



IT Governance with Military Precision



The New Year is upon us and the pressures in IT for deriving real value from hardware expenditures and software deployments have never been greater. The time is ripe for implementing a program of IT Governance.

Just what is IT Governance?

IT Governance is the responsibility of executives and shareholders. It is not an isolated discipline, but rather is integral to business governance. It consists of the leadership, organizational structures and processes that ensure that IT sustains and extends the organization's strategies and objectives.

The purpose of IT governance is to direct IT endeavors, to ensure that IT's performance meets the following objectives:

- Alignment with the business and realize the promised benefits
- Enable the business by exploiting opportunities and maximizing benefits
- Proper resource utilization
- Appropriate management of IT risks

Why Do We Need It?

The objectives of IT Governance are to understand the issues and the strategic importance of IT, to ensure that the business can sustain its operations and implement the strategies required to extend its activities into the future. IT Governance ensures that expectations for IT are met and IT risks are mitigated. It has been produced to enable business to enhance the quality of service delivered to customers (internal and external). This grows in significance as customers continue to require increasingly complex applications to meet business requirements, at minimum cost. It also recognizes that services and service management are essential to helping generate revenue and be cost effective.

Why Military Precision

IT Governance requires in-depth planning, understanding to all levels of the organization, training, practicing, sand-table exercises, scenario exercises, reviews, dry runs, wet runs, and more training in order to maintain a sustainable level of proficiency. This is executing with Military Precision. The military spends 99% of its time training and running through scenarios so that each individual, each team, each unit knows exactly what they are supposed to do and how they are to execute in most any situation. Roles are understood; expectations are understood; support for the effort is universal. If IT would adopt even a fraction of this methodology, life would be easier. Remember, project management originated in the Air Force.

What is ITIL?

IT Infrastructure Library (ITIL) has become the world-wide *de facto* standard in IT Governance. ITIL guidance has been used by state and federal government, energy, health care, public utilities, banking, finance, and manufacturing. All sizes of organizations have implemented ITIL. In the past, many IT organizations were internally focused and concentrated on technical issues. Businesses have high expectations towards the quality of services and these expectations change

with time. For IT organizations to live up to these expectations they need to concentrate on service quality and a customer oriented approach. Cost issues are high on the agenda as is the development of a more businesslike attitude to provision of service.

ITIL provides high quality services with a particular focus on customer relationships. The IT organization should provide whatever is agreed with customers, which implies a strong relationship between the IT organization and their customers and partners, something normally anathema to IT.

Many IT shops struggle to maintain high levels of service. Working reactively spending most of their time 'putting out fires,' IT can get into this tailspin and never spend time planning, training, reviewing, investigating, and working with the business. They fail to adopt structured or proactive working practices while simultaneously being pressed for improved quality, lower costs, greater flexibility and faster response to the business. IT Governance resolves these issues and leads to significantly improved customer service and satisfaction.

What Are the Components-in Short (IT Service Management – ITSM)?

Security Management	Change Management
Availability & Contingency Management	Release Management
Service Level Management	Incident Management
Service Level Reporting	Problem Management
Capacity Management	Customer Relationship Management
Financial Management	Supplier/Vendor Management
Asset & Configuration Management	

Benefits of IT Governance

It is important to consider the benefits for the organization of having a clear definition of the ITSM function. Some of the benefits include:

Improved quality of service and more reliable business support; Provides a well-defined understanding of the customer's requirements, concerns and business activities and business led rather than technology driven services; IT service continuity procedures are more focused, more confidence in the ability to follow them as a matter of course; Improves value for money, resource utilization and service quality; Better information on current services (and possibly on where changes would bring most benefits); Greater flexibility for the business through improved understanding of IT support; Improves staff morale, and hence the service and the customer's perception of the service; Provides staff with goals and an understanding of the business's needs; Increased flexibility and adaptability is likely to exist within the services; System-led benefits, e.g. improvements in security, accuracy, speed, availability as required for the required level of service; Improved cycle time for changes and greater success rate; Provides an infrastructure for the controlled operation of ongoing services by formalized and disciplined processes.

Where Do We Start?

Few firms have no IT Governance at all. It is common for existing practices to be based upon historical (we've always done it this way) or political considerations. Step one is to assess any existing processes and compare these to the needs of the business and to ITIL/ITSM. When implementing a formal IT Governance program, it is important to focus on business process and concerns, not function or technology; develop well defined and understood goals; clearly define roles and responsibilities; ensure all executive, managers, and staff is committed to their roles; practice and train with Military Precision.

To achieve the benefits from IT Governance, it is essential to allocate sufficient time and resources. This can represent major changes to your organization. In many cases when IT Governance is introduced, the first sign of difficulty leads to abandonment. Early stages of implementation don't necessarily deliver immediate results. There is often a stage where the costs outweigh the benefits. This drop in benefits is normally matched by a fall in enthusiasm. It is the job of all management at this stage to stay the course, to encourage staff to persevere and continue the practice and training. Management needs to hold its nerve. Management needs to lead with Military Precision.

Jeffrey S. Bardin, CSO
Treadstone 71
jbardin@treadstone71.com

—