



Davide Grassano joined KPMG Italy in 1978 and has encountered many different issues in the field of Information Technology in various management roles. He became a partner in the KPMG Italian division in 1990. He has led the KPMG IT Advisory practice in Italy since 2006. In 2013 Davide was appointed Lead Partner of KPMG IT Advisory Management Consulting Network for Europe, the Middle East and Africa. He is also a member of the Global IT Advisor Team. Furthermore, he is CIO for the Italian Network. Currently he focuses on selected global accounts, IT Innovation and IT Alliances.



## Creating Value in the Network Era

The main challenge is how to align business needs with IT

Interview: Davide Grassano

*How did this Jules Verne tale inspire you in talking about the IT world?*

Jules Verne, with his tales set in the air, in space, in the depths of the seas, inspired scientists and technological applications of later ages. Sometimes a lot of things or innovations seem impossible to realize, but some years later they become real! It is the same with IT.

*What were the main steps in information technology in past years?*

Forty years ago the first main-frame computers were introduced in companies, and they impressed people with their power and speed. These big machines took up whole rooms with very cold air conditioning, and their performance was inferior to that of the cheapest PCs sold in shops today.

Nowadays some emerging technologies and innovations are creating destructive forces that have the poten-

tial to disrupt the *status quo* – the way people live and work. They rearrange value pools and lead to entirely new products and services. IT and globalization are directly affecting the real world: changing the speed, shape and scope of competition. As a result, networked organizations and virtual enterprises become reality; new kinds of partnerships and strategic alliances emerge. Within this context, many managers understand the competitive power IT can offer, but, in order to play its role as enabler, IT should be embedded into the business.

*What are the main issues related to IT Advisory?*

In an ever more complex scenario marked by continuous technological innovations, the current focus of IT Advisory is recognizing these changes and adding value in deriving the right formula to successfully manage business objectives.

There is no competitive advantage in IT itself, only in the way it is used. The relationship between IT and business stakeholders is changing. I have been observing IT and business users come together differently from how this has happened in the past. They share similar views of what can be achieved with new technologies: who will play each role (people) and how to make it (platforms) happen through the implementation of best practices in order to find common ground. These objectives require a great level of joint work and coordination between IT and business units, facilitated with strategic vision that IT Advisory must provide in its journey towards improvement. In this sense, we need to build a new partnership between IT and business.

*How do IT Advisory services affect competition?*

The role of IT Advisory is becoming more and more strategic in helping clients to make the right decision at the right time. Today making the right decision is a complex matter for

all corporate decision makers. Not only because they now have such a wide set of options and possibilities for different IT architectures and business models, but also, as we know well, because any change in innovation also encompasses risks and big changes in people's behavior and attitudes.

Our aim in IT Advisory is helping our clients:

- to find the right innovation
- to focus and create new business opportunities
- to build an agile organization
- to analyze internal and external available data in order to support decisions and improve risk management.

*What are the main drivers of these changes and how do they affect KPMG?*

There is a new way of thinking about IT projects that creates more value. It is based on measurable achievements combined with the benefit of a better process-driven approach by Business Process Management solutions.

The other trend is moving from legacy to real-time business: the in-memory processing of relevant amounts of data from different sources (internal and external data).

Those trends have helped shape the current goals for our local IT Advisory practice:

- driving client business strategy facilitated by technology and innovation
- helping to build team organizations managed by event and Business Process Management
- collaboration in moving information and connecting people, since deficiencies in this area often include communication with the client
- mobile collaboration: for instance, all our 3,500 employees in the Italian division are now able to access com-

pany data and company systems from their mobile devices, anytime and anywhere, as if they were sitting in their offices; the use of mobile devices is based on security policies for business use; at the same time, free personal use of these mobile devices has improved employee performance and satisfaction

- managing risk is one of the new areas of change as the level of threat awareness and control dictated by current and future global compliance protocols is increasingly critical for the business
- a new area of early development in the innovation roadmap is cyber security, which is important to put in place for defense and prevention without violating individual rights derived from privacy principles and related regulations
- Integrated Risk Management is the key area where the IT Advisory practice has been very active in developing and supporting the strongest cloud-based technology solution.

*Exploring the future, what's next?*

The art and the science of combining business and IT is a key factor in creating value. Moreover the "agility" in the IT operations and applications development will be another *buzzword* in the IT agenda. This new approach means developing features that bring greater value with frequent incremental releases of the agreed-upon functionalities, sharing them and getting feedback from users to confirm developments. This flexibility makes the system extensible and modular, so that new features are implemented in the future for integration with management systems and other platforms.

Finally, we must encourage a different view of IT, as a set/network of technologies rather than silos of products/applications. In order to successfully manage this complex "ecosystem," IT Advisory should take a new holistic and multidisciplinary approach and hone new project management skills.

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