CDO CONCLAVE

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Q. What are the key elements to look for in a potential CDO?

GK: Executives in virtually every industry are finally coming to understand just how extensively the digital revolution is restructuring their competitive landscape. The demands of digitisation will ultimately force companies to transform virtually every aspect of their business.

If companies are to find that executive, whether internally or from outside, they must consider several factors: the roles and responsibilities required; how their organization is structured, and how it should be; the governance model needed to give the CDO the authority to carry out the digital strategy and transformation; the cultural hurdles the new CDO will face; the new digital technologies needed; and even how to measure the success of their digital transformation. And they must bear in mind that the CDO position is so new that they can't rely on past experience in finding one, as they would in searching for a new Chief Operating Officer (COO) or CIO. I believe companies should look for the following 5 elements:

1. The progressive thinker - thinking imaginatively about how the business could be transformed through digitisation, and to provide the inspiration as the company moves to a fully digital strategy and operating model. Preferably working directly with the CEO, the progressive thinker will typically focus on the development of digital strategy and innovation throughout the company, while pursuing innovative ideas and methods from the world at large as well as the industry in question.

2. The creative disrupter - offering a more hands-on approach to the continuous development of new digital technologies and business models and solutions. A creative disrupter can be especially valuable in companies facing severe and dramatic changes as a result of digitisation in consumer-oriented industries, such as publishing and retail.

3. The customer advocate - focuses on the development of a convenient, engaging, and seamless customer experience using design thinking across all channels, digital and physical.

4. The innovative technologist - promoting the use of new digital technologies to transform the company's entire value chain, providing the technological groundwork for new digital business models through technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), mobility, social media, and analytics, while improving internal efficiency and finding ways to cut costs.

5. The universalist - typically managing all aspects, and all value-creation levers, of a complete digital transformation. Reporting directly to a wholly supportive CEO, the universalist can oversee the spectrum of possible digital tasks, guiding the development of digital strategy as part of an overall corporate strategy; devising new business models; overseeing digital marketing and the customer experience; implementing digital technologies; boosting operational efficiency; and digitising the ways in which employees do their work.

Q. How can organisational infrastructure be set up to support the transformation process?

GK: IT infrastructure strategies for a digital world. Most businesses today were conceived in a very different world when compared to the current digital era—with no pervasive connectivity, mobility, social platforms or the cloud. Following are five key impact areas, which are fundamental to designing a sound IT infrastructure strategy:

End-user devices - The dramatic increase in the number of end-user devices will raise the stress on an organisation's IT infrastructure. As a result, it becomes essential to have a robust IT framework in place to manage all these user devices consistently, enabling peak performance.

Enterprise storage - Digitalisation will have a paramount impact on an organisation's storage requirements. Consequently, data capture, storage capacity and retrieval requirements would all need to grow exponentially.

Enterprise computing - With digital business blurring the line between the physical and digital worlds, consumer-centric mobile applications complemented by powerful wearables will take center stage. This makes enterprise computing an important factor to closely evaluate. There will be a huge demand for complex, real-time processing that is able to perform comprehensive algorithms to easily account for both structured and unstructured data.

Networking - Also imperative to the success of a seamless, digital business is increased networking capability. An organisation cannot afford to be unavailable for even a split second, as the digital world is bolstered through several internal, external and independent devices that constantly exchange and utilise data.

Security - Security is one of the most critical of these five areas in a digital IT infrastructure. When compromised, it can result in huge losses. Digitalisation gives organisations and their direct stakeholders, including employees and

consumers, direct access to their specific data, providing complete control over how the technology and information are used. But this leaves the entire ecosystem more vulnerable to cyber-attacks. Organisations need to design a security system that effectively identifies, classifies and removes threats, as well as maintains data integrity at any stage.

Q. How can buy-in from all the stakeholders be ensured for a smooth transition to a digital atmosphere?

GK: Digital transformation creates deeper and broader change, using more agile methodologies that involve multiple stakeholders. The role of change management needs to evolve to provide a more integrated view and shifts in focus for some change levers, but the quintessential role of helping people transition will remain an important contributor to digital transformation's success.

Change managers supporting digital transformation need to shift their focus in relation to some of the following change levers:

Stakeholder identification and management: Digital transformation is typically cross-functional, cross-business, and may well involve external parties such as customers, regulators and external service providers. Therefore, stakeholder management needs to be more comprehensive and focused on specific interests of each group, rather than a taking a simplistic, project-centric view of their 'influence' and 'level of support'.

Change champions: To support the depth and breadth of change, it is critical to cultivate genuine change agents from many parts of the organisation. These are not always readily identifiable by their seniority or role.

Change leaders: Driving change from the top is necessary, but no longer sufficient in digital transformation. Multiple leaders that are capable of speaking to their respective constituencies will be required, but need to work off the same script.

Training: Deep change requires different learning methods that help people adapt to new roles, new mindsets and using multiple new systems. Communication: 'Telling' is out, but deeper ongoing and authentic engagement is in. The role of the change manager is to provide the appropriate channels to enable this.

Q. How do you think the attendees will benefit from this event?

GK: Events like this, specifically focusing on digital, will greatly help the organisations to understand how they could plan or enhance their digital journey. It will also help them learn from the best in the industry on best practices of digital strategy and implementation.