

MSR Case Study



SITUATION ANALYSIS:

The main issue CIOs face in today's recessionary climate is trying to derive greater demonstrable business value from IT spending amid shrinking IT budgets. While today's stark economic outlook makes optimizing IT's value a top priority, there currently is no integrated, standardized framework for evaluating investment decisions strategically at the corporate level. The Innovation Value Institute, a consortium comprised of Intel, Chevron, Northrop Grumman, Microsoft, Google and others, responded to this void with the IT Capabilities Maturity Framework (IT-CMF). However, while IVI eloquently argued in support of the IT-CMF's benefits, proper launch of the framework risked being hampered by several major challenges, including the lack of such critical proof points as ROI as well as the framework's sheer complexity. Additionally problematic was reliance on in-person journalist attendance at a one-time launch event in an era of newsroom staff and budget cuts.

STRATEGY & EXECUTION:

MSR created and executed a strategy to introduce the IT-CMF to the business world as the up-and-coming standard framework for deriving business value from IT. However, our strategy also had to address the hurdle presented by a lack of proof points and ROI. We did so by leveraging several key points. First, we fully exploited the strength and novelty of the consortium itself, drawing attention to the fact that such a diverse group of organizations rarely works together on anything. During our media and analyst outreach we continually asserted that this highlighted the seriousness with which today's organizations are taking the issue of strategically aligning IT with overall business interests, and how this critical need required a new level of collaboration among organizations—even direct competitors.

We also leveraged interest in cost-cutting and general anxiety over shrinking corporate budgets to gain the ear of business tech and general business media in order to make the case that IT should be seen as a crucial source of business value, as well as a source of the kind of innovation that leads to bottom-line dollar improvements. We made the case to analysts and media that, thanks to the cutting-edge work of the IVI consortium, IT – previously seen as a budgetary sinkhole – was in fact well-positioned to make a strategic contribution to the organization.

As the complexity of the framework presented a challenge in relating its value to business media, we worked closely with IVI to streamline its messaging down to its essence – the bottom-line benefits offered by an IT department fully aligned with the overall goals and policies of the larger organization. This entailed not only fully understanding the capabilities model of the IT-CMF framework, but the ability to then take a step back and communicate its benefits to those with little or no knowledge of IT.

Additionally, IVI was banking on strong in-person attendance of the event, not only to generate coverage but to demonstrate the importance of the announcement to representatives of prospective member companies. However, the location of the event as well as budget realities at magazines and newspapers made the likelihood of a strong showing slim. We addressed the issue in two ways. First, we greatly expanded the list of target reporters to include bloggers as

well as more general business reporters typically not involved in tech coverage, but whose audiences were nonetheless affected by IT budget considerations. Second, we offered 'virtual attendance' options for reporters unable or unwilling to attend via under-non-disclosure pre-briefings as well as a podcast. The podcast was delayed by several hours in order to avoid diminishing incentive for in-person attendance.

RESULTS:

Thanks to MSR's efforts, nine reporters from key publications confirmed attendance at the launch event including the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *ARS Technica* among others. Additionally, we secured under-NDA pre-briefings with reporters and analysts from such key outlets and firms as *CIO Insight*, *Baseline Magazine*, Gartner and Forrester. Top-tier coverage included stories in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *CIO Update*, *CIO Insight*, *ARS Technica* and other media outlets pertinent to business leaders and IT decision-makers.

Through a series of well-placed articles, we successfully introduced IVI and the IT-CMF to targeted decision-makers, firmly established a need for a solution, and differentiated the IT-CMF from current existing frameworks.

"We selected MSR to oversee the launch of our new framework because of their proven relationships and results with business and technology reporters. They bring genuine passion and professionalism to everything they do."

Martin Curley, Professor of Technology and Business, NUI Maynooth and Global Director, IT Innovation, Intel