24. Drain the swamp

Description:
All too often an IT organization finds itself so busy with the hot issues of the day or week that they don't make a lot of progress. In other words, they are so busy fighting alligators that they forget to drain the swamp which will eliminate the alligator issue altogether.

Pull yourself back away from the chaos from time to time to evaluate whether there are things you can do to eliminate the source of your technology support problems and find a way to attack the issue, not the symptom.

Key points:
- Reactive managers get lost in the shuffle of supporting technology
- Clearly define your objectives
- Always seek the source of problems and attack them aggressively
- Find ways to execute your plan, even when you have to fight an alligator
- Fight the alligators only as needed to continue moving forward
- Stop fighting the alligators and drain the swamp

Category:
- IT Assessment
- IT Strategy & Planning
- IT Project Management and Processes
- IT Organization and Staff
- IT Financial Management
- IT Measurements and Communication
Discussion:

I hear it all the time, "I'm too busy to take a few days off to attend that training program I know I need." When I hear things like that, I have to chuckle inside. That's the reason the people are in such a reactive mode; they don't take the time to learn how to get out of it so they try to work harder.

Stop fighting the alligators and drain the swamp. Eliminate the source of the problem and you eliminate the mundane issue that causes you to lose productivity and be ineffective. "Fighting alligators" is the wrong focus.

Reactive managers get lost in the shuffle of supporting technology - Most of us tend to react because it's easier than being proactive planners. Reactive managers get lost and stay lost in the day to day support issues. The issues of the day tends to fill these managers and their team's productive hours and as a result they don't make very much real progress.

Clearly define your objectives - Define your objectives and target your efforts for higher achievement. Take charge of your life and what you want to accomplish.

Always seek the source of problems and attack them aggressively - Learn where the source of your problems are and attack them with vigor. Eliminating the source can be a real boost to your team's productivity and remove a lot of headache for your client. This can improve client satisfaction significantly.

Find ways to execute your plan, even when you have to fight an alligator - You may have to fight some issues while trying to eliminate the source of the problem, i.e., "fight an alligator in the midst of draining the swamp". If so, always try to find a way to work toward achieving the real objective while dealing with the immediate problem.

Fight the alligators only as needed to continue moving forward - Totally avoid dealing with the problem if you can while you focus your effort on eliminating the problem source. If you have to fight alligators, only fight them to the extent required to get by while you deal with the real problem. Remember, the alligator is not the problem; it's the swamp, so focus attention on the real issue.

Stop fighting the alligators and drain the swamp - Focus on eliminating the source of problems versus fighting the problems and you will find your team will be much more productive and will achieve more. Your team will also appreciate your wisdom on such matters.