Why IT Has Not Delivered On Its Business Promises And What We Can Do About It

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For decades, companies have poured billions into IT systems, analytics platforms and digital tools with the promise of speed, efficiency and transformation. And yet, business leaders still frequently express disappointment. "Why did this not solve the problem?" "Where is the ROI?" "Why does it feel like we are spending more for less?"

From my experience, the disconnect is not in the technology; instead, it is in the expectations and partnership between IT and the rest of the business. But with proper communication, transparency and realistic expectations, it does not have to be this way.

The Root Of The Disappointment

At its core, one of the biggest issues is the assumption that technology is a magic wand and that automating a process, no matter how broken or inefficient, will fix it. But all automation does is make bad processes run faster (mistakes included).

This mistake is a common one. Companies sometimes invest heavily in systems without ever addressing the flawed business logic behind them. Pair that with unrealistic timing expectations, especially in areas like data and analytics where real impact takes time, and you have a recipe for disappointment.

IT Is Not Just Support, It Is Strategy

Too many companies still treat IT as a cost center or a service desk. There is value in those functions, of course, but they are only one piece of the puzzle. When it comes to functions like data, analytics and digital innovation, IT must be deeply embedded into the business.

When IT has to operate like a third-party vendor, the team becomes obsessed with closing tickets and meeting SLAs. The goal becomes "solving incidents" instead of "creating value." I have seen companies reduce IT costs this way, only to end up with a disengaged tech team and zero strategic advancement.

Defining Real ROI In Business Terms

Communicating the return on IT investments starts with shifting the narrative. These are not "IT projects," they are business enablers. Always make sure to measure outcomes the business actually cares about: real dollars, real productivity, real growth.

Time saved is only valuable if it is redirected toward something more impactful or if it offsets real costs. That is why it is so important for businesses to define what ROI really means before a project kicks off. And the project does not end when the system goes live. It ends when the business goals are met.

Set Realistic Expectations

Software vendors often oversell their tools, promising transformation without disruption. This leads to frustration when leaders expect instant results or IT-free implementations.

This is why it is vital to set expectations early. Get technical teams involved on day one, not just to shape the solution, but to ground the conversation in reality. This helps avoid costly missteps, unearth hidden dependencies and prepare the business for what it will take to succeed.

Technology Does Not Live In A Vacuum

Too often, business leaders select platforms without understanding what it will take to make them work. For example, implementing an ERP without investing in governance or master data management is like building a skyscraper on sand.

These dependencies matter. So does infrastructure, integration and long-term maintenance. You cannot expect technology to deliver business value if it does not fit the bigger picture.

Showing Value When The Results Take Time

Not every win is immediate, which is to be expected. But IT can still show progress by tying every initiative to a business outcome, being transparent with reporting and speaking in language business leaders understand.

I always aim to deliver a mix of quick wins and long-term improvements. When you solve a tactical problem today and build strategic infrastructure underneath, it earns trust while laying the groundwork for future value.

The Failure Is Not In The Delivery

IT actually has not failed to deliver, it just is not always positioned to succeed. When business and technology leaders align early, communicate clearly and commit to solving real problems together, outcomes improve dramatically.

The key is not more tools. It is more partnership. The companies that get this right will not just get better tech, they will build a stronger business.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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