

Streamlining IT Integration at a Roll-Up Company: Lessons from the Frontlines

In the high-stakes world of roll-up companies, where multiple acquisitions are consolidated under a single umbrella, IT integration often emerges as the linchpin for operational success—or failure. As roll-ups expand their portfolios, bringing diverse systems, platforms, and processes into alignment becomes a daunting yet mission-critical challenge. Here's how leaders are navigating this complex terrain, transforming IT into a catalyst for growth.

The IT Conundrum in Roll-Ups

Roll-up companies typically acquire businesses with distinct IT ecosystems. From legacy systems at an industrial parts distributor to cutting-edge cloud platforms at a tech startup, each acquired entity arrives with its own technological baggage. These disparate systems may power individual business units effectively, but they rarely align with the strategic goals of the parent company.

For a roll-up, the goal is twofold: create a cohesive IT infrastructure that drives synergies across businesses while preserving the unique value of each acquisition. The stakes are high—poorly executed integration can lead to operational silos, skyrocketing costs, and even cultural rifts. Conversely, seamless integration can unleash efficiencies, enhance data visibility, and accelerate growth.

Step One: Define the Vision

Successful IT integration starts with a clear vision. Leadership must articulate how IT will support the company's overarching strategy—whether it's achieving economies of scale, enabling cross-selling, or standardizing operations. This vision should drive every decision, from technology investments to staffing.

In a roll-up, IT isn't just a back-office function; it's a growth enabler. A unified IT strategy empowers teams to innovate and scale without being bogged down by operational inefficiencies.

Step Two: Assess and Prioritize

Once the vision is in place, the next step is to conduct a comprehensive audit of the IT assets across the portfolio. This includes cataloging software applications, hardware,

networks, and security protocols. Equally important is understanding how these systems support existing business processes.

Rather than attempting to overhaul everything at once, savvy roll-ups prioritize. Core systems—such as ERP platforms, CRM tools, and cybersecurity frameworks—typically take precedence. The aim is to create a scalable backbone while allowing less critical systems to evolve over time.

Step Three: Standardize, But Stay Flexible

Standardization is the holy grail of IT integration, but it's not a one-size-fits-all approach. For instance, while it makes sense to standardize enterprise-wide data management practices, preserving industry-specific tools for specialized teams might be equally critical.

A hybrid approach often works best. Some roll-ups deploy a centralized IT team responsible for infrastructure and governance, while leaving room for decentralized units to tailor solutions to their needs. This balance fosters consistency without stifling innovation.

Step Four: Manage Change, Not Just Systems

Technology integration is as much about people as it is about systems. Resistance to change is a common hurdle, particularly when employees feel their workflows or job security might be at risk. Transparent communication, robust training programs, and early involvement of key stakeholders are crucial to overcoming these challenges.

Integration isn't just an IT problem—it's a cultural journey. Your best technology won't succeed if your people don't buy into it.

Step Five: Measure, Refine, Repeat

Integration is not a one-and-done exercise. As the roll-up grows, its IT needs will evolve. Establishing metrics to track progress—such as system uptime, cost savings, and employee adoption rates—ensures leaders can adapt their strategy over time.

Regularly revisiting the IT roadmap allows companies to align with shifting business goals, industry trends, and emerging technologies.

The Payoff

When done right, IT integration can transform a roll-up company into a powerhouse. Unified systems enable real-time data analysis, empowering decision-makers with

actionable insights. Streamlined operations reduce costs and improve agility, while robust cybersecurity safeguards the enterprise as it scales.

The journey is rarely smooth, but for companies willing to invest the time and resources, the rewards are clear. As the roll-up model continues to gain traction, IT integration will remain at the heart of its success—proving that in business, as in technology, unity is strength.

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Andy Zmugg is a principal in the Boston office of the Avec Group. At Avec, we're focused on amplifying growth for middle market businesses (\$10M-\$500M). Our experienced team has been on both sides of transactions and in sectors ranging from automotive to healthcare. We also understand the deal close is just the beginning—we'll work with you to unlock sustainable revenue growth.