Technology Roadmapping, towards a wiser approach in identifying technology investments. – By: Osama Gamal ElDin

Have you ever asked yourself which technology areas should you invest in for your company? Did you ever make an investment to learn something that you found resulting in zero added value to what your customers want? Were you ever trapped in the hassle of making the right decision towards your technology investments? If yes then you might need to consider integrating the Technology Roadmapping procedure as a part of your organization's process structure.

Technology Roadmapping "TRM" is a systematic approach that aids an organization to make better technology investment decisions. The procedure is divided into four consecutive steps/workshops which are interdependent and the result for applying these four steps is the TRM. The TRM approach is widely used all over the world. SECC has implemented it here in Egypt with several organizations and the results showed that applying this systematic procedure saves a lot of time, effort and money that could have been wasted in planning and aimless trials.

First step is to conduct the Market Workshop, this is conducted to extract the customer's needs and the internal organization's needs. What the customer wants and the organization needs certainly should be the main driver for any decisions the organization makes. That is why this workshop is important to identify and state these needs and prioritize them to control and guide the organization's decisions. The outcome of this workshop is the prioritized Market and Internal Business Drivers.

Market workshop is then followed by the Product Workshop. Here we start breaking the product into a set of product features and then identify the effect of each of the Market and Internal Business Drivers on each of these product features i.e what is the impact of these drivers if enhanced on each part of the product that is being built . The output of this workshop is the Drivers/Product Features impact grid.

Now we have the most important product features from the Product Workshop. We then use these as an input to the Technology Workshop in which we identify the Technologies that we need to learn in order to develop or enhance these product features. Finally we prioritize these technologies according to the impact between them and the product features by constructing the Product Features/Technologies impact grid.

Here we have spotted the most important Technologies that should be learnt down from the Market and Business Drivers. Now comes the time that we start mapping learning these technologies to a time schedule i.e we conduct the Charting Workshop to construct a Roadmap that shows the time schedule that we will follow to learn these technologies according to the defined priorities and needs.

As illustrated previously the final outcome of applying the TRM procedure is the map that will guide the organization towards learning and capacity building, this map is dependent on the real needs which when spotted and served correctly will sure result in better serving for the customer which apparently will serve in boosting the organization's business.