

**Labrador
Technology**



What a workplace strategy professional should know about an IT department.

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We get it.

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Executive summary

Corporations manage significant investments in real estate and information technology. Forward thinking organizations recognize the value in thinking strategically about these investments. Unfortunately, those responsible for real estate and information technology may not have developed close working relationships that align their interests and goals.

The most successful strategies consider both investments. This whitepaper examines some of the factors within a typical IT department that a workplace strategy professional should consider when leading any effort around corporate real estate.

Key takeaways

Workplace strategy professionals can benefit from:

1. Understanding how an IT department typically thinks about value for any tool or solution.
2. Considering the structure of a typical IT department, and which roles and responsibilities will need to be involved in certain efforts.
3. Recognizing the opportunity to align around business goals, as the traditional focus of IT departments continues to evolve to emphasize business need.

Trying to find alignment

Consider this scenario: A corporation engages a workplace strategist to lead an analysis of their real estate portfolio. The strategist leads a robust dive into understanding the client’s space, people, and processes. She collects qualitative and quantitative data and has a strong case for alternative strategies that will realize significant value for the client.

The strategist also recognizes support will be needed from the client’s IT department. Armed with a general idea of what the client will need – laptops, communications tools, remote access, etc. – she engages IT to help take the evaluation to the next step.

But this seemingly simple conversation escalates quickly. Assumptions are called into question about the technology the client can use to support the workplace strategy. Challenges arise which, on the surface, appear to ignore the potential value the firm can realize by changing the way people work. The IT stakeholder explains objections on the grounds that “we can’t use that technology, it isn’t secure,” or “we can’t support this equipment, we don’t have the resources.”

Understanding misalignment

IT departments are not creating conflict out of thin air. Most of the concerns are legitimate, though not insurmountable. The misalignment can often stem from the realities IT professionals are dealing with on a day to day basis, the way their organization is structured, and the philosophical evolution they are facing as technology continues to evolve.

Consideration #1: Workplace Strategy professionals and IT professionals think about “value” differently.

The responsibilities of an IT department have bred a specific methodology to help evaluate the potential “value” of any new service or technology the firm may provide. Is it “Fit for purpose,” in other words, does it support or improve performance? And is it “Fit for use,” in other words, is it available, continuous, secure, and scalable to the capacity needed?

Figure 1 is a representation of the “Value” of any service that IT is responsible for providing. It comes from ITIL (the Information Technology Infrastructure Library), which is a set of best practices for IT service management that focuses on aligning IT services with the needs of the business.¹

When a workplace strategist thinks of technology, the driving factor tends to be “Utility” – does this help a client’s employees do their jobs better, does it support an alternative workplace strategy, or does it remove a current barrier to improving the office experience?

But for an IT professional – particularly someone responsible for implementing or supporting a new technology – the “Warranty” considerations can be the drivers. Is it secure enough? Is it available when it needs to be? Does it have capacity to scale to everyone who needs it? And is it continuous enough to reliably provide the service employees will use it for? The answer to ALL OF THESE QUESTIONS needs to be “yes” for a new solution to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

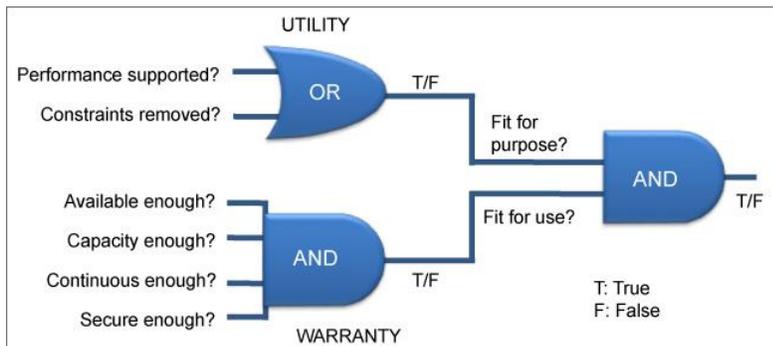


Figure 1: ITIL concept of Valueⁱⁱ

A holistic approach considers both parts of the value equation. In other words, does a solution solve a business need AND can it meet the warranty requirements that someone in IT will be expected to deliver?

Consideration #2: IT departments are complex, with multiple responsibility ‘silos’ impacting a workplace strategy effort

IT organizations at mid to large firms can be complex and difficult to navigate. As with most departments, IT has developed specialized roles and functions, spread across various silos of responsibility. When a client assigns an IT person to collaborate on a workplace strategy initiative, it is more than likely that that person does not have all the answers around “workplace technology.” And when you consider the responsibilities that role up to a typical CIO, you can see how accountability spreads across multiple groups (see Figure 2).

Those responsible for evaluating the business case for a solution are different from those defining the security requirements. And those responsible for choosing the hardware may not be the same people who oversee the project to install that hardware.

Some roles are evaluated based on metrics specific to their responsibility, such as how long it takes to resolve issues, how often technology goes down, if there have been any security breaches, etc. For someone who deals with these challenges on a daily basis, a common first reaction can be to focus on the problems new technology might present. Similarly, someone focused on the business value of a new solution, it can be easy to underestimate the complexity that comes along with any new technology.

Concerns from each silo outlined in Figure 2 and Figure 3 need to be considered to understand the total effort and complexity involved in any given request around technology. At Labrador, we often find ourselves playing the role of “IT-Business Relationship Manager,” which involves identifying solutions that will have a meaningful impact and recognizing which parts of a client IT organization need to be consulted to be able to bring the solution from idea to reality.



Figure 2: CIO areas of responsibility

Relationship Management	What is the business need? What problem are we solving? Are there other departments who can use this?
Applications	What software is involved and what does it require? Do we need to test integration with existing software?
Vendor Management	Who, what, how are we sourcing materials and labor? What will be required for vendor management and SLAs?
Strategy & Architecture	What new policies are needed? How does this fit with current architecture? Will we build or buy, keep in house or in the cloud?
Infrastructure	What are the impacts to our PCs, laptops, servers, storage, phone system, network gear...?
Security	What are our authentication and data protection requirements? Where will our data exist?
PMO	What is required for pilot projects, rollout programs, budget oversight?

Figure 3: Sample concerns for each responsibility

Consideration #3: IT departments are focusing more on business goals while trying to keep pace with evolving business demands and new technology pressures

In IBM's 2012 CEO survey, technology was ranked as the leading external factor that will affect business over the next five years.ⁱⁱⁱ Some research analysts predict that within five years, CMOs (Chief Marketing Officers) will have bigger IT budgets than CIOs^{iv}. Dealing with changing technology is no longer an "IT thing" but a "business thing."

And technology keeps changing. In the mobile world, for example, smartphones and tablets are nearly ubiquitous and businesses are constantly finding new ways to enable their workforce and engage with their customers. This has produced new and rapidly evolving solutions in areas like Mobile Device Management (MDM) – a set of software tools that help IT departments with mobile policies, security, and configurations.^v The figure below shows Gartner's coverage of this space, and its rapid growth and turnover. IT needs to understand solutions like these, but also has to deal with the rapid pace of change.

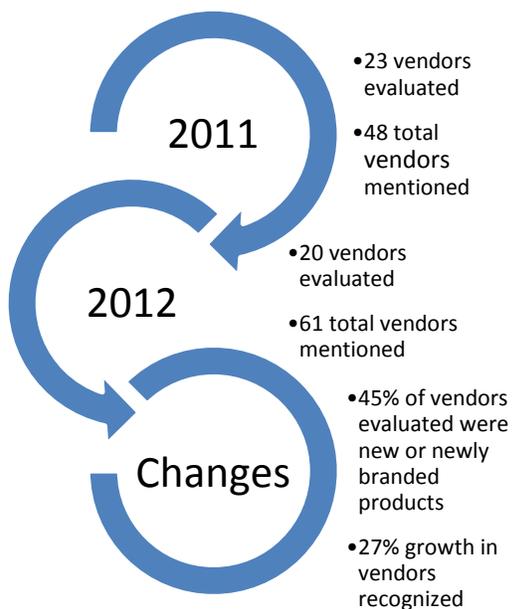


Figure 4: MDM landscape changes^{vi}

Firms are also dealing with pressures from the consumerization of IT. This concept has emerged as a way to describe the wave of new technologies that are readily available to consumers – without any need for the involvement of IT departments – and are reshaping the business-IT landscape. This trend is strongest in millennial workers, who are forecast to constitute 44% of the US workforce by 2020^{vii}. Many of these tools – for communicating, collaborating, and creating – are available at low or no cost, so employees are finding ways to use these tools to be more productive, without IT control.

IT departments in turn are responding by undergoing philosophical and structural changes. They understand they cannot be an independent silo which keeps existing systems running and approves or denies incoming requests. The new IT organization is a business partner; one that helps find innovative ways to support the company's ability to compete and succeed. The next wave of CIO's will continue to make a seat for themselves at the business table alongside the current C-suite, and their IT organizations will reflect this.

IT leaders recognize that technology is an enabler for companies to remain competitive and innovative. They will need to continue to work toward alignment with the business, and any strategic effort, such as a workplace strategy engagement, represents an opportunity to discuss this topic with them.

About Labrador:

Labrador Technology is an IT consulting firm that provides technical design, project management, and management consulting services. We work with the business, technology, and facilities leaders of sophisticated organizations to match communication and collaboration tools to their workplace strategy—and to their business. Labrador furthers the solutions through design, and manages implementation during IT and real estate transitions to ensure a successful outcome.

Endnotes:

ⁱ <http://www.ital-officialsite.com/AboutITIL/WhatisITIL.aspx>

ⁱⁱ <http://itil.org/en/vomkennen/itil/servicestrategy/valuecreation.php>

ⁱⁱⁱ "Leading Through Connections," IBM, May 2012 (<http://www-935.ibm.com/services/us/en/c-suite/ceostudy2012/>)

^{iv} Arthur, Lisa, "Five Years From Now, CMOs Will Spend More on IT Than CIOs do," Forbes, February 2012, (<http://www.forbes.com>)

^v Redman, Philip, Girard, John, and Basso, Monica; "Magic Quadrant for Mobile Device Management Software," Gartner, May 2012 (www.gartner.com)

^{vi} Redman, Philip; Girard, John; Wallin, Leif-Olof; "Magic Quadrant for Mobile Device Management Software," April 2011 (www.gartner.com)

^{vii} "Bureau of Labor Statistics Employment Projections" (http://www.bls.gov/emp/ep_data_labor_force.htm), assuming Millennial birth years defined as 1982 to 2004.