Why Business and IT Must Co-Create Strategy for a Digital Enterprise

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Why Business and IT Must Co-Create Strategy for a Digital Enterprise

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Executive Summary

As part of a larger effort to transform to a Digital Business Model, executive technology leaders and business leaders must co-create strategy together, not serially.

The Open Group IT4IT™ Reference Architecture and the TOGAF® Standard can be used in conjunction with the Business Relationship Management Body of Knowledge (BRMBoK™) to accelerate and strengthen a co-creation model oriented for business agility and value-based outcomes.

These standards and framework provide guidance to key roles in business and IT to help them architect silo-less value streams for continuous collaboration and strategically-aligned, high-value service delivery.

Introduction

The new digital business model is challenging companies to shape new strategies to stay competitive. Customer-centricity is key, to the point where some industry researchers assert that if you don't start the transformation now to become the "ecosystem driver" for your market domain, you will lose your place in your market altogether.[1] The race to become this ecosystem driver has re-engineered entire industries and generated new requirements for agility, transparency, and value-driven outcomes. Specifically, in any organization, business and technical people must be continuously working together to investigate, recognize, and test new customer value propositions and the digital technologies that make them possible.

For business and IT to work together, legacy boundaries and silos have to be dismantled. IT leaders are well-positioned to co-create strategy because they have a holistic view of the company. They are aware of emerging digital technologies, are well-versed on the business objectives, and can share where to apply technology to create a competitive advantage.

Shaping demand and selecting the right investments has taken on heightened strategic importance for business and IT. Together, business and IT must focus on the intersection between which new value propositions can be made available to customers and which ones the customers value enough to actually pay for.[2] Further, IT must not only focus on shaping demand but, equally importantly, ensure that real business value is delivered for all investments. The role of putting structure and definition around the still amorphous "business agility" and "digital transformation" being demanded by every CEO, still falls mostly to IT leadership.

For this reason, The Open Group is expanding its guidance to the industry within its IT4IT Strategy to Portfolio (S2P) value stream, bringing a greater focus on co-creation of strategy. This document presents emerging best practices in agility and value focus and highlights the key roles involved in the S2P value stream.

What is the Current State?

IT organizations struggle (and often fail) to rise above an "order taker" mentality, responding to the last-loudest-voice syndrome, resulting in most work happening on low-value activities. Worse, IT struggles to report out to business leadership in the language of the business on how its work streams support strategy or value. Complicating all of this is the drive to achieve faster throughput via agile methodologies and DevOps. It is easy to get lost in the blaze of speed and miss the need to assess investments and ensure they drive value. The price for IT in this current state is frequently lost credibility with business leaders and frustration inside the IT department.

[1] What's Your Digital Business Model?: Six Questions to Help you Build the Next-Generation Enterprise by P. Weill and W. Woerner (see References).

[2] See http://cisr.mit.edu/research/research-overview/classic-topics/digital-design/.

This document aims to provide guidance for changing this dynamic and supporting the upward climb to a strategic partnership with IT and its business constituents on the transformation journey to becoming a digital enterprise.

How to Move to the Desired State?

For a transformation to a digital enterprise to succeed, IT will need to create a more agile, collaborative, end-to-end value stream view of work, keep a sharp focus on business value, and use agile methods to get to value realization more quickly.

It is essential for IT executives to raise up the conversation from managing lower-level technology concerns like systems and servers to delivering business outcomes. "Successful technology leaders take initiative in bridging gaps and finding solutions by asking questions like the following:

- What business or customer problem are we trying to solve?
- Is the investment worthwhile?
- How can we test new ideas?
- How do we measure results?"[3]

Another important reason for creating this relationship between business and IT is that co-creation may not be the final desired state. As the digital model becomes ingrained in a company's business culture, and they start working cross-functionally, business and IT will begin to blend and there may no longer be a distinction. The history of incorporating electricity into business is a telling example of how this type of blending can evolve to create winners and losers. It demonstrates why it is imperative for businesses to shift to survive. A 100 years ago, companies had a Chief Electrical Officer to help them embrace the power of electricity. As the knowledge of how to use electricity was incorporated by businesses, the role started to become obsolete. The lesson learned from this shift is that those companies that embraced electricity fast enough and designed the business around electricity survived compared to those who continued to only use steam power.[4]

A recent MIT Sloan School Center of Information Systems Research (CISR) study reinforces the idea that IT and business will eventually blend as companies shift from partnership models to pervasive models. "*The Partnership model is premised on the IT unit as a distinct organizational unit that contains most of the knowledge and expertise (i.e., people) it needs to achieve the functional objectives of building and keeping IT systems working, delivering some IT services itself and managing vendors that deliver the rest. The Pervasive model maintains that the "IT unit" is not a separate distinct organizational unit, but rather that it is embodied in a set of intra and inter-organizational networks of connections providing access to distributed knowledge. It is through the coordination and integration of this knowledge that capabilities and products underpinned by technology are realized. This happens by bringing together – usually in teams – people with diverse discipline, knowledge, and experiences, and giving them resources and the freedom to do what is*

[3] Taken from https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/bridging-the-leadership-gap-between-tech-and-business/.

[4] See also https://medium.com/@kdelko/chief-electricity-officer-wanted-f020520f6b97 and https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/digital/cdos-the-new-chief-electrical-officers.

necessary to achieve outcomes, unhindered by functional silos, hierarchy, multiple handovers, unclear responsibilities, conflicting metrics, bureaucracy, and budgets."[5]

The tactics outlined in this document can help change IT conversations away from "cost reduction" to "value delivery" and away from "utility" to "strategy". This can drive measurable improvement in execution success and time to business value, as well as improved business-IT relationships and customer experience. Figure 1 shows the digital strategy journey from the days when business and IT created their strategies independently to the desired state where the lines between business and IT are blurred and the silos have disappeared.

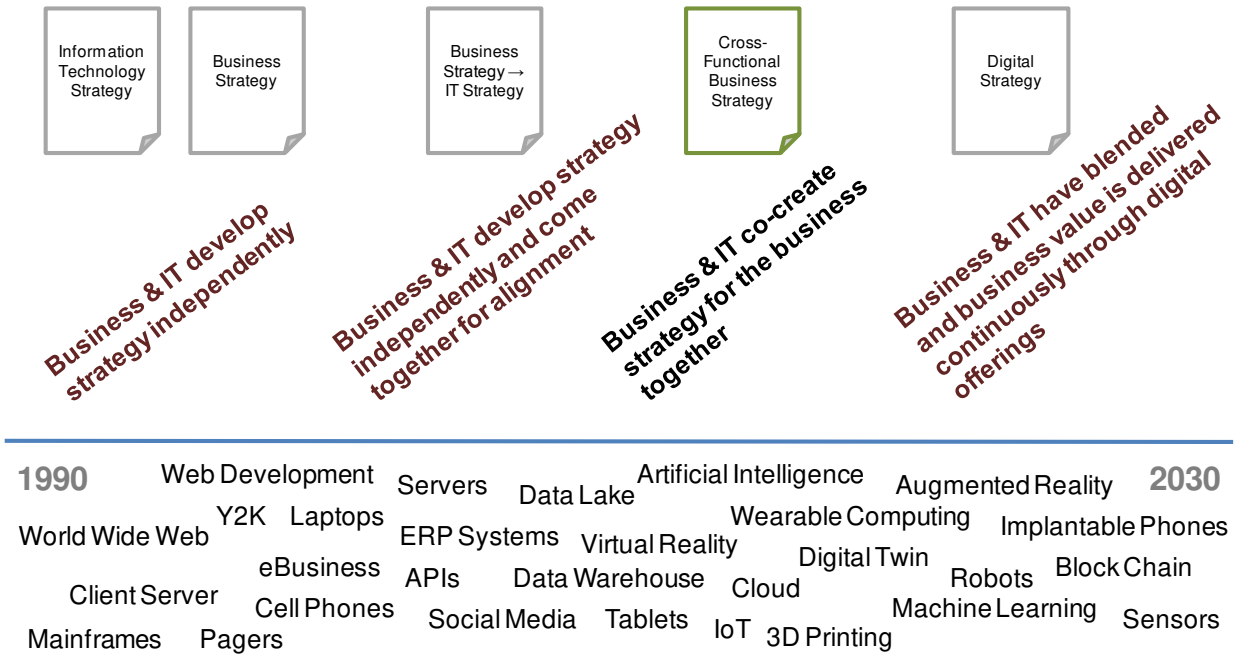

Figure 1: Digital Strategy Journey

[5] Taken from The Metamorphosis of the IT Unit, MIT CISR: http://cisr.mit.edu/blog/documents/2019/07/18/2019_0701_itunitmetamorphosis_peppard.pdf/.

The Strategic Portfolio Management Triad

Business and IT have traditionally created their strategy independently and then come back together for alignment. Co-creation of strategy requires business and IT to work together to create and execute the strategy and deliver business value incrementally. The foundation for Strategy and Portfolio Management with shared business-IT responsibility is represented in the Strategic Portfolio Management Triad (shown in Figure 2) which is composed of three equally important components:

- **Co-Creation of Strategy**: organizes business and IT to work together to execute the strategy and deliver business value incrementally
- **Value Focus**: provides a strong business value foundation that is actionable and based on common outcomes
- **Agility**: ensures a steady and predictable stream of business value through incremental delivery methods

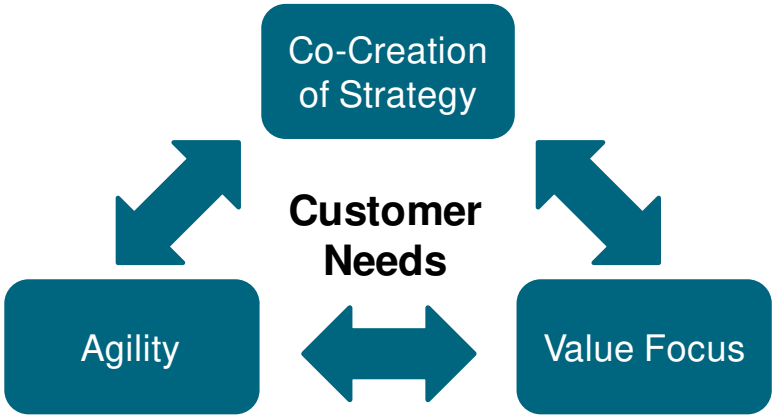

Figure 2: Strategic Portfolio Management Triad

Co-Creation of Strategy

Co-creation of strategy is where business and IT work together to execute the strategy and deliver business value incrementally. The activities and roles that will be pivotal to make this shift are:

- Establish trust between business and IT working with roles like the Business Relationship Manager
- Agree on a framework for the co-created strategy working with the Strategist and Business Architect
- Deliver an architecture to execute the agreed strategy with the help of the Enterprise Architect

Creating an environment where IT is esteemed as a trusted advisor or ultimately a strategic partner is the foundation for the success of any co-creation of strategy and a key measure of success on the digital journey. What can help the IT team grow trust in this manner? Empower a Business Relationship Manager or Business Leader to partner with a cross-functional team to shape the company strategy. Depending on where the company is on the digital strategy journey, the roles may reside in multiple functions. For example, there will likely be corresponding Business Relationship Managers, Strategists, Architects, and Portfolio Managers in many of the functions until cross-functional accountability becomes a way of working and the silos break

down. This team shares ownership of the results from strategy to execution and works together to optimize business value. The BRMBoK is a resource for the Business Relationship Manager that provides a maturity model for transforming the relationship of IT to the business from one of order taker or service provider to one of strategic advisor. The BRMBoK maturity model (shown in Figure 3) can help IT earn a seat at the table with business as a strategic partner in establishing strategy.

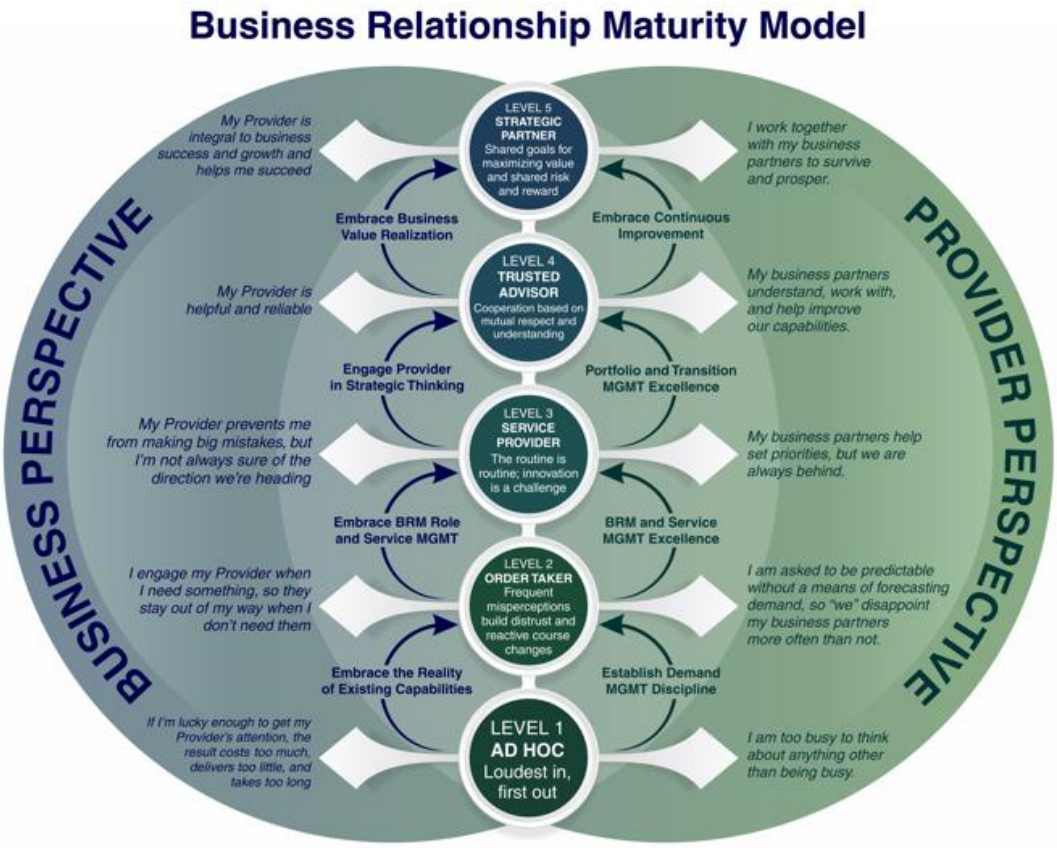

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Figure 3: Business Relationship Management Maturity Model

Moving up the maturity curve demands that the CIO and the entire IT/technical organization across all value streams become vested in business value and business outcomes. The IT Value Chain and Reference Architecture defined in the IT4IT standard can be important enablers in helping IT to climb the maturity ladder.

IT Business Partnerships: A Field Guide (see References) cites statistics showing that there is direct financial benefit for organizations who move up the maturity curve by choosing to converge and co-create strategy. Organizations where co-creation of strategy is the norm perform significantly better in many measures. Co-creation of strategy results for these organizations is shown in Figure 4.

Converged Versus Non-converged Peers

Metrics	%
Return on Equity	4%
Return on Assets	8%
Return on Investments	13%
EBITD	7%
Earnings per Share	28%
Revenue Growth	11%

BTM Institute Research

Figure 4: Co-Creation of Strategy Results

The Business Architect is another key participant in the co-creation of strategy.

Business Architecture as a discipline is a best practice for translating strategy to execution and the TOGAF ecosystem has most of the major components in the following TOGAF Series Guides (available from The Open Group Library at www.opengroup.org/library):

- Business Models
- Business Capabilities
- Value Streams
- Business Scenarios
- Information Mapping
- Organization Mapping (in review)

Additionally, The Open Group TOGAF Series Guide: Business Models states: "*Business models improve communication among business executives because they provide a common perspective for the organization's core business logic, thus helping executives "get on the same page" ... In essence, business models provide clarity of thought using a different point of view from the one provided by traditional strategic planning methods, and can foster a greater level of thinking required for innovation*."

According to the Business Architecture Guild, *"... Business Architecture enables everyone – from strategic planning teams through implementation teams – to get "on the same page", enabling them to address challenges and meet business objectives*". (Source: The Business Architecture Quick Guide: A Brief Guide for Game Changers – see References.)

The IT Value Chain and Reference Architecture (shown in Figure 5) provides a solid foundation for business and IT by identifying the lifecycle activities required for defining product/service strategy through execution

and support. It provides a roadmap for the key activities and functions that must be optimized to ensure successful value delivery. All of the co-creation strategy roles can utilize the IT4IT standard since it identifies activities across the entire product/service lifecycle.

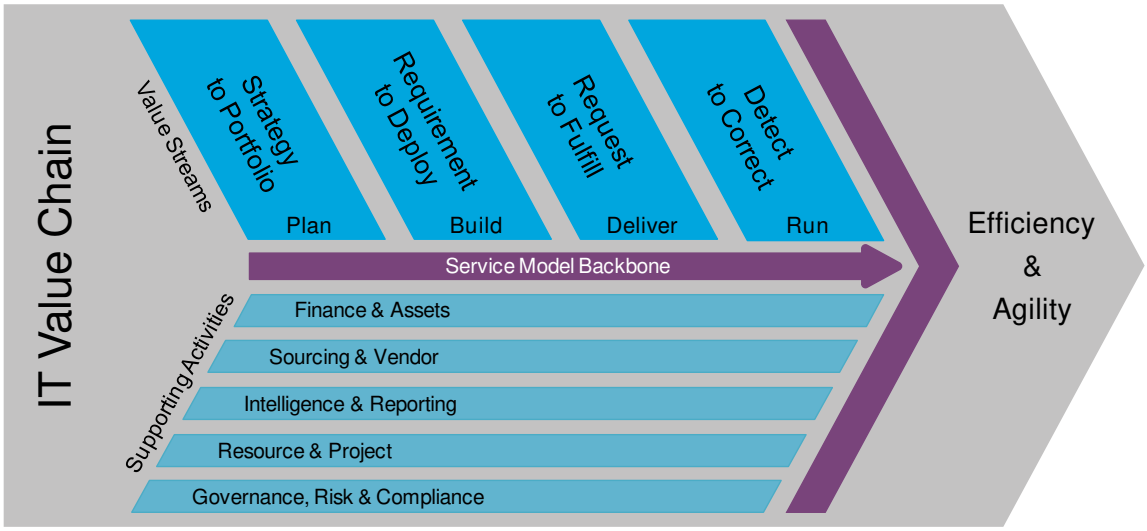

Figure 5: IT Value Chain in the IT4IT Reference Architecture, Version 2.1

Insights from the IT4IT standard add significant value to the longstanding issue of business-IT alignment, which is more important than ever. The IT4IT S2P value stream in Figure 5 is the initial focal point for the co-creation of strategy and shifting entire IT organizations to a value focus. Building strategic objectives that inform both business and IT roadmaps are key activities in the IT4IT S2P value stream and are re-enforced by the BRM Institute and Gartner.

An overview of the activities that occur in the S2P value stream are presented in Figure 6.

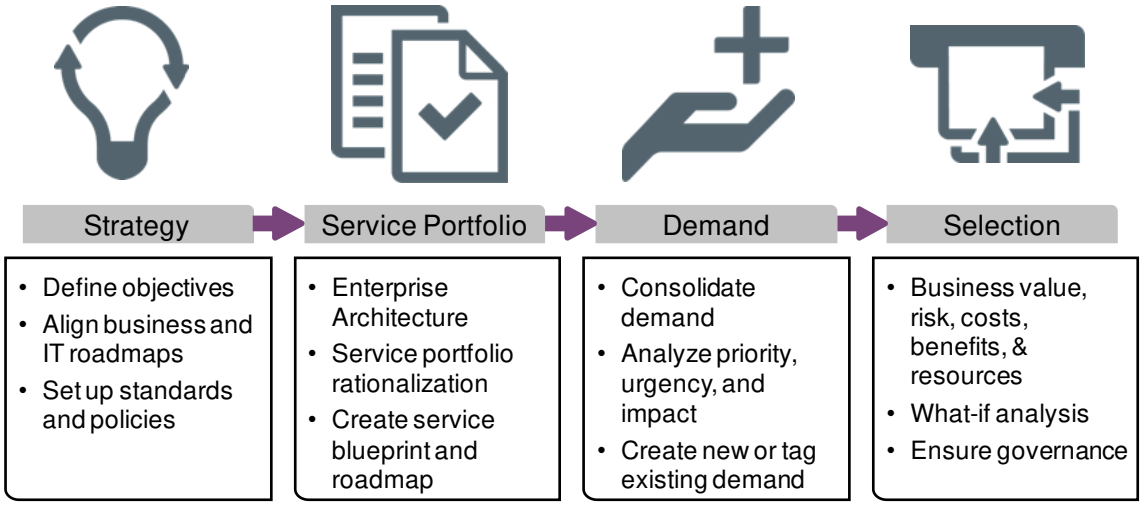

Figure 6: IT4IT Strategy to Portfolio Activities

The IT4IT S2P value stream emphasizes the need for portfolio management and prioritization of demand and includes activities to synthesize business and IT roadmaps and consolidate demand. This supports business and IT in converging strategy as it is being created and exposes demand across the enterprise instead of only viewing demand by each functional silo.

Last, but most important, in order to get organizational acceptance and accelerate the delivery of business value, it will be essential to have strong CxO sponsorship for the new intention of co-creation of strategy with a value focus.

Value Focus

A value focus provides a strong business value foundation that is actionable and based on common outcomes. The following activities and roles will be central to bring about the shift to value focus.

Start by securing a business value definition led by the Business Architect and supported by the Business Relationship Manager, Strategist, and Portfolio Manager.

While many models exist for determining business value, how an organization chooses to define and measure business value has fundamentally changed in recent years with the disruption of digital product offerings and the digital enterprise. For most organizations, the discussion to define business value must now include supporting the organization's transformation to a digital enterprise, and addressing how to ensure and measure customer retention, customer satisfaction, and market expansion. In the book Designed for Digital: How to Architect Your Business for Sustained Success by Ross et al. (see References), the authors posit that it will be critical for business and IT to work together to understand and recognize the new customer value propositions that digital technologies make possible. They propose that for sustained success, organizations should start now by driving two critical initiatives:

- **Digitization** – to enhance operational excellence, as operational excellence is no longer a "nice to have", but rather it is a "must have" and is a prerequisite to Digital Transformation
- **Digitalization** – to enhance the customer value

As part of the shift to a value focus, Ross et al. suggest that each organization ask itself this question to develop its own unique answer based on its market and capabilities:

"*How does having much more information as well as new technologies change the value proposition we can offer our customers?*"

The DPBoK™ Standard (see References) recognizes the need for operational excellence as the foundation for digital-first and defines "digitization" as the conversion of analog information into digital form and "digitalization" as the application of digital technology to create additional business value within the primary value chain of enterprises. A "digital-first" culture is where the business models, plans, architectures, and implementation strategies are based on a digital organization architecture that inspires and rewards a number of desired behaviors, such as servant leadership, strategic value chain thinking, consumer focus, fault

tolerance, agility, and more. It requires a workforce with a sense of psychological safety, digitally savvy enough to execute a "digital-first approach".[6]

In contrast, some legacy organizations may still measure business value in more traditional ways. In a CIO.com article (X4),[7] business value is addressed as five very specific things:

1. Increase revenue
2. Decrease cost
3. Improve productivity
4. Differentiate the company
5. Improve client satisfaction.

Every one of these items has a financial implication with a focus on achieving financial projections to shareholders and/or stakeholders.

Ultimately, whatever measures your organization chooses for the value focus, CxOs share accountability as their IT teams make recommendations to deliver quantifiable and tangible business value. In doing so, IT teams are perceived as business partners and boost the frequency and effectiveness of value conversations.

Another source for guidance on business value identification is the TOGAF standard, with its Architecture Vision and Business Architecture Development Method (ADM) phases. This includes the TOGAF Series Guide: Value Streams (see References) which describes a process for understanding business value. The methods and examples there provide a starting point for architects to deliver an architecture based on business value and the business strategy. Figure 7 describes the relationships between value streams, processes, and capabilities. (Source: TOGAF Series Guide: Value Streams, Figure 2.)

[6] See https://pubs.opengroup.org/dpbok/standard/DPBoK.html#definitions.

[7] Business Value is Key to IT Success – see https://www.cio.com/article/3128724/business-value-is-key-to-it-success.html.

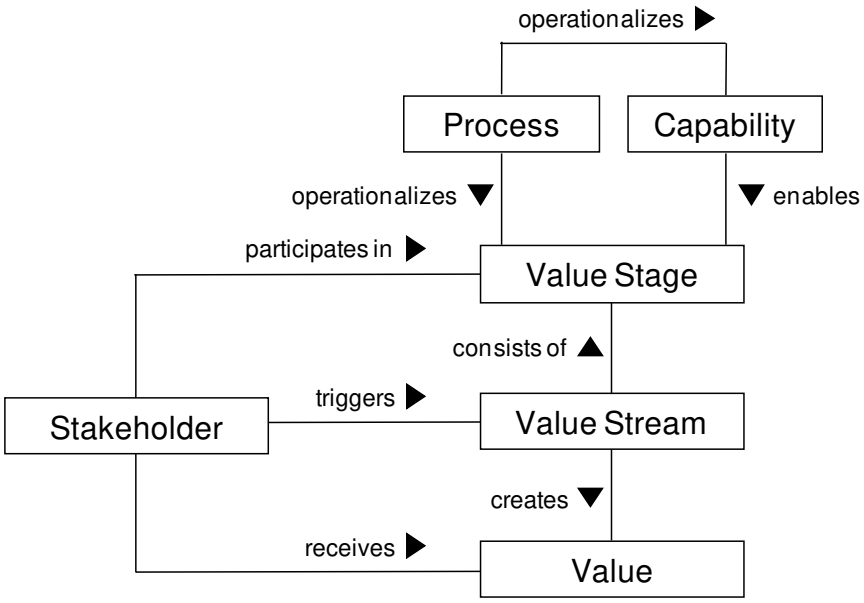

Figure 7: TOGAF Value Stream Model

The TOGAF standard provides the framework for mapping strategy to value streams, capabilities, and processes. It also offers guidance for creating an opportunities roadmap to drive business strategy to execution. (Source: BRM Institute and The Open Group IT4IT and TOGAF standards.)

Agility

Agility ensures the execution of strategy via a steady and predictable stream of business value using incremental agile delivery methods. Driving business agility by effectively connecting strategy to delivery is a key peer of co-creation.

Organizations can leverage a planning process supported by the roles of Business Relationship Managers, Strategists, Business Architects, and Portfolio Managers to determine a strategic direction for their next 3, 5, 10+ years. But that process is often disconnected from the one to two-year delivery cycle meant to drive realization of the strategic plan. Connecting the answers to the strategic question of: "*Who should we be (or where should we be headed)?*" is a challenge for organizations. There is a significant effort moving into the next conversation: "*How do we get there?*". Developing a clear, prioritized, value-focused "Book of Work" that can be delivered against effectively is not easy; it is the step in the process that often detours or derails many companies.[8]

To connect strategy to delivery and improve strategy realization, some organizations have started using Business Value Increments (BVIs). BVIs are a key component of a result-oriented approach. BVIs are different than projects in that BVIs are focused on delivering incremental value while also iteratively

[8] See the DPBoK Standard, §6.2.2.1: Work Management and Lean: https://pubs.opengroup.org/dpbok/standard/DPBoK.html#KLP-work-management.

evolving strategies and/or system(s). They should be composed in such a way that they deliver an agreed set of end-user capabilities quickly allowing for the realization of value, capturing of feedback, and validation/improvements to strategies and system(s). Traditional planning methods can be enhanced by leveraging a Delivery Kanban to more effectively track delivery of BVIs.[9] Ensuring logical support for strategic business outcomes at the highest levels requires an organization to consume and analyze BVI information and endorse those efforts that are especially important for competitiveness and strategic goal achievement. In this way, BVIs are mapped to the business strategy.

Co-creation of strategy between the business and IT should incorporate a framework for the continuous delivery of these BVIs. The IT4IT S2P value stream includes activities to identify business value and the benefits of a new service or product. As the value and benefits are identified they can be translated into BVIs as a method to continually monitor and deliver value. The IT4IT standard provides the foundation for agility by driving integration, automation, and self-service solutions that underpin an enhanced experience for consumers. Gain further agility by establishing the IT4IT standard as the common value stream framework for digitization and automation used by teams developing digital products for external consumption and teams developing digital products for internal consumption.

[9] See the DPBoK Standard, §6.2.1: Product Management: https://pubs.opengroup.org/dpbok/standard/DPBoK.html#KLP-CA-product-mgmt.

Accelerate Agility and Value Delivery through the S2P Value Stream

As business agility and digitization to improve customer experiences become key differentiators in the global economy, Chief Information and Technology Officers (CITOs) are expected to understand the degree to which business technology and IT solutions are delivering and accelerating value. By understanding and creating traceability between business value realization and technology investments, the probability of strategic achievement and planning cycles being accelerated increases. It also provides the flexibility to pivot when industry changes are expected or recognized.

Organizations that use the IT4IT Reference Architecture have insight into the IT Value Chain with an iterative ability to gain foresight. Ensuring support for strategic business outcomes at the highest levels requires an organization to consume and analyze BVI information and endorse those efforts that are especially important for competitiveness and strategic goal achievement.

The Open Group IT4IT standard is a reference architecture and value chain-based operating model for managing the business of IT. It uses a value chain approach to create a model of the functions that IT performs to help organizations identify the activities that contribute to business competitiveness. The IT Value Chain previously shown in Figure 5 applies this concept to IT by defining an integrated IT management framework focusing on the lifecycle of services. It identifies the key things that IT must do – and do well. It allows IT to achieve the same level of business predictability and efficiency that supply chain management has allowed for the business and was designed by practitioners to be industry and vendor-agnostic.

Conclusion

Co-creation of strategy between business partners and IT is an important progression from the more typical siloed organization for developing and executing strategy. The Strategic Portfolio Management Triad establishes an enhanced way of working cross-functionally to deliver value incrementally. As your Business Relationship Managers, Strategists, Architects, and Portfolio Managers leverage the Triad and The Open Group IT4IT and TOGAF standards along with the DPBoK standard and BRMBoK, they can provide an organization with a solid structure for co-managing the business strategy and investment portfolio. This is essential for identifying sustainable customer value propositions and transforming to a digital enterprise. It also provides a platform for identifying waste and inefficiencies within business and IT. Driving business agility by effectively connecting co-created strategy to delivery will create a steady and predictable flow of business value.

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(Please note that the links below are good at the time of writing but cannot be guaranteed for the future.)

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The IT4IT Forum is a membership-based group comprised of organizations from multiple industry segments from around the world. IT management professionals from these member organizations come together to share their experiences for the purpose of developing and publishing future-safe prescriptive guidance. The IT4IT Forum members focus on developing an end-to-end reference architecture – the IT4IT Reference Architecture Standard – for designing and delivering Digital Products as services.

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