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<< Business



## Not about the money

The new CIO leader has to be willing to step up to the plate and be recognised as part of the leadership team.

The South African IT sector is facing a skills shortage unprecedented in local business history. Against this backdrop, CIOs face the challenge of making the move from managing technology to leading a value-creating IT organisation that is built on a foundation of talent management.

A combination of factors in our recent history has led to the circumstances in which the local IT industry finds itself today. These include the departure from our shores of over one million skilled people, the fact that little significant and systematic IT training has taken place post-Y2K, and the ever-increasing demand for high-level IT skills across the country.

As technology is increasingly relied on to support all functions within the organisation, CIOs have to come to terms with the sea of change in the demands being placed on them if they do not want to be relegated to the position of chief technology mechanic. Fundamental to that from the outset is a clearly defined strategic intent.

The CIO of today – and indeed tomorrow – has to demonstrate the ability to understand and deliver on the business vision and, at the same time, manage vast budgets and infrastructures. The new CIO leader has to be willing to step up to the plate and be recognised as part of the leadership team.

Technology remains an enabler and it has an important role to play, but the leadership and business skills of the CIO will determine level of influence within the organisation.

In their book, *The New CIO Leader: Setting the Agenda and Delivering Results*, Marianne Broadbent and Ellen Kitzi spell out the priorities for the new CIO, stating that leadership is the foundation of this role.

Noting that leadership and management are different but complementary, the authors point out that management is about execution, while leadership is about change, specifically influencing others to change. They say that leading through influence is critical for the new breed of CIO leader.

Operating in tandem with this is the notion of talent management: new CIOs need to reposition IT within the organisation, but they can do so only when they have created a team that is appropriately skilled and committed to achieving business results. To succeed, the IT team needs new and different competencies that are far more focused on strategic thinking and relationship building than on technical skills.

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It's not about the money. Of course, when skills are in demand, it's easy to look at cash as the main enticement, but smart CIOs will know that it is far more important to bring people on board who are committed to the company's vision and determined to go the extra mile in achieving the vision.

### New breed

**The successful new CIOs are able to lead effectively because they are committed to understanding their environments.**

Jim Collins said it best in *Good to Great*: "If people board the bus principally because of all the other great people on the bus, you'll be much faster and smarter in responding to changing conditions ... if you have the right people on your bus, you don't need to worry about motivating them. The right people are self-motivated. Nothing beats being a part of a team that is expected to produce great results."

The successful new CIOs are able to lead effectively because they are committed to understanding their environments. They know how their business operates, where it has been, where it is now, and where it's going. They understand and buy into goals and strategies. They know who their competitors are. They also understand the need to influence transformation that supports the vision of the business.

Their own vision for IT within their organisations is grounded on the understanding of their environment and, as a result, they are able to secure the support of their peers and colleagues.

What is key here is the ability of the new breed of CIOs to evangelise to their teams a grand vision, and to enable their employees to see that they are part of a bigger picture that includes them. It is important for IT to understand its value contribution in going beyond simply supporting the strategic objectives of the organisation, but that it is a vital part of enabling the organisation to realise those objectives.

You need only to think of the vastly different entity that the South African Revenue Service has evolved into, to appreciate the significance of a strong focus on technology talent management.

Ultimately, CIOs who are able to shape expectations, and achieve consensus on business needs, strategies and endeavours, will have the ability to attract, retain and develop IT people who understand that they are fundamental to building and achieving the strategic intent of the business.