

# Influencing key stakeholders on a long-term IT strategy: do's & don'ts

When building a long-term IT strategy achieving buy-in and the support from senior leadership, securing appropriate funding and most importantly “following through” is becoming increasingly difficult in today's fast paced, competitive and economically challenging environment. Today most executives have a difficult time seeing beyond the next quarter let alone the following year or several years out. Developing and “selling” a future state vision that clearly articulates significant themes and includes a healthy mix of long term vision and short term wins is key to delivering a successful IT Strategy.

Here are a few “Do's and Don'ts” to fuel some discussion...

## Do's

- Stakeholder Engagement – This is critical! If you don't have active involvement and buy-in from those at the top along with their key staff you'll have a hard time moving beyond a first draft and a harder time getting their support once things are in motion.
- Ownership of a successful long-term strategy includes all key stakeholders within the organization; IT should be the facilitator not the owner.
- An IT Strategy should be flexible and dynamic. Today everything changes and change comes quickly compared to several years ago. Be prepared to change and adapt to business needs and challenges.
- Position the IT strategy as a “framework” that facilitates the alignment of strategic decisions, investments & establishes the stakeholder consensus of a defined future state, avoid the perception that this is being “done to them”.
- Short term wins!! Short term deliverables within the overall plan that bring value to the business will help you get buy in on the elements that may take years.

## Don'ts

- Never assume that all stakeholders will stand behind your “better, faster, and cheaper” view of the future. Remember that all stakeholders have different motivations and what might work well for one might lead to a negative implication to another. You need to work with and understand the sweet spot of each stakeholder.
- A long-term IT strategy should not be an “all or nothing” plan, it should support incremental gains by allowing for flexibility on timing & commitment.
- Do not overlook or underestimate the role/involvement required “the business” once things get moving. They need to be committed and have the necessary resources lined up.
- Never assume that silence of a stakeholder suggests buy-in. This usually means they don't get it or are disinterested. Spend some extra time with these ones as these “sleepers” can create issues down the road.