

Strategic Technology Planning Process

Technology planning process has become a key differentiating factor in the success of companies. Today, technology touches every facet of the organization from its core businesses to functional requirements and is a key competitive advantage. Customers are also increasingly requesting better technical interactions and for most part, companies who don't offer superior solutions to their customers may not survive. However, technology must be directly and tightly aligned to the business and customer requirements. This document will explore best practices to establish a robust planning process to provide this competitive edge to your company.

Governance and Roles in Technology Planning Process

Business managers have a key role in the technology planning process. Technologies are intended to accelerate business objectives and improve the chances of success. When starting your technology planning process, you must ensure that:

- The plan is aligned with the overall business plan
- The core team is comprised of both IT and business leaders
- The expectations are clear throughout the process

Technology planning is an on-going process, and for that reason, the technology planning committee is a standing committee with defined membership and specific terms of participation and turnovers.

Preparation for the Planning Process

Before moving forward with a technology plan, your committee should prepare a clear set of guiding principles and ensure that the business leaders prepare a comprehensive outline of their perspective business requirements.

It is also helpful to include customers during the preplanning process and from time to time during the planning process to validate the direction. The guiding principles are a key document to shape the direction of the outcome aligned with the company vision.

The long-range technology roadmap and investment planning documents

The corporate IT Architect should develop a recommended technology roadmap to be used as prerequisite to the planning document. This document should be updated on annual basis and adjusted based on technology planning outcomes. These two documents are to be tightly aligned. Another key document as input to the planning process is the long and short range investment planning document. The planning process and timing of the two documents should not overlap to allow members of both committees to participate fully in each of the processes as needed.

The Planning Process

The planning follows a five step process to develop. What may seem missing from this process is communication. That's due to the fact that communication will take place regularly during the entire process. It is important to keep all stakeholders informed about the progress in every step of the process and solicit their input throughout. The key steps are:

1. Identify and prioritize business needs
2. Strategic mapping and identification of overlapping requirements
3. Stakeholder review of the Technology Plan draft and sign-off
4. Finalization of the document with cross-functional prioritization and sign-off
5. Project planning and execution timeline and resource requirements and sign-off

Sections for the plan

Although, every [strategic] technology plan will differ in content and delivery, the following sections are deemed to be standard recommended section to include in every plan:

- IT Accomplishments
- Strategic Goal Mapping
- Industry Trends
- IT Assessment & Gap Analysis
- Strategic IT Initiatives
- Business Alignment & Sponsorship
- Technology Roadmap
- Budget Allocations & 5-Year Budget Projections
- Investment Categorization & Portfolio Prioritization
- Scenario Planning
- Workforce Plan, Organizational Development & Skills Inventory
- Application Portfolio
- IT Evolution Roadmap
- Implementation Plan
- Services and Solutions Delivery Plan
- Corporate and IT Governance
- Supplier Sourcing Strategy
- Risk Management Plan
- Communication Plan
- Monitoring, Benchmarking & Balanced Scorecards