

---

# Leadership in ICT Organizations: Skills or Experience?

**Mehdi Asgarkhani**

CPIT  
City Campus, Madras Street  
Christchurch  
[AsgarkhaniM@CPIT.ac.nz](mailto:AsgarkhaniM@CPIT.ac.nz)

**Jun Wan**

Information Analyst and Research  
Assistant  
CPIT

**Abstract**

Today, access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) plays an essential role in both economic and social development. A diverse portfolio of ICT solutions is contributing towards a significant change in corporate business processes worldwide. ICT organization leadership is essential for setting up competitive businesses, managing global corporations, adding business value and providing valued products and/or services to their potential markets. Successful ICT organization leaders need to use a mix of technical skills, managerial skills and relevant management and technical experience so as to be able to provide effective leadership.

**Keywords**

ICT Leadership, Technical Experience, Technical Skills, Management Skills, Personal Attributes.

**Introduction**

Today, the diverse portfolio of ICT solutions - ranging from the Internet to wireless networks to digital phones and cable systems - is contributing towards a significant transformation of corporate business processes worldwide. Many organizations worldwide, consider ICTs as being essential for setting up competitive businesses, managing global corporations,

---

This poster paper appeared at the 1st annual conference of Computing and Information Technology Research and Education New Zealand (CITRENZ2010) incorporating the *23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference of the National Advisory Committee on Computing Qualifications*, Dunedin, New Zealand, July 6-9. Samuel Mann and Michael Verhaart (Eds).

adding business value and providing valued products and/or services to their potential markets. Within the last decade, investment on ICTs has become the largest component of capital expenditure within most organizations. As capital investment on ICT within corporations continues to grow, there is an expectation that ICT managers and strategists optimize the investment on technology. They are required to demonstrate leadership so as to not only maximize the benefits of the application of ICTs and other technology solutions but must also avoid the many risks (economical, social and cultural) that are associated with rapid technological change. Within the past few years, numerous academics, theoreticians and strategists have developed and proposed frameworks to make the ICT leadership more effective. What's more, there has been much debate over factors that influence successful leadership of ICT organizations. Some academics and practitioners place high value on experience whilst others insist leadership as an attribute is more influential (than technical experience) in directing ICT leadership towards success.

We examined different views on factors that influence the effectiveness of a leadership role and in this paper we present a brief outline of the outcome.

### **Findings**

In brief, from the review of literature and case studies it became apparent that a combination of skills and personal attributes impact of the success of leadership within ICT organizations. Numerous parameters (such as personality type, emotional intelligence and organizational culture) also impact on effectiveness of ICT leadership. Within the ICT sector, previous experience is often considered as one of the key criteria

when organizations select individuals for ICT executive roles. However, whether it is a valuable criterion to be included in the selection process has been vigorously debated. Based on this study, we suggest that experience can make ICT leaders more effective. However, we cannot look at experience in isolation. That is to say, experience must be considered in conjunction with other relevant factors and parameters. Experience can play a significant role if it is relevant to other criteria for selecting ICT leaders – such as leaders' skills, knowledge and professional capabilities.

Overall, a successful ICT leader needs to possess variety of managerial skills, a combination of relevant personal attributes and additional relevant experience with the use of technology and strategic developments within the ICT sector.

### **References**

- Asgarkhani, M., & Wan, J. (2008). A pilot study of current trends in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) education within the tertiary sector. *Contemporary Management Research*, 4(4), 291-304.
- Baroudi, J. J. (1985). The impact of role variables on IS personnel work attitudes and intentions. *MIS Quarterly*, 9(4), 341-356.
- Bartol, K. M., & Martin, D. C. (1982). Managing information systems personnel: a review of the literature and managerial implications. *MIS Quarterly*, Special Issue, 49-70.
- Benbasat, I., Dexter, A. S., & Mantha, R. W. (1980). Impact of organizational maturity on information system skill needs. *MIS Quarterly*, 4(1), 21-34.