Transforming
IT

Chief Information Officer John Hinshaw knows exactly where to find success at Boeing – in the hearts and minds of his global team.

by Catherine Rudolph

He was so taken with Boeing products that he became engaged to his wife on a 757.

Now, John Hinshaw, Boeing's chief information officer and vice president of Information Technology, is so taken with boosting Boeing's productivity that he's engaging employees across the enterprise to transform the IT environment.

An unshakable believer in the power of collective effort and the effectiveness of face-to-face contact, the personable Hinshaw has met thousands of his global team members in meetings large and small to promote a crystal-clear six-point plan for success. He's already won fans among technical and nontechnical employees alike by, for example, by advocating simpler, more intuitive computer systems.

"I am listening to their ideas on how we can improve Information Technology together," says the hard-charging former Verizon CIO. He was handpicked to run the Boeing IT organization in June 2007.

What drives this man who confidently predicts that one day Boeing will have the best IT shop of any company in the world? He recently sat down with *Challenge* magazine to explain his focus and philosophy.

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What attracted you to Boeing?

I was drawn to Boeing for many reasons. First, Boeing is a company focused on the future and improving that future for the citizens of the world. Our new aircraft, such as the 787, will revolutionize travel for millions of fliers. Our defense products and services will ensure that our nation and friendly countries remain strong and secure.

Second, Boeing is a high-tech company. I've always loved technology and how it can improve the results of business operations. With a record backlog at Boeing, there is a great opportunity for productivity improvements enabled by technology to improve profitability.

Third, I've always loved airplanes and many of the other products Boeing makes and supports, such as the Space Shuttle and satellites. I met my wife on a Boeing 737 airplane in 1998, and we got engaged on a 757 in 2000, so Boeing has been in my soul for many years.

What are your priorities for IT?

I've set six key priorities for IT. The first is to simplify our IT environment. Today we have far too many redundant systems; they perform the same function but require multiple sets of IT infrastructure, systems development, processes and training.

We will also find ways to add a lean focus to our IT environment to simplify the way we introduce information technology.

Second, we will ensure that our systems are secure and controlled. Information security is an extremely high priority for Boeing. Think about the data we house in our systems. Boeing is a worldwide enterprise that must continue to guard its data securely for customers, suppliers, and employees. Having solid controls is extremely important, and IT will continue our focus on these areas.

Third, we need to improve our users' experience on the systems we all use here at Boeing. As a new employee, I've discovered that some systems need significant improvements in user experience. We have teams in place to address this. Our systems should be intuitive and easy to use, with fewer mouse and keyboard clicks required. Our systems should also be easily upgradable to new versions of software, in a way that minimizes training required for users.

Fourth, IT will support the tremendous growth of the company. As Boeing continues to increase its airplane and defense sales, IT will be there to ensure that the capacity and scalability is in place. Additionally, as Boeing acquires strategic assets, an IT framework will be in place to more easily assimilate new ventures and partners into the Boeing family.

> "Almost any job or program in the company today is enabled through information technology – aircraft design and manufacturing, defense solutions, supplier relationships, financials, payroll, and support data for all of our programs. The strategic value of IT is enabling all of us at Boeing to do our jobs and run our programs more productively."
>
> – John Hinshaw

Touring the AH-64D Apache Longbow assembly line in Mesa, Ariz., recently, John Hinshaw is reflected in the rotorcraft's Modernized Target Acquisition Designation Sight/Pilot Night Vision Sensor. Hinshaw was also in town as part of his companywide tour to speak directly to members of his global IT team about his strategy for the future.

Fifth, IT will improve the financial performance of the company by providing productivity-enhancing IT tools and innovation. Updating our IT systems and infrastructure to allow more rapid program deployments is vital. Additionally, the IT team will assist our defense and airplane programs, where unique IT requirements that will generate additional revenue opportunities.

Finally, my sixth priority is to communicate with and invest in the IT team. We have a very large IT population at Boeing, spanning the globe. In my first couple of months, I've had the opportunity to meet several thousand members of the IT team in small and large group meetings. I am listening to their ideas on how we can improve IT together. I am a strong believer in employee empowerment and engagement. I will also be investing training dollars in our IT team to ensure that we have the tools necessary for the future.

How do you see IT providing strategic value for the company?

Almost any job or program in the company today is enabled through information technology – aircraft design and manufacturing, defense solutions, supplier relationships, financials, payroll, and support data for all of our programs. IT is enabling all of us at Boeing to do our jobs and run our programs more productively. Faster time to market with new programs, quicker customer response, better financial management, and improved employee tools are just a few ways that IT provides strategic value.

Where do you see IT in Boeing's future?

Information technology is a larger and larger component of our products and services every day. Many of our defense programs base a large portion of their deliverables on integrated networks, security, and other IT components. Our 787 airplane is one of the most sophisticated computers in the sky. I would like to see our IT organization add more value to our programs, both from a perspective of what is possible, and also from an implementation perspective.

As we expand our global operations, IT will step up to support an ever-growing global supply chain and support infrastructure. This will require innovative thinking and quick responsiveness to changing business needs.

Finally, my crystal ball says that someday Boeing will be known around the world as having one of the best IT shops of any global company. We are already well on our way. ■