



How Will the CIO Role Evolve in the Rapidly Changing Digital Business World?

The landscape of the business world is changing at a fast pace. Influencers such as the financial crisis, off-shoring and outsourcing, and globalization affect business operations and the leadership needed to sustain superior performance. One powerful game changer in the last decade is the sudden explosion of data. Consider for example, American businesses currently collect more digital data in the span of two to three days than were ever collected in all of history up to the year 2003. Furthermore, the digital global network of economic and social activities enabled by information and communications technologies – such as the Internet, mobility, and sensor networks – continue to accelerate this proliferation.

To maintain a competitive advantage throughout these shifts, it means the roles of people in the C-suite must evolve with these changes. The Chief Information Officer (CIO) can play a vital leadership role, particularly with the transformation of a business. Another important element of a 21st century CIO is the utilization of soft skills which are necessary to take a holistic approach and to help an organization support global growth. Lastly, the role of the CIO is to market and show how strategically using the power of information technology (IT) drives efficiency, productivity, innovation, and the bottom-line.

Technology and business transformation go hand-in-hand. To have successful change, it requires leadership to steer and direct useful tools and the corresponding resources in an optimal path to maximize performance. As such, leadership can not be a stagnant concept.

The wave created by the digital media already has significantly altered the marketplace along with market demands. As the digital business world increases, it will change the way people run their business and the type of business they run. With more and more new IT platforms emerging each year, corporate leaders have to adjust their strategies and respond quickly to be able to stay at the top of the game. CIOs and the rest of the leadership team will be at a disadvantage if they use the approaches and operational plans of yesteryears to move into the future. Consequently, the role definition represents a need to look beyond traditional thinking. The progression in CIO jobs is toward more sophistication and “hybrids” – that is, a blend of business savvy and technology competence. This type of thought leader is necessary to map out and promote optimal solutions that utilize technology as a business and organizational transformation tool.

Transformation is but one element of profitability. The other is sustaining high performance. CIO leadership can therefore be an enabler of technology to enhance workplace performance. Ultimately, technology can be a platform to stimulate and cultivate collective intelligence as well as build workforce knowledge.

*Clara Chow, Lead Accelerator
The Talent Accelerators*

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