

CLEAR - ACTIONABLE - CURRENT - RELEVANT A HOLISTIC VIEW OF IT STRATEGIC PLANNING



IT struggles to bridge the gap between challenges and impactful solutions - resulting in a dearth of timely and relevant insights.

Developing IT strategic plans can be time consuming and costly, and still fail to generate direction that is clear, actionable, current and relevant. The better an organization is at planning for the future the better their chances of increasing operating efficiency and effectiveness, and delivering a high-level of service to customers. However, this can be a tough mountain to climb. The day-to-day operation of a typical IT department is fast-paced and complex. Things move at lightning speed. In 2018, Canada's tech industry surpassed \$13B overall in research and development, and continued to outperform other major sectors, including Finance & Insurance, Wholesale Trade, Retail Trade, and Agriculture.

The IT department is multi-tasking intense day-to-day operations with periodic unexpected and critical events. At the same time, they're routinely working to understand what's coming down the "technology pipeline" that might be applied to new requirements of the organization. There often isn't time, or sufficient depth within the team, to accomplish daily operations as well as long term strategic planning.

While a leaking roof is a sure sign of the need for building maintenance (although not necessarily for roof replacement), the need for maintenance on other types of infrastructure may not be so obvious. The building trades and other engineering professions have established many types of metrics and standards, and strategic planning frameworks to guide such decisions. IT hasn't achieved that level of standardization, but we can foster an approach to assessing IT infrastructure, leading to the development of sound strategic plans, by measuring their usefulness, reliability, and technological obsolescence.



In many organizations IT is still being treated as a cost center.

Traditionally, organizations rarely collected and analyzed data across the entire IT infrastructure; it just was not feasible because of the disparate legacy systems they had to manage. There needed to be a way to gain visibility into corporate processes and infrastructure, eliminating the reliance on manual, redundant tasks, improving the capability to report on how IT is helping an organization achieve its goals for providing its customers with the highest quality of service in an efficient manner.

For IT this can be a very tough challenge. Those in the core business of the organization may be in a similar situation. They are also working to find a way to integrate long range planning with daily operations. Everyone, no matter what their primary discipline, has to balance day-to-day operations with future planning.

It is in the area of future planning that there can be a major gap between IT staff and the core business.

IT Teams Must Be Active, Not Reactive, Planning Partners

When IT has a seat at the "strategy table" they have a better understanding of their businesses' near and longer-term technology needs. They are also more effective at driving partnerships and shared accountability with the business.

Technology Landscape is Constantly Changing

Even IT leaders can struggle to find time to keep their finger on the pulse of the ever-changing technology landscape. While keeping up with what's happening in the tech world takes dedicated effort, identifying the trends and innovators as early as possible can be a competitive advantage.

This "innovation gap" will likely continue, as cloud providers are profit-driven whereas the vast majority of IT organizations are viewed as a cost center. Missing a trend or opportunity can cause companies to play catch up in their industry, or worse.



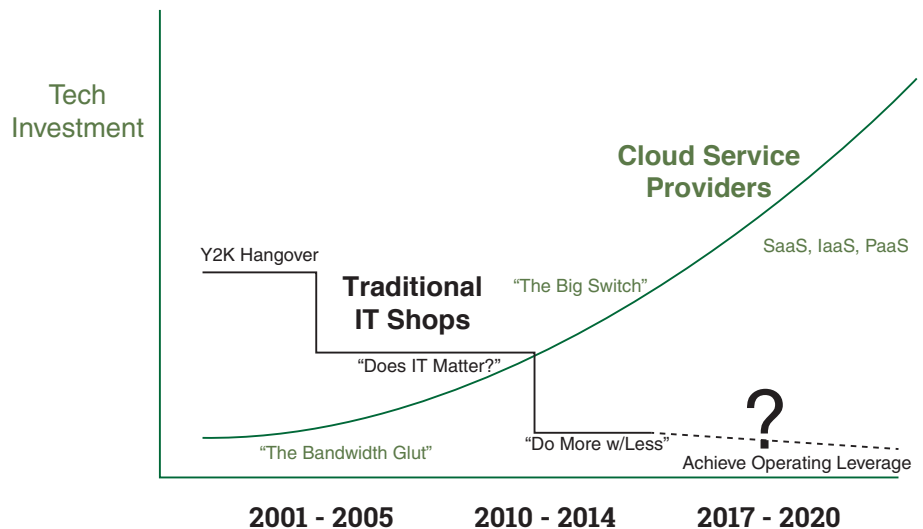
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Business Change is Tough

Most organizations will acknowledge that change is hard.

A lack of vision, middle management permafrost, a lack of understanding about change, and a lack of good methods to measure and implement change, are examples of where businesses tend to stumble.

The Innovation Gap is Widening

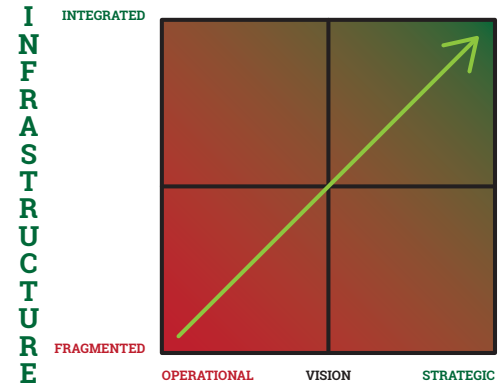


TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE IS DRIVEN BY STRATEGIC BUSINESS INFRASTRUCTURE

IT leaders are struggling so hard to keep up with technology evolution and operational reliability that they don't have much of an opportunity to look for new business applications of the technology they provide.

They continue to strive for integration across technologies as well as integration with the business structure and processes. Business executives need to make sure they have a Business Infrastructure that integrates processes from input to output and assures coherence of operation across divisions.

The IT department with true business appreciation will also understand the integration that has to take place between all business processes and the technology that supports them.



FROM COST CENTER TO PROFIT CENTER - THE NEW IT

In making major decisions around the architecture of corporate applications and systems, historically the business units would take a relatively hands-off approach. However, in many organizations today IT is working closely with the business to help them understand the implications of technology — how it will change their service offering - and what new capabilities it may deliver in the future.

By the time the organization has to make a decision on the architecture, that decision will essentially be made. Educating everyone during the early stages is key in broadening the understanding, making the entire process more efficient and collaborative.

KPIs are being used to show how implementing a technology product will lead directly to bringing in a specific number of new customers, that will represent a specific range of new revenue dollars. Another potential bucket is customer service scores: how does implementing a technology tool reduce customer wait times in call centers that will lead directly to improving customer service scores by a certain percentage.

Key to Success

Today's successful IT department has more depth and is much more collaborative. The business now understands that everything they do has a technology requirement or implication, and the conversations start much earlier.

IT is at the table when new business concepts are being discussed such as breaking into a new market or developing a new product. That makes a big difference because their role is more consultative and collaborative - opposed to being reactive order-takers.

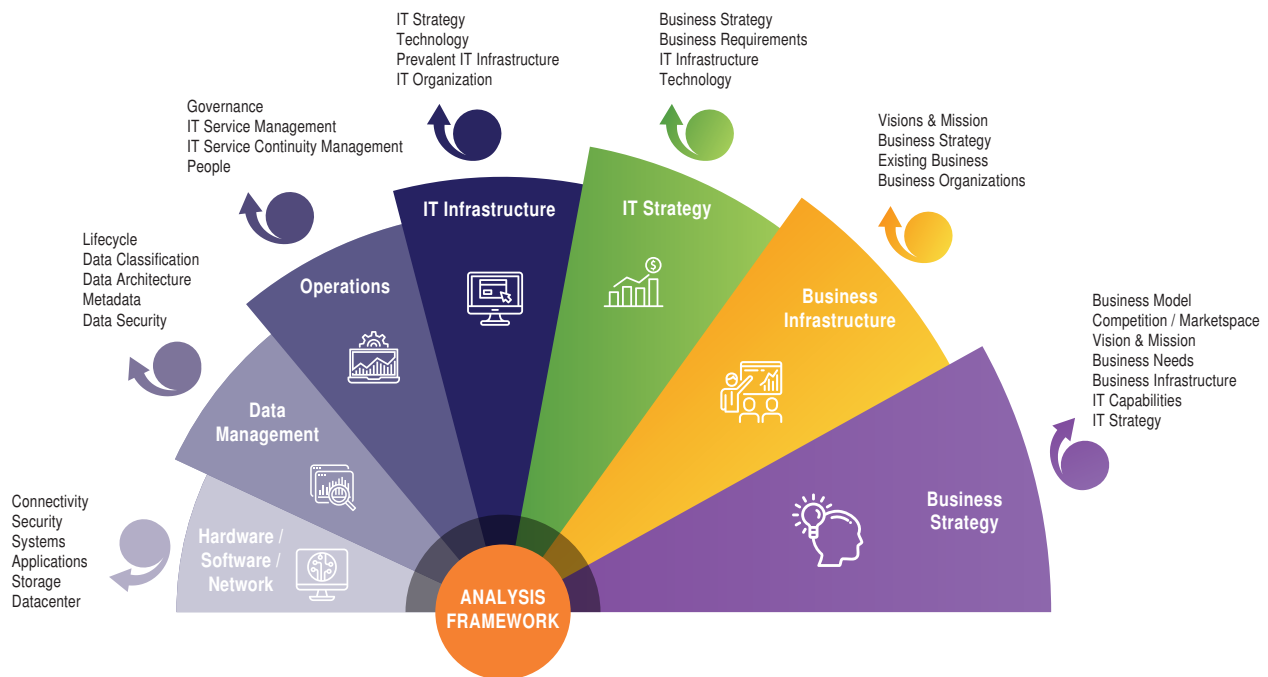
- 1 Business Vision Drives the Technology Vision.**
- 2 Feedback Enhances the Business Vision.**
- 3 Technology Without Business Application Has No Value!**



THE EVOLUTION OF IT STRATEGY

Traditionally IT Infrastructure is based on the requirements to support IT Strategy and Business Infrastructure. This is where Business Infrastructure drives IT infrastructure. But when IT infrastructure is futuristic, based on the long-term vision of IT (or IT Strategy), it would have the features to support the business which business itself may not have thought of. Thus, it would start driving the Business Infrastructure.

The evolution of Business/IT Strategy and Infrastructure is a continual process and the continual improvement can be triggered internally by the business, IT or externally (e.g. competition, law, marketplace, etc.).



Evolution of Business/IT Strategy and Infrastructure is a continual process with core services such as Operations, Data Management, Hardware/Software/Network acting as the supporting pillars

The value proposition of IT can only be realized when IT partners with the business

IT “as a service” means coming up with services that can help everyone do their jobs better, whether those services are physically run by IT or procured from remote sources (i.e. the Cloud). It's less about managing devices and more about brokering services and demonstrating value to internal customers.

To help senior management recognize the value of information technology in everyday business, IT teams need to prove themselves to be indispensable partners within the organizations they serve. Sometimes, perception is just as important as reality. When visibility drives the perception of effectiveness, reality is sure to follow.

About WG Advisory Services

WG Advisory Services specializes in IT Strategic Planning, Business Continuity Management, and Cloud Readiness.

Our expertise in the many layers of information technology, coupled with a strict focus on our customers business requirements, has made us unique in the industry.

