

# Applying a Service Mindset When Thinking and Communicating about Systems and Projects

Steven Alter

*Department of Information Systems, San Francisco University*

**ABSTRACT:** *Despite the best of intentions, many IT groups have difficulty engaging and communicating with business professionals, managers, and executives they hope to serve. A shift toward applying a deeper service mindset when thinking and communicating about systems and projects might lead to greater success in addressing business issues directly and attaining more effective engagement.*

*This paper explains four principles underlying a service mindset for thinking and communicating about systems and projects. These principles lead directly to three frameworks for thinking and communicating about IT-reliant systems. In turn, the frameworks lead to straightforward tools that support business-oriented description and analysis of IT-reliant systems in organizations.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Service Mindset, Work System, Service System, Work System Framework, Service Value Chain Framework, Work System Life Cycle Model.*

## 1. Introduction

Despite the best of intentions, many IT groups have difficulty engaging and communicating with the business professionals, managers, and executives they hope to serve. At the executive and strategic level, this problem contributes to inadequate business/IT alignment. At the project and operational level, it appears as insufficient user involvement and participation. At either level the impact includes diminished contributions to business success, unnecessarily difficult projects, and frequent disappointments in project results. These problems occur even in IT organizations that have a strong culture of service to the larger organization.

Assume that an IT group's business/IT alignment and user involvement need improvement even though it already has a culture of service. Assume that its staff genuinely wants to provide good service, uses carefully developed processes, has empathy for customers and colleagues, is interested in improving business results, and obtains feedback about service quality using SERVQUAL (Parasuraman et al., 1985) or other tools.