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DIGITAL
INTENSITY

Does Your Technology Division Support Your Transformation Strategy?

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Many companies today are embarking on Digital Transformation. VCI is helping a number of companies in these efforts. One issue we see often is the difficulty of getting the technology function in the company to properly support and/or lead the transformation. One recent client we worked with had this issue. We worked with them around our framework of people, process and technology. The following is a focus on process recommendations for this client.

As a small, highly technology-focused company, they had a small and highly skilled technology team. They had developed an architecture appropriate to their industry and were working to update the environment to map into the new architecture. But the CEO was frustrated. Why? Because it felt like the tech team wasn't making much progress. The same promises were made multiple times, deadlines kept slipping, and what seemed like simple projects took too long to deliver.

This was a department with very little process, illustrated by a comment from one of the engineers, "I hate to put deadlines on things because too much stuff comes up."

When people in large companies think of IT process, they may sigh and think of burdensome bureaucracy. When you look at a small company with very little process, however, you can see where the need for process discipline comes from. Technology employees in this company were finding it hard to focus on strategic priorities, as each of them were repeatedly pushed into 'all hands on deck' urgent issue resolutions.

In addition, very little attention was being paid to traditional project management disciplines such as planning, estimating, governance, reporting etc. If a project manager had been brought on board, would it have helped? It seems unlikely, as long as the resources couldn't really be held accountable for commitments made while the latest emergency took up their time.

The company is working now to implement some basic process disciplines. In a small group, implementing the full stack of IT processes from a framework like ITIL would be cost prohibitive. However, splitting out the day to day issue resolution from the project work can be done. Getting issues entered into a system and tracked and communicated can be done. Strategic planning has begun on initiatives, which will allow additional resources to be allocated if there is truly a return on the investment that will justify the spending. Other than specific, targeted investments, the technology budget is being kept flat through these changes.

A program of work that likely would have taken five years to complete without intervention can realistically be tackled in around a year after this type of intervention.

You might be thinking: What about DevOps? The newer process frameworks built around the Agile project management methodology can be highly effective at iteratively incorporating user feedback so that a project doesn't come back months later and deliver something other than

what was wanted. Automated development environments allow for quick turnaround on changes. Pulling all of this together requires a high level of process discipline.

When we worked with this company to set up basic disciplines, we laid a foundation that should lead to Agile when they're ready. Of course, making the jump can be hard for a technology division to do once they've mastered the basic disciplines.

So, is there a reason for the annoying change management, ticket management and project management disciplines in your company's IT department? Yes. If your technology department just doesn't seem to be able to keep commitments and deliver, it may be just some of those disciplines that are needed. If the department is sluggish and slow to make any changes, it may be that some processes need to be overhauled and simplified.

To have a successful Digital Transformation, it's vital that your technology division is fully able to support your strategy.