WHAT DOES THE CIO OF THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE? A PARADIGM SHIFT AT FOUR KEY LEVELS
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Introduction
CIOs are under more pressure to change than ever before. IT leaders, who are traditionally responsible for ensuring technology operations stay up and running, are now being asked to lead a digital transformation of the business.

In many cases, this transition represents a fundamental shift. Many CIOs become technology leaders after focusing on the internal IT department, while their c-suite peers, such as the CMO and CFO, have a career-long exposure to external business practices. For many IT directors, the shift from operations to transformations is sharp.

There is no turning back. Great CIOs have already won the right to sit at the centre of business success by proving the value of technology. All IT leaders must embrace transformation and take on new responsibilities. They must communicate with business peers and source solutions from various partners. For CIOs who don’t shy from challenges, the future has never been brighter.
The paradigm shift in the role of the CIO
So why has the role of the CIO changed? A paradigm shift at four key levels – consumerisation, value, mobility and cloud – has led to new roles and responsibilities. These four changes broadly encompass the digital transformation. CIOs must manage this change in order to help businesses make the most of technology in the digital age:

• **Consumerisation** – The increased use of smartphones and tablets means many end users now have access to better technology at home than in the workplace. There will be more than two billion smartphone users globally this year, according to researcher eMarketer. Individuals want to use these devices at work to boost their productivity. CIOs must help the business create a strategy that allows employees to hook their devices into enterprise networks securely.

• **Value** – The traditional IT department was a cost centre; technology was a service that had to be provided at the lowest possible price. Smart executives today recognise that IT is much more than cost. Effective use of digital technologies, like mobility and the cloud, can create a competitive difference and help organisations to grow. CIOs must demonstrate this value and prove how an investment in new technology can produce a measurable return on investment.

• **Mobility** – Enterprise computing has moved from the desktop to an undefined, flexible location. End users can access information from any location using broadband, smart device technology and specialist apps. Research suggests Android users have access to more than 1.6 million apps in the Google Play store, while iOS users can choose from about 1.5 million apps. CIOs must help users take advantage of both apps and data as part of a governable mobile strategy.

• **Cloud** – Enterprise IT is moving from the internal data centre to the cloud. Line-of-business executives can call on the power of the cloud to scale IT resources up or down as demands change. Spending on the cloud is growing by as much as 28 per cent a year, according to Synergy Research. Growth is taking place at all levels, including public platforms and infrastructure services. CIOs must take control and maintain a balance between in-house and cloud-based services.
What will be the remit of the CIO of the future?
Modern IT leaders, therefore, face a different working environment to that which they joined. Rather than focusing on operations, CIOs must work closely with the rest of the business to source new solutions to fast-emerging business challenges. In many cases, internal customers have better access to technology at home than in the office. These tech-savvy individuals are keen to use their awareness to complete work tasks. If enterprise IT is not set up to support this flexibility, end users source their own solutions to business challenges, with or without the say-so of the CIO.

While technical aptitude is important, it is soft skills that determine the long-term success of a CIO. IT leaders must build strong relationships with users, c-suite peers and external third parties. As Enterprise Rent-A-Car European IT director Jeff King suggests, CIOs need to act as skilled integrators and orchestrators. They must work across technology and business to build a great strategy that fits with fast-changing demands.

Future CIOs, recognises Chris Hewertson, CTO at hotel chain glh, will focus on wider organisational concerns, rather than IT operational issues. CIOs will spend more time on issues relating to the successful and long-term use of technology, such as governance, relationship management and service management. Research from the CIO Executive Council suggests collaborative orientation (49 per cent), innovative idea generation (47 per cent) and leadership capability (37 per cent) are the most in-demand soft skills.

What emerges is a picture of a future CIO who understands the benefits of technology and who can demonstrate that value to the rest of the business. Rather than simply buying technology and giving it to users, CIOs will have to discover business challenges and source solutions from various partners. Future IT leaders, therefore, will need strong business acumen and an ability to communicate with stakeholders.
What do technology leaders need from their organisations?

BCS research suggests just 13 per cent of digital leaders believe their organisation has enough resources to address key management issues and IT trends. New technologies – related to key topics such as big data, the Internet of Things and agile development – continue to bombard the business. IT leaders who are going to make the most of these advances and demonstrate value will need to develop a broad skills set.

Organisations can play a key role. Just as technology continues to develop, so do IT skills. Firms will have to create an organisational structure that supports IT leadership development in business acumen and communication. Look for a strategy, like the Skills Framework for the Information Age (SFIAplus), which provides an international skills and competency framework to help organisations develop their IT functions.

CIOs regularly assert that the best way to develop next-generation IT leaders is through business experience. In short, give your talented people something interesting to do. Great IT professionals will want to stay ahead of the curve and work on change projects that help develop their skills sets. Ally this project experience to a training programme around key areas, like project management, business analysis and agile skills development, and you will help to develop the new generation of value-driven CIOs.

Organisations must allow talented IT workers to engage directly with the business. If the future of internal IT is service-based, then your company needs managers who can interface with business colleagues. Many CIOs are already developing trusted deputies. Robert Threadgold, global head of IT infrastructure at ICBC Standard Bank, says great deputies posses experience in customer service and stakeholder management.
Also remember that retention is a key concern. Claranet CIO Andy Wilton says technical workers tend to move around every two to three years. Technology-focused companies face an annual attrition rate of 20 per cent. CIOs can fight these attrition rates by helping their staff to build career paths. Wilton suggests autonomy, responsibility and a healthy working environment can dramatically improve loyalty.

In short, organisations must help their next-generation IT leaders to continue to learn and develop. Firms need to create highly valued technology professionals who can interact with business colleagues, discover their challenges and then source valued solutions from trusted partners. For organisations that develop these technology professionals – and for the individuals who benefit – the future of IT leadership is brighter than ever before.
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On the paradigm shift in the role of the CIO...

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