

Overcoming Technology Gridlock: *Moving Technology from Vision to Value*

A Mainline CIO Advisory White Paper



About This Paper

Inside this Mainline CIO Advisory White Paper, you'll learn about the following issues and conditions confronting technology and business leaders:

- **The Prevalence and Impact of Technology Gridlock**
- **Identifying the Conditions for Gridlock**
- **Key Factors in Unlocking Your Organization's Technology Vision**
- **Solutions That Drive Progress and Consensus**

Mainline's CIO Advisory practice delivers a range of consulting and technology services specifically targeted to the most pressing issues facing IT leaders. Our experience leading technology organizations across a wide array of industries and development stages gives us unique insights into solving problems and driving results. We hope these insights will be useful to you and your teams.

Problem Summary – Spotting “Gridlock”

What Is It? Spotting Gridlock

Ever get the feeling you’re not really getting anywhere? Many organizations suffer from technology that is stagnant and falling further behind despite efforts to build a strategy or execute a clear roadmap. Why is it that, despite acknowledging that things need to change, it’s often hard to effect needed changes, or to change at an acceptable pace? The same technologies and delivery methods remain, year in and year out, because change is hard. And for teams to embrace change, they need to know where they’re going to land when they get there.

A Sea of Options

Technology and business leaders are inundated with options for increasing agility, growth-at-scale and/or cost reduction. For every business outcome, there are dozens of ways to achieve it. While technology leaders have become adept at identifying the vaporware, many new technologies and delivery methods have real success stories to point to. Yet for every success story, the road is littered with trials and initiatives that didn’t achieve the goals suggested by the glossy presales literature.

“On a more pervasive level, technology gridlock keeps organizations from realizing the disruptive benefits of technology to drive their mission.”

Why Does It Matter? The Impact of Gridlock

Many organizations eventually arrive at a technology direction, not by careful analysis, but through frustration with the lack of progress or by hurriedly adopting a vendor’s prefabricated roadmap that promises a good fit.

Many teams succumb to the pressure of sales deadlines from vendors that make their solution sound like the deal of the century, whether it truly fits or not. While this gives the illusion of progress, it ultimately ends with solutions that don't fit the organization or have unexpected outcomes that create significant additional cost or long-term technical debt, not to mention making your teams feel like they aren't being heard and are having a solution thrust upon them.

Unlocking Your Technology Strategy

After years of working through gridlock and failed half efforts as IT leaders and with our clients, we decided to take a hard look at what could be done about this common concern. We recognized that technology gridlock was happening across industries and in IT teams that were both mature and still forming. If we could apply the methods we've seen effective operators use to define and execute an IT strategy that drives consensus and creates a foundation for success, we'd have something really useful.

One of our key observations was that the teams with the most clarity around their IT strategy also had strong consensus. The best examples revealed teams for which the mission was clear and understood by all. For these teams, all the stakeholders were "on the bus" and accepting the changes the new direction would bring. That's not to say there weren't disagreements and differences of opinion, but all parties recognized the value proposition the new strategy brought.

The other major dynamic was detail. Teams with a strong direction built it from analysis that brought sufficient detail to allow teams to contrast the options and trade-offs that made one way more preferable than another. The old adage about numbers not lying seems to still have legs. When IT leaders and their stakeholders can add up the cost, weigh the pros and cons, and see the risks in a practical way, a defensible approach will result.

Strategic Directional Analysis (SDA) – A Way Out of Gridlock

Our team at Mainline has built a process to address the conditions allowing clients to dissolve the gridlock and craft a technology approach and direction that best fit their situation and business goals. This isn't prefabricated shelfware, but a customized strategy based on detailed analysis free from vendor spin delivered through "free assessments" or paid industry analysis papers.

SDA is the process we undertake with our clients to drive consensus and quickly establish a technology strategy with clear benefits.

Our process uses a straightforward, four-stage approach and is delivered by our CIO Advisory consultants, who bring years of IT leadership and operational expertise to the conversation. Our team is composed of IT leaders who have “owned it” and understand the complexities and politics involved in delivering technology change.

We work with clients to stratify the sea of options and separate the signal from the noise, leaving only the directions that make sense for your business mission. Our model development process creates a range of future-state approaches that include a 360-degree view of change across people, processes and technology, and factor in other key attributes such as risk and a detailed cost forecast.

By building contrastable models of your future state, we work with all stakeholders to eliminate the nonstarters and arrive at the few potential models that really resonate. To get to a final strategy, we go deep and project costs, complexity and organizational capability to clarify the best route forward.

Unlike many big consulting firms, we don’t disappear once a strategy is chosen, leaving our client to figure out how to execute it on their own. We continue to deliver on our end-to-end partnership by building an execution roadmap and detailed delivery plans to put your strategy into action, rapidly and with a clear value expectation.

Don’t Sit in Gridlock

If these conditions sound familiar, your organization may be stuck in technology gridlock. Don’t be alarmed – lots of organizations are there with you ... but it’s time to take action. There is a way to break the gridlock and achieve the technology foundation you need to drive your mission.

Let Mainline’s team help you find the right way forward.
Contact us today for a consultative session to see if SDA is right for your organization.