

COBIT®

Focus

The newsletter dedicated to the COBIT® user community

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The People Factor in IT Governance

By Delton Sylvester

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to successfully implementing IT governance within an organization is the people factor. Within an organization, people can make or break initiatives. Too often control audits conducted on IT end up gathering dust in some IT manager's drawer. The common attitude toward the need for IT governance is acknowledging the necessity and simultaneously forestalling the implementation due to budget constraints.

If top management is not serious about implementing IT governance, there is little chance that the rest of the company will be. An IT governance initiative must start at the top and gradually filter down. Key decision makers must act as champions of the cause. These champions must be passionate about the subject and able to influence other key role players. If reluctant IT initiative is not addressed (by redefining job descriptions and performance contracts), an organization will have little chance of success. The organization must ensure that IT governance skill development is addressed and that personnel are equipped to handle the challenges faced by IT governance implementations.

Raising Awareness for IT Governance

There needs to be a common understanding of what IT governance entails. The campaign should begin as far up in company hierarchy as possible. Initiators should present cases of similar industries that have struggled with IT governance issues. Sources such as news clippings, research material and legislation can be used to increase personnel awareness. IT governance must be placed in the context of the organization, e.g., poor performance of IT projects, so that the message resounds. The end result of an awareness campaign must be that key people become aware of the need for IT governance.

Identify Change Agents or Champions of the Cause

Key decision makers and key role players must be identified as champions of the cause. A stakeholder analysis must then be conducted to define the expectations and concerns of stakeholders. The champions should be at a level in the organization so they can influence other key stakeholders.

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Develop IT Governance Skills

Initially, champions should use specialist skills to initiate the project. In the long run, however, champions should bring the initiative in-house. This is achieved through formal training, e.g., IT governance courses, and knowledge transfer from consultants to permanent staff. Initiators will need to continually address skills, including succession planning, to ensure continuity.

Build the Guiding Team and Address Accountability

The guiding team must advocate IT governance at all levels through various media (e.g., staff meetings, e-mail) to ensure accountability. At this stage, a Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and/or Informed (RACI) chart must be set for the IT governance project and for each *Control Objectives for Information and related Technology* (COBIT) process (see **figure 1**).

Obtain Buy-in From Top Management

The guiding team must also ensure that the board understands why it needs to initiate IT governance, e.g., legislation, good corporate governance, good public image, low risk profile. A high-level schedule of activities (e.g., conducting a COBIT assessment, communicating results) must also be produced at this stage. Additionally, a business case (including a budget) must be communicated and approval must be obtained for the IT governance program.

Fuse IT Governance With the IT Strategy

IT governance and IT strategy are often run as separate projects. This leads to competition

between the two for resources, often resulting in IT governance being viewed not as everyday work, but as an additional load. To make IT governance an intrinsic part of everyone’s work, IT governance and IT strategy need to be fused into one entity. IT governance then becomes the framework within which the IT strategy is implemented. A COBIT assessment must be conducted and priorities must be set to determine what should be addressed first. The COBIT assessment is then input into the IT strategy as a process gap analysis; the other gaps will be technology and business priorities (see **figure 2**).

Realign the IT Organization

To ensure that the whole of IT is working toward a common vision, the organization needs to be realigned to the IT strategy (with COBIT embedded therein). This entails restructuring the IT organization, redefining job descriptions and updating performance contracts in line with the IT strategy.

Build a Management Cockpit

A management cockpit (scorecard) must be implemented to ensure that progress is tracked and deviations are rectified. (Remember this involves actually tracking the strategy, with COBIT embedded therein.)

The process then begins again with a COBIT assessment, which then reassigns priorities and feeds back into the IT strategy.

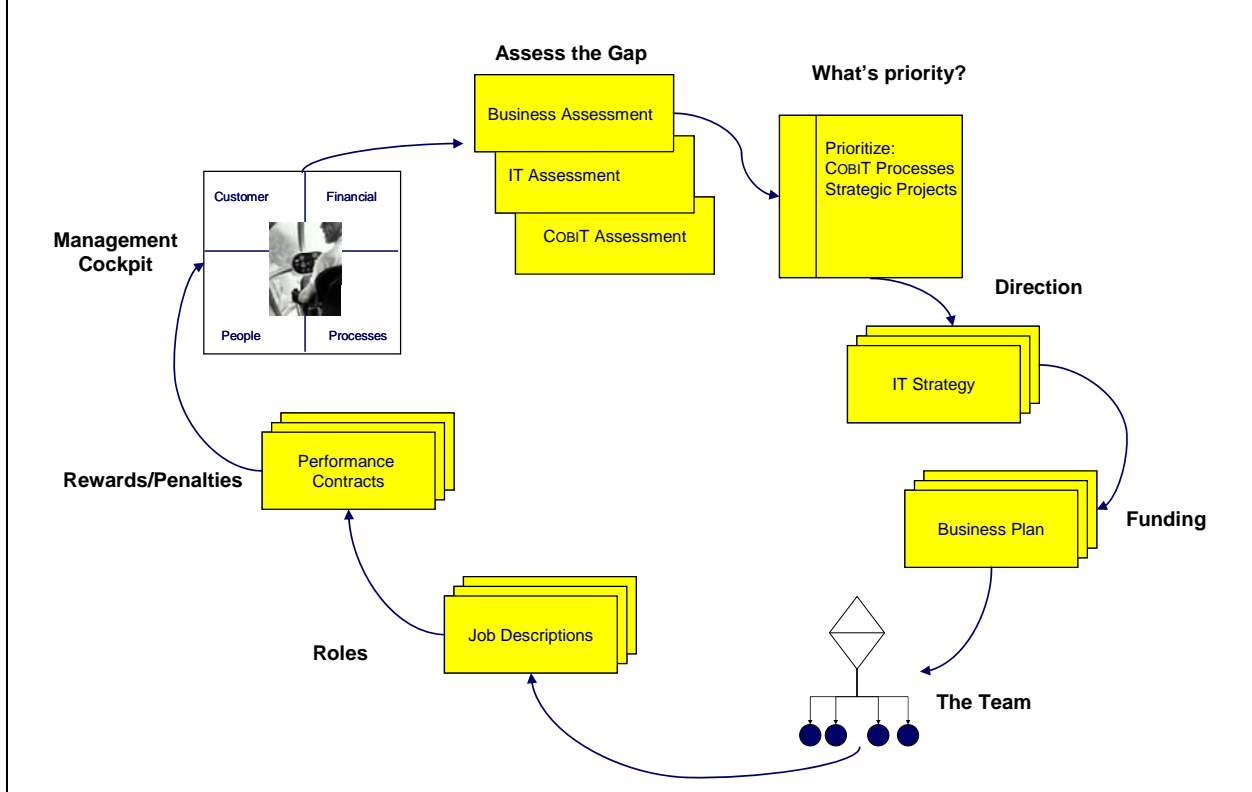
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Figure 1—RACI Chart

Role	Person X				Person Y				Person Z			
	R	A	C	I	R	A	C	I	R	A	C	I
Function												
Project management		•					•		•			•
Change management			•		•	•						•
PO1—IT strategy	•	•						•			•	

Legend:
 R—Who is responsible? (The doer)
 A—Who is accountable? (The entity that makes the final decision and has ultimate ownership)
 C—Who is consulted? (The entity that must be consulted before a decision is taken)
 I—Who is informed? (The entity that must be informed that a decision has been taken)

Figure 2—IT Strategy and IT Governance Fused



Delton Sylvester

has more than 15 years of experience in the IT industry with a key focus on project management and IT governance, including COBIT, IT strategy, and IT architecture and process design. He was one of the pioneers in implementing COBIT within South Africa at De Beers during 2000-2003. He is a subject matter expert on COBIT and frequently assists with COBIT implementations. In 2004, he acted as part of a team of 40 world experts to

update COBIT. He also played a key role in SARS' IT governance and has hosted a disaster management course for the last two years that prepares delegates to handle disasters within their organizations. Sylvester is currently redesigning the IT and business processes at Hollard and is the IT manager for the Life division, and consults for the Central Banks of SADC and East Africa.

Innovation, ICT and the ITGI IT Governance Framework

By Dirk Steuperaert, CISA

Innovation is a hot, yet tricky, theme. Particularly in this economic climate, many eyes turn to innovation as a solution or means to secure the continuation or growth of an organization. Innovation is defined in many ways. A widely accepted definition is that it is the successful introduction of new ways of doing things or doing new things. Are we doing the right things? Are we doing them the right way? Are we benefiting? The principles of managing value in the organization are applicable to support

innovation, and the adoption of Val IT™ processes will likely provide a sound structure to support innovation. This is similar to the Four Ares¹ in Val IT.

Why is innovation important? What are the drivers? Whenever an organization faces stress because a major organizational component is having problems, the organization is forced to take action. When people, processes, technology

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or money are no longer adequate, when the organization's products/services are no longer marketable, something needs to happen. First, an organization will try to change isolated or related problems. If people are lacking, the organization will recruit or train. If processes are failing, the organization will reengineer. If technology is failing, the organization will acquire new technology. If necessary changes do not bring the expected results, more action is needed. And this is where innovation starts: when optimization and change reach their maximum potential.

What is the role of technology in the innovation debate? Innovation and information and communication technology (ICT) are symbiotic. Indeed, technology can support new ways of doing business, or technological innovation can create new business opportunities. These are not the same, however. The former is the business coming up with new ideas that are implemented through technological solutions; the latter involves new technological solutions enabling new business initiatives.

To what extent do COBIT and, by extension, Val IT and the upcoming Risk IT framework² of the IT Governance Institute[®] (ITGI[™]) support innovation? A few observations can be made in this respect.

Innovation starts with new ideas, with creativity. This is people's work. No process or technology itself can generate ideas that will lead to innovation. If one wants to achieve innovation successfully, creativity must be encouraged, supported and rewarded in the most optimal manner.

Is a (rigid) process model, such as COBIT, in that case not an obstacle for innovation? A comment often heard, mostly with creative types, is that too many processes and rules (or restrictions as they are then called) kill innovation. This article argues differently. As stated above, creativity and the generation of new ideas must be encouraged and rewarded. But creativity is only the starting point of innovation. Inventions are the beginning of innovation and must be brought successfully into practice.

"Into practice" means that ideas need to be transformed into normal business activities, i.e., they need to be integrated into business processes.

Upcoming 2009 ISACA COBIT Events

23-24 February	Asia-Pacific Computer Audit, Control and Security (CACS SM) (COBIT-specific training) Kyoto, Japan www.isaca.org/asiacacs
2-6 March.....	ISACA [®] Training Week (COBIT-specific training) Houston, Texas, USA www.isaca.org/trainingweek
15-18 March.....	EuroCACS (COBIT-specific training) Frankfurt, Germany www.isaca.org/eurocacs
15-19 June	ISACA Training Week (COBIT-specific training) Vienna, Austria www.isaca.org/trainingweek
17-21 August	ISACA Training Week (COBIT-specific training) Boston, Massachusetts, USA www.isaca.org/trainingweek
14-18 September	ISACA Training Week (COBIT-specific training) Toronto, Ontario, Canada www.isaca.org/trainingweek
2-6 November	ISACA Training Week (COBIT-specific training) San Francisco, California,

"Successfully" means that the ultimate business objective, or the problem that needed to be solved, is ultimately achieved or resolved. Keeping focus and monitoring comprise the key practice for this.

For both, a structured approach is necessary, and the ITGI frameworks offer such an approach.

How is COBIT helpful for innovation? Searching through COBIT, one sees that innovation is mentioned in business goal 16 and in PO1 *Define a strategic IT plan*. Does this mean that COBIT is incompatible with innovation? The point where COBIT thinking starts—the business goals—clearly includes innovation. Therefore, innovation is recognized as one of the IT-related business goals IT has to support, and COBIT, through its business goals, defines all IT-related processes that will support successful innovation.

It is obvious that ITGI's frameworks themselves will not generate new ideas. But, once people

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generate new ideas, COBIT and Val IT provide the necessary structures and tools (e.g., business goals, IT goals, process maturity models) to bring ideas to fruition and create the best support for bringing technology evolutions to the business.

A final thought on ITGI's frameworks and the process models they include. It is not unthinkable that at some point in time the current models—the components they include and all ideas underlying them—will prove inadequate to support the new business reality. Although COBIT clearly states that it is not intended to be rigorously and literally applied, this may need to be taken a step further. One must be prepared to be flexible or to eventually rethink some of the current ideas, i.e., leaders must be ready to innovate COBIT, Val IT and the upcoming Risk IT framework at some point in the future.

Dirk Steuperaert, CISA

is currently running his own consulting company, IT In Balance, providing IT governance-related

services. Previously, he was a director at PricewaterhouseCoopers in Belgium, responsible for IT governance services. During the early years of his career, Steuperaert gained IT and IT audit expertise at SWIFT and ING Belgium. He was also a member of the COBIT Steering Committee (CSC) from 2006-2008 and remains a member of the core team supporting the activities of the CSC. Steuperaert is currently acting as project manager of the development team for the new Risk IT framework.

Endnotes

- ¹ Based on the "Four Ares" as described in *The Information Paradox*. Thorp, John; Fujitsu Consulting's Center for Strategic Leadership; *The Information Paradox: Realizing the Business Benefits of Information Technology*, McGraw-Hill, USA, 2003
- ² The initial publication of ITGI's Risk IT framework, *Enterprise Risk: Identify, Govern and Manage Risk, The Risk IT Framework*, will be out for exposure during the first quarter of 2009. Watch www.itgi.org and www.isaca.org for the exposure draft.

Using COBIT to Help the Credit Crunch

By Gary Hardy, CGEIT

This is not a joke! The recent financial turmoil and focus on costs and investments has reminded us of the efficiency aspect of IT governance. Although there is a tendency to focus on performance improvement and compliance when driving IT governance and adopting COBIT, there is always an opportunity to improve efficiency and optimise IT costs. ISACA's training programme in IT

governance implementation includes a module on looking for cost savings, but too often this aspect is neglected in real life. With recessions looming everywhere, now is the time.

IT governance will result in more effective and efficient processes; better decision mechanisms;

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Figure 1—COBIT Processes and Cost Savings

COBIT Process	Cost Area	Symptoms of an Immature Process and Potential Cost Savings
PO1 and PO10	Programme management	Inability to prioritise and cancel IT initiatives
PO5	Investment management	Poor business cases and returns on IT-related investments
PO5 and DS6	Budgeting and cost management	Poor understanding of current costs; inability to optimise the budget and identify how to spend less but obtain more value
PO10	Project management	Projects running late and over budget
AI5	Procurement	Inability to negotiate good deals and obtain value for money
DS2	Contract and supplier management	Bad supplier relationships and poor service/product delivery
DS9	Asset management	Cost of assets not understood; bad asset replacement strategy; software licenses not being used; hardware maintenance too high
DS1 and DS8	Service levels and service desk	Poor service delivery; service calls and incidents too high
DS13	Operations and systems management	Too many tools and not enough efficiency; no standardised procedures

Figure 2—Immature People-related IT Processes and Excessive Labor Costs

COBIT Process	Cost Area	Symptom of an Immature Process and Potential Cost Savings
PO4	IT management and organisation	Ineffective outsourcing arrangements; IT organisation not optimal for business needs
PO7	Deployment of human capital	Skills not aligned to competencies; highly qualified staff firefighting
PO7	IT recruitment	High recruitment costs; inability to hire staff required
PO7	Staff retention	High staff turnover; low staff morale
PO7	Use of contractors	Long-term contractors; high contractor costs as percentage of overall staff costs
PO7 and AI4	Training and staff development	High degree of errors and rework; poor feedback regarding staff learning and development

and fewer problems, errors and wasted investments. Additionally, as process maturity increases, risks decrease and quality and efficiency increase.

Figure 1 illustrates specific COBIT processes and areas where immature processes can generate unnecessary expense.

IT human resources constitute a high percentage of the IT budget, but is the IT staff viewed as technical personnel or human capital?

Figure 2 illustrates how immature people-related IT processes can result in excessive people costs and poor return on human capital.

Now is a great time to focus on cost drivers for IT governance and to expose the current practices that are likely adding to IT and business costs. COBIT can be used to demonstrate current maturity levels and to set targets for cost reduction. It may require some initial effort to

uncover these issues, but the effort will likely lead to saving money and increasing business value. Such an initiative may also provide a kick-start to get IT governance moving in the enterprise.

Gary Hardy, CGEIT

is director of IT Winners, an independent consultancy based in South Africa. He has been involved in the IT industry for more than 30 years and is a longstanding member of ISACA®. He has worked in a variety of IT roles, initially as a systems developer and project manager, then as computer audit manager for a major oil company and group manager at Deloitte & Touche in London. He has been director of consultancy for a major IT security company and a director of risk consulting at Arthur Andersen. He is currently an advisor to the ITGI and Deloitte, a thought leader on IT governance, and an author of many publications on related topics.

What Are Application Controls?

By Gary Baker, CA

The variety of possible answers to this simple question is surprising. The following are two of the most common responses:

- Application controls are the automated controls, built into an application system, that help ensure the completeness, accuracy, timeliness and authorization of transaction processing for that application.
- Application controls are the activities (manual, automated or a combination thereof) that ensure the completeness, accuracy, timeliness and authorization of transaction processing for an application.

The difference between these two definitions lies in the scope of the control activities. In the first response, the controls are limited to those automated controls that have been programmed into the application, while the second response expands the definition to include those activities that may happen outside the application itself. ISACA defines them as follows:

Manual or programmed activities intended to ensure the completeness and accuracy of records and the validity of entries made. The objectives of application controls are to

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*ensure the completeness and accuracy of the records and the validity of the entries made therein resulting from manual and programmed processing.*¹

In simpler terms, application controls are a subset of internal controls that relate to an application or application system and consist of those policies, procedures and activities designed to provide reasonable assurance that objectives relevant to a given automated solution are achieved.

COBIT® 4.1 identifies the following six Application Control (AC) objectives:

- **AC1 Source data preparation and authorization**—Ensure that source documents are prepared by authorized and qualified personnel following established procedures, taking into account adequate segregation of duties regarding the origination and approval of these documents. Errors and omissions can be minimized through good input form design. Detect errors and irregularities so they can be reported and corrected.
- **AC2 Source data collection and entry**—Establish that data input is performed in a timely manner by authorized and qualified staff. Correction and resubmission of data that were erroneously input should be performed without compromising original transaction authorization levels. Where appropriate for reconstruction, retain original source documents for the appropriate amount of time.
- **AC3 Accuracy, completeness and authenticity checks**—Ensure that transactions are accurate,

complete and valid. Validate data that were input, and edit or return for correction as close to the point of origination as possible.

- **AC4 Processing integrity and validity**—Maintain the integrity and validity of data throughout the processing cycle. Detection of erroneous transactions does not disrupt the processing of valid transactions.
- **AC5 Output review, reconciliation and error handling**—Establish procedures and associated responsibilities to ensure that output is handled in an authorized manner, delivered to the appropriate recipient and protected during transmission; that verification, detection and correction of the accuracy of output occurs; and that information provided in the output is used.
- **AC6 Transaction authentication and integrity**—Before passing transaction data between internal applications and business/operational functions (in or outside the enterprise), check it for proper addressing, authenticity of origin and integrity of content. Maintain authenticity and integrity during transmission or transport.

The COBIT Application Control objectives cover the full scope of control activities, which may be either manual or automated, include such things as document preparation and editing corrections, and ensure that COBIT's seven information criteria (effectiveness, efficiency, confidentiality, integrity, availability, compliance and reliability) are achieved for that application.

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Some common examples of application controls are:

- Logical access controls (e.g., those that limit access to application functionality)
- Date entry/field validations (e.g., validation of entered credit card numbers)
- Workflow rules (e.g., routing and sign-off of purchase requests)
- Field entries being enforced based on predefined values (e.g., pricing information)
- Work steps being enforced based on predefined status transitions (e.g., open, reviewed, closed)
- Review and follow up of application-generated exception reports
- Automated activity logs
- Automated calculations

In response to the need to better understand application controls in today's complex automated business processes, ITGI is developing detailed guidance for business and IT management, business process owners, developers, users, auditors, and compliance practitioners. This guidance, based on COBIT, will provide practical approaches for the effective design, implementation, operation and management of this increasingly critical component of an organization's system of internal controls. The guide, *COBIT and Application Controls: A Management Guide*, is expected to be available in the first quarter of 2009.²

Gary Baker, CA

is a partner in the enterprise risk practice of Deloitte & Touche LLP in Canada and leads Deloitte's Canadian IT Governance team, assisting clients in all industry sectors to identify, prioritize and manage IT risks within their organizations. Baker has authored numerous articles and is a frequent speaker on IT governance and risk

COBIT Research Update

Recently released COBIT initiatives include:

- *Aligning COBIT®, ITIL® V3 and ISO 27002 for Business Benefit*
- *Identifying and Aligning Business Goals and IT Goals*
- *IT Governance and Process Maturity*
- *Understanding How Business Goals Drive IT Goals*

The above publications can be found at www.isaca.org/deliverables or www.isaca.org/bookstore.

COBIT initiatives scheduled for availability in first quarter of 2009:

- *COBIT® and Application Controls: A Management Guide*
- *COBIT® Mapping: Mapping of BS 25999 With COBIT® 4.1*
- *COBIT® Mapping: Mapping of CMMI With COBIT® 4.1*
- *COBIT® Mapping: Mapping of ISO 20000 With COBIT® 4.1*
- *COBIT® Mapping: Overview of International IT Guidance, 3rd Edition*
- *COBIT® User Guide for Service Managers*
- *Enterprise Risk: Identify, Govern and Manage Risk, The Risk IT Framework*

management topics. He currently serves on the COBIT Steering Committee.

Endnotes

¹ ISACA, Glossary, www.isaca.org/glossary

² Once finalized, this publication will be available at www.isaca.org/deliverables and www.isaca.org/bookstore.

COBIT Case Study: Adnoc Distribution Implements COBIT for IT Value and Efficiency

Founded in 1973, Adnoc Distribution markets and distributes petroleum products and services within the United Arab Emirates and internationally. One of the largest and most innovative government-owned petroleum companies in the Arab Gulf, Adnoc Distribution offers a wide variety of petroleum and natural gas products and services.

Adnoc Distribution was growing in leaps and

bounds with the initiation of a multibillion-dollar (US) natural gas project that increased the complexity of operations. Resources were not proportionally increased, projects were not prioritized and IT value was increasingly questioned. Adnoc Distribution did not have established processes and procedures to provide IT services in an effective and efficient manner. IT was viewed as a cost center, and management did

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not believe that the investment was justified.

Hence, IT department leaders suggested implementing COBIT to add discipline, improve service levels, increase IT users' satisfaction and improve IT governance practices—thereby enabling the business to achieve its goals.

The main goal of the COBIT implementation was to improve the efficiency of the delivery of the information systems services by either improving the existing processes or designing and implementing new processes. Although Adnoc Distribution was aware that not all of the COBIT processes were applicable or required, the prioritization exercise helped the company streamline the implementation and carry it out in phases. The processes achieved their intended results, and a significant improvement was noticed in the efficiency of IT services delivery. They have led to organization and maturity and have been embedded in the IT culture.

After a successful first phase of COBIT implementation, Adnoc Distribution is integrating COBIT with other frameworks for maximum benefit. While it is expected to take one to two years to achieve the seamless integration of the different frameworks, Adnoc looks forward to the efficiencies it will realize as a result.

This is an excerpt of the latest COBIT case study featured on the ISACA web site. The full text of this case study is available at www.isaca.org/cobitcasestudies.

The experiences described in a COBIT case study are effective ways to share what is working well and what challenges enterprises have faced. Submitting material for a case study is easy. Simply contact news@isaca.org or +1.847.660.5566 to receive details and a list of questions.

The Importance of COBIT Control Practices

By Jimmy Heschl, CISA, CISM, CGEIT

When COBIT 4.1 was introduced in 2007, the content of the control objectives was reduced in both number and in the wording of each objective. This was done in order to make each objective concise and focused. This process was initiated with the release of COBIT® 4.0, but was taken further in 4.1.

In conjunction with these developments, a new version of the *COBIT Control Practices*, first released in 2004, was launched. Part of this redevelopment involved realigning the new material with the latest COBIT version, and because of the effort to make the control objectives more concise, some of the detail was moved into the control practices. The control practices were also realigned and updated, creating more valuable guidance.

Experience has shown that it is best to now use the control objectives and control practices together, giving a fuller set of guidance on what each objective is and on what needs to be achieved for successful governance. For each objective there are an average of six further guidance statements as well as the drivers for value and risk (i.e., the benefits of implementation and the risks of not implementing).

Initially *COBIT Control Practices: Guidance to Achieve Control Objectives for Successful IT Governance* was only available in hard copy from the ISACA Bookstore, and sales showed that only a few hundred people were using it. As a result it was decided to offer this volume to all ISACA members as a free PDF download. In addition the COBIT control practices can be browsed, filtered and downloaded from COBIT Online®.

COBIT users are encouraged to acquire and use this guidance alongside COBIT 4.1 when implementing improved IT processes or when undertaking assurance reviews. The guidance is extremely useful. As with all COBIT guidance, feedback about its use, including suggested improvements, is always welcome.

Jimmy Heschl, CISA, CISM, CGEIT is senior manager IT advisory at KPMG Austria. He is also a board member of the ISACA Austria Chapter, a member of the COBIT Steering Committee and the program manager of the COBIT mapping series. He was highly involved in the development of the latest version of COBIT. He is experienced in implementing COBIT in different organizations and is an accredited COBIT trainer.

ISACA COBIT Education

Looking for ways to build the internal competencies that support the adoption of COBIT and IT governance? ISACA provides COBIT training in several formats. All ISACA classroom-based courses are delivered by ISACA-accredited trainers. The following are some highlighted COBIT training opportunities available through ISACA.

COBIT Education at North America CACS 2009

The following North America CACS workshops are planned:

- Preconference Workshop—COBIT Foundation Course™
- Postconference Workshop—Using COBIT in IT Audit

In addition to these workshops, North America CACS conference sessions related to COBIT include:

- An Integrated Process Model
- Delivering Governance Using COBIT and ISO/IEC 38500
- Beyond COBIT: Implementing IT Governance Using COBIT, ITIL, ISO 27000 and Six Sigma
- IT Governance—Strategic Alignment and Convergence With the Business
- Auditing IT Governance: A Multiphased Approach

COBIT Campus

ISACA has developed a portfolio of formal training programs that address the need for COBIT training at

various levels. Working with ITpreneurs, ISACA has a full array of training courses available in a self-paced online format in addition to classroom versions. Courses are available through COBIT® Campus at www.isaca.org/cobitcampus. The online COBIT curriculum includes the following courses:

- COBIT® Awareness Course (2 hours, self-paced e-learning)
- COBIT Foundation Course (8 hours, self-paced e-learning)
- COBIT® Foundation Course Exam (1 hour, online 40 questions)
- COBIT® for Sarbanes-Oxley Compliance (5 hours, self-paced e-learning)

While at COBIT Campus, visit the FAQ link to learn more about the courses, process and technical requirements. COBIT Campus is supported for ISACA by ITpreneurs. Use the support links to contact ITpreneurs for registration and technical assistance.

COBIT Training Week

ISACA is proud to offer a unique new training week course. COBIT® Training Week integrates ITGI research and ISACA's current COBIT educational courses into a single, comprehensive COBIT training program. COBIT Training Week will take place 2-6 March 2009 at the InterContinental Houston in Houston, Texas, USA. Please see www.isaca.org/trainingweek for more information.

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