



Chapter II

The Chief Information Officer

Introduction

The chief information officer (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: (1) highest ranking information technology executive; (2) reports no more than two levels from the CEO (i.e., either reports to the CEO or reports to one of the CEOs direct reports); (3) areas of responsibility include information systems, computer operations, telecommunications and networks, office automation, end-user computing, help desks, computer software and applications; and (4) responsibility for strategic IS/IT planning.

According to Gartner (2005), only a few CEOs view CIOs as boardroom peers. Most CEOs view their CIOs as effective operational leaders. Yet only a few view them as full business leaders. There is an opportunity for CIOs to build their relationship with their CEO and other stakeholders — to increase their influence and to enhance the contribution of information systems and information technology.

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 (Grover, Jeong, Kettinger, & Lee, 1993). It was even postulated that in the 1990s, as information became a firm'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 20-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, suggests it is unfortunate that 20 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) suggests the reasons for this gap may 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,

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