

Align IT with the Real End Customer

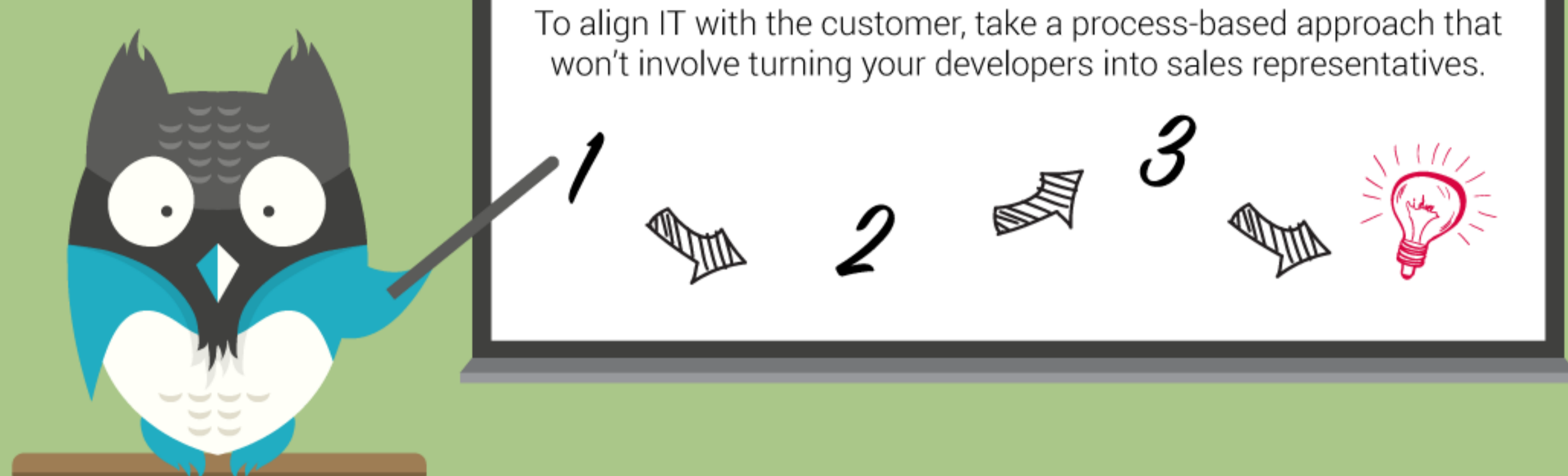
Ensure IT and the business are working towards the same goal: improving customer experience.



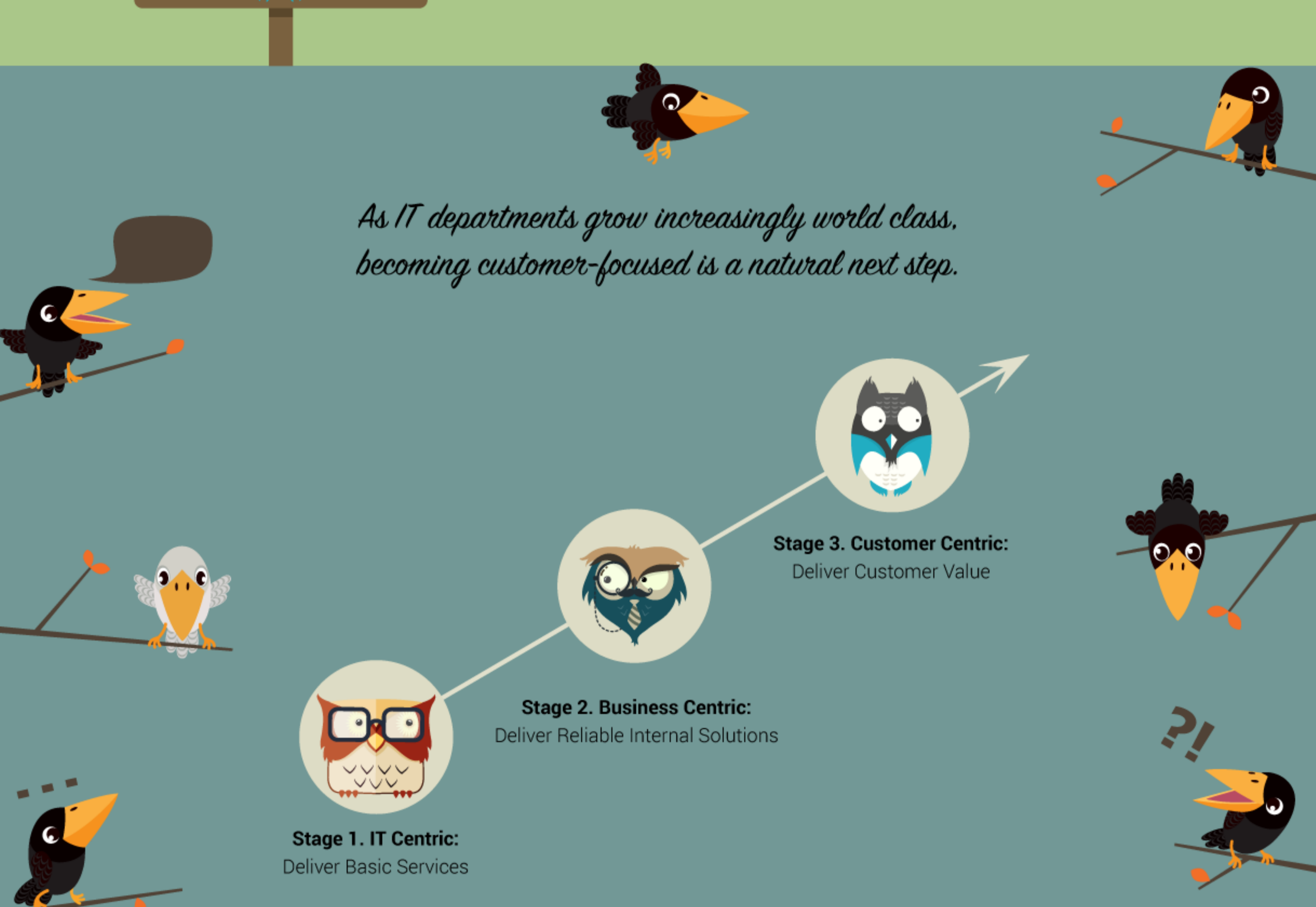
- Organizations are becoming increasingly focused on the customer and much of this focus places technology at the center.
- However, the business units feel uncomfortable working with IT on customer-related projects because they don't believe that IT understands the customer.
- The CIO struggles to understand what IT should be doing differently to support this growing customer focus.



To align IT with the customer, take a process-based approach that won't involve turning your developers into sales representatives.



As IT departments grow increasingly world class, becoming customer-focused is a natural next step.



Move from this...



The traditional business model where IT serves internal business customers, who in turn serve the organization's external customers, does not meet current realities.

When customer feedback is passed through the organization, there is often a "telephone game" effect. The message is altered slightly by each stakeholder, either deliberately or accidentally. The result is a distorted customer message arriving in IT and ultimately a negative customer experience.



... to this.



To improve the accuracy of the message, IT needs to get to the Direct Voice of the customer instead of the Indirect Voice.

This is not suggesting IT should talk to the customer before the business or without the business. Nor is it suggesting IT should know the customer better than the business or go over the business's head. Instead, it's about IT talking to customers with the business.

IT and the business must collaborate to talk to the customer together rather than the business passing customer feedback onto IT.

Steps for Success

Phase 1: Launch the Project

Step 1 Investigate Challenges and Benefits

When customer feedback is passed through the organization, the message can become distorted. IT must get to the Direct Voice of the customer instead of the Indirect Voice. IT should be talking to customers with the business.



Step 2 Build the Project Charter

The business is an essential partner in this project. Make sure you have its support before moving forward with the planning phase.



Phase 2: Plan the Project

Step 3 Assess Current IT and Customer Processes

When you map your current IT and customer processes, you are likely to find that IT isn't necessarily building what the customer needs. Instead, IT is building what the business thinks the customer needs or what IT thinks the customer needs.



Step 4 Select Target IT and Customer Processes

Customers are always changing their minds and often have trouble describing what they want until they see it in front of them. The last thing you want to do is invest heavily in an idea and then discover that it may not be what customers want. To minimize surprises, build an iterative process called a feedback loop to continually respond to customer preferences.



Step 5 Determine Process Modifications

Break process changes down into manageable initiatives to ease the transition. Prioritization must happen based not only on which initiatives are most important, but also on which initiatives must happen first, logistically.



Step 6 Refine the Organizational Design

Embedding IT in the business is a great way to ensure a smooth flow of customer information, but it requires the right culture to support it.



Step 7 Motivate IT Staff

To determine metrics for IT, it is essential to first step back and examine the behaviors you would like to reward.



Phase 3: Implement the Project

Step 8 Communicate Effectively

Having a shared vision is important, but stakeholders will want to know right away what this project means to them. When preparing the messages that will be conveyed to each group, make sure you have done your homework and can identify the impact this change will have on each role, at least at a high level.



Step 9 Train IT Staff

Experiential training is an excellent way to "break the mold" with your training methods and provide IT staff the opportunity to interact with the customer and better understand their needs.

