

This year's Gartner Fall Symposium/ITxpo – held from 3rd to the 7th November in Cannes – was organized around the theme of IT and the economy. This report offers an overview of what was on attendees' minds and what they learned from Gartner analysts and each other.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

CIOs at Symposium learned how to increase the IT organization's efficiency and effectiveness, while addressing perennial needs for governance and strategy. They also learned some valuable lessons about how to advance their careers and remain on top of business needs. The current economic downturn was on attendees' minds, but CIOs also agreed that they now had a great opportunity to help their businesses improve and transform – and save money.

Some key takeaways were:

- Redouble efforts to remain connected and relevant to the business. Reach out personally to customers and IT users to see what needs and opportunities are out there.
- Learn more about the financial side of the business and cultivate a better relationship with the CFO.
- Continue with major projects – standing still has its costs, too.

## CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

### The 2009 CIO Agenda

The economic downturn has complicated CIOs' expectations for 2009. Gartner surveys of CIOs since the downturn worsened showed that most CIOs plan flat or slightly higher IT spending in 2009 – not massive cuts as might be expected. And even if the CIO has to cut IT costs, he still has to link business and IT plans, and deliver IT projects that grow the business. Enterprise effectiveness ultimately is not about what is spent on IT – what's important is what CIOs do with their budgets and the results IT creates.

During the next 60 to 90 days, CIOs *should*:

- Improve visibility into revenue. Executives want to know what's going on.
- Define the business drivers of IT cost. Cost comes not from technology demands, such as the number of servers and data centers, but from larger-picture demands to support business decisions, such as new product releases and changes to geographical distribution.
- Look at points of collaboration and friction across the enterprise. Workers usually think vertically, a lead to friction which in turn leads to delays and costs in headcount to expedite or manage the friction.

During the next 60 to 90 days, CIOs *should not*:

- Offer executives a "take it or leave it" IT plan – they might view that instead as an invitation to take or leave you.
- Treat IT staff as a commodity that just costs money, or keep staff in the dark about what's going on – rumors will fill the vacuum
- Give up on your big ideas – keep them going and be part of the solution, not part of the problem

### How to Build an Alliance with the CFO

Gartner surveys have found that nearly a quarter of CIOs today report to CFOs – and that percentage is likely to increase as more CEOs move the CIO reporting structure away from a direct report to the CEO. This means the CIOs may find their focus narrows to focus just on IT and running the shop, but it also means opportunity for CIOs who can use IT to help CFOs do their jobs better.

CFOs face pressures for financial reporting and regulatory compliance, but they also want to improve their understanding and performance on risk management and to achieve a single integrated view of financial performance and productivity. CIOs can use tools info and modeling techniques to help here.

CIOs who report to CFOs can manage how the CFO views the CIO role by:

- Identifying the CFO's focus, whether it's visionary leadership, financial stewardship or performance optimization.
- Working to understand portfolio management and portfolio-based planning, so the CIO can help the CFO improve planning based on risk, value and strategy.
- Adapting to the CFO's culture. If the CFO likes face-to-face communication, communicate that way.
- Reserving time to talk with CFO about future and big picture even though you have a million operational details to talk about.

### Workshop: Jumpstart 2009: Strategy and Planning

About 50 CIOs and other IT leaders attended a workshop to consider three main areas in jumpstarting their 2009 plans. They reviewed steps for overall strategy and planning and focused on mobilizing people, process and technology.

Workshop participants used this session to create a road map for the upcoming year with specific action items. The recommendations are:

- Identify strategic areas to focus on and conduct your gap analysis
- Balance the need for growth with the need to manage expenses
- Integrate career development and succession plans



## KEYNOTES

### Welcome Address and Analyst Keynote

There are no easy or safe decisions in the next year – get over it. Be smarter, conquer your fear and make the hard choices. We are in a new age in which IT is still essential – but so is change. Gartner recommends you take action now; examine your investments, rank them to find your priorities, question everything you have, protect your key people who can deliver your priorities, reconsider each budget line, plan for multiple futures and then choose where to cut AND where to spend.

IT is very good at acquiring systems but it's time to learn how to "manage what you have." Use this opportunity to move from the accidental legacy architecture you have inherited toward a 21st Century sustainable architecture. Use the downturn to modernize and prepare for the return to growth; remember this is your chance to get executive support for the change process so you can do what's necessary to succeed in the long run.

It's also time to innovate. It's time to "learn to let go" instead of always seeking to control and stamp out user driven innovation and technology choices. Find the opportunities for reinvention. By cultivating innovation and identifying where you can make a difference, you will be able to drive down costs and harness new ideas. You need to upgrade or you risk lower speed, lower power and performance than more agile competitors. Do rationalize your portfolio, but be careful! Exploit commoditization, use the cloud, and leverage partners where appropriate. Take stock and decide what you need – and what you can change. We live in interesting times; it's time to focus, it's time for courage, it's time to get started.

### Mastermind Interview: Ian Livingston, CEO, BT

For the next year, things are going to be tough across the business world. The key message from Ian Livingston, CEO of BT, is you should plan for it – being prepared won't harm you. No one is recession proof. No one is going to escape the present climate unscathed. Companies should be looking at both the top and bottom line simultaneously, to cost cutting as well as continuing to seek opportunities for revenue growth.

Remember that in this difficult time green IT is not going to go away. And with innovations like telepresence and virtualization, it isn't a case of paying for green IT at the expense of the business. Green IT can and does save you money if approached sensibly, and is something customers want to be a part of.

Reducing headcount is definitely going to be one of the core approaches CEOs adopt; it's inevitable. When BT is talking to its customers, the CEOs are responding that they are examining costs and they are looking to refocus on higher growth regions of the world. The opportunity for IT is to streamline the bureaucracy and to move to a position where the CIO and the key IT management are change leaders and change enablers contributing to overall business efficiency and effectiveness.

Radical moves in the name of cost cutting are not the right approach. Use technology and process to reduce failure, work on increasing agility and ensure customer experience is at the forefront of each decision. This has to be the answer; making the organization more able to realize opportunity and deliver to customers more effectively. Don't force people to use new technologies; think about where social networking technologies, cloud computing, SaaS and remote working can make life better for the business and for employees and use the technology to serve those ends – make people want to use the new approaches.



### Mastermind Interview: Contractions and Balance: Business is IT and IT is Business: Steve Chambers, CIO and Valerie Dias, Executive Vice President, Chief Risk and Compliance Office, Visa Europe

How to get Business and IT to work effectively together is a constant question. The first step is to stop asking the question – the divide between business and IT does not exist unless you create it. In Visa, they have formed joint project boards and everyone is encouraged to continually ask "why?" It's vital to identify, in clear business terms, the purpose and goal of a project. Success must be measured in business terms – how will the project positively impact the business?

It's important that everyone understands that they are all part of the one organisation. Creating trust at all levels across the business and within IT is critical. Visa ensures this by having an IT directorate embedded throughout the organisation. All project teams should ask the "why?" question when they are asked to undertake a project. This close relationship between business and IT can be the key to achieving competitive advantage. If IT is not closely aligned to the business, a gap is created that will add unnecessary risk, time, complexity and cost to a project. A key objective for any CIO should be to minimize this space.

Overcoming scepticism can be a difficult hurdle. Leaders need to be firm in their beliefs, demonstrating on a practical level that their ideas and solutions can work. This process may take some time, but over time, behaviours and attitudes will begin to change. Success breeds change, which in turn breeds more success. Leaders need to have a sustained vision and purpose to ensure this.

People, politics and personalities are often the root cause of conflict. Conflict can, however, be useful, so long as it is focused on solving the challenge and moving forward. But when conflict becomes about entrenched positions and blame, then it benefits no one.

If you can't articulate the value of technology spend... then all you are doing is spending money. Always, always, ask "why?"

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