EUNIS 2016: IT strategy for a public university – why, what, when and how?

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Introduction

This paper discusses the challenges of establishing an IT strategy for a public institution in Higher Education.

As a CIO, you are expected to have an IT strategy for your institution. This is a task that may be done with some regularity, say each 3rd year. Does an IT strategy works that way? Should it be more frequent regarding the rapid changes within ITC? Or should it be the other way around, let the IT strategy be a moving target and go into a never-ending transformation. This paper addresses the challenges with an institutional IT strategy: Why? What? When? How?

Why should you invest in an IT strategy?

Good question! Who cares? Does it help you? Is it worth the endeavor? Yes, it must be worth it, otherwise don´t. It should be your work goals and work plan and your foundation for internal and external acceptance of where you are going with your institutions ITC. You need to have a strategy, and it can be defined, exposed and used in many ways. Without a plan, you are lost !

What is an IT strategy?

Good point! Does it look like a thick book? Is it a sheet of paper? Is it a video? Is it statements with a price tag or is it a storytelling piece of art? Is it in your head, not explicitly shown to anyone? A good strategy is like good rhetoric, it explains what you want to do and why, and it addresses the obvious critique that always exists within our institutions. Is there a difference in being a public university versus another organizational form? In this central section, I´ll go through areas that need to be managed in an IT strategy.

When to release an IT strategy?

Good thinking! Timing is everything. When is the right time to present a shift in motion? I´ll walk through some institutional indicators that can trigger a move or change with current IT strategy. This includes shift in institutional business strategy, changes in central management and changes in the financing model, technology shift and organizational changes.

How to implement an IT strategy?

Good planning! An IT-strategy that is not implemented is worthless and may represent a lot of effort put into nothing. It is important to understand the managerial culture of your institution and how to deal with acceptance and resistance. Should you go all-in and risk your position or wait for collegial support? Know your supporters and your opposition.

The author is CIO for Umeå university since 2009. He has a degree in Computer Science and Business, University of Umeå, 1978. After university studies, employed as System Analyst and Designer for business information systems. Returned to Umeå university for doctoral studies and teaching in Informatics with special focus in System Design and System Development. He has been a Project Manager for several national projects. He has been Head of the Ladok Division at the University of Umea, a large unit specialized in system development and maintenance. He has been a board member of EUNIS and worked as an expert for the European Commission. Current EUNIS publications includes:

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