



# Your 2015 Technology “To Do” List

*Top 10 technology issues that need to be on your organization’s tech priority list in 2015.*

## 1. Securing the IT Environment

### Questions to Ask:

**Description:** Securing your IT environment involves ensuring your information systems are protected against, among other things:

- Unauthorized access to your systems, from both inside and outside your firewall.
- Unauthorized modification of information.
- Unauthorized access to confidential or sensitive information, regardless of where this is stored (on servers, desktops, laptops, or mobile devices) or during transmission via email.

1. When did you last conduct a risk assessment to identify internal vulnerabilities and threats?
2. How does your business ensure the availability and continuity of your IT services?

## 2. Managing and Retaining Data

### Questions to Ask:

**Description:** Managing and retaining data involves the oversight and storage of data for a variety of business reasons. Data stored in outdated or incompatible formats, or data improperly backed up, may lead to irrevocable loss of data.

1. How well does your organization conform to its data management policies and procedures? How well does it monitor its compliance with regulatory requirements?
2. Even if you believe your organization is properly backing up its data, when was the last time restoring this data was tested?

## 3. Managing IT Risks and Compliance

### Questions to Ask:

**Description:** Managing IT risks and compliance requires creating controls to help mitigate potential business threats. Without solid processes in place to manage these risks, the organization may be incredibly vulnerable to:

- Viruses and other malware,
- Employee turnover,
- Fires and other disasters.

1. When was the last time your risk management policies were reviewed against your entire IT ecosystem?
2. How – and how frequently – does your organization monitor the effectiveness of its IT-related internal controls?

## 4. Managing System Implementations

### Questions to Ask:

**Description:** Implementing a new system is done to increase organizational effectiveness. Many implementations fail due to lack of technical planning, project management, personnel availability, staff training and cooperation, and other factors. Without strong management of the system implementation, the implementation could be delayed or even aborted, wasting a significant investment with no return.

1. How well do your systems align with the organization's strategic goals?
2. How many, and what types of, work-arounds have you developed for your current systems?

## 5. Enabling Decision Support and Analysis

### Questions to Ask:

**Description:** Enabling strong decision support and analysis allows an organization's leaders to make more educated strategic and operational decisions. Without strong technology support for your business, management may base decisions on inaccurate or incomplete reports, and information.

1. How do you and other organization executives know you receive reports with accurate, complete, and timely data?
2. How well does your organization seem to use business intelligence and performance management technologies?
3. How closely is your management reporting aligned with the organization's strategic goals?



## 6. Governing and Managing IT Investments and Spending

### Questions to Ask:

**Description:** This initiative ensures an organization aligns its business strategies and its information technology, and then allocate and manage time and funding to receive a solid return on its IT investment.

1. How closely is your organization's IT budget aligned with the organization's mission and strategic plan?
2. How – and how frequently – does your organization review its return on its IT investment?

## 7. Leveraging Emerging Technologies

### Questions to Ask:

**Description:** This initiative enables your organization to be more effective at anticipating, and adapting to changes in technology. These changes can make your organization mobile, more efficient, and more effective, and potentially create new revenue streams.

1. What are your organization's policies and controls for emerging technologies – including personal devices like smart phones or tablets, and cloud-based services – which might commingle personal and business information?
2. How well does your staff adhere to the organization's policies and controls for emerging technologies? How well does your staff understand these policies and controls?
3. How well does your organization seem to evaluate and manage the cost, risk, and value of emerging technologies?

## 8. Ensuring Privacy

### Questions to Ask:

**Description:** Ensuring privacy in relation to technology concerns protecting the rights of individuals, and assuring organizations use, retain, disclose and dispose of personal information in an appropriate manner.

1. What system controls are in place to help detect inappropriate attempts – whether accidental or malicious – to access private information?
2. What steps would your staff follow in the event of a potential or actual security breach?

## 9. Preventing and Responding to Computer Fraud

### Questions to Ask:

**Description:** Preventing and responding to computer fraud involves creating policies and plans to prevent and respond to fraud within the organization. Without preparation, an organizations faces greater risks and more vulnerabilities.

1. How well have you and other managers been trained to identify risk factors of computer fraud?
2. What safeguards has your organization implemented to prevent and detect unauthorized access to security controls, encryption keys, firewalls, and intrusion detection systems?

## 10. Managing Vendors and Service Providers

### Questions to Ask:

**Description:** Managing vendors and service providers effectively within an organization can save an organization time and money. Without this type of oversight, the company may unknowingly take on risks of the vendor, or may be unable to find the right service provider for their organization – in either case, an organization can open itself to security, confidentiality, and processing integrity risks.

1. When hiring a vendor or service provider, what due diligence does your organization perform in assessing the credentials, reputation, and stability of the company or individual?
2. To what extent does your organization involve IT and other appropriate areas in assessing risks and controls over vendors and service providers?

Read the full article at [www.todddherman.com/improve-business/tech-list](http://www.todddherman.com/improve-business/tech-list)



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**Sources:** Descriptions and questions in this article are based, in part, on details from the **2013 Top Technology Initiatives Survey – Business & Industry Checklist, 2013 North America Top Technology Initiatives Survey Results**, and the **2013 Top Technology Initiatives Survey Results: Business and Industry White Paper.**

Of the survey participants, 36% are in public accounting, 36% are in business and industry and 28% in consulting, government or not-for-profit or other organizations. A majority of the participants said they "frequently" or "regularly" encounter information technology questions in their field of work.