

# A New IT Framework to Enable Effective Change

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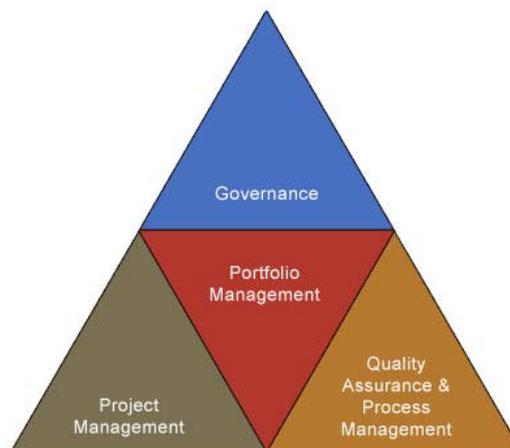
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## PROBLEM STATEMENT

At 225 years old, the University of New Brunswick (UNB) is Canada's oldest public university. Though it possesses a rich and venerable past, UNB has long been—and indeed still is—Canada's smallest comprehensive university, serving 12,000 students on two campuses through 14 faculties. Paradoxically, while the university displays many signs of its maturity in programming and course development processes, it has been astonishingly slow to incorporate standard modern information technology (IT) business practices and methodologies. Whether as a result of economic challenges or technological advances, change has been inevitable at UNB, as everywhere else, but it has not been readily accepted or managed particularly well. Haphazard project execution strategies, few internal controls and risk mitigation plans, and a lack of governance structure to ensure alignment with the enterprise, left IT at UNB struggling to understand and fulfill its role.

## SOLUTION

In a single year, the UNB Integrated Technology Services (ITS) unit, responsible for delivering IT services and resources across the enterprise, has re-invented itself through thoughtful but rapid adoption of a governance framework, portfolio and project management strategies, plus quality assurance and process management methodologies, all based on industry standards and best practices. And what is more, this has been accomplished in a very challenging economic climate—several consecutive years of cuts to the unit budget have left it very, very lean.



**Figure 1: UNB's New IT Framework**

This new IT framework (illustrated in Figure 1, above, and summarized in Table 1, next page), provides a solid platform from which change can be effectively managed. Incorporation of good governance practices, complete with an enterprise-wide advisory committee, ensure that the unit has a strategic plan that is aligned to that of the enterprise; gone are the days of ITS acting (and often merely reacting) in isolation to determine priorities and implement narrowly-focussed projects in response to complaints and business needs from individual faculties or departments. A broader perspective, combined with a renewed mission and vision, ensure that ITS can respond to enterprise needs much more rapidly than ever before. ITS has adopted the IT governance principles articulated by the IT Governance Institute [1].

Portfolio management has allowed ITS to realistically assess its capacity to take on projects, and to work with requestors to ensure that what they ask for is what they really need. It assesses strategic fit of current and prospective applications, systems, and services, and tracks and monitors available resources, particularly people, assigning them to specific projects according to fitness for the task, rather than functional role. This has spread opportunities for interesting and challenging assignments around to individuals who otherwise may never have been considered for participating in projects outside their 'normal' roles.

Project management methodologies have been incorporated into all of our projects, meaning they are executed systematically and rigorously according to well-planned schedules and budgets. A new Project Management Office (PMO) provides support, including mentoring, training, tools, and software applications, to the entire unit as formal

methodologies become widely deployed. ITS uses the project management standard of the Project Management Institute (PMI), and helps staff members achieve PMI certifications [2].

ITS has also begun to methodically and objectively review and assess its own internal processes and quality control practices, with the goal of dramatically increasing efficiency throughout the unit and ensuring the university enjoys an unprecedented level of quality in all IT services and products. Though the unit is still becoming familiar with this new emphasis on assessment and change, it has been welcomed widely, and considered long overdue by many. ITS is undertaking application of and adherence to *Cobit 4.1*, the standard for IT process management from ISACA, the international organization that certifies individuals in the fields of IT audit, security, governance, and risk control [3].

**Table 1: Summary of IT Framework components**

<b>Enterprise IT Governance</b>	<b>Portfolio Management</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure strategic alignment</li> <li>• Assess value delivery</li> <li>• Optimize risk management</li> <li>• Advise on resource management</li> <li>• Promote performance measurement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Receive project requests</li> <li>• Assess feasibility and strategic fit of requests</li> <li>• Develop and refine project proposals</li> <li>• Assign resources</li> <li>• Monitor overall project capacity</li> </ul>
<b>Project Management</b>	<b>Quality Assurance and Process Management</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain PM Office</li> <li>• Equip staff with appropriate PM tools</li> <li>• Execute projects using PM methodology</li> <li>• Demonstrate PM value</li> <li>• Champion PM outside of IT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish quality and process standards for all services and products</li> <li>• Analyse, monitor, assess, and recommend changes to internal processes</li> <li>• Ensure operational readiness under all circumstances</li> </ul>

## IMPACT

Adoption of these principles, standards, and methodologies is transforming IT at UNB. The university is becoming more aware of, and engaged in, the enterprise IT function. The unit is becoming more transparent to the university community, and the unit is more conscious of its crucial role. Above all, the unit is adapting extraordinarily well to profound change, and is fast becoming a leading change agent throughout the enterprise.

## SESSION OUTCOMES

The goals of this session are to:

- Help participants find methods by which their own organizations can adapt to change and foster a culture and environment of flexibility, openness, and innovation, based on standards
- Demonstrate that good management practices will help to incorporate change effectively
- Focus attention on critical areas, especially strategic alignment with enterprise goals and objectives; a strong emphasis on service quality; building a unit that is highly responsive to change; and, change leadership that comes from within the unit.

## REFERENCES

1. *Board Briefing on IT Governance*. Available from: <http://www.isaca.org/Knowledge-Center/Research/ResearchDeliverables/Pages/Board-Briefing-on-IT-Governance-2nd-Edition.aspx>, accessed 01 October, 2010.
2. Project Management Institute, *A Guide to the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK Guide) – Fourth Edition, an American National Standard ANSI/PMI 99-001-2008* (Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute Inc., 2008).
3. ISACA. Available from: <http://www.isaca.org>, accessed 01 October, 2010.

## PRESENTER BIO

Terry Nikkel is Associate Vice President, Integrated Technology Services and CIO at the Fredericton campus of the University of New Brunswick. Previously, he was Director, Information Services and Systems at the Saint John campus and Head, Library Systems, at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and also worked for a number of years for Honeywell International, in a large R&D unit, in London, Ontario. Mr. Nikkel earned an MLIS at the University of Western Ontario, and an MBA at Dalhousie. He is also a PMI-certified Project Management Professional.

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