

From Architect to Provocateur: The Many Hats of the CIO

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In Brief: What does it take to work as a Chief Information Officer? According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006), Chief Information Officers are responsible for the overall technological direction of their organizations. Today, these managers must propose budgets for projects and programs and make decisions on staff training and equipment purchases. They assign and supervise computer specialists, information technology workers and support personnel. They also provide organizations with the vision to master information technology as a strategic and competitive tool.

However, no other role among senior executives remains more inconsistently defined than that of Chief Information Officer. At the onset of the Web-based era in the mid-1990s, the position of CIO was typically occupied by an IT manager, and thus, consisted of mainly technical responsibilities. A fundamental shift has occurred in the job description, from the role of technology coach to the role of operating strategist.

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Once organizations realize that business processes could be improved and made more efficient through the effective use of IT, the CIO is introduced to a series of new challenges. New applications aimed at automating business processes must be acquired, customized and implemented or built entirely in-house by IT.

However, if there is insufficient collaboration between business and technology, these new systems can fail, because business processes are not changed. Two common examples are failure to realize the full capabilities of the newly implemented application and failure to properly synch the original business process with the new solution.

What does this mean? When we reassess the professional demands placed upon the CIO, a variety of fundamental attributes emerge: (1) those focused on leadership style including **informational**, **decisional** and **interpersonal** roles; and (2) those focused on business operations, including **Chief Architect**, **Change Leader**, **Product Developer**, **Technology Provocateur**, **Coach** and **Chief Operating Strategist**.



The outcome of this study provides a composite “responsibilities” section of a CIO job description, focused on 10 leadership roles. The “major responsibilities” are divided into four essential areas of competency: Strategic Management & Leadership, Operations Management, General Management and Hiring. This job description for the position of the CIO (see table below) is intended to help executive teams make educated decisions in better aligning CIO job responsibilities with current organizational needs.

Abstract: This paper examines the changing role of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) in large technology organizations, from 1995–2005. Using a pre-defined set of nine CIO leadership roles (Gottschalk, 2001), a content analysis is conducted to determine which CIO leadership roles have become more predominant. Conclusions are presented in a timeline graph (Corda,

Chief Information Officer (CIO) Major Job Responsibilities	
Competency #1 - Strategic Management & Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Understand the organization’s strategies and plans and participate in strategic planning. ▪ Spearhead corporate cultural change by getting top management buy-in on IT innovations. ▪ Develop a set of strategic IT plans that span both system deployment and business change management. ▪ Work with a comprehensive cross section of business and IT representatives to develop a vision for the new IT organization. ▪ Evaluate and improve the entire business operating model. ▪ Understand and communicate the financial picture of the IT investment portfolio to the CEO and line-of-business (LOB) executives. ▪ Improve relations with the business by adopting [better] methods of communicating with the business, end-customers, suppliers and others.
Competency #2 - Operations Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborate effectively in an environment with different legacy systems and newer generation technology. ▪ Scan technologies and identify innovative, new ideas/technologies to bring into the business. ▪ Architect integrated, standardized IT systems with heavy reliance on outsourcing.
Competency #3 - General Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish a matrix management structure. ▪ Oversee all processes throughout the supply chain at the transaction level. ▪ Be involved in areas such as marketing, sales, mergers and acquisitions and partnerships. ▪ Participate in product development meetings.
Competency #4 - Hiring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Implement an aggressive hiring and retraining program. ▪ Hire business-savvy IT executives.

Figure 1: CIO Competencies

2004) and a composite set of key job responsibilities in a current CIO job description, for use by executive recruitment teams.

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