Pragmatic, value-focused support for the design and implementation of complex IT projects appears more necessary than ever before, especially in times of ubiquitous digitalization, as “software is eating the world” (Andreessen 2011): In increasingly digital companies, the number of projects that is not heavily dependent on IT is constantly falling. The implementation of organization projects, projects for implementing regulatory requirements and merger and acquisition projects is also practically impossible without the involvement of IT—“every budget is becoming an IT budget” (Gartner 2012).

1.1 A New School of IT

IT has always involved automation, and IT has also always had a disruptive influence. Business models have always changed as a result of IT. Some disappeared, some only became possible in the first place. So is everything the same as it always was? Not entirely, because a number of factors are currently combining: The world is becoming more digital, data and applications are becoming mobile, and IT projects have to deliver quick results. Even during development, it must be possible to adapt their focus. Long project durations are undesirable, because the world has often changed so dramatically after a long project that it is difficult to know whether the originally promised benefits are actually generated. This leads to a change that is more radical than the slow progress of automation. Concepts that appeared promising yesterday are now a hindrance. It seems that enterprise IT has a new role and that it requires new or at least additional skills and capabilities.

Faced with technological disorder in the context of mobile technologies, broad digital transformation and elastic, cloud-based infrastructures, IT is no longer just a central means of production. Rather, enterprise IT is becoming an essential co-designer and co-creator of future solutions. In order to fulfill this role, it must
assess the opportunities and risks of new technologies, talk to users and business departments, and know the challenges faced by the respective industry.

As a result, enterprise IT is changing from a pure service provider to an enabler and co-designer of business changes. Instead of just implementing an operating department’s ideas, and instead of just providing defined services to an agreed quality, enterprise IT is taking on a consulting role. Based on its knowledge of technology costs and benefits, and of business challenges and opportunities, enterprise IT now works together with the operating departments to design solutions that can be implemented efficiently, that have innovation potentials, and that provide competitive advantages.

In other words: Enterprise IT is on the move. From the basement to the boardroom. It now has a say and takes responsibility. And it can only do this if it understands both technology and business.

Companies are currently facing huge strategic changes triggered by three key IT trends: mobility of clients and employees, agility in software development, and elasticity of IT infrastructure. These are the foundations that are increasingly defining the requirements of enterprise IT. And because an enterprise IT that satisfies these requirements has a different structure and different competencies than traditional enterprise IT, we call it the New School of IT. This is admittedly bold, but clearly states that the upcoming changes will go far beyond a normal level of change.

1.1.1 Mobility

Mobility is increasing across all industry sectors: Central business processes have mobile components, or at least components that can be mobilized. Clients and suppliers can be integrated using web-based applications or native apps and take over important parts of the business process. Mobile solutions need to be developed and delivered quickly. The aim is to rapidly launch new products or services on the market, often using a range of different sales channels.

Whether the mobility of data and applications demanded by users is always required, and whether it is socially and economically beneficial that the availability of humans is increasing, and that parts of the business process can be outsourced, is irrelevant for the question of whether enterprise IT must be able to develop and operate mobile applications. The trend toward mobility is a social trend, and the experiences gained in the private context are creating expectations in companies.

Consequently, enterprise IT must come to terms with the topic of mobility. This is exacerbated by the fact that mobility is often also an important driver for innovative applications, simply because the mobilization of data and applications can lead to structurally different applications and entirely new use cases, which makes the topic of mobility even more essential for enterprise IT. After all, the mastering of technologies that have the potential to trigger the next batch of changes in application landscapes cannot be outsourced and remains part of the enterprise IT’s core business.