

## MIT 2005 - Essay #2

*Please give an example when your thinking was different from others' (up to 500 words).*

It is not often when a recent hire, coming straight out of college, has a chance to introduce new ideas and, despite initial skepticism and resistance, succeeds in getting them implemented. The experience described below was most valuable to me because I was able to prove to myself and others that some of the things that I've learned in a purely academic environment could indeed have direct applications in the "Real World."

In 1999, when I started working for the Slant/Fin Corporation, I was surprised to learn that many of their practices for handling sensitive documents were severely outdated. There were no formal backup procedures and no guarantee that the files residing on the central server were properly updated. Inadequate security measures and lack of proper directory structure often lead to much confusion and even occasional data loss.

While it was accepted as "normal" that documents would sometimes simply disappear without a trace and had to be recreated from scratch, I believed that a series of relatively simple administrative measures could prevent this from happening altogether. Enthusiastic about being able to apply my computer skills to address these problems, I was able to convince my new boss to allow me to remedy the situation.

The first step was to go through hundreds of files in various formats and to figure out which ones were still relevant. Every document had to be renamed according to a new convention that I introduced and cataloged in a way that would make it easy to search for the vital data. I also developed guidelines for document storage and implemented new file system access permissions. Finally, I selected a new server-specific anti-virus tool and a special utility that would automate the backup procedures.

For a while, introducing all of these changes put me at odds with some senior employees who, in the many years with the company, got accustomed to doing things the "old way." It took a lot of persuasion, departmental meetings, memos, and personal assistance on my part in order to gradually roll out the new system. I came to realize that the two main keys to success were patience and persistence.

Over a number of months, my colleagues began to understand that the new IT infrastructure was in fact far more reliable and allowed them to work more efficiently. What started out as a simple initiative to improve the document handling procedures, ultimately turned out to be invaluable in significantly increasing the productivity of a whole department.

In retrospect, while I'm proud of the difference that I was able to make, I find it somewhat ironic that none of the above was ever specified as my primary responsibilities. However, this "side project" had more of a long term impact on the company than most other things that I did while working for them. And, as cliché as it sounds, this was the first time when I experienced how "thinking outside of the box" can benefit everyone.