

Building a Digital Roadmap for greater engagement and success

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1. SUMMARY

In 2013 the Queensland University of Technology's IT Strategy had expired. The technology landscape was changing rapidly, and the university was increasingly aware and responsive to the transformative changes occurring in the global higher education and research sector. By the end of 2014, a compelling case for change was proposed to the IT Governance Committee, and QUT embarked on a very different strategic approach to digital leadership than it had in the past.

The presentation on QUT's Digital Roadmap describes how to build a case for change and break from past practices. The presentation outlines how leadership, engagement and placing the customer at the centre of everything you do is essential to success.

2. ABSTRACT

The defining characteristics of the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) are to produce graduates able to adapt and thrive in a changing world, and deliver impactful research that contributes to Australia's growth and competitiveness. To do this, QUT needs to be at the forefront of technology and innovation. QUT aspires to leverage and lead with digital technologies and data to drive business outcomes, that facilitate and enrich learning, teaching and research.

In 2013 QUT's IT Strategy had expired, and for nearly one year there were no plans to replace or update it. By the end of 2014, a compelling case for change was proposed to the IT Governance Committee, and QUT took a very different approach than it had in the past. It chose not to redevelop an IT strategy, but to develop a Digital Roadmap that underpinned the corporate strategy. The Digital Roadmap was highly integrated with the three spheres of university activity:

- Students, learning and teaching
- Research and innovation
- People, culture and sustainability

More than 70 senior academic, research and professional staff from across QUT were engaged in the development of Digital Roadmap in 2015. Through this wider engagement, the Digital Roadmap was aligned with, and now underpins, university plans for Real World Learning and Real World Research.

This presentation will demonstrate the criticality of broad support in the development of a Digital Roadmap; placing the customer at the centre of everything you do; how to embed ongoing support long after development; and finally the measurable outcomes one year after completion.

The objective of the presentation will be to illustrate a case study example of how leadership and engagement are at the heart of strategy development, and that success is a journey, comprising the achievement of mutual goals and continuous alignment of investment priorities in a commonly accepted direction.

3. ABOUT QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY (QUT)

QUT is a major Australian university with a global outlook and a real-world focus. The university is one of the nation's fastest growing research universities and its courses are in high demand. Its graduates include eight Rhodes Scholars, five of these awarded in the past six years. QUT has a world ranking of 28 in the top 100 world universities under 50 years old as ranked by Times Higher Education.

The University is an ambitious and collaborative institution that seeks to equip its students and graduates with the skills they need in an increasingly disrupted and challenged world. QUT is transforming the student experience for its 47,200 students and has a staff profile of 12,900.

4. PREVAILING SITUATION

The three year IT Strategy for the university had expired in 2013, and consequently, there was no explicit IT leadership direction for how digital technologies should best be deployed to meet the strategic aspirations for the university. The university IT governance model was also being reviewed, and there were views at the time that it was not responsive enough to innovation or in meeting new challenges.

A business case highlighting the challenges facing the university was developed in late 2014 and presented to the University's IT Governance Committee. The IT Governance committee approved the development of an innovative Digital Roadmap that would be highly aligned to the QUT Corporate Strategy (called the "Blueprint").

5. MAJOR TRENDS AND THE NEED TO TRANSFORM

Around the same time as the business case was being prepared to develop a Digital Roadmap, the university was already considering the major trends in the higher education market place, and identified a number of areas that were likely to reshape higher education.

The major trends being identified by the university were in four key areas:

- Transformative (Digital) technologies
- Amplified Expectations
- Intensified Global Competition
- Engagement and Partnerships

The impact of transformative (Digital) technologies were identified as follows:

- the ubiquitous availability of knowledge online; student learning was increasingly being informed by materials that were not developed by the university.
- the availability of new technologies that could enhance learning, and therefore potentially increase graduate outcomes.
- students own expectations of the quality and personalisation of on-line services.

- the rise of big data and analytics, and the promise that better information derived from all our data could inform better decision making.
- the granularisation of learning, and new trends such as micro credentialing that recognised student learning.
- use of technologies in driving process efficiency.

The university also recognised a level of amplified expectations arising within its community. These expectations naturally included the strategic importance of achieving a high global research standing, and the essential outcome of achieving high employability of its graduates. However, there were increased expectations provide students with tailored experiences; managing an increasingly diverse student population; and in providing a return on investment in all its key decision making.

Other trends and challenges were present. QUT recognised the intense global competition for high calibre students, staff and funding. Asian universities were advancing rapidly; the Australian academic workforce was ageing; public funding for universities was shrinking; and research needed to focus on national priorities in order to attract scarce funding opportunities.

QUT also saw that it needed to focus more heavily around engagement and partnerships in order to adapt. It was recognised that greater University-Industry co-funding of research and increased commercial partnerships was required in order to respond to a tightening of public funding, but also to ensure high impact.

6. IT GOVERNANCE

QUT's IT Governance had served the QUT community well over the previous decade. However, the dynamic and fast changing external IT environment, combined with a number of internal factors, necessitated that the university focus significant effort and attention to the way in which it managed its ICT investments.

The prevailing IT governance process did not structurally differentiate between initiatives of different strategic value. There was effectively one pool of funds, which was broken up by type of investment such as contract maintenance, project etc., and prioritised against the collection of proposals of various strategic values. In addition, proposals prepared by areas seeking funding took a minimum of 12 months for successful initiatives to traverse the governance approval process. This process was considered far too slow even in industries that were not facing strong competition.

The business case for the Digital Roadmap was presented as a strategic instrument that could assist the university in communicating its required digital transformations and provide the mechanism to guide future project proposals made through its IT Governance process.

7. DIGITAL ROADMAP OVERVIEW

The Digital Roadmap now sets the agenda for QUT's digital transformation that is aligned to the broader transformation occurring in learning and teaching, the elevation of research impact and outcomes, and enhances engagement across the QUT community. It is divided into three spheres of activity:

- **Students, learning and teaching**
QUT will build digital capacities that help create an engaging, innovative, and responsive learning and teaching environment. In so doing, QUT recognises the intersection between pedagogy, technology, and the built environment.
- **Research and innovation**
QUT will use digital technologies to transform research, enable innovation and strengthen engagement in our broad community.

- **People, culture and sustainability**
QUT will enhance and energise its digital workplace to create an environment of collaboration and community engagement.

8. CONCLUSION

Significant issues occur when there is non-alignment of IT investment with the strategic priorities of the university which range from ineffective balancing of investment across different spending categories; an inability to gain an overall view of the return on investment of the IT portfolio and the absence of a framework to assist the university to deliver on its corporate strategic aspirations.

The benefits of the Digital Roadmap have been significant and include:

- IT investments are more tightly linked to the business strategy of the university.
- Allocation of funding is balanced between innovation, strategic and business as usual investments.
- IT Governance is underpinned by a widely accepted Digital Roadmap that is highly aligned to the digital transformations required in Learning & Teaching, Research and the Enabling services of the University.
- An enunciation of the key goals, principles and initiatives in a language understood by all parts of QUT's academic, research and professional staff and the wider QUT community.
- The completion of projects and innovations outlined in the roadmap.

9. REFERENCES

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10. AUTHORS' BIOGRAPHY



Chris is the Director of Information Technology Services for Queensland University of Technology, located in Brisbane, Australia. He holds positions as a member on the Board of AARNet, Australia's Education and Research Network telecommunications provider; the Board of QCIF (Queensland Cyber Infrastructure Foundation) and is the Vice President of the Council of Australian University Directors of IT (CAUDIT).

He has over 20 Years ICT private sector experience across a broad range of industry sectors. Much of Chris' experience has been gained in professional consulting services, responsible for systems integration, outsourcing, product management and business development.

Chris draws upon lessons from a diverse career that has seen him serve for more than seven years in the Higher Education sector, responsible for major ICT Shared Services programs and leadership in digital transformation.

Prior to his current role at QUT, Chris' previous role was Director, ICT Shared Services at Monash University in Victoria from 2009-2010 and in Asia Pacific and National roles in Hewlett Packard between 1999 - 2009.

Chris holds a Master of Business Administration and Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science.

Driven by innovation and strong business engagement, Chris strives for excellence in providing staff and students with digital platforms to see them succeed at many levels.

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