

## Game Time

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**We're so determined to change the game... why? Well, because the rules are slippery and it seems some of the players can roll the dice as many times as they want. But before embarking on any drastic upheaval, you might begin by assessing which combination of planning, technology, and available resources can truly address the best opportunities for your business.**



As the days on the calendar dwindled, I found my inbox glutted with multiple year-end top lists of “game-changing technologies” we might anticipate in 2012. Though the senders often play fast and loose with the description, many of these technologies do have far-reaching ramifications for business enterprises.

For example, Gartner, Inc. recently released the results of its trends analysis relating to IT, citing expectations for businesses grappling with the world of high technology. What struck me most about Gartner’s analysis was its insistence that many organizations who move past the point of technology implementations may then reach a point of data overload. Specifically, says the report: “There is an increase in the amount of information available to organizations, but it’s a challenge for them to understand it.”

At the root of this, typically, is a lack of training and this case is no exception. But I’d argue that this lack of training has a foundational issue of more pressing concern, which is a failure of clear, long-term planning.

Any time we reach for the stars in terms of complex, high tech product solutions we risk making some catastrophic mistakes if we don’t ask ourselves some critical questions:

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- Have I adequately researched the available solutions before making this business decision, focusing on my own application needs as a key driver in this purchase?
  - Have I factored in the operations and maintenance costs (really) when calculating ROI?
    - Do I have a plan post-implementation? Who will maintain the product or system, and are they truly invested in its success?
      - Do I have a plan for training my employees on how to use this, and someone who will ensure that they're following through?
        - Do I have a specific person or team in place who will help assure that the functionality of these high tech solutions does not get undercut by more pressing concerns (as in, "we're under the gun, so let's just do it the old way until we have time to adequately integrate the new product/solution into the process")?
          - If the new system generates much more transparency of data than we were traditionally used to, what will we do with this data? Do we have a cogent plan for how it will be organized and utilized?

This last one is a critical question, I'd say — and it sounds like Gartner agrees. As organizations reach a point where technological improvements are an easier sell, we need to go one step further and determine how the information they can harness will be used effectively. It truly comes down to accurate planning, with a focus on practically assessing your organization's ability to optimize its own initiatives.

Making an investment in technology is not, by itself, a simple check mate. In order to improve your competitive advantage, it takes the right plan to support it. In the end, that will be the true game changer.

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