Jim Boomer • Nov. 08, 2012

From the Bridging the Gap blog.

Keeping up with the changing landscape of technology is challenging and more so when you don't have the proper IT governance structure in place. What exactly is IT governance and how should a firm go about it? Let's start with the AICPA's definition of IT Governance:

A framework that ensures that technology decisions are made in support of the business goals and objectives.

In other words, it ensures that you have alignment between the firm's strategic vision and the technology initiatives that support the desired results. This concept seems simple but it is one that CPA firms have struggled with for years. So how do you create this alignment?

Don't Develop Plans in Silos

Start by developing a strategic plan for the overall firm that outlines your Vision, Mission, Core Values and Strategic Objectives. Once you identify your top 4-6 Strategic Objectives, you must then drill down to the specific initiatives, measures of success, responsible parties and due dates. We recommend that you limit this to a single page, front and back to force yourself to focus on what's really important.

Once you have the strategic plan for the firm you can start to tackle the Technology Plan. Too often, we see firms try to develop the two plans in siloes. The result is typically two disjointed plans that don't support each other. When you align IT with firm strategy you leverage technology to its full potential and accelerate business results.

Ensure You Have the Right IT Leader

6. Strategy & Planning

While your IT leader's sufficiency in all these areas might not be at an "expert" level, you need to look for potential. Do they show a willingness to learn new skills and a desire to develop beyond their current position? If the answer is yes, you likely have the right person and need to invest in development and training programs.

You also need to encourage them to join a peer community and share with peers. If you answered "no", then you are better served investing your time and money in recruiting and hiring the right person.

Technology impacts every area of your firm. Managing the people, planning and processes around IT can be challenging but is critical to the success of your firm. I encourage you to start today by taking the initial steps to improving your firm's performance through improved IT leadership and alignment.

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