# "Navigating Leadership and IT Strategy: Insights on Innovation and DecisionMaking"

Patrick Stoll, the CIO (Chief Information Officer), is an experienced IT leader who has held significant roles in guiding IT strategy and operations. With a focus on managing decentralised teams and addressing the challenges of rapid organisational growth, Patrick brings a wealth of knowledge in system integration, technical debt management, and strategic IT decision-making. His approach emphasises data-driven strategies, internal leadership in strategy formulation, and a balance between innovation and maintaining core IT functions. Through his experience, he has gained insights into how IT can be a key driver of business success, navigating both technological and managerial complexities in various organisational environments.

Organisational Structure and IT Challenges
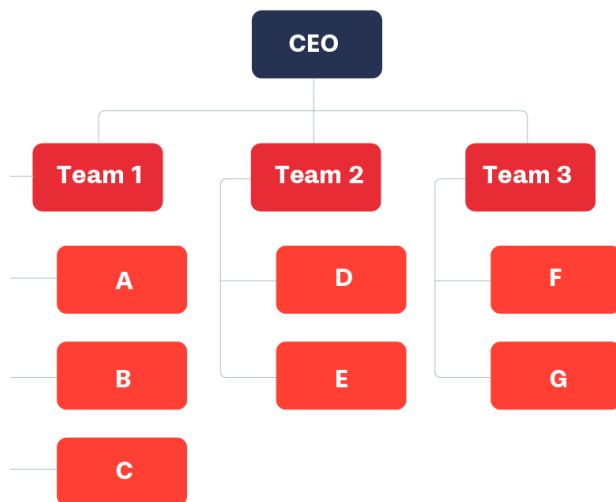
"Optimising Healthcare through IT: Patrick Soll on Streamlining Medical Practices and Enabling Efficiency in a Decentralised Network"

Patrick Stoll's organisation operates with a highly decentralised structure, with over 2,000 employees across 140 locations. This presents unique challenges in IT management, including:

•**Decentralised IT Operations:** Many employees have IT-related tasks without formal titles, creating difficulties in forming a clear IT structure. The ongoing centralisation efforts aim to overcome these issues, but a comprehensive understanding of the team size and IT roles is still being developed.

•**System Integration:** As the organisation grows, the need for system consolidation and modernisation becomes paramount. The rapid expansion calls for a long-term focus on integrating legacy systems with new technologies while avoiding excessive technical debt.

Approach to IT Strategy as per CIO Mr Stoll

• **Data-Driven Decision Making:** A core principle in IT strategy development is the use of data to validate assumptions. Mr Patrick stresses the importance of controlling data to understand the current state of IT infrastructure and to support strategic decisions. IT

controlling is viewed as critical in providing measurable, evidence-backed insights into performance and needs.

- **Avoidance of External Influence:** Mr Patrick strongly discourages relying on external consultants to define IT strategy, as they often produce overly generic plans. The importance of internal decision-making and ownership of the strategy is emphasised, ensuring that the strategy aligns with the organisations's unique requirements and challenges.

Development of IT Strategy

The creation of an IT strategy is framed as a multi-stage process that typically spans over a year. Key elements include:

- **Initial Inventory:** The first step in building an IT strategy involves conducting a thorough digital inventory. This helps identify the current state of systems and the technical debts that need to be addressed.

- **Strategic Decisions:** Mr Patrick underlines that a good strategy requires making difficult decisions. It argues that many strategies fail because they avoid concrete choices, instead opting for vague or non-committal statements. A sound strategy must focus on addressing specific problems with clear, actionable solutions.
- **Focus on Core Competencies:** IT must align with the company's core competencies, but care must be taken to avoid over-reliance on external service providers, which can lead to strategic dependencies.

Challenges in IT Strategy Execution

Several common challenges in IT strategy are discussed, including:

- **Technical Debt:** This refers to unresolved IT issues that accumulate over time. A significant portion of the IT strategy is focused on eliminating these technical debts to ensure the organisation's

infrastructure is modern and capable of supporting future innovations.

- **Balancing Innovation and Maintenance:** There is a clear need to separate innovation from regular IT operations. Innovation projects must be handled independently to avoid being overshadowed by the day-to-day operational demands.

- **Strategic Dependencies:** As Mr Patrick defines that The organisation must avoid becoming overly dependent on specific IT service providers. Strategic dependencies, especially in IT, can create vulnerabilities if external providers have too much control over critical systems.

IT as a Profit or Cost Center

Mr Patrick also debate of whether IT should be treated as a profit center or a cost center. While only a small percentage of organisations view IT as a
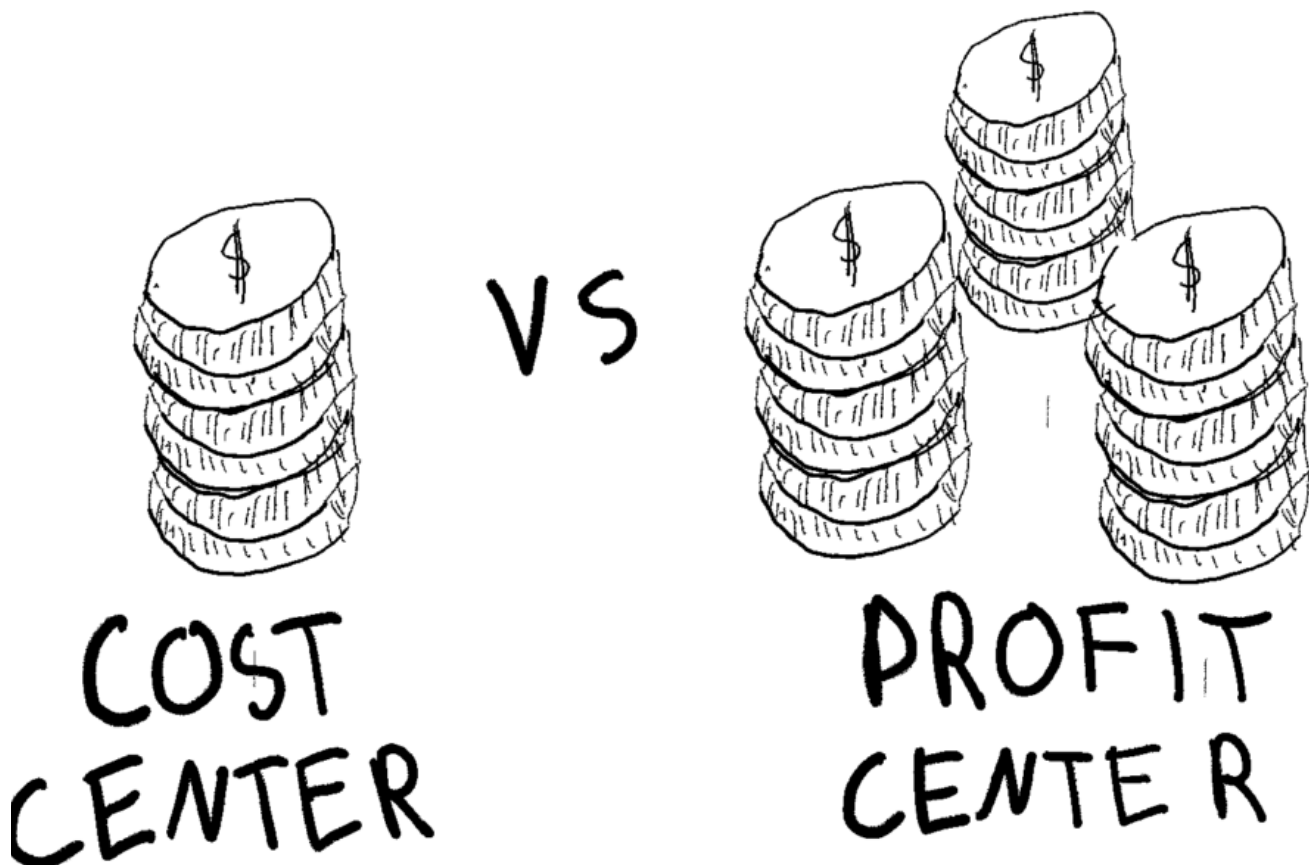
profit center, the conversation highlights the complexity of this approach. IT's role in generating profit is often difficult to quantify, and the imposition of profit-centre metrics can undermine its strategic importance within the organisation.

Measuring the Success of IT Strategy

The success of an IT strategy is assessed based on several factors:

- **Alignment with Business Objectives:** An effective IT strategy ensures that the organisation is moving in the right direction and making progress toward its goals.
- **Feedback from the Organization:** Continuous feedback from other departments is essential to adjust the strategy and ensure it remains relevant.
- **Avoiding Surprises:** A well-constructed strategy helps avoid unexpected disruptions, ensuring smoother operations even in turbulent times.

Future Trends and Considerations

Looking ahead, the discussion identifies key trends and challenges that will influence IT strategies in the coming years:

- **Talent Shortage:** The growing shortage of skilled IT professionals is a major concern. Attracting and retaining talent will be critical to the success of future IT initiatives.
- **Artificial Intelligence:** AI is mentioned as a major technological trend, but its practical application within the organisation remains unclear. As AI continues to evolve, organisations must carefully evaluate its potential uses and risks.

Mr Patrick synthesises the key points from the conversation and highlights the importance of strategic decision-making, technical debt management, and innovation in IT leadership.