

ABSTRACT

Recent studies concerning GIS show that it is the fastest growing segment (both hard & software) of the graphical computer market. 70% of private organizations expect to use GIS as a strategic tool within their company.

Like a product, GIS in an organization has a life cycle. According to the model of Nolan this life cycle starts with awareness and ends when full integration with other information systems is achieved. Until recently project management for GIS projects was mainly about projects which were considered to be experimental. The requirements for such projects differ from the requirements for projects which are strategic for a company. Strategic GIS projects require a project manager with thorough understanding of issues such as: planning, knowledge of the objectives of the project, project environment and politics. There is little experience with such GIS projects. However the question "How to manage a GIS project effectively" has to be answered for strategically positioned GIS projects to be successful.

It is important for project managers to understand the relationship between the position of GIS in an organisation (Nolan Model) in relationship to the importance of GIS for the organisation (Mc Farlan). The way a GIS project should be handled depends, to a large extent, on these two positionings.

A combination of IT methodologies such as Structured Analysis and Design, project management methodologies such as PRINCE and Hewlett-Packards Customer Project Life Cycle 2 combined with best practices are proposed in order to provide a framework, for project managers, to handle GIS projects which are considered strategic for the organisation.

This framework, based on prior experience and through evaluation of a complex GIS project has been shown, in some respects, to work. There is still some uncertainty since there is little experience in the market with strategic GIS projects so there are not a lot of "best practices" to learn from and to further evaluate the proposed approach available.