Chapter 3

The Duality of Information Technology Roles: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This investigation documented the interpretation of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief Technology Officer (CTO) roles on the senior management team of a financial organization. Confidential one-on-one interviews were conducted to document research participant’s interpretations. A qualitative approach was adopted, employing Narrative Inquiry to document these interpretations. Results suggest that the organization benefits in many ways with these two roles as members of the senior management team. The team is more collaborative and is able to approach planning in a proactive manner, while decision making is both efficient and effective because of the immediate consideration for both the affect on business processes and the availability of technological support.

INTRODUCTION

This manuscript presents the results of a project which investigated the interpretation of the senior management committee team regarding the involvement of both the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief Technology Officer (CTO) on the senior management team.

In order to apply information technology strategically corporate information must be considered a valuable resource. Thus, the attitude of senior management must be that managing information strategically should be treated with the same level of interest as managing finances, human resources, operations, and all the other more traditional functions within the organization (Meagher, 2003).

Both of these functions, CIO and CTO are important. What is also important is the alignment or agreement between the CEO and the CIO that the role will involve those aspects associated with a CIO role or a CTO role. Interpretations by the CIO, CTO, and the CEO must be clear and explicit. Oren (1995) suggests that successful managers must ensure they accurately interpret
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in order for information to be successfully regarded as a valuable resource and for it to be employed in a beneficial way there must be alignment between the expectations of senior management and the consequent CIO and CTO roles.

The next section provides some general context for this investigation with reference to other research into the roles of CIOs and CTOs. Then the method employed to conduct this investigation is described. Following this section is a presentation of the results obtained from the interviews. These results are organized by the major themes which emerged from a thorough review of the transcripts. Finally, general conclusions are presented.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following discussion of literature is organized by themes. To begin context is provided through a presentation of the historical evolution of the CIO role. Upper Echelon Theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) is briefly reviewed to serve as an introduction to alignment issues relating to IT and business. Finally, the expanding role of the CIO leads to changes in perspective and the eventual emergence of the CTO role.

In 1986 Business Week (Bock et al., 1986) reported on the emergence of a new breed of manager, the “Chief Information Officer” and their introduction into the senior management team. The CIO was expected to be able to relate to the company’s non-technical managers and those more technical managers of the, then named, data processing department. A very interesting point made by the Business Week article was that the emergence of the CIO role followed the emergence of the CFO role by about twenty years. Also, in the late 1980s it was estimated that approximately one-third of major companies in the United States had identified the necessity for a CIO role and had filled
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