# Transcript: IT Podcast – Ep 36 – Jerry Geiser

*The following transcript is a verbatim account of the video or audio file accompanying this transcript.*

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

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Speaker #2 (Jerry Geiser):

Hello, and welcome to another podcast for their Masters and IT management program. Today we're going to be looking at the program overview and how when making this choice for this particular IT degree will help you with your career and advancement as you go forward after your education.

My name is Jerry Geiser. I'm one of the course instructors for this program. I would like to introduce someone we have today, Ryan Whisler, who's the Program Chair for MSITM. Hello, Ryan.

Speaker # (Ryan Whisler):

Hello, Jerry. Thanks for having me. It's great to be here.

Speaker #2 (Jerry Geiser):

You and I have had several discussions in the past and we've talked about why we get excited about what this IT degree brings and why we looked at students who are in this program as having an opportunity to really be successful. Can you give me your idea and background of what you think this program means to you?

Speaker # (Ryan Whisler):

That's a great question, Jerry, because I think this program helps students at all different stages. If you're an IT professional who had years of experience, you'll do well in this program, and it'll help you to balance your career and move up to climb the ladder, so to speak. If you are new to IT, Let's say you have a degree in another discipline and you want to get into IT, this program will also meet you there and provide the information you need from a technical perspective to start building that experience-based, and also to gain leadership acumen.

During my time as a CIO, I really wish that I had known about the MSITM and had an opportunity to take it because I really learned a lot just by living it out and being a CIO. It would have been really helpful to have the lessons learned and the competencies that are built into the MSITM in advance at my time as a CIO.

I really feel like whether you're starting out in IT or whether you're seasoned IT professional and you're just looking for that next step, this program really help you to get there.

Speaker #2 (Jerry Geiser):

You brought up a really interesting point. As a CIO, you sat there, you are like, on the job experience, tell me if there's any particular course in this program that you would have said, men, I wish I really would have had this because this would have helped me immensely.

Speaker # (Ryan Whisler):

Yeah. I really appreciate that question, Jerry, because what sets this program of par is that it's not a pure technology degree. It's, how do you lead within technology, is our focus. The importance of that is, there are some disciplines that are outside of IT, our best example of that is the financial management class. Many students, I think they ask the question, why am I taking a financial management class? The best answer to that is really, you need that kind of course as an IT leader, because you need to understand what your peers are looking at, how they think about the business to be able to contribute in conversations, whether it's in the boardroom or in one-on-ones. But you need to be able to understand the financials of the company. It's important not only to be able to understand, but also contribute even more. I've seen a lot of IT professionals have brilliant ideas of how they could use technology to transform the business, but they struggled to help communicate to their business partners the value of those projects. Certainly, a digital transformation project brings a lot of really cool tech to the forefront, but how do you show the ROI on that, the return on investment? How do you show that this project will make us more profitable or bring savings? That's really what your CEO and your board of directors and other high-level leaders are looking for. That's a way that this program helps position you for being running in those circles.

In addition, there is another course that really jumps out to me related to sourcing and development. That's something that when I went into the CIO role, I don't know that I'll fully grasp the frequency with which we would be having those conversations. What I mean by that is vendor negotiations, vendor contracts, outsourcing those types of efforts, because that can really consume a good percentage of IT leader's time, and it's really key, you're depending on these other organizations to help you get work done then execute your projects, and you've really got to be able to understand that process, be involved in negotiations, and all of the activities that go into forming a great partnership. It allows for both parties to have success.

Those are two courses that jump out to me. There's a lot of other courses that I feel like they're really fun and interesting. Emerging technologies is one that comes to mind. Leadership, power, and influence is another one. There's a lot of good stuff in the program, but I really wanted to highlight some of the things that maybe some students look at and go, why this? Why finance? Why sourcing and development? It's because that's where you can really shine and differentiate yourself.

Speaker #2 (Jerry Geiser):

You brought up a really good point. One of the things about IT, we always talk about how technology is leading edge. It's fresh, it's new. But one thing that is hard to communicate about IT is we don't move as fast as the business. The business has monthly plans, it has yearly plans, it has possibly 3-5 year plans, and IT and its traditional infrastructure could have a refresh, maybe every three years to five years. So IT seems to be on its own path. In a traditional environment, it seemed like the IT department was a necessary evil that they were necessary because the business knew that without them, they couldn't succeed. But they really weren't part of the business partnership. Do you now see that this program tries to address that in it's new and fresh and leading?

Speaker # (Ryan Whisler):

Yeah. I feel like as a CIO, a lot of my time was spent bringing technology to the forefront. What I mean by that is demonstrating how the use of technology could revolutionize how we did business. There are many phrases I've heard it referred to as, of course, like the cost center versus the value center. The idea that we just have IT around to keep the servers running and our desktops operating. That is a piece of what IT does for sure. But on top of that, we also have the ability to transform the business.

It's been a personal mission of mine wherever I've been to try and promote the fact that IT should be at the core and at the table with any discussions related around the organization strategy and how they move forward. There are some things, hardware refreshes, etc, that go on a longer schedule, but this quest to constantly find ways to improve organizational performance, outcomes and reduce costs, those are all things that we should be looking at every day. Every time we hear about pain point in the organization, we should be thinking about how IT can solve that. That helps us move from a maintainer role to a leading edge source of value creation. I think that's where IT really wants to be.

I really think that this whole move around now if you search the web, you'll find all kinds of stories and references to digital transformation. I love that phrase and we need to recognize IT as a source of digital transformation and not a source of cost.

This program really helps you do that because it helps you demonstrate the value that you as an IT organization can bring and to think about it holistically in light of what the business goals are and not just cool technology for cool technology say, but instead, to drive the business forward.

Speaker #2 (Jerry Geiser):

Excellent. I have one last question for you. We talked a lot about the CIO role. Some students might be sitting here saying, I just don't know if I can fit that role. I wasn't planning on it. Is this really the right degree for me if I'm not thinking I'm going to be the CIO?

Speaker # (Ryan Whisler):

I've heard that from students and I'm always encouraged when I do because I feel like it's a great opportunity to say that you never know where your skill set will take you as you expand your skill set. My hope is that in this degree, some may come into it with a vision of already where they want to go and how they're going to get there, and that is amazing. But for others, my hope is that in this degree, you'll feel more and more confident that you have the skills to be able to step up into a management role, a leadership role, ultimately potentially the CIO type of role, to be in the C-Suite with the executives. I really hope that many of our students are realizing that they are capable of that level of leadership.

Speaker #2 (Jerry Geiser):

Well, Ryan, this was an excellent time, and I really do appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to talk to me today. Everyone who got to join the podcast, I hope you enjoyed it and look forward to us delivering more podcasts on actual course content. Always feel free to reach out to us in any way, shape, or form. Thank you for joining the program.

Speaker #1 (Narrator):

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