3 STEPS TO ALIGNING IT GOALS WITH BUSINESS GOALS

Earlier this year a bit of sobering news came to light about how the priorities of IT teams relate to larger company goals. IT teams, in the eyes of other departments, are way out of sync with business priorities.

A report, sponsored by BMC and conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), revealed that 31% of non-IT survey respondents view IT decision-making as misaligned with their company's digital transformation goals. Think about that: The department with the most digital expertise is perceived as not actually driving the company's most important digital initiatives.

That needs to change. IT must embrace a shift from being function-driven and reactive—the classic technology gatekeeper role—to being proactive, business-driven, and strategic. IT must set the tone by ensuring it is pursuing goals and outcomes that are clearly tied to the company's overall business vision. Here are three key steps to make that happen.

1. Work with executives and senior management to establish a shared vision.

A lack of alignment between IT and other business units is often rooted in disconnected goals. CIOs and other IT leaders must lead the charge by working across departments to create a shared strategic vision and work collaboratively toward realizing it. IT leaders and their staff can reach out and act as IT ambassadors. By listening to and understanding other departments' needs and strategies, they can capture these inputs in the IT roadmaps and decision making. Look for allies

who support this shift toward a more collaborative approach to digital transformation and business outcomes.

2. Reevaluate IT strategy against that shared vision.

With a shared vision in place, it's time to re-evaluate your existing IT roadmap and decision-making against the company's overall mission. Too often, siloed IT departments have priorities that are misaligned with other business units. For example, the EIU researchers found that both IT and other departments rank greater efficiency as a key outcome, but the priorities of the two groups diverge after that: IT respondents placed a high value on integration with legacy systems and system resilience, while non-IT survey participants give higher ranking to revenue growth and cost reductions.

Work closely with the leadership team to define clear goals and a vision for achieving them. What needs to change? Moreover, what new technologies or strategies will you need to adopt so that IT can drive the company's critical goals? Remember that statements like "this is how we've always done things" will not serve you in this alignment process. Finally, deprioritize or eliminate work that you can't connect to business goals.

3. Connect your IT metrics to business goals.

One of your greatest challenges will be to align and contextualize all IT metrics with business goals. As you reevaluate IT goals in the broader context of the company's overall vision, it's also important to reconsider how you measure IT performance in pursuit of those goals. Traditional metrics such as uptime or project completion deadlines are insufficient by themselves. By moving to metrics that are more explicitly linked to business value—ROI and revenue are two basic examples—you can help better align how different teams across the company are measured.

Connect your modern IT metrics to specific business goals, creating a loop with that shared vision at the outset and enabling ongoing review and optimization. IT should stop caring only about technical indicators such as uptime; rather, it should connect uptime targets to business value and goals. For example, what does 99.9% uptime mean in terms of revenue or reduced call-center volume? How will a multi-cloud strategy enable the company to hit its goal of launching in three new markets this year?

The days of IT as reactionary gatekeeper may be numbered, but its future as a collaborative partner adding value across the business is bright. Aligning IT strategy and business goals is the foundation for that future.