

***Vision Statement for Innovative Software Development in a Large  
Corporation***

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## ***Introduction***

This paper presents a vision statement for a software development organization that in a large corporation. This vision statement is based upon actual events in a real Fortune 250 organization; as such, the author is indebted to his unnamed peers on the leadership team dedicated to implementing this vision. Much of the material in this paper is drawn from the work done by this leadership team.

The vision statement is presented in the form proffered by Collins and Porras (1991). This form consists of two major components: a Guiding Philosophy and a Tangible Image. Collins and Porras (1991) define a Guiding Philosophy as “a system of fundamental motivating assumptions, principles, values, and tenets” (p. 34) and a Tangible Image as “focusing people’s attention on a specific goal” (p. 42).

A Guiding Philosophy has two components: Values and Beliefs, and Purpose. Values and Beliefs describe the organization’s deeply held convictions about fundamental ideas of what is important in operating its business and its role in society (Collins and Porras, 1991, p. 35). Purpose, based upon core values and beliefs, describes the essence of why the organization exists (Collins and Porras, 1991, p. 38).

A Tangible Image has two components: Mission and Vivid Description. Mission expresses specific and very challenging goals that provide focus for people throughout the organization (Collins and Porras, 1991, p. 42). Vivid Description is an engaging and

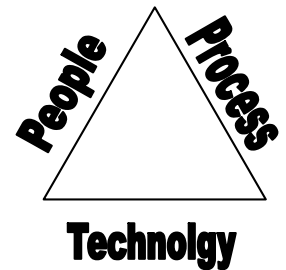
compelling portrait or word picture that describes what it will be like when the mission is achieved (Collins and Porras, 1991, p. 47).

This balance of this paper presents the vision statement for the Software Engineering component of the Information Technology Services (ITS) organization. The Software Engineering organization focuses on the portion of the information technology services organization that builds application software systems.

### ***Statement of Organizational Vision***

#### **Guiding Philosophy: The ITS Software Engineering Values and Beliefs**

The Information Technology Services (ITS) Software Engineering organization abides by three sets of core principles that relate to people, process, and technology. People principles focus on enlisting responsible, passionate individuals sharing a desire to be part of a leading edge software development operation. Process principles focus on delivering business value by continuously adapting to a dynamic business environment. Technology principles focus on appropriately employing the right tools at the right time in creating software solutions.



Principles related to people include self-subscription, agent-based contribution, and joy in work. Self-Subscription is striving for a 100% volunteer-based organization to which people

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>People Principles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Self-Subscription<br/><i>We enlist for work that we are passionate about.</i></li><li>• Agent-Based Contribution<br/><i>We are responsible for creating and delivering value.</i></li><li>• Joy in Work<br/><i>We believe in a motivating, exciting place to work.</i></li></ul> |
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choose to belong. Agent-Based Contribution is recognizing that individuals control their contribution to the organization as well as to their own personal, professional, and career development. Joy in Work is creating an opportunity to find personal and professional satisfaction and enjoyment in the work we do.

Principles related to process include direct value, applied maturity, and optimizing for change. Direct Value is focusing on only doing work that directly adds value to the end result, as the customer defines it. Applied Maturity is emphasizing needs-based process improvement through the mining of practitioners' best practices. Optimizing for Change is being flexible and adapting to change by positioning for action and responding rapidly to opportunity.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Process Principles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Direct Value <i>We understand how our practices help us be successful.</i></li><li>• Applied Maturity <i>We do more of what works, and less of what doesn't.</i></li><li>• Optimizing for Change <i>We deliberately embrace business change over seeking business stability.</i></li></ul>
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Principles related to technology include applied strategies, all the tools, and just enough tools. Applied Strategies is emphasizing that realization of ITS technology strategies occurs only through delivered solutions. All the Tools is employing the necessary tools to be successful. Just Enough Tools is recognizing that tools are enablers for ITS processes, not substitutes.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Technology Principles</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applied Strategies <i>We make technology strategies real through our actions.</i></li><li>• All the Tools <i>We get the tools we need to do the job.</i></li><li>• Just Enough Tools <i>We use the tools that help us get the job done.</i></li></ul>
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**Guiding Philosophy: The ITS Software Engineering Purpose**

As a component of Information Technology Services, the purpose of Software Engineering must be understood in the context of the purpose of its parent organization: ITS exists to quickly deliver high-quality solutions that provide direct business value. Software Engineering exists to efficiently create high-quality solutions that upon delivery provide direct business value. Software Engineering is the focal point of the delivery process in that it creates the solution.

The purpose of Software Engineering must also be understood in the context of its peer organizations. Exhibit 1 depicts the relationships between organizations within ITS. The Information Office organization is the primary customer of Software Engineering. Although business people within the company are the ultimate end user of the solutions that Software Engineering creates, the Information Office is the primary customer because they are the interface to the business organizations and represent their interests. The Technology Office, System Engineering, and System Operations organizations team with Software Engineering in creating and delivering solutions that provide value to the business. The Technology Office provides the interface to the technology industry by researching, evaluating, and selecting current and emerging technology for appropriate application to business need. System Engineering designs and implements hardware, network, and system software solutions. System Operations operates the data center and production application systems.

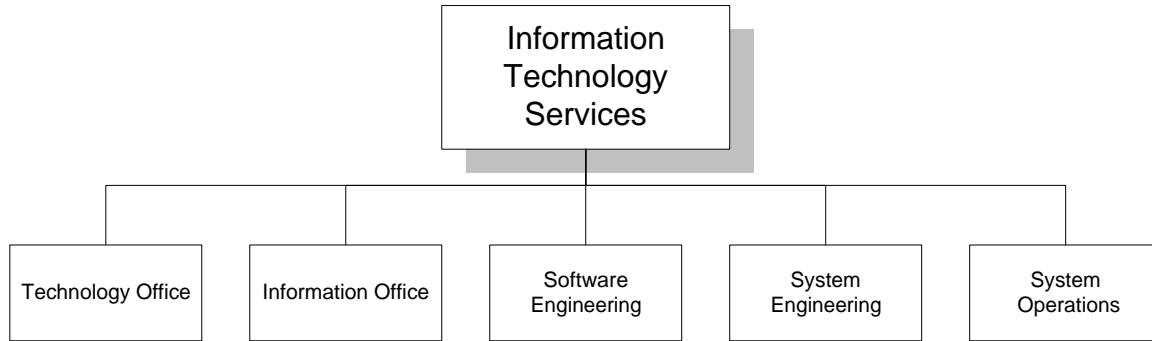


Exhibit 1 -- The ITS Organization

**Tangible Image: The ITS Software Engineering Mission**

The mission of Software Engineering is to deploy project teams that apply innovative methods for software development through adaptation of the best methodologies, approaches, and thinking available in the industry. We are committed to fundamental change in how we develop software: to transform our efforts from employing traditional waterfall and information engineering oriented approaches to employing innovative new approaches that include (but are not limited to) lightweight or agile methods, extreme project management, and extreme programming. These approaches are characterized by small teams, short iterative delivery cycles, simple project planning and system design methods, test driven software development, continuous improvement of system design, continuous integration of incremental results, and a sustainable pace of work effort by people in project teams.

Software Engineering achieves its mission through deploying project teams that exhibit key tenets of embracing change, encouraging collaboration,

<i>Mission</i>
Project teams that:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Embrace Change</li><li>• Encourage Collaboration</li><li>• Prioritize Value</li><li>• Resolve Risk Early</li></ul>

prioritizing value, and resolving risk early. Project teams are groups of people that come together to deliver a solution that has a real and measurable return on investment to the business. Embracing change is permitting customers to evolve their requirements as they incrementally gain insight into their real needs. Encouraging collaboration is continuous learning and self-organization within the project team and between all project stakeholders. Prioritizing value is delivering simple solutions that capitalize on only the essential aspects of delivering business value. Resolving risk early is front loading project work with the most difficult or uncertain aspects of the solution.

**Tangible Image: The ITS Software Engineering Vivid Description**

As we succeed in deploying project teams that employ the best in innovative approaches, we will establish a reputation as the vanguard of innovative software development. While other software development organizations are talking about innovative methods and trying to resolve their practical application, we will be practitioners. Recognized experts in the industry will begin to cite our organization as an example of successful practice. We will provide other organizations with the benefit of our experiences. Industry peers will recognize our organization as an exciting place to work. Our employees will be sought after to speak at conferences and write papers about our successes. Industry publications will recognize us as best in class and use our organization as a benchmark for comparison with other software development operations.

We will develop a reputation as a winning organization and the best professionals from around the world will seek us out just to be a part of the exciting work we are doing, relocating their families and having monetary reward as a secondary consideration. This

is analogous to a championship franchise in professional sports. In professional hockey, the Detroit Red Wings are widely regarded as a top notch winning organization as illustrated by four Stanley Cup championships in seven years. The best professionals in the sport want to play for the Red Wings, and are willing to move their families and forgo millions of dollars in salary just for the opportunity to belong to a winning organization and have a chance to win a championship. This is illustrated by a report on the signing of Curtis Joseph as the team's number one goalie (ESPN, 2002, pp. 1-2):

“[Joseph] said. ‘Detroit offers a very unique opportunity. Everybody who plays there says the future is now. That was enticing. ...

‘There's no guarantee's that I'll go to Detroit and win a Stanley Cup. But I'd like to take that opportunity.’

Joseph, with his daughter on his lap and his family around him, said there were ‘a lot of sleepless nights’ in deciding his future.

He said money was not the biggest consideration in leaving Toronto, and added he wants the chance to win a Stanley Cup with the Red Wings.

‘This was an offer that was tough to refuse. It's a great team that just won the Stanley Cup,’ Joseph said at a news conference in Detroit. ‘Every year, you see the big Cup being raised, and if you're not on the ice, you're dreaming about it.’

‘It became abundantly clear Curtis would receive more money from Toronto and more money from other clubs,’ agent Don Meehan said. ‘But it doesn't take long for players to know what Detroit is all about.

‘The reputation and the presence of the Detroit Red Wings is a special one.’”

### ***Audience for Vision Statement***

The Software Engineering vision portrays a fundamental shift in perspective within ITS. Currently, the unit of product delivery to the business is headcount oriented with a focus on assigning the right number of people to projects that are primarily organized and managed by the Information Office organization. The goal is to change the unit of

product delivery to project teams with a focus on using innovative methods in project management and software development to deliver a complete solution to the Information Office. This fundamental change impacts most people and organizations within ITS. As a result, there are many constituents for the Software Engineering vision.

The primary audience for the vision is the people within the various groups that comprise the Software Engineering organization. This includes Software Engineering leadership, leadership of professional practice groups, and people who manage and staff the project teams that create and deliver solutions. As the primary customer, the Information Office is significantly impacted by the transformation represented by the vision and therefore its leadership and staff are also a key audience. Secondary audiences for the vision are the other stakeholders external to Software Engineering and include ITS leadership as well as the peer organizations with which Software Engineering teams to deliver solutions. It is critical for success that these stakeholders understand and endorse the vision. Additionally, a clear and compelling vision for Software Engineering may spark similar vision casting initiatives for these external stakeholder organizations resulting in a sharpening of overall mission focus for ITS as a whole and delivery of increasing value to the business.

### ***Assessing Audience Acceptance***

Since buy in to the Software Engineering vision by stakeholders is critical for success, it is essential to develop a strategy and action plan for developing commitment to the vision. These plans include putting feedback loops in place for each stakeholder group and surveying to assess stakeholder attitudes.

The goal of feedback loops is to measure acceptance and identify opportunities to initiate and adjust activities for developing commitment to the vision and for modifying behavior of people within the organization. Initially, feedback loops consist of one on one conversation between the individuals on the Software Engineering leadership team and key leaders from the other stakeholder groups. Additionally, the Software Engineering leadership team must also conduct conversations with others in the organization (management by walking around). The basic strategy is to use conversations to confirm understanding, to reinforce key messages, and to assess buy in to the vision.

The goal of surveying stakeholder attitudes is to provide a baseline against which change can be measured by subsequent surveys. Once a timeline is developed to show the types of manifest change and when they are expected to occur, the leadership team can plan follow up assessments of stakeholder attitudes to determine rates of change. Evaluation of this data will result in adjustments to strategies and plans for building and reinforcing understanding and commitment to the vision.

## ***Conclusion***

A good vision statement helps an organization focus the energy of its people on a common objective and thus maximizes the likelihood of successful achievement. The Collins and Porras (1991) vision framework is valuable to help leaders in all types of organizations dispel confusion around what a vision statement is, its composition, and its potential value. All leaders can benefit from the clarity this framework provides and from applying it in their vision casting endeavors.

## **References**

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