Foreword

Petter Gottschalk’s book takes a wide-ranging look at CIO roles and skills, and, in particular, explores the strategic and leadership competencies that support a progression to becoming a CEO.

How realistic is it for a CIO to become a CEO, particularly as it has been found that many IT managers are not interested in becoming the CEO? It is true that historically not many have made this transition. What are the biggest pros and cons for a CIO who wants to take the top job? Arguably, the biggest advantage is the cross-functional expertise that IT gains, together with a focus on logical, forward thinking and planning. This allows a “big picture” view that Dr. Gottschalk highlights with his expansive review of technology-enabling business models. Of course, in the extreme, strengths also can become a weakness. Strong logic may not be the best tool to deal with the “shades of grey” needed for stakeholder management and uncertain futures.

In practice, many IT managers have not yet evolved the skills and behaviors to become a CIO. According to surveys by Henley Management College and the British Computer Society, the most important factors in building a successful career in IT are leadership and communication skills (ranked by 69% of respondents as the most important), followed by management skills (22%) and professional skills (16%).

Henley Management College, where Dr. Gottschalk also obtained his doctorate, is well-known for its research on leadership. Building on some of these findings and research with CIOs, we have found a three-level path requiring an evolutionary blend of five skills. The entry level to IT requires “technical” skills. Progression to IT manager needs both professional and management skills. At the CIO level, it is the business and interpersonal skills that become most important. These latter skills are the ones that offer the potential to become a CEO.

However, in our research, IT directors raised serious concerns about a non-technical skills gap among their staff. Fifty-three percent indicated that there was a shortage of people with the right level of personal skills, such as communication, people
management, and leadership; 51% said there was a lack of business and management skills. Just 2% said that their organisation lacked IT managers with the right technical skills. This requirement for well-rounded IT professionals means that respondents are as likely to look outside of the organisation for new recruits with the right skills as they are to promote internally.

In my own career as a CIO, one of the biggest initiatives I had was working with the European CEO to develop and implement a new business model for key accounts. It needed strategic insights both in business processes and emerging technologies, but probably the biggest challenge was dealing with multiple stakeholder relationships internally and externally across diverse cultures.

So how can organisations develop their future CIOs and CEOs? This book provides relevant theory and practical advice for the future CIO or for the CIO who aspires to be a CEO. Its consolidation of theory from a range of different fields makes it a valuable reference book for IT management courses. At the same time, the practical insights into strategy and leadership make it a useful primer for managers. Dr. Gottschalk’s experience both as a CIO and CEO, supplemented by his extensive publishing record, are clearly evident in this recommended book.

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Dr. Sharm Manwani, PhD, is a senior faculty member at Henley Management College, a leading UK business school, where he researches and lectures in information management. Prior to this role, he held leadership positions with multinational companies, most recently as VP and CIO, IT & Business Processes at Electrolux. Dr. Manwani consults with leading companies on strategy, IT leadership, and program management. His commitment to professional activities includes being a fellow of the BCS and judging computing awards. He has an MBA and doctorate from Henley and is currently researching IT management capability. Dr. Manwani co-authored the CIO Elective for the Henley MBA, launched in August 2005.