Creating a Highly Responsive IT Organization

IT governance presents a nagging challenge for today's Chief Information Officers.

CIOs must be skillful innovators, creating competitive differentiators using technology, but they are also responsible for any business risks that technology introduces. This influential position requires vision for roadmapping and providing internal thought leadership. Regrettably, unnecessarily complex governance procedures stand between CIOs shifting from skilled risk managers to enterprise visionaries.

The Fight for Lean Governance

Governance procedures established even five years ago have failed to meet the changing needs of IT and the lines of business they support. Risks have increased, demand for fast delivery has skyrocketed, and resources are being stretched thin. Governance, however, remains unchanged. Continuing to leverage "heavy" documentation and manual approval processes, while focusing on cost containment and cost reduction can cause other areas of the business to circumvent well-intentioned governance practices.

> Any IT leader knows their responsibilities are among the most complex within the organization because their department touches every aspect of the business.

Not only are they responsible for keeping IT running smoothly, they face the highest level of scrutiny from their management team colleagues, boards of directors, and even government regulators.

Strategically, IT governance is supposed to align corporate and business unit goals. Tactically, IT governance provides enterprises with guidelines for five key areas: Utilizing existing resources, incorporating new technologies, organizing/reorganizing personnel, managing risk, and measuring performance.

To support this evolving role of CIOs, organizations must become highly responsive. An enterprise must undergo a "digital transformation" simply to keep up.

How it Used to Work

When IT governance procedures are either ineffective or ignored, the ripple effect can be significant.

Consider a situation where Marketing wants to utilize a new marketing automation system. IT is asked to assess the system. The evaluation is time-consuming and further elongated because of scarce IT resources. If this assessment takes too long, Marketing may unilaterally decide to implement the system. As a stand-alone solution, the system can be implemented quickly. A vast array of issues arise, however, once marketing needs to fully integrate the new solution with existing systems. A tremendous business opportunity quickly becomes an operational headache that requires the immediate attention of managers, DBAs, and software engineers. Significant time is wasted on one-off fixes, re-work, and maintenance. If governance is made more lean, approval processes can be streamlined and alternatives can be provided for solutions that work at an organizational level, not for just individual user groups.

What Goes Wrong

1. Time Wasted in System Selection

2. Resources Diverted to Support New Systems

3. Decreased Morale During Difficult Implementation/Integration

4. IT Becomes Reactive Instead of Proactive

5. Planning/Budgeting Becomes Even More Challenging

6. Loss of Trust in IT's Vision

7. Higher Costs, Decreased Profitability

Becoming Highly Responsive

A highly responsive IT organization must address the demands of internal users, meet the expectations of new and existing customers, and adapt to the ever-evolving state of technology in order to remain competitive. They must also be prepared to support their CIO as a roadmapper and visionary for the business.

While many enterprises seem to be investing in "Digital Transformation," there is a fundamental disconnect in what this truly means for an organization. Digital Transformation doesn't and shouldn't mean simply investing in new technology. IT leadership must establish a strategy before purchasing software to really achieve digital transformation.

The strategy should help to formalize decision models and challenge existing governance practices. To succeed, however, the strategy needs to contemplate ever increasing uses of technology across the enterprise without a commensurate increase in personnel. The strategy should be centered around building a highly responsive organization.

To be responsive, you have to:

1 Isolate the obstacles to maintaining/expanding current enterprise systems;

2 Identify quantifiable metrics that illustrate IT's performance in supporting the business;

3 Explore new platforms that create scale and operational efficiencies.

What Highly Responsive Really Looks Like

Embedding Lean IT Governance into a CIO's digital transformation framework builds an organizational structure for accelerating future system replacements, expansions, or upgrades. Focusing on incremental value while supporting a long-term strategy creates enduring flexibility and scalability which is essential to digital transformation.

The framework includes:

1 **Agile Enterprise Architecture:** defines an overall IT strategy and technical architecture (Integration Hub, Security, MDM, others) that matches near-term and long-term business goals.

2 **Platform Decisioning Model:** serves as the applications request "intake engine" and maps applications needs to the approved platform factoring in scalability, security, and functionality.

3 **Organization:** identifies key roles and responsibilities of team designed to accelerate the delivery of technology across the organization.

By following this process you will be able to reduce the time between project phases and roll out new solutions faster. With an accelerated time to market, your enterprise will be more responsive and competitive. You will have the freedom to expand and innovate in ways that do not seem possible under the old governance model.

When you become highly responsive, you'll be able to support integration requirements within a timeframe desired by your end-users. You'll also be able to spend less time focused on security because you'll know where new additions are coming from and will have vetted their fit with the enterprise.

Accelerate Your Transformation

If you are on the cusp of a digital transformation and you'd like some additional guidance, Acumen Solutions is the expert in enterprise IT strategy and optimization.

Our work has facilitated the success of our clients through adding capabilities, increasing capacities, and driving new economies of scale unimagined previously. With our guidance, CIOs can embrace driving vision throughout their organizations. Contact us today to get started.

What You Can Achieve From Lean Governance

1 Faster Time to Market for New Systems

2 Better Resource Planning and Budgeting

3 Higher Confidence in Your Ability to Deliver

4 Lower Costs for System Implementation, Management and Improvement

5 Proactive Visioning, Planning and Delivery

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