

IT BEST PRACTICE TOOLKIT

PDS Consultants
end-to-end IT solutions

The benefits & risks of IT:

Increasingly businesses are becoming critically dependent on IT for the delivery of efficient and reliable services to clients. While the benefits of automation are well known, the use of IT brings with it significant business risks which are often not fully understood until an unexpected, but preventable, service interruption occurs.

The areas of concern:

For most businesses, major concerns relate to the protection of confidential information, the preservation of data for the specified retention period and the control of system access. Often these areas are approached in an ad hoc way, exposing companies to potential business failure in the event of a security breach and/or loss of critical data.

The effect of regulation:

Regulated industry is under increasing pressure to demonstrate to both the regulator and to clients that its use of IT is under control. As a consequence, there is a growing 'best practice' culture which places demands on business to provide reassurances that IT governance frameworks are in place for the protection of both their own and their clients' data.

The need for IT governance:

Since most firms rely on third parties to deliver IT services in the creation and support of their IT infrastructures, there is no guarantee that the day to day management of their IT systems follows procedures which meet the expectations of company policy. Without such a governance framework it is difficult to demonstrate that best practice is being followed.

The solution:

The IT Best Practice Toolkit gives firms that are dependent on IT an easy-to-use suite of IT policies, guidelines and procedures which can propel their businesses from a position of risk and uncertainty to one of confidence, control and security.

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Product overview:

The *IT Best Practice Toolkit* is a suite of standardised templates which are designed to be customised for inclusion within a firm's quality management system. In those cases where no IT quality assurance framework exists, the toolkit delivers the policies and procedures that are necessary to establish a QA system. The Toolkit also provides a fast-track methodology for complying with the IT expectations embedded within industry regulations.

There are three component categories within the toolkit:

1. IT Policies
2. IT Guidelines
3. IT Procedures

IT Policies:

It is normal for the use of IT to be governed by the presence of company policies which set out the scope of the deployment and utilisation of IT resources. These address all areas of IT infrastructure from system security to data management to risk management to the management of third party service providers. They deal with these topics at a high level as a checklist of focus areas, set against company standards.

IT Guidelines:

Guidelines, which sit alongside the IT Policies, provide insight into each policy focus area to provide guidance to the quality manager in understanding their scope (e.g. anti-virus measures, password policy, etc.) so as to assist in the customisation of the corresponding IT procedures component.

IT Procedures:

Standard operating procedures (SOPs), along with working practices (WPs), cover all aspects of IT control as defined in the IT policies:

- System Security Auditing
- Managing security breaches
- Data management
- Audit trails
- Records retention
- Backup, archive & restoration
- Records destruction
- Account management
- Control of system access
- System maintenance
- Monitoring system access
- Software licensing
- Virus management
- Computer systems validation
- System operation
- SOP administration
- Personnel management
- Training
- Disaster recovery & business continuity
- Configuration & installation management
- Change management
- Document management
- Incident management
- Risk management
- System retirement
- Supplier & vendor management
- Procurement of hardware / software / networks & applications

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