Innovation in IT - Capabilities

by Bill Poston

I was asked this week to speak to a group of large-company Chief Information Officers on the subject of innovation in IT. Recently, I wrote about a couple of obvious challenges facing the IT function in large-companies. In this post I propose some innovation management capabilities that would benefit IT.

The first innovation capability that I suggest the CIO cultivate is that of research, strategic alignment, and roadmapping. The business solutions marketplace is so dynamic that the shelf life of the old SISP (Strategic Information Systems Plan) can now be measured in months. We need a much more robust capability to monitor trends, scout solutions, enable business strategy, and update the IT roadmap.

Rapid prototyping and pilot experimentation is a standard innovation capability that would greatly benefit the IT function in large companies. It simply takes too long to evaluate and make decisions regarding enterprise software. We need to be able to test different solutions and make quick decisions about their relative value. This will allow us to invest more resources to implementation and adoption.

The last innovation capability that comes to mind is basic voice of the customer collection and other forms of end user interaction that enable IT to create solutions that meet real business needs. Not just with system functionality, but with ease of use and methods of use taken into account. IT too often is placed in the role of saying, “NO,” because they are trying to control costs and deliver efficiently.

There are many more capabilities that we work hard to build in innovation that would benefit IT. There are different development methodologies, team configurations, governance models, launch execution, and other ideation tools that we could apply to enable a much more dynamic and innovative IT function.

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For the past 30 years, Bill has helped executives in technology-driven industries transform their competencies to deliver results. He is a highly regarded consultant, speaker, and writer on the topics of innovation strategy, product development, portfolio management, technology commercialization, and the software systems that enable innovation. Keep up with Bill's latest research and thoughts on innovation and the rising role of the Chief Innovation Officer at www.TheChiefInnovationOfficer.com.