



SMB Newsletter

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A new year in a new decade has begun and many are sighing with relief that the “lost decade” or the Aughts is finally over. Everyone we know is looking at moving forward. Survival of the Aughts is a notable feat.

Just as the Ship’s Captain charts a course for the voyage, a business needs to chart a course for how their Information Technology (IT) will support the organization’s vision and mission. IT has a major role in assisting a business with transforming itself – in growing the business either domestically or globally. Technology continues to develop at a phenomenal pace opening new doors of opportunities for business. IT’s biggest contribution comes not from maintaining a status quo or trying to cut costs, but from its impact on the overall financial and operational performance of the company.

As you start 2010, think about how you might be able to use IT across the business to achieve innovation, improve service and reduce costs. Two tasks you might want to consider are performing an IT Health Check and creating a Strategic Information Technology Plan.

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AN IT HEALTH CHECK?

Think about visiting a doctor for a physical exam. The exam provides an objective assessment of your body. It does not mean anything is wrong, rather it helps determine what you should continue to do or change if need be.

An IT Health Check (or an IT Assessment) is similar. It is designed to assist management:

- With obtaining an objective assessment of IT’s performance,
- Evaluating your IT strengths and weaknesses, and
- Analyzing how IT is supporting the vision, mission and business needs.

The results assist management with decision-making including determining the company’s strategic and tactical goals as well as developing or modifying an IT Strategic Plan.

Overall, the analysis should focus on the **IT Operations, Systems, Support, Governance, and Management**. Once the Health Check is complete, an action plan that enhances your IT performance can be developed.

Where should you start?

You may want to start by asking your end users how they perceive the services they receive.

ARE YOU CHARTING THE RIGHT COURSE ?

A Ship's Captain charts a course before embarking on a long ocean voyage to ensure the course is efficient and safe. Tactical actions are defined and needed crew duties are assigned enabling the Captain to reach the strategic destination successfully.

Charting a course for an ocean voyage is not easy. Industry guidelines as well as individual preferences are taken into account as the course is plotted. If the voyage seems easy and effortless and the destination reached, the Captain is considered first rate. If not, people may decide not to travel with the Captain in the future.

Just as the Captain charts a course for the voyage, a business needs to chart a course for how their Information Technology (IT) will support the organization's vision and mission. IT Governance processes or IT Best Practices are the guidelines that assist businesses with creating an IT approach or a strategic IT plan.

IT Best Practices 1) help ensure that the investments in IT generate business value, and 2) mitigate the risks that are associated with IT. Implementing IT Best Practices is not necessarily a cost reduction initiative. Rather, IT Best Practices could raise the bar of expectations on the part of the board, community, and donors since you may provide a higher quality of service as well as be more effective and efficient. As the success of an ocean voyage requires all of the crew to do their part, so does the success of implementing IT Best Practices.

This article highlights a few Best Practices any business, regardless of size, should consider implementing.

Are you aligning IT with your Strategy? Are you doing the right things? Are you doing things right? Are board members involved in the process?

When it comes to aligning IT and Business Strategy take a "top-down" approach. By looking at the "big picture", it is possible to align your business processes and IT needs with the overall strategy and goals of your organization. Strategy and Goals drive Business Processes. Business Processes determine necessary tasks (who, what, why, where and how). The tasks define the IT requirements (software, data and hardware) to be implemented.

The challenge with aligning occurs when discussing the tasks and IT requirements. The communication channel tends to break down. This is known by many as the "IT Divide". Both sides have their own jargon, abbreviations, and unique experiences. Neither is able to explain, in terms understandable by the other, the necessary requirements, limitations, gaps, and potential solutions that are an acceptable fit. CEOs, Executive Directors, Managers, Technologists, and Board Members each go their own way out of frustration with one another and alignment goes by the wayside.

Best Practice:

Align IT, Business Processes and Strategy by creating an IT Strategic Plan.

The plan becomes the "Road Map" to help manage IT as well as manage requests from various different functional areas of the business.

How important is the project? Should the project be moved up in our priorities? Does the business have the network infrastructure in place to support the new program?

Prioritizing the IT projects is not a once a year effort; it is an on-going process. Technology and business needs continually change and staff provide new ideas. Effective IT requires embracing change and changing priorities. **THERE ARE NO TECHNICAL PROJECTS** – there are only Business Projects.

Best Practice:

Implement Project Management processes.

Project Management is an approach or discipline for planning, organizing and managing resources to successfully complete a specific project.

How reliable is the vendor? Do we have adequate backups of our data? Are we performing the right amount of maintenance work?

A number of factors as well as decisions can impact a business's technical risk. We have found many organizations needlessly complicate their IT environment. IT should not and does not need to be

complicated. Focus on keeping your technical environment simple, but implement Policies and Standards to assist with standardization and controlling of actions.

What is an example of increased risk? You may have heard of a well-meaning decision maker, who buys a new application system and then calls the technical person after the fact. "I purchased this software to help with sales. I realize we did not talk before I selected the software, but we need you to install it and support it." Will the software work? Maybe or maybe not.

Best Practice:

Create Policies and Standards such as:

- Purchase brand name software and hardware from

industry leaders.

- Prohibited access to pornography, violence and criminal activity sites.
- Windows 7 is the standard operating system for workstations.
- Application data is backed up nightly.
- 60% of the technology budget will be for maintenance; 40% for new projects.

Every business is dependent on Information Technology (IT) to support their operations as well as to meet the organization’s mission. Whether you have 5 or 500 employees, implementing IT Best Practices enables your business to prioritize efforts, analyze and manage risk, and ensure maximum benefits at the right cost are provided.

A “Good” IT Strategic Plan

1. Highlights how the Business Strategy (objectives) are supported by the IT Strategy.
2. Highlights where IT Strategic efforts do not directly tie to the Strategic Plan but are necessary to support the organization.
3. Considers the Policies, Procedures and Standards that have been defined.
4. Provides the **Foundation or Infrastructure** (architecture) based on the above 3 points.
5. Provides a **“Road Map”** specifying the order of events to meet the Business Strategy.

IS COMMUNICATED TO BOTH BUSINESS AND TECHNICAL PEOPLE.

GOOD HABITS FOR A GREENER PC

Quite frequently, we are asked about becoming energy efficient or *Going Green*. What a business should do when it comes to IT and *Going Green* depends on a number of factors. It is important to look at the total picture including the total cost – and then deciding on the right course of action.

We recommend working with your CIO, talking to your network administrator or third party service provider and then deciding on the right action plan for you. The **Good Habits for a Greener PC** was sent to us by Microsoft on 1/5/2010. Since it includes some points that a business person may want to consider, we have added it to our newsletter and website. (complete article –

http://www.ladenterprizes.com/MS_GreenPC.htm)

From Microsoft –

You can reduce power consumption and achieve significant energy savings when using your PC simply by acquiring a few good habits. Read the handy tips below.

The monitor

In a PC, the display is greatly responsible for overall energy consumption. Some estimates for laptops show that the monitor accounts for 40% of total energy consumption. The figure is not much different for desktop PCs. LCD monitors typically require between 15 and 60 watts, while a CRT (cathode ray tube) screen requires between 50 and 125 watts.

In order to reduce energy consumption and in particular battery consumption, it is recommended to not change the standard configuration set by the manufacturer. In

fact, after a certain period of inactivity, the monitor automatically “goes to sleep”. In this mode, it consumes just 1 to 3 watts of energy.....

PC hibernation mode (This may not be an option for your business. We recommend you have a conversation with your network administrator.)

The most effective way of reducing consumption when your PC is not in use is to put it in hibernate mode. Rather than shutting down your PC every day, restarting it, then re-opening all your applications, it is much better to “suspend” PC activity, because energy consumption in this mode is roughly 5 watts for a desktop PC and 1 watt for a laptop.....

Switch off the Wi-Fi antenna

Today’s laptops and some desktop models are equipped with antennas for transmitting and receiving data via radio waves using hotspots, microcells equipped with Wi-Fi antennas that comply

with wireless standards 802.11 a/b/g/n and allow Internet browsing in bars, airports, at work, or in the home.....

Regulate Windows Search indexing

One of the most interesting changes in Windows Vista is the ability to index all PC content, from e-mails to documents to images. This is a task that Windows Vista performs in the background or while you are doing something else, but it’s a task that inevitably consumes energy.....

Power Savings Features in Windows 7

Windows 7 runs with fewer background activities so your PC processor doesn't work as hard and draws less power. Other innovations include less power-hungry DVD playback (handy on long flights), automatic screen dimming, powering off unused ports, and a more accurate battery-life indicator. For the entire article

http://www.ladenterprizes.com/MS_GreenPC.htm

Upcoming Seminars and Speeches

Business Intelligence Conference – Solutions Selection

February 18, 2010 -- 7:30 AM - 4:00 PM

Sponsored by Relevante – CPE credits available

[Register at http://www.relevante.com/htmls/educational_events/feb bi 2010 symposium.htm](http://www.relevante.com/htmls/educational_events/feb_bi_2010_symposium.htm)

How Project Management Can be Used in YOUR Nonprofit

March 23, 2010 -- 9:00 – 10:30 AM

April 20, 2010 -- 9:00 – 10:30 AM

Offered by Millersville’s Nonprofit Resource Network in Partnership with the Project Management Institute (PMI) Education Foundation

Just \$10 per person Thanks to the [PMI Education Foundation](http://www.pmi.org).

[Register at http://www.nonprofitresourcenetwork.org/events/](http://www.nonprofitresourcenetwork.org/events/)

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