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of doing business? Successful firms view it as an asset and build an IT leadership and governance model that helps harness the power of technology as an accelerator toward improved performance, profitability and growth. There are five aspects of IT governance that are differentiating the best from rest.

Jim Boomer • Apr. 21, 2014



Is your firm leveraging technology as a strategic asset or is it viewed as simply a cost of doing business? Successful firms view it as an asset and build an IT leadership and

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that do are still developing each plan in isolation and then wondering why there is no alignment. The better approach is to start with development of the strategic plan for the overall firm (preferably in collaboration with IT) and then develop a Technology plan that rolls up to and supports the firm's strategic objectives. This is how you gain alignment and avoid disjointed strategies.

2. IT Professional Development

Trends such as the cloud and Consumerization of IT are changing the role of the IT Professional and their skills will also need to adapt. This requires a different approach to professional development for your IT team. The focus needs to move on management, leadership and communication rather than obtaining technology certifications. These skills will better position IT to understand how people do their work and facilitate the identification and implementation of tools that will make their work easier and more efficient.

3. IT Planning & Budgeting

To truly create alignment between firm strategy and IT strategy, it needs to be a collaborative effort between IT and business professionals. But it doesn't stop there. You need to ensure that all functional areas – IT, HR, Marketing and Talent Development are also in alignment with each other and the overall firm strategy. Budgeting is a necessary evil that is dreaded by most IT leaders. They are presenting to a group that crunches numbers for a living and often get beat up in the process. Some tips that will make this process go a lot smoother for everyone include:

- **Speak in their terms** – Develop your presentation in business language rather than technology terms.
- **Limit the detail** – Start with the important numbers such as IT spend as a % of revenue and % change from last year and provide the detail as requested.
- **Separate maintenance from innovation** – Maintenance items keep the lights on

whereas innovation is about new projects that will move the firm forward.

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- Utilize task forces
- Realize IT Department ≠ Technology Committee
- Include other functional leads from the firm (Marketing, Training & Learning, etc.)

Focus your committee meetings on progress rather than perfection. Highlight accomplishments and use challenges as learning opportunities rather than an opportunity to point blame.

5. Peer Groups

With the speed of change today in technology and all areas of business, it is impossible to keep up with the leading trends when you operate in a vacuum. It's imperative that firms step outside their own four walls and learn from their peers. Many firms are doing this today but their approach is actually creating further disconnect between IT and business because everyone does their own thing. IT professionals go to technology conferences/training and firm leadership attends practice management events. The topics may be similar or even the same, but often times they are not hearing and taking away the same message. Bringing the IT and business leaders together in the same room will start to bridge the gap between IT and practice management.

Technology impacts every area of the firm and managing the people, planning and processes around IT is critical to the success of your firm. Waiting can be costly since playing catch-up requires a lot more time, effort and money than maintaining your technology at a high level. I encourage you to start today by taking the initial steps to improving your firm's performance through improved IT leadership and governance.

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