

Developing information systems strategies

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Failure to incorporate those IS/IT considerations when deciding other areas such as corporate, marketing or other company specific sections / divisions strategies can result in decisions being made on a purely financial basis. In most cases, this will later result in a higher total cost of ownership and lower return on Investment In the IS/IT division, thereby fuelling the already stereotypical Industry view of " expensive" and " Inefficient" CIT. I will explain in detail why organizations must Invest time and capital In a suitable IS, IT strategy.

I will also suggest a suitable example framework for analyzing an organization's acquirement and producing an IS/IT Strategy that maximizes potential and use of IT technologies, and then evaluate the framework against pre-defined criteria. Why should an Organization develop an IS/IT Strategy? IS/IT strategy should be an Integral part of the holistic business consideration. The IS/ IT strategy can assist the normally corporate level decisions of " Where is the business going? " and " Why is the business heading in that direction? By defining what is required and how it can be delivered to achieve and support the overall business goals. Information definition and classification is one key area where a business lies heavily on a suitable IS/IT strategy. The storage and presentation of formal and Informal Information, whether Internal communications such as strategy plans, supplier e-mails and contracts, can dictate the business productivity levels. In addition, a well-designed IS/IT strategy will provide the tools for management review and system improvement, allowing the business to meet its agreed financial targets.

In addition to the Organization's overall corporate strategy, an organization will need to produce an IS/IT strategy that aligns the Information Systems development with the business needs. What is currently required? " is only half the question. Application developments, providing a platform for the required business information storage and delivery, and a strategy for delivering the applications using technology as an enabling mechanism are crucial considerations.

Analysis of the current organization situation, looking both at the internal and external aspects of the business, is concerned with the current strategy and its strengths and weaknesses. SOOT 1 analysis helps to define the organization's position in the business related marketplace by looking at competitors (and their product offerings), internal departmental structure (for suitability when providing products and services) and market share (identifying opportunities to increase within market segments).

Today the role of CIT in a modern day business model is better defined, providing more control and continuously evolving with the business need, thereby increasing its business reliability level. Organizations that realize strategic IS/IT when completing their overall business strategy have benefited from competitive advantages such as improved productivity, performance, facilitation of new management and organization methods, and in some cases the development of new cuisines focus areas or new products.

Common problems and barriers in developing an IS/IT Strategy The same IS/IT strategy that can levy increases in productivity and business

opportunities may also limit the choices available to the business in meeting those targets due to technology restrictions, or the financial implications of procuring the required technology. But an organization looking at implementing an IS/IT strategy needs to consider the manner with which it will be applied to the overall business strategy, and not simply review how the existing technology is being used.

To successfully implement a suitable IS/IT strategy the organization will need to decide whether it is planned, resulting from intentions that were carried out, or has it emerged in the absence of previous intentions. Also, is it planned well enough to allow logical progression and evolution, adapting with the needs or goals of the business, or is it progressing toward a single goal? Ensuring not only top-level management 'buy-in' to the concept, but also the cooperation of Organization representatives required to capture existing processes and redefine the IS/IT Strategy can be challenging on many levels.

I have found the most common to be cost-prohibitive reasons. An organization will crave a suitable IS/ IT Strategy, requiring the process controls it brings, but does not have the necessary budgets available. Organizations are focused on short-term gains when considering IS/IT, and proving to senior management that a well-developed IS/IT Strategy will actually bring long-term financial benefits, demonstrated only by case studies, is difficult. The stereotypical view of IT is that it is expensive, badly managed, very rarely delivers its promises and is purely an operational tool.

Developing an IS/IT Strategy organizations are willing to do. The objectives and development of an IS/IT Strategy Framework A strategic framework can be put in place by considering three factors, the external environment in which the business operates, any pressure groups or stakeholders that will affect the decision making process and internal business straightening and planning. Many factors dictate whether a selected framework for providing a suitable IS/IT strategy has been successful.

Such factors include identifying current and future information needs for the organization, ensuring that they are in close alignment with both the business and IS/IT strategies, their functions and objectives. The chosen framework should facilitate the recognition that the organization's requirements will be constantly changing, ensuring that the IS/IT function formulated from the results of the framework can be responsive, assisting with not only long- term planning but also any urgent requirements.

The framework will ensure that comprehensive policies are defined to control and manage any corporate information resources, providing a sound IS infrastructure, and that the IS function is central to the organizations considerations. Senior management will ensure that key IS skills, squired to deliver the action plans and projects, are developed and maintained in the organization and that the new IS/IT Strategy is communicated to all areas / departments. Finally, the framework will ensure that the derived IS/IT strategy is accepted and responsibility for it shared between the IS/IS function and the organization as a whole.

The framework I have chosen is the BCC framework provided as part of the coursework. The BCC framework has been produced to allow Semen's and departments or divisions within larger organizations to develop suitable IS/IT strategies and therefore support the overall business plan. It uses a two-day process-based residential workshop method, which involves activities including the review and completion of template documents prior, during and post the workshop days and requires a sponsor, typically the Managing Director (of a SAME), or the head of a department, division or business unit.

Prior to the scheduled workshops, facilitators will record all of the information required to define the IS/IT strategy including a Business Process Wheel for defining the organization or department's Core and Supporting processes, an IS/IT Evaluation for each system within the organization and finally a Generic Issues log. Successful capturing of this information should provide a draft vision and statement of direction, the organization's core competencies, a comprehensive analysis of business activities and a list of issues that are important to the organization (amongst others). Erection, agree the critical issues that require resolution when producing the IS/IT strategy, and define the improvement projects required for the strategy. By agreeing the boundaries for the organization, using past experiences and predicted future scenarios, the vision and statement of direction can be achieved. Analysis of the issues that are important to the organization helps to provide the critical success factors and agree the items to be addressed if the IS/IT strategy is to be successful.

Facilitators will work closely with the sponsor and other assigned personnel to review the business processes and priorities them according to their importance and quality within the organization. Using template Project Performa and a Business Process IT Matrix, each application, infrastructure and business process project within the new IS/IT Strategy is carefully defined to ensure the improvement of priority processes.

The final workshop activity is the production of the IS/IT Strategy intent, which will include the (priorities) projects and also an appropriate communications method for disseminating the new strategy to the organization. Action plans are defined, showing the timescales over which the agreed projects will be implemented, any risks or constraints that may hamper the project, the responsibilities for Project Management, Project Sponsor and the required manpower effort to complete.

The IS/ IT strategy intent components are defined, including the role of IT within the organization, the technical infrastructure required and the management incinerations for the IS/IT Strategy. On completion of the workshops the focus turns to monitoring the agreed action plans, reviewing the business direction and the effectiveness of the implemented IS/ IT Strategy. Action Plans are reviewed at regular meetings, typically every three months, and updated as required. The reviews also ensure that the IS/IT Strategy produced by the BCC Framework Workshops continue to be consistent with the business objectives.

Conclusions and Summary The BCC framework is essentially a structured methodology, providing key steps to capture and analyses the current

organization layout and use of IS/IT. The pre-reshow phase ensures that the project team responsible for formulating the new IS/IT strategy fully understands the business processes in place and any dependencies that exist for those processes, also any areas which are not currently process driven or managed but require a more formal approach.

The workshop phase of the BCC framework looks at defining the new strategy, again using process driven steps to produce projects and the documentation necessary to manage those projects, to ensure that the agreed resulting IS/IT strategy is deployed as required. The post-workshop phase, which will effectively last as long as the projects are tat. I therefore believe that the BCC framework achieves the objectives of understanding the current and future needs of the business, and is an effective method for producing a suitable IS/IT Strategy in business.