case study: IT assessment, recommendations & roadmap implementation

results at a glance:

Problem: The organization had become dissatisfied with IT's operational performance as a result of frequent system outages and the failure to deliver strategic initiatives.

Solution: An assessment conducted by Randstad Technologies identified a number of shortcomings in operations, processes, infrastructure, and the IT organization. A roadmap of activities was designed to prioritize and remedy the shortcomings.

Results:

- System availability is now at 99.99%
- Strategic initiatives are widely understood and attained on time within budget
- Significant improvements in staff morale, cost control, communications, and responsiveness

client profile:

Harris Williams & Co. is a twenty year-old investment bank that provides middle market companies financial advisory services in support of mergers and acquisitions.

business problem:

Excessive system outages and the inability of the firm's IT operations to deliver on strategic initiatives had led to widespread dissatisfaction with IT's operational performance. The current CIO was unable to remedy the outage problem and lacked the skills and knowledge to develop and manage an IT infrastructure that could support the firm's goals for growth. Strategic projects languished as the CIO struggled to drive projects to completion and to develop and gain approval of business cases for needed initiatives.

the Randstad Technologies solution:

This client called on Randstad Technologies® for an IT assessment to help them understand and resolve an array of strategic and tactical problems that manifested themselves in a variety of ways — from recurrent outages to failure to complete projects to a lack of credibility with much of the organization. They also asked Randstad Technologies to give them an objective assessment of their IT organization and operations from an application, infrastructure, and personnel standpoint.
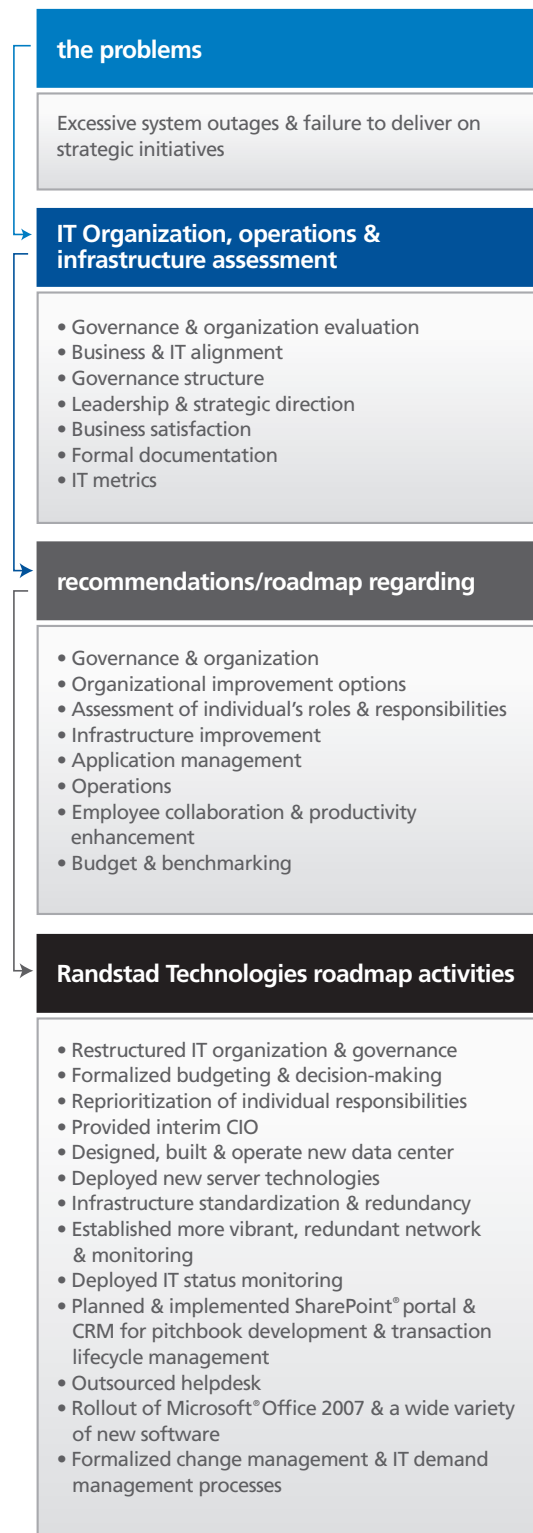
The client's management agreed with the assessment's findings and recommendations. It recommended actions to improve IT governance, organization, infrastructure, application management, operations, and budgeting. One of its primary recommendations was that the client bring in an executive to drive some of their strategic initiatives and serve as a coach to the current CIO as well as a backstop in the event the current CIO was unable to step up and meet expectations.

Shortly after the completion of the assessment, the client determined that the current CIO was not going to work and asked Randstad Technologies to provide an interim CIO for a minimum of six months. The term was then increased to nine months and ultimately ended up lasting two years.

One of the first endeavors Randstad Technologies provided to the client was the implementation of an IT EDGE Initiative; the core of which consisted of a strategic long-term IT roadmap and a technical solution to drive improved productivity throughout the organization. The initiative proposed improvements in three primary categories:

1) network/infrastructure enhancements and redundancy
2) long-term IT strategy and ongoing governance
3) employee collaboration and productivity enhancement opportunities

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the problems

Excessive system outages & failure to deliver on strategic initiatives

IT Organization, operations & infrastructure assessment

- Governance & organization evaluation
- Business & IT alignment
- Governance structure
- Leadership & strategic direction
- Business satisfaction
- Formal documentation
- IT metrics

recommendations/roadmap regarding

- Governance & organization
- Organizational improvement options
- Assessment of individual's roles & responsibilities
- Infrastructure improvement
- Application management
- Operations
- Employee collaboration & productivity enhancement
- Budget & benchmarking

Randstad Technologies roadmap activities

- Restructured IT organization & governance
- Formalized budgeting & decision-making
- Reprioritization of individual responsibilities
- Provided interim CIO
- Designed, built & operate new data center
- Deployed new server technologies
- Infrastructure standardization & redundancy
- Established more vibrant, redundant network & monitoring
- Deployed IT status monitoring
- Planned & implemented SharePoint® portal & CRM for pitchbook development & transaction lifecycle management
- Outsourced helpdesk
- Rollout of Microsoft® Office 2007 & a wide variety of new software
- Formalized change management & IT demand management processes

From a network/infrastructure perspective, Randstad Technologies developed and deployed a wide variety of IT programs including such activities as the design, construction, and operation of a new data center; standardization of hardware; and the improvement of network infrastructure and applications software.

Some of the organizational activities addressed the firm's lack of a sufficient IT delivery team. Randstad Technologies provided a blueprint for the overall restructuring of the IT organization. The goal was to improve governance and to create a more efficient and effective IT organization. To that end, a new organizational structure with newly defined roles and responsibilities was fashioned. An assessment of the existing IT team members' capabilities and effectiveness led to the re-prioritization of individual responsibilities. An important skill set deficiency justified additional head count. Ultimately, the CIO was replaced. Additionally, formal budgeting and decision-making processes were implemented.

Randstad Technologies helped them improve employee collaboration and productivity through the implementation of a Knowledge Management Portal (SharePoint-based) and a CRM-based capability. The solution provided "Deal Sites" which compressed the average time to produce a "pitch book", their primary tool for securing new business. Additionally, the solution drove quality improvements in collaboration, workflows, analytics, and document version control. The solution also improved the organization's ability to match investment opportunities with historical and stated investor interests, shortening the average time to sell or recapitalize a represented company.

A list of some of the initiative's areas of concentration and activities appears in the diagram to the left.

benefits delivered

Because if the improvements in infrastructure and operations, system outages are no longer an issue. System availability is at 99.99%. By implementing the changes Randstad Technologies recommended in IT governance, management, decision-making, and processes, strategic initiatives are widely understood and attained on time within budget. Morale of the IT staff has improved significantly, as people now clearly understand their roles and responsibilities. Frustration by the rank-and-file has disappeared as they now have confidence that their needs will be met expeditiously.

The new data center and the improvements in the network have resulted in a much more efficient and cost effective IT operation. The outsourcing of their helpdesk to Randstad Technologies has off-loaded a cumbersome non-core activity and helped improve user efficiency and satisfaction. Through industry peer benchmarking Harris Williams has a better understanding of the appropriate levels of their expenditures and investment in IT.

The Knowledge Management Portal/CRM implementation has helped Harris Williams improve collaboration and shorten their "pitch-book" creation time helping to secure new business. Furthermore, the improved workflow, quality assurance, and analytics the solution provides has improved the efficiency of transaction lifecycle management related activities. This strategic initiative has been a major contributor to helping Harris Williams outpace their competitor's growth rates.

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