The IT Strategic Planning Journey at the University of Newcastle

Carey Steller[1], Frank Herb[2]

[1]University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia, carey.steller@newcastle.edu.au
[2]University of Newcastle, Newcastle, Australia, frank.herb@newcastle.edu.au

INTRODUCTION

Nearly two years in the making and three CIOs later, IT Services at the University of Newcastle has (finally) delivered the institutional IT Strategic Plan.

How do you successfully plan strategically when radical change is happening in the business environment, in the technology landscape and in the organisation? With no real idea, how to go about creating an IT Strategic Plan, this is the documented journey undertaken at the University of Newcastle. If nothing else, it may provide valuable insights on what to avoid on the journey.

MAIN BODY

The theory of course is that by understanding the strategy of the business and aligning the underpinning IT to support the business strategies, then nothing can go wrong.

The reality of course is quite different – certainly not CABD but BACD vs ABCD vs BBBBCAD.

So of course we started by collecting requirements, top down, bottom up, sideways in and out.

Then naturally we reviewed the current IT environment - identified strengths and weaknesses, external directions, vendor roadmaps.

We also included outputs of other initiatives such as our Enterprise Architecture, business area systems planning, and external infrastructure reviews.

In addition, we engaged with the business to identify the business IT needs required to achieve the institutional strategy, through "blue-sky" workshops.

With an entire host of plausible and other inputs we then pulled together the Strategic Plan Working document which included the synthesised recommendations. This required us, not necessarily in order,:

- to come up with an appropriate acronym;
- to combine common IT needs into identifiable initiatives or projects;
- to develop a strategy map summarising IT needs into the strategic themes;
- to develop a project prioritisation methodology;
- to develop guiding principles to guide decision making and identify risks; and
- to develop a series of supporting IT strategies for IT Governance, IT Service Delivery, Resourcing, Applications, Information, Integration, Security and Technology.

Along the journey we also collaterally, and necessarily changed the finance model for capital projects and implemented a gated model for project delivery to support the long term plan.

Of course as our first attempt grew to a document of several hundred pages we realised that the potential for shelf ware was huge. Hence the strategic plan morphed into a 12 page brochure style document – which while actually 16 pages long included enough pictures and colour to be interesting, and possible read.

The IT Strategic Plan brochure is supported by an IT focussed detailed document complete with supporting analysis, and a prioritised portfolio of projects over the next several years.

The challenge now is to gain real value form the work completed on the plan as we continue to move forward during a time of continued change. - But that is the story for a future presentation, this is the story of the journey so far.

BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHORS

Carey Steller is the Enterprise Architect at the University of Newcastle and has assisted with the development of the institutions IT Strategic plan, worked on the Enterprise Architecture and various business area systems strategies, chairs the Architecture Advisory Group and occasionally still gets his hands dirty with code.

Frank Herb is the Associate Director, IT Project Services at the University of Newcastle. His responsibilities include overseeing all significant IT based projects, and development and support of enterprise level applications at the University. Frank relies heavily on clever people like Carey getting their hands dirty. Frank and Carey have been involved in the development of the Strategic Plan from its inception.