

January - March 2008

page2 **Understanding BRASS**

CA. KRV Panicker, MD of MMIT Consultancy, explains BRASS Business Risk Assessment, Strategies & Solutions which helps businesses to identify their growth concerns and areas of improvement.

page4 **BPR**

Business Process Reengineering : Challenges and Opportunities.

page5 **Human face of IT**

An integrated HCM approach is the key step for an HCM reform program and Technology is the vehicle that moves Human Capital Management from concept to reality.

page7 **Information Security**

Organizations protect information by instituting a security process that identifies risks and implements a strategy to manage and control the risks.

page8 **Success through IT Planning**

SMEs to stay competitive by looking at technology adoption and IT infrastructure in a comprehensive manner and as a business investment.

Editorial



Welcome to the first edition of the *newsletter* from MMIT Consultancy, member of Morison Menon Group. With this newsletter, we are bringing to the fore, the first element of IT – information. Timely dissemination of the right information is often the key to dispelling ambiguity and communicating the desired message.

However, it is ironical that in today's excessively wired world, information is still a matter of concern. People complain about information overload, and it applies as much to mainstream news as to technology updates.

IT continues to baffle people despite its relevance to every day life for the simple reason that information flow relating to IT is still regarded as the privilege of a few. With this newsletter, we intend to discuss the shifting trends in IT vis-à-vis the end-user – You, your business.

MMIT is cutting a road of its own. While IT is the prime enabler in this mission, we are equally committed to ensuring that we have a streamlined system for information flow. We believe and hope that this newsletter achieves our goal.

This issue, we have a diverse bouquet of articles – from the importance of technology enablement in human capital management to identifying the right technology partner, which is extremely relevant to all businesses – SMEs as well as large corporates. As with all innovations, IT too can be a double-edged weapon, which is why information security is imperative for today's businesses. We discuss the issue in depth alongside the relevance of business process reengineering.

We also introduce **BRASS** the top-down consulting methodology, developed by MMIT with their in-depth industry experience, that enables businesses to abide and fulfil their vision and mission.

We hope this mixed bag of articles will give you a better understanding of the use of IT in an everyday business environment.

We look forward to your feedback, which is the only way to enhance the efficacy of our communication initiative.

Happy reading

Accelerate your progress...

Assurance Services
Incorporation Services
Trademark Registration Worldwide
BPO & Web Solutions

Project Feasibility and Market Research
Business Valuations & Due Diligence
Hr Solutions & Property Consulting
IT Consulting & IT Solutions



P.O.Box 55535, Dubai, UAE e-mail: dubai@morisonmenon.com
Tel. +971 4 33 66 990, Fax. +971 4 33 66 992 www.morisonmenon.com

Offices in: Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, RAK, Jebel Ali, DIFC, Iran, Qatar, KSA, India

MMIT Consultancy - member of Morison Menon Group

Understanding BRASS

Why BRASS?

The fluctuating forces of demand and supply and complex market forces have paved the way for the need to recognize and organize functioning of future businesses.

Market conditions and technologies are changing rapidly and any organisation is vulnerable to several risks. Timely availability of information and an efficient business model have become central to profitable and sustainable business growth.

BRASS - Business Risk Assessment, Strategies and Solutions, which helps businesses to identify their growth concerns and distinguish areas of improvement.

What is BRASS?

BRASS is an interactive approach to identify the concerns and key issues as well as areas of improvements across the enterprise. BRASS helps evolve a turnaround plan in the organization structure, operations and technology that are the 'best-fit' for the company. BRASS helps to transform the enterprise as a Process Organization with a much focused organizational structure with people aligned to organization vision and business goals.

Enterprise risk management is one of the facets of business strategy. How important is it in BRASS?

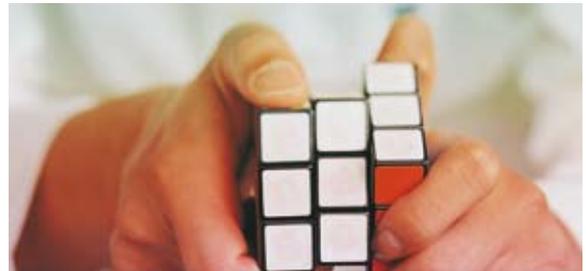
All enterprises face uncertainty, which presents both risk and opportunity, with the potential to erode or enhance value. Enterprise risk management enables businesses to effectively deal with uncertainty and associated risk and opportunity, thus enhancing the capacity to build value and avoid pitfalls and surprises along the way.

According to the context of an entity's established Vision and Mission, the management formulates strategic long term plans, selects strategy and sets aligned business goals that cascade through the enterprise. The enterprise risk management frame work is geared to achieving the entity's business objectives.

Can you generalize the objectives of a business?

Yes, there are four basic objectives for any business:

- *Strategic - high level goals, aligned with and supporting its mission.
- *Operations - effective and efficient use of its resources.
- *Reporting - reliability of reporting.
- *Compliance - with applicable laws and regulations.



“Business Risk Assessment, Strategies & Solutions is an interactive approach fully developed by MMIT to identify the key issues and areas of improvement needed across any enterprise.”

Today, businesses are all concerned of risk and risk mitigation. Can you provide more details ?

Business risks are derived from the way management runs an enterprise and are integrated with the management of process. Risks are analyzed, considering the likelihood and impact as a basis for determining how they should be managed. Risks are assessed on an inherent and a residual basis. Internal and external events affecting the achievement of an entity's objectives must be identified, distinguishing between risks and opportunities.

Management selects risk responses - avoiding, accepting, reducing or sharing risk - by developing a set of actions to align risks with the entity's risk tolerance and appetite. Policies and procedures are established and implemented to ensure the risk responses are effectively carried out. Internal control is an integral part of enterprise risk management.

The enterprise risk management is monitored through ongoing management activities, independent evaluations and modifications made as necessary.

What is the importance of an IT strategy for an organisation?

A well-defined IT strategy is of utmost importance to any enterprise to think and plan ahead. It equips enterprise to meet challenges in IT governance, improve business processes and make available information in shaping the competitive strategy. Strategic Information Systems (SIS) consists of technology and systems that help to acquire, sustain, and proliferate information.

What is the distinctive advantage offered by MMIT?

MMIT's approach is to let the business vision govern the development of the IT strategy encompassing, for example, the business objectives, strategy, future business map and key performance measures. Shared Services is appropriate for large groups and will help enterprises to define the role of the corporate centre and what activities are to be undertaken at the corporate centre, in various business units or outsourced. The need of the hour is to make IT-enabled change in the Enterprise, which will have an impact on all the factors that contribute to the success of the Enterprise - People, Process and Technology. That's exactly what our Top-Down consulting provides for the valued clients.

Today, businesses talk of As-Is and To-Be processes. What is the difference between them?

As - Is processes analysis provides a big picture view of how things currently operate across the enterprise. It brings clarity on what is working well and what is broken with the current business processes. It helps determine the key operational pain areas, and forms the basis for arriving at the to-be process.

To - Be processes define operational strategy and will enable the rolling out of a higher level corporate strategy in the years to come. It leads to the inception of high performance measures at various levels and aligning operational and management reports from the system.

Rapid implementation or modification of the information system to support the To - Be processes and a transition plan to align the organizational structure with the business policies and procedures is critical for the success of BPR.

What are the factors to be emphasized on while drawing out an organisation's restructuring framework?



The framework for organizational restructuring must emphasise on the company's Vision and directions that set the focus for improvement. It must highlight the horizontal work processes and vertical functional

roles, and it must approach technology as an enabling strategy for implementing desired changes.

Some of the key factors to be considered are communicating the directions and rationale for change; conducting job analyses; compiling employee profile and initiating training and development programs. Performance goal setting, performance appraisal, and skills development are also important components of the program.

It must be remembered that on one hand, restructuring unleashes tremendous energy from those who embrace the change; on the other, it paralyzes the productivity of those who resist it.

Now that you have mentioned change, can you give us an overview of change management?

Guiding and nurturing human capital are of utmost importance to ensure that organizational change is received and implemented enthusiastically, rather than with distrust and fear. Sustained, focused, leadership from the Top is imperative for successful implementation of changes to occur.



"The need of the hour is to make IT-enabled change in the Enterprise, which will have an impact on all the factors that contribute to the success of the Enterprise - namely, People, Process and Technology."

CA. KRV Panicker,
Managing Director, MMIT Consultancy.

A change partner with clout, conviction and charisma can keep people actively engaged in the change process. This individual can deal with adaptation and assimilation issues and consistently work to melt down resistance.

Consistent and continuous communication of organization's values and beliefs are needed to facilitate organizational change. This will help overcome resistance by the use of clear goals and performance measures linked to incentives and rewards.

BRASS is your unique consulting methodology. What are the core strengths of MMIT that helped conceptualise it?

MMIT's unique consulting methodology, BRASS, is to recommend and implement effective business solutions that deliver real business value and set high standards of customer satisfaction.

Our ability to combine a clear understanding of IT and business issues with solid delivery skills is our strength. Our core management consulting services include business and IT strategy, business risk assessment and mitigation, process reengineering, organization re-structuring and change realization. To complement, we also have specific consulting expertise in HCM with enabling technology, IS security and IT service.

BPR Challenges and Opportunities



Satish Kumar
Manager Enterprise Solutions
MMIT Consultancy

In today's ever-changing world, the only thing that doesn't change is 'change' itself. In a world increasingly driven by the three Cs - Customer, Competition and Change - companies are on the lookout for new solutions for their business problems. Recently, more successful business corporations in the world seem to have hit upon an incredible solution:

Business Process Reengineering (BPR).

BPR advocates that enterprises go back to the basics and reexamine their very roots. It doesn't believe in small improvements; rather it aims at total reinvention. BPR focuses on processes and not on tasks or people. It endeavors to redesign the strategic and value added processes that transcend organizational boundaries. The aim of BPR is to achieve dramatic improvements in cost and quality.

What to reengineer?

Reengineering should focus on processes and not be limited to thinking about the reorganization. A business process is defined as a series of steps designed to produce a product or a service and it includes all activities that deliver particular results for a given customer, external or internal.

Processes are currently invisible and unnamed because people think about their departments; must switch to giving names to the processes with which all of them are involved. Just as companies have organization charts, they should also have process maps to picture how work flows through the company. Process mapping provides a proven methodology for identifying current As-Is business processes and can be used to provide a To-Be roadmap for reengineering business enterprise functions.

Steps to BPR

Having identified and mapped the processes, deciding which ones need to be reengineered and in what order is the first step. The check points in this start with defining:

Dysfunction: which processes are functioning the worst?;

Importance: which are the most critical in terms of customer satisfaction;

Feasibility: which are the processes to be successfully reengineered?

BPR - the act

With an understanding of the basics of BPR, the organization could adopt a structured approach to re engineer their business processes. The first step is to prepare for reengineering. Remember that "if you fail to plan, you plan to fail."



Planning and Preparation are vital factors for any activity or event to be successful and reengineering

is no exception. Planning and preparations begin with a consensus on the importance of reengineering and the link between breakthrough business goals and reengineering projects.

A cross-functional team is established for the process of reengineering with the strategic direction from the top. The impact of the environmental changes that serve as the impetus for the reengineering effort must also be considered.

The company must establish strategic goals for the reengineering effort to understand customer expectations and where the existing process falls short of meeting those expectations. Having identified customer-driven objectives, a mission statement is formulated.

The mission is what a company believes it wants to achieve and can act as the flag to rally around and be the yard stick for measuring progress.

Map As-is process & Design To-be process

Before proceeding to redesign the process, organizations need to map the existing processes first, analyze and improve on it to design new processes. The important aspect of BPR is that the improvement should provide dramatic results.

In this phase the disconnects - those factors that prevent the process from achieving desired results - and value adding processes are acknowledged. Considering the time and cost that each activity takes, the processes that need to be reengineered are identified.

Having identified the potential improvements to the existing processes, the development of the To-Be models is done and the time and cost involved is analyzed. Several To-Be models that are finally arrived at are validated. By performing Trade off Analysis the best possible To-Be scenarios are selected for implementation.



"An intense customer focus, superior process design and a strong leadership are vital ingredients to business success and reengineering is the key to attain these prerequisites to success."

Implementation

The implementation stage is where reengineering efforts meet the most resistance and hence it is by far the most difficult one. Blatantly hostile antagonists to passive adversaries - all of them are determined to kill the effort. When so much time and effort is spent on analyzing current processes, redesigning them and planning the migration, it would indeed be prudent to run a culture change program. This would enable the organization to undergo a much more facile transition.

The transition plan must align the organizational structure, information systems, and the business policies and procedures with the redesigned processes. Rapid implementation of the information system that is required to support a reengineered business process is critical for the success of the BPR.

Continuous improvement



A process cannot be re-engineered overnight.

A very vital part in the success of every reengineering effort lies in

improving the reengineered process continuously.

Communication is strengthened throughout the organization, ongoing performance measurement is initiated, and a feedback loop is set up wherein the process is remapped, reanalyzed and redesigned.

TQM and BPR have always been considered mutually exclusive to each other. But on the contrary, if performed simultaneously they would complement each other wonderfully well.

An intense customer focus, superior process design and a strong leadership are vital ingredients to the recipe of business success. Reengineering is the key that every organization should possess to attain these prerequisites to success.

BPR doesn't offer a miracle cure nor does it provide a painless quick fix. Rather it advocates strenuous hard work and instigates the people involved to not only change what they do but targets at altering their basic way of thinking itself.

Failures don't mean that reengineering stops forever. It usually stalls and then restarts as the company gets itself refocused and remobilized. It cannot stop.

The human face of IT

People are the most effective resources to achieve competitive advantage in the global market today. No matter your industry, company, or nationality, there is a battle-ready competitor somewhere who is busy thinking how to beat you.

Products can be quickly duplicated and services cheaply emulated – but innovation, execution, and knowledge cannot. The collective talent of an organization is the prime source of its ability to effectively compete and win.

Today's global marketplace is spawning the industrialization of the global workforce. To remain a leader in the face of global competition, organizations must resourcefully leverage the best talent available, at the lowest possible cost. This entails a thoughtful approach to the Human Capital Management around the globe.



CA. Girija Menon
Partner
Morison Menon
Chartered Accountants

Four commitments

With limited resources and management time available, developing a holistic and strategic perspective across an integrated set of HCM initiatives requires long-term executive commitment.

The four "commitments" that the organization must make in order to implement HCM practices that support successful reform are:

- *Commitment to recognize and manage employees as critical assets,*
- *Strategic workforce planning and utilization,*
- *Prioritize and plan human capital costs for sustained investment,*
- *Engage employees through communication and collaboration channels*

Components and key steps

The HCM Framework identifies the Strategy and begins with the basic components like "recruitment and hiring", alternatively "retention" measures that involve high-performing employees remaining in their positions.

The overall orientation of an organization; the implementation initiative which support and monitor the results manifest in work environment are the key steps for implementing an HCM reform program.

HCM Impact

The **maturity level** of HCM helps the organization to determine where reforms and improvements can have the greatest effect.

H.E.A.D.S

HEADS – Transform HR into HCM

Human Enterprise and Administration Development System, a fully web enabled and state of the art solution enabling Corporates to transform routine HR management to enterprise Human Capital Management

Manpower planning & budgeting
Recruitment & personnel database
Training & development
Dynamic organization chart
Appraisal management

Employee self service
Employee document management
Full auto alerts & reminders
Payroll, OT & Leave management
Severance benefits & Leave pay

MMIT & e-Security Solutions
Member of Morison Menon Group



Tel: +971 4 336 70 00, Fax: +971 4 337 25 25, Mob: +971 50 558 9582 203 Tower-A, Gulf Towers, Oud Metha, Dubai - UAE, PO.Box 46718,

E - mail : k r v p a n i c k e r @ e - m m i t . c o m , w w w . e - m m i t . c o m Offices in: UAE, Oman, Qatar, Iran, KSA, India

MMIT Consultancy - member of Morison Menon Group

The human face of IT



“With IT enabled HCM approach, employees easily relate their immediate tasks with the mission objectives of the Organization.”

For instance, “**people-averse**” level indicates that HCM strategic initiatives are not tied into overall organizational mission or supported by sufficient investment. “**People-aware**” level recognizes that there is organizational awareness of the need to invest in human capital, but also realizes that the right skills may be missing to move ahead with that kind of investment. At the “**people-aligned**” level, intent begins to speak with action as strategies are defined and HCM leadership understands that organizational success is grounded in strategic investments in the workforce.

A “**people-centric**” organization has formal, realistic, and widely accepted and utilized HCM practices. Human capital’s role is documented in the organization’s mission and HCM is central to performance.

A focused and integrated HCM approach will result in all employees knowing the organization mission and easily relating their immediate tasks to support the mission objectives. This is discussed and reinforced throughout the employee performance cycle.

Technology in HCM

Understanding how to take advantage of technology embraced by a new generation of workers will be critical to gain competitive advantage.

A single view of data across the enterprise is one of the most critical elements for effective talent management. Organizations have spent enormous time, effort and money implementing systems to capture key employee data.



Technology continues to be the critical factor in enabling the scale and scope of process change needed to transform HR into HCM. From improved data management and self service automation to portal consolidation and analytic dashboards, technology is the critical enabler in delivering HR services to the workforce.

Take internal mobility, for example. When seeking to fill a critical position in a global organization, a manager can now quickly identify a pool of candidates by accessing consolidated system data concerning an employee’s performance, career development plans, education and compensation—for greater insight and visibility.

Integrated HR Management System

Many of the problems facing growing organizations reflect the incongruous solutions they have implemented. Over the course of time, and without seamless integration, these multiple “solutions” can create more havoc than they cure.

Data integrity issues coupled with information access and the lack of consolidated reporting force organizations to create “work-around” spreadsheets, where they manually manipulate data to get the information they need to do their jobs.

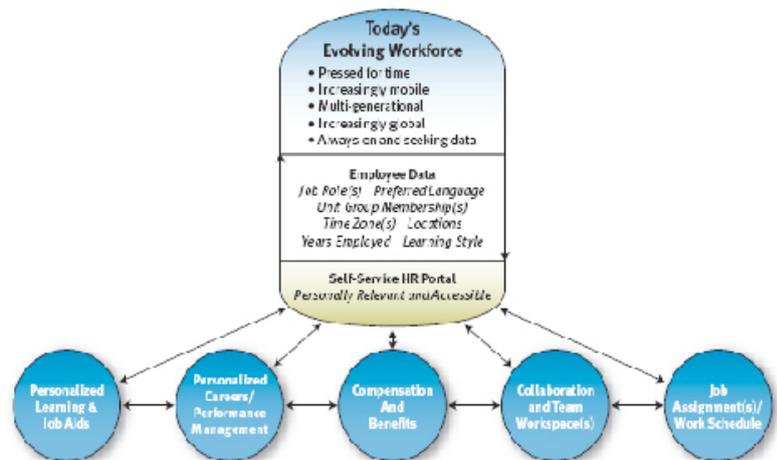
For instance, many HR departments are not attuned to training or conducting performance evaluations. Reviews are rarely tied in to future growth, but rather to past performance. Too many departments still function under stand-alone processes, unique to their section of the corporate world.

Differing verticals within the same corporate group might have multiple interfaces, slowing down workflow and, hence, hindering the integration of newly hired staff or delaying new assignments for existing staff.

Compliance to local laws is another key deciding factor which dictates value for money, which, if not present, leads to incorrect and tedious document management, delayed renewals of work permits, and haphazard gratuity calculation leaving the management completely at a loss over time calculation and other possible scenarios.

Add to this the inability to measure the effects of training, impact of compensation packages, and one can readily see the need for a comprehensive, proactive solution.

Adapting to Emerging Workforce Trends



HCM Reform Program

To speed up the system integration effort, it is imperative that organizations closely evaluate and implement an HCM reform program. This tends to be a more strenuous effort than the technical integration itself, but organizations that do this right will reap the benefits of a smoother talent management integration.

Without technology enablement, talent management is purely a conceptual vision that cannot deliver value. Technology is the vehicle that moves Human capital management from concept to reality.

Information Security and Risk Mitigation



Madhu Nambiar
Business Development Manager
MMIT Consultancy

Information is one of the most important assets of any organization. Protection of information assets is necessary to establish and maintain trust between the company and its customers, compliance with law, and protect the reputation of the institution. Information security is the process by which an organization protects and secures its systems

that process and maintain information vital to its operations.

An organization establishes truly effective information security when it continuously integrates processes, people, and technology to mitigate risk in accordance with risk assessment and acceptable risk tolerance levels.

Organizations protect their information by instituting a security process that identifies risks, forms a strategy to manage risks, implements the strategy, tests implementation and monitors environment to control the risks.

Information Security Objective

Organizations striving to accomplish information security objective by:

- **Availability**

Authorized users have prompt access to information.

- **Integrity**

Systems are free from unauthorized manipulation

- **Confidentiality**

Policies, and controls to protect confidentiality

- **Accountability**

Processes and controls to trace actions

- **Assurance**

Operational security measures work as intended.

Information security should be supported throughout the institution. This can be achieved through security training and ongoing security-related communications and audits.

Information Security Risk Assessment

Organizations must maintain an ongoing information security risk assessment program and develop strategies to mitigate those risks. This could start with gathering data regarding information and technology assets of the organization, its vulnerabilities and threats. Existing security controls and processes, and the current security standards and requirements must be monitored. This should be followed up by analyses of the probability and impact associated with known threats and vulnerabilities to their assets. The final step is in prioritising the risks present, and determining appropriate level of training, controls, and assurance for effective mitigation.

Assess Threats and Vulnerabilities

Threats are events that could cause harm to the confidentiality, integrity, or availability of information or information systems.

Vulnerabilities, known and expected, can be characterized as weaknesses in the system, or control gaps,

if exploited, could result in unauthorized disclosure, misuse or destruction of information or information systems.

After assessing the likelihood and exposure of identified threats and vulnerabilities, evaluating control effectiveness, the institution should assign risk ratings to information systems.

The probability of an event occurring, and its impact on organization should be considered in determining the appropriate risk rating:

High, Medium or Low.

Information Security Strategy

An information security strategy is a plan to mitigate risks with the integration of people, process, and technology. Security strategies include prevention, detection, and response, and all three are needed for a comprehensive and robust security framework.

Policies are guiding decisions and also specify mechanisms through which security responsibilities can be met, provide guidance in access control and security audit.

Policies should be communicated in a clear, understandable manner to all concerned. Organization must provide the required flexibility to address changes in the environment.

System Architecture

An organization can significantly mitigate the risk of security events by an appropriate technology design for effective network-level monitoring and limit intrusion to the network. Security domains for a network are typically constructed from routing controls and directories.

Access should be authorized and provided only to individuals whose identity is established, and their activities should be limited to the minimum required for business purposes.

Access rights periodically reviewed and updated on personnel or system changes. Organizations should secure access to their computer networks through multiple layers of access controls to prevent unauthorized access.



“Truly effective information security integrates processes, people, technology and protects its systems that process and maintain information vital to its operations.”

Tools and systems

Firewalls which comprise computers, routers, and software are an essential control and provide a means of protection against a variety of attacks. Perimeter routers and firewalls configured to enforce policies that forbid the origination of outbound communications from certain computers.

Network Intrusion Prevention Systems similar to firewalls, are an access control mechanism based on an analysis of packet headers and payloads. Wireless networks do not have a well-defined access points. To mitigate risks, it is important to rely on encryption to authenticate users and to shield communications.

Organizations provide employees and vendors with access to network through external connections like Internet for remote support. Remote-access should be strictly controlled and restricted by establishing policies.

Confidentiality agreements put all parties on notice that the organization owns its information, expects strict confidentiality, and prohibits information sharing outside of that required for legitimate business needs.

Business continuity plans should be reviewed as an integral part of the security process. Security needs for back-up sites and alternate communication networks should be considered.



MMIT Consultancy

203 Tower-A, Gulf Towers, Oud Metha, Dubai – UAE, P.O.Box 46718,
Tel: +971 4 336 70 00, Fax: +971 4 337 25 25, Mob: +971 50 558 9582
E-mail : krivanicker@e-mmmit.com, www.e-mmmit.com, Offices in: UAE, Oman, Qatar, Iran

SUMMIT

mmmit newsletter

Success through IT Planning



CA. K. Parthasarathi
General Manager
Morison Menon
Chartered Accountants

Small and Medium Enterprises, today, are under pressure to do achieve more with the same meager level of resources. This puts spotlight on the effective use of IT planning – as the key to success. Technology plays an increasingly important role in allowing Small and Medium-sized Enterprises to operate in a fiercely competitive and fast-changing environment. While customer expectations are rising, businesses are under pressure

to do more with the same or fewer resources with an ever increasing cost.

“Don’t skate to where the puck is; skate to where it’s going to be.” SMEs traditionally add technology as a means of addressing an immediate problem. SMEs can improve their business processes by looking at technology adoption and IT infrastructure in a comprehensive manner. This means, addressing an immediate problem while taking future, long-term needs into consideration and viewing the IT infrastructure acquisition as a business investment.

With well chalked-out IT planning, the companies could avoid the pitfalls faced by many SMEs that adopt technology in a less orderly, piecemeal fashion.

An overview:

Large enterprises have a solid understanding of the value of long-term technology planning and investment. In contrast, SMEs are faced with a more serious constraint on technology effectiveness and tend to address immediate business concerns with the least expensive solution available. Using this ad hoc approach to technology acquisition often results in an unwieldy infrastructure that is difficult to manage and upgrade. This approach increases the operational costs, often erasing any short-term savings derived from point product purchases.

IT Infrastructure Planning

The key rider in proper IT infrastructure planning is creating a clear and consistent structure, where IT is aligned with business objectives and set to a comprehensive plan. The company must acquire the right direction that meets its needs with available technology, and the IT strengths and orientation of staff must be aligned to achieve progress.

When SMEs map their business objectives to long-term technology plans, they can improve communications and streamline business processes. Having a plan creates a common understanding within the organization and helps companies to achieve business objectives quickly and cost-effectively.

SMEs often think about their business goals and their IT spending priorities as two independent and unconnected topics. Rather than having a clear strategic mission for IT, SMEs normally emphasize priority for buying specific point products. Farther down the list are key infrastructure investments that will significantly improve business efficiency and productivity.

Evolutionary nature of IT planning

Currently SMEs lack an IT planning process as a rule, not an exception. Problems resulting from ad hoc technology acquisition tend to be debilitating and potentially disastrous. At the very least, the risks of not planning are lost time and efficiency as well as technology not fully supporting the longer-term business needs. At the worst, the failure to plan ahead can place a firm in such a weak competitive position as to threaten its survival.

Successful Implementation

Changing business dynamics and emerging opportunities can make investment in new technology essential. Annual budgeting can provide the discipline necessary to make sure that critical infrastructure investments are being made today to support future technology needs.

The crucial consideration in connecting technology roadmap to business planning is: Are there new technologies that could or should be incorporated into your network? Even if the answer is no at present, it will be beneficial to plan now for future technology integration.

If technology advantages are associated with the competitors, then technology advances will have to be funded in order to keep pace or continue to be relevant to customers. The fundamental questions are:

- *What business challenges does your firm face today?*
- *How can technology help to address these challenges?*
- *What technology tools can you use to make staff more efficient?*

Your technology may be doing the job today, but will you be able to build on it tomorrow? Start developing a plan that involves a schedule and budget that will allow your IT infrastructure to transition and evolve with your business vision.

Consideration should not be limited to equipment and services. It must also include the “processes,” practices, and skills of staff in using and managing technology. In addressing critical needs, an incremental approach is required, but a timetable for replacing inadequate technology is essential. The goals are to prepare a fully thought-out and carefully crafted plan for very specific change and to deliver measurable performance improvement to company operations.

The right technology partner

Rather than simply act as technology conduits, the key technology partner serves as an extension of a company’s IT staff, providing important guidance as well as a wide range of services, including installation, training and support. The considerations in choosing a technology partner should be:

- *Can technology partner provide the service you will be looking for?*
- *Does technology partner truly understand your business challenges?*
- *Do you believe that your technology partner shares your company vision?*
- *Is the technology partner capable of providing technology and support in keeping with your business growth plans?*

As part of a long-term perspective, you should seek a committed partner who will be able to serve you as your needs change. In most cases, the technology partner will become a trusted colleague and partner who recognizes that its business will grow with yours.

It is therefore essential to objectively assess your current technology environment and how it maps to your short- and longer-term business goals. Identify what changes need to be made to make sure IT plans and business plans are in sync and prioritize those changes.