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# 5 Tactics to Deliver More By Doing Less (and Doing Better)

By [Alistair Lloyd](#)

## Your future service delivery model is simpler than you think

It's good to be popular. Interest in technology and how it can help your organization continues to grow. There are increasing pressures on you and your team to respond to business change while also playing an active role in transforming the company. There is just one hitch – you need to be able to do this with a reduced budget.

This is not a new problem for CIOs. Each budget cycle finds your operational and capital costs robustly challenged. This dilemma – mounting business demand with a shrinking supply of resources – is not yours alone. It is a whole-of-business problem.

The opportunity for you is to use this dilemma as the basis to establish five practices which will allow you to do something that seems to defy logic – deliver more, of better quality, by doing less.

## 1. Refresh your city plan

In 2000 The McKinsey Quarterly published an article titled "[The Paris Guide to IT Architecture](https://www.alistairlloyd.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/TheParisGuideToITArchitecture.pdf) [https://www.alistairlloyd.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/TheParisGuideToITArchitecture.pdf]" which used city planning as a metaphor for enterprise architecture. This concept was simple to understand and powerful as a communication tool throughout the business.

Like the city you live in, enterprise business systems have:

- History (legacy systems).
- Precincts (groups of solutions serving particular functions).
- Building codes (solution architecture standards).
- Preferred materials (the right technology for the right job).

When facing spending pressure refresh your city plan and use this as a conversation piece to discuss what parts need to be refurbished, reused or rebuilt. With this improved understanding of your organization's existing solutions and services you will be able to lead



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## 2. USING scarcity and necessity to your advantage

Both scarcity and necessity are cited as drivers for creativity. The HBR Blog network published opinion pieces in 2011 arguing the case for each. [This article \[https://blogs.hbr.org/2011/01/the-number-one-key-to-innovati/\]](https://blogs.hbr.org/2011/01/the-number-one-key-to-innovati/) states that “deliberately imposing scarcity” was a catalyst for creativity. However, a [complementary view \[https://blogs.hbr.org/2011/03/necessity-not-scarcity-is-the/\]](https://blogs.hbr.org/2011/03/necessity-not-scarcity-is-the/) is that innovation is most likely to be effective when there is a clear problem to solve.

As a CIO the problems for you and your team to address are not always well defined. Your challenge is to make them clear.

Lead your team and C-level peers through cycles of refining demands and reducing these down to a discrete, achievable set of goals. Challenge your team to respond with solutions which use the technologies and capabilities already at their disposal. Take a leaf from the Apollo 13 playbook – figure out [how to fit a round peg into a square hole \[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2YZnTL596Q\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C2YZnTL596Q). You will enable your team to deliver against a more focused set of requirements by leveraging existing investments.

## 3. Standardize your skill sets

Standardized work practices and continuous improvement are the basis of [lean manufacturing \[https://blogs.hbr.org/2011/03/fast-lean-by-michael-zinser/\]](https://blogs.hbr.org/2011/03/fast-lean-by-michael-zinser/). In manufacturing this leads to reduced task time, streamlined work sequences and reduced inventory. In a service delivery environment – such as IT – the opposite approach is more common. Efficiency improvements in IT often rely on the introduction of new technology, the creation of more complex processes, or the duplication of data. These “improvements” are costly to implement and maintain.

Take [the lead offered by best practice in materials management \[https://hbr.org/2011/10/lean-knowledge-work/ar/1\]](https://hbr.org/2011/10/lean-knowledge-work/ar/1) and apply lean thinking to your IT service delivery.

Reduce the number of technology platforms you support by applying architectural principles that encourage reuse and identify single solutions for common business functions.

Consolidate the technologies underpinning your business, such as database, infrastructure and client solutions.



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## 4. Don't be too efficient

In 1984 Eliyahu Goldratt and Jeff Cox published “[The Goal](https://www.amazon.com/The-Goal-Process-Ongoing-Improvement/dp/0884271951/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1382166338&sr=8-1&keywords=the+goal) [[https://www.amazon.com/The-Goal-Process-Ongoing-Improvement/dp/0884271951/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1382166338&sr=8-1&keywords=the+goal](https://www.amazon.com/The-Goal-Process-Ongoing-Improvement/dp/0884271951/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1382166338&sr=8-1&keywords=the+goal)] ” which told the story of a manufacturing plant manager facing an ultimatum – improve productivity and profit, or go out of business. While he makes good progress on improving material availability and eliminating bottlenecks, the protagonist encounters an unexpected problem. The removal of gaps and delays caused the equivalent of peak hour gridlock. Productivity began to slide and targets were missed.

This can also occur in IT services and project delivery.

If the space between changes is too small, your team members are constrained as their work is too tightly packed. There is no buffering between major projects, and the minor changes that slip in between them.

To improve the flow, create space between projects and major production releases. Give things time to settle down. Bundle associated groups of changes into their own release. The result will be a consistent flow of delivery work that doesn't get tangled by being full to capacity.

## 5. Dining on elephants

How do you eat an elephant? Easy – one bite at a time. It's a classic kids joke as well as being sound advice for managing large capital budgets in the grown-up world of business.

Future budgets for major projects will come in irregular waves and will be [hard fought](#)

[[https://www.cio.com.au/article/456829/4\\_ways\\_federal\\_fiscal\\_austerity\\_will\\_impact\\_it\\_budgets](https://www.cio.com.au/article/456829/4_ways_federal_fiscal_austerity_will_impact_it_budgets)] . There will be high expectations of the projects that support the business trend towards austerity and controlling your non-discretionary “[MOOSE](https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/IT-MOOSE-management-maintain-and-operate-the-organization-systems-and-equipment) [<https://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/IT-MOOSE-management-maintain-and-operate-the-organization-systems-and-equipment>] ” (Maintain and Operate the Organization, Systems and Equipment) spend.



Break your portfolio into three levels – long term strategic programs, medium term tactical projects, and short term operational response initiatives.

Be ruthless in the governance and decision making that drives which projects get funding and which get set aside.

Break the projects into smaller pieces; each piece should deliver a positive business outcome, and should build upon the piece implemented before it.

In this manner you can control three things.

1. Your peers can see evidence of progress being made and value added with each release
2. Your team is able to be flexible, adapting to a changing business environment as they go, rather than having a fixed, long-term goal set at the start of a major initiative
3. Limited capital funding resources are more closely managed, with financial benefits being yielded earlier

Delivering more with fewer resources, and to a better level of quality, may seem an impossible goal. However, this is exactly what will be expected of the CIO of the Future, and all of your C-level peers.

As you lead discussions with your colleagues, bring with you these five talking points to share:

- What parts of our existing business systems landscape can we refresh, reuse or rebuild to get the job done?
- Which are the critical issues that we face right now, and how can we use existing resources to respond to them?
- How can we further consolidate, standardize and simplify our processes and systems to take advantage of our core capabilities?
- Where on our project roadmaps are we scheduling time to allow changes to truly bed down and become a stable part of our operations?
- Why don't we break major projects down into realistic, achievable pieces?

*In your experience what are the primary levers of doing more with less?*

*Are you expected to deliver more, with less? How do you go about this?*



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