From working with our clients, and from across interviews for *The DNA of the CIO* report, we believe there are some critical principles to help a new CIO to make the best impact in their first 100 days in the role.

**Expect the unexpected**
The role you signed up for might not be the one that was sold at the interview. You may find that the reality of the issues facing you is of a different magnitude and nature than described. The complexity of the underlying IT systems and processes; the way IT is perceived within the business; the depth of skills within the team – the reality may not match your expectations. However, prior to taking office, it is important to do your due diligence, understand the role and begin to identify the key issues that you will inherit.

**Listen well, and ask the stupid questions**
There are advantages and disadvantages of being appointed internally or externally. An existing knowledge of the business, ability to leverage existing networks and inherent knowledge of systems, people and processes are some of the advantages of an internal appointment. However, the advantages of an external placement include no previous history to impair initial credibility, the ability to more easily “command the change” and the opportunity to ask the stupid questions. An external appointment is the platform to ask the straightforward questions that can throw light on fundamental issues that have previously been overlooked. A key part of this involves listening carefully and reading between the lines to pick up on potential issues.
Make friends, network and influence people

Not always the natural domain of the CIO, there may well have been a relationship deficit from the prior candidate. It is important to prioritize the relationships that will be critical to your future success – and start understanding what colleagues expect of you. Clearly, the key relationships encompass the traditional CEO, COO and CFO triumvirate. But you should network with all the major divisional heads you’ll be supporting. Taking key stakeholders to lunch to gain an understanding of their approach and interests can be a useful step to break the ice and gain some insights into their needs. Given that your first 100 days may feel a little lonely, you may also want to identify a mentor to guide you and act as an independent confidant.

Get your team behind you

Spend time up front in understanding your team’s issues, responsibilities and competencies. Identify who you can rely on to support you with the detail, so you can focus on the bigger picture.

Act promptly

A new placement is often a rare opportunity to implement necessary change quickly. Change will be expected from you, so you have a window of opportunity where you will be given a relatively free rein to act. There is a clear distinction between starting the role in a crisis situation and in one that is more stable. Where a major business transformation is required, there is a certain expectation that significant change will be made early on, which will require rapid attention. In a stable environment, where the business is already performing well, you need to start building up a vision of where it needs to go next to remain competitive. You have 100 days to listen and learn, but then the honeymoon period will be over and action will be expected.

Make your mark

It is imperative that you put your individual stamp on the strategy of the organization. This is clearly guided to some extent by the circumstances you inherit. An external recruit will need to focus on immersing themselves in the business and rapidly understanding how it makes money. If joining from another sector, you will want to quickly become familiar with any sector-specific issues to show you understand the pressures faced. Whether moving into the position as an internal or external appointee, a key to making an early mark is to identify and tackle the quick wins.

The DNA of the CIO is the first of Ernst & Young insights into the role of the CIO and what defines this unique group of IT leaders. Our ongoing program will address aspects of personal interest to CIOs as they seek to develop themselves and their teams, and learn from others within their community.

For further information, please visit www.ey.com/cio, email cio@ey.com or speak to your Ernst & Young contact.