

Giving IT the Airtime it Needs

Birgitta Klasén, a speaker at the marcus evans Nordic CIO Summit 2010, shares her thoughts on why an IT governance board is essential in an organisation.

Interview with: Birgitta Klasn, Co-Author, 'IT and Leadership - Do it Right' & Former Chief Information Officer, Telia, Pharmacia & EADS

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Information Technology(IT)investments are often a significant portion of a company's budget, yet IT decisions do not always get the airtime they need in board meetings, says Birgitta Klasn, co-Author of 'IT and Leadership - Do it Right' and Former Chief Information Officer at Telia, Pharmacia and EADS. To secure the time IT needs, an IT governance board should be set up with representatives of all stakeholders. A speaker at the marcus evans Nordic CIO Summit 2010, taking place in Stockholm, Sweden, 25 - 27 October, Klasn puts forward her recommendations for an IT governance board to give IT the time and attention it deserves.

How can CIOs ensure to get the most out of IT investments?

Birgitta Klasn: There is no silver bullet to deal with all IT investments, but if you have proper governance in place, decisions will be made at the right level in the company. It is too easy to let the IT department handle business efficiency strategies, but IT governance must be properly managed as it is the bridge between the business and IT functions.

One way of securing this is to have an IT governance board with the right stakeholders represented. This should, for example, include top management. IT investments are huge; for some companies IT projects are the most important projects, yet some still delegate the responsibility for IT investments to the IT department. In some companies the IT spending is 2 - 3 per cent of revenue but in some it can be up to 15 - 20 per cent, and in companies where the customer offering is an online service, it can be up to 80 per cent or more.

Often, IT does not get enough airtime in board meetings. IT topics tend to be neglected or get very little time on the agenda; therefore a separate forum is needed. IT matters should not have to compete against other topics.

How can CIOs best integrate IT into the organisation's entire governance process?

Birgitta Klasn: The IT services in an organisation needs to be aligned with and support the company's core business processes. The company has to decide which IT solutions and thus which IT standards and IT architecture it should select, as it cannot install everything that is available in the market. The IT department should not decide alone on which technologies to implement; this needs to be a business decision. There are many examples of bad IT projects and IT investments, because IT is difficult for many business executives to grasp and therefore the IT organisation has been left to make critical decisions that ultimately has ended up in a too costly IT architecture.

To make sure that the IT governance boards works well, the Chief Information Officer(CIO) needs to be good at communicating in business terms. The risks and benefits of new IT projects must be clearly explained. It is essential that the CIO communicates before as well as after the governance board meeting in terms that business people understand.

What are some of the upcoming changes that CIOs should prepare for?

Birgitta Klasn: There are always new technology changes and the CIO needs to be precise when explaining whether these new ideas can work in the organisation or not. The CIO has to follow trends closely, track what is going on and explain what can be of value to the company. CIOs have to be good at managing expectations as people do not always understand the complexities involved.

Complexity is always increasing, so the CIO must also be capable of handling old systems as they may not be able to afford to switch to new technologies. The architecture has to be flexible enough to handle both new tools and solutions, as well as the legacy systems.

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Aboutthe Nordic CIO Summit 2010

This unique forum will take place at the Sheraton Stockholm Hotel, Stockholm, Sweden, 25 - 27 October 2010. Offering much more than any conference, exhibition or trade show, this exclusive meeting will bring together esteemed industry thought leaders and solution providers to a highly focused and interactive networking event. The summit includes presentations on implementing smart governance methods, improving IT capabilities and cloud computing.

For more information please send an email to info@marcusevanscy.com or visit the event website at <http://www.nordic-cio.com/BirgittaKlasenInterview>

Please note that the summit is a closed business event and the number of participants strictly limited.

About marcus evans Summits

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