



Leadership & Management

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Should CIOs be Driving Revenue?

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As we focus on the New Year and new budgets, many of us have been engaged in discussions with the executive team about what our focus will be in order to hit our revenue targets. We've attended the kickoff meetings, heard the speeches, and geared up to play our part in reaching corporate goals. As proactive CIOs, hopefully we helped develop this year's strategy beforehand, and weren't caught by surprise as divisions announced their plans. We already recognize that it's important to be individual contributors in this conversation, and not marginalized as partners with operations or one of the functions.

How do you become an individual contributor to corporate strategy? I think one of the most effective ways to do this is to focus on the opportunities you have as a company, and that means thinking like the head of Sales. Taking this approach involves several key actions on your part. You must:

1. Know your customers
2. Visit Your Customers
3. Give Your Customers What They Want
4. Publish Your Success

How Well Do You Know Your Customers?

As your company's CIO, your responsibility is not just the technology focus of the firm, but as an executive, it's also your responsibility to understand your customer segment. Do you know who your key customers are? Do you know what they like about your company? Do you know what they hate? Can you describe what those customers need, and whether they would like to try something new? Do you have any idea what would make them spend more money with your company? Have you tried to figure out what they like about your competitors? Do you know if there is information or analytics that they wish they had? This isn't just the responsibility of your head of sales, but every executive, and as the CIO, knowing this puts you in a unique position to develop IT products that can aggressively impact your bottom line.

Have You Ever Visited Your Customers?

While many CIOs can describe who their customers are, only a few of them have ever actually visited a real customer's site. Gartner reports that 50% of CIOs have never visited a customer location, and only 1% can report that they spend 20% of their time engaging customers in a real way. They further report what many of us already know...that most CIO information about customers is received second-hand from sales staff. Face-to-face meetings, however, allow CIOs the chance to interact with the customer in a way that can generate additional revenue. (Gartner – Engaging the Customer, 2008) If you haven't met with your head of sales to determine when you can join the next major client meeting, this may be a good time to do so.

Have You Seized the Opportunity to Give Your Customers What They Want?

Once you visit with your customers, you should be able to seize some of the opportunities shown below. What does talking to your customers reveal about innovations that can be brought to your company? What suppliers could you integrate with to unlock hidden value? Do you have any key or new partners that you can work with you change your supply chain and substantially change the way you do business? Are there any new markets or customer needs that you can reach by collaborating? Would these extend themselves to new business

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ventures? Taking the time to assess these options increases your value to the company and gives your presentations more impact because they help everyone focus on the bottom line. (Gartner – Mastering the Paradoxes of Innovation, 2008)

Where do the opportunities exist for your enterprise?					
	R&D	Manufacturing operations	Distribution	Sales and marketing	New business
Opportunities	Are there innovations happening that could be brought into the enterprise?	Could you integrate with suppliers to unlock value?	Is there an opportunity to radically alter distribution through partners?	Could your enterprise reach new markets/customers/needs by collaborating?	Are there opportunities to extend the business by collaborating?
Obstacles	Is the R&D process stuck in industry assumptions?	Are operations less efficient/effective than those of the industry leaders?	Are there inefficiencies/learning opportunities with current distributors?	Are your front-end processes struggling to adapt to new market realities?	Would strategic experiments help to move the business forward?
Partners	Are there ways to involve other communities—e.g., students/academia?	Are there suppliers/other partners who could help—e.g., from other industries?	Are existing/new partners capable of unlocking the value?	Are there opportunities to combine with others—e.g., customers more in the value chain?	Are there partners who could work with you to leverage your strengths?
Goals	Could both your enterprise and partners capture value, without leaking IP?	Could a business model be structured to be win-win for all?	Could value be generated for distributors by reducing costs or providing services to them?	Would partners/customers experience this as valuable?	Could you/partners generate value without damaging the core business?

We are in early stages of evaluation of an electronic document management and archival solution. I am interested in connecting with my peers who have implemented such solutions.

By Partha Mukherjee

Does anyone have an IT partner in Mexico who can provide equipment / local network services for locations there?

By Mike Booke

[How many hours per week do your application programming teams normally work? Your infrastructure teams?](#)

By Stephen Hamilton

Would anyone be willing to share an Infrastructure Services org chart for a medium sized IT shop that is based on services vs. platforms?

By Chris Bell

[How far along is your IPv6 transition?](#)

By Bethany Simpson

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Have You Learned How to Publish Your Success?

One of the best things you can do once you achieve your goals is to publish your success via company newsletters, the intranet, the internet, through the publication of white papers, the receipt of industry awards and the ultimate success if you have business to business operations: publication or endorsement on your customer's web site. It's critical for you to work through this process of marketing IT so that you're seen not only as a company leader, but your firm is seen as an industry innovator, and you, in turn, are seen as a critical driver for that success. Take the time to make this happen, and if you don't have time, make sure you assign it to one of your direct reports. It's not enough for you to know what you've done...everyone needs to know it.

Homework

I have an assignment for you.

1. Identify your top customers or customer segments. List what those customers want from your company.
2. Work with the head of sales to determine which key customers you should visit.
3. Determine the major client topics you should be able intelligently discuss with the executive team at any given time, and what the technology drivers are support them.
4. Identify the ways you will market IT's customer successes this year, and put a plan in place to make sure they get done.

Take a moment to complete the assignment, and if you're comfortable, share the results as a part of this forum. Many of us would be interested in your feedback!

References:

Gartner: Engaging the Customer, 1 April 2008 | ID:G00157699

Gartner: Mastering the Paradoxes of Innovation, 1 June 2008 | ID: G00159181