Effective implementation of IT governance in the business units of an enterprise involves the process of institutionalization (e.g., changes in culture and behaviors of people), to use the processes, tools and metrics. Many times, IT governance implementation fails due to ineffective institutionalization. Quite often, the root cause can be traced to lack of business-unit executive buy-in. Therefore, a critical success factor is earning buy-in from business-unit executives. This article discusses the essential process of formulating and presenting practical business cases to executives to increase chances of earning buy-in from business-unit executives.

Implementation of IT governance in an enterprise's business units is no easy task. There are many strategies and tactics necessary to change the culture and behaviors of people for the usage of processes, tools and metrics. Most of the time, IT prepares business cases using a standard company template and converts them to slides for presentation. It is no wonder that the end result is a failure of the business-unit executives to understand the scope of the effort and a negative response.

Business case presentations need to clearly communicate the scope, be easily understood by business executives and be presented in an hour-long meeting. As such, the presentation needs to focus on the following points:\(^1\)

- Organization or business-unit goals
- Pain points of the business units in meeting these goals
- Implementation strategies and tactics
- Cost and schedule
- Benefits
- Metrics
- Success stories
- Presentation technique

The following steps outline a process to determine the strategies, tactics, benefits and metrics to formulate and present effective business cases:

1. **Develop initial strategies and tactics**—Similar to any transformational change or process-improvement initiative, business-unit strategies and tactics should be developed along the three dimensions of the people, processes and tools (PPT) triangle.\(^2\) Developing the strategies and tactics along the three dimensions ensures an adequate balance in the system (e.g., people need to be trained to use processes that are enabled by tools). The reason is that if any one dimension is not in alignment with the others, the system as a whole becomes unbalanced and fails. Along with developing the people, processes and tools related to strategies and tactics, developing metrics such as key performance indicators (KPIs) and key goal indicators (KGIs) to measure, monitor and validate the achievement of strategies and tactics is also a must.

People-related strategies can include training, communication and awareness sessions; capability levels; mentoring; and quality support. Process-related strategies can include process training, process compliance audits, tailoring and augmenting processes, building process repositories, and providing process support. Tool-related strategies can include tool deployments, tool training and tool usage audits. Appropriate metrics (KPIs and KGIs) should be selected to measure and monitor the progress and critical success factors (CSFs).

2. **Implement Hoshin Kanri planning**—After the initial PPT strategies and tactics are developed, they need to be refined and aligned with the organization's strategies and communicated to all business-unit staff. Hoshin Kanri planning is a useful process in carrying this out. Also called Policy Deployment,\(^3\) this is a strategic planning/strategic management/strategic control methodology based on Deming's Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle. The purpose is to communicate and spread awareness of the organization's vision, goals, KPIs and CSFs to
all levels to ensure that the business units and staff at all levels do the following:
• Plan, develop and align tactics based on the strategic intent of the organization as well as other business units.
• Act on and validate the achievement of goals, KPIs and CSFs.
• Provide feedback for continual improvement.

The Policy Deployment X Matrix tool can be used to implement the Hoshin Kanri Planning technique. Use of this tool ensures the alignment of business-unit strategies, tactics and metrics to the organization’s goals or objectives. The tool is a spreadsheet with objectives, action programs (or strategies), action items (or tactics), and measures and targets along the four sides of a square and a RACI chart on the right. There are grids in the four quadrants where “X” can be entered to show correlation between the following:
• Objectives and measures and targets
• Objectives and action items (tactics)
• Measures and targets and action programs (strategies)
• Action programs (strategies) and action items (tactics)
• Action items (tactics) and RACI charts

The tool has been found to be extremely useful for ensuring that the strategies cover all objectives, there are adequate and correct tactics for the strategies/action programs, and sufficient metrics are present to measure the objectives and progress of strategies/action programs.

3. Implement an adequate communications plan—Implementation cannot succeed without adequate communication, awareness, culture change and reinforcement activities. A sample communications plan template that lists the stakeholders, messages and communication channels (e.g., what messages need to be targeted to the stakeholders using which communication channels) must be prepared. It is important to target all relevant stakeholders using all available channels (e.g., town-hall meetings, team meetings, one-on-one meetings, newsletters, emails, brown-bag sessions). The sample plan can then be tailored to each business unit’s needs and consequently implemented.

It is critical to stress to the business-unit executives the importance of implementing the communications plan. Many implementation activities do not progress due to inadequate communication and awareness among staff.

Moreover, the communication and awareness activities should be ongoing. Frequently, implementation plans that had initially progressed stall and go back to square one once the communication, awareness and reinforcement activities are discontinued.

4. Summarize the cost and schedule—A question that is always asked when business cases are presented is the cost and schedule of institutionalization activities. It is critical to provide the summarized cost and schedule with milestones, because executives frequently base their decisions on this information. A very high cost and lengthy schedule is more likely to result in a negative response due to business-unit funding and budget issues. Therefore, it is important to appropriately plan the IT governance implementation activities and tailor them to the business-unit needs so that a realistic and achievable cost and milestone schedule is presented to the business-unit executives.

5. Present the business benefits—While presenting business cases, questions frequently surround the benefits: What are the benefits? When will they be realized? How will they be measured and reported? Presenting benefits using a results chain model can be useful. A results chain model is a comprehensive and accurate model of an organization’s or business unit’s benefits realization process. Results chain diagrams map out a series of causal statements that link short-, medium- and long-term results in an if-then fashion.’ Using this model, the strategies, tactics and any assumptions can be linked to the intermediate and long-term benefits and goals in a visual manner. The model can
also visually depict the achievement of business benefits at that point in time. Thus, a results chain model is a great presentation tool and its usage greatly enhances the presentation.

6. **Present the measurement and reporting plan**—Executives also want to know how the business benefits will be monitored, measured and reported. Presenting the metrics and the measurement and reporting plan is important. It is critical to select the correct metrics, those that will demonstrate the progress of meeting the goals. Planning using the Policy Deployment X Matrix certainly helps in arriving at metrics that are aligned to the business-unit goals, strategies and tactics. It is also important to stress metrics analysis, development of an improvement plan and tracking of corrective actions for continual improvement.

7. **Relay success stories**—Relaying success stories, if available, reinforces the business case authenticity and practicality. If the business-unit executives agree with the contents but do not want to move ahead due to questions on practicality, relaying success stories can be a game changer.

8. **Choose the appropriate presentation technique**—It is very important to match the delivery with the personality types of the executives. People are mainly of three personality types: visual, auditory or kinesthetic. Most executives tend to be visual, which means the business case needs to be delivered at a good pace, while focusing on the big picture. But sometimes, it may be necessary to deliver the presentation to people who are of auditory or kinesthetic personalities. In these cases, it is necessary to deliver the business case at the pace and level that is easily understood by the audience. Not following this guideline can either lead to the business-unit executives getting frustrated (e.g., this would be the case if presenting at a slow pace or with a lot of detail to visual types) or not understanding the message (e.g., this would be the case if presenting at a fast pace and big picture to auditory or kinesthetic types).

**CONCLUSION**

IT governance implementation and institutionalization in enterprise business units is dependent on buy-in from the business-unit executives. Formulating strong and effective business cases is the most important factor in gaining buy-in. But it is not enough. Business case presentations should be done in a manner that clearly communicates the scope, is easily understood by business executives and can be presented in an hour-long meeting. Following the aforementioned steps ensures effective formulation and presentation of business cases, which, in turn, increases the chances of gaining buy-in for IT governance implementation.

**ENDNOTES**

1. This is based on the successful experience of the author in presenting business cases for IT governance.


6. Ibid.
