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### [Interview] Part 4: Celso Mello, CIO of Chubb Security Systems

This is the next blog in the [continuing series](#) of interviews with leading professionals.

In this blog series, we talk with [Celso Mello](#), a leading IT leader. I had the pleasure meeting Celso at the CIO and IT Executive Summit in Montreal.

Thank you and Enjoy!  
Stephen Ibaraki, [FCIPS](#), [I.S.P.](#), [MVP](#)

Celso Mello: CIO, Chubb Security Systems shares three pivotal lessons / stories



Stephen: Looking back over your career, what three stories and resulting lessons can you share that were most pivotal?

Celso: I believe communication is a key piece in everything we do, so I selected 3 stories around that theme:

1. In one of my previous jobs, I was assigned to a project where a new application system was being implemented at multiple branches around the World of a large multinational company. I was dealing with very different cultures and behaviours, particularly when it came to train users. Language was a bit of a barrier in some cases too.

In the beginning, I was very focused on completing the tasks efficiently within the allocated time. For example, no matter what happened, I would be sure to complete all 12 modules of the training program in the 2 days allocated for it. However, through post-implementation follow-ups, it became clear to me that the user retention of the information they were getting was minimal and as a result there were lots of problems. In many cases, users would even find a way to go back to their old system and just "pretend" they were using the new application to satisfy the corporate office, which I was representing in that case.

Then one day, I switched the approach - instead of doing traditional "classroom" training, I simply asked users to read the first module of the training program on their own, encouraging them to discuss it amongst themselves in their own language, and then try it out (on their own) on the computer sitting in front of them. Meanwhile, I would be walking around and whenever a user called me, I would assist him/her on an individual basis. Needless to say, only a fraction of the training program would get completed within the allocated timeframe, but at the end of the day, the users figured out the rest on their own, and the implementations were much more effective in those cases.

The point here is not one of how to do training - rather, how to deal with people. In anything you do, people are at heart of it. I strongly believe that if you make every effort to communicate with them at their preferred method and pace, you will get their buy-in early on and as a result they will sort out the issues, and your initiative will succeed.

2. A few years ago I was associated with an application re-hosting project that would affect almost 2,000 users spread throughout the US. The project was quite complex and posed several technical challenges, but these technical issues were dealt with appropriately and timely.

However, the user communication/training plan was sort of "make-shift", (it was not considered critical at the time because the impact to the users was minimal), the appearance of the system was identical to the end user - they just had to start it up from a different location. Because the communication plan wasn't great, the information about that (small) change didn't get through to all users, (or in some cases it was incomplete or inaccurate), which caused frustration and a negative reaction. By not knowing exactly what the change entailed, users tended to resist it and influenced other users to do the same. I had a very competent technical team in place that had spent weeks thoroughly testing the application and anticipating any potential issues. Also, the new application actually performed faster than the old one, but none of that mattered at that point - it was all about user perception. Fortunately, in the end we were able to reverse the situation, but this whole experience taught me that a change management plan is as important as a development or testing plan, in any IT project.

3. Finally, this last story took place almost 20 years ago now. It was about a more close form of communication, between me and my manager at the time, but there is a good lesson around open communication here: I was working for this company as a programmer for a couple of years, and was very happy with that job. One day, my boss comes to me and asks: "What are your career aspirations?" Looking at my puzzled face, he goes on: "You can do bigger and better things, but you cannot just sit and wait - you have to make it happen"



John Osley Director Community Evangelism  
Microsoft Canada



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and wait - you have to make it happen".

Note that this person had nothing to gain by saying this to me, as he would potentially lose a (presumably good) employee. And maybe for that reason, the message was so strong and effective. To this day, those words resonate in my mind: "you cannot just sit and wait - you have to make it happen".

Stephen: If you were conducting this interview, what 3 questions would you ask, and then what would be your answers?

Celso: I actually found this interview to be very comprehensive, but I will offer one additional question anyway: "What are the critical success factors for IT?" My answer to it is: "having good people". I honestly believe that a good team can overcome almost all obstacles that present themselves and deliver quality work even under tight circumstances. I recognize that a truly good team is very hard to find, though.

Stephen: Celso, again, thank you for sharing your deep insights, talent and experiences with our audience.

Celso: This is an honour and a pleasure for me, Stephen. I hope your readers will find some value in my answers. If there is ever anything else I can do to contribute with any of your initiatives, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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I encourage you to share your thoughts here on these interviews or send me an e-mail at [sibaraki@cips.ca](mailto:sibaraki@cips.ca).

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Posted: Friday, March 02, 2007 8:27 AM by [cdnitmgr](#)  
Filed under: [Stephen Ibaraki](#), [Interviews](#)

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Comments

[Canadian IT Manager](#) said:

Graham Jones (Vancouver, President of VANTUQ) noted Celso's comment about language being a barrier

March 6, 2007 3:44 PM

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