

## WHY THE CIO NEEDS TO BE IN THE ROOM

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*Mark Reid writes a highly relevant piece to educate us in exactly why bringing the CIO into the room can assist greatly in re-setting your business operating model and to lead discussions in order to understand how your business can further harness technology to recovery and grow.*



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As Donald Rumsfeld said: “We know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns; the ones we don’t know we don’t know.”

This quote seems particularly apt for the current circumstances as organisations plan for the “new normal”. As the C-suite debates what this looks like and the changes required to their operating model, it won’t be long before the discussion extends to areas with a technology impact, such as:

- Normalising key business process based on staff location
- Driving more revenue through the digital channels
- Building more resilience into the operating model
- Protecting the business from the increased cyber threats

However, as they look around the boardroom table...is the CIO actually in the room?

In reality, there has never been a more important time for the CIO to be part of the narrative for re-setting the business operating model and to be leading the discussion on how the business can further harness technology to recovery and grow.

This short article provides some key questions that will really help facilitate this discussion and should help put the CIO centre stage of this re-alignment process.

### 1. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT ABOUT OUR TECHNOLOGY CAPABILITIES OVER THE LAST 4 MONTHS?

Such reflection is sometimes hard to do in the face of dealing with the next technology challenge, especially when everyone has been working flat out to support the business through the pandemic.

A quick survey around the boardroom table may have already provided some insight but let’s dig a bit more:

- How did our digital operating model perform?
- What impact has there been on the key business processes?
- How successful was remote working enabled?
- Was our MI good enough for monitoring the business performance?



- Have the key IT assets met the needs of the business?
- How have the service levels across the IT ecosystem been impacted?
- What do the cyber security and resilience metrics tell us about the protection levels?

The answers will really help focus the mind on areas to be addressed following the pressure testing of an organisation's technology capabilities over the last 4 months.

## *2. HOW GOOD IS OUR DIGITAL PROPOSITION?*

Digital transformation remains a hugely popular mission but surveys continue to show a lack of confidence among the C-suite about their success. In part, this is because all projects have become "digital" and therefore programmes have become unwieldy, with extended timescales before value is delivered.

The lockdown has shown us what incredible things organisations can achieve with focused and collective effort. We should build on this and take the opportunity to re-set the digital agenda for the organisation. Let's explore this more:

- What does "digital" mean to the business and what digital levers will drive most value?
- Have we really looking outside and in and followed the customer's journey?
- How will changes to the business operating model impact the digital vision?
- How aligned is the organisation and culture to these expectations?
- Is the right level of sponsorship in place?
- What technical architecture will underpin the digital operating model?
- Digital = data, so what data architecture and analytics deliver this?
- Do we have the resources and skills to deliver the programme?
- Can we break the delivery down into more bite-sized value components?

The questions could go on, but this aims to highlight that ultimately technology alone will not transform the business and therefore the biggest challenge for the C-suite, as they re-cut their plans, is ensuring that the organisation is fully prepared for the changes that will define the new operating model.

## *3. WILL MOVING EVERYTHING TO THE CLOUD GIVE US MORE RESILIENCE AND REDUCE COSTS?*

At this point in time there is probably no better example than Zoom to highlight how a cloud service can be delivered at scale, turned on with a click and overall, deliver an excellent customer experience.

Based on that and other very visible cloud successes during lockdown, the answer to this question may well be "yes" however, these decisions must be fully understood in the wider business and architectural context before contracting. Let's look at some of the factors to consider:

- Where can cloud services be used to support key business processes?
- How do they fit with the target architecture and how will any integrations be handled?
- What are the costs based on various scaling scenarios?
- Is switching capex costs to opex accepted by the business?
- What are the service levels and security credentials of the provider?
- How will access and permission controls be managed?
- What skills, processes and technologies will be required to manage/monitor the service?

Clearly, the level of focus on each of these will vary on individual circumstances but this list does highlight that there can be much more to consider in adopting a cloud service than simply registering and using.

## *4. ARE WE FOCUSED ON THE PROJECTS THAT ADD MOST BUSINESS VALUE?*

Most organisations will now need to re-assess and re-set their priorities, even possibly stripping back to cash preservation initiatives only. There will be some iterations to this process but to have this discussion the C-suite will need to be presented with an updated version of the projects/transformation plans. This needs to be mapped to the new operating model and clearly showing the business value impact and costs.

The importance of this stage is to get to a final list that everyone is confident the business can deliver alongside the BAU activities. This requires some tough challenging against some key questions for each project, such as:



- How confident are we in the business case?
- Is business ownership clearly allocated?
- How do we reflect the benefits within the budgeting process?
- Is the right priority allocated?
- How does it sit within the overall change capacity of the business?
- Do we have right resources and skills in place to deliver this?
- Is the delivery timeline achievable and can it be shortened to deliver value earlier?
- How do we communicate the vision and expectations to the business?

The output from this debate should provide the C-suite with a highly informed picture of the projects that the business will focus on and the CIO with a clear mandate to deliver.

In conclusion, I appreciate that there are many moving parts to this re-alignment process that can't be captured in a short article, but I believe that business management through the pandemic has shown us that the fusion between business operations and technology has never been greater - therefore the CIO needs to be in the room to help shape the narrative for business change and to be fully engaged with its delivery.