Should IT organisations brand themselves? - blueAPACHE

Canonical: https://www.blueapache.com/blog/to-brand-or-not-to-brand

Details:

Summary

This blog post, "Should IT organisations brand themselves?", is a blueAPACHE article from 2022 covering collaboration. With the events of the last few years, it has become increasingly evident the role that technology has to play as an enabler in organisations. It’s central to how businesses interact with their customers and external stakeholders, and how they operate more efficiently and effectively. It is written for readers evaluating Microsoft Teams, blueAPACHE Store. The collaboration and communications considerations it raises continue to apply as organisations keep adapting how staff connect, meet and work together.

Key facts

Label	Value
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Services referenced	Microsoft Teams, blueAPACHE Store
Named products or vendors	None named beyond blueAPACHE

Article

With the events of the last few years, it has become increasingly evident the role that technology has to play as an enabler in organisations. It’s central to how businesses interact with their customers and external stakeholders, and how they operate more efficiently and effectively. Progressive businesses across all sectors now see themselves as technology companies first and foremost, and they use that capability to offer bank accounts, provide insurance, ship goods, sell groceries or whatever their “old” line of work was. Under that paradigm, IT leadership must take centre stage in how organisation’s shape their future success (see our blog) on the importance of IT Strategy. It’s therefore imperative that efforts underpinning this transition are recognised and leveraged accordingly to maintain momentum on your IT Roadmap. But this change in the role of IT from “maintainer of equipment” to “strategic enabler” is not a natural one. It requires a change of thinking from within technology teams as to how they define their role, and importantly how they help other parts of the organisation recognise the value and importance of their new paradigm. They need to evolve their brand, but how? To understand this further, we sat down with our resident ICT strategy expert John Kostopulos to learn about a framework he uses to support technology organisations in their brand evolution.

1. Evolving your team branding

Often, I sit in workshop sessions with great people as they map out their IT Roadmap. All the components will be covered:

Vision/Mission/Values/Goals aligned to Organisational Strategy (check)

Initiatives proposed and captured to deliver on Goals (check)

Priority and execution horizon road mapping (check)

Budgets approved for Year 1 (check)

…then it hits the execution phase and, aside from standard operational reporting – financial, procurement, etc. – nothing from IT until the next year. Rinse and repeat. This is part of the reason why I always emphasise the idea of "branding" when it comes to developing and executing a Strategy and Roadmap. Securing Executive/C-level endorsement and funding a year at a time is only part of executing your Strategy/Roadmap – we must also continue to promote and carry our broader vision communicated by your Brand and strong on-brand messaging.

2. But, how can we brand IT?

Full disclaimer for all my Marketing friends…. I am not a Marketing savant, rather, I'm just a big fan of leveraging Brand – be it personal, departmental or organisational – to further one's goals in business. As such, while what I'm about to say may have some of said fraternity in knots, I stand by it. So, with that out of the way, let's first examine what we mean when we talk about brand. Pick up any Marketing textbook and you'll get a definition of brand much like the following:

A company's brand is an aggregation of the desirability of products or services produced by the company and therefore the price premium it is possible to attain for those services.

So, to relate that to the context of this article, I'd like to propose the following changes:

IT = company

Performance / User Experience = desirability of products or services

Roadmap Funding / Budget = price premium

IT's brand is an aggregation of the performance / user experience produced by IT and therefore the roadmap funding / budget it is possible to attain for those services.

3. IT = company

How often do we hear the term used within IT departments that 'the End User is our customer'? If that's true, then does this not make IT a business and therefore should it not operate in the same way? My answer? YES!!! As such, I always put forward the idea that as IT leaders we should think how:

We enable the company to attract revenue (not just reduce cost)

We develop our services to improve user / customer experience

We maintain competitive advantage , and so on…

4. Performance / User Experience = desirability of products or services

While there are many ways to articulate value within IT (cost reduction anyone?), with the advent of significant Digital Transformation, I would place UX as a core company-wide KPI and indicator for overall performance. What I mean by this is that UX has become so focal to how IT is viewed (especially with decentralization of workforces), without favorable / positive perception (especially at executive level), any attempt to secure funding for broader transformation becomes incrementally more challenging. Essentially UX is an IT department's share price – as it climbs and lowers, so too does its

standing in the business and it's ability to attract further funding.****

5. Roadmap Funding / Budget = price premium

Now before our more fiscally minded readers start to bristle … when I mean price premium, I am actually referring to the leverage/buy-in from an organization to invest in IT initiatives, as opposed to how much IT can get away with spending. An old trope of IT has always centered around sparing no expense for the sake of the best technology. Well, these days IT leaders must be cost conscious to secure departmental funding and be able to demonstrate a clear linkage between the investment and the improvements generated in performance or user experience. It's this linkage that represents what we can think of as the brand promise – that by spending X amount you will drive Y outcome.

6. Brand state of mind

Given the above, how do we improve our IT Brand to more effectively serve the business and our end users?

Enablers: Our core function as IT is to enable our business to use technology to compete more effectively. This must be central to all that we do, and we can use our brand to continue to communicate that to the rest of the organization.

Collaboration: Technology in business has many stakeholders (most outside IT). Inter-department/senior-level engagement especially during planning and development are critical.

Demonstrable Performance: Delivering and reporting to stakeholders throughout the business on successful execution (and associated value) is key to building deeper trust and demonstrating we are meeting our brand promise.

Communications: Whether through reporting, processes or tools, simply and regularly communicating the linkage between IT execution and actual organizational outcomes is crucial.

Alignment & Endorsement: Ensuring your roadmap aligns to the core organizational goals/messaging through C-level endorsement, creates shared ownership and consequently brand awareness.

It is important to remember that with all of the above, you don't need to be the next Steve Jobs to have a strong brand. Ultimately as a leader your brand and your department's brand are synonymous, so ensure application of the above is tailored to your organization's maturity and your own personal style.
Author Credit: John Kostopulos, Head of Business TransformationAs Head of Business Transformation for blueAPACHE, John Kostopulos brings more than 15 years experience in Business and ICT strategy development, having previously consulted to a client portfolio boasting many nationally recognised brands across NFP, private business and local/state government. To find out more, please contact us directly on 1800 248 749 or here

Related

Microsoft Teams

emPOWER Collaboration (pillar hub)

emPOWER Procurement (pillar hub)

blueAPACHE Store

Honan Insurance (case study)

Frequently asked questions

Who is John Kostopulos, and what does this post say he was interviewed about?

The post describes John Kostopulos as blueAPACHE's resident ICT strategy expert, interviewed to explain a framework he uses to support technology organisations through their brand evolution.

What formula does the post propose for defining 'IT's brand'?

The post proposes that IT's brand is an aggregation of the performance and user experience produced by IT, and therefore the roadmap funding or budget it is possible to attain for those services, mapping IT to 'company', performance/UX to 'desirability of products or services', and roadmap funding to 'price premium'.

What does the post say user experience represents for an IT department?

The post says UX has become so central to how IT is viewed that it functions as an IT department's 'share price': as it climbs or falls, so does the department's standing in the business and its ability to attract further funding.

How does the post redefine 'price premium' in the context of IT branding?

The post clarifies that 'price premium' refers to the leverage and buy-in an organisation is willing to give for investing in IT initiatives, not how much money IT can get away with spending.

What five elements does the post list under 'Brand state of mind' for improving an IT department's brand?

The post lists Enablers, Collaboration, Demonstrable Performance, Communications, and Alignment & Endorsement as the five elements of a stronger IT brand.

What common execution pattern does the post describe as undermining IT's brand?

The post describes IT roadmaps that tick every planning box, vision and values, initiatives, prioritisation, and approved budgets, but then go quiet through execution aside from standard operational reporting, with nothing more heard from IT until the next year's cycle repeats.

How does the post say IT leaders should think about their role if 'the end user is our customer'?

The post argues that if the end user is genuinely IT's customer, IT should operate like a business: enabling the company to attract revenue rather than just reduce cost, improving user and customer experience, and maintaining competitive advantage.

What is John Kostopulos's professional background, according to this post's author credit?

The post credits John Kostopulos as Head of Business Transformation at blueAPACHE, bringing more than 15 years of experience in business and ICT strategy development, having previously consulted to a client portfolio spanning nationally recognised brands across the not-for-profit, private business, and local and state government sectors.

Source

origin post (2022)

Knowledge Base

Who is the featured expert in your blog on IT branding, and what is their role?

The featured expert is John Kostopulos, Head of Business Transformation within our business, who brings more than 15 years of experience in Business and ICT strategy development, having previously consulted to a client portfolio boasting many nationally recognised brands across NFP, private business and local/state government.

According to the blog, how has the role of IT changed in organisations?

The role of IT has shifted from being seen as a 'maintainer of equipment' to becoming a 'strategic enabler,' as technology has become central to how businesses interact with customers and operate efficiently. The blog notes this change in thinking is not natural and requires technology teams to redefine their role and help other parts of the organisation recognise the value of this new paradigm.

How does the blog redefine the traditional marketing concept of 'brand' for an IT department?

The blog reframes the standard marketing definition of brand into an IT context: IT = company, Performance/User Experience = desirability of products or services, and Roadmap Funding/Budget = price premium. This results in the statement: 'IT's brand is an aggregation of the performance/user experience produced by IT and therefore the roadmap funding/budget it is possible to attain for those services.'

Why does the blog say User Experience (UX) is important for IT departments?

The blog argues that UX has become so central to how IT is viewed, especially with decentralised workforces, that without favorable perception (particularly at the executive level), securing funding for broader digital transformation becomes increasingly challenging. It describes UX as 'an IT department's share price – as it climbs and lowers, so too does its standing in the business and its ability to attract further funding.'

What five elements does the blog recommend for improving an IT department's brand?

The blog lists five elements under 'Brand state of mind': Enablers (IT's core function to help the business compete via technology), Collaboration (engaging stakeholders across departments and senior levels during planning), Demonstrable Performance (delivering and reporting on successful execution to build trust), Communications (regularly communicating the linkage between IT execution and organisational outcomes), and Alignment & Endorsement (ensuring the roadmap aligns with organisational goals through C-level endorsement to create shared ownership).

What does the blog say about 'price premium' in the context of IT funding?

The blog clarifies that 'price premium' refers to the leverage or buy-in from an organisation to invest in IT initiatives, not how much IT can spend. It states that IT leaders must be cost conscious to secure departmental funding and demonstrate a clear linkage between investment and improvements in performance or user experience, which represents the 'brand promise.'

Does an IT leader need to be a famous figure like Steve Jobs to build a strong brand, according to the blog?

No. The blog explicitly states, 'It is important to remember that with all of the above, you don't need to be the next Steve Jobs to have a strong brand,' and adds that as a leader, one's personal brand and their department's brand are synonymous, so the framework should be tailored to the organisation's maturity and the leader's own personal style.

How can someone learn more or get in touch with you after reading this blog?

Readers are invited to contact us directly by calling 1800 248 749 or through the contact link provided in the article.