

Data-driven IT

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We've all heard the dreaded phrase "we need to do more with less." By tapping technology, we've met that call. But during this year's planning process, the motto changed to "we need to do more with less for less." Coral Springs, Fla., has always justified its IT investments through value, but never before has it been tested as in this recession.



Justifying the value of new technologies to an organization has a big impact on acceptance. You must lead the justification with a data-driven purpose. Technology is there so that investments can be maximized in order to build economy of scale.

The city of Coral Springs accomplishes this through a strategic planning process, which is the cornerstone of our business model. It is the foundation upon which our business plan, annual budget and key intended outcomes are based. We believe that before we can justify an IT implementation and allocate our available resources, we must first understand the needs and desires of the residents of Coral Springs and the environmental factors that may affect the city in the future.

In building justification, we ask our customers what they need and establish the level of service we will provide, along with an understanding of what technology will be necessary. We perform an environmental scan that includes customer satisfaction survey data, requirements and analysis of changing demographics and emerging technologies. It includes tangible data and perception-based data.

Once we've nailed down the strategic plan, the business plan provides the framework for our IT operations in a specific, directed and quantifiable form. It guides the direction of the entire IT organization, and only then do we begin to allocate resources and technology. In this way, we assure that our efforts are justified and purposefully designed to meet the city's strategic plan.



One of the initiatives this process generated was a green computing and sustainability project we linked to data center consolidation. We implemented server virtualization, data deduplication with disk-to-disk-to-virtual-tape technologies and new racking technology that incorporates fire suppression and environmental control in stand-alone rack space.

We reaped the following savings:

- Eliminating 64 physical servers
- Reducing cooling and power costs by 42 percent
- Recovering more than 250U of rack space
- Recovering more than 1.5TB of storage out of 12TB

Taking advantage of this economy of scale generated another benefit. Once the green consolidation projects were complete, we had extra square footage in the data center. This led to an agreement to provide disaster recovery and continuity of operations for the city of Miami, which financially aids both cities.

The strength of this strategic planning process has been tested in recent years by events such as Sept. 11 and Hurricane Wilma. But the value is evident in Coral Springs' acceptance of the 1997 and 2003 Governor's Sterling Award and the 2004 Florida City of Excellence Award. In 2007, the city was honored as the first local or state government organization to receive the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award.

Now, as we navigate this tumultuous time, past performance has proven the flexibility and durability of our strategic planning process. We rely on those strengths to see us through our current challenges.

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Recipe for Governance

- **Survey:** Listen to customers and solicit requirements and expectations.
- **Results:** Include both tangible and perception-based data.
- **Data:** Use data to guide justification and budget decisions.
- **Value:** Don't measure success by dollars alone.