

How Cisco IT Improved Development Processes with a New Operating Model

New way to manage IT investments supports innovation, improved architecture, and stronger process standards for Cisco IT

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- IT activities are integrated with Cisco business strategy
- IT can respond with speed and agility to changing business demands
- Ability to fund business-critical IT projects
- IT resources are allocated to business-critical IT projects

“The IT Operating Model helps us work more effectively by creating consistency in how we deliver capabilities to the business and linking business and technical architecture. We can make better, faster decisions because the right processes, frameworks, and metrics are in place to guide us from architecture through operations. The operating model is the key to operational excellence, which allows us to put a greater focus on innovation for the company.”

Rebecca Jacoby, Senior VP and CIO, Cisco

Cisco IT is expected to lead Cisco’s business strategy. To do this, IT must enable Cisco to adapt quickly to changing business environments, as well as new business opportunities and markets. But Cisco IT must also deliver new services and capabilities without sacrificing performance or stability of existing IT services.

Cisco business priorities for IT were inconsistent, and Cisco IT’s processes were not flexible enough to meet changing business requirements. A new operating model enables IT to partner more closely with the business, and gives Cisco IT improved flexibility to prepare for and respond to changing business priorities.

New corporate councils bring business units and IT together to plan and fund IT projects from the start. These councils are represented at the highest level, and discuss common business opportunities and directions. Councils define a shared business vision and roadmap of new business capabilities across all business units, and the CIO responds with a defined architectural roadmap with associated timelines and budgets to deliver these capabilities.

Business units that were reluctant to fund IT efforts in the past can see

the clear connection between IT architecture and their future business capabilities, and are more supportive of these clearer IT directions.

Architectural processes translate business requirements into technical roadmaps. Cisco IT dedicates its most experienced architects to meet two goals: first, to define the best technical roadmaps for delivering companywide business capabilities; and second, to do this through a simplified, flexible, services-oriented architecture. This architecture provides a strong foundation and takes advantage of reusable service components that can be adapted to meet changing or future new requirements.

Good planning starts with prioritizing investments, continues with focused resource delivery, and ends with effective release management. Cisco IT prioritizes each project and then puts it through a demand-clearing process. This IT-wide process reallocates funding and people to business priorities, and reports progress back to the business. Collaboration between business leaders and IT, and among different IT groups, is critical for success. Rigorous release management practices balance new project changes with IT requirements for stability and reliability of the existing infrastructure.

Deploying the new operating model required clear communication, new tools, and gradual change. Changing work processes is risky and difficult, because people must work together to change and still remain effective in their former roles. Continual collaboration is a requirement for success.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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