

The changing role of today's CIO:  
***An interview with GM's Group Vice President and  
CIO Ralph Szygenda***

**Taking the Business to a Better Place**

**Mr. Ralph Szygenda:** Well, when I first came to GM, there was a big IT issue, and there was a big business issue. The IT issue was there was no IT organization. This company never had one.

The second one, I sat down with the Chairman and CEO of the company, Jack Smith at that time, and said Jack, what's your biggest problem? And he said Ralph, it takes too long to design and develop a car. We have to change that.

So, the idea was we're going to bring this icon back to life, and we're going to do it through having the best digital environment that ever existed in the history of any corporation.

Today, the cycle time for developing vehicles at General Motors is over 50% reduced. We have taken out \$12 billion of cost in ten years, and we have put \$7 billion back to redo General Motors.

The real bottom line was changing the company. If you are trying to change a business, why don't you change it to be better than anybody else?



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# The changing role of today's CIO:

## ***An interview with GM's Group Vice President and CIO Ralph Szygenda***

### Taking the Business to a Better Place

**Mr. Ralph Szygenda:** I knew General Motors. My father drove Chevys. This was something that's in the blood of almost every family, and now you're coming to kind of make it a better company.

GM was a legacy company, 100 years old. It was great selling vehicles and designing them in a country 50 years ago. It's an icon, General Motors. It needed to be brought back to life. It needed to have the information technology that would let it happen. You down deep wanted to be part of transforming and bringing it back to life and make it a shining star.

The exciting thing about a journey is you have to get to the end destination, but it's really the overall path to get to that end point.

Well, when I first came to GM, there was a big IT issue, and there was a big business issue. The IT issue was there was no IT organization. This company never had it. Nothing was common. All the processes were different.

The second one, I sat down with the Chairman and CEO of the company, Jack Smith at that time and said Jack, what's your biggest problem? And he said Ralph, it takes too long to design and develop a car. We're not competitive anymore. We have to change that. That cycle time has to be reduced.

So, the idea was we're going to bring this icon back to life. We're going to do it through having the best digital environment that ever existed in the history of any corporation. So, I ventured out to hire a thousand of the best information technology people in the world, the largest influx of executive talent in the history of General Motors.

So, we put a great deal of efficiency in the business by taking out information systems, reducing the number of computing servers. So, we have taken out \$12 billion of cost in ten years, and we have put \$7 billion back to redo General Motors and create that real-time business and that real-time company. So, now you'd like to innovate.

With new applications, new information systems, we can run a real-time digital company that is global, meaning every part of the world is run the same way. With that, we'll revolutionize not only General Motors, but maybe the information technology industry.



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