CIO | EXCHANGE

5 ways to redefine IT in the face of change

CIO Exchange Brief

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This CIO Exchange Brief is part of a series that summarizes key discussion points in Oracle's CIO Exchange events. In these virtual events, hosted by Oracle CIO Jae Evans, global IT leaders and peers discuss the latest topics with acclaimed thought leaders.

The evolution of the CIO role has always mirrored the evolution of the impact of technology on business. Today, many entities and enterprises are becoming technology businesses, and products are being driven by data. Along with that evolution, the CIO role has shifted more and more to being a strategic contributor to the business. We know more than ever that crises can be a powerful force in accelerating a company's digital transformation plans, where technology, data, cloud adoption, customer engagement, and analytics are key. To reset the bar for IT and get everyone thinking more strategically, here are five key actions IT leaders can take.

This brief summarizes the discussion around redefining the role of IT and covers these key takeaways from the event:

1. Turn crisis into opportunity

2. Lead cultural shifts

3. View IT through a customer lens

4. Enable the business to run on data

5. Focus on flexible workloads and automation

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Turn crisis into opportunity

Organizations have seen massive amounts of change in the last couple of years. The global pandemic has created a galvanizing mission for almost every organization across every industry to accelerate digital transformation initiatives to help prevent future disruptions.

In the past, the normal sequence of events involved in IT innovation typically followed a path of ideation, looking at different technology options and business implications, and recommending options. These events are now compressed into a single holistic process in which the business and technology teams, along with customers and partners, are at the table brainstorming solutions together. Crisis has taught teams to look at challenges and opportunities in an agile way. This method of engagement and innovation is going to continue. As a result, CIOs are looking to the cloud to further accelerate the speed of innovation and solutions delivery.

Rapid innovation requires a cloud that can deliver autonomous services that reduce risk and save time on labor; productivity that is cloud-scale and flexible; AI and ML that are built in; application migration and development that is intuitive; and security architected at every level. Cloud services can help businesses adapt to market changes while maintaining consistency in day-to-day operations.

Because the pandemic showed how IT can deliver with speed and agility, CIOs have taken a role that's more central, and they continue to tackle more strategic priorities as well.

2

Lead cultural shifts

CIOs are now operating as both technology leaders and business executives in their organizations, and they have responsibilities across those interests. Increasingly, CIOs are having to consider how to lead technology across the entire organization.

Businesses with an outdated organizational framework have factions of fragmented IT teams that operate in silos. To resolve this, CIOs can combine these various teams and consolidate their functions. One approach some CIOs have implemented is a "you build it, you own it" strategy—something akin to a DevOps mindset which fosters ownership and better understanding of who your customers are. Blending engineering with traditional IT models is both an organizational and cultural shift that can drive real change. This organi-

zational design is necessary to drive a data-focused business. New skills, cultural changes, and a democratized structure enable business users to be their own technologists.

Additionally, the IT organization has an opportunity to evolve how it engages with its partners in the business. CIOs are now looking for people who are broad in their education, polished in their leadership skills, intellectually curious, and emotionally intelligent. CIOs are also building teams that are able to engage leadership and figure out the best approach for the business as a whole. For example, at Oracle, we created a working group across HR, real estate, and IT in order to create a comprehensive plan for the global workforce to work fully remotely.

3

View IT through a customer lens

The role of the CIO starts with a business focus and therefore with the customer. How do you ensure that what IT is working on really matters to the entire company? One of the most important ways is to see that the work is done through a customer lens. Starting with a value proposition, understanding how we can make a difference and contribute to the strategy of the company is a way CIOs are now approaching technology management.

Companies across the globe have been talking about digital enablement and digital transformation. These past two years, CIOs have focused exponentially more on

their customers and the data insights that transform how they view and support them.

CIOs are balancing legacy systems with digital enablement in a way that is conducive to producing value for the customer. This positions CIOs to engage with customers today in ways they haven't been able to before.

Looking ahead, the CIO is going to be on the front lines together with other business teams, focusing on customer-facing products. The role of the CIO could even evolve further toward something like a chief innovation and product officer.

4 Enable the business to run on data

Many businesses are becoming technology businesses, using products driven by data. Data has been moving up the enterprise priority list for years. CIOs are more data-driven in their decision-making than ever before, transforming how they interact with customers, drive sales, and engage employees.

CIOs are demonstrating the importance of data to their boards. They are even running executive training to elevate how they think about data and how to make strategic investments in data.

Educating all P&L leaders on how they think about their data has been a major shift in working at the top.

CIOs are also thinking about how to work with all the data streaming in, and analytics takes an important position. To that end, CIOs are investing in technologies such as data lakes and visualization tools. Specifically, a data lake is valued as an enterprise asset that ensures different teams adopt common tools, which results in more insights for the company.

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Enable the business to run on data

The value of data is realized more when people across an organization work with it together. Therefore, a fundamental transformation that's accelerating is the CIO working closely across the business to drive value from huge amounts of data to make better decisions.

They're investing effort to ensure that people with different backgrounds work together with the data to create insights. Companies are even establishing reporting and analytics competence centers that sit within IT and in business units.

In short, data is becoming the differentiator for many of the products sold into markets. This creates a need for technology leadership, analytic data leadership, and an engineering culture—more than what's been seen in even the recent past.

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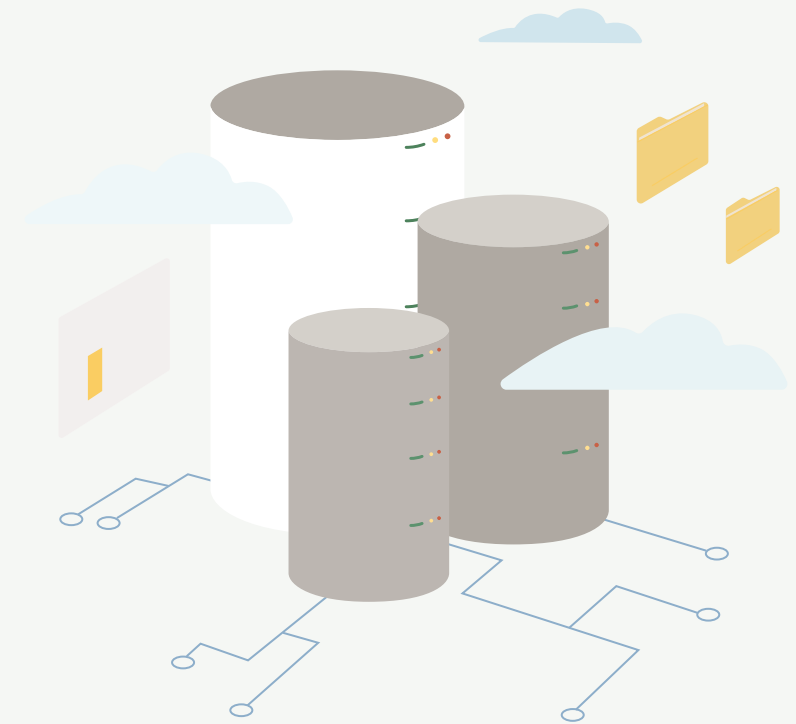
Focus on flexible workloads and automation

CIOs are becoming increasingly more aware of how workloads are migrated and managed, and they're demanding better line of sight into capacity management. With flexible workloads, they're able to meet the response demands of their organization, customers, and industry.

Leveraging the same pipeline in a repeated fashion helps gain velocity when migrating various types of workloads. This flexibility extends to every application, ensuring that enterprise workloads can scale globally.

CIOs are finding that workload management is also critically important from a security perspective and from a span of control perspective. As a core competency, they're ensuring that workloads can continue to grow in a place that IT can still control.

IT is managing workloads in an efficient manner in order to eliminate manual tasks and operational overhead.

CIOs are creating governance models to ensure oversight and structure around provisioning. They're finding that a governance model is necessary to have the discipline to truly understand workloads in order to be able to ensure an infrastructure that's leveraging elasticity. Increasingly, IT is growing intelligently in a way that allows the organization to scale up or dial down as needed. Flexibility greatly matters to supporting an enterprise with potentially many thousands of applications and workloads

CIOs are the future orchestrators of innovation

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In the future, the CIO will be responsible for multiple sets of platforms and services. The stack that runs those platforms is going to be fully cloud enabled with automation built in at every level. Eliminating repeatable manual tasks required of employees and engineers helps provide strategic focus and up-levels IT's role.

The future role of the CIO could be one of orchestrator, making systems and teams work together. And, perhaps more importantly, to make sure that data flows where it needs to go in an automated way. The CIO is in a position to lead coordination and integration with all the disciplines that are involved in delivering value.

But to build the future, CIOs are also cultivating a culture of intellectually curious, analytical, and emotionally intelligent teams that will create real value for the business by engaging across the organization and with leadership. Looking to that future, the CIO role will be more central, fostering an environment where the operating model, organizational design, and business culture align.

> "As CIOs, we have an incredible opportunity to help our c-suite peers achieve their goals; keep the business humming; drive innovations that respond to what customers need and want; preserve jobs and make them more rewarding."
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> **—Jae Evans, CIO, Oracle**

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