Guidehouse

Strategic Mobilization:
The Key to Successful System Modernization

A Guidehouse Point of View

Introduction

Many private sector organizations and government agencies are not receiving the commensurate value for their investments in system modernization. Hence, we see many modernization projects failing entirely or being shelved prior to completion due to the lack of return on investment (ROI). Even when stakeholders are aligned and all the right steps are taken, failure of technology projects occurs more often than success, with as many as 82% of large-scale Agile initiatives classified as "failed" or "challenged."[1] Such failure is even more pervasive in the federal government. These rampant project failures can be attributed to multiple causes, ranging from incorrect technology selection to a lack of strict project management or stakeholder alignment, to name a few. However, there is a critical component that often goes overlooked-one that can make all the difference in the fate of large-scale modernization projects: **Strategic Mobilization.**

The practice of "Strategic Mobilization" creates an enterprise-wide view of the operating model. It entails synchronizing stakeholders and creating an organizational blueprint that charts the future of the business and drives strategic decision making around investments, priorities, and solutions. As digital enablement accelerates, Strategic Mobilization is increasingly critical to organizations-and more difficult than ever before to execute. Strategic Mobilization provides enterprises and organizations with the ability to adapt to the dynamic needs of a digital economy and bridges the gap between business strategy and execution. The capacity to mobilize the right strategic approach helps ensure system-modernization success.

Oftentimes, we observe organizations with very thoughtful and impressive strategies that are designed to address their issues and seem to present the correct solutions to fit their needs. However, when a given strategy is implemented, latent shortcomings surface and various risks emerge. Seasoned business and technology professionals who have experienced these types of situations claim to have adhered to the leading project management methodologies and software delivery practices. Yet the outcome is the same in each case: a failed project, without the expected benefits or hoped-for returns on investments.

A case in point is the Amazon's Fire Phone. "Amazon's Fire Phone was a flash in the pan - getting announced and released in 2014, then being discontinued the following year. It ran on Android and looked competitive. In reality, it was a critical and commercial failure. The one big sell point - 3D face scanning technology - was a gimmick, and a limited availability at AT&T initially didn't help it get off the ground. In the long run, Amazon discontinued the phone 13 months after its launch, and outright retired from phone manufacturing after this one model."[2]

Through many discussions with clients, and our experience in supporting major business transformations and modernizations across a wide range of government agencies and private organizations, we have learned that most programs move from the strategy-definition phase directly to execution. In each case, the programs are skipping a crucial step: the creation of the foundational building blocks needed to support the transition through all sorts of identified and/or unidentified risks. We recommend that these building blocks be established and executed via a dedicated, deliberate phase targeted at bridging the gap between strategy and execution.

[1] In this study, the Standish Group looked at 50,000 projects around the world, from simple enhancements to large-scale implementations. https://standishgroup.com/sample_research_files/CHAOSReport2015-Final.pdf

[2] https://www.businessinsider.com/biggest-product-flops-in-history-2016-12#2014-amazons-fire-phone-24

Our Point of View

Driven by interest in modernization and relentless innovation, the technology landscape is ever more complex and constantly shifting. For instance, receiving a new web-based email originally required users to refresh the page. Now, Gmail and other email hosts automatically download new emails behind the scenes. Moreover, Facebook instantly shows new lines and comments in news feeds, Twitter instantaneously displays new tweets on your timeline and so on; and many applications are migrating to the cloud, facilitating access from any location. Given these advances, consumers now expect a certain level of finesse in the applications they use every day.

Those same expectations are carrying over into the workplace, where legacy business applications are struggling to keep up with modern/emerging technology and the needs of its users. Efforts to modernize legacy applications and infrastructure provide tangible benefits to the organization, its stakeholders and the organization's bottom line. In order to successfully achieve these gains, however, a strategic mobilization approach must first be in place.

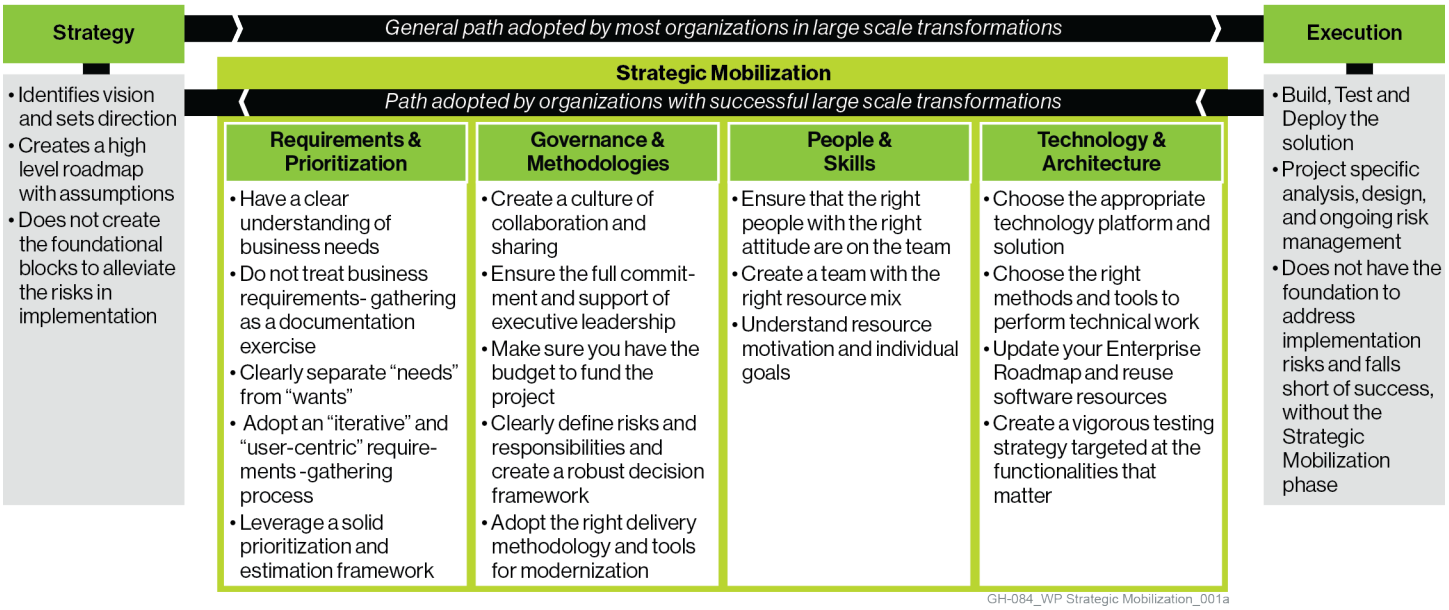
Strategic Mobilization bridges the strategy-execution gap

The challenges of mapping day-to-day execution to business objectives in a digital climate should not be underestimated. Most businesses regularly generate new ideas or innovation efforts, but few can bring them to market in line with their vision. Implementing a change in a business or technology strategy takes planning, time, and effort. Unfortunately, most programs tend to move straight from strategy to execution and skip vital elements that prepare the program for success. Based on our experience, the change effort covering the entire program has a far greater opportunity for success, if the time is taken to effectively plan and mobilize for executing the strategy.

The Strategic Mobilization phase aligns stakeholders around a set of differentiated capabilities -each integrating people, information, processes, and technology - that together permit the business to execute its vision. This framework is designed to enable organizations to achieve project success, and is based upon four key dimensions:

1. Requirements and Prioritization
2. Governance and Methodologies
3. People and Skills
4. Technology and Architecture

Strategic Mobilization bridges the Strategy-Execution Gap



A Closer look at Each Dimension

Dimension #1: Requirements and Prioritization

In order to make any journey successful, it is not only necessary to reach the target, but also to understand the associated processes and risks along the way. The same is true for large-scale modernizations. Understanding the journey an organization will take to modernize means taking the time to truly understand the unique business needs involved, which will set the stage for capturing detailed requirements that align to the project's objectives and strategic vision. The following five elements contribute to this dimension.

Have a clear understanding of business needs

Gaining a clear understanding of business needs is easier said than done. Current industry approaches use well-established practices (e.g., journey maps, user personas, object-interaction models, process flows) to assess the current state of operations. While these practices are in place, team members nonetheless have different perspectives and experiences.

Understanding the business needs and requirements

Many project failures are caused by poor requirements gathering techniques. These blunders can increase the project's cost and duration and lower the users' or clients' satisfaction.[3]

For instance, in observing various clients, we have witnessed different team members performing the very same functions with divergent understandings of the issues and solutions associated with those functions. A common, up-to date understanding of the status of business operations and functions is extremely important for reducing downstream re-work. In our experience, user personas and process flows capturing the current state of business functions and interdependencies have proven to be effective ways to gain a unanimous perspective.

Simply put, Business requirements defines the reason behind a project and what objectives of the performing organization will be fulfilled by undertaking the project. There is an intent behind every project and the project must fulfill these needs to be defined as successful.[4]

Don't treat business-requirements gathering as a documentation exercise

Industry best practices for assessing the current state of operations do not necessarily emphasize the feasibility and accuracy of the resulting business requirements. As well, many organizations struggle with the defined level of detail necessary to articulate requirements. Often, business resources describe these requirements at too high a level, rendering them very difficult, sometimes impossible, to implement.

Understanding the user

"The primary challenge for many IT leaders becomes how to define high-level needs and wants. For a project focused on identifying a new IT solution to be successful, the layers of wants must be peeled back to find the true business-driven needs that will add value to the organization."[5]

When capturing business requirements, defining non-functional requirements such as security, performance, availability, reliability and recoverability is vital. A product can have great functionality and may impress the business, but it is unusable if it fails security or does not meet the performance needs of the users.

[3] https://4pm.com/2017/09/18/requirements-gathering-4pm-com-2/

[4] https://thebusinessanalystjobdescription.com/business-requirements/

[5] Ven Meyerzon, "Defining "needs" and separating them from "wants": Central to Any Successful IT Project - https://evolllution.com/technology/infrastructure/defining-needs-and-separating-them-from-wants-central-to-any-successful-it-project/.

Clearly separate "needs" from "wants"

Business users tend to base their expectations on a function's performance over the years, or on a solution they have in mind. A business-requirements document (BRD) which stems largely from those expectations, states all requirements with the same importance. Rather than focusing on the actual needs of the customer, the BRD becomes a driving document for what the customer wants. In many cases, this approach may be a good practice-especially if customer needs and wants match. However, there may be instances where the solution to a given issue may differ from what is needed in day-to-day business operations. This dilemma can be solved in many ways. For instance, effective use of a product backlog, where requirements for new ideas are prioritized by key stakeholders and groomed over time, can help close the gap, if any, between the technology-solution "needs" and "wants" of the business.

Adopt an "iterative" and "user-centric" requirements-gathering process

One of the basic premises of the Agile methodology is that businesses seldom run without requirement changes over time. Rendering the business-requirements process iterative and ensuring it covers as many views and perspectives as possible are thus vital elements of any such endeavor. It is equally important to quantify the incremental business impact of adding new capabilities and upgrading existing ones.

A deliberate approach to requirements gathering involves building user profiles (i.e., user personas) and journey maps. Journey maps represent a real-life experience for the user and improve the chances of "buy-in." They capture the user experience and allow the user to understand how and when they may interact with a system relative to a business process. User personas, on the other hand, capture the details necessary to understand the end user. These details encompass goals, pain points, overall objectives and day-to-day activities. Based on our experience with our clients, both tools (journey maps and user personas) are effective ways to capture high-level requirements from a user perspective.

"User-centered design is an optimistic approach to invent new solutions. It starts with human beings and ends with the answers that are tailored to their individual needs. When you understand the people you are trying to reach, and then design from their perspective, you come up with unusual answers"[6]

[6] https://uxplanet.org/user-centered-design-process-and-benefits-fd9e431eb5a9

Leverage a solid prioritization and estimation framework

Even before the first line of code is written, it is important to lay out the approach and process that will be used to build the new solution. A software product can be developed in a variety of ways, with some architects approaching the process from a top-down perspective, and others preferring to build a foundation first. There is no single right approach, yet a one-size-fits-all model is often used-even as any roadmap to implement functionality should be aligned to each customer's needs and priorities.

It is equally important to establish a framework to estimate the level of effort for each task. We have learned that in many cases there is no deliberate, meticulous discussion around effort. This leaves teams to begin implementation with only a very rough initial estimate of the time and energy the project will entail.

In such cases, issues typically arise during implementation because certain activities were not accounted for and require additional time. Complications like these can be easily alleviated when a detailed level of effort is established for each task.

> *Understanding your delivery capacity*
>
> "When it comes to prioritization, the biggest consideration is to measure the impact of a project versus the time and resources that need to be devoted to it. A firm understanding of the value each project brings back to your company coupled with a knowledge of your team's bandwidth is crucial for prioritization."[7]

Dimension #2: Governance and Methodologies

Addressing the Governance and Methodologies dimension answers the critical question of how an organization plans to execute its system-modernization project. While there is no one correct solution, the success of any system-modernization project depends on key governance elements that are a must-have for large-scale projects. This second dimension entails attention to the five factors outlined below.

Create a culture of collaboration and sharing

The ongoing business and technology collaborations that synchronize stakeholders around the right set of capabilities are central to the success of any modernization effort. These, in turn, align with business strategy. In this context, innovation and time-to-market can accelerate dramatically. Further, such collaboration helps avoid confusion during the day-to-day execution of the project. Too often, strategy execution breaks down as program offices act in their own interests rather than for the interests of the enterprise.

The best teams are those that combine individual drive with a shared understanding of the importance and power of the team. Take the Rolling Stones as an example. The Stones' success comes from every member having a distinct yet complementary role. Everyone involved is a talent in his own right, but it is their combined chemistry that renders the band exceptional. Being part of the Rolling Stones remains the best way for each member to achieve their individual goals.

[7] Forbes Technology Council, "Project Prioritizing 101," Forbes, March 29, 2018. www.forbes.com/sites/forbestechcouncil/2018/03/29/project-prioritizing-101/#3f97f62ee091

Ensure the full commitment and support of executive leadership

Lack of support and commitment from executive leadership is a primary reason many large-scale modernization efforts fail. Executives are always under tremendous pressure to show results in a short timeframe, while simultaneously contending with limited budgets and conflicting priorities. The inherently complex nature of large-scale modernizations entails a drawn-out, time-intensive process. Some projects take years to reach the target state. As a result, top leadership can lose track of project progress and thus, over time, lose interest. Those projects may then essentially fall off executive radar, allowing something else to become a priority.

Lack of top-down leadership causes delayed decision making, as well as a loss of focus and momentum. Additionally, sponsors and champions who are not actively involved or are unaware of key developments may put project success at risk.

The onus lies on the project team to constantly engage with top leadership and keep them updated on both risks and overall progress. The focus should be on presenting solutions within a framework that enables key executives to make informed, data-driven decisions. The project team must ensure that long-term senior executive support and buy-in are commensurate with the strategic importance of system modernization.

Make sure you have the budget to fund the project - and to support it though the peaks and valleys

Short-term-oriented, cost-driven planning and investment decisions lead to improper budgetary planning and benefit realization. As budgetary pressures start to mount, modernization programs get starved for resources, resulting in broken interdependencies, reduced scope, cut corners and, ultimately, the inability to achieve significant benefits. In any large-scale modernization project, unforeseen circumstances - such as issues around data quality, technical complexities in implementing a certain feature, software limitations or the need for additional software licenses or hardware - can add considerably to costs. It is imperative to maintain the burn rate of the project and ensure that the budget matches the estimates.

As part of its Strategic Mobilization, the project team must get a comprehensive handle on the necessary and available funds for the project. Allocations should be made and vetted using multiple approaches - top-down, by task, by resource - avoiding waste throughout. Managing a project and delivering it on time and within budget is a challenge for many project managers. Provided below are some insightful perspectives on large-scale modernization from several IT project management experts:

"When it comes time to estimate costs, be realistic. Make sure to get input from all applicable stakeholders. More importantly, build in contingencies. This step is essential. You need to factor in things outside of your control, such as external environmental considerations that may impact pricing of supplies, resources, labor, financing, product/service shortages, currency exchanges and so on. Today's price or rate may not carry through to the later stages of a project. Ensuring vendors can deliver on their promises is vital and prepare a backup plan. Getting input from other stakeholders and vetting suppliers and vendors can go a long way to setting a more realistic budget that can be met, even if there are unforeseen circumstances that impact costs. I've seen many project managers get caught off guard with escalating costs, suppliers that couldn't meet quoted obligations or other issues. Plan for surprises, so you aren't blindsided."[8]

[8] Moira Alexander, "Project Management: 5 Tips for Managing Your Project Budget," CIO, August 18, 2017. www.cio.com/article/2406862/project-management-project-management-4-ways-to-manage-your-budget.html

> *Managing the budget of large IT projects*
>
> Seeking examples of what your clients want will help you identify their needs and better manage their expectations. If your client didn't realize the scope of what they're asking for, this provides a great opportunity to lean on your expertise and provide pragmatic, honest advice to them. Help them identify their core business needs, and the minimum viable product (sometimes called an MVP) that will fill that need and align better with their budget.[9]

"You've got to have a solid strategy on where you're moving to the cloud and why, what systems are most important to move and how quickly can you move them," he says. "You've got to take a stand that says you're going to be a cloud-first company and a SaaS-first company - which we did back in 2010. Then, when any upgrade or any major change comes to any of these systems, you ensure that you're moving them closer to the cloud or into the cloud, with every step along the path. You have to stay true to that strategy."[10]

"Increasingly, C-suite members are starting to understand the need to break free of costly legacy systems," says Macrie. "They see their world changing and being radically disrupted by small technology innovators, and they want to stay ahead of them. When you look at what these smaller companies are able to achieve on a shoestring, you've got to start to embrace those techniques - or you'll be in a poor cost position over time."[11]

Clearly define roles and responsibilities and create a robust decision framework

In many modernizations, people do not clearly understand their roles vis-à-vis program management and governance. This stems from a lack of clarity regarding new job roles, responsibilities and behaviors.

Strategic Mobilization enables the identification of roles, responsibilities, stakeholders and processes - and clearly lays out "who will do what" without any confusion. It also ensures that a proper decision framework, grounded in fact-based data, is created to avoid delays and confusion during actual implementation. When all the above elements are clearly defined, answers to key questions - *What decisions need to be made? Who is the ultimate decision maker? What is the process for coming to a decision?* - are readily available.

Adopt the right delivery methodology and tools for modernization

Many organizations do not have the maturity necessary to adopt the Agile implementation methodology. However, they still choose to do so based on the theoretical benefits of an Agile approach. In such cases, the gap between knowing about a practice and implementing it on a day-to-day basis is exposed during implementation. Project failure is the almost inevitable result.

We recommend adopting a methodology with which the stakeholders and project team are comfortable and familiar. Large-scale modernizations are not necessarily an appropriate playing field for first-time Agile practice implementation. During Strategic Mobilization, the business and technology teams need to come to a consensus on a chosen methodology and understand the implications of their choice. This also applies to the tools and templates that will be used during implementation.

[9] https://www.shopify.com/partners/blog/project-budget

[10] https://www.cio.com/article/3391921/how-digital-leaders-tackle-it-modernization.html

[11] https://www.cio.com/article/3391921/how-digital-leaders-tackle-it-modernization.html

The challenges of Agile projects

The principles of the Agile Manifesto need to be augmented in practice and CIOs need to relearn some of the lessons discarded by the original Manifesto. In reality, these are the answers to the perennial and ever-present issues faced by large scale IT delivery.[12]

Dimension 3: People and Skills

A product is only as good as the people involved in its construction and use. Technology can derail a project. It is the human element, however, that adds unknowns into the mix; making people oftentimes the toughest aspect to manage during any modernization effort. This dimension is best addressed through the following three approaches.

Ensure that the right people with the right attitude are on the team

Having the right people on board entails more than just seeking out team members with the right skillset; attitude is equally important. People who do not share a vision of where the project is going or understand their individual role in the process will have a hard time truly investing in the project. A lack of buy-in has a direct impact on behavior and attitude, which then impacts the team dynamic. The onus is therefore on leadership to lay a strong foundation for team morale and to provide a vision around which the team can coalesce. Moreover, when leaders take pride in their work and demonstrate passion for a project, their positive attitude will ultimately trickle down to the team. This is a necessary paradigm shift for organizations that want to ensure teams are fully on board and have the right mindset to perform at a high level.

Create a team with the right resource mix

Ensuring the right resources are in place and that day-to-day operations continue while modernization occurs are integral challenges for any modernization effort. Unfortunately, organizations often underestimate the staff and skill commitments required throughout modernization. Planning for enough staff and skills (along with backfilled staff, when appropriate) is essential to any such project. Having the right skillsets in place at the right time will enable the program to complete high-quality work in an efficient, timely manner.

> *Project success criteria: having the right skillset mix*
>
> According to McKinsey "For both successful and unsuccessful transformations, roughly two-thirds of respondents indicated that the single most significant factor influencing a transformation's outcome is the degree of ownership and commitment of the organization's leaders."[13]

A lack in the right skillsets is often a major pitfall for organizations looking to modernize. This gap causes project constraints that put the project at risk of completion. To effectively modernize, organizations need to ensure the right skills are available to execute the work. It is extremely important to consider the skillset requirements of the "future" state for both IT and business resources.

Resource planning is a key strategy and should be mapped out before embarking on any modernization program. Along with IT-planning alignment, determinations about whether the proposed technology can be supported and whether staff can be fully trained should be made early in the process.

Technology constraints and commitments are further magnified during modernization efforts. Supporting existing systems requires time and commitment from team resources and planning for changes to those systems will tax already constrained resources. Planning for both legacy needs and modernization efforts is critical for success. As the two systems may run in parallel for some period, both IT and business staff will be impacted. Strong governance and oversight are necessary to align with future innovations while also maintaining the current state.

[12] Chris Porter, "An Agile Agenda – How CIOs Can Navigate The Post-Agile Era," 6point6, April 1, 2017. https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/2915542/White%20Papers/6point6-AnAgileAgenda-DXWP.2017.pdf

[13] Alasdair Johnston, Frederic Lefort, Joseph Tesvic, "Secrets of successful change implementation," McKinsey, October 2017 https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/operations/our-insights/secrets-of-successful-change-implementation

Ensuring the right resource mix helps prevent common implementation gaps that often lead to failed modernization projects. These gaps include:

- Failure to identify key resources for implementations
- Insufficient consideration of the impact of strategic initiatives on current initiatives or business
- A lack of established priorities for managing resource contention
- Inaccurate assessments of the capabilities of the organization and vendors involved

A lack of dedicated talent and experience can hinder the overall success of a project. Defined skills and expertise are needed to assume accountability in oneself and others. For example, an experienced project manager and scrum master possess key skillsets that help drive productivity across all project teams. The guidance of a very strong project manager/scrum master who has extensive knowledge and experience with similar projects can be a critical factor in ensuring success for the team.

Understand resource motivation and individual goals

One personality trait that many effective leaders share is the ability to motivate others to achieve a common goal. Motivation can inspire, encourage and stimulate individuals and project teams to attain great accomplishments. A leader-driven motivational environment fosters teamwork and shared initiative around common goals and objectives.

The level of motivation an individual and/or team applies to a project can affect all aspects of project results, and will directly impact project success factors (e.g., whether the project is on time, within budget, meets scope/customer expectations). With that said, it is in the project manager's best interest to understand the reasons behind demotivation, in order to achieve project success through the creation and maintenance of a motivating environment for the team. Having realistic performance expectations around skill gaps and resource requirements will help promote the construction of a consistently effective, high-performing team.

Insight from former leaders

"Employees who believe that management is concerned about them as a whole person-not just an employee-are more productive, more satisfied, more fulfilled. Satisfied employees mean satisfied customers, which leads to profitability."[14]

– **Anne M. Mulcahy**, former chairperson and CEO of Xerox Corporation

"The only way to get people to like working hard is to motivate them. Today, people must understand why they're working hard. Every individual in an organization is motivated by something different."[15]

– **Rick Pitino**, former head coach at the University of Louisville, and current head coach of Panathinaikos of the Greek Basket League and the EuroLeague

[14] https://storyofmulcahy.wordpress.com/motivation/

[15] https://www.hrzone.com/community-voice/blogs/johnsylvester/how-to-destroy-employee-motivation

Dimension 4: Technology and Architecture

Any system modernization effort involves making changes to business processes, creating a change management strategy and building a unique technology solution. The right technology and architecture can make all the difference in a project's success. Tackling this dimension involves the four steps described below.

Choose the appropriate technology platform and solution

Incorrect technology selection is yet another main cause of project failure. Many organizations jump from capabilities and requirements definition to delivery, sidestepping crucial time and focus on the initiation phase. We have observed many cases in which companies have neglected to assess their underlying technology architecture or define the target-state technology architecture before implementation.

Strategic Mobilization enables the team to make rational choices around the technology platform, define the future state of technology architecture and ensure that the chosen technology solutions meet business drivers and initiatives. This exercise enables the team to expose potential technological shortcomings and allows them to capture and plan for implementation risks downstream.

> *Choosing the right technology*
>
> Successful companies embrace digital transformation programs not by indiscriminately replacing the old with the new but by leveraging and aligning their strategic competencies with new digital capabilities.[16]

During this process, teams should revisit any "buy-versus-build" decisions that have been made or need to be made. One key metric teams will want to consider entails comparing the amount of code that needs to be written with the out-of-the-box configuration options a given technology platform provides. This exercise also aligns to the level of effort and resource skills needed for the project.

[16] https://isg-one.com/managed-services/digital-supplier-management/articles/digital-transformation-choosing-the-right-technology-for-managing-suppliers

Choose the right methods and tools to perform technical work

Small, daily activities often end up being the differentiating factor between successful and failed projects. It is important to choose the right approaches and tools for technical problems and to be smart about leveraging open standards, re-using common functions across different modules, and reinforcing a shared set of validations through an effective business-rules engine.

Strategic Mobilization compels the team to think through the minute-yet-impactful decisions that shape the whole project. While these details may, at first glance, seem insignificant, ignoring them may pose real problems during execution. It is imperative to embrace new data-preparation tools, software management tools, requirements-gathering tools; and an automated testing tools - and practices, such as instituting a DevSecOps (development-security-operations) environment. Further, it is equally important to develop a repeatable data-migration process that helps with multiple data refreshes in a short timeframe, in order to support testing activities.

Update your Enterprise Roadmap and reuse software resources

Many programs incur significant losses by reinventing the wheel, essentially wasting time, funds and energy on creating a solution that is already available. This generally stems from the lack of communication typically found in a siloed approach to solutions.

The breakneck pace of technological advances has been fueled by building upon what is already available and reusing still-relevant building blocks of code. Best practices in technology modernization embrace reuse and organization-wide integration. Developing a common set of validations and functions, creating standard libraries that can be used by different modules, reusing infrastructure platforms and so on can save significant time and benefit the project in a myriad of ways.

Create a vigorous testing strategy targeted at the functionalities that matter

There is no debate over the need for testing in a large-scale modernization program but testing itself can pose a challenge to many enterprises. In our experience, forward-thinking organizations can evolve in their scale and ability to perform testing, with some moving toward test-driven development (TDD) methodology to ensure that all use cases are identified and documented.

Whatever methodology is chosen, a comprehensive test strategy is mandatory for any successful modernization. It is imperative to have the testing teams involved from the outset, during the requirements-gathering and usability-definition phases of the project. The effectiveness of the testing itself is also of the utmost importance, along with confirmation that the test scripts cover the actual points of failure and do not focus on cosmetic and ancillary functions. In addition, establishing set levels for prioritization and weightage in test cases is essential. It is also necessary to tie the test scripts to the original requirements through clear and measurable acceptance criteria.

During testing, development teams typically approach every issue as an enhancement, whereas the business team treats every issue like a defect. Strategic Mobilization helps teams overcome these conflicting perspectives and allows them to focus on tracing test cases to the requirements that matter.

Final Thoughts – Conclusion

Organizations undertaking digital modernization, or major system-modernization initiatives need to proceed gradually at first, then eventually pick up pace. It takes significant time to develop a strategy, to assess what needs to change and to build a foundation for innovation. Given the latest industry and technology trends, failure to adapt and modernize is no longer a viable option. Keeping up with emerging technologies requires flexibility and the capacity to quickly adapt. To that end, the large-scale modernizations that enable such adaptability must nonetheless be enacted gradually and with care, as a successful modernization strategy is built one win at a time.

Modernization risks and roadblocks may emerge due to changing requirements or technical complexities, but the key is to find effective, measured solutions that reflect both current and future state goals. Organizations that take the time to make informed, data-driven decisions benefit from utilizing a systematic approach while moving forward.

Failure to detect execution challenges for strategic programs early on can lead to numerous issues and lost value. Oftentimes, risks are identified during program initiation, but little is done to understand and mitigate those risks. Post-facto attempts to bring the project back on track are usually introduced too late to recover momentum or recoup losses.

Our Strategic Mobilization framework begins with a holistic definition of strategy, based on a comprehensive assessment of business capabilities and needs. The focus then shifts to building the foundational blocks of execution so that mechanisms, processes, structure, governance, technology and people all come together to effectively and rapidly realize and execute the strategy. The multi-layered dimensions we have outlined in this paper are grounded in our extensive real-world experience. Integrating these dimensions will enable organizations to achieve the highest possible levels of success across all facets of any large-scale modernization program.

> *System Modernizations take time and consistent efforts*
>
> Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) needed to establish consistent, reliable data to inform financial and resource decisions. They chose portfolio and resource management to drive consistency as they decommissioned 35 legacy systems, 50+ user-developed tools, and hundreds of spread-sheets. With data in different formats and hundreds of projects managed by different systems, they wanted to get a grip on their data to see their total portfolio more clearly. They could deliver on their business case and achieve ROI within 12 months. Along the way, they've improved transparency and reduced costs in each business unit."[17]

[17] https://info.planview.com/rs/456-QCH-520/images/Planview-Case-Study-Royal-Bank-of-Scotland-CS717LTREN.pdf

About Guidehouse

Guidehouse is a leading global provider of consulting services to the public and commercial markets with broad capabilities in management, technology, and risk consulting. We help clients address their toughest challenges with a focus on markets and clients facing transformational change, technology-driven innovation and significant regulatory pressure. Across a range of advisory, consulting, outsourcing, and technology/ analytics services, we help clients create scalable, innovative solutions that prepare them for future growth and success. Headquartered in Washington DC, the company has more than 7,000 professionals in more than 50 locations. Guidehouse is a Veritas Capital portfolio company, led by seasoned professionals with proven and diverse expertise in traditional and emerging technologies, markets and agenda-setting issues driving national and global economies.

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