6 WAYS TO IMPROVE IT/BUSINESS COLLABORATION



At countless enterprises, digital transformation (DX) success depends on something far less flashy than breakthrough technology: their IT team's ability to collaborate with other teams. A recent survey and research report sponsored by BMC and conducted by The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) identified several DX roadblocks caused by out-of-sync IT:

- Slow decision-making
- Difficulty integrating new technologies
- Organizational resistance to change

But the EIU research also revealed reasons for optimism: 89% of respondents who identified as collaborators were confident they would overcome these challenges, compared with just 55% of non-collaborators.

How to improve IT/Business collaboration

Improving cross-departmental collaboration is crucial as IT evolves from gatekeeper to strategic business partner. Here are six tactics to follow.

1. Reach out and resolve to collaborate.

Becoming a more collaborative, strategic IT department begins with relationship-building. That effort can begin with IT executives seeking organizational buy-in for IT to work more collaboratively

with other departments. But IT team members at any level can also participate, identifying and reaching out to key allies in other departments, then learning their needs and strategies and how IT can support them.

2. Find strategic wins and evangelize them.

Don't expect IT to turn into a strategic partner overnight. After identifying key allies in other departments, work together to secure small wins. It might be automating a manual process or identifying a new revenue opportunity. Create an action plan for achieving these small wins and promote them widely. You want to build momentum for future collaboration by bringing skeptics into the fold.

3. Focus on internal processes first.

Since both IT and non-IT teams value improved efficiency as a DX outcome, continue those small wins by focusing on internal processes. Any process that is hampered by repetitive manual effort, bloated spending, or other inefficiencies is worth considering. Look at updating processes such as employee onboarding, expense reporting, and other necessary day-to-day tasks.

4. Create new pathways for learning.

Create opportunities for your IT teams to improve their business acumen and learn what people in other parts of the company do. There are many ways to go about this, such as "ride-along" programs in which a developer shadows a marketing manager, or a systems engineer participates in customer focus groups. This is a two-way opportunity: Invite business unit employees to IT lunch-and-learns on technical topics or do a "roadshow" to visit other departments and educate them on how technology drives the business day-to-day.

5. Experiment with new team models.

Explore new team models that can help spark new ideas and broaden perspectives. These can include:

- Creating temporary project teams
- Embedding IT pros into other departments or product teams

The fundamental idea is to redesign monolithic team structures and processes that perpetuate the outdated model of IT working in isolation from the business.

6. Have fun!

A little fun goes a long way when it comes to team-building. Plan offsites or social events to help build connections between IT and business teams. Consider at least semi-regular opportunities for team-building, such as monthly or quarterly events.

For more IT leadership, explore our IT Leadership & Best Practices Guide.