



Industry

Food and Drug Retailer

Client Profile

Safeway, Inc. (NYSE: SWY) is a Fortune 100 company and one of North America's largest food and drug retailers. The company operates over 1,700 stores in the U.S. and Canada and had sales of \$40.2 billion in 2007. In support of its stores, Safeway has an extensive network of distribution, manufacturing and food processing facilities. Safeway's IT department supports the business objectives of increasing sales, reducing costs and creating greater efficiencies that ultimately improve the overall customer experience. The IT department works with various business units to develop and implement technology solutions to meet business goals. The department delivers solutions covering all aspects of Safeway's business, including marketing and merchandising, retail, supply chain, eCommerce, business intelligence and administration.

Infrastructure Strategic Planning

"Taos' greatest differentiator from other consulting firms is its people. I never feel it's about sales with them. Their consultants have a genuine desire to see us succeed and that has made a tremendous impact on our organization. I have continued confidence in their ability to deliver great results time and again."

- Michael Wolfson, Group Vice President of Information Technology
Safeway, Inc.

Success Highlights

1. Created three-year strategic infrastructure plan utilizing unique, proprietary planning model that garnered support
2. from throughout the organization.
3. Reduced expenses due to plan's capability to link IT investments to business needs.
4. Re-prioritized IT projects to be based on ROI and competitive advantage.
5. Compressed strategic planning timeframe to consume less high-value staff time.

Taos Service Areas Deployed

- Project Delivery
- OCIO

Situation

Safeway's Group Vice President of IT, Michael Wolfson, had been working with several consulting groups over the course of two years in an attempt to create a long-term strategy for his organization's infrastructure. He sought to break away from a yearly planning process based on allocated budget monies and transition to a more thoughtful, strategic planning process that offered flexibility for when business needs change. After not attaining the result he needed, he turned to Taos' Office of the CIO, believing they could help him achieve success. Wolfson, having worked with Taos previously, had confidence that Taos, via their breadth of capabilities and experience, would assist him to help his company understand how technology would benefit the business. He wanted to partner with Taos to identify the necessary prerequisites for his team to break away from working in silos allowing for wiser IT investments.

Solutions

Taos leveraged its Power Alignment Facilitation methodology to create an infrastructure strategic plan for Safeway. The Power Alignment Facilitation model

follows a path that engages multiple individuals in various positions in the planning process. It takes into consideration that individuals have various learning styles (e.g. kinesthetic, visual, auditory) and creates a planning environment that caters to the ways that the broadest cross-section of participants are able to give, receive and assimilate information. It's a group rather than individual leader-based, approach. The planning process that emerges is cross-domain, descending into the organization to create "legs under the tabletop" of knowledge and expertise. The method never *tells* an individual what the right answer is, but rather *guides* individuals to the right decisions.

Results

Taos' unique approach to strategic planning organically produced buy-in across the IT organization as it allowed the people who are actually doing the work to have a say in how and what would happen. Empowerment ensued, which led to more motivated employees. For Safeway, it became a team-building exercise as well as a discovery session. They quickly revealed that certain entities already had plans that were not being shared, and many activities were being unnecessarily shadowed. Safeway was able to quickly diminish duplicative efforts.

The methodology also allowed Safeway to refocus its thought process when dealing with long-term investments. They were no longer chasing technology, but were instead investing IT dollars prudently based on business objectives and adding calculable value. Priorities became clear across the organization which allowed more of the right things to be accomplished, and the outcomes became pre-defined.

The procedure is flexible in its design and, therefore, has helped Safeway facilitate discussions for when business needs change and/or the business climate fluctuates. On a quarterly basis, the team is now able to quickly re-examine and adjust its focus based on these variants, resulting in their ability to add the most material impact.

Due to Taos's vast experience with this process, the planning timeframe was compressed into only eight weeks.

About TAOS

Taos is a professional IT consulting services company. With more than 5,000 successful engagements at more than 1,000 clients, we have the experience and the technical expertise to help you achieve and sustain operational excellence. Our success is built upon the breadth and depth of our technical expertise, flexibility and objectivity – we are hardware and software vendor independent.