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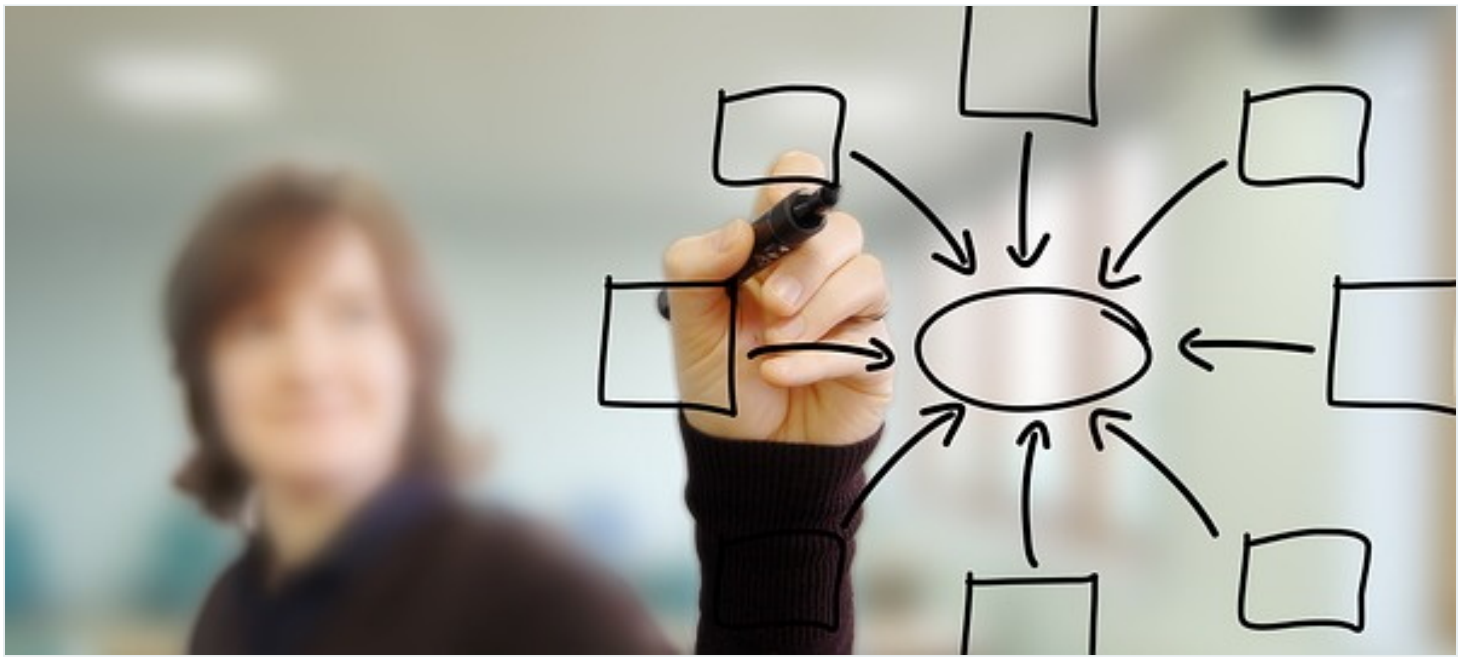
Jim Boomer • Dec. 13, 2019



In an accounting firm, technology is embedded in everything we do. Yet too often, we see firms hand off responsibility for all technology projects to their IT teams. Firms that successfully leverage technology as a strategic asset recognize that there is no such thing as an "IT project." There are only firm projects that are supported by IT.

Still, someone needs to be responsible for decision-making when it comes to choosing and prioritizing projects. That responsibility doesn't fall solely on IT, and it shouldn't be added to firm leaders' already lengthy list of duties. So who should make the decisions? A technology steering committee.

What is a technology steering committee?

A technology steering committee brings together key IT and business stakeholders to

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and there is better alignment between IT and other areas of the firm.

Benefits of a technology steering committee

Too often, firms base their IT initiatives on gut feelings, squeaky wheels, chasing shiny objects or following what others are doing. A technology steering committee can provide a stabilizing influence to help ensure that the firm's technology standards, policies and initiatives are established and maintained with a high-level view. The committee provides direction on long-term strategies that support the firm's needs and vision.

As a bonus, using a technology steering committee helps with the adoption and rollout of new technology because team members from throughout the firm are a part of the selection from the beginning. This involvement helps people feel like they're a driver of the change, rather than a victim of it.

Technology steering committee best practices

A technology steering committee can serve an essential role in the overall IT governance process – if it operates effectively. When firms simply create a committee without really giving it authority, structure and accountability, committee meetings tend to devolve into the CIO doing most of the talking while other participants answer emails on their phone. Here are some best practices that can ensure yours serves its intended purpose.

Ensure support from firm leadership

One of the most critical factors that contribute to the success of a technology steering committee is having the full backing from firm leadership. If the committee's primary function is to review and approve the firm's key projects and initiatives, then it must have high-level support and participation to be effective. This also ensures

that both IT and firm leaders are accountable for their decisions rather than having

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prioritization and selection criteria to ensure that only projects that are properly aligned with the firm's overall strategy are selected for execution. Setting these standards also helps ensure that projects are evaluated objectively rather than being influenced by steering committee members with stronger opinions or more political clout.

Monitor progress and metrics

Once projects have been approved and prioritized, the committee needs to monitor the execution and progress of its projects. The committee should request that project managers provide reports and visibility into ongoing projects. By holding the steering committee accountable for results, monitoring projects becomes a priority. The committee can also provide project support if it feels that the project is deviating from its intended goals.

Focus on continuous improvement

A technology steering committee is an important group within your firm, so its effectiveness should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is delivering value for the firm. Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the committee's structure and processes, and make changes as needed.

Nearly every project in your firm will involve technology on some level, but that doesn't mean those projects should be handed off to a technology team. They need to be driven by a multi-functional, multi-level team dedicated to ensuring that technology decisions are made in alignment with overall firm strategy.

Firm Management • Technology

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