



The first 100 days of a new CIO:

Nine steps for wiring in success

**It's critical to get a good start when stepping into the CIO role.
Consider several measures when you shape your course.**

**Michael Bloch and
Paul Willmott**

The early months of a CIO's tenure are an extremely important time to learn about a company's culture and critical issues, shape an agenda for change, build relations with peers and senior leaders, and make decisions—on people, funding, and other matters—that will provide a solid foundation for the future.

Ian Buchanan, who has served several financial institutions as CIO or COO, says: "In the first 100 days, you have to make your mark. In that period, you also need to formulate a compelling vision, because if you want to lead, as opposed to executing the visions of others, you do need to come out quickly with a story that everybody can align around." (See our interview with Buchanan, page 6.)

By working over the years with many senior executives stepping into this role, we've learned about elements to cover, priorities to make,

and mistakes to avoid. We have attempted to distill the most important topics to address during these critical first months. Of course, the particulars of each situation will have an impact on the priorities of each CIO. But we believe every new CIO will benefit from reviewing these elements and using them as a starting point to shape his or her own course of action.

1. Start the first 100 days before your first day

- Use the interview process to understand organizational dynamics and expectations.
- Ensure you see all stakeholders, such as corporate directors, to form a better perspective. Talk with systems integrators and other outside experts to obtain a fuller view.
- Start building a hypothesis of your plan.

Takeaways

For CIOs, it is essential to use the first few months on the job to set the tone for the coming years. However, pitfalls await many stepping into new roles.

Experience has shown which elements are essential to address early on, how to set priorities, and how to avoid common mistakes; the steps outlined in this article are a good starting point for CIOs charting their course.

2. Clarify and strengthen your mandate

- Understand what is expected of you and how you will be measured, for example, with regard to new business capabilities, cost targets, automation levels, and projects to fix. Set out your “strategic posture”—for instance, emphasizing IT as a driver or enabler of strategy.
- Set clear expectations with the CEO and other stakeholders on the levers that you must have control over, such as the freedom to cancel projects, change reporting lines, replace business unit CIOs, or outsource functions.
- Enlist CEO support for early symbolic actions, for instance, stopping a high-profile project or replacing an underperforming executive.

3. Build relationships with business unit executives and agree upon priorities

- You only get one opportunity to make a strong first impression, so prepare for these meetings well. Get input from members of your team who know the executives you’re meeting. Learn as much as possible about their priorities and concerns up front. Form a hypothesis of the likely answers, and test and refine them in every discussion.
- Develop alliances across the group. Set meetings with business unit heads and other key executives, for instance, client account managers and R&D leaders. Focus on the business imperatives that IT can enable or transform with regard to, for example, channels, customer relations, and products.
- Set the tone for peer relationships and avoid conversations about executives’ IT concerns. Challenge current priorities and plans when

appropriate. Educate others when necessary. Many executives are nervous about IT simply because they don’t understand it.

4. Understand the upside and downside

- Understand the specific role of technology in the industry and how it creates value. Study the best and most admired users of technology in your industry. What do they do that your company does not?
- Ensure that an IT-enabled innovation pipeline is in place. Start building this capability if needed.
- Make sure you understand the IT-driven risks in the organization, for instance, regarding cybersecurity and large, ongoing programs that might not deliver on expectations. See to it that regular review and mitigation plans are in place.

5. Develop the plan

- Create transparency on performance and health. Develop a fact base not only on IT performance—for instance, cost levels, service levels, head count, and key projects—but also on IT health with regard to architecture, capabilities, culture, and delivery.
- Understand your technical assets and benchmark them against best practice. Consider technological discontinuities, such as cloud computing, mobility, and social media, and study how you can leverage them.
- Choose levers selectively. There are many levers for improving IT, but the most effective transformations focus on just a handful. Sequence improvements to build capabilities. Partner or outsource where required to fill

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capability deficits, but make sure to develop internal capabilities as part of the plan.

6. Build your team

- Start with organizational design. Incumbent team members might be effective in their current roles but not in a new structure. Aim high. Sketch out the profiles of your “dream team” rather than shuffling existing players.
- Take some risks. Consider a range of options, for example, external hires and transfers from business roles. Promote unrecognized high performers.
- Be aware that you will send a strong signal through your choices. Test them with trusted colleagues. Act decisively and swiftly.

7. Rally the IT organization

- Establish trust early by communicating a vision for IT. Give people compelling reasons to support your cause. Develop a simple stump speech that everyone can understand. Set bold aspirations. Link business success to IT success.
- Communicate consistently and persistently in order to cascade your vision throughout the organization. Use town-hall meetings and blogs to get key messages out. Make yourself visible. Visit major sites. Give opinion formers and rising stars personal attention.

- Think through the capabilities your organization most needs to improve—for example, architecture, customer interactions, innovation, and large-scale program management—and develop a plan for addressing the gaps.

8. Demonstrate leadership through visible results and actions

- Find some quick wins. Killing off an ineffective sacred-cow project can be an effective way to rapidly demonstrate leadership. Initiating outsourcing and offshoring deals can have the same effect.
- Assess the project portfolio and the business benefits it delivers:
 - Which projects must be canceled because they are not aligned with business priorities, have no clear business case, or have made no visible progress in six months?
 - Which projects must get extra resources, for example, because of a mismatch between requirements and resources, to deliver results on time? Which projects must be rescoped to meet a critical milestone for the business?
- Respond thoughtfully to “blockers” in the organization. Change will surface these blockers, and your initial response will shape how you are perceived.



9. Continue your personal journey

- Invest in yourself. Recognize that a new role brings a need for new skills and behaviors. Set an agenda for personal development. Educate yourself in the business areas you know less well. Draw on internal and external sources to learn the business fundamentals.
- Find mentors who will help with your transition and support your personal development.

Internal mentors can help you with the culture and politics, give you honest feedback, and watch your back. External mentors are good sounding boards who can educate you about areas you know less about. Find sources of freshness. Industry outsiders can feed in new ideas.

- Pace yourself. The first 100 days are only the start of a marathon. Maintain a balanced lifestyle to sustain the pace. ○