Introduction

Note - In the project, IT and IS is used interchangeably.

How do you get twenty individual groups of Information System (IS) staff to share one vision?

No, it isn't a children's playground joke, but a problem which was costing us lots of money and threatening a leading MNC in the US with the loss of their customer base. We spoke to the IT manager and they explained the problem as follows:

Let me set the scene. We work in the IT division of a multinational chemical company. The company employs twenty thousand people in twenty international locations and is rapidly expanding through the acquisition of smaller chemical companies.

We had been through a consolidation exercise in which the IS units, which were fragmented throughout the organisation, were brought together under the control of one umbrella IS division. This division alone consisted of six hundred staff. The intention was to give IS a standard vision and direction.

However, despite this central control, each IS unit interpreted the IS policy differently, with the result that there was no uniformity in direction for IS.
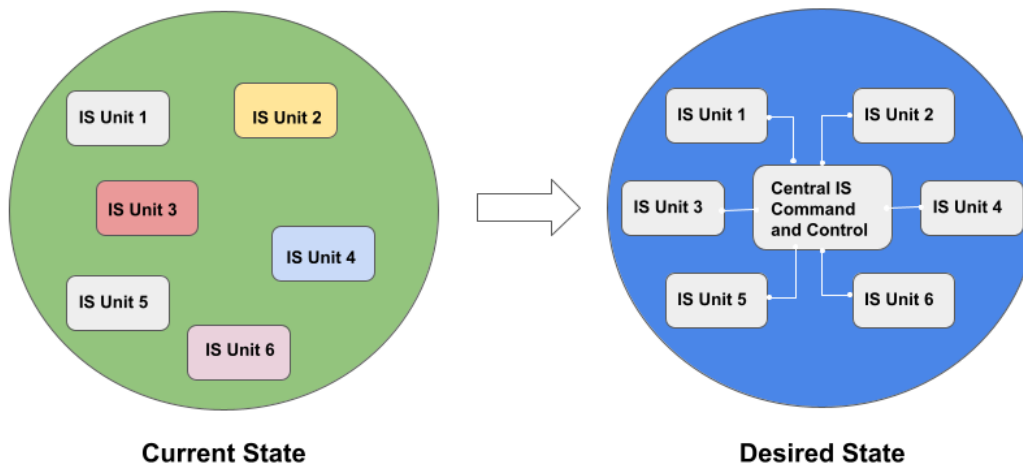

Figure 1: Vision and Direction of IS

We also had a major shift in company policy to contend with; it had been decided to concentrate on 'core business', which for the company meant chemicals, not IT. The business units were to be allowed to buy their IT services from the supplier of their choice. If we wanted to survive as an IS unit, we had to prove our worth to our customers, in this case the people of our company using our services.

The upshot was that we had to get our house in order. We needed to have enough central control to be able to steer the division and maximise the benefits of having a large IS department, while allowing each IS unit to be flexible enough to be able to meet local business needs. Our staff had to feel part of one group, with its own identity and mentality. We chose **ITIL** as our method for getting everyone on the same page, through the implementation of a Total Quality Programme.

The IT infrastructure consisted of an amalgam of on-premise and cloud-supported applications and infrastructure networks that were used by the various business units of the company. The IT department supported the business through the provision of running several applications that facilitated business. They had four alternatives when it came to running their services, as shown below.
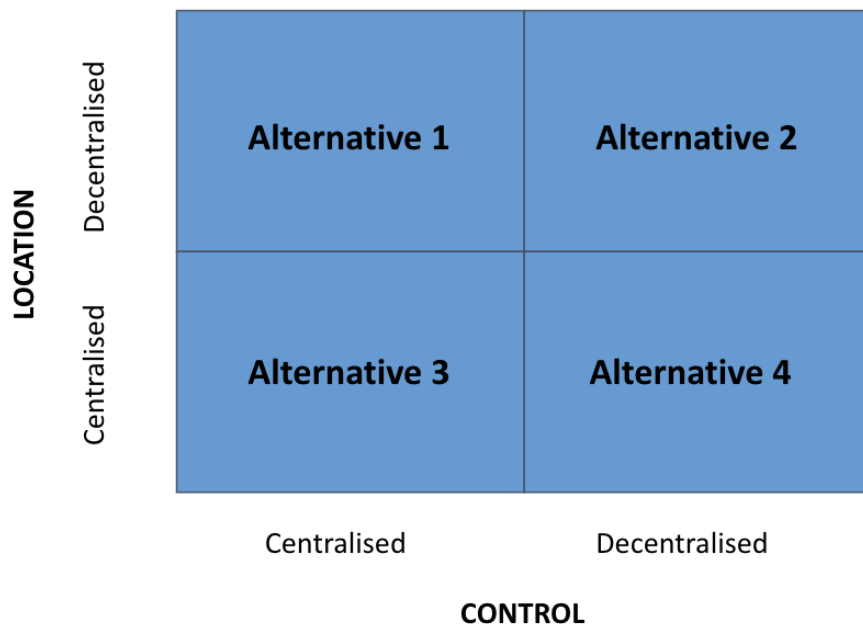
Figure 2 - Centralised/ Decentralised IT Infrastructure Location and Control

Where do we want to be?

A quality improvement programme needs a goal. Without that goal, you lose the motivation of the very people you need to make the programme a success, and you have no chance of achieving the results you want.
We tried to make the improvement programme goals as concrete as we could, and where possible, measurable. We were working with a disparate, international organisation, in which culture, language, customs and even the IT customers were different in each IT unit. We needed to have 'one language' using which everyone could communicate.

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Project Assignment

You are required to plan the transformation initiative to help the IS department achieve its goal of being useful for its users and answer the questions in the next segment.