



Leadership, Capability and Culture

The CIO's Silent Revolution

Introduction

For Chief Information Officers (CIOs) wanting to move beyond the confines of a traditional Information Technology (IT) based role, the demands are significant. As they make the transition to a broader range of responsibilities CIOs shape their own future, the future of their IT organisations and indeed, the future of their parent enterprises.

This is the third of a series of papers exploring aspects of the CIO's changing role. In this paper we look at the changes in mindset and approach that a CIO needs to make with respect to the IT organisation to evolve beyond a purely IT oriented role. We explore how these changes affect his¹ IT organisation, which must also change in order to support the CIO's evolution. We have concluded that three important areas of focus are needed in the IT organisation for the CIO to be able to evolve his role successfully:

- *The intent and style of leadership*
- *Capabilities and tools*
- *The culture the CIO creates, both within the IT organisation and in the wider enterprise.*

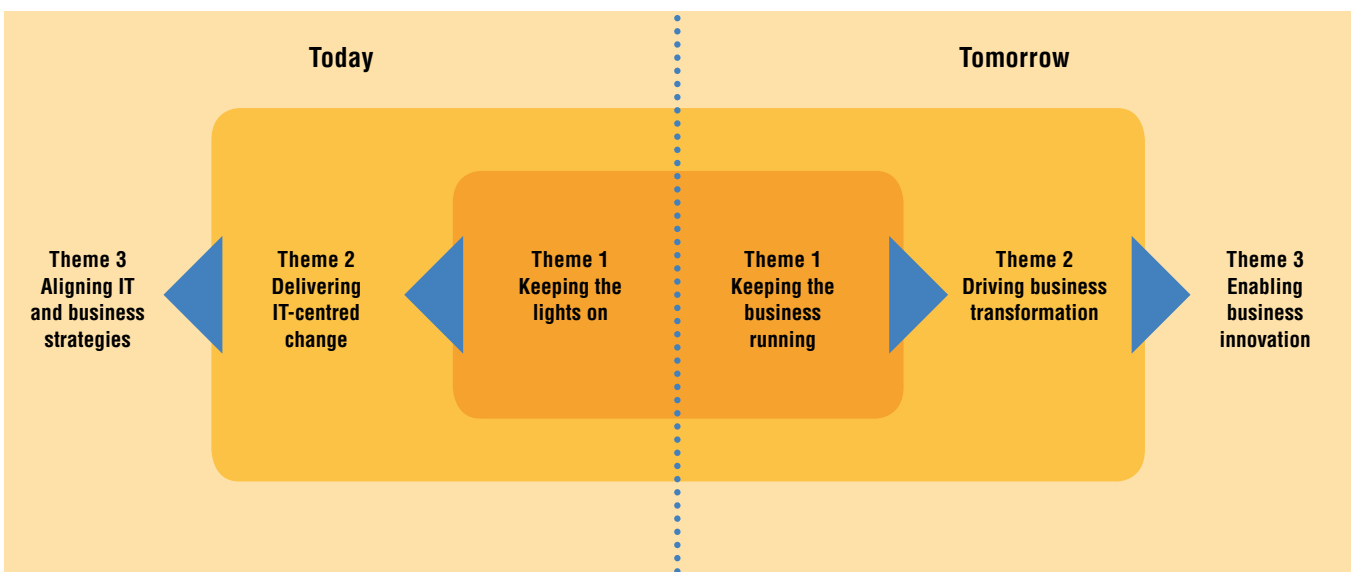
Our findings for this paper build on the previous two papers in the *Evolving Role of the CIO* series. The first paper² identifies three additive transitions that progressive CIOs make in moving from an IT-centric to a more

business-oriented role (Diagram 1). Starting with 'keeping the lights on', evolving CIOs broaden their capabilities, first to keep the business running and then driving business transformation. Building still further, CIOs whose roles have evolved to a great extent are frequently enabling business innovation.

While not all CIOs will achieve, or even aspire, to, a fully evolved role, increasing numbers of CIOs are seeking to broaden their scope as they reach the top of the IT profession. The second paper³ in the series discusses the prerequisite factors for the CIO's evolution, one of which is the CIO's own profile. Another factor is the nature of the business environment in which the CIO operates, particularly the degree of change taking place within the wider enterprise. The final factor influencing this evolution is one we explore in more detail in this paper: specifically, the maturity of the IT organisation itself. CIOs must shape, encourage and influence the right levels of maturity across several aspects of their IT organisations to create the conditions necessary for their own role to evolve.

In preparing for this paper, we drew on the experience and knowledge gained from IBM's work with hundreds of IT leaders worldwide, which offers deep insight into the challenges experienced by CIOs and their IT organisations. We added to this by interviewing a number of UK and US based CIOs whose roles are evolving.

Diagram 1: Three transitions made by progressive CIOs as they move to a more evolved role



Source: *Today's Challenges, Tomorrow's CIO*³

Leadership

The first area of focus for CIOs in evolving their role is leadership, applied not only in their own IT organisation but equally, to the wider enterprise and even beyond it. A clear vision, the ability to lead change and to forge robust partnerships with suppliers and customers, are now blurring traditional IT functional boundaries and demanding skills and experience reaching beyond those boundaries.

Multi-faceted leadership

The need for CIOs to demonstrate well-developed leadership capabilities both within their own IT organisation and the enterprise it serves, is clear³. A CIO's ability to create a compelling vision for the business, to collaborate, and to make and execute sound business decisions, all create a strong skills portfolio. However, if he wants to evolve this role further, the CIO must add several more capabilities to transition successfully to a broader leadership position.

Evolving CIOs are not only adept at being leaders themselves, but also take a strong interest in growing the leadership capabilities of their IT organisation. They have effective coaching styles, particularly in the context of transformational change. Their strong commercial experience and well developed self awareness is tempered with a realistic view of their personal ability to broaden their role. And finally, all evolving CIOs understand the imperative to develop a considered succession strategy. When opportunities to take on wider responsibilities present themselves, the CIO, his potential successors and the rest of the IT organisation must all be primed and ready for the CIO to grasp them.

Leading change

Nowhere will a CIO's leadership skills be more needed – or tested – than in situations involving business and IT transformational change. Recent studies show that globally, whether instigated proactively or in response to external events, change is happening faster than industry leaders predicted even two years ago⁴. Change is the new norm, and high performing enterprises embrace change rather than flounder in its wake. A CIO's ability to lead change proactively and effectively is crucial to the success of the enterprise.

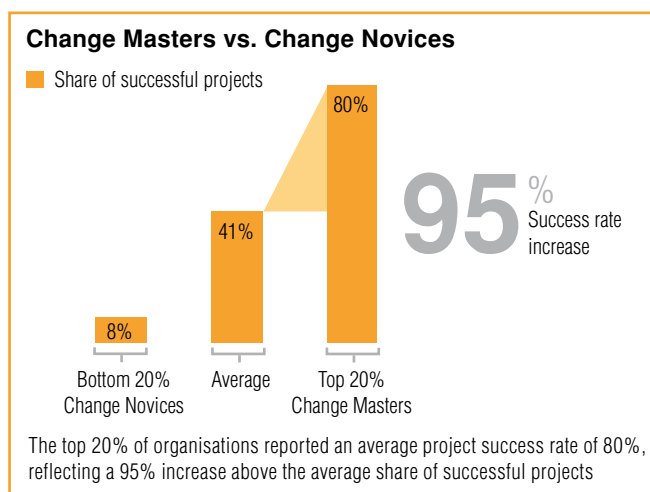
The pervasiveness of IT within the enterprise means that many CIOs have a more detailed understanding of business performance levers, and across a broader spectrum, than possibly any Board member except the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The challenge is how to share and exploit the insight this understanding provides.

CIOs must deal with change in multiple dimensions: within their IT organisation, within the wider enterprise and potentially externally to the enterprise, in partnership with suppliers and customers as part of an end-to-end service strategy.

The challenge of change

For CIOs, dealing with accelerating change carries its own risks, as proven by the high failure rate of transformational change projects and programmes. The consequences can be very costly if appropriate mitigation strategies are not in place. A global study of over 1,500 change practitioners published in 2008⁵ shows that on average, only 41% of transformational change efforts fully met their objectives. However, when leaders who the study calls 'change masters' were involved, the success rate nearly doubled. Change masters are experienced change managers who consistently apply formal change management approaches across all phases of a project or programme, including allocating adequate resources in terms of budget, skills and people. In contrast, for change novices the average project success rate was a miserly 8% (Diagram 2).

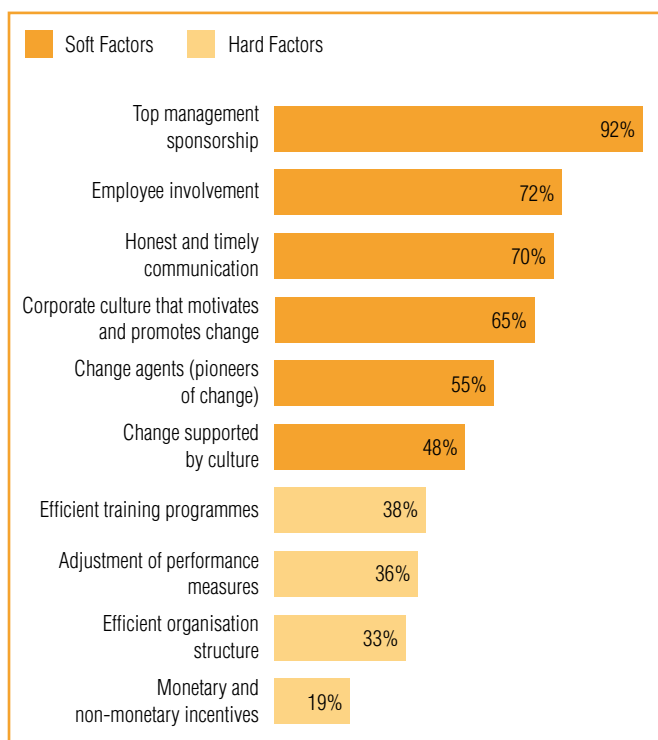
Diagram 2: 'Change masters' double the average rate of change project success



Source: "Making Change Work", IBM Global Business Services, 2008⁵

The study showed that the key change management elements, ranked in order of most needed for successful change effort outcomes, are the softer skills in the change management portfolio, including leadership, communication and culture change (Diagram 3). Worryingly, the study points out that even experienced change managers often overlook – or worse, ignore – known change management requirements, and then experience failure.

Diagram 3: Factors for successful change



Source: "Making Change Work", IBM Global Business Services, 2008⁵

For the CIO wishing to evolve from a more traditional role, strong change management experience and leadership are prerequisites for IT organisational and enterprise success. To keep his enterprise competitive, the CIO must be able to operate effectively outside of his established IT comfort zone and deliver a new and often very differently shaped enterprise to the one which existed before.

Evolving CIOs lead and advocate business transformation and innovation, first by getting change on the business agenda and then by driving it through to realisation. Their IT teams must be able to do the same at every level. Consequently, evolving CIOs lead the IT organisation itself through the change process, changing its culture so that all IT staff become proactive and competent agents of change. In this way, these CIOs set the tone and calibre of change capability not only for their direct reports, but for their entire IT organisation.

“The challenge is whether we as individuals can step out of a mindset that says ‘back office’ and become a value creator for the business.”

R. Blake Young, Former Senior Vice President of Global IT & Technology, BG Group

Building diverse experience

An evolving CIO's leadership is visible in the strategic, operational, commercial and people management approaches he takes with IT and business users³. But without a succession strategy that develops in others, the same degree of competency, skills and depth of experience as his own, the CIO's role can not move beyond the scope of the IT organisation. In effect, the CIO has to be able to face making himself redundant by grooming his replacement. In the process of developing the capabilities of his staff, the evolving CIO's thinking becomes more aligned with him as 'CEO' of the IT function.

“I consider myself to be a General Manager.”

Carl Urbania, Senior Vice President and Global Chief Information Officer, Thomson Reuters

Evolving CIOs are highly business aware and commercially competent. Globally, over half of them have backgrounds with senior executive responsibilities in functions outside of, as well as within, IT⁴. They lead by example with a coaching style that adapts to people and their desired performance. They create the scope for their teams to assume incremental depth and breadth of IT and non IT based responsibility, infusing commercial awareness appropriate to staff levels and job roles.

Unifying teams

The evolving CIO also builds robust relationships at Board level with his functional peers. Once that is done he has the added mission of securing support and sponsorship from the CEO for IT and non IT functions to work together at all levels as unified teams. Increasingly, this means physically and functionally co-locating different organisational groups. Many of the CIOs we interviewed had co-located their IT subject matter experts (SMEs) and business counterparts to facilitate improved levels of dialogue between them.

As he bridges the divide between IT and the business, the CIO may find his to be a 'lonely office'. One CIO we spoke with confirmed that: "The key qualities that the CIO needs as a business leader are courage, persistence, influence and integrity – a CIO has got to say what's right."

"You have to build business process skills and capabilities in order to have a credible conversation about priorities with the business."

Malcolm Whitehouse, Group Applications Director,
UK Department for Work and Pensions

Partners in action

For today's CIO, reliable, cost-effective IT and service delivery to promise, endure as critical factors for success, equal in importance to building management teams and structures to deliver against those more traditional requirements. In times of economic downturn, the pressures on him to improve efficiency and reduce running costs only increase, even while he drives the transformational agenda.

Implementing new sourcing models to achieve more at less cost, the evolving CIO yet again draws on his leadership skills. Streamlining his sourcing structure from many suppliers to a mere handful creates a simplified service sourcing strategy that demands far less operational management overhead to maintain. The CIO can then use the economies created to fund innovation and new projects, with strategically chosen partners that allow him to draw on skills, often specialised, that complement those found within his own organisation.

Trust-based relationships

These are partners in more than just name. By driving ambitious joint goals and sharing risks and rewards alike, evolving CIOs are confident in eroding the boundaries between where their enterprise (and IT organisation) stops, and the supplier's begins. It comes as no surprise to find that customers of enterprises with evolving CIOs will be seeking to do likewise. For this approach to work well, the whole tenor of the enterprise/supplier relationship has to move up a gear into greater, trust-based commitment. Evolving CIOs and their IT organisations are very conscious of the leverage such partnerships offer.

"We look to our vendors to be 'self starters' about improving their performance, and share best practices between different vendors."

Simon Post, Chief Technology Officer,
Carphone Warehouse

Vision and confidence

The evolving CIO and his IT team must first create their vision of sourcing changes and then share it with their business customers to see and understand. Then the IT team creates confidence in that vision. They work with the business and with supplier partners to deliver planned benefits by applying leading edge capability in technology innovation, industry experience or best practices. Effectively, this is change management based around the sourcing model.

New sourcing strategies also create the need for a highly professional, specialist contract and service management capability that takes both a short and longer term view of business requirements. From there, the agenda could potentially be grown from IT sourcing to wider business process sourcing for areas such as finance, human resources and procurement.

"There has been a dramatic blurring of the lines between where IT starts and ends... it is much more integrated with the business and harder to separate."

Carl Urbania, Senior Vice President and Global Chief Information Officer, Thomson Reuters

Developing capabilities and tools

The second area of focus within their IT organisations for evolving CIOs has two parts. One is comprised of the processes, methods and tools used by the IT team. The other part is the skills and capabilities of IT staff.

Deploying a Highway Code

If leadership describes the journey to the IT organisation's ideal, evolved destination, then the Highway Code that helps road users understand how to get there is the IT processes, methods and tools creating the guiding principles of driving convention. They also draw the map. The evolving CIO will ensure all of these are in place to support the evolution of his own and his IT organisation's roles.

Developing deep partnerships with customers and suppliers, and streamlining its sourcing model can give the IT organisation the experience and credibility needed to guide the enterprise itself through an equally radical transformation of business processes, methods and tools. The IT function is now in a position to hold up a mirror to the rest of the enterprise and say, "Look. We've proven our ability to do this very effectively in our own organisation. Now let us do it for you."

"It's likely that IT will need to be able to set the vision and develop the roadmap for future business development."

Gareth Jackson, CIO, Honda UK

Processes grow organically in most enterprises, layered one over the next rather than carefully stripping out the old as the new ones go in. Consequently, it is rarely easy to establish new processes – or the tools and methods that support them – which are rich and flexible enough to support the strategic intent of the enterprise. Nonetheless, this is the task that CIOs must embrace if they are to successfully evolve their role. If they do not lead the effort themselves, CIOs will delegate it to experienced process specialists with an excellent understanding of the business, leveraging approaches such as Lean Sigma.

"In IT development the growth areas are technical architecture, project management and change management."

UK CIO, Manufacturing Enterprise

The CIO will also need to secure sponsorship for, and active buy-in from, his Board level peers in order to define, agree and deploy new processes enterprisewide. Leading by example, evolving CIOs are visible and vocal sponsors for developing and deploying agreed standards across the full breadth of their enterprise.

The result is a more consistent and effective service to the business, with processes, tools and methods aligned to the retained part of the IT organisation. IT staff are encouraged by the evolving CIO to take a continual learning approach, which the CIO is also active in advocating throughout the rest of the enterprise. The business and the IT organisations work together effectively to develop and deploy a seamless result.

Broadening scope

Traditional IT teams tended to deal with a defined set of customers and were responsible for ongoing maintenance as well as enhancements or new work. In contrast, an evolving IT organisation is service orientated, with broader capabilities ranging from business processes to IT infrastructure. Its role is designed to deliver to multiple customers and to interoperate with other components. Service-aligned federated units have an autonomy allowing for agile response locally, with shared centralised governance to maintain a well orchestrated portfolio of services overall.

The CIO's ability to evolve his own role will depend on how well he nurtures the capabilities and skills of his IT team. Developing technical, 'hard' skills will remain important; equally so is a new parallel focus on soft and people skills that support the succession strategy for those below the CIO whose roles are also undergoing evolution.

"The CIO needs to be able to spot and nurture the talent needed to build and sustain high performing teams."

Carl Urbania, Senior Vice President and Global Chief Information Officer, Thomson Reuters

In building this organisational capability, evolving CIOs place emphasis on achieving expertise within their teams for a wide range of technical and non technical areas. They will seek to create a 'T' shaped skills/experience profile in their staff, where broad skills are complemented by in-depth knowledge and experience in niche areas needed by the business.

New skills, new structures

The broader scope of skills needed will also drive new management approaches. Traditional IT line management structures will give way to matrixed organisations as IT staff are aligned to the changing needs of the business, and work within the business on a short or long term project basis.

IT staff will need excellent project and programme management skills alongside well structured, ubiquitous change management capabilities. For example, strong stakeholder engagement and communications abilities will be needed to support business process analysis, process understanding and process optimisation skills.

Within the IT organisation, the streamlined IT sourcing strategy will drive the need for strong multivendor management with good commercial acumen, particularly where risk-reward commercial structures are brought into play. In general, the ability to balance relative needs across a much broader demand spectrum than was traditional is encouraging the development of portfolio management skills. Design authority and solution architect knowledge and experience are also key to securing IT delivery and service effectiveness as the rates of asset deployment and re-use are increased.

Mechanisms for skills development

Evolving CIOs take a strategic, long term view of requirements for their teams, driving skills and capability development within their IT organisation through a number of mechanisms.

The first mechanism is strategic resource planning to define the future workforce profile, including career paths with multiple development routes leveraging business and IT to spread the skill base across the IT team. Another mechanism is regular job rotation within both the IT organisation and the business, which increases IT staff exposure and their understanding of demand in areas of the enterprise which they would not otherwise have the chance to experience.

“IT needs to understand that is OK to say ‘no’ to shortfall requests, and engage more fully to show the art of the possible.”

UK CIO, Public Sector

Where demand is predicted to ramp up suddenly, evolving CIOs will put into place accelerators such as focused training or shadowing programmes to address gaps in strategic skills. The CIO might also build cross-business and IT knowledge management communities to foster capability and to encourage collaboration in a systematic way, particularly around service components.

“Integrated collaborative environments have shocked people into a new paradigm in how they think about their job – and themselves. It’s a great stimulus for transforming our way of working.”

R. Blake Young, Former Senior Vice President,
Global IT & Technology, BG Group

Creating headroom

The transition from the traditional to a new IT organisation skills profile is a big step, and one that can push hard on the comfort zone of CIOs and their organisations. However, CIOs need to create the headroom for their role to evolve, which will not happen if there is no growing skill base in the IT organisation to which evolving CIOs can delegate responsibility.

That skill base must also contain leadership skills which are crucial to CIOs’ ability to evolve their role. CIOs need to build a strong IT leadership team around them. They must understand and be very honest about their own weaknesses, and bolster their team accordingly to fill any gaps.

“The business/IT dialogue is an art, not a science,” insists a media sector CIO we interviewed. Some of the older ways of teaching art – perhaps better called an apprenticeship – such as exposure, watching, hands-on participation and management coaching, are coming back into force.

Once again, attention to soft skills such as leadership, a structured approach to change management, negotiation and commercial understanding will yield big dividends as the IT organisation’s remit continues to expand.

Hallmarks of success

A number of hallmarks will indicate that an evolving CIO has been successful in creating a capability development framework that is effective overall. Three immediately spring to mind.

The first is strong and active communities of interest which can be developed into centres of excellence hosting people, assets, methods and tools. Another is flexible resourcing practices that offer shared capability across multiple projects, because they increase the IT function's ability to meet specific peaks and troughs in demand cost effectively. A third hallmark is partnering with the industry for commodity-based IT skills.

“Leadership of change is imperative.”

UK CIO, Public Sector

Persistence

What is clear is that as the CIO's remit broadens, he must be persistent and consistent in fostering the skills and capabilities in all parts of his IT organisation so that he can delegate and devolve responsibility. If he fails to delegate, he will be overwhelmed, unable to create the space needed to evolve. By taking the time to plan, budget and deliver sound capability development, evolving CIOs make sure that the enablers needed for their role to evolve are in place, active and successful.

Getting the culture right

The final area to which successfully evolving CIOs pay attention is creating the right culture throughout the enterprise to enable the evolution of his role. Part diplomat, part revolutionary and part general, evolving CIOs must be able to touch the intangible, consciously driving many cultural influences into a unified whole.

Changing 'how we do things here'

Culture is the third focus area for CIOs who are evolving their roles successfully. Generally implicitly rather than explicitly understood even by those who live it day to day, we can define culture in simple terms as 'how things are done around here'. Because it is so rarely codified, culture is very hard to articulate, and even harder to change. Still, if the CIO is going to modify the prevailing culture, those who live it have to become aware of what they live – and then they have to be willing to change it. Unless they chose to act differently to before, 'how we do things around here' will never have new outcomes.

“Recognising the value of IT changes the way that the enterprise invests in IT.”

R. Blake Young, Former Senior Vice President,
Global IT & Technology, BG Group

There are several reasons why an evolving CIO would want to modify a prevailing culture, but they all boil down to one common denominator: the need to adapt to and embrace change. If historically based in a traditional IT function, the CIO's own role will be undergoing change as he evolves. Similarly, functional boundaries throughout the enterprise will need to be eroded if the more fluid, project-based ways of working in a matrix managed environment are to flourish. Looking more widely, the risk-based partnership model between the enterprise, its customers and its suppliers also needs greater levels of trust than they had previously.

Perhaps the biggest driver of the CIO's need to be ready for change is the global acceleration of the pace of change itself. Understanding the layers of culture in which he operates, and then being able to affect its adaptation to new business models and requirements, is now an essential tool in the evolving CIO's armoury.

Integrating culture

Once again, the CIO will start with a business focus at front of mind. The successfully evolving CIO will have modified the culture in his (often very diverse) IT organisation to one where defined values are aligned with business strategy, instilled and shared across the entire enterprise.

“We need a more questioning culture.”

UK CIO, Public Sector

A defining feature of this culture is the extent of the integration it drives. It will foster a partnership approach to delivery, spanning IT, business and external suppliers. The increasingly trust-based relationship with suppliers discussed earlier will find an echo in internal staff stepping up to taking responsibility for making things work, despite contractual or process mechanisms in place which would allow them to place failure elsewhere.

The combined IT and business services oriented team also integrates as it defines an outcomes-based way of measuring their joint success, and takes joint responsibility for it. These shared measurements and outcomes help to ensure a business/IT ‘class system’ is erased. In the new culture, the services provided by IT organisation staff, along with the values they hold and act on, define and differentiate the IT staff’s contribution to success.

Culture was the dimension that generated the most debate in our discussions with evolving CIOs. Unsurprisingly, leadership and building capability came a close second; of course the three are closely linked. One theme that surfaced repeatedly as we talked with CIOs about culture was how to encourage a willingness within the IT team to take more well-considered risks – or at the very least, a greater propensity to challenge the status quo.

*“We need to be more opportunistic.
More risk aware and less risk
averse – take risks and learn,
rather than avoid being too risky.”*

UK CIO, Public Sector

‘Can do’ attitude

Another desired cultural indicator cited by evolving CIOs when talking about their teams was being ready to take the initiative. These CIOs understood and recognised the sort of

behaviours they wanted, which led to an attitude that found creative ways of getting things done. It is an approach sought at all points in the supply chain: in the IT team, the enterprise, in suppliers and indeed in customers as the working relationship boundaries between all of them are eroded and their teams become more homogenous.

Again, a key driver of this erosion is change, which accelerates shifts in corporate culture as the enterprise seeks to adapt to new demands and business requirements.

As business and IT strategies have come together, their timing has differed. Historically an IT strategy was set in place after the business had decided its direction, as a one-off planning exercise. Increasing awareness of the value of IT by business audiences drives business and IT strategies development together. In today’s world, it is often the IT strategy that opens the door for a business direction that would not otherwise be possible without IT enabled innovation.

The driver is change

Our discussions with CIOs around culture carried strong themes of change and change management, perhaps due to the factors needed for successful change covered above. Evolving CIOs understand the importance of culture shift in sustaining transformational change, and will lead by example as they drive new ways of working to help that shift happen.

They will identify and develop early adopters across the IT and business organisations to act as change agents and champions, helping to make management messages meaningful for different audiences. Culture shift is also encouraged by evolving CIOs who put incentives in place for all staff to embrace new values and behaviours, using a performance measurement system that rewards positive behaviours.

Staying grounded

As their role evolves, CIOs incorporate a number of critical success factors in addressing culture change while staying grounded in reality. An enterprise’s culture can make or break change efforts; the savvy CIO ensures he addresses culture as he evolves his own role and that of his IT organisation. Capturing hearts and minds, leading by example and ensuring an empowered change network is in place, are three ways that CIOs can help their role to evolve successfully.

Summary

While being enthusiastically pragmatic about the direction they are going, CIOs wanting to evolve their roles must also be realistic about where they and their organisations currently sit in terms of capability maturity. Successfully evolving CIOs and their IT organisations need to be adept at creating the case for change, driving the transformation agenda, and creating plans to develop the IT organisation with a particular focus on leadership, capability and culture.

The evolving role of the CIO is an increasingly tall order for a single individual to lead effectively. The CIOs we interviewed show that it is still possible to achieve, but how far can one role expand before it becomes impossible for

one person to cover? By investing in and developing their own organisation so that their IT teams have delegated and devolved authority, these CIOs lay the foundations for future generations of IT leaders to step into their shoes, ready to take on and deliver an ever-widening scope of business critical responsibilities.

Diagram 4 is a maturity model for the IT organisation, showing progressively more mature states of the three areas that CIOs need to focus on within their IT organisation so that their own role can evolve. The three focus areas can be further broken down, but all of them need attention if a CIO is going to evolve his role successfully to take on wider responsibilities within the enterprise.

Diagram 4: Maturity model for three focus areas in the IT organisation for CIOs wanting to evolve their role

		Traditional IT State	Low Maturity	Medium Maturity	High Maturity	Target State – Evolved
Leadership	Leadership	Inward, IT focus	Technology inward focused with limited Board interaction	IT is a profit centre; CIO is board member or regular attendee	Responsible for the creation & development of new business services. Enterprisewide change programme accountability	Focus on business service
	Sourcing	Not engaged in sourcing	Ad-hoc approach; point solutions driven solely by cost	Transformation by step changes only; some integration & collaboration with suppliers	Value based commercial models; partnership drive business & IT innovation	Value based
	Organisation structure	Independently dispersed	IT function aligned teams. Centralised management control has IT demand-supply split	Federated IT service lines delivering cross business unit; technology focused centres of excellence	Centralised joint business & IT functions e.g. Process Authority. Federated IT services lines aligned to business services	Business aligned, federated
Processes, Methods, Tools and Capability	Process, methods & tools	Locally applied, ad-hoc	Ad-hoc/inconsistent use of processes & tools, non standardised	Processes & tools centralised and standardised including management information & reporting, actively managed asset reuse, benchmarks achieved e.g. CMMI	Continuous improvement. Systematic, enterprise-wide process assurance supported by tooling	Standardised and optimised
	Skills & capabilities	Localised IT skills only	Focus on siloed, IT-aligned skills and frameworks	Growing active communities sharing assets & best practice. Knowledge management in place. Broad skills growth planning in place	Business & IT roles cross pollinate; career paths are flexible. Matrix managed, highly transferrable skills. Integrated business/IT skills. 'T' shaped skills profile	Fully integrated IT and business communities
Culture	Culture	Insular, siloed	Project oriented 'them vs us' mentality; risk adverse behaviour	Growing shared values and mutual respect, service provider mentality	Risk sharing. IT, business & suppliers act as equals. Proactive continuous improvement, dynamic business engagement	Full partnership

Source: IBM Global Business Services

Further information

For more information, please send an e-mail to cioforum@uk.ibm.com or visit ibm.com/services/uk/cio/evolving_role_of_cio

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Other papers in the Evolving Role of the CIO Series

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References and Notes

¹ Throughout this paper we have used the pronouns "he" and "his" to refer to both male and female CIOs.

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