

Way 11: Four Cycles IS Planning Method Tool

An [analysis of contingencies](#) is a tool to evaluate the surrounding variables in an organization with the goal to make the subsequent decision better fit the context. In the case of the Four Cycles planning method, the contingencies can be analyzed during the first planning cycle to serve as a background in the next cycles.

For the set-up of the planning approach, the analysis of contingencies is a tool which help to assess the current state and role of IT in the organization, which is particularly useful during the first time through the cycle and when significant changes in the IS Strategy are made during previous iterations of the method.

In the field of IS strategy planning, three variables are especially important to analyze to ensure a planning which fits the organizations current state: (1) the present IT infrastructure and its successes and failures; (2) the stage of adoption and management of IT and (3) the role IS strategy plays on the organizational level.

It can be quite difficult to get a good overview of the current [IT infrastructure](#), since this phase of the planning cycles doesn't lend itself for too much detail. A good approach is to make a general [overview of the infrastructure](#) and analyze [what is successful and what is not](#). This lends itself to the iterative character of the four cycles planning method. However, objective analysis of the success and failure of IT projects and systems is very difficult and time consuming. Therefore, I suggest to make-up a top-and-flop list of projects and systems recently developed. This will allow for a quick starting point of successful and unsuccessful practices in the organization.

For the assessment how far IT is adopted into all levels of the organization, not only on the operational level, but certainly on management levels as well, different [maturity models](#) can be used. A quick [questionnaire](#) can be used to find out what the level is in a generic [technology adoption model](#).

The [role IT and IS strategy has in organizations](#) differs a great deal. In some organizations, IT fills a strictly supporting role to the main operational departments. It is only used to execute the main business process in an effective and efficient manner. In others, IT innovations and possibilities are an important driver of overall business strategy. The scope and objective of the information strategy is heavily dependent on [the role it should play in the overall business strategy](#). One of the easiest tools to find out what role IT plays in the organization, is the model of [strategic alignment by Henderson & Venkatraman](#).

The final remark I'd like to make is that since every situation is different and that because of this, there can be other contingency variables which play an important role. Therefore, don't be blind sighted by the 3 presented above.