

Chapter 13

The Role of the CIO

THE ROLE OF THE CIO

The CIO can be defined as the highest-ranking IT executive who typically exhibits managerial roles requiring effective communication with top management, a broad corporate perspective in managing information resources, influence on organizational strategy, and responsibility for the planning of IT. This definition is in line with research; which applied the following criteria when selecting CIOs for empirical observation: i) highest-ranking information technology executive; ii) reports no more than two levels from the CEO, that is, either reports to the CEO or reports to one of the CEO's direct reports, iii) areas of responsibility include information systems, computer operations, telecommunications and networks, office automation, end-user computing, help desks, computer software and applications; and iv) responsibility for strategic IS/IT planning. The CIO plays a vital role in every interoperability project in digital government. There may be a CIO in each involved public agency as well as a CIO for the whole of government. For example in Hong Kong, there is an office of the government chief officer, which developed the interoperability framework for all agencies and other public organizations to follow (2007).

In this chapter we start by defining the position of the CIO. CIOs are playing a key role sourcing IT resources and enabling IT governance. These topics are covered in the next sections. Then, we continue discussing CIO leadership roles. As organizations expand their use of the Internet, the CIO emerges as an important executive for developing digital government, competitive strategy and Internet strategy. We are also looking into the CIO selecting e-business model.

The CIO Position

The CIO position emerged in the 1970s as a result of increased importance placed on IT. In the early 1980s, the CIO was often portrayed as the corporate savior who was to align the worlds of business and technology. CIOs were described as the new breed of information managers who were businessmen first, managers second, and technologists third. It was even postulated that in the 1990s, as information became an organization's critical resource, the CIO would become the logical choice for the chief executive officer (CEO) position.

Job advertisements for information systems positions from 1970 to 1990 were reviewed by Todd, McKeen and Gallupe (1995). They investigated specific positions related to programmers, systems analysts and information systems managers. It is the latter position that is of interest here. At the time of the research, it was considered that successful information systems managers should have a blend of technical knowledge and sound business related skills. Further, in general, they should possess effective interpersonal skills. Over the twenty-year period, Todd et al. (1995) determined that there had not been much change in the required skills indicated in job advertisements.

Benjamin, Dickinson and Rockart (1985) suggested that the emergence of the CIO role represented the recognition of the importance of the role to be played within the organization. Kaarst-Brown (2005), however, suggested it is unfortunate that twenty years later, in 2005, the CIO is still held in lower regard than those senior managers of other more traditional business units. Kaarst-Brown (2005) suggested the reasons for this gap might be attributed to some of the items on the following list:

- Personality conflicts
- Lack of corporate technology vision
- Poorly aligned IT goals
- Lack of business knowledge
- Lack of IT awareness among the business executives
- Incorrect formal structure and reporting relationships

However, Kolbasuk (2005) reported that the perception of CIOs within organizations may be evolving. She suggests they may finally be getting the respect they deserve as they become members of the board of directors of large companies. This movement to the board level in the organization indicates the perception of the CIO role is evolving from a manager primarily focused on regulations, back office operations, and administrative duties to applying information technology at a strategic level to facilitate competitive advantage through an understanding of how business processes function and may be adapted to a changing corporate environment.

As a manager of people, the CIO faces the usual human resource roles of recruiting, staff training, and retention, and the financial roles of budget determination, forecasting and authorization. As the provider of technological services to user departments, there remains a significant amount of work in publicity, promotion, and internal relations with user management. As a manager of an often-virtual information organization, the CIO has to coordinate sources of information services spread throughout and beyond the boundaries of the organization. The CIO is thus concerned with a wider group of issues than are most managers.

While information systems executives share several similarities with the general manager, notable differences are apparent. The CIO is not only concerned with a wider group of issues than most manag-

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