



Connecting Business + IT Strategy



Long View

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"That's How It's Always Been Done," Is Not a Reason

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Long View is one of the most powerful IT solutions and services companies in North America with offices across the continent. With a clear focus on combining business and technology through our Hybrid IT solutions including cloud, IT infrastructure, managed services, and end user support, Long View is able to define and customize what the future of IT looks like for our clients. Innovative, flexible, cost-effective, and business focused...that's Long View.



EXEC SUMMARY

We have a number of customers in Oil & Gas, and with the current price of oil, many of them are looking to us to help answer: "How can I reduce my costs?" While this is a very important conversation, we realize this is just one lens in which to look at the "economics of IT", and *if you are only looking at reducing costs, you may not have all the information you need to make the best decisions for your business.*

As a means of having a broader conversation we assembled a senior panel of experts across all areas and functions of Long View, and interviewed them across four economic lenses with the goal of understanding how they talk to their customers. *The advice and counsel that we give to those who might be facing a tough economic climate like our friends in Oil & Gas, interestingly enough applies to those in "times of plenty" as well.*

To share these ideas with you we have compiled our interviews into five themes that were consistent across our panel into this eBook.

Brought to you by – The Long View Think Tank

We felt that a cross discipline panel of Long View experts was the right way to bring a full, broad perspective of industry trends and insights to our customers and partners. We will continue to bring a variety of topics and market conversations from a cross technology, industry and geographic perspective to you by interviewing and compiling Long View insights and experience.

Happy reading!

Please share your feedback or suggestions of topics you would like to see covered with us at info@lvs1.com



"A few years ago I came across a little linguistic gem that has stuck with me, and considering the business climate of the oil and gas sector, it feels quite relevant. The Chinese word for crisis is a combination of two characters, danger and opportunity. Within Alberta and those in or closely tied to the oil and gas sector, we've seen wage freezes, lay-offs, and people delaying their retirements as companies react to the falling prices of a barrel of oil," / **Andrew Bentley**. "But what we also need to see, and help our customers and partners see, are the opportunities."



Using technology as an enabler of business success, we reached out to experts across our organization and asked them to help us understand: what are these opportunities?

For our customers across North American not affected directly by the price of oil, how can we help them be prepared should they face tough times in the future, or to best take advantage when times are good? How do we help highlight the game changers for all customers regardless of industry, and how can we help our customers make changes now?

The four lenses which we asked our panel to provide us real world ideas and advice across were:



DECREASE SPEND

What strategies can we offer to our customers to immediately realize savings in their capex or opex budgets, or to drive operational efficiencies?



GROW REVENUE

If spend is under control, how can customers look for ways to use technology to increase overall revenue and margin (even if it means spending more up front to realize growth).



INCREASE VALUE

How do we make sure that our customers are able to recognize the value through ROI or other measurement activities for every dollar spent?



AVOID COSTS

How can our customers avoid unforeseen costs that could put allocated funds for strategic projects at risk?

OUR PANEL



ROBIN BELL,
Chief Technology Officer

Robin was one of the first 3 employees at Long View and has been instrumental in its growth since 1999. He defines technology strategy and oversees R&D. He also sits on Gartner's executive program, Gartner Symposium and the IT Expo advisory board.



KEVIN CROWE,
VP of Procurement Services

Kevin joined Long View in 2000. He led the Managed Services division from ideation to #1 MSP in the World (MSP Mentor). In 2010 Kevin built the Cloud division and defined the go to market strategy.



BILL EVELYN,
General Manager of Hybrid IT

Bill has over 25 years in the IT industry. He started with Microsoft in the early 90's; his most recent role was Sr. Director of Enterprise and Partners (Western Canada).



CRAIG COOK,
Director, Cloud and Managed Services

Craig has been involved in Product Development and IT Management for the past 15 years. He's skilled at blending technology with a solution engineering focus that drives transformational business outcomes.



SHAWN OVENDEN,
Director of Applications

Shawn has 30 years of experience serving the O&G industry from an IT lens. He leads Long View's Applications practice (Collaboration, Insight and Application Managed Services).



MICHAEL THOMASCHEWSKI,
Director of Infrastructure

Michael has over 20 years of IT industry experience analyzing, designing, implementing, and supporting technology. He leads Long View's infrastructure practice (CI, Storage, Virtualization, Data Center, and Networking).



JUDY BENDA,
Director, End User Experience (EUX)

Judy has been in the Service Desk industry for over 20 years and is currently leading Long Views North American Service Desk.



DUNCAN MUNDELL,
Director of Business Technology Management

Duncan has over a decade of experience in infrastructure, software and management. He currently directs Long View's Architecture, Security and Project Management Office.



ALASTAIR WOOLCOCK,
GM of Strategic Business Solutions (SBS) North America

Alastair has over 10 years with Long View and has been in technology for over 11.5 years. He helps clients envision the future of IT.



DAVID DICKENSON,
Strategic Business Solutions (SBS) North America

David is an accomplished executive with over 30 years of experience with Fortune 100 companies including Intel, MCI West, and Qwest.



JAMES BELL,
Director of Shared Services

James has been in the IT industry for 18 years' working internationally in operations, applications, and procurement. He currently runs Shared Services which provide world class service to Long View customers and internal users.



ANDREW BENTLEY,
GM of Sales North America

Andrew has over 20 years of experience with technology leadership and sales at Microsoft, IBM, HP, and Long View.



STRATEGY AND PLANNING

2.0 Change in the Absence of Crisis

It is often believed that more time spent planning means less time spent reacting and “putting out fires” – however – this assumes that you are planning for the right things. In this theme we will elaborate on developing effective two way communication, managing priorities, continuous improvement, and optimization to enable more effective planning between business and IT.



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Change in the Absence of Crisis

Pretend you are buying a car. You really want it to have silver paint, and you want a metallic effect. The dealer says: "No problem, I'll give you a call when it's ready." A week later when you call to find out where your car is you realize that your special order means that it will take 6 - 8 weeks for delivery, whereas without the metallic paint, you could have driven your car off the lot. The problem is you didn't understand how long it was going to take, if you did, you would have decided it wasn't worth the wait, you need a car now.



This was the analogy given to us as an example of the misalignment between business and IT – often, even though both sides have come to the table, the communication is not effective and so the outcomes are often frustrating for both sides.

The analogy broken down even further, highlights the key missteps by both parties in this communication:



DECREASE SPEND



INCREASE VALUE

1. The order was placed without any discussion or explanation by the buyer as to "why" they wanted metallic. It wasn't made clear to the dealer that it was a preference, not a critical requirement.
2. The dealer did not communicate the "how" or "what" that needed to be done to fulfill the order. It wasn't made clear to the buyer that it was going to take longer, the dealer just said "no problem" in an attempt to be accommodating.

Does this sound familiar to anything that has happened before in your organization?

When we started our panel interviews we only provided conversation starters about the different lenses around the “Economics of IT” – how do you spend less, recognize more value, avoid costs or increase revenue? **In almost every interview the importance of strategy and planning came up time and time again as the best overall approach to decreasing spend and increasing the value the business can derive from IT initiatives.** As we explored the topic, we ended up having the same conversation multiple times:

Q/ When it comes to technology and IT priorities how do our customers know they are planning for the right things?

A/ Alignment of IT priorities to business strategies.

Q/ How do they ensure business / IT alignment?

A/ On-going, effective, two-way communication.

Do you agree? If yes, how would you grade your organization on your business and IT alignment? If it isn't where it should be: read on.

If you are still reading you are likely not alone. Across our panel there was complete **agreement that alignment between business and IT was the exception not the rule.** It was hypothesized that this was due to business strategy and IT priorities being set completely independently; the business making technology decisions (with or without IT) not always understanding the implications, or the converse, IT making technology decisions without understanding the business priorities. But why? Why are so many business units special ordering “cars” and why is IT delivering them without asking the right questions or explaining the implications?

We believe it is because alignment only comes through effective, ongoing, two-way communication. And by on-going we mean it isn't a one-time conversation, but an on-going discussion around continuous improvement and optimization. We know that for most organizations this is a muscle that needs to be developed and built over time, and when it does you can reap the benefits across every facet of the organization. Proper planning can also help some organizations avoid “taking cost cutting measures as a reactionary measure, without consideration for how they might compromise the long term strategy and growth of the business.”



“The general user population [within an organization] is a consumer of what IT operates, so we only call upon them when we have an IT problem. **Heads of business units and individual users don't typically come in thinking how they can be more strategic in their roles by using technology?** That's where the benefit of IT moves up in the value chain, when you start to think more about how technology can progress business strategies, and you can start to quantify the benefit of technology in terms of costs and outcomes.” / **Michael Thomaschewski**

So if you want to build this muscle what do you need to do? **Start by making it an inclusive process. Bring everyone to the table early and add the necessary structure,** even if that means bringing in someone from the outside. This means making sure your strategy is aligned with the goals, objectives, and tactics of the business with clear budget and timeline parameters so that there are no surprises.



At Long View, we've looked at our 18 month roadmaps by business unit and re-ordered some of our priorities as an organization. We've looked at how many projects could still proceed without capital and looked at people, process and efficiency gains in how we operate our business. The money that is being invested is in the most strategic areas to the business, and with a narrowed focus, we are able to deliver these projects more efficiently and effectively. "It creates an opportunity for learning as people come to truly understand what is really critical vs what we'd like to have."

/ James Bell



One of our panelists expressed the critical importance for all departments – especially IT – to spend time in Quadrant Two, referring to the 'Four Quadrants of Time Management' by Stephen Covey in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. **"Companies who may be in a slow period for any reason including an economic downturn should take advantage. In slow times, if you come out as a well-oiled machine, you are better positioned to weather the next storm.** If your environment is a well-oiled machine you aren't running around fixing, you are focused on the strategic. If you are living in Quadrant 1 – emergency response, remediating failing systems, you're not spending time in Quadrant 2 where you're going to get that understanding of business strategies and how IT can help."

/ Robin Bell

Things to Consider

How does your organization define strategy? What steps have you taken to make sure everyone involved understands what the plan is to go from A to Z in executing against that strategy?

How effective is your communication? How often are you frustrated at the beginning of a process/project because you didn't understand the "why, what or how" of what the business needed and why or how IT was planning to deliver?



HOW TO BE MORE COMPETITIVE

3.0 If You Aren't Getting Ahead, You Are Falling Behind

When the market is tough, the need to be more competitive is greater than ever. In this theme, we will explore how companies can use technology as a competitive advantage to drive business outcomes while also providing their organization the scale and agility required to align with market demands.



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If You Aren't Getting Ahead, You Are Falling Behind

Getting ahead. This phrase makes a few assumptions:

1. You know what direction you are headed in.
2. Strategically, the direction you are headed in is the right direction.

With the assertion that these are true statements, a number of very interesting conversations took place across our panel about what it means to them when we talk to our customers about how to “get ahead” or “be more competitive” and how technology can be leveraged for competitive advantage, whether facing an economic downturn or unprecedented growth.



This was an exciting topic for our panel as there are a million ways that companies can use technology to facilitate new innovations or enable the business with new capabilities (which we will talk about later within this series). However, one comment that we heard over and over across our panel was that IT needs to be able to scale through the use and combination of different consumption models to meet the needs of the business, we thought this idea was worthy of a

whole blog to explore this further. **Those that can both scale up or down fastest can achieve a distinct advantage against their competitors.**

As we dug into the topic of scale, this was **one of the simplest principles for companies of any size or industry** to use to be better poised in any market conditions.

If consumption based models are ideal for scale, why isn't everything consumption-based?

- **One panelist believes that it is because some IT departments are still very insource focused.** They continued, “Don't feel like you have to do it all yourself, look beyond your four walls. The availability of services for your business to consume, are richer than they have ever been before.”
- **The other reason is simple: reality.** It isn't realistic for every organization to move fully to a consumption-based model based on existing investments, business requirements or technical requirements, so the trick is finding the optimal combination of traditional and pay-as-you-go consumption models based on the needs of your organization.



DECREASE SPEND



INCREASE VALUE



GROW REVENUE



AVOID COSTS

Think about this: **if your business changed today and you no longer needed the resources that you have invested in, what happens?** For many, this is not a fun scenario because it means waste. It means that you have paid or are paying for something (potentially expensive infrastructure or people) you no longer need or is being underutilized. If the implication of unnecessary spend on the bottom line isn't bad enough, we think what is more disadvantageous to an organization is when lack of ability to scale means they continue to pay for what they don't need. The costs are sunk and reallocation isn't an option. Flipping the switch to off or dialing back can mean the difference between profit and loss.



We are seeing abundant growth in shadow IT – where spend is happening outside of IT. What is the ripple effect? We have an entire industry trained to put technology in place to address issues. The danger of non-technical people signing off on data and applications has a ripple effect and ramifications such as security and integration. “IT needs to become the orchestrator of consuming services, adaptive sourcing or bi-modal technology. So business units don't go outside of the purview of IT. We also need to create small, fail fast teams inside IT departments that take on pertinent business problems and that can be solved with technology. The idea is to be agile; solve, test, iterate, and ultimately fail or succeed quickly. You need to create a team that is not operational but a team that knows your business processes. The key is to focus on what you are good at and outsource the commodity components of IT.” **Alastair Woolcock**.

On the flipside, what happens during a period of growth? Early bird gets the worm, right? Those companies that are in a position to scale infrastructure and resources to pounce on a market opportunity first can give themselves the best opportunity to establish themselves as a market leader, capturing customers and capturing revenue.

Things to Consider

Management Strategy: By keeping your IT team focused on what is core to your business and the alignment of your technology priorities to your business strategy, can you more easily scale the resources needed for the day-to-day operations? Does removing the requirement to hire a senior full time resource reduce cost, especially when that individual only needs to work on “senior” tasks or projects from time to time and isn't core to your everyday business?

Consumption Strategy: If you build a multi-million dollar datacenter you will always have to pay for the physical datacenter and the equipment in it, the staff, the maintenance, the power, heating and cooling, etc. If you purchase a software solution through traditional licensing for your team, what happens if your team shrinks or grows by 30%? Have you explored Hybrid Cloud or SaaS solutions instead?



LACK
OF
EFFICIENCY

4.0 Are You Throwing Your Money Away?

IT has long been thought of as a cost center, but there are real opportunities to change this by taking a leadership role in bringing the business opportunities to leverage technology to improve performance, utilization and increase ROI. In this theme we will outline strategies for spending pitfalls within IT and across the business.



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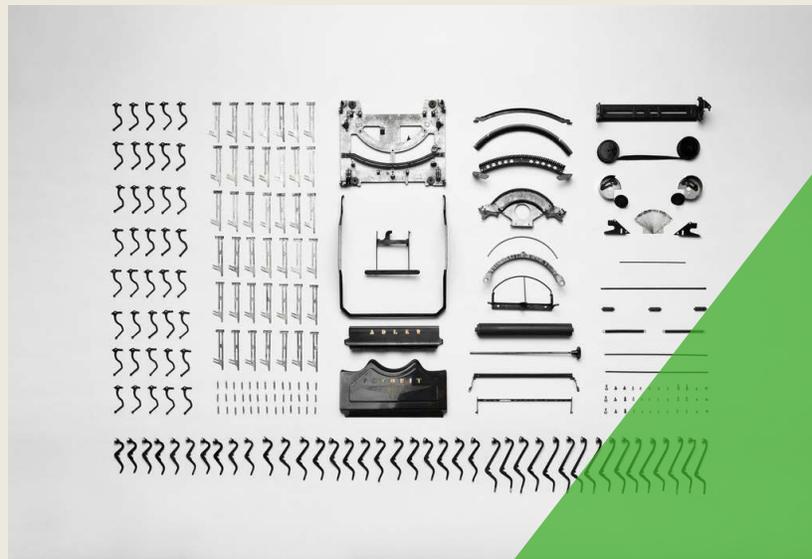
Are You Throwing Your Money Away?



Typically a procurement team makes buying a science, never paying more than they should for anything. Purchasing the various items and components and being as efficient with every dollar spent is an important step in the buying process. However when we narrow the conversation to just technology spend within an organization, we heard loud and clear from our panel, **"This is really an opportunity where IT can, and should be, showing leadership of where technology can be leveraged for competitive advantage," / Kevin Crowe.**

When we asked the panel to expand, here are a few things they suggest that our customers consider when looking for inefficiencies within their organizations:

- Do the parts really come together to deliver a solution that the business needs to move the business forward? Is the whole greater than the sum of its parts?
- When making a purchase decision do you have a full understanding of the TCO beyond the purchase price?
- What is the ROI of the solution? Sometimes what feels like too large an investment can provide the greatest ROI.
- Are you standardizing an approach based on the requirements of the most demanding workloads?
- Have you prioritized short term fixes and introduced complications that could mean more expenses later?



Let's look at some scenarios that help illustrate these potential pitfalls for inefficiencies in spending:

Shadow IT: If the business finds a solution for their immediate need and can't wait for IT, what's the harm in making an investment in a solution that can help increase Line of Business (LOB) operations? If we ignore the potential security and compliance risks, this one "trend" can have a significant negative impact on your business by driving down efficiency and increasing costs. This bad habit in the long run could mean that you are investing in buying and managing redundant applications if LOBs aren't aware of each other's purchases. What happens if integration with other applications or business processes isn't thoroughly vetted and requires extensive customization? Could a similar tool be negotiated as part of a larger purchase to drive down costs?



Hidden costs of hardware: Does the cost of upgrading your hardware seem too expensive to justify when your existing infrastructure hasn't reached end of life? You could be wasting money and not even know it. With improvements to hardware on the market today and the reduction of energy consumption, a quick TCO or ROI analysis may show that even with an initial outlay of capital you could reach a breakeven point faster than you would imagine. These kinds of initiatives may even make you more effective at using the existing resources you have. In addition, the cost of upgrades can become complex and expensive if you leave migrations too long, as talent goes away from managing older equipment.

Employee travel and collaboration initiatives: You want your employees to collaborate and be effective, but the cost of travel is expensive both in hard costs and the cost of the lost productivity when your team is on the road or in the air. Enhancing your collaboration tools to include video conferencing and even instant messaging can radically reduce costs and improve productivity. Not only are you no longer spending money on travel, but you are giving your team the ability to move faster. Waiting "until I see them" turns to, let me see if they are online so we can collaborate now.



Application rationalization: We see lots of companies that have 1000s of legacy applications with only a handful of users, or 3 or 4 applications providing similar capabilities. "The support costs (maintaining a knowledge base to resolve common issues and incidents and keeping data fresh are extremely high. You need to take a good look at the legacy things being supported today, and make a plan to take them out of the environment with a replacement for the users." / **Judy Benda-Schnurr.** Another area to look for efficiency is in software that has been purchased yet hasn't been executed on, and there is a lot of opportunity to get it operationalized and working. Or alternatively deciding it wasn't the right purchase and turning it off so you aren't paying for future renewals and maintenance on software assets.



Standardizing for mission critical workloads: You have mission critical workloads and they must be running on mission critical infrastructure, your business can't afford to do anything less. However, are you standardizing all of your infrastructure or solutions based on the needs of your mission critical apps? It is more common than you think, since standardization means better pricing, fewer skills needed for management and maintenance which help drive down costs. But more data is needed to understand if the TCO of standardization on one technology is the best option. Could it be more beneficial to use commodity solutions basic workloads, such as archiving? For many organizations we recommend exploring taking a blended approach, perhaps standardizing on a vendor instead of a technology. "You should consider matching up application infrastructure cost to better match the needs of the applications, since not every application is mission critical," / **Bill Evelyn.** "That should include looking at on premises but also at cloud solutions where you might be able to provide it at a fraction of the cost."



Efficiency: If you've maximized efficiency within the IT department (infrastructure, internal vs outsourcing, cloud for availability), a good CIO will look at how they can use technology to help drive savings in other areas of the business. "If you look at the history of technology over the last 30 years, what has technology been really good at? Efficiency. Take a complex problem or a labor intensive problem, apply technology to it, and deliver it more cheaply, more effectively and with a better business outcome. That's why companies have IT companies. Now extend that model to drive efficiency in other areas of the business," / **David Dickinson.**

Something to Consider

There are many ways an organization can be wasting money through inefficiencies, too many to list here – so consider this: **You know what you know, you know what you don't know, but there are also unknown unknowns. It is not knowing what you don't know that often can be the biggest waste of time, money and resources,** that is why we recommend finding a trusted partner. As a trusted partner to our clients, we can look at your organization with objective eyes and help you find opportunities to increase efficiencies through centralization, standardization, modularization, optimization and outsourcing that you may not have even considered or realized the full economic impact of making changes.



ITO STRATEGIES

5.0 Your Crystal Ball Is Broken

Traditional 3 year buying cycles for technology as well as staffing a team often rely on a messy process of predicting the future and "just in case" scenarios. This theme explores two ideas: (1) How to take control of the buying cycle and spend your money more optimally? (2) How to delineate skills that are worth developing vs those that aren't core to your business?



Long View

Your Crystal Ball Is Broken



The 3 year buying cycle was explained by a panel member like this: “When it comes time to ask for budget for capital projects, like infrastructure, a manager asks their team and they state their worst case scenarios with a little buffer added in just in case, the manager totals that and again adds a little wiggle room. This inflated grand total is submitted for approval and if some of it goes unused that is better than the alternative of needing more and not being able to get additional budget for three more years,” **/ Craig Cook.**

Does this sound familiar?



What we recommend is **looking at how to spend your money more optimally over time instead of trying to predict the future** so you don't have to worry about waste or underutilized assets (infrastructure, licenses etc.) and it may help you save money over time.

Sounds great, right? The cloud and subscription based services such as SaaS apps deliver this, and the best part is, if the resource

is no longer needed in the future, you can “shut it off” and stop paying for it – or if you need more quickly, you can scale up almost instantaneously. This **ability to turn your services up, down, on or off is key** to success in a changing, sometimes unpredictable economy.

Disaster Recovery as a Service solutions are a great real world example of this. Most would agree that a DR strategy and plan is imperative as the likelihood of a disaster occurring is too high to risk and you don't want to be in a position where you can't recover. That said, DR strategies are like insurance which is not an exciting line item to put money towards. You want to do it in the most efficient and effective way possible. So instead of building a secondary datacenter and paying for the real-estate, infrastructure, heating / cooling, maintenance and so on, why not consider the cloud? With a DRaaS solution outside of some set up fees, routine testing etc. you only pay for what you use IF there is a disaster. Think of what you could repurpose that money towards.



DECREASE SPEND



AVOID COSTS

A similar story can be told for your people resources when you know you are going to need a certain specialized skill, however you can't always keep that person or an entire team busy you may not want to hire permanent staff for those roles. The problem with acquiring these people of course is that it is likely those tasks that you keep them busy with are not the specialized and typically more expensive skill they were hired for.

In this scenario we recommend looking at ITO (IT Outsourcing) as an option, with an **outsourcing model** there are a number of benefits including eliminating the expense of finding, recruiting and retaining resources with highly specialized and sought after skills. For these persons you can also avoid having to hire them full time and only contract them when you actually need those skills either on a project basis or in an ongoing part-time model.

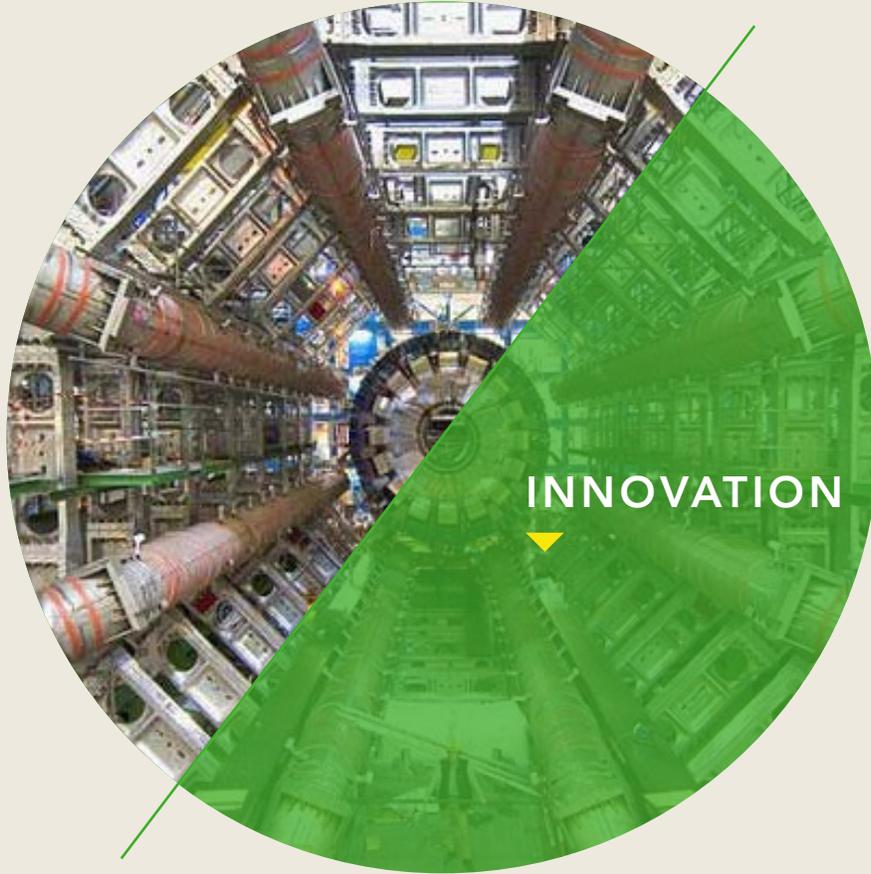
On the flip side, what if the skills aren't core to your business? Do you need to invest in skills, employees or training for things that are contextual, or that are commodity, not highly differentiated or highly specialized etc.? Or is there more benefit to outsourcing these skills so you can focus your energy on developing skills for those projects that differentiate you in the market?

With a clear understanding of your business strategy and needs you can adopt either of these strategies, but it is important to (again) find that trusted advisor who can walk you through the **details of how to start and stop the service, understand the legal requirements, penalties, SLAs, and who to call if you have a problem, are they local?** Will they come to you and how long are their response times etc. This will help you make sure that you have a solution partner who is invested in your success.



Things to Consider

- Do you always accurately predict your resource needs in terms of people or purchases?
- Do you only invest in recruiting and maintaining skills that are core to your business or only require consistent, full time work?
- If you answered no to either of these questions, it is time to explore better consumption models to meet your needs.



INNOVATION

6.0 “That’s How It’s Always Been Done,” Is Not a Reason

For many organizations to “disrupt or be disrupted” often means a fresh perspective and refusing to do things the way they have always been done. In this theme we will share our thoughts on how technology can drive innovation within all levels of an organization. Innovation doesn’t have to mean being the next “Uber”; innovation can come in unassuming places and drive incredible changes to the bottom line.



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“That’s How It’s Always Been Done,” Is Not a Reason

Sometimes there are eye rolls when the word “innovation” is used, and we understand why: it is often over used. We would like to remove the eye rolls and challenge our customers as we have challenged ourselves to start thinking differently about what innovation means within the walls of your organization.



So what is innovation? “It can be big, revolutionary things that challenge an entire industry. Or it can be smaller, everyday evolutionary innovation; things that we start to find new ways to do so that we can improve a process, streamline management, reduce maintenance, enhance productivity, or even unassuming things that with smaller changes actually make a big impact over time,” */ Shawn Ovenden.*

We would contend that there are some opportunities for revolutionary innovations, and there are many opportunities for evolutionary innovations.

Let’s give a few examples of evolutionary thinking that we heard from our panel:



Applications: We have come across a lot of applications that are sitting on end of life platforms. The hardware is old, the O/S is out-of-date and no longer supported, nor is the database, the app language is 10 years old, etc. From a traditional perspective you would evaluate the app, lifecycle it if you don’t need it, or if you do, upgrade the O/S, upgrade the database and if you are lucky you only need a little bit of re-coding. “But what if you re-design the application from scratch? Look at the core of what the application is driving towards and design the application in a completely different way that aligns to new business standards, integrates with other applications, can be consumed through appropriate devices and mobile platforms,” */ Duncan Mundell.* “Fostering that kind of thinking and allowing your team to take that approach, we would argue, is meaningful innovation.”



**INCREASE
VALUE**



**GROW
REVENUE**

Process: Within Long View we spend time thinking about innovation in terms of process improvement and how we can reimagine processes in one of two ways:

1. Are there things we are repeatedly doing that we can automate to save time?
2. Can we identify the cause of these repeated actions and develop a way to reduce those events from happening initially?

We use these approaches across our own IT team and our customer service desk all the time to drive real results quickly from a reduction in both time and expenses.

Culture: But when it comes to innovation, it can be frustrating and we hear: "why can't we innovate?" Or from an executive: "I am spending money on innovation, where is my ROI?" If you are looking for that next innovation be it revolutionary or evolutionary, you need to develop a culture that is conducive to that kind of thinking. Is your organization or business unit a well-oiled machine or is it chaos? If you are always in crisis mode, we would contend it would be hard to be thoughtful around new innovation. Is your business transparent? You need to give people the information they need to come up with new ideas which are the foundation of innovation, lack of transparency or rigid silos can also be a blocker to that success.

Agility: And finally, we want to leave you with one last thought: to be innovative, you have to be willing and able to respond to the opportunity. If you can't or don't have the ability to seize the moment, develop the idea, cut through the red tape, put aside the risk and say: "Go!", otherwise the opportunity could be diminished or lost entirely, especially if your competitors aren't waiting.



Things to Consider

Innovation, like creativity, needs room to breathe. Without time and space to think differently about how things are being done, you don't have time to come up with new solutions, only continue to keep your head down and execute.

Are you agile enough to respond when there is an opportunity? Have you built a culture that reacts quickly and appropriately with purpose that is aligned to what the business is trying to achieve or are you giving your competition the opportunity to respond first because of red tape or set innovation cycles?