

EXECUTIVE FIELD GUIDE: **THE IT STRATEGY MAP**

As with most things in life, it is much easier to start with a template than with a blank piece of paper. A template serves as a set of ideas you can add to, change, or delete to produce a custom product.

IT strategy maps are no exception. What makes IT strategies different from one another is the magnitude of importance an organization places on various objectives. For some, cybersecurity may be the highest priority. Some emphasize productivity. Still others put digital transformation at the top of the list. Nonetheless, 80% of IT strategies that I have seen in my career are quite close to the model outlined below.

A STRATEGY MAP IS AN EFFECTIVE VEHICLE FOR IT STRATEGY ELABORATION

The original strategy map concept belongs to David Norton and Robert Kaplan. Their “balanced scorecard” format depicts the following perspectives:

FINANCIAL	Setting financial goals for the organization or a department
CUSTOMER	Ensuring customers’ objectives are met
INTERNAL	Defining what needs to be done inside the walls to execute the strategy
TALENT & TECHNOLOGY	Identifying the resources necessary for success (formerly Learning & Growth)

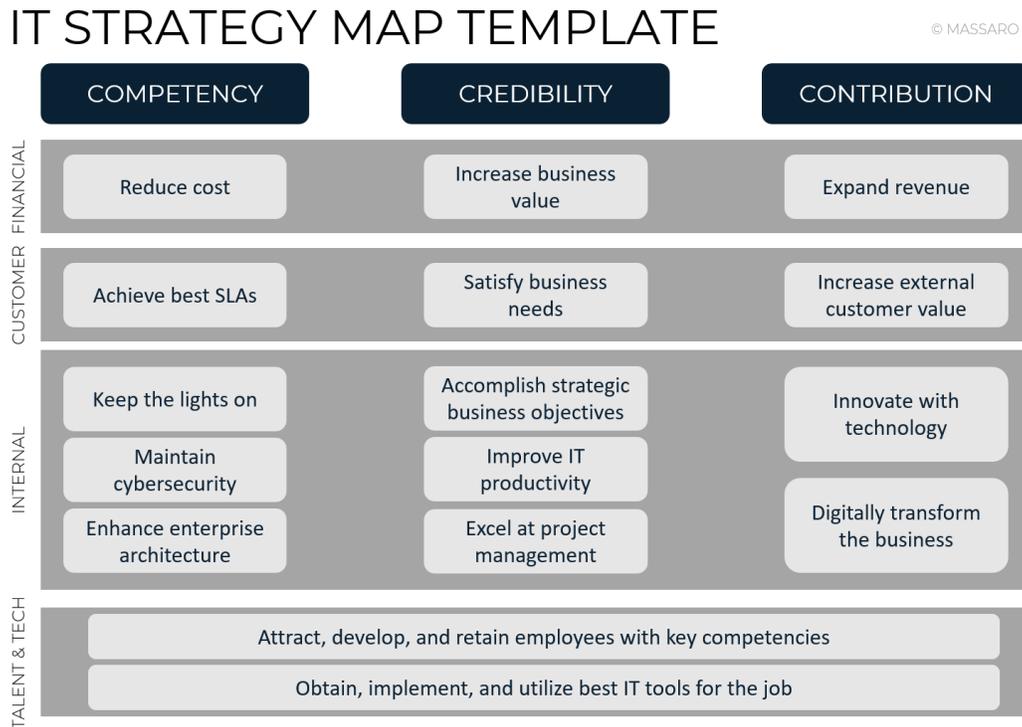
There is causal logic behind the perspectives. If we have the right people and tools, we can make appropriate internal changes, which would improve customer satisfaction, and ultimately drive financial results.

OVERLAY THEMES TO CREATE MEANINGFUL EXECUTION SEGMENTS WITHIN EACH PERSPECTIVE

The causal logic is further enhanced using themes. Themes demonstrate how objectives related to some perspectives drive results in others. The most effective themes for an IT strategy are:

COMPETENCY	CREDIBILITY	CONTRIBUTION
<p>IT is competent enough to maintain and support all the technology we own. Competency is about minding the shop. This is a legitimate portion of the IT budget that should shrink a few percentage points every year, unless the business goes on a shopping spree and purchases a bunch of new technology.</p>	<p>IT is a reliable partner to the business for the purpose of executing strategic initiatives. Credibility encompasses IT's support of the business's strategic advancements. This is where IT has a seat at the table, but not at the head of the table. KPIs here are mostly operational, although IT affects business KPIs as well (in fact, that is the whole point).</p>	<p>IT drives revenue through its own strategic initiatives. Contribution is all about IT born innovation. This is where IT is at the head of the table, leading the transformation into the digital age.</p>

The resulting matrix will look like this:



USE THE MAP TO PRIORITIZE INITIATIVES

Naturally, there is value in an easy-to-follow strategy snapshot that everyone can agree on. But the greater benefit is in using the map to prioritize IT activities. If someone suggests a project that doesn't support any of the objectives, you can reject it on the basis that it not strategic.

Further focus on key initiatives by color-coding the strategy map. For example, if cybersecurity is in pretty good shape, color it green. If digital transformation is in the early stages, color it red. The visual indicator will automatically turn everyone's attention to the most critical areas.

Feel free to use the above framework for outlining your IT strategy, and let us know how it worked out for your team. If you'd like support defining your departmental objectives, gaining alignment with the business, or executing on a strategic plan, let's start a conversation: hello@massaroconsulting.com

Learn more about Massaro at www.massaroconsulting.com