Building the bridge between Business and IT

How to avoid project failure

CONTENT

BUILDING THE BRIDGE

IT stands as a pivotal business function for nearly every organization, a realization that is neither novel nor unexpected.

Businesses across diverse industries acknowledge that technological advancements create new avenues for business opportunities and market outreach.

IT is assuming a more proactive role in shaping long-term business strategies, with organizations harboring high expectations from their IT investments.

These expectations encompass cost reduction, streamlined processes, heightened productivity, improved workflow and communications, and the potential to implement innovative business strategies for gaining a competitive edge.

"The prevailing narrative seems to focus more on failure than success"

Despite the widespread recognition of IT's significance, a disconcerting trend emerges: a substantial number of IT implementation projects end in failure, resulting in financial losses, diminished profitability, internal distrust, and a lingering sense of disappointment.

Unfortunately, tales of prestigious business projects failing to fulfill promises are not uncommon. The prevailing narrative seems to focus more on failure than success, prompting the question: Why?

The answer lies largely in the disconnect between business and IT, characterized by organizational siloes, limited shared understanding or alignment, and a lack of common business goals.

BUILDING THE BRIDGE...

This disparity is not only highly frustrating but also remarkably counterproductive. Consider the significant amount of money wasted and the unfulfilled promises when the outcome of an investment, like implementing a new ERP system, proves to be the opposite of expectations.

Envision the numerous futile endeavors taken when a new system fails to align with business procedures, resulting in missed opportunities to enhance revenues, expand market shares, and accelerate business processes.

The consequences of not closing the divide between business and IT become apparent.

This eBook aims to provide insights into the nature of this challenge, addressing fundamental issues and offering the groundwork to bridge the gap between business and IT.

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WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT?

Success or failure in your project can be influenced by various factors, such as:

1 - Resistance from users to embrace change.
2 - Inadequate alignment of software with business processes.
3 - Shifts in the market.

In the realm of IT-enabled projects, a common challenge involves reconciling two perspectives – the business viewpoint and the IT perspective.

The business perspective
The business perspective revolves around recognizing the business challenges and understanding how a particular solution will meet specific needs.

The IT perspective
The IT perspective focuses on identifying the most suitable technology.

Project failures often stem from an overemphasis on "when to execute."

There is a tendency to prioritize the "go-live deadline" without thoroughly considering the complexities of the task.

It becomes tempting to sprint ahead without taking the necessary steps, neglecting the groundwork required for success.

The primary challenge arises when a technology-centric IT strategy, intersects with a business strategy.

There is a significant communication gap between the two sides. When the role assigned to IT is limited to a subordinate position in strategic and business planning, treating it merely as an implementation tool without active involvement in shaping strategy, the primary concern arises.

In such a scenario, there is a risk that IT becomes an appendage to the business, an afterthought rather than an integral part of forming the organization's structural foundation and central nervous system.

Consequently, the organization may struggle to align IT and business activities toward shared business objectives. This contradiction and paradox contribute significantly to the persistent gap between business and IT, leading to the existence of silos and a lack of shared understanding.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

Ensuring the success of your project necessitates a shift away from treating IT as a mere afterthought to adopting a more business-oriented approach where both business and IT collaborate toward shared business objectives.

The central questions to address are: Where do we need to be in the future? How do we ensure that our IT remains relevant to an evolving business? Constructing this bridge relies on fostering knowledge, understanding, and cooperation, and is achieved by adhering to the following tips:

1 - UNDERSTAND YOUR ORGANIZATION

The outcome is contingent on the quality of your analysis. The essential element in establishing a connection between business and IT is comprehending your current position before charting the path forward. Invest time in understanding the human, business, and technology aspects specific to your business model, organization, and the key stakeholders on both sides.

Conducting a comprehensive "as-is" analysis serves as a solid foundation. This analysis may range from a swift examination of a specific issue to a thorough assessment of entities, individuals, processes, locations, systems, and their surroundings.

Assessing the organization's pulse provides a clear and authentic perspective, encompassing both challenges and opportunities to achieve strategic objectives.

2 - UNDERSTAND YOUR STAKEHOLDERS AND ACTIVELY INVOLVE THEM

Effective stakeholder management is pivotal for the success of any project within an organization. Constructing the bridge between business and IT goes beyond drafting a new strategy in PowerPoint; it materializes when individuals grasp and embody the strategy.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

Overcoming resistance to change or a lack of commitment hinges on engaging the right people in the right manner. It's essential to identify individuals or groups likely to impact or be impacted and ensure their active involvement.

Consistent, frequent, and diverse communication channels - such as speaking, writing, video, training, focus groups, bulletin boards, and intranets - must be utilized.

Through clear communication and robust involvement, key stakeholders will be empowered to make further commitments and actualize the project's objectives.

3 - ESTABLISH A SHARED LANGUAGE AND MUTUAL BUSINESS OBJECTIVES

Establish a unified reference model and articulate a shared vocabulary to ensure that both technical and non-technical stakeholders possess a common knowledge base. Recognize that effective communication is a two-way street.

To align IT with Business, it is imperative that everyone speaks the same language and shares a common understanding of priorities. By defining shared business objectives, you can harmonize the focus of IT and business toward a common goal.

4 - SECURE THE PARTICIPATION OF TOP MANAGEMENT

Never undervalue the importance of top management engagement. A crucial aspect of closing the divide between business and IT is ensuring a concentrated effort from top management.

The extent of buy-in and support across the organization relies heavily on the level of involvement and commitment demonstrated by top management.

SUMMARY

Connecting business and IT requires adopting a business-oriented approach, fostering collaboration between the two toward shared business objectives.

It's crucial to resist the temptation to prioritize execution without a solid foundation, as this can lead to unmet promises and expectations, resulting in negative headlines.

By comprehending your organization, identifying stakeholders, establishing a common language, defining shared business goals, and securing top management commitment, you can lay the groundwork for fundamental knowledge, shared understanding, and cross-functional cooperation essential for success.

"The manifold benefits of aligning business and IT are integral to any technologically reliant organization's success."

While bridging the gap may take time, it's a structured approach that ensures effectiveness.

Recognize the pivotal role technology plays in shaping business strategy, especially given its rapidly evolving nature.

The manifold benefits of aligning business and IT are integral to any technologically reliant organization's success.

Therefore, facing the challenges methodically is crucial - walk before you run.

START YOUR JOURNEY NOW

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