# Getting There –
# Deliver Infrastructure Success!
# Just Like You've Envisioned.

*"I know where I want to be. But, it's hard to get there."*
*Where would you begin?*

Part I of a two part series on strategy and tactics
in implementing an IT asset management program.

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**White Paper**
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## Introduction …

This is my dilemma, or shall we say opportunity. "I want Six-sigma, CMM Level 5, ISO 9000:2000, and bulletproof procedures. I've had them before – I know they work. But, my reality today is much, much different."

"Today, we have lots of downtime. For a supply company, this is very costly. My CIO and I are relatively new to the company, where many of the IT staff have worked for the company 15 years or more. Procedures are in people's heads, or at least they are not readily available. We have no accurate inventory, listing or tracking of IT assets. Our main focus is to implement a new ERP system and we have to keep the business running through the process. We understand that asset management practices must be adopted, but there are many options on how to begin."

The question before us here is, "What would you do?"

This paper touches on the past, current and future issues to increase the maturity of an IT infrastructure organization. While this paper is certainly one opinion of many available options, our goal is to provide a working model on a research-based approach for success.

## First Things First; The Past is the Past

If you are a novice reader here, welcome to the world of distributed computing. For so many reasons beyond the topic of this study, this scenario is not too uncommon. If this situation is reminiscent of an environment that you are facing, do not feel alone. Over 75% of all IT organizations do not deliver proactive services[1]. Remember, things could be worse.

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[1] The Gartner Group, "Evaluating the Maturity of an IT Asset Management Program", DF-14-6558, November 1, 2001

Many people faced with this dilemma often first want to place blame. "Who let things get this bad?" History, anthropology and for that matter, the study of dinosaurs, are useful to understand who we are as people. But in this situation, more productivity can be gained from a disciplined focus on solving the problem. Accept that, "it is what it is" but that you are going to succeed in increasing the maturity of your organization.

Having said that, you do need to understand the past strategies and the management principals that led to those strategies. Maybe, the department is on-track. In some cases, chaos and disarray are a natural and expected by-product of a radical change. More often than not however, the strategy is simply wrong, outdated, or in most cases, non-existent.

## It's All About Strategy

Business management is all about setting strategies and tactics to achieve corporate goals. Gone are the days that IT was immune from running their operations like a business. Certainly in the "hey-day" of technology, it was sufficient to employ the brightest, fastest technologists who could rapidly deploy new systems. Those days are gone.

Today, there are standard approaches to address the issues in this case study.[2] We can begin with a question: "what is the strategy to deal with the issues we'll face from where we are today, and where we want to be?" Inherent in this approach is 1) having a strategy, 2) identifying the issues, 3) mapping where we are today, and 4) defining what is eventual success.

We set-up this case with a scenario where the technologists have "everything in their heads." The problems with companies allowing technologists to horde corporate information in their grey matter are obvious, but the same is true about leaders. I would recommend that the strategy, whether good, bad, old or new, should be reduced to writing.

Such strategies should be approved by senior management and sold in an appropriate manner to those who will be affected by the change. "Appropriate" is of course subjective as many factors are at play in helping people deal with change. Acceptance of change is in fact, one of the issues to be addressed. The strategy should include the real world issue of how the company will react to people who are resistant to change.

> Many IT groups are chaotic because of a lack of strategy.
>
> Do you have a strategy? Is it written down?

The plan would have milestones and timetables for achievements. No one should expect systemic changes to happen overnight. Progress should be measurable and achievable in defined increments.

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[2] The Gartner Group, "Strategies define effective IT asset management", TG-14-4303, October 30, 2001

## Where Are You Today

Research and best-practices will also tell you that a good, if not essential first step is to baseline where you are today.[3] Asset management programs deliver hard, quantifiable results – in due time. The ultimate goal may take years to achieve, but documented results must be achieved along the way to maintain momentum.

> Use outside consultants strategically in areas where people resist change.

"External service providers are commonly brought in, as needed, to provide benchmarking assistance during this initial phase." It's tough if not impossible for management to maintain focus on a long-term goal like asset management when daily urgencies arise. A sub-task of "baselining" is easily by-passed, subverted, or simply ignored if left to the people with a vested interest in the status quo.

Furthermore, outside consultants are a good patsy. They can be used as a strategic tool to help the new guard interplay with the established ranks. Generally, there will be friction between the "new players" and the "established guard". Having a third-party removes this conflict from people that will ultimately all need to be part of the solution.

The baseline should identify the relevant domains of interest: geographically, hierarchically, or along some defined grouping. For instance, desktop asset management is different than infrastructure asset management. Identify which area has the greatest pain and the greatest reward potential? Other mappings include geographic baselining (i.e. EMEA, APAC, HQ, remote offices, etc.), product-type groupings (servers, desktops, mobile devices, shared applications, individual applications), or organizational team delineations.

In essence, you can't solve everything at once. The approved strategy should identify the chosen groupings and the timetable for each when results will be achieved.

Remember too that this problem is more about organizational behavior and change management, than asset management or a technology problem. Seldom can "the killer app" simply be installed on the servers and voila, the problem is solved.

Your baseline should also include issues like tools, process, staffing, organizational structure, documentation, and budget figures. There are many peripheral components that drive the likelihood of success in an asset management program. Leaving these items out is almost a guarantee that the program will be less effective.

## What About Issues

You'll need a good grasp on the issues you'll face along the way. Certainly, many unforeseen issues can arise, but many can be predicted. Remember, business must continue the whole while your asset management program is underway. Upcoming project schedules, for instance, may require adjustment to the asset management improvement plan. Your

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[3] The Gartner Group, *"Best practices to launch an IT asset management program",* DF-15-9800, April 16, 2002

company's tolerance for instability, requirements for uptime, people constraints, and budgeting are other real-world factors that must be managed.

Supporting procedures like change management and procurement standardization are needed to accompany the asset management process. Without the associated process improvements, any gains made along the way are easily lost.

## Conclusion …

Your vision for success should be well defined. The strategy plan should articulate milestones for each area of focus. Companies are most successful when the strategy document identifies the issues that will be addressed. Define areas of focus. Set targets for when the milestones will be achieved.

To increase the maturity of infrastructure support teams, companies often develop an asset management program. Although we focused on strategy, the tactics to achieve that strategy are important too. Not every move toward success needs to be strategic in nature.

Short-term tactics are as critical as the long-term vision. Programs that are purely tactical in nature, for instance those crafted to solve a single problem, do deliver results.[4] However more lasting benefits occur when a strategic view is first adopted.

We suggest beginning with strategy, but your tactical plan should match where you are today and how you get to the next level of maturity – but that is another topic.

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[4] The Meta Group, "*Tactical asset management return on investment*", EDCS 1155, February 18, 2003