Chapter 5
Strategies for the Long Term

ABSTRACT

This chapter is devoted to developing a long-term vision for information management. It explains the importance of understanding the longer view of your external business environment, envisioning role the organization might play in that future, and the role that information plays in helping to achieving that role. The chapter also highlights futuring methods that can help to expose that future and highlights the relevance of business intelligence methods. Components of 10-year, 5-year, and 3-year strategies are considered. Guidance is offered on documenting the vision as strategy.

LONG TERM BEFORE NEAR TERM

By definition managing strategically means managing for the future – managing against a vision of your business. Managing strategically means identifying tactics to achieve your strategy in the short term. A long term strategy is focused on leveraging information assets to achieve business goals in the external business environment and to strengthen the internal working environment of the organization. The long term strategy is built around a long term business vision, expectations for how the business environment will evolve and how competitors and stakeholders will behave (Cornish 1977). A long term strategy is dependent upon a good understanding of the external economic environment and in this case how information assets are changing the nature of the economy.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-5225-8410-0.ch005
It is important to distinguish a long term strategy from other methods. By definition, strategies that are designed around short term tactics are not strategies – they may focus on three or four month intervals or target low hanging fruit. Tactical plans are important for realizing your strategy, but they are not a strategy. Tactical plans may move your organization forward in small increments, but they may also have unintended consequences or generate liabilities if they are not linked to and assessed against a long term vision and strategy. Tactical plans will not help an organization to survive or thrive in the changing economic landscape of the 21st century. Additionally, a long term information management strategy is not a maturity model. Maturity models are tools to help you measure progress along a linear trajectory. Evolving business environments do not follow a linear trajectory. Long term information management strategies are not information technology strategies. Information technology is an enabler and it will be a factor in how the environment changes, but it is only one of many factors.

The most important characteristic of a long term strategy is that it describes and focuses on the future. Painting a vision for the future is not a trivial task. It is most difficult for those who are doing the business today. It is critical for those who are doing the business today to be able to see the future. There are three common mistakes organizations make in developing a long term strategy. All three result from the business’ inability to see a future that is beyond their current understanding. The first mistake is to take a simple use case scenario to describe a linear trajectory from today or the recent past. This strategy focuses on small and logical changes to a future environment and produces a positive, probable near term view of the future. This is an insufficient context for a long term strategy. The second mistake is to see the future from the perspective of the sector or market as it exists today. Common business intelligence tools teach us to look at the existing players, to consider their current positions and what actions or events might lead to different positioning within the market. This is another short term view of the future. It does not take into account the way that sectors and markets are shifting – not only at the top or among the primary players but from the bottom up or from the inside out. Again, the mistake here is to begin with an insufficiently rigorous view of the future. The third mistake and one that is often combined with the first two is in assuming that there is a single future and that such a future is a positive and probable one. A long term strategy is a response to the business’ vision for the future. How do we overcome these limitations to define the future? What are the factors that will influence the
Related Content

An Integrated Production-Supply System with Uncertain Demand, Nonlinear Lead Time and Allowable Shortages
[www.igi-global.com/article/integrated-production-supply-system-uncertain/73020?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/integrated-production-supply-system-uncertain/73020?camid=4v1a)

The Effective Approach of Managing Risk in New Product Development (NPD)
Enhancing E-Commerce Processes with Alerts for Credit Card Payment
www.igi-global.com/chapter/enhancing-commerce-processes-alerts-credit/64141?camid=4v1a

The Influence of Culture on Consumer Decision-Making Styles of Namibian Millennials: An Application of Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions
www.igi-global.com/article/the-influence-of-culture-on-consumer-decision-making-styles-of-namibian-millennials/218188?camid=4v1a