**Innovation Strategy**

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|  | Business Challenge Book | Competency Book | Technical Debt Book |
| Horizon | * Need of the Hour | * Preparing for future | * Mistakes of past |
| Content | * List of Opportunities business want to capitalize. * List of problem business want to solve | * List of capabilities firm leadership want to build for future proofing. * Central repository of all POC & Case studies with detailed lesson learnt. * Central reference List of capabilities implemented across firm | * List of known technical debts and major architectural compromise made. * List of outdated software products, outdate architectures, IT processes, Manual IT processes and technical challenges. |
| Sponsorship | * Focus is on Immediate Business opportunities. * Projects / business case is well defined and must be enabled by IT with at earliest. * Easy to get sponsorship | * Focus is on building new technology capabilities. * Not strongly linked to project / business case immediately * Has high potential to enable medium term or long-term business opportunities. * Sponsorships can be challenging | * Primary reason for slowing down IT’s Go to Market speed * Almost like cholesterol in the IT delivery pipeline * Sponsorship is very difficult |
| Solutions | * Start from here to establish trust and track record for innovation project. * High visibility and low failure scope | * Build Innovation conclave * Can adopt Fail fast and learn fast. * Trust Has to be established by delivering results from other two books. * Must be driven top down initially | * All Speed IT * Agile * DevOps * IT Process Automation * IT Centric KPI’s |

1. Start with Business Challenge book and Technical Debt Book.
2. Successful track record will enable trust and then start working on competency book.
3. Eventually, every IT project must be judged based on their contribution in each 3 books.
4. In medium term, competency book should have Lego pieces which can be put together to solve problem in business challenges. This is already the case for conventional 3 tier, conventional solutions for applications, BI, and automation solution. Same state must be attained for modern day technologies.
5. **What are the key critical success factors for the innovation project and how will you align it towards Organization goals?**
   1. **It must solve important business** **problem**:
      1. Steve job said there are many solutions which are looking for problem to solve. And this is the sure shot way to fail innovation.
      2. Most important aspect of any innovation projects is that it must solve important business problem and not only implement some cutting-edge technology or IT process.
   2. **Its Continuous process:** 
      1. All transformations of past like ERP adoption, web-based apps**,** DWH & BI,Automation was from steady state A to steady state B.
      2. Current digitalization and innovation are a transformation from A steady state to continuously moving state.
      3. Agility and Continuous adoption are the only way to stay relevant.
      4. Innovation can be key enabler for this continuous change.
   3. **Failure is norm and ROI for innovation has longer horizon:**
      1. Impact of innovation would be visible in medium to long term compared to hot fix BAU project.
      2. business need to be convinced for longer time horizon investment.
      3. Innovation project will and should fail. Key is to change mindset from “Never make Mistake” to “Never make same misstate twice”.
   4. **Innovation is not about cutting-edge technologies:**
      1. Innovation generates compounding returns only when its widely adopted across firm.
      2. For wider adoption, all IT processes need to be made very nimble using combination of All Speed IT, DevOps, Agile, automation etc.
6. **How do you get buy in from stakeholder? How will you get sponsorship for project?**
   1. Business will sponsor any project only if it meets following criteria.
   2. It solves important business problem.
      1. Know your stakeholders well.
      2. Focus on Communication and identify business pain point and opportunities they are trying to encash.
   3. You have earned their trust.
      1. If it is not top-down sponsorship and I need to use influence to gain sponsorship then before embarking big bang project, deliver quick, high impact project to establish trust.
   4. It has a high good chance of succeeding.
      1. Never directly ask for sponsorship
      2. Do the groundwork, build roadmap and when possible, build minimum viable product.
      3. Ask for sponsorship for only next step, execute next step and demonstrate advantages then ask for larger sponsorship
7. **What will be your first 90 days plan if this role should materialise?**
   1. Get: Talk to all stakeholders, including IT, gather high level challenges and opportunities, understand AS-IS state and expected To-Be State. 1-2 weeks
   2. Set: consolidate understanding and clearly define To-Be state and high-level roadmap for to get to to-be state. Identify some important work projects and where possible, quantify business value for each project. Get stakeholder buy-in. 1-2 Weeks.
   3. Go: Pick up medium risk project, ensure IT resource are available, adjust IT process where needed and get going.
8. **You have been in traditional roles, what is your motivation to take up this role?**
   1. The role has very wide scope and would provide me big canvas to contribute to firm and enrich myself with new experiences and knowledge in the process. My Broad-based experience of end-to-end ownership at Avanda is very relevant for this role.
9. **There will always be constant trade-off between business projects and innovation projects and resources will be pulled into critical business projects - how will you handle it?**
   1. Trade- off between innovation and business project is struggle of short-term quick fix projects and long-term strategic projects.
   2. Business stakeholders need to be convinced that innovation / digital transformation projects are also solving business problem but on longer horizon. And if continuously choose not to invest in them, we will be always firefighting and hot fixing the problems.
10. **How will you handle failure in innovation projects?**
    1. This must be one of the biggest mindset changes required to enable innovation.
    2. If innovation projects do not fail, then either we are best in the world or we are very conservative in approach.
    3. Even a failed innovation project will have a great value in terms of skill upgradation, identifying organization’s bottlenecks and thus formulating correction plan, better understanding or our strength and weakness will be of great value.
    4. So instead of avoiding failure, we need to promote “fails fast and learn fast” culture to avoid waste of resource and time.
11. **Take me through the life cycle or an innovation project?**
    1. Identify list of business problems.
    2. Identify list of tech/ skill capabilities we intend to develop.
    3. Identify combination of problem and skill capability.
    4. Build solution roadmap and develop prototype or minimum viable product.
    5. If too complicated, use the influence gained with previous track record and Get business to sponsor minimum viable product.
    6. Build minimum viable product, do detailed evaluation, build business case, and get full project sponsorship.
12. **Say for the projects you are working on, you have identified 3rd part applications and products are needed - what is your approach deployment 3rd party apps to the project - this could be white label solutions (how will you get internal approvals etc, what will be your process etc)**
    1. We are very rapidly moving from era of end-to-end ownership of technologies to being part of echo systems.
    2. It is very much possible to setup multi billion investment management firm without having their own front office, back office, risk management, treasury, CRM, regulatory reporting, and analytics platform. All these are available as Lego pieces which need to be put together.
    3. So, even if we implement some product internally, there is no guarantee it will remain so for next 5 years.
    4. My approach would be to utilize best suitable products /components/ applications but ensure they are loosely coupled and can be easily replaced by other internal / external products when needed.
13. **Innovation problems could start simple, and couple end up being extremely complex problems - rapid innovation is required and at the same time you should hold the team to keep moving, sometimes long hours, weekends etc - how will you manage it?**
    1. **Accept failure:** Fail fast and learn fast. Make failures acceptable and if possible, celebrate good failure.
    2. **Incentivise innovative work:** Recognize efforts irrespective of results, ensure individual’s contribution is incentivised, with combination of recognition, remuneration and performance objectives.
14. **What is innovation mean to you?**
    1. For me, Innovation is simply a mindset of continuous improvement. Ongoing pursuit of doing things better, cheaper, and faster at the same time. Its attitude of focusing on solution without being weighed down by problem’s scale, complexity, or resource limitation.
15. **Why do you think you are right candidate for this role? What are your strengths?** 
    1. I have **Broad technical knowledge** applied in financial firms for over 15 years.
    2. I am a **person driven by Result** and has successful track record of delivering resultsamong with complex stakeholders, conflicting priorities, unrealistic timeline, uncertain resource environment and resistance for change.
    3. **My Diverse experience**, I learnt technology and innovation fundamentals from amazon, has been key player in large scale transformation of regulatory risk reporting at Barclays where in 2010 we were waterfall, once a year production deployment, legacy technology stack and manual testing to agile, offshore teams, monthly production deployment, strategic technology stack, automated testing, and revamped change management. I have successfully set up a Start Up IT department with lean and agile resources and heavy focus on automation, modern technologies.

1. **What is the biggest innovation you have done?**
   1. I have successfully created a start-up like IT department for Avanda which is very agile & nimble, heavily utilizes automation to limit human resource growth. Though our mandate was to build all application on-premises only, convinced management to adopt cloud second strategy, executed multiple POC and pilot projects and eventually adopted modern technologies like cloud, big data for non-confidential data.
   2. Our current technology stack where entire tech stack is managed service and we do not need to worry about backup, recovery, high availability, scalability and pay as you go.
   3. In 2012, at Barclays, after UAT sign off, we used to take 15 days to deploy code in production. I looked at industry trend, created a plan to improve it. As priority was given to new business functionalities, process improvement would not get stakeholder sponsorship so divided entire plan into many small actionable steps and over next 1.5 years, implemented all steps to bring downs 15 days to 3 days.
2. **How would you drive change in culture?**
   1. Culture is the only way to sustain any initiative but changing a culture, especially in financial organization is one of the biggest challenges.
   2. First and foremost, leadership at all different level must agree and actively support the notion that status Quo is no longer acceptable.
   3. Ensure that enabling environment is available. Courses, additional time if implementing new Tech, acceptance of failure etc.
   4. Create environment of healthy peer competition among team/ people to adopt change.
   5. Adoption to change should be recognized, celebrated and when possible remunerated.
   6. Every team and every person will adopt to change due to different motivation and different speed. Provide scope for these adjustments.
3. **How would you drive change in reluctant team?**
   1. Knowing the precise problem is the first major step in solving it. So, will talk to stakeholders, try to identify the reason for reluctance. Many times, it will be stakeholder’s intuition based on their vast experience, but they would not have articulated reasons clearly. Concerns would be generally four categories.
   2. Valid concerns: Recognize concern and assure team for corrective action at earliest.
   3. misunderstanding: Provide additional information and clarify concerns.
   4. Unavoidable consequences: concern around job security, relevance, individual liking / disliking of new process/ software. Where possible, provide path for team to be relevant in new setup. Worst case, when not possible, must get top-down mandate for change.
4. **What are some of the biggest road blockers in innovation? key Stakeholders challenges?**
   1. No Trust: Risk averse culture, predictability is paramount over everything else.
   2. No Time: Shorter time horizon and Prioritization of immediate result-oriented projects.
   3. No Money: Innovation project is treated as nice to have and gets only left-over resources.
   4. No Failure: No appetite for failure.
   5. No Adoption: Driving innovation as an isolated initiative rather them mainstream change. Leads to lower adoption and reduces compounding return.
5. **How will you manage if you do not have required resources?**
   1. Any project cannot sustain without resource forever so eventually resources would be required.
   2. Meanwhile, roll up sleeves and start working. We did this for our CRM project.
   3. If working on modern technology, create buzz among developers and invite them to participate. They will learn new tech and in return we can build POC & MVP. Demonstrate advantages of POC and MVP to senior management and convince them for sponsorship. *We did this with our python community. Started knowledge sharing sessions, provided managed environments and when needed, developer help. We have standardized our python stack; VBA is almost not used.*
   4. Beg, borrow, steal & barter. Ask a team to provide resource with skill X and we can help them with skill Y. *Did this when I joined Barclays, there was no time for KT so was asked to figure out my way. Asked couple of senior resources to hand over all boiler plate task to me and free up 2 hrs a day for training. Set up worked perfectly fine and became de facto method of onboarding new resource.*
6. **What do you think is the next wave for technology? (Also talk about jugaad innovation when you can include)**
   1. Next wave would not be driven by new technology, but new/ unique combination of existing technologies executed at scale and with efficiency.
   2. Robinhood, meme investing, cred, apple’s “Pay Later”, slice Insurance, etc are not driven by patented technologies but unique combination of tech.
7. **17.According to you people, process, technology, strategy- which is the most important to handle an innovation team?**
   1. All of them. Innovation is not an alien approach. Finance industry has moved from physical banking to online banking, or trading on the floor to high frequency trading or paper-based communications to instant confirmation regime using similar frameworks based on people, process, technology, and strategy. Only new thing this time is the speed. Earlier strategic adjustment would happen every 5 to 10 years and now we are talking about twice a year. Just 2 year ago, reddit, bitcoin, meme investing was not major factor for portfolio managers. Today, they are, and they are enabled by technology can be responded only by technology.
8. **What is the budget of your cloud project?**
9. **What is the total IT budget you oversee?**
10. **What is your experience with innovation?**
11. **Projects for Avanda**
12. **Projects for Barclays**
13. **Projects for Amazon**

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14.Our organisation is ambidextrous - https://www.google.com/amp/s/hbr.org/amp/2004/04/the-ambidextrous-organization.

https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/358900

https://businessinnovation.design/business-challenges

https://medium.com/ideo-stories/innovation-challenges-26abe0ce69d4

https://www.businessinsider.com/innovation-issues-in-business-community-2013-1

https://www.cio.com/article/2996520/7-big-threats-to-innovation-and-how-to-overcome-them.html

https://www.viima.com/blog/common-challenges-in-innovation-management

https://www.ersj.eu/repec/ers/papers/11\_1\_p6.pdf

://www.cairn.info/revue-management-2010-4-page-318.htm

What according to you are the innovation challenges handling stakeholders in big banks and small organizations and how will you overcome them?

<https://www.coursera.org/specializations/digital-transformation-financial-services>?

<https://www.edx.org/course/introduction-to-fintech?index=product&queryID=0185aa1c9c3f2b30400d513c295de365&position=19>