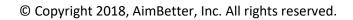# AimBetter

December 2018

Remember WYSIWYG? Now it's time for DYGWYPF!

Way back in the 1980s, there was a new acronym WYSIWYG – what you see is what you get, which captured the movement from crude screens requiring HTML markup tags onto a full on-screen visualization of what was going to be printed. People have become so used to the prevalence of this once revolutionary technique that the word has fallen completely out of the litany, but I want in this paper to bring back a new, and slightly modified version, to build a case for a much-needed revolution in data management thinking – instead of a declaration that WYSIWYG, ask question - DYGWYPF which means Do You Get What You Pay For?

In the early days of modern economies, the growth and prosperity of society was dependent on, and measured by, tangible things. Volume, weight, quantities and so on were the ways that business was measured and reported on. The term 'bean-counter' that we now regard as derisive described a real and essential function.[i]

If a manufacturer ordered 100 widgets for its inventory, and the supplier only delivered 98, then the 'bean-counter' could detect that, report on it, and take action. It went further, because if the production line found that 10% of the widgets had left-hand threads, when only right-hand had been ordered, then that too was detected, reported on and actioned. All of this was relatively simple, but the success or otherwise of an enterprise rested on doing it properly. So good management could be based on "get what you paid for" because it was measuable.

Now we have moved substantially into the world of service - which is the ordering and supply of intangibles. In advanced economies, the value of the service industry is rapidly overtaking physical output sectors and this trend can only accelerate. But the methods used to evaluate the delivered quantity, quality and benefit of service is lagging far behind, in many ways stuck in the groove of 'bean-counting'.

Management techniques and thought-processes are still largely driven by 'bean counting' methodology. This is true for both historical reasons, in that business schools are still teaching 'sound business practices' that grew up in the age of manufacturing, and more importantly, the typical technique of evaluating the value and quality of intangible services is still in its infancy.

Even the 'old fashioned bean counters' recognize that they can't yet come to terms with the gaps in scoring intangibles. A Journal of Accounting produced the following table that highlights exactly why.

AimBetter

(With acknowledgement to the website accountlearning.com, we reproduce below their comparison of products and services.)

Product	Service
1. It is tangible.	It is intangible
2. Quality standards can be attained.	It is very difficult to attain quality standards.
3. It may be an asset sometimes, e.g., hardware, infrastructure, etc.	It involves expenditure without any tangible return benefit.
4. Physical possession is possible.	Physical possession is not possible.
5. It can be stored (for use when needed).	It cannot be stored (use it or lose it).

Of course, some parts of the services sector, such as utilities (power, communications, transport) and finance (banking, insurance etc.) at least have some degree of 'tangibility' which allow measurement of actual delivery. Electricity consumption is measured, telephone volume is counted, and banking transactions are (or should be) on a cost-by-service basis. The one sector that is furthest from 'tangibility' and which in all respects is growing the fastest, is in delivery of 'virtual' cloud-based computing services.

This movement over to 'intangible' computer services has accelerated dramatically over the past decade. Up until the start of this century, an entity usually established its own data processing infrastructure, buying, installing and managing computer centers with 'tangible' assets in the form of hardware, infrastructure and proprietary software that was built for, or modified to suit, the customer. Then along came Cloud Computing. The underlying principle of virtual computing "in the cloud" is that the customer does not invest in hardware or software as such but buys a bundle of services from a specialist vendor. The attraction of this is undeniable. Large vendors set up massive server farms, which provide almost infinite capacity for data storage and processing. All of the overheads and variables that on-site processing used to involve, like constant power availability, security, backups, networks, software upgrades and so on, were now farmed-out to the cloud services vendor, in return for a fixed cost. And remember that having fixed costs is one of the ultimate goals of the 'bean counter' manager!

(Please note that I am not talking here about shared ASPs (application service providers) such as SalesForce.com, Oracle On Demand or Zoho CRM, which are vendors of specific software solutions. These companies may in fact also be using shared virtual environments to deliver their services, but in that sense, they are customers of the cloud, just as you are.)

What is missing from the new picture, though, is a way of evaluating the actual value, in terms of quality of service, that the cloud vendor is delivering. As the table from accoutlearning.com above makes clear, services are hard to evaluate in terms of both quality and benefit. So our new acronym DYGWYPF is the main way to assess the value of the services you are buying – at the very least, '**do you get what you pay for?**'.

Talking about cloud computing on its own, the service supplier promises to make available a package of computing power and resources that equates to an equivalent on-site computer server. This should not be thought of as just renting a physical computer in a remote location. The facility you are getting is a "virtual" computer, which is sharing physical resources with other customers of the service provider. The typical contract offers a specific configuration of (minimum) computing power which is expressed in terms of number of CPUs, speed, cores etc. Then this is supplemented by storage with a specific minimum capacity, network with minimum bandwidth, guaranteed backup plans, minimum up-time

AimBetter

should be stipulated, and many other attributes that can be grouped under headings such as Availability, Reliability, Recoverability, Responsiveness, Threat Management, Compliance with Regulations. Obviously, buying cloud services involves a great deal of management oversight, but the question remains, once the contract has been signed, who is measuring the effectiveness of the service – in other words – DYGWYPF!

In a recent article in Computer Weekly Mark Skilton, a member of the Cloud Business Artefacts Project at the Open Group, is quoted saying "Cloud computing can lead to a quick way of getting into trouble. People need to discuss the business value and identify which areas of infrastructure can be virtualised in the cloud."

---

[i] A product is tangible (visible). It has physical existence. By acquiring a product a person may acquire an asset, e.g., a television set. A product may be capable of being reused for a certain time. … On the other hand, a person while availing a certain service. Example — Transport, medical, legal, etc., incur expenditure. Service is intangible in nature. (https://accountlearning.com/products-services-meaning-definition-differences/)

AimBetter