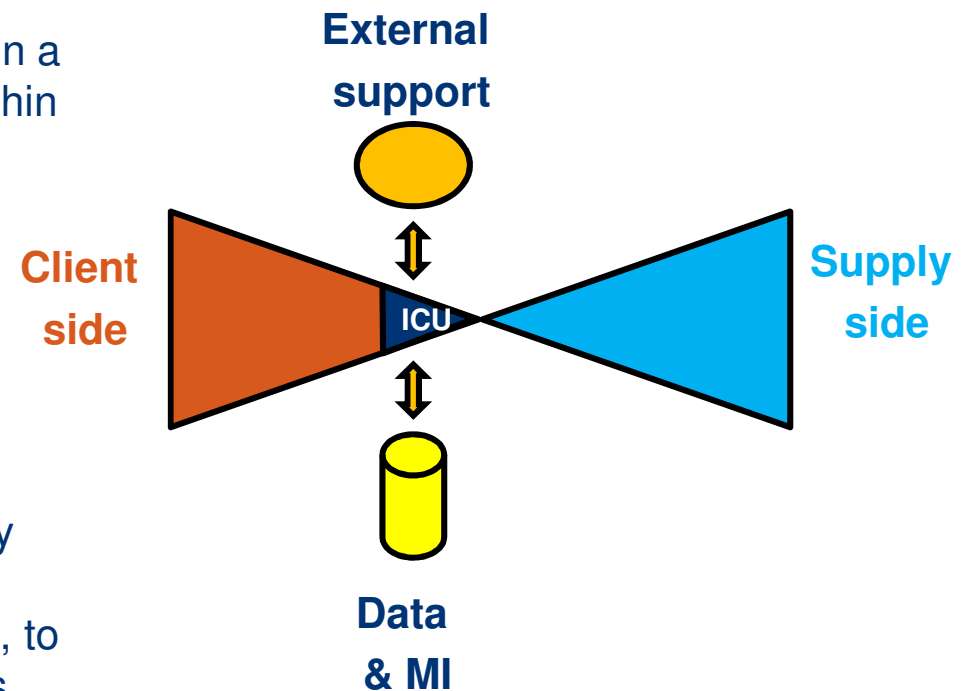


## What is an Intelligent Client Unit (ICU)?

- An Intelligent Client Unit is a team of people, housed within the “client side” of the organisation, that interprets the client requirements and translates them into reality in a way that achieves sustainable results both within the client organisation and within the related supplier community.
- An ICU is definitely NOT a mechanical / process-orientated procurement service. Anything but!
- It is sophisticated, sensitive and commercially astute – tuned to the real users needs of the organisation (while managing demand wisely), to what others are doing in parallel organisations, to real-time performance data, and to supplier needs (maintaining a fair and economically sustainable service).



## Key attributes of a high performing ICU



**Strategic capability** – an ability to understand the strategy and see the business strategy context

**Skills** – legal, commercial, specification, procurement, project management, operational

**Pre-planning** – a deep skill in scenario planning, options creation, options engineering

**Intelligent capability** – the art of reading and translating demand into suitably scoped supply packages

**Governance and control** – ensuring that timely decisions are taken by the right client and supplier people

**Procurement and partnering** – knowing how to work collaboratively, not at arms length, not adversarialy

**(Delivery management)** – many regard as the main ICU scope, but its the easiest and least important

**Learning** – a process for learning, sharing and absorbing experiences across and outside the organisation

**Continuous improvement** – processes for reinforcing good behaviours and correcting others

## Why ICU's fail



ICU's fail for a number of reasons – mainly because its really challenging to find the right people, and then empower them to take decisions that often go to the heart of business operations

ICU's need to be able to understand the organisation's strategy, and all the constituent elements, in order to make sensible day to day decisions. For example, the overarching strategy informs the property strategy, the IT strategy, the HR strategy. Decisions taken in isolation are bound to provide poor value. The ICU needs to understand all that, and become the translator of the requirements for the suppliers

ICU's fail because the team doesn't do sufficient pre-planning – at the very earliest stages before projects come into full being. That's the time of greatest influence. This is all about proper demand forecasting, optimism bias, strategic resource allocation, option creation / engineering, priorities and early value management.

Ineffective ICU's are often characterised by poor data / MI processes. The blind leading the blind...

ICU's should translate business requirements into suitably scoped packages for the supply chains. Watch out for those that do this mechanically, without a blend of strategic and practical thinking, without commercial or legal intuition, or with mechanistic adherence to formulaic procurement. They stifle innovation from the supply side and create a sterile an uninformed master-servant relationship.

ICU's that don't feed relevant governance cycles, or that don't aid timely decisions cycles, are of little use!

Thank you!



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**If you have any thoughts or views,  
we'd love to hear them please.**

**Do email us on**

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**and let us know what you think!**