

**Building an IT Strategy
Perspectives on a Global IT Consultancy Firm**

**Beverly Escaño
Jinno Ordoñez**

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I. Executive Summary

The focus of the case study is to examine the situation of the outsourcing hub, Manila GIT (Global IT) which is a subsidiary of the multinational IT consultancy firm, GIT. GIT has had over 20+ years in the industry and its outsourcing hub has been of great support to its operations for over 18 years. The primary purpose of the case study is to examine how Manila GIT will cope with the organizational changes and remain of strategic importance to the organization. What has been examined is that there is a lot of potential for expansion and growth in terms of skills in IT management, as well as highly technical skills in human resources. This remains to be the biggest asset of Manila GIT. It can be said that Manila GIT is in no trouble of losing its position as a significant player in the strategic plan of GIT, so the goals and plans of Manila GIT is not to stay competitive but to gain competitiveness to become an even more important player in the GIT corporation.

The case study further describes the current situation of the outsourcing hub and how it contributes to the strategic business and IT goals set by the corporation. The main question to be asked is, 'Can the outsourcing hub create a strategy in which it not just contributes to the strategies that is set by the corporation, but to help build and create the strategies?'

II. BACKGROUND

a. Type of Business

GIT (Global IT Company) is primarily a global IT consulting company. The organization provides its clientele a varied set of IT services in the *solution chain* founded on its Industry and Technology Expertise.

b. Services

The three main services offered by GIT are:

- Consulting. With over 24 years of experience in the industry, GIT is able to provide clients with sound business and technology advice. The key areas of expertise are on Process and Program management.
- Systems Integration. GIT helps companies leverage their existing and new solutions by building a common framework serving as gateway of information that the customer can use.
- Application Outsourcing. The basic motivation behind this service is the statement, "Reduce costs, improve quality and decrease time to market". In outsourcing, GIT provides the technical staff and premium skill set associated with it to accomplish the project for the client at a predictable cost rate.

c. History

GIT was established in London in the early 1980's as a privately owned company. Its main office is located in the USA and has subsidiaries across Europe and Asia Pacific. It has delivery business centers located in Manila and India.

d. Role of Manila GIT as an Outsourcing Hub

The Manila GIT subsidiary focuses on offshore/outsourcing services. It has been in operation since the late 1980's. The choice of Manila and India as Delivery Centers are primarily anchored on the business strategy of sourcing for cost-effective and high competency skill set of Delivery Resource.

e. Organization Structure

The Organizational Chart of Manila GIT is basically a flat organization chart wherein the top/strategic level is composed of the President (also the Regional Managing Director of GIT) and the General Manager.

The Middle/functional Managers are composed of the following:

- Delivery Executives. They take care of managing the delivery of projects (application outsourcing).
- Operational Executives. Finance, Administrative work, Human Resources and Technical Resource Management are specialized departments that support the operations of Manila GIT.

- Shared Services Executives. Operations that support corporate strategy and which can be considered as assets to be shared across the organization such as management of Technology infrastructure and Research center fall under Shared Services.

The staff level is composed of Consultants, Developers and administrative employees under each department. Please take note that the term/job title Consultants refer to Senior Developers and not as external consultants who give business management advice.

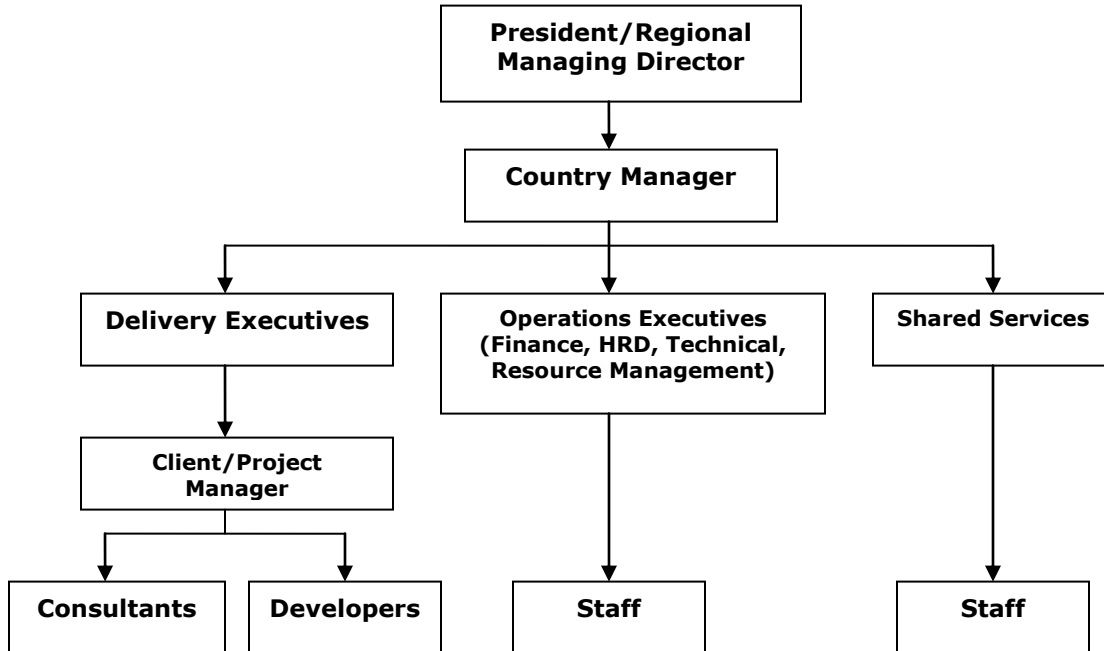


Figure 1.0 Manila GIT Organizational Chart

f. Organizational Culture

The 1,400 and 300 headcounts for both GIT and Manila GIT respectively contribute to the focused business and technology expertise offered by GIT to its customers in delivering value-based solutions.

The values shared across the organization are anchored on performance and development of people. A working environment embodied by fun and team work.

g. Economic Climate

Manila GIT is a healthy profitable company based on its well-established set of local client base that comprises 30% of its revenue. The majority revenue contribution of 70% comes from offshore projects.

III. Setting the Stage

“To be the worldwide leader in delivering distributed consulting solutions in the markets of our choosing.

To bring to bear a truly exceptional team at each point of the solution chain equipped with the best practices and components that are available.”

- Manila GIT Vision/Mission

In its entirety, the situation which sets the Manila GIT in its current status with the GIT corporation is by no means an accident. In other words, the state of the Manila GIT is due to what it can only offer to the company – in short, the state of the country (Philippines) where Manila GIT situates itself limits its contribution to the company. But it is still quite a positive impact if we delve into the fact that a third world country can still contribute to first world country standards. Furthermore, its human resources are knowledgeable enough to cope with this rapid changing industry of IT and even further enhance the industry standards by introducing new perspectives and innovations (The latter is the potential of Manila GIT the proponents of this paper believes strongly in, in terms of building the IT strategy therefore it is yet to be realized by the global corporation. Such potential is simply waiting to be unleashed). This is what the GIT corporation saw in Manila GIT and was quick to grab the opportunity. Manila GIT has now been part of the GIT corporation for almost 18 years.

Given the situation of almost 18 years of collaborative work between the top managers of GIT Manila and GIT corporation what kind of hierarchy has been built? What kind of working relationship is being used? The top managers of Manila GIT can be said to be limited to operational analysis and not contributing in developing the strategic analysis that impacts the whole organization. In other words, the Manila GIT can contribute to the strategy but its top managers are not part of the team that develops strategic management for the corporation globally. Hence, we say that Manila GIT simply abides to the strategies that was set by the corporation in order to meet the goals and objectives that were also set by the global corporation. The strategic thinking is done by the CEO and the Managing Directors which are supported by the executive board including the Chairman Emeritus.

Given the executive board of GIT corporation, the head of Manila GIT who is the Country Manager, is only communicable with one of the managing directors responsible for the Manila GIT hub. Therefore it is clear that the head of Manila GIT is only responsible for maintaining operational harmony and to make sure that the outsourcing hub contributes to the strategic plan that was set by the top managers. The key word for Manila GIT is ‘delivery’ hence, given the name of ‘Global Delivery Center’.

Building the Strategy

Given the current situation of the subsidiary, it is slowly climbing up from the trenches yet to reveal its prowess. The idea behind the strategy of Manila GIT is to tackle the goals and objectives of the corporation through the instigation of the strategies set by the executive board to further grow by means of innovation. This is tackled by the outsourcing hub by finding use of its main assets: human resource and cost-effective resource allocation. This describes using the local

environment/setting in which it is set towards its advantage and turning it into potential strategy.

Manila GIT would look upon its champion the Country Manager to head this endeavor as its General, to be utilized by the soldiers namely the delivery executives, and the highly technically skilled consultants and developers. The goals of the human resource are outlined as follows:

- Country Manager – to lead the team and bring about the belief in the vision of the strategy.
- Delivery Executives - seek more business/clients locally to further improve the companies in its external environment. This tackles to build more revenues onshore which composes 30% of Manila GIT's revenues as compared to its offshore revenues of 70%.
- Consultants – to be able to further improve their IT management skills by being able to work with local clients that the delivery executives seek. Skills and experience will be gained in terms of the first two phases of the GIT corporations services which is 'Consulting' and 'Systems Integration'. The third phase is the majority of where the outsourcing hub is useful to the company which is 'Application Outsourcing'. This is very significant in terms of building new areas of innovation in IT.
- Highly Technically Skilled Developers – continue to excel in technical skills and embrace the new era of IT change. This new era describes that program developers must be open to the idea of becoming skilled consultants and not to become mere developers.

It is quite amazing to imagine that the strategy mentioned is possible, simply because of the advancement of technology today specifically the boom of the internet, broadband technology and the movement of the hardware technology becoming cheaper. To be able to utilize this, the environment in which the company is set upon is in definite need of development being a third world country. It therefore becomes imperative for Manila GIT to seek out the opportunities in which its strategy can be utilized.

In the next section you will observe how the strategy can be utilized.

IV. Project/Case Description of the Project

The Manila GIT subsidiary is part of the large GIT corporation which is composed of 1,400 employees where Manila GIT is around 30% of the whole population. As a global IT consulting firm outsourcing is realized to play a significant role in its strategy. The GIT corporation is known for being a pioneer in the business and it should come in no surprise that they had built an outsourcing hub in the Philippines since the late 1980s. Manila GIT is one of three of the outsourcing hubs of the corporation. The subsidiary is very self-sufficient in terms of managing its resources. As seen in the background of the company in the previous section, the subsidiary contains top managers and business unit heads to lead the organization.

The global consulting firm covers all aspects of the needs of its clients which is to use IT to build strategy. Therefore the main concern of GIT as its service in being an IT consulting firm, is to align IT strategies with that of its client's business strategies.

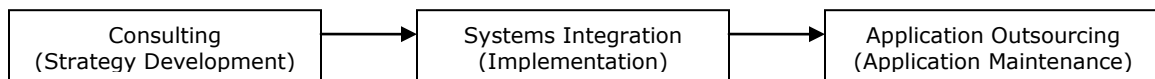


Figure 2.0

In the process of delivering this type of IT consulting service, Manila GIT plays its major role in the corporation in the last process of Application Outsourcing/Application Maintenance. The first 2 phases (Consulting and Systems Integration) are the main concerns of the other 2 outsourcing hubs of the corporation. But that is not to say that, Manila GIT concerns itself solely of the third phase. At this point the proponents would like to point out, one of the strategies of Manila GIT:

An Area of Strategy: Areas of Innovation

Manila GIT's main and key role in the corporation is to delivery technology products. In other words technology/system implementation and maintenance are the key factors. Being the case, Manila GIT has the capability and potential to grow as an outsourcing hub to become equal and as important as compared to the other 2 outsourcing hubs of the corporations. The key for this is towards building areas of innovation.

Main Focus of Manila GIT: Technology Delivery

The issue can be clearly seen, that Manila GIT plays less of a significant role in the entirety of the corporation's main strategy. On the top portion of the organizational chart:

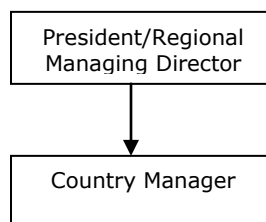


Figure 3.0

As seen here, the top manager that deals with all the employees and team leads of the Manila GIT is the Country Manager. Only the Country Manager communicates directly with the President/Regional Managing Director. The President is then the only one who has direct communication with the CEO of the company. From this, we can see that the top managers of Manila GIT does not play a role in building the strategy that impacts the whole corporation. Although, Manila GIT can still pride itself in contributing and serving the strategies/goals of the organization as a 'technology delivery' outsourcing hub.

MANILA GIT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

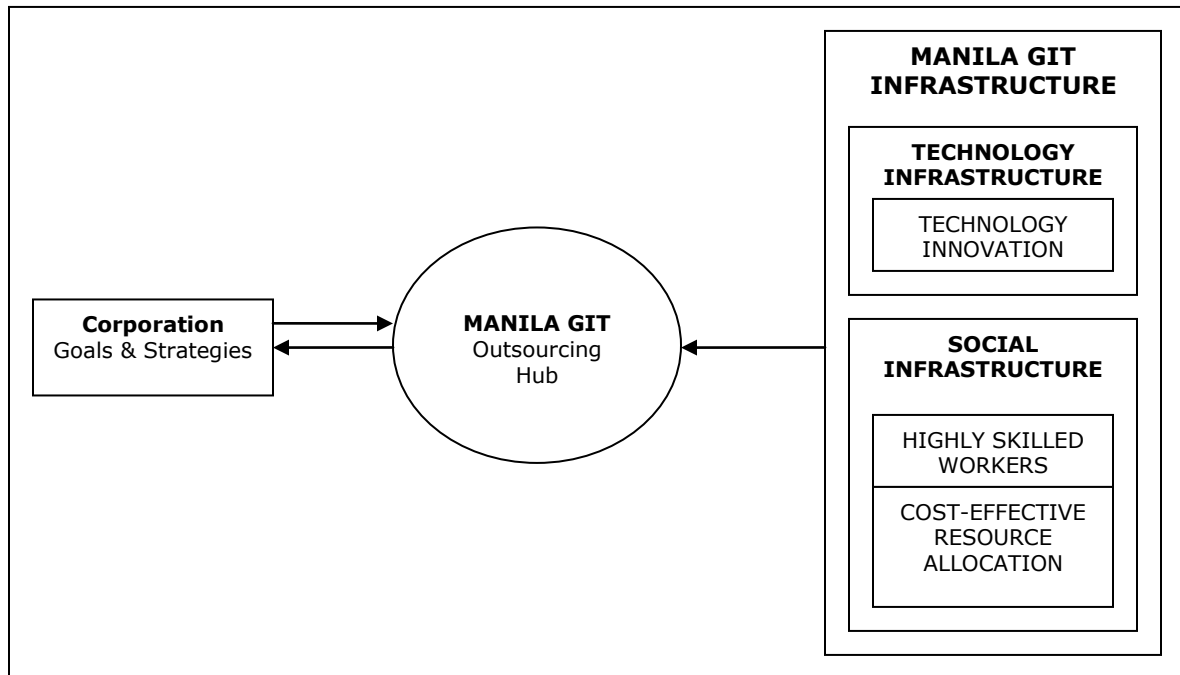


Figure 4.0

This diagram shows how Manila GIT utilizes its assets in contributing and leveraging itself as an essential player in the Goals and Strategies of the corporation.

FURTHER IMPLICATIONS OF MAIN GIT GOALS AND ISSUES IN RESPONSE TO MANILA GIT CONTRIBUTION

Organizational Goals	Manila GIT Contribution
1. In response to differentiating itself from low commodity vendors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identifying specific niche markets/industry - strengthening key offerings 	Areas of Innovation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating new innovations in technology
2. Improving gross margin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - marketing - maximum profits 	Building the country's IT Infrastructure to get more local clients. In doing so, it also advances the country's economic stand in the global view. Outsourcing – allows for cheaper but highly skilled workers
3. Focus on people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low utilization: leveraging on potential capabilities of highly skilled workers 	Develop a community that is more involved/aware of the global perspectives of the company. Keeping highly skilled workers in the country – in response to the issue of 'brain drain' Allowing highly skilled workers with opportunities to practice their craft and grow

Table 1.0

V. Current Status of the Case/Project

Defining the Strategy

In response to building the strategy, it becomes essential to define exactly what type of strategy is being utilized. The following describes the 3 different categories of IT strategies (Frenzel, 2004) in which the Manila GIT strategies would fall under:

1. **Functional Strategies** - describes how the company's broad goals and objectives of the company. This takes into consideration which systems to maintain and enhance and which ones should be replaced.
2. **Stand-alone Strategies** – describes one time goals and opportunities for the company to gain advantage. These technological breakthroughs or vendor-offering are usually decisions made can be closely described as 'seizing the opportunity' therefore the question, 'should we jump the bandwagon or not?' usually rises to the occasion.
3. **Business Strategies**
 Business strategies are the strategies that put into perspective the functional and stand-alone strategies. Because at the end of the day no matter how good the technology is the question is always, 'How much will it cost?' Business strategies are composed of the company's goals and objectives. These are where the Functional and Stand-Alone strategies are based upon.

Elements of an IT Functional Strategy (Frenzel, 2004)

- Support to business objectives
- Technical support
- Organizational considerations
- Budget and Financial Matters

In case of Manila GIT the Functional and Stand-Alone strategies are both essential for the internal organization and for external use in creating new products and services since Manila GIT is in the business of selling technology.

The following table summarizes the Manila GIT Contribution in response to the GIT's goals and objectives with the utilized IT Strategy in which it's type of strategy is defined.

Manila GIT Contribution	IT STRATEGY	TYPE of STRATEGY
Areas of Innovation - Creating new innovations in technology	The eLearning Initiative	Functional & Stand-Alone
Building the country's IT Infrastructure to get more local clients. In doing so, it also advances the country's economic stand in the global view. Outsourcing – allows for cheaper but highly skilled workers	Adapting more advance methodologies that can be utilized in the local industry - Change Management, Portfolio Management, etc. Convincing local companies to build more advance technologies - ERP, CRM, etc.	Business
Develop a community that is more involved/aware of the global perspectives of the company. Keeping highly skilled workers in the country – in response to the issue of 'brain drain' Allowing highly skilled workers with opportunities to practice their craft and grow	Portal – Information System	Functional & Stand-Alone

Table 2.0

The eLearning Initiative

Manila GIT's eLearning initiative is still in its infancy stage. But this does not necessarily mean that Manila GIT is behind the eLearning industry/market. Manila GIT has had some relevant experience in building eLearning applications and is now just realizing its potential to be able to develop eLearning technology. The GIT corporation also has eLearning technology called an LMS (Learning Management System). This system is being maintained for GIT by a 3rd Party vendor. The long term goal of the Manila GIT's eLearning initiative is to be able to support its own eLearning in the future. By the time they are able to support their own eLearning is the time they can have developed a well-established eLearning institute.

eLearning is one of the Technology innovations that Manila GIT is exploring in terms of building new markets. In the next section we will discover another technology that is utilized by Manila GIT which is in the same vicinity as eLearning – KMS (Knowledge Management Systems).

VI. Conclusion and Recommendation

As a small subsidiary of the GIT organization, Manila GIT might be mistaken as a low impact contributor to the strategic growth of the entire global company. Being an outsourcing hub, the main expectation for Manila GIT is to produce a highly competent set of skilled workers that can be used by GIT for its customized application development business. And this perspective of Manila GIT's role to the overall organization might be a cause of why GIT has not explored Manila GIT's potential as a possible significant contributor for strategic growth.

To answer the main question presented in the earlier section of the paper, 'Can the outsourcing hub create a strategy in which it not just adapts and contributes to the implementation of the strategies set by the global corporation, but to help build and create the strategies?'

Manila GIT is in fact an important part of GIT's strategic plan. As an organization it has the potential to become a major impact player in the global growth of the organization by producing high productivity results that can be used as a competitive advantage in the outsourcing business.

In the current scenario wherein Manila GIT's strategic direction is set by the global organization, there is no opportunity for local management to exploit its knowledge of local operations and business landscape as an advantage in creating new products and services that will achieve its own strategic goals and implementation plan in support of the global company's strategic objectives.

To build its own IT strategy (Manila GIT) that will support the business strategic direction of GIT, Manila GIT should focus on how to address the challenge of aligning the global business strategies with local IT strategies to fit well and organize proper execution in order to produce high impact competitive advantage and organizational benefits.

To help Manila GIT in analyzing its current strategies, the group has identified gaps and will give recommendations on how to fill the gaps in order to strengthen and improve the implementation of the organizational strategies.

As a result of the first business strategy of developing areas of innovation and its corresponding IT strategy of applying eLearning technology for internal and external purposes, the organization has obtained eLearning materials that enables it to develop its business in eLearning application development for its clients. However, since the development of its internal eLearning is outsourced from a third party provider, the skill set of internal technical people on eLearning and the application of the eLearning technology across the organization has not yet reached a mature stage wherein they will be able to branch out and share an eLearning expertise to their clients that will enable the organization to grow the consultancy side of the business.

The proponents recommend that the internal group tasked to handle the eLearning initiative to identify and review the Best Practices applied in the existing eLearning materials, internalize the learning and codify the knowledge by coming up with Standards and methodologies on eLearning processes and project development. Build the Portfolio by extending the eLearning materials further by strengthening the eLearning application development by creating the following eLearning applications such as Learning Course Management System (LCMS), Standalone and Online Learning Modules.

Since eLearning is a relatively new technology, it is also recommended that the Organization seek out clients with whom Manila GIT can work as technology partners sharing the responsibility of exploring and nurturing advancement of the eLearning technology for both organizations.

On the next business strategy of Manila GIT to help increase revenue for GIT, it would take on the initiative of taking more local clients to help shape the country's IT infrastructure. By doing this, it is hoped that the organization will help the country to advance its current economic state, by keeping the cash flow within the country, on top of the increase in revenue flow for the local organization. Being in the Outsourcing business and picking Manila as a location is also a key business strategy. Cost reductions balanced with globally at par technically skilled source of manpower are all pluses for GIT. To leverage IT to achieve the business goals above, Manila GIT has continuously improved and matured its change, project and portfolio management methodologies in creating advance technologies such as ERP, CRM and etc that are offered to local clients for influencing the direction of the local IT landscape.

For the gap analysis, the group has identified the following issues: 1) Manila GIT is not yet aggressive in going after local projects for local government and local SMEs; 2) Lack of external education/awareness in terms of technological advancements.

For the recommendation on how should the gaps are to be addressed, Manila GIT should target social/cultural improvements for Local Market maturity/ business landscape to accept and adapt advance technology into organizational processes. Proactively, educate this community about the technology initiatives of Manila GIT. Manila GIT has to capture a wider local market share to gain considerable influence in shaping the local IT infrastructure. They need to become more aggressive in marketing their products and services. They are currently holding only the big

industries in the local setting that does not compose a big chunk of the local business market. There are still a lot of potential clients for medium and small businesses.

For the third and last business strategy, developing a local community (internal/external) that is more involved/aware of the global perspectives of the company and nurturing knowledge in the company. Highly skilled workers in the country should be taken care of to keep into the company to address the issue of "brain drain". Give facilities that will allow the highly skilled workers with opportunities to practice their craft and grow. The existing IT strategy that partially addresses the strategies above is the Portal, A web-based information system that is basically a "One-stop information shop" for employees.

The Portal has features that show traces of a shallow application of KMS concepts. The following are some of the features in the Portal:

- Collaborative tools
- Email, ERooms
- Yellow Pages
- FAQ
- Help desk

For an outsourcing organization like Manila GIT whose main business is dependent on competency and abundance of technical resource, Knowledge would be a key organizational need.

As a gap analysis and also as recommendation, transform the Portal from a transactional and information based system to become a full-pledged Knowledge Management System. But before, the discussion of the recommendation, let us get a glimpse of the differentiation of an Information system from a Knowledge Management System as lifted from the book Information Systems Management in Practice (McNurlin, 2002)

Information Management is Different from Knowledge Management From McNurlin, 2002. Figure 7-9 page 235	
Information Management	Knowledge Management
Emphasizes delivery and accessibility of content	Emphasizes adding value to content by filtering, synthesizing, interpreting and adding context
Has heavy technology focus	Balances focus between technology and culture or work practice
Assumes information capture can be standardized and automated	Requires ongoing human inputs and links to communities

Table 3.0

It is also important to note how Knowledge nurturing is an important activity in managing the IT Portfolio. In the figure below (taken from McNurlin, 2002), the three kinds of applications needs are identified: 1) Knowledge to support Technologists; 2) Discussion for collaboration work; and 3) Automating routine work through Transactions. The challenge ahead for Organizations is in how to leverage IT to manage knowledge in an organization to work towards worker productivity and competitive advantage.

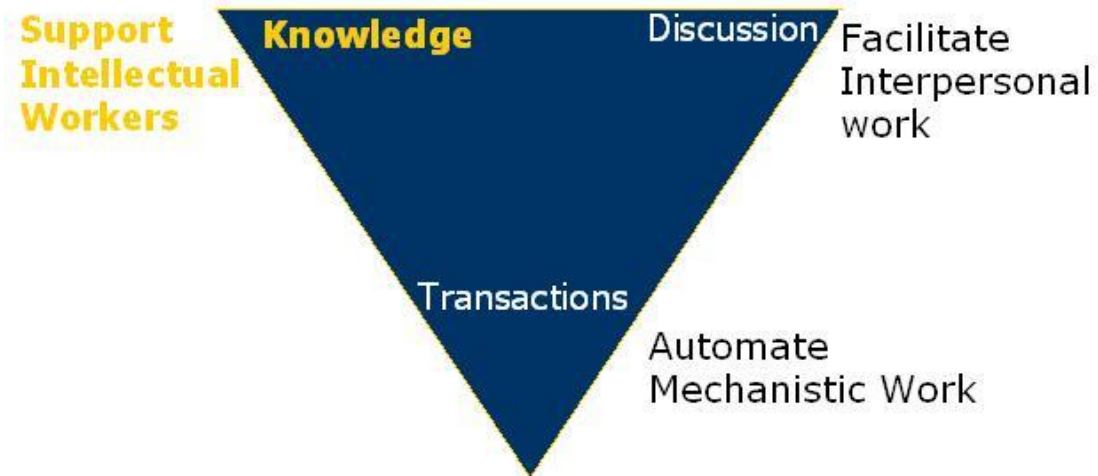


Figure 5.0

For the group's specific recommendation on how to transform the Portal to be a full-blown KMS, the following facilities can be developed as mapped against KMS activity framework:

- **Creation of Knowledge**

ex.

Messaging

Message Board

Promote tools for "capturing" tacit knowledge by identifying Best Practices

Apply data mining and data warehousing to extract meaningful data that can be new knowledge for the company.

- **Sharing of Knowledge**

ex.

Establish and encourage creation of Communities of Practice

Intelligent Agents

- **Application of Knowledge**

ex.

Develop Key Performance Indexes and Analytical Reports Arising from the existing and identified Best Practices for measuring performance and benchmarks

BUSINESS STRATEGY	IT STRATEGY	GAP ANALYSIS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Areas of Innovation</p> <p>Creating new innovations in technology</p>	<p>eLearning Motive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELearning materials for employee learning/training • Developing the learning infrastructure of initial client base 	<p>E-learning initiative is not yet mature enough to be able to support other business aspect of consultancy</p>	<p>Build the Portfolio:</p> <p>eLearning Application Development: LCMS, Learning Modules (Stand-Alone Applications) and Online Applications</p> <p>Standards and Methodologies: Defining the templates, processes, scheduling, project management, and methods of development.</p> <p>Partner and explore with clients the eLearning initiatives.</p>
<p>Building the country's IT Infrastructure to get more local clients. In doing so, it also advances the country's economic stand in the global view.</p> <p>Outsourcing – allows for cheaper but highly skilled workers</p>	<p>Developing advance methodologies such as ERP, CRM etc Offerings that can help local companies leverage advanced technology into their processes</p> <p>Utilizing advance methodologies for usage in the local industry - Change Management, Portfolio Management, etc.</p>	<p>Manila GIT is not yet aggressive in going after local projects for local government and local SMEs;</p> <p>Lack of external education and awareness in terms of technological advancements.</p>	<p>Targeting social/cultural improvements for Local Market maturity/ business landscape to accept and adapt advance technology into organizational processes</p> <p>GIT needs to become more aggressive in its marketing. They are currently holding only the big industries in the local setting that does not compose a big chunk of the local business market. There are still a lot of potential clients for medium and small businesses.</p> <p>Proactively, educate local clients about technology initiatives</p>

BUSINESS STRATEGY	IT STRATEGY	GAP ANALYSIS	RECOMMENDATIONS
<p>Develop a community that is more involved/aware of the global perspectives of the company.</p> <p>Keeping highly skilled workers in the country – in response to the issue of ‘brain drain’</p> <p>Allowing highly skilled workers with opportunities to practice their craft and grow</p>	<p>Portal - A web-based information system. “One-stop information shop” for employees</p> <p>Transactional and Collaboration functionalities</p> <p>Traces of KMS: Collaborative tools Email, ERooms Yellow Pages FAQ Help desk</p>	<p>Transform the Portal from a transactional and information based system to become a full-pledged Knowledge Management System</p>	<p>Add facilities to develop and support the following characteristics of a full-pledged KMS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of Knowledge ex. Messaging Message Board Promote tools for “capturing” of tacit knowledge by identifying Best Practices data mining, data warehousing • Sharing of Knowledge ex. Communities of Practice Intelligent Agents • Application of Knowledge ex. Key Performance Indexes, Analytical Reports

VII. EPILOGUE AND LESSONS LEARNED

After stating the analysis and recommendation in the previous section, the group hopes to have given a valuable insight into how Manila GIT's perspective and role can be redefined to become a significant strategic contributor to the whole GIT organization. The analysis establishes a foundation on how Manila GIT can build its own strategies wrapped around the current global business and IT strategy.

In the course of studying the organization, Manila GIT, it was a great experience to explore the operations and to review and analyze the application of the strategies across the organization. The group appreciates gaining a deeper knowledge and insight about GIT and Manila GIT, from its business nature and organizational structure up to examining its IT infrastructure. It gave the proponents a good understanding on how an outsourcing hub works. A personal insight is on realizing that even a small subsidiary can become a vital component of a big organization depending on how well its capabilities are utilized. It also does not matter where an organization is located (first world or developing country), just as long as resource availability for the job is in place and IT Portfolio management is well structured, an organization can thrive and prosper to support a global business strategy.

Overall, it was an enriching experience to gain first hand knowledge on how to apply management, strategic management and strategic IT management concepts into the study and analysis of an enterprise level organization. Being exposed to the company's structured processes and methodologies, organized information system and knowledge repository is truly a great step towards knowledge advancement. Thinking about how to map the concepts with actual strategies and initiatives to come up with the group's proposed ideas is IT consultancy in practice.

Disclosure

Jinno Ordoñez and Beverly Escaño would like to thank Manila GIT for allowing them to do their IT Strategic Management study on their company. Thank you for all the support especially for allowing us to use your Private Internet Portal which has been of the best help we could ask.

Please be advice that all information/name of the company is protected by law in this case study and the proponents are very well aware of the confidentiality of the disclosure upon receiving such invaluable information from the organization.

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McNurlin, Barbara C. & Sprague Jr., Ralph H. "Information Systems Management in Practice, 5th Edition". Prentice Hall, 2002.