

IT – A Great Tool To Transform Your Business

Many Malaysian companies hesitate in actively adopting IT as a part of their main business strategy. Does IT really matter? We unveil the importance of IT in companies and how successful integration into business can be achieved with limited budget.

by Andrew Lai



IT + Toys + Idea = \$

The Hollywood blockbuster, 'Transformers 2' presents a point in case. The movie grossed over \$387 million dollars in 2009 with the help of IT. We shall not forget that the movie originates from an eighties cartoon that came with live action figures: toys!

The Only Constant is Change

As a business entity, companies confront challenges from a variety of internal (e.g. company operations) and external (e.g. competitors' strategies) forces. I believe that the only way to survive in this competitive business environment is TO CHANGE. Change the way how we operate our business, how we handle customers, dealing with business partners and stakeholders and etc.

Adaptation: The Cockroach's Guide to Survival

Cockroaches have been able to survive because of their rapid reproductive cycles and adaptability to poisons, environments, and even nuclear bombs! Clearly, there is something to learn from this spirit of survival that has let them live way past the dinosaurs!

In business, the main hurdles against adaptation could well be from the company

itself. The word "change" should be interpreted as "the art of reacting in a challenging environment, by learning to adapt and adopt to unknown risk". Can the company expand and contract according to the economic environment? Is the company able to ride on the 'green' bandwagon as it comes?

Google Apps from Google Inc. for instance, is a system that allows users to complete collaborative tasks in a revolutionary manner. It is a free or fee-based online web-based messaging and collaboration application that requires no hardware or software outlays, huge online storage, all mobile email, calendar and Instant Messaging access. It is a typical SaaS (Software as a Service) business model and puts a dent in traditional software applications, especially the main software player: Microsoft. Microsoft reacted by offering its latest Office suite: Office 2010, that includes browser-based versions of Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and OneNote.

This evolution is a fruit of change in the IT environment. For the past 20 years, technology development has been focused on the performance of an individual device, i.e. the processor and storage. Looking forward, IT is striving towards green technology, cloud networking, and large data transfers using wireless technology. Thus, technology development is no longer focused on a specific device, but the integration of the technology into business. Existing business models are now being integrated to a broadband-enabled, mobile and collaborative business environment.

Using IT to Resolve Challenges

IT is not a panacea for all companies. However, it is undoubtedly a powerful tool to accelerate and streamline the business process that provides high quality information for management in business decision making. It impacts on traditional businesses, forms new online business models (e.g. B2C Businesses) and creates new business opportunities in all industries. No industry escapes the IT wave. IT forms a great challenge to existing major market players. Everyone is busy getting on the IT bandwagon and it has become an important tool in strategic planning.

Malaysia has a share of success stories. For example:

Industry	Example	IT Strategy
Airline	AirAsia	Online booking and check-in
Job Search	JobStreet.com	Provide online job search and recruitment
Stock Trading	Jupiter Online	Buy stock online with minimum transaction fee
Banking	Maybank2U	Bill payment and funds transfer online
Hotel	Malaysia-hotels	Provide travel guide and hotel discounts
Entertainment	Redtone	DETV: Chinese-centric IPTV service

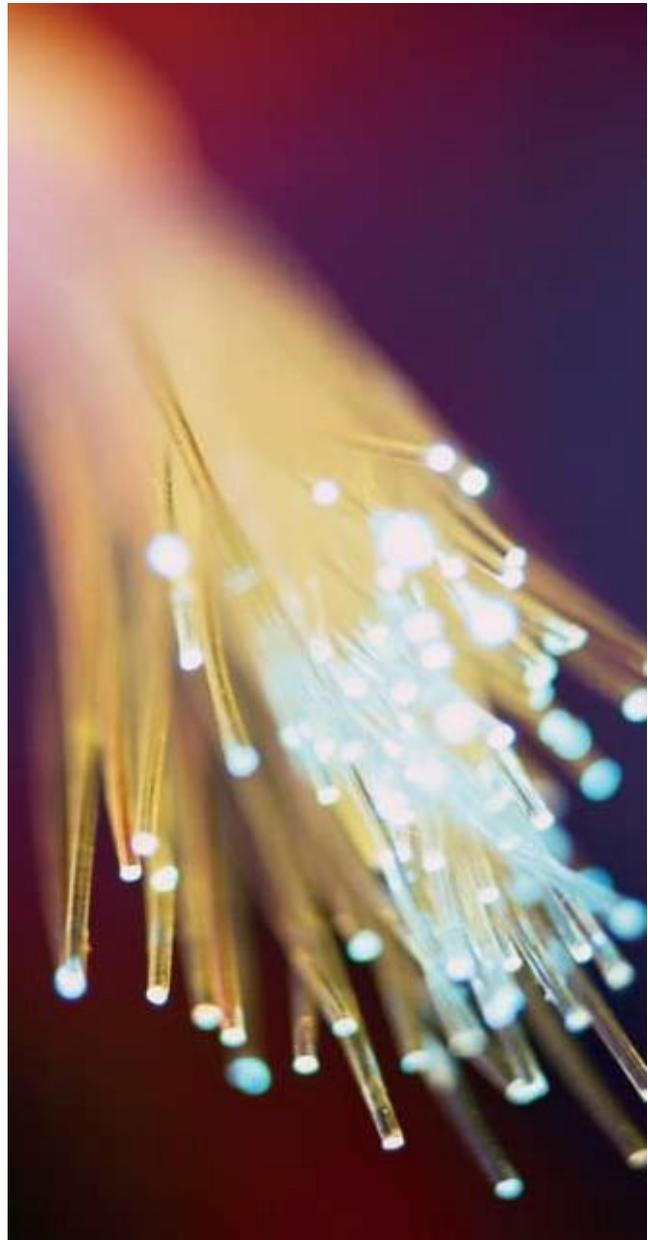
IT Doesn't Mean BIG Budget

Contemporary IT brings to the plate alternatives such as Open Source solutions and SaaS. These provide quality features with or without cost incurred. For instance:

Software / System	Purpose
SugarCRM	Customer Relationship Management
Google Apps Basic	Online Information Sharing System
Xtuple	Enterprise Resource Planning System
Zencart	Online Shopping Cart for B2C Business
OrangeHRM	Human Resources Management
Open Office	Office Application Suite
Phplist	Distribution of Online Newsletter
Asterisk	iPBX
Zoho	Offers a Suite of Online Web Applications

Free online services that are ready for all business users include:

Online Service	Example	Purpose
Audio / Video Conferencing	Skype	Make calls over the internet
Email and Calendar	Gmail	Huge mail storage and mobile access
Instant Messenger	MSN	Chat online and send instant messages
Photo Sharing	Picasa	Fast and easy photo sharing
Social Networking	Facebook	Connect people with friends and others
Micro Blogging	Twitter	Instantly updated information to web-log (Blog)
Video Sharing	YouTube	Upload and share videos
Project Management	OnStage	Online workspace, collaboration and project management tool



Network Development: Broadband in Malaysia

In the past two decades, the Malaysian Broadband service has grown tremendously: from wired narrowband (dial-up service) to high-speed wireless Internet Broadband. Recently, major players like TM launched ultra-fast Internet service, while bundling its High-speed Broadband (HSBB) service with IPTV; Celcom, Digi and Maxis continue to upgrade and promote their 3G and HSDPA+ service, undercutting one another in an attempt to gain market share; the 4G operator, P1 WiMAX launched its WiMAX service late 2008 and now has a 140,000 subscriber-base; while another WiMAX player, YTL e-Solutions, is planning a nationwide roll out by the end of this year.

IT is a tool that helps people stay connected easily, share and collaborate information in an effective and efficient manner. Businesses that leverage on IT therefore take advantage of this wave that is here to stay.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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