Chapter I

Overview

Introduction

This book contains the stories of the personal management experiences of individuals performing the role of the chief information officer (CIO). The goal in carrying out the interviews and writing the book was to document and explore those issues, which are considered significant by practicing CIOs. Firms are recognizing the importance of business processes associated with gathering, processing, and disseminating information. The formal establishment of a CIO role is evidence of this recognition.

A new breed of manager, the chief information officer (CIO), became recognized in the late 1980s. This new position was established to provide a link between the data processing department and the company's senior managers. Thus, the data processing manager position was becoming recognized as a CIO in a similar manner as 20 years before, when accountants were elevated to the chief financial officer (CFO) position. The emergence of the CIO role suggests that companies were recognizing the strategic importance of information and its supporting technology.

The CIO role emerged so that one senior executive could be assigned the overall corporate responsibility for an organization's information processing needs. As this role is elevated to senior management involvement, the corporate expectations are being revised. Thus, rather than simply supervising the information technology

(IT) function, the CIO is expected to understand the business and to work toward ensuring that IT supports those initiatives that contribute to establishing and maintaining the firm's competitive advantage. The management of the IT function relates directly to the bottom line. The role of the CIO is to ensure appropriate activities are carried out. It is considered important both for survival and to attain competitive advantage that the business goals are reflected in the actions of the information technology function.

Writing the Book

Before the interviews for this book could be conducted, it was necessary to find individuals who were interested in the idea of the book and who would be willing to volunteer to participate. Through various personal contacts, individuals were sent information about the book. Those who responded as expressing an interest in the project were contacted and provided further information. Eventually, CIOs from New Zealand, Taiwan, and the United States of America agreed to participate. They were not chosen. They volunteered. The interviews and resulting chapter represent the CIO's opportunity to tell his or her story. The stories provide an interesting perspective on the personal management experiences of practicing CIOs in various industries in three diverse countries. Individual interviews were scheduled with each CIO who volunteered. Some were conducted face-to-face, while others were carried out via the telephone. In all cases the interviews were audio taped. Transcripts were prepared from the audio tapes and sent to the respective participant for review. The approved transcripts formed the basis for the chapters included later in this book. While the author developed each chapter, the respective CIO retained the final editorial rights to their own chapter.

In order to ground the discussion in the CIO's personal management experiences, an interview protocol was developed which guided a chronological discussion of the CIO's personal work experience. Questions were posed regarding the CIO's past career and personal experiences. A chronological process was followed from early life, through formal education, and into the various positions held throughout their career up until the current position. Then the detailed specific issues of the current position were investigated. Questions were asked about initial, current, and future issues. The questions about issues were nondirective in nature. Thus, the CIO was able to decide which issues they considered important enough for them to raise the item and expound upon it. This approach supports the idea that important issues will come to mind first during a specific conversation.

Interviews were conducted either face to face or via the telephone. It is important to adopt a data gathering approach which ensures the CIO is as comfortable as possible

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