



The McFletcher Corporation
 8700 E. Vista Bonita Drive
 Suite 220
 Scottsdale, AZ 85255

Tel (480) 991-9497
 Fax (480) 948-7955
 McFletcher@McFletcher.com
 www.McFletcher.com

THE SHIFTING ROLE OF SUPPORT FUNCTIONS From Specialized Experts to Strategic Partners

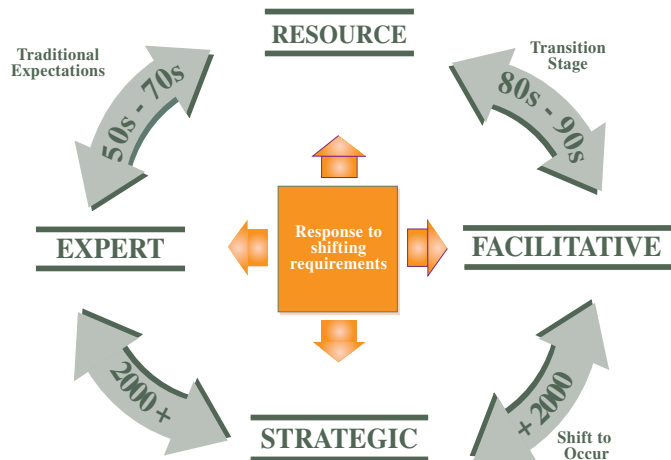
In a world of instant response, integrated work and innovative technologies, line organizations need strategic leadership from support functions like finance, information systems, marketing and human resources.

This leadership means equipping those on the line to carry out activities traditionally managed and controlled by support functions. Shifting work requirements make *options* from support functions more valuable than *answers*. Highly skilled support professionals, then, should strategically collaborate with line employees and management to create solutions.

A Model For Change . . . How To Get Strategic

Operational forces are driving this shift according to **Donna McIntosh-Fletcher**, principal consultant with The McFletcher Corporation and co-author of the WorkStyle Patterns[®] Inventory. "Changing market requirements, shifting customer expectations and new work approaches are altering work environments. A strategic approach in support functions drives traditional support activities to the front line of work for business, technological and economic decisions."

SUPPORT FUNCTION MODEL Finance, Information Technology, Marketing, Human Resources



McFletcher's Support Function Model captures the required shift for incorporating strategic leadership—moving from specialized expertise to a strategic focus.

Ideally, support functions need to operate from a strategic approach equipping others in the organization to carry out all four approaches in response to customer and work requirements.

- **Expert Approach** *Providers* within a tightly centralized function.
- **Resource Approach** *Representatives* placed in the line organization but reporting to a centralized support function.
- **Facilitative Approach** *Facilitators* transferring capability to members of line positions and teams through decentralized support staff.
- **Strategic Approach** *Partners* providing visionary leadership and serving as subject matter experts/advisors.

Reality Check . . .

"Support functions face a monumental struggle to continually provide value," says **Tomas McIntosh-Fletcher**, principal consultant with The McFletcher Corporation and co-author of the WorkStyle Patterns® Inventory. "Customers propel professionals in support functions toward a more strategic approach, while a forbidding array of restraining forces push them back into the expert role."

WorkStyle Patterns® Data reflects the reality of the shift through the support functions model for four specific support organizations:

- *Finance:* After years of "micro-level" expert service, finance functions have lacked both presence and preference for strategic partnership. Changing workplace requirements such as supply chain process, global budgeting and enterprise systems are driving a shift toward the resource and facilitative approaches.
- *Information Technology Systems:* Open systems architecture has pushed information systems toward more collaborative approaches (*facilitative and strategic*). Yet, the steep learning curve for new systems and technology, combined with a preference to work as an individual contributor, draws many IT professionals to the expert approach.
- *Marketing:* Through frequent customer contact, marketing professionals have moved quickly through the support function model. Increased responsiveness and ever shorter product and service life cycles, however, leave little time for developing a strategic approach.
- *Human Resources:* Self-directed teams, outsourcing and reengineering pushed HR to look at new forms of compensation, ways of hiring, and methods for restructuring work. HR now needs to teach others through its own functional demonstrations, initiating the shift to strategic partnership.

Established in 1974, The McFletcher Corporation is a research and consulting firm which specializes in aligning organizations with their market requirements and the workforce. The WorkStyle Patterns® Inventory and data base research are products and services of the McFletcher Corporation. The Study referred to in this brief was comprised of 4,169 support professionals from a broad base of North American businesses and government agencies. Additional qualitative interviews with executive level personnel from Fortune 500 companies were gathered in 1993, 2000 and continued in 2006 for comparisons of Support Function shifts over the years.



The McFletcher Corporation
8700 E. Vista Bonita Drive
Suite 220
Scottsdale, AZ 85255

Tel (480) 991-9497
Fax (480) 948-7955
McFletcher@McFletcher.com
www.McFletcher.com

Call, fax, e-mail, or look us up on the web to learn about McFletcher's products and processes which create new ways to integrate projects and people.
A consultation without obligation is available.