About The DNA of the CIO

This DNA of the CIO provides fresh insight into what it is to be a leading Chief Information Officer today. The report is based on our survey of more than 300 senior IT professionals worldwide, including analysis of how they are perceived by the rest of the C-suite.

This report, from the CIO program, explores the expectations and aspirations of those in the job — and the skills and relationships that they need to master in order to succeed. It is one of a series of EY thought leadership programs that seek to understand the support, skills and capabilities required of C-level executives as their role evolve.

Further the report includes the insight and personal experience from 25 CIOs, other C-suite members and executive experts from global companies, e.g. Bayer Business Services, Heinz and HDFC Bank.

The characteristics of today’s typical CIO

- Male, 43-years old, has been in his job for five years
- Seven years is considered to be an appropriate tenure
- The most common level of education is a degree in IT (49%)
- The majority of their career has been spent in the IT function only
- He is highly motivated, works extremely hard and delivers on the (often too low) expectations

More information and full report available on www.ey.com/dna-cio

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Ready to take on the challenge?

For many years, CIOs have been talking about becoming a true partner to the business and the executive management team. But, as The DNA of the CIO highlights, relatively few have broken out of their comfort zones to actually become one.

The encouraging news is that many CIOs find the remit and responsibilities of their role hugely rewarding and enjoyable.

The DNA of the CIO provides CIOs with a robust and balanced toolkit on what to change, who to influence, and how to do it. But it will be up to CIOs themselves to find the courage to reinvent themselves.

What makes a Chief Information Officer?

Motivated to make a difference

CIOs see significant potential to add value to the business. Many are keen to change the often weak or limited perception of IT within the business for the better and they want to move away from being seen as a mere support function, and toward a stronger role as an innovative and transformative part of the business.

A fulfilling career in itself

64% of the interviewees enjoy the scope and remit of the role of the CIO making this a desirable career destination for most – with about two-thirds being content to see their role as a final career destination and half remaining ambitious, hoping for a true invitation to the top table.

Not yet at the top table

All CIOs are dealing with cost management and keeping the lights on and many are acting as an information broker to the business. However, too few are delivering transformation and business model innovation – for many the probably most rewarding part of the role.

Too few CIOs are currently regarded as true members of the executive management team, limiting their potential for change. They appear to be C-level in title only. And less than half say they are deeply involved in strategic decision-making.

There is a clear sense that, for a number of CIOs, not enough time or priority is given to the development of a clear career strategy. About one-third (35%) admit that they are strongly in need of advice on how best to develop their career.

Lack of support from the C-suite

The perception of IT still appears to be shaped by its role as a “helpdesk”. Most leaders aim to keep any discussions with the CIO centered on IT budgets, with few seeing this as a chance to engage in a wider discussion about the value of technology. There’s a common understanding that the C-suite prefers a CIO who is simply stable, consistent and doesn’t rock the boat much.

Does anyone here speak business?

81% of CIOs cited leadership as a crucial skill for their role, as did 79% for communication and influencing skills, well ahead of IT knowhow. But despite this recognition, it is also clear that too many CIOs don’t know what it takes to join the executive management team.

There’s a vital need to discuss technology issues in terms of the business value they bring – whether costs saved, revenues gained, customer satisfaction achieved or similar – rather than in terms of uptime, gigahertz and terabytes.

Relationships are key to success

A more senior role is inevitably more political in nature too, making the need to win friends and influence far more important. There is wide agreement that developing these skills is the number one thing that CIOs can do to bolster their chances for promotion. While CIOs hold the closest relationship with the CFO, they recognize the CEO as the key position for the overall development of their careers.

Nevertheless, few appear to relish the task. When asked about key priorities for the years ahead, internal politics ranks low for most respondents.

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