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An Effective Demand Planning Process for Better IT Services

[1]Marghalani, Adel A, [2]Alrabia, Abdullah M

[1,2]Aramco, Information Technology
Co-author: Alrabia, Abdullah M – abdullah.alrabia@gmail.com

Abstract: **The information systems play a crucial role mainly in operative planning and management in any given Organization. Within this paper, a clear demonstration of the significance of Information Technology (IT) demands planning process for customer operations & support will be discussed. The paper will also cover the various ways to surmount any gaps in information technology coverage. The IT Demand Planning represents a set of processes and information technologies necessary to satisfy customer demands in the process of planning. The main reason behind the IT Demand Planning process is to assist any business in weighing its potentiality regarding profits. Indirectly, it has the upper hand in determining an Organizations capacity, financing, and stakeholder confidence (Sheldon 2006). A proper IT Demand Planning process is an essential feature when defining customer demands and directing them to a single entity inside any IT organization for implementation.**

Keywords: **IT Demand Planning process, Business Engagement.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Issues of Information Technology Demand Planning Today:

Today, business priorities and requirements are revolving, on a daily basis; these changes synonymously impact customer's planned IT demands. The challenging issue about IT is that changes are unpredictable, and they come about at unexpected times, maybe when the Organization is on with its daily Organizations. IT Demand Planning issues within any corporations come from not only the business environment, but also internal IT. Loose rein within IT is necessary to capture all business demands relevant to IT, and engaging business partners or stakeholders in the IT Demand Planning process are vital of succession planning. Inadequate IT Demand Planning process has adverse impacts on business operations (Vlckova, Vladimira & Michal p.40). Similarly, corporations cannot stand to enable its connections to debilitate with its clients. Poor customer relations may negatively affect business operations as well.

An Effective IT Demand Planning Process for Better IT Services:

Proper IT engagement improves any business, the use of IT leads to the customer-centric and proactive identification of opportunities. In essence, information technology (IT) adds value to any Company by enabling that Organization's business to utilize the most viable, efficient and cost-effective IT solutions to problems facing the firm.

An operating model to facilitate the engagement activities with enhanced demand planning process was developed and endorsed by IT stakeholders. At the onset of demand planning process, it is necessary to ensure the process is driven by corporate strategies. Corporate strategies ensure the business directions are appropriate and that planning teams efforts are synonymous with the strategic objectives and focus areas of the business (Vlckova, Vladimira & Michal Patak p.56). As per enterprise architecture best practices, these focus areas and business priorities should be further aligned with the business processes and IT capabilities, this way it easy to identify any gap which would result to new opportunities. These can be evaluated based on corporate investment process that is based on business values, risks, economics and possible technologies' enablement.

To create a streamlined and exclusive IT demand planning process, IT must work intently with various IT entities, entities that are expertise even to particular demands. Currently, all lot of gaps have been identified while addressing IT demand. The main gaps are described below:

- Fragmented demands: several channels of receiving IT demands.
- Disrupting planned activities: unplanned demands affect the planned demands that result in resource management difficulty.
- Customer engagement: corporate strategy approach alignments.
- Lack of visibility: managing demands in silos without having a full visibility of the corporate strategy and vision.

Any IT company suffering from multiple channels of receiving demands for IT services, project scheduling conflicts and inefficient resource utilization are imminent. Multiple channels in any IT firm will directly cause delays, project backlogs, and low customer satisfaction. Additionally, inadequate post-implementation reviews to measure the business benefits realized of the offered IT service. It is requisite for any firm to have the recommended tools to carry out demand prioritization, capability making plans, financial capital planning and finalize demands (Stewart p.67).

Setting up a powerful IT demand planning process procedure has its benefits. Efficient IT demand planning process procedure delivers the following advantages:

- It enforces a single channel for its call for requests.
- Ability to include unplanned demand into the annual planning cycles.
- Enhance the IT demands assessment & prioritization procedures.
- Expand an interactive and open engagement model that is obvious and collaborative.

Creating or improving IT function by deploying a theoretical working model that focuses on business engagement will fundamentally build the quality IT acquires regarding the benefits the enterprise gets across the organization. Also, prioritization of benefits of the business necessities will guarantee efficient resource utilization. The demand operating model should be built on a centralized IT demand entity that works as a single channel for receiving and managing all it needs making it the driving force to a successful accomplishment of all demands. This entity is also required to have full transparency of costs across all IT services, as well as have the oversight of delivered services through support, and tracking business benefits realization.

Fragmented demand:

Fragmented IT demand channels create customers' confusion. Clients get confused; they don't know the appropriate person to contact IT to handle their demands. Furthermore, fragmented demands hinder IT from being to capture all the customers, demands, prioritize them, and fulfill them based on specific client requirements. Also, fragmented demand has a debilitating effect on the visibility and subsequent scheduling of the overall IT demands (Cova, Bernard & Robertp.90). It is essential to have a demand process governance and overarching portfolio and project management. With many channels of demand, IT is unable to manage and control its costs across all provided services as expected. Fragmented demands prevent IT managers from making informed and accurate decisions with clear communications to the business and other IT entities.

Disrupting planned activities:

The unplanned demands affect the regular schedules upon which individual resources are dedicated to catering for a specific project. The occurrence of unplanned activities consecutively leads to disruption of normal activities. Unplanned actions affect the availability of IT resources as they get pulled out to focus on the specific emergency activity even though it was not scheduled. Unexpected activities adversely affect the progress of the schedule of existing projects. Unplanned activities are not recommended because they lead to poor planning for IT demands and inaccuracy of forecasts. Unfortunately, IT can't reject unplanned demands which disrupt the execution of the planned demands.

Customer engagement:

The lack of customer engagement means there is no alignment between business strategies to IT technology roadmaps. Lack of alignment between IT technology roadmaps and business strategies results to obsolescence, hence new costly solutions. Active customer engagement with IT will encourage the business to capture their IT demands that could potentially translate into valuable projects with measurable business benefits (Al-Oteawi p.128). Also, customers will bring business opportunities prioritized business needs that will be successful based on existing IT.

Lack of visibility:

Having silos of IT, demand will cause duplication and misalignment with IT technology. The key to success is to maintain open and regular clear communications channels with customers. Setting strategic decisions will prove visibility in any IT organization. A clear visibility will also align technology roadmaps.

Types of Information Technology Demand:

The services below can be considered to be part of IT Demand Planning Services to be delivered to customers in any organization. IT requires strategic funding since it is the only way the Information technology will be able to get operating funds requisite to avail these services to Organizations. Strategic funding will enable IT to optimize both services that require manpower and funding. If the Demand planning services are to be availed successfully then IT should organize an annual meeting upon which both parties review the services hence guarantying efficiency.

- Applications development\enhancement
- Computing hardware
- Expanding infrastructure
- Network and connectivity
- The End-user devices such as workstations, printers, etc.
- Software licenses

Application development /enhancement:

With the growth of any business, it is necessary to upgrade the existing software to ensure they are by the ever-changing business. The IT staff augmentation will replace the existing software applications.

Computing Hardware:

Everything that a company requires regarding the physical components of the computer availed. The IT firm will ensure it installs the firm with the latest CPU, RAM and any persistent storage. For instance, the IT staff will ensure it installs the modern chips with multiple cores, upon which one core is a semi-independent CPU, and it can operate alone in case the others break down.

Expanding infrastructure:

At many firms, the IT infrastructure has expanded from basements with few servers to complex data servers with almost thousands f thousand servers. In most of the large IT Organizations, networked storage is costly. Expanding infrastructure is necessary for any growing business; it improves the speed in which some firm processes client's transactions (Viardot p.40). It also enhances the manner a certain company handles its customer's data and hence yields relevant marketing insights. Infrastructure also runs the applications that support the analytical tools helping a Company's top executive make rational decisions that shape a sophisticated Organization.

Network and connectivity:

This service is necessary for any operational firm; employees need to surf and use the internet for various work reasons. The IT Company installs the appropriate internal network that the firm's employees will utilize in their daily operations. It ensures that connectivity is throughout and no delays in customer delivery caused by network problems.

End-user devices such as workstations, printers, etc.

This service ensures that the office workstations and peripherals are available to request, configured and customized by the IT. The IT Company also ensures that the workstation is stylish and updated; it is the Information technology's duty is to ensure the end user devices are captured during the IT Demand Planning cycles for fulfillment.

Software license:

The software license is an IT service management; it ensures that an Organizations license agreement is operational. This IT service management ensures that snow License manager lessens the sophistication, cost, and risk related to software assets and licensing.

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