



Careers



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Are You Thinking Like a CEO?

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I was speaking with a couple of colleagues recently about the push to recovery that we have all been feeling at the executive level. In almost every meeting, in every setting, it seems as though each of our executive peers has an idea to increase revenue and help our companies emerge from the pit of this economic crisis. The conversations all seemed to take on a similar tone: *What does it really take for the CIO to help increase revenue? What type of knowledge do we need? Who should we be working with?*

The results of my conversations will be the focus of my next few blogs. We've all read the news columns that suggest that CIOs don't have enough business savvy, or that we are a thing of the past. Like my esteemed colleagues the Global CIO Executive Summit,

I don't agree with that assessment. On that contrary, I believe that the CIO is uniquely positioned to help companies take advantage of technology capabilities to catapult their companies into strategic positions that make the decision to use their competition obsolete. From my own experience, and those of my peers, I determined that the following skill sets were necessary in order to effectively drive a return on investment for projects we may be engaged in:

1. The ability to think like a CEO
2. The ability to think like a CFO
3. The ability to think like the head of Sales
4. The ability to not just align with the business, but to become the business
5. The ability to create a competitive advantage
6. The ability understand your industry and customer trends so well, that you know how to use technology to make money

Thinking Like a CEO

The first element, learning to think like a CEO, requires that CIOs know who their company is. This not just a quick blurb about who you are and what you do, but a true and deep understanding about how the company was formed, what the culture is, who the people are that

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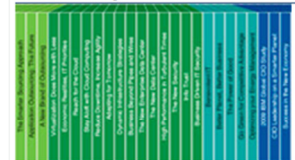
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work there, what you do well that causes you to make money, where you're going in the future, how you plan on getting there and how long you think it will take to arrive. A good leader knows all this information about their firm, and not just the infrastructure or technology that supports it.

Thinking like a CEO also requires CIOs to understand at a deep level what the company vision is, their mission, and their overall strategy. Do you know your company's values, what they take pride in, what their operating principles are, or where you have a strong sense of social responsibility? Can you articulate that in such a way that you could represent your company in a 5 minute interview on CNN, NPR or MSNBC? Do you know your best markets, your best customers and your best products? Can you talk with assurance about why you are better than your competition?

All of this is a key part of your ability to think and act like a CEO. If required, would you be able to interview your CEO's replacement and know from a strategic level why that person could or could not lead your company forward?

Do you know where you fall in the CEO-CIO relationship?

Gartner suggests that there are four types of CEO-CIO relationships: At risk, Transactional, Partnering and Trusted-Ally. Do you continually evaluate your relationship with your CEO so that you know where you fall?

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

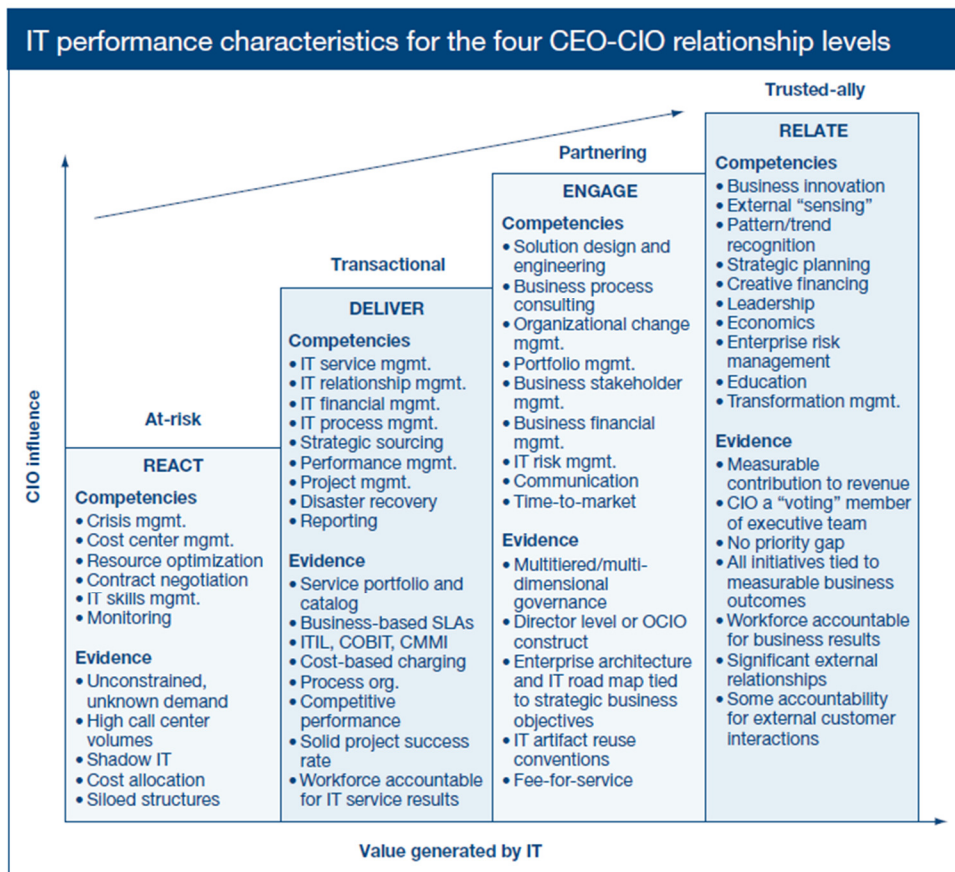
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By Mike Booke

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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

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By Bethany Simpson

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Take a look at this Gartner model that helps CIOs identify CEO expectations and how to execute against them. Do you see where you fit? Does the evidence of your reality fit your initial perception of yourself? Are you truly generating the value you know you can contribute? What areas do you need to work on so that you can move up on the scale? What will transform you into a trusted ally if you're not already considered to be one?

What type of conversations do you have with your CEO? In my conversations with my peers, one of the biggest frustrations they shared was when they had times they were limited to discussions about IT ops or IT strategy only. They wanted to get their hands and feet into business strategy and business operations. Several of us indicated that we had found success by partnering with other key executives on critical initiatives that used technology as a driver. It's up to you to develop and push those relationships so that you are able to help lead the company to success from your seat at the executive table.

In the same article regarding setting CEO Expectations, Gartner calls these types of discussions "above the line," meaning that these are items that are part of our CEO's attention radar and they are discussions you want to have. They include business strategy, performance and operations or things like run, transform and grow initiatives. According to Gartner, you should think twice about discussions that involve IT budget, policy, governance, SLAs, or enterprise architecture, and you should skip conversations about business complaints, IT metrics, IT costs or performance benchmarks. Those items you should think twice about, or should skip altogether are considered "below the line."

I have an assignment for you.

- Try to state your company mission, vision and strategy in 2 minutes or less, in non-technical terms that would excite an average listener about your products and capabilities.
- Identify what type of CEO-CIO relationship you have and what you need to do to change it.
- Determine the top 5 "above the line" business topics you should be able to intelligently discuss with your CEO at any given time.

Take a moment to complete the assignment, and if you're comfortable, share it as a part of this forum. Many of us would be interested in your feedback. We will continue our discussion with "How to Think Like a CFO" in our next blog.

References:

Gartner: Identifying CEO Expectations and Executing Against Them, 1 August 2009 | ID:G00170607

Comments



Angelo Valletta, Sun National Bank – Nov 11, 2010 4:23pm

Posted by:

Angelo J. Valletta, SVP and CIO
Sun National Bank

Try to state your company mission, vision and strategy in 2 minutes or less, in non-technical terms that would excite an average listener about your products and capabilities.

Sun National Bank provides a full-range of banking products and services, delivered by experienced bankers who know your name. Sun focuses on personal attention, while delivering world-class service and competitive products, plus anticipates and fulfills the needs of today's consumers and businesses. At Sun, we believe that doing business in the community means being a part of it. Through a variety of efforts, Sun supports organizations, events and programs that make a difference in the communities we serve. Together, we work to add value for our employees, customers and shareholders today and for years to come. Additionally we were recently honored as one of Forbes magazine most "trusted" organizations. We are humbled and honored to be part of this exclusive group.