

CIOs Must Change...Really?

Let me come straight to the point - there seems to be quite a number of non—CIOs writing on forums for CIOs that CIOs must change and be more business oriented.

While there is certainly truth to this - CEOs, CFOs and Boards also need to adjust their attitudes and leadership styles – in fact, they should probably be leading the way. There is very little point to CIOs adjusting while there are no positions for them once they have.

Why do we still see a plethora of CIO and CTO roles advertised with the phrase 'hands on' and JDs that demand expertise in programming languages and infrastructure? A simple rule of supply and demand comes to mind along with the phrase 'if you build it, they will come'.

I know that there is, unfortunately, a vast majority of those calling themselves CIOs that are preventing CEOs and boards from changing their perspectives because, basically, these so-called CIOs are really just IT Managers. No, there is nothing wrong with being an IT Manager and by no means am I suggesting that they are inferior or redundant – an IT Manager simply serves a different purpose to a CIO and both can – and should – exist in harmony.

This is the message that needs to be propagated to CEOs and Boards (and some very experienced techies) – not preached to the choir of CIOs who have evolved, studied business, attained MBAs and are chomping at the bit to be given the chance to work with their CFO and COO brethren to lead their companies into the future by embracing new, digital technologies to deliver improved services, empower business and drive organisational goals focussing on innovation, competitive edge, business growth and improved efficiencies.

I can bring up the fact that there appears to be an inconsistent – or perhaps no – standard definition of what a CIO actually is but, really, is there any concerted effort to make one? Everyone seems to have a pretty concrete perception of the role of a CFO or a COO but the role of CIO...? While still in flux between the 'chief' technical expert and the business leader of the digital age, other roles are emerging such as the CDO. Not to mention the other confusing C-level titles such as CTO and CISO where there is no consistency on who reports to whom. Who is coming up with these roles? Certainly not the IT community - and it isn't CEOs or Boards either. It's the media and so called research and advisory companies whose aims are little more than to come up with new ideas to sell to make names for themselves and, subsequently, money.

I've written about 'too many Chiefs' before but I want to now focus on the media obsession of asking CIOs to change to fit into a world where that changed role simply isn't accepted yet. CIOs - how do you feel? Are you a CIO who thinks that your role is chief techie or are you a CIO longing to be given the chance to be all that the media is telling you that you can be? Alternatively, are you a CIO who is fulfilling the dream and being given the opportunity to work with your real C-level peers and lead your company into the future? How do your company and your boss (whoever that may be) see your role?