

WHITE PAPER

**Success Drivers
to Effective
Information
Technology (IT)
Governance**

About the author

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Tom is a visionary leader with 30 years of experience in financial, operational and Enterprise Risk Management disciplines. The breadth and depth of his expertise have been developed from Big Four public accounting as a CPA, as well as executive roles as Chief Audit Executive, CFO, Regional COO, Chief Risk Officer and his executive consulting and coaching experience. Tom has developed a principle-based approach to problem solving, having seen common cause-effect relationships across diverse industries spanning public accounting, banking, financial services, insurance, investment management, consulting, not-for-profit, global conglomerate operations and entrepreneurial ventures. This unique perspective and understanding has allowed him to successfully align strategies with operating infrastructure by effectively integrating people, processes and systems. Organizations that Tom has served include KPMG, Blue Cross Blue Shield insurance companies, Ohio Bureau of Workers Compensation, Talegen Holdings, CARE, PwC, California State Automobile Association, Fireman's Fund, Allianz, Barclays Global Investors and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' global operations spanning 176 countries.

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Executive Summary

As the complexity and pace of Information Technology (IT) innovation continues to accelerate, combined with increased investments in IT for businesses to stay competitive, executive decision makers must have effective IT governance to ensure IT investments support corporate objectives and help earn respectable returns. Disparate IT governance mechanisms and silo thinking are no longer acceptable. The IT function must progress from the “out of sight, out of mind” perception of maintaining ongoing operations to becoming a valued strategic partner and leader in the business.

The transition from informal governance to formal governance is occurring rapidly, evidenced by the creation of the IT Governance Institute (ITGI) in the late 1990's. The need for best practices has stimulated more discussions among those in the IT profession, academia, consultants, and vendors that promote governance tools. This in turn has created a number of good IT governance principles to guide decision makers to implement more effective IT governance within their organizations. There is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach to IT governance. A number of sound principles are available for consideration. However, there are three important principles that are consistent with best-practice governance, risk management, and compliance (GRC) principles. They are foundational in IT governance and will greatly increase the odds for achieving desirable outcomes.

First, senior management in partnership with the Chief Information Officer (CIO) must actively design the IT governance structure around the enterprise's objectives and performance goals. A one-page IT governance matrix of roles and responsibilities can be extremely effective in communicating the vision and objectives with key stakeholders. Second, performance metrics linked to desired outcomes must be developed for proper alignment of IT resources and accountability. These metrics should include profitability, asset utilization, and growth measures. Studies have shown that high IT governance performance correlated with the achievement of desired measures of success. Third, good IT governance requires alignment of the business operating model with the enterprise architecture. The operating model defines the level of data standardization and process integration. By clearly communicating the operating model and accompanying desirable behavior to stakeholders, decisions are aligned to overall company strategies and objectives.

The ultimate success of each organization's IT governance will largely depend on the extent to which these three important principles are applied. The example company selected here differs in its culture, size, management style, profit-orientation, and the nature of its external regulation with other organizations. Nevertheless, the impact of IT governance on business strategy is dependent on an organization's ability to migrate from an efficiency focus to an effectiveness focus, and from an execution role to a visionary role. As IT governance expands its role from ongoing operations, to include cost effective service delivery, value creation and capture, strategic partnership, and ultimately strategic leadership within the organization, the value impact to the business will migrate from low to high.

Introduction and Historical Perspective

Technically, IT governance started over 40 years ago when decisions were made, priorities established, and money spent on computer technology. Research indicates that no consistent systematic approach was used to make those decisions until much later in the history of computer technology. As IT became critical to the success or failure of organizations, the need for a formal governance framework was recognized. This adaptation was driven by the increased dependence and spending on IT, failures in IT, and the understanding that organizational success was dependent on strong IT governance.

Organizational Divisions such as Marketing and Communications were recognized in the mid 1900's as critical business components. This resulted in successful organizations governing their expenditures and setting priorities through objective means. In the late 1900's, IT expenditures surpassed most other organizational divisions. Investment in IT "exceeded 50% of the average firm's annual total capital investment" (Gormolski, 2001). The rapid technological advances and complexity of IT caused a lag by many organizations in addressing IT governance properly. This lack of effective governance also contributes to the rapid growth in allocating financial resources to IT. Gartner recently revised its global IT spending forecast upward, from 3.2% to 5.4% for 2010 and from 3.5% to 5.1% in 2011, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Global IT Spending, 2008-2014, 4Q10 Update Vs. 3Q10 Update (Billions of U.S. \$)

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	CAGR (%) 2009-2014
4Q10								
Spending (\$B)	3,393.3	3,227.9	3,401.6	3,575.8	3,733.9	3,901.1	4,075.9	4.8
Annual Growth (%)		-4.9	5.4	5.1	4.4	4.5	4.5	
3Q10								
Spending (\$B)	3,392.5	3,227.1	3,329.0	3,446.9	3,602.8	3,761.2	3,935.3	4.0
Annual Growth (%)		-4.9	3.2	3.5	4.5	4.4	4.6	
Delta								
Spending (\$B)	0.9	0.8	72.6	128.9	131.1	139.9	140.6	0.7
Annual Growth (%)		0.0	2.2	1.6	-0.1	0.1	-0.1	
CAGR = compound annual growth rate								

Source: Gartner Report (December 2010)

The compounded annual growth rate of 4.8% on a base of \$3.2 trillion is truly incredible. While the investment in IT is growing, history is full of IT failures accompanied by staggering costs. "Between 1999 and 2001, American companies spent \$130 billion on IT they never used, according to one estimate" (McAfee, 2006). This number does not include the soft costs of poor processes created with a lack of integration. The result of disparate IT governance includes spectacular failures of large IT investments as well as an enormous number of inefficient and costly smaller IT investments. This historical perspective further emphasizes the importance of effective IT governance.

The transition from informal governance to formal governance is occurring rapidly, as organizations realize that identifying specific processes and accountability for decision making greatly improve their success. Its importance was acknowledged in the late 1990's that resulted in the creation of the IT Governance Institute (ITGI) in 1998. ITGI was designed to advance international thinking and standards in directing and controlling information technology. In the 2000's, IT governance was recognized as critical. "An effective IT governance structure is the single most important predictor of getting value from IT" (Weill, 2002). IT has come to a place in history where decisions regarding its infrastructure, applications, and data need to be made through a formal process that identifies accountability for both projects and programs. Indications are that organizations have responded to this need as "...almost 85% of companies, according to a recent survey, have a formal IT governance structure, or are actively developing one" (Kearney, 2008).

IT Governance Principles and Success Drivers

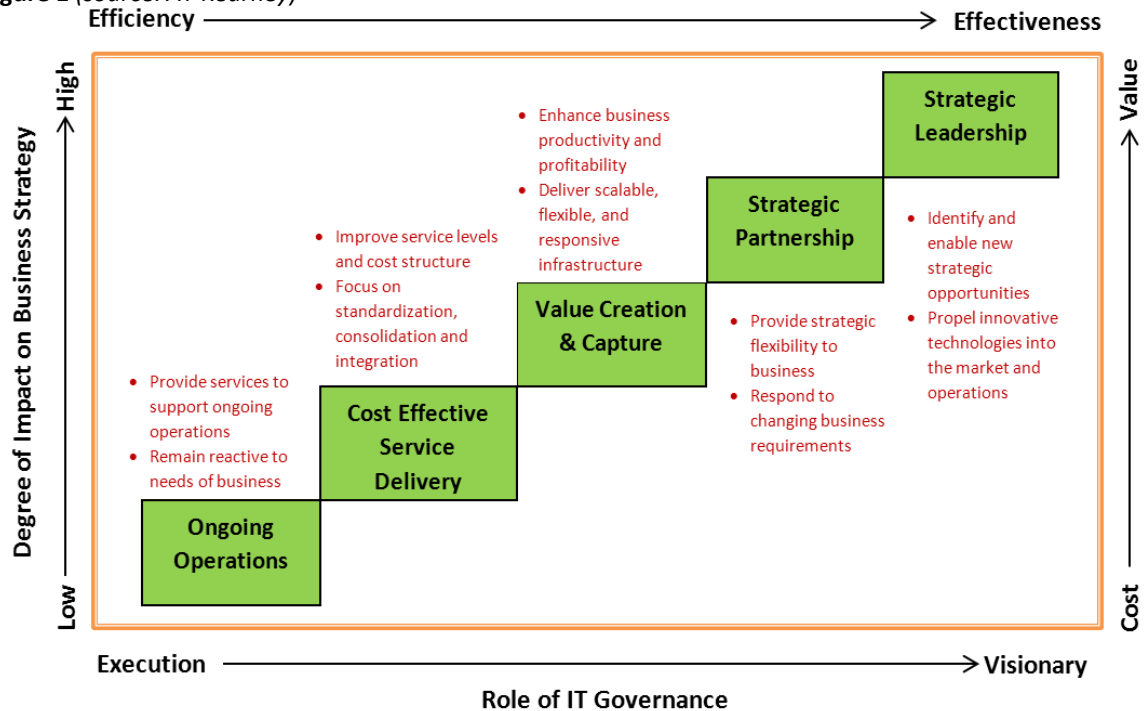
The 2008 financial market meltdown and the ensuing global recession have brought much attention to effective corporate governance. Boards of directors of publicly traded companies are receiving increased pressure from regulators to do a more effective job in their fiduciary roles. The increased demand for risk transparency has resulted in auditors, professional associations, regulators, consultants and enterprise systems vendors to discuss best practices and solutions in governance, risk management and compliance (GRC). Most GRC discussions encompass people, processes, technology and their operational implication to business strategy. Since IT governance also encompasses these important elements, successful implementation and execution of IT governance will also contribute to effective GRC in an organization.

There are several important benefits of effective IT governance (Ross and Weill, 2009). These include:

- Aligning and prioritizing IT efforts with core business strategies
- Standardizing and integrating processes to increase operational efficiency and effectiveness
- Minimizing unmanaged risks
- Improving oversight and accountability
- Improving financial performance

While it may not be conclusive that superior IT governance performance causes superior financial performance, since there are likely other contributing variables to business success, it can be said that these two measures correlate quite well. Effective governance aligns IT investments with overall business priorities, determines who makes the IT decisions and assigns accountability for the outcomes (Weill, 2005). To the extent that the IT function is perceived as purely a low value function that is “out of sight, out of mind”, an effective IT governance framework outlined in Figure 1 below can bring the IT value proposition to light.

Figure 1 (source: AT Kearney)



As the role of IT governance moves from an execution orientation to being visionary, the impact of IT on the business migrates from an ongoing operational focus to a strategic leadership focus. The ability of an IT team to effectively execute in all five areas of ongoing operations, cost effective service delivery, value creation & capture, strategic partnership and strategic leadership will change the perception of IT being a cost center to being a key contributor of value. The degree of impact on business strategy will change from low to high, and the IT team will be viewed as not just providing efficiency solutions but one of being effective business contributors.

To realize IT governance benefits and evolve the IT team to a valued business partner status, important IT governance principles must be in place to promote an organizational culture where the “tone at the top” is established with buy-in from key stakeholders. There is not a “one-size-fits-all” approach to IT governance where a number of sound principles are available for consideration. However, there are three important principles that are consistent with best-practice GRC principles. They are foundational and will greatly increase the odds for achieving desirable outcomes.

1. **Actively design the IT governance structure** – Many enterprises have created disparate IT governance mechanisms. These uncoordinated mechanism silos result from governance by default – introducing mechanisms one at a time to address a particular need, which creates architecture problems, overspending, or duplication. Patching up problems as they arise is a defensive tactic that limits opportunities for strategic impact from IT. Instead, management should actively design IT governance around the enterprise's objectives and performance goals (Weill, 2004).

Firms with more effective IT governance had more senior management involvement. CIOs must be actively involved with senior management in IT governance for success. This senior level IT Steering Committee must be complemented by other cross-functional management teams to engage the right resources, the approval processes and timely performance reviews. For many enterprises, this involvement is a natural extension of senior management's normal activities. Many senior managers are willing to be involved but are not sure where they can best contribute. It's helpful for the CIO and his or her staff to communicate IT governance on one page with a matrix of roles and responsibilities. The matrix provides a vehicle for discussing each stakeholder's role to address concerns they may have (Weill, 2004). Table 2 shows an example from Southwest Airlines' IT governance.

Table 2 (source: Ross and Weill, 2009)

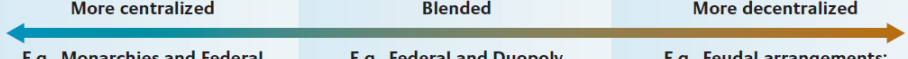
	Decision				
Accountable Party	IT Principles	Enterprise Architecture	IT Infrastructure Strategies	Business & Project Deliverables	IT Investment
CEO	Accountable				
CIO		Accountable for technology standards	Accountable	Leads tollgate reviews	
Executive Committee					Accountable for enterprise priorities
Strategy Teams		Accountable for process and data standards			
Business Leaders				Accountable	
Architecture Working Group		Conducts compliance reviews			

It is important to design IT governance at multiple organizational levels, especially for large, multiple-business enterprises. The starting point is enterprise-wide IT governance driven by a small number of enterprise-wide strategies and goals. Enterprises with separate IT functions in divisions, business units or geographies require a separate but connected layer of IT governance. Usually the demand for synergies increases at the lower levels, whereas the need for autonomy between units is greatest at the top of the organization. The lower levels of governance are influenced by mechanisms designed for higher levels (Weill, 2004).

2. **Develop performance metrics for accountability** – There is an old adage that says, “You can’t measure what you can’t see, and you can’t manage what you can’t measure.” Flying blind has led some IT departments to be criticized for a lack of innovation and agility to respond to changing business needs. Ultimately effective IT governance should be evident in business-performance metrics (Weill, 2004).

It is not surprising that top-performing companies govern much differently from other companies. Even among top performers, governing styles differ according to which performance metric they emphasize. Table 3 below demonstrates how senior management can align performance goals with key drivers and metrics. Profit is measured by return on equity (ROE), return on investment (ROI), and business process costs. Asset utilization is measured by return on assets (ROA) and IT costs. Growth is measured by revenue growth.

Table 3 (Weill, 2005)

	PERFORMANCE		
	PROFIT	ASSET UTILIZATION	GROWTH
Strategic Driver	Profitability via enterprisewide integration and focus on core competencies	Efficient operation by encouraging sharing and reuse	Encourage business unit innovation with few mandated processes
Key Metrics	ROI/ROE and business process costs	ROA and unit IT cost	Revenue growth
Key IT Governance Mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Enterprisewide management mechanisms (e.g., executive committee) ■ Architecture process ■ Capital approval ■ Tracking of business value of IT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Business/IT relationship manager ■ Process teams with IT members ■ SLA and chargeback ■ IT leadership decision-making body 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Budget approval and risk management ■ Local accountability ■ Portals or other information/ services sources
IT Infrastructure	Layers of centrally mandated shared services	Shared services centrally coordinated	Local customized capability with few required shared services
Key IT Principles	Low business costs through standardized business processes	Low IT unit costs; reuse of standard models or services	Local innovation with communities of practice; optional shared services
Governance	 <p>More centralized E.g., Monarchies and Federal</p>	<p>Blended E.g., Federal and Duopoly</p>	<p>More decentralized E.g., Feudal arrangements; risk management emphasis</p>

* Based on analysis of companies with statistically significantly higher three-year industry-adjusted performance: profit (ROI/ROE), asset utilization (ROA), growth (revenue growth).

In evaluating the performance of an enterprise or business unit, IT governance can be assessed by how well it enables IT to deliver on four objectives: cost-effectiveness, asset utilization, business growth and business flexibility (Weill, 2005). Research that has weighed these factors shows that governance performance varies significantly across enterprises in an approximately bell-shaped distribution (Weill, 2005). These studies have shown that high IT governance performance correlated with the achievement of other desired measures of success.

3. **Align business operating model with enterprise architecture** – A company’s operating model specifies which decisions will be global and which will be local. It defines the level of data standardization and process integration. By clearly communicating the operating model and accompanying desirable behavior to stakeholders, decisions are aligned to overall company strategies and objectives. Clarifying IT decision rights and accountability allows management the capability to progress along the IT-savvy journey (Ross and Weill, 2009). Both good governance and good strategy require making choices. It is not possible for IT governance to meet every desire. Instead, governance can and should highlight conflicting goals for debate.

According to Ross and Weill, exceptions can contribute to enterprise learning. From an IT perspective, exceptions challenge the status quo, particularly the IT architecture and infrastructure. Some requests for exceptions are frivolous, but most come from a true desire to meet business needs. If the exception proposed by a business unit has value, a change to the IT architecture could benefit the entire enterprise.

There are three common elements to administering exceptions (Weill, 2004):

1. The process is clearly defined and understood by all. Clear criteria and fast escalation encourage only business units with a strong case to pursue an exception.
2. The process has a few stages that quickly move the issue up to senior management. Thus, the process minimizes the chance that architecture standards will delay project implementation.
3. Successful exceptions are adopted into the enterprise architecture, completing the organizational learning process.

To ensure proper alignment of a company’s operating model to its enterprise architecture, the following issues and questions for key decision domains in Table 4 can be helpful.

Table 4 (Source: Colorado State University BUS 630 PowerPoint)

Domain	Issue
Principles	How do business principles translate to IT principles that guide IT investment What is the role of IT in the business? What are the desirable IT behaviors? How will IT be funded?
Architecture	What are the core business processes of the enterprise? How are they related? What information drives these core processes? How must this data be integrated? What technical capabilities should be standardized? What activities must be standardized to support data integration? What technology choices will guide the enterprise?
Infrastructure	What infrastructure services are most important? What infrastructure services should be implemented enterprise wide? How should infrastructure service be priced? What is the plan for keeping the infrastructure up to date? What infrastructure services should be outsourced?
Applications	What are the business and market opportunities? How are strategic experiments designed to assess success? How can business needs be addressed within architectural standards? Who will own the outcomes of each project and institute organizational change?
IT investments	What process changes are strategically important? What is the distribution of the current IT portfolio? What is the relative importance of enterprise wide versus business unit investments? How is the business value determined after deployment?

Example of IT Governance Challenges and Successes

IT governance principles can be applied across different industries, company size, and for-profit or not-for-profit organizations. The following example is selected to examine application of these principles of effective IT governance.

West Metro Fire Protection District:

The West Metro Fire Protection District (West Metro) is a special district where the majority of its revenue is provided through property taxes. West Metro provides structural fire protection, emergency medical service (EMS) and transport, hazardous materials response, water rescue, technical rescue, tactical emergency medical, fire investigations, special events EMS coverage, and wildfire protection. The District includes 15 stations, covers 110 square miles, employs 335 uniformed personnel, and responds to more than 24,000 emergency calls per year. Support services include Human Resources, Payroll, Finance, Staffing, EMS Billing, Fire Prevention, Community Outreach/Education, Training, Communications, and IT. Support services work out of the Headquarters building and the Training Academy/Urban Search and Rescue Headquarters.

In 1999, the history of IT governance at West Metro was similar to many organizations at that time where problems were solved through a variety of applications with little to no integration or unified platform. There was no official IT Department and division heads' opportunity to acquire technology was contingent solely upon their ability to get specific items into their budgets. In that same year, Pat Purdy was hired as the CIO to build an IT Division for West Metro. Mr. Purdy performed an audit of all IT activities and found a series of silos. HR applications didn't integrate with Payroll, staffing applications didn't integrate with HR or payroll, and patient care reports were hand written by paramedics and then typed in by EMS Billing. Even incident reports had to be adjusted before sending them to a federal data base, as they were in the wrong format. He saw different applications used at different fire stations, and in virtually all divisions. In reviewing the work flow processes for effectiveness and efficiency, it became obvious that significant improvements were needed.

Mr. Purdy recognized the need for IT governance and his initial objective was to require that all projects and programs show a benefit to the organization as a whole. This meant unifying the IT platform, and replacing silos with integrated applications. The process was budget dependent and required the eventual hiring of four additional IT experts. Much of Mr. Purdy's work involved direct contact with other division heads explaining why certain programs needed to be changed or why they couldn't use other non-integrating programs. It also became necessary for him to educate the executives on the benefits of integration. The executives were made up of the Fire Chief and his three Deputy Chiefs, all of whom were career fire fighters with exceptional abilities in organizational structure, command, and control but lacked understanding of IT. Through perseverance, Mr. Purdy was able to eventually incorporate IT into the Fire District's Strategic Plan and educate the Command Staff on their responsibilities regarding IT governance.

Table 5	Principles		Architecture		Infrastructure		Applications		IT Investment	
	input	Decision	Input	Decision	Input	Decision	Input	Decision	Input	Decision
Bus. Monarchy										
IT Monarchy										
Federal										
Duopoly										
Feudal										
Anarchy										

Table 5 shows six different governance approaches for decision making. Business monarchy allocates decision making to business executives. IT Monarchy puts IT executives in charge of the decisions. The Federal approach allows operating units and IT to share authority. Duopoly has the IT and business executives sharing decision making. The Feudal system leaves it up to the separate business units. The Anarchy approach has small groups throughout the company doing what they want to do.

The governance pattern for West Metro places all the input and decision authority on the IT Division for both Architecture and Infrastructure, since their expertise in these areas is far superior to the executive team. This is also a direct result of the trust afforded to the IT Division as well as their willingness to be accountable for those decisions. Most other areas fall in the Federal category in order to make sure business units are getting IT assets that enhance their effectiveness and efficiency while benefitting the organization as a whole. The ultimate decision on IT Investments remains with the executive team who maintains authority and accountability for all activities within the District.

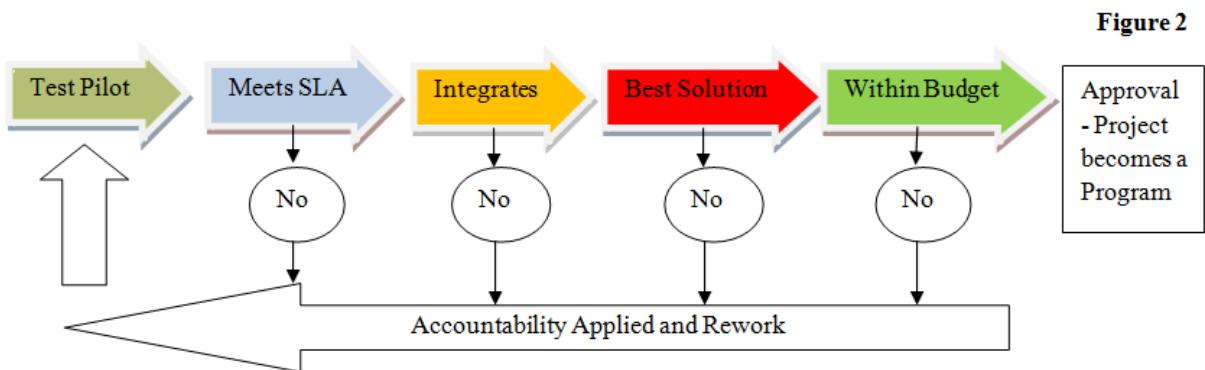
IT governance would become increasingly critical as West Metro became more dependent on technology. In 2005, West Metro began work on the implementation of mobile data computers, a new reporting system for both incident reports and patient care reports, and a new Computer Aided Dispatch software package. Additional new software became available that would meet the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPPA) and the National Fire Reporting System Standards. These applications along with new hardware allowed for easy access to data regarding the nature of incidents, response times, and apparatus locations for call orders.

The mobile component of the system would allow for fire fighters to view Dispatcher notes, use Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL), have immediate access to building pre-plans, view a variety of maps for any incident, and pull staffing reports to ensure crew accountability on large incidents. The patient care reports met the requirements of hospitals and also integrated with EMS Billing with no redundant effort. Integration was critical from everything between cardiac monitors and patient care reports to the computer-aided dispatch system and AVL.

Project prioritization became critical and at first glance seemed simple. Projects that enhanced the safety of West Metro employees or improved service to the citizens would take priority followed by projects that improve federal law compliance such as National Fire Reporting Systems and HIPPA. The last projects would improve support activities. Using the Federal

approach, it became obvious that prioritization wasn't nearly that simple as certain programs were dependent on each other and cutover had to be immediate for many projects. A score card system was created to help in project prioritization, ensure accountability, and manage costs.

In order to test all new hardware and applications where implementation didn't allow for any cutover time, pilot tests were conducted on standalone servers by end user groups using a variety of evaluation tools. (See Figure 2 for process.) Included in the evaluations were assurances that service level agreements were met and that dispatch software, incident reporting systems, 911 software, and mobile computer software would all integrate.



In 2008 all of the infrastructure, applications, and data were implemented successfully and within budget. Metrics for value added are more difficult to identify with government and non-profit agencies as the bottom line doesn't involve profits. In West Metro's case, evaluations on the success of the programs by end users along with data specific to response times, hospital reporting statistics, call waiting statistics, and feedback from regulatory agencies are used to determine the value added while more objective means are being researched.

As previously illustrated in Figure 1, which showed IT governance's value and effectiveness progression, West Metro's IT team has migrated from having no IT governance twelve years ago to now being viewed as providing valued strategic partnership and leadership to the business.

Conclusion

The rapid growth of IT innovation and complexity has outpaced many businesses' ability to effectively manage IT resources, both operationally and financially. The result has been poor management decisions and wasted capital investments and expenditures. Top performing companies understand the importance of the role of IT governance in capturing information technology's true value to the business. In order to stay competitive in the changing global landscape, a company must understand principles that are foundational to effective IT governance. These important principles include:

1. Actively design the IT governance structure
2. Develop performance metrics for accountability
3. Align the business operating model with enterprise architecture.

The path to successful IT governance implementation can be challenging and full of obstacles. Depending on the size and complexity of a company's business, it can be a multi-year endeavor. Nevertheless, businesses do not have the luxury of operating in a reactive mode. Effective IT governance can realize important benefits that include:

1. Aligning and prioritizing IT efforts with core business strategies
2. Standardizing and integrating processes to increase operational efficiency and effectiveness
3. Minimizing unmanaged risks
4. Improving oversight and accountability
5. Improving financial performance.

These are value-added propositions that may be the difference between business success and failure.

The ultimate success of each organization's IT governance will largely depend on the extent to which these important governance principles are applied. Regardless of company culture, size, management styles, profit-orientation, and the nature of external regulation, the impact of IT governance on the business strategy is dependent on the company's ability to migrate from an efficiency focus to an effectiveness focus, and from an execution role to a visionary role. As IT governance expands its role from ongoing operations, to include cost effective service delivery, value creation and capture, strategic partnership, and ultimately strategic leadership within the organization, the value impact to the business will migrate from low to high.

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