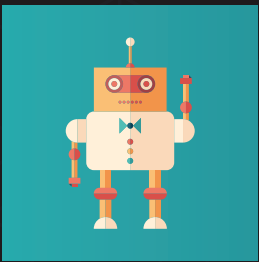
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## 3. Advocate for IT solutions that align with business goals



**Steve O'Donnell**

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### VALUE IS NOT ALL ABOUT COST REDUCTIONS

Clearly, IT solutions should deliver business value, but how to evaluate value is a non-trivial exercise. In particular, value is not all about cost reductions—it is much more three dimensional than that.

I recommend looking at the balance between improvements in Business Advantage, Risk, and Cost delivered by a solution in order to make a valid judgment. The key questions to ask are:

**Business Advantage:** How does this solution perform in killing off the competition, driving customer acquisition, increasing customer retention, or speeding up the rate of business innovation?

**Risk:** How does the solution reduce business risk? Does it make the organization more compliant with regulations or deliver more on certain business outcomes?

**Cost:** How does the solution drive down business operations costs, not just IT costs?

Just like in the area of project management where there is a triangle of interaction between cost, timeline, and quality, there is often interaction between Business Advantage, Risk, and Cost in the selection of IT systems. Improve one and face a depreciation in one or more of the others (e.g. cheaper may be riskier).

The value of each improvement is not the same across companies and business processes. For example, risk reduction may not be as important to a startup as to an enterprise and business advantage may be less relevant for email than for a CRM system.

#StrategicIT Pros must "Evaluate the business value of IT solutions," says @stephenodonnell.

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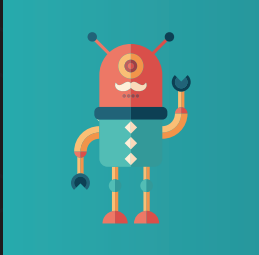


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## 3. Advocate for IT solutions that align with business goals

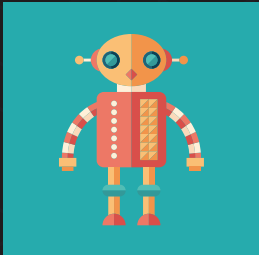


**Rob Enderle**

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 @Enderle



**Jeremy Thompson**

IT Manager at Caddo  
Parish Sheriff's Office

Shreveport, Louisiana



### START BY CREATING A WORKING MODEL

In evaluating a solution, start by creating a working model of what it should be based on your requirements, not based on what the vendors present. Often vendors present what they have as a complete solution. However, their “complete” offering is not calibrated to your problem and may fall short.

Once a requirement is defined you can then write up an RFP and the most capable vendor should rise to the top. Highly integrated solutions go in faster, are far less expensive to maintain, and can be made far more responsive to the needs of the end user.

### LOOK AT THE FEATURES

Get away from buying a solution just because you've heard of the name. There are so many options out there, and with due diligence on your part, you can find a solution that will fit your budget. Don't get hung up on spending money just to spend the money.

Look at the features and what your business actually needs, rather than buying something because an advertisement is telling you to buy it.

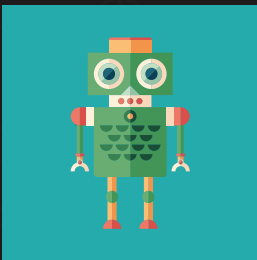
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## 3. Advocate for IT solutions that align with business goals



**Greg Schulz**

Founder of StorageIO

Twin Cities, Minnesota

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### CONTEXT DOES MATTER

Realize that everything is not the same across organizations—what's going to apply to a large enterprise isn't going to be the same at an SMB. Make sure you're looking for solutions that fit your organization.

What may be good for Google, Amazon, Boeing, or another big company may not be applicable to your environment.

Think about what's important in your organization, your area, your focus. Context does matter. Having awareness of your environment, as opposed to others, is critical. You want to avoid comparing apples to oranges and stay focused on what you're trying to do.

"Context matters when bringing on #StrategicIT solutions," according to @storageio.

 [Tweet this](#)



**Hardware projects top 2015 budget priorities among IT pros with 42% of funds allocated to them. Software (33%) and hosting/cloud-based services (12%) were second and third.**

The 2015 IT Budget Report, Spiceworks Voice of IT®



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## 4. OPTIMIZE YOUR PROCESS FOR ADOPTING SOLUTIONS

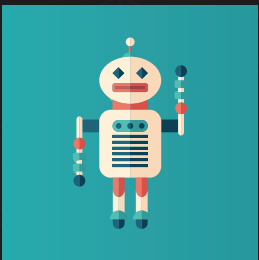
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## 4. Optimize your process for adopting solutions



**Thomas Lee**

Owner of  
PS Partnership

Slough, United Kingdom

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### YOU'VE GOT TO TEST IT

Adoption time—time to use—is extremely important. I've seen too many cases where people don't get the application; it doesn't work from a user perspective, so it doesn't get used. Therefore, it's a failure.

I think you've got to test it. Show some of the alternatives, give users chances to provide feedback, and make sure they're in the loop going forward. If a user feels a solution is being imposed, they are likely to be resistant to change and may even reject it.

When you involve users in the process, they then become part of the solution and are significantly more enthusiastic—and that enthusiasm is contagious. When you get users involved, you not only get buy-in, but you get evangelists. They're telling others how great a solution is.

Users should be the first to review and the last to approve. You can lead a user to water, but you can't force them to drink. On the other hand, if the water seems like something they helped to bring into being, something that's theirs, they'll go like a duck to the water.

A #StrategicIT must from @DoctorDNS: "Involve users in IT adoption to create evangelists."

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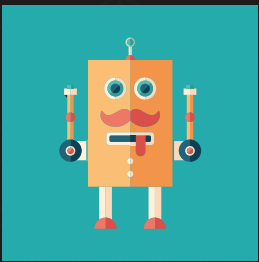


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## 4. Optimize your process for adopting solutions



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Phoenix, Arizona

### SIT DOWN WITH USERS AND ASK THEM TO SHARE

Before identifying potential solutions, distribute questionnaires about what functionality users are looking for and ask for the pros and cons of the software they are now using. What would they like to do with the software? What features would help them work more efficiently?

For example, rather than having to click several times to complete a function, ask what features might simplify what they do, saving time and reducing frustration. You really have to be communicating with people who are using the technology on a day-to-day basis.

You can also sit down with users and ask them to share what they do in a regular day to understand what solutions can help them. It may open your eyes. When you see what they are doing, you might recognize limitations to their knowledge.

After you shadow staff and see what they're doing, brainstorm about what could help to improve the situation. It could be a simple training solution, not a technical one, that can allow them to be more efficient and productive.



**The top reasons IT pros are purchasing new hardware, software, and services? In order: End of life, growth/additional need, project need, upgrades/refresh cycles, and end-user need.**

The 2015 IT Budget Report, Spiceworks Voice of IT®

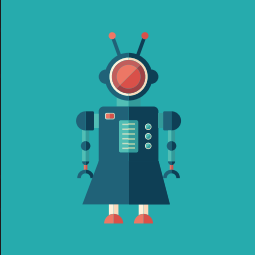


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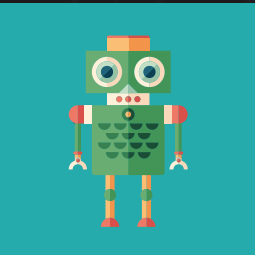


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### IT'S OFTEN THE LITTLE THINGS

It's critical that organizations get input from end users at all stages of the process. Ideas that sound good in theory don't always work as well in practical application. When it comes to usability, it's often the little things that make a

huge difference. Evaluating the user-friendliness of IT solutions should be an iterative process. Companies should listen to user feedback and implement changes as needed.

### LOOK AT YOUR USERS

Step back from the power command lines and the technology. Look at your users and how they are using the technology. What's practical for them? It could be something very low tech, but durable. Think about the best UI for an application. For some people, the best UI might be a traditional display on a laptop. For others,

it may be going on a phone and tapping a few clickwheels.

Don't fall into the shiny new technology trap. Instead, think about the essential things that the person using the solution needs to accomplish.

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## 5. EVALUATE SERVICE LEVELS—BEFORE CLOSING THE DEAL

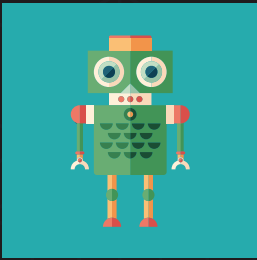
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## 5. Evaluate service levels—before closing the deal



**Greg Schulz**

Founder of StorageIO

Twin Cities, Minnesota

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### USE THE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Good service providers should make your internal customers feel like the help is an extension of your own capabilities as an IT professional. Outside service should be good, timely, clear, and succinct—otherwise people won't call.

What's the best way to gauge service? Actually try it. When you're using a trial or free demo/download, use the customer service. How are the self-help capabilities, the service forms, the downloads?

When evaluating the help line, don't just call in the middle of the day, but also at night. Go to the off-hours when you think that not even

the A or B team but the C team may be on the helpline. Call in to see how something goes at a non-peak time—make up a problem if you need to. Do call in the day to see what call volume is like, but don't forget off-hours to see what that overall experience is like.

You might have a company tell you to call in with a special priority code to get assistance during a trial period. That's fine, give it a try and see what its' like—but also call in on the regular line and go through regular help process. How do things get resolved?

"In evaluating service, try at peak times and off-hours," advises [@storageio](https://twitter.com/storageio).

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## 5. Evaluate service levels—before closing the deal



**Jeremy Thompson**

IT Manager at Caddo  
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Shreveport, Louisiana

### READ REVIEWS ABOUT VENDORS

Take advantage of trial periods. You can do a whole lot of legwork in the beginning with these opportunities, especially when it comes to software. In terms of hardware, look to forums like Spiceworks for insights and community support. Read reviews about vendors and their services.

Before committing to a solution, make sure a provider has technical people on staff who can answer your questions and talk you through the process.



**Despite technology's growing importance in business, only one-quarter of IT pros said their organizations would be adding staff to the department in 2015.**

The 2015 IT Budget Report, Spiceworks Voice of IT®



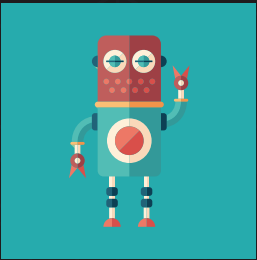
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## 5. Evaluate service levels—before closing the deal



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Network Monitor at  
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### EVALUATE HOW REACHABLE THEY ARE

Customer service is # 1 in my book. You can have the greatest product out there, but if the customer service is bad, then you might as well not be in business. I am working on a replacement for our current web filter, and some of the customer service I've run into leaves me feeling dejected.

A company will conference in four sales guys to convince you to buy its product, but when you need support, there is only one person available and you are playing phone or email tag.

When it comes to choosing a vendor or consultant to work with, evaluate how reachable they are and how well they follow through. You need to be sure someone will be there to provide help with the solution.





## A SMART DOCUMENT PRODUCTIVITY SOLUTION FOR STRATEGIC IT PROS

Armed with these strategic IT tips, you can accelerate your development as a driving force for innovation within your organization. At Nitro, our mission is to become a part of this journey by providing you with tools to help you succeed.

Our document productivity suite is a strategic solution that helps organizations of all types and sizes increase efficiency and reduce costs. Encouraging user adoption of digital documents and electronic signatures can help the bottom line—and make you a hero among leadership.

We know you have a tough job to do. Constricting budgets can make it challenging to equip staff with the tech they need to do their jobs well. UI issues can saddle the IT department (maybe that's just you, flying solo) with user tickets.

We strive to be the IT Pro's best friend, serving as an intuitive, easy-to-use, effective Adobe® Acrobat® alternative—at a fraction of the price. Our cost-effective digital document solutions can make your life easier while helping align IT initiatives with business objectives.

**Whatever your role in IT, bringing Nitro to the table can get you noticed in the best ways possible.**

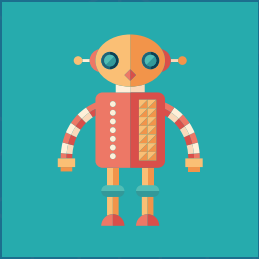
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## One Strategic IT Guy's Journey from Adobe to Nitro



**Jeremy Thompson**

IT Manager at Caddo  
Parish Sheriff's Office

Shreveport, Louisiana

### ABOUT MY ORGANIZATION:

We're a law enforcement agency with around 1,000 users.

### OUR DOCUMENT PRODUCTIVITY NEEDS:

The people within the organization using digital documents right now are in the accounting and tax departments. They take reports from the software we have and convert the PDFs into Excel documents so that they can work with the numbers.

In another department, we're moving over to a digital solution with signature pads so we can reduce paper, storage, ink, and other costs that come with a paper-based reporting system. Employees are excited because it will make the process faster and easier. Signatures will be stored on a hard drive that can be accessed from anywhere, instead of on a piece of paper in a filing cabinet.

### HOW I FOUND NITRO:

I was looking for an Adobe alternative because of that program's high cost. Whenever you're looking at \$250 for a license and you have multiple users, you go out and do your due diligence to see if there's anything out there comparable for less money. You don't want to spend so much on a piece of software that's for a fraction of a person's job.



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### FULL FUNCTIONALITY? CHECK.

"In choosing Nitro, I made sure it had the capabilities we need it for now, but also functions we may use later. I didn't want to limit myself. I needed to know it has key document productivity features, and it does—at a much cheaper price than Adobe. The purchase decision came down to price, but I felt good about it because I knew Nitro provides the equivalent of Acrobat."



**Strategic IT pros know a digital document application can increase productivity by leaps and bounds. Nitro has everything users need, nothing they don't.**

### USER FRIENDLY? CHECK.

"Some users were used to Adobe Acrobat, but they really liked Nitro when they got used to it because it's easy. It's been really natural for them to pick up and learn. The menu is really good, and the new modern UI look of it is in line with newer software packages."



**The strategic IT pro understands the importance of making things easy for users. Nitro's ribbon-style interface matches up with Microsoft's UI, introducing familiarity users appreciate.**



## #StrategicIT



## One Strategic IT Guy's Journey from Adobe to Nitro



Jeremy Thompson

IT Manager at Caddo  
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### EASY IMPLEMENTATION? CHECK.

"The purchase and implementation was very smooth and easy. It's what you would expect of any large software company—good support, easy download, and a single license to manage."



**Strategic IT pros know that getting up and running has a cost. With Nitro, implementation is easy and the technology doesn't get in the way. Our global 24/7 Customer Support team quickly resolves any issues that do arise.**

### COST EFFECTIVE? CHECK.

"We've already saved money. On licensing alone, we've cut more than half of the costs than those we carried with Adobe. When you're looking at a PDF solution overall—getting rid of those costs for printing time, paper, and ink, time saved with manual processes—you can definitely recognize the savings with digital document software."

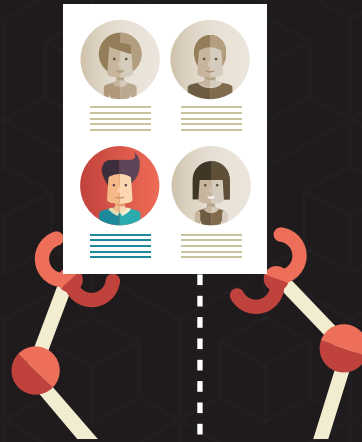


**Always on the hunt for savings, the strategic IT pro gets that bringing cost-effective, scalable solutions to leadership is part of the job description. Nitro helps deliver.**



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# THANK YOU TO THE EXPERTS

Thank you to the IT Professionals who contributed their from-the-trenches advice to our project. In an increasingly technology-dependent business world, IT Professionals can use these suggestions to increase their influence and make IT a stronger strategic business partner within the organization.

GET THE LATEST UPDATES IN THE WORLD OF DOCUMENT PRODUCTIVITY ON THE [NITRO BLOG](#).

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