

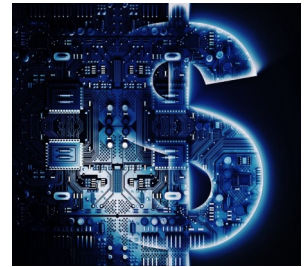
TMC'S ADVISOR

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Optimizing Your Tech Refresh Schedule By Peter Aggus

How do you balance getting value out of a major investment with missing out on improvements offered by newer technology? Many years ago, telecom and computer technology was expected to last 10 to 20 years and that mentality has carried forward to some extent. We regularly encounter clients with servers that are much too old and networks that are architected for long ago. Here's our approach on optimizing your refresh cycle.



Creating 'Beginner' Dashboards By Ellen Koskinen-Dodgson

Gartner says that most organizations should be doing better with data and analytics, given the potential benefit. We agree...and the irony is that most managers like the concept of dashboards. However, reality sets in when Business Intelligence projects are launched, but the resulting dashboards fail to deliver the promised value. I want to talk about dashboard basics and how to use 'beginner' dashboards to teach yourself how to succeed with dashboards.



Pandemic Plan?

- Does your Emergency Management Plan or Business Continuity Plan include a Pandemic Plan?
- Does your plan include succession planning for when key staff members are ill?
- Does it address how to scale back work to maintain critical and essential functions?
- Does it include a communication plan?

For a more comprehensive list, contact Ellen at ellen@tmcconsulting.ca.



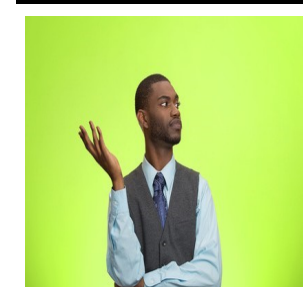
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Obsolete Too Soon

Technology continues to change at an ever-increasing pace. What is state-of-the-art today becomes obsolete, often before giving full value for the investment.

This makes cost justification difficult to do when a device was bought two years ago and was expected to have a five year life. In your defence, if you don't upgrade now then you risk "missing out" on features that could be adding business value.

Budgets

The central pillar of current organizations is a balanced budget and predictable income. IT, for example, must budget for their expected capital and running cost over several years—as must user departments.

The problem is that new technology business disruptors are frequently not seen in time to be built into planning and budget cycles. As a result, user departments either "do without" or "cause budget problems".

The Crystal Ball

If only we could predict the future...

Well perhaps we can. Technology



developments do not suddenly appear. They are there years in advance—but you need to look. Developments—like the upcoming 5G cellular—are known to tech experts already. Yet end users, who will have the need that will justify them, are often not in that knowledge loop.

Education

Companies should encourage their tech experts to educate senior executives and other departments on 'what is coming', how it might be used in business and how others are beginning to use it.

We have promoted this education for over 20 years through our magazine, through conference presentations, executive briefings and "lunch and

learn" sessions for staff.

Educating senior management, planners, and even front line staff to see upcoming opportunities for change well in advance, makes two things possible.

First, it becomes possible to anticipate future needs and to budget accordingly.

Second, it can trigger a knowledge-based "what if" dialogue. Business process transformation works best when everyone knows technology basics and is encouraged to answer the question "how might we change how we work if..." This can lead to optimizing the business planning process.

Advance Planning

As an example, does your Executive know what 5G might do for the company? Are they deciding who needs it, why and when? Or will it arrive as a surprise when you have dozens of locked in contracts and heavy break-out penalties?

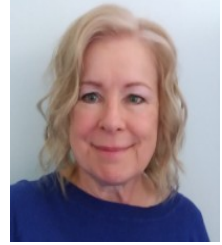
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Peter, as an engineer & technology management consultant, has developed innovative & cost-effective solutions for clients in many industries.

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Dashboard Roadblocks

Dashboards, the output from Business Intelligence projects, have been around for 30 years, and when well-designed can deliver real value. Unfortunately, BI projects can be daunting, and may not gain approval in many medium and smaller sized organizations due to cost and complexity.

Another major roadblock is that dashboard platforms have traditionally limited design options to data-analyst approved styles. The current "best practice" for clear data display is a grid of four charts, two across and two down.

Design

This analyst-style design approach tends towards "too much information". Many potential users have trouble articulating what they want to see so they go with what the analyst or vendor suggests. This can lead to a feeling that dashboards are very complicated.

A graphic designer or marketing designer would be horrified by this non-pretty approach that has no appeal to human emotions.



A good dashboard should "pop". It should be easy to understand and should immediately tell the viewer whether there is anything to be worried about.

Beginner Dashboards

We describe this as one that is easy to build without a major BI project. We include simple dashboards in many of our client projects. Our design meetings ask the question "What do you need to see?" When that question is answered, we then ask "Why"?

Trying to answer the "why" often changes the "what". It's an iterative process but once we reach consensus, we then mock up a few display styles for review.

Designing and using a variety of simple dashboards for various topic areas helps develop an inherent understanding of what approach works best for your organization.

For example, on a business continuity project, a BCP dashboard, used when the BCP is activated, may show a simple graphic representation of each division.

The colour of each division will show if the CEO or VPs need to worry about the BCP process in that division. If a division shows as red or amber, the division name is clicked to go to a second level to see subgroups within that division.

Start Small

Start small, start often, and share internally. Try the TMC approach and iterate though the two questions: "What"? And "Why"?

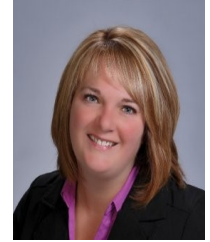
Demonstrating small successes can spread the desire for others to

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Ellen Koskinen-Dodgson is President and Managing Partner of TMC IT and Telecom Consulting Inc. She is an IT and Telecommunications Management Consultant, electrical engineer, author, speaker, media resource and Expert Witness.

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AI Is Changing

Forbes predictions of AI trends to look out for in 2020 span many fields. These include:

Boring Stuff: Filling in forms, generating reports and diagrams and producing documentation and instructions are all tasks that can be automated by machines that watch what we do and learn to do it for us in a quicker and more streamlined manner.

Personalization: Dominos for example, will learn when we are most likely to want pizza, and make sure the "Order Now" button is in front of us at the right time.

Improved Data: Simulations have advanced to the stage where car manufacturers and others working on the development of autonomous vehicles can gain thousands of hours of useful driving data without vehicles even leaving the lab.

More Devices: AI tools, augmented by virtual and augmented reality displays, will increasingly be embedded into our vehicles, household appliances, and workplace tools.



Moving from Cloud to Edge: Custom processors designed to carry out real-time analytics on-the-fly will increasingly become part of the technology we interact with day-to-day, and increasingly we will be able to do this even if we have patchy or non-existent internet connections.

Better Tools: Increasingly, tools will be built to support our imaginative, design, strategy, and communication skills supported by fast analytics and huge real-time datasets.

Entertainment: Enhancements in movie making have now gone beyond basic CGI. AI can allow de-aging, transformation of a person into a werewolf, etc. with far less human intervention. Similarly in gaming, CGI becomes ever-more lifelike. Even

smart playlists on services like Spotify or Google Music that match tunes and tempo to the mood and pace of our everyday lives.

Security: AI can be used to spot giveaway signs in digital activity or transaction patterns that are likely to be indicators of criminal activity, and raise alarms before defences can be breached.

Chatbots: AI will become more and more able to fool us into thinking there is a human on the other end of the conversation.

Big Brother: San Francisco became the first major city to ban the use of facial recognition technology by the police and municipal agencies.

Our Thoughts

Changes in AI will affect every aspect of our lives—personal safety and security, business security, personal productivity, and entertainment.

If you're not yet keeping track of AI, and including AI in your regular business strategy planning, it's time to start.

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Lee-Ann is a researcher and business analyst that oversees benchmarking studies.

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Apathy

Apathy is defined as a lack of interest, enthusiasm or concern. In the field of disaster planning, we define apathy as a lack of *sufficient* interest, enthusiasm or concern where obstacles to proper planning are more important than the agreed need to plan. We regularly encounter six of these variations of apathy:

1. **Routine**—According to the manager of an engineering firm in Los Angeles: "If my staff members take time away from their usual work to serve on a [disaster planning and security] committee, they complain about falling behind on ordinary stuff."
"As a consequence, our plan is very basic, and does not address all of the risks that prevail in our organization. It has taken us years to reach this point. I have no idea how long it will take us to develop a comprehensive plan."
2. **Fear**—While professional disaster planners become accustomed to considering the loss of life and assets, other people might try to ignore such unpleasant matters as the concepts make them nervous.



3. **Not My Job**—Should a disaster occur and disrupt operations, many employees assume that they should step aside and allow "the experts" to put everything right.
4. **Embarrassment**—People worry that in discussing risks, they might appear foolish or "alarmist". Corporate culture can discourage outlandish thinking, even though this can include serious potential risks.
A discussion of shelving collapsing and killing someone is judged to be somewhat ridiculous. Even people with a real interest in risk mitigation can be silenced if colleagues won't take them seriously.

5. **Disbelief**—It can be difficult for staff members to believe that disasters could occur on or near their sites. Offices are not nearly as dangerous as manufacturing plants, mines, or municipal works yards. "If a natural disaster should occur, it can't be planned for so staff would just stay home."
6. **Misplaced Confidence**—People tend to over-confidence. It is impossible to predict the future, but it is usually safe to assume that a disaster will not strike any time soon, if at all.

Our Advice

Our experience has led us to downplay discussions of "Hollywood" scenarios as this results in push-back from attendees. We have learned to focus the planning on the more mundane; for example, storms causing power outages, excavation errors causing loss of phone and internet communications, and roof leaks causing equipment and paper file damage etc.

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Guy Robertson is a senior planner at TMC and an instructor at the Justice Institute of BC and Langara College. He has written five books and numerous articles on corporate security and disaster planning, and offered workshops and lectures at conferences across North America and in the UK.