

Is your IT actually slow, or is the business setting it up to fail?

A 12-question self-assessment for IT leaders
and the executives who rely on them.

FIVE MINUTES · TWELVE QUESTIONS · ONE HONEST READ

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HOW IT WORKS

Five minutes. Twelve questions. One honest read.

Score each question from 0 to 3 based on what is true in your situation today. Add up the scores. The total tells you how structurally healthy IT is in your company. The pattern across the three sections tells you *which* of the three usual culprits is dominant - process, people, or alignment.

0	Not a problem.	We have this under control.
1	Mostly fine.	Some friction, but it does not regularly cause issues.
2	Recurring source of pain.	Everyone here knows about it.
3	On fire.	It comes up in every quarterly review.

There are three sections of four questions each. Take all twelve, then total each section and the overall score. The sections measure different things; the highest-scoring section is your **dominant culprit**.

If you are an IT leader: take the assessment yourself. If you are an executive: take it as you see things, then ask your CIO to take it independently. The gap between the two scores is itself a useful diagnostic.

SECTION A

Delivery and process

The IT operating model - does the team know how to ship, and can the business see it?

A1. When the business asks how long something will take, the team can answer within a week of work, with a reasoned estimate - not a number pulled from the air to make the meeting end.

0 1 2 3

A2. Our Roadmap reflects what we actually have the capacity to deliver this quarter - not just what the business has asked for.

0 1 2 3

A3. We have a defined Change Management process that the team actually follows, and changes do not regularly cause incidents.

0 1 2 3

A4. We have an SLA the business actually cares about. It is measured monthly. The team is held to it.

0 1 2 3

Section A total: ____ / 12

SECTION B

People, hiring and bonus

The team - are the right people in the right roles, paid for the right outcomes?

B1. When we hire someone, we can describe in one sentence the business outcome they are accountable for - not just their technical role.

0 1 2 3

B2. Our bonus and incentive model rewards the outcomes the business actually cares about - not lines of code, hours worked, or tickets closed.

0 1 2 3

B3. Recent hires have measurably moved the work forward within six months. We can name specific things that are now done because that person was hired.

0 1 2 3

B4. We are losing the right people no faster than we are losing the wrong people. The strong ones stay; the weaker ones move on.

0 1 2 3

Section B total: ___ / 12

SECTION C

Business-IT alignment

The relationship - is IT a partner the business plans with, or a vendor the business plans around?

C1. The business knows, to within $\pm 20\%$, what IT capacity actually is for the next quarter.

0 1 2 3

C2. When IT pushes back on a request, the business hears it as a real constraint - not as IT being slow or unwilling.

0 1 2 3

C3. The IT leader is in the room when the business sets quarterly priorities - not informed afterwards.

0 1 2 3

C4. When IT delivers something, the business can tell you what changed for them as a result - in their own language, not ours.

0 1 2 3

Section C total: ___ / 12

ADD IT UP

Your score, and what it means

Section A - Delivery and process	___ / 12
Section B - People, hiring, bonus	___ / 12
Section C - Business-IT alignment	___ / 12
OVERALL TOTAL	___ / 36

Your **dominant culprit** is whichever section scored highest. If two sections are tied, you have two problems compounding - read both result blocks on the following pages.

WHAT YOUR OVERALL SCORE MEANS

0-8	Functional	You are in better shape than most. Friction exists but no structural fire. Watch for drift.
9-18	Under strain	The system is not on fire - yet. The conversations are getting harder. There is a 6-12 month window to act before someone in the executive team swings the bigger hammer. This is the cheapest moment to fix it.
19-28	On fire	The relationship between Business and IT is in trouble. The CIO is being blamed for things that are structural. Hiring more developers will not fix this. A 4-6 week assessment is the right next step.
29-36	Critical	This is the band where leadership changes happen. Get a neutral read in the room before that decision is made - replacing the CIO into the same structure produces the same outcome 18 months later.

IF SECTION A SCORED HIGHEST

Your problem is delivery and process

The team is doing the work, but the operating model around the work is loose. The Roadmap has no capacity model behind it; Change Management is informal; SLAs are aspirational at best. The result is that the business cannot tell whether delivery is fast or slow because there is no rhythm of evidence to compare against. This is fixable - and it is the fastest of the three culprits to fix.

Three things you can do this week

- 1.** Take your current Roadmap and mark every item with one of: *“definitely shipping in the next 90 days,”* *“we’ll try,”* or *“wishlist.”* Most Roadmaps end up 60% wishlist. Showing this honestly to the business is the start of the conversation that gets you out of the trap.
- 2.** Pick the three changes most likely to cause an incident in the next month. Define one explicit owner for each, and one explicit rollback plan. That alone reduces next month’s incident count.
- 3.** Define one SLA the business actually cares about - *one* - and start measuring it weekly. Not all of them. One. The point is to start the muscle of evidence-based conversation, not to instrument everything at once.

IF SECTION B SCORED HIGHEST

Your problem is people, hiring, and bonus

You have the wrong system for getting the right people, or the right people are landing in a system that does not know how to use them. Either way, hiring more does not fix it - it usually makes it worse. The CFO is correct that recent hires have not moved the needle. The reason is upstream of the recruiter: it is the role definition, the bonus model, and what those people are asked to ship.

Three things you can do this week

- 1.** Take your last three hires. For each, write down in one sentence the business outcome they were hired to produce. If you cannot, *that* is the problem - and it explains why the CFO has noticed those hires were not worth it.
- 2.** Look at what your team is currently bonused on. If the bonus rewards activity (tickets closed, lines of code, hours), it is producing the wrong behaviour. Bonus must reward outcomes the business cares about, or you are paying people to do the wrong things.
- 3.** Identify the one person on your team you cannot afford to lose. Have a real career conversation with them this week - not a survey, not a slide, a conversation. The cost of losing the right person is roughly five times the cost of paying them to stay.

IF SECTION C SCORED HIGHEST

Your problem is Business-IT alignment

This is the most common one - and the most dangerous, because it is invisible to people who only see one side of it. The business has decided what IT is supposed to do without asking what IT can do, and IT has never translated its work into outcomes the business can credit. The relationship has slowly become a quarterly argument instead of a working partnership. If this is not addressed, the business will eventually conclude that the IT leader is the obstacle.

Three things you can do this week

- 1.** Write down, in two sentences each, the three things the business currently *believes* IT is delivering this quarter. Then write down what IT is *actually* delivering. The gap between those two lists is your alignment problem made visible. Do not present it yet - first sit with it.
- 2.** If you are the CIO: get yourself into the next quarterly priority-setting meeting *before* it happens - not as a presenter, as a participant. If you are the executive: invite the CIO into yours.
- 3.** Pick one thing IT shipped recently and write a four-line summary of what changed for the business as a result, in the business's own language (revenue, customer impact, risk reduced - not "deployed v2.3"). Send it to one executive. Do this every Friday until it is a habit.

NEXT STEP

If your total is 9 or higher, a 30-minute call is probably worth your time.

We use your scores as the starting point - no rebuilding context, no slide deck, just where you actually are and what to do about it. If I cannot help you, I will tell you within the first 10 minutes - and point you to who can.

Book a 30-minute call

Free. No slides. Just an honest read.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Radu Spataru - founder, INGINES. 30 years in IT. Author of *Practical Guide for IT Leaders*. Helps companies turn IT from a cost centre that gets blamed into a technology strong-power that wins business.

- *Radu*