

4 keys to more effective CIO succession planning in an age of digital transformation

Many companies face two dilemmas with respect to technology strategy—succession planning for retiring Baby Boom-generation CIOs, and keeping up with the digital transformation of their industry. In the past, those two issues were unrelated. But now, **outdated technology platforms** and legacy software solutions artificially constrain companies in both respects, making it difficult to respond to technological disruption, and limiting the choice of future CIOs to those capable of managing obsolete technology.

In the few years remaining while Baby Boom generation CIOs are still on hand to provide continuity, companies need to accomplish the following four key tasks.

1

Identify how many of your technologies are reaching obsolescence

Nearly every industry is in the midst of technology-driven disruption, and only a technology-driven transformation will suffice in response. However, obsolete technologies like COBOL, Flash, and PBX are still widely used, and other business technologies are racing toward

obsolescence, but not extinction. That's particularly true for on-premise enterprise solutions. While **a surprising number of core business functions** today still run on older technologies, such as mainframes, the cost and difficulty of maintaining legacy applications will only increase with time. Rather than saddle future CIOs with the need to support too many outdated technology platforms, **start identifying functions that can be moved** to more modern platforms now.

2

Measure how much time your IT staff spends on manual modifications

Many CIOs started their work lives in the pre-digital era, so they know all the nuts and bolts of the business. At this same time, they also recognize how much more difficult the CIO role is becoming. According to CIO.com, **88% of CIOs polled** agree that the role is become much more difficult, and has become far more focused on business strategy than ever before. There's no reason to squander the time, attention, and resources of an increasingly critical business leader on old-world tasks like constructing dashboards, reports, maintaining customizations, and other routine requirements. Many of those tasks once required manual intervention by IT staff; but today, that kind of task can be accomplished by business users who have access to the current releases of enterprise financial software packages. In many cases, the savings incurred by freeing up IT staff (and your CIO) would pay for the upgrade to newer solutions. The ideal time to **upgrade to more agile, user-friendly software** is before changing CIOs, rather than after.



3

Assess how much of your IT spending goes to functions that can be outsourced for less

Friends don't let friends build their own datacenters. The remarkable economic advantages of VPNs, cloud software, mobile technologies, and distributed workforces constantly change the equations you should use to make a build-or-buy calculation for any IT function. Now is the time to calculate how much of your staff's precious time and attention your company can afford to devote to replicating commodity functions like server maintenance, OS upgrades, security software, datacenters, and other details that are so much cheaper and easier to outsource than they were a decade or two ago. Because businesses are in the early stages of a [mass migration to the cloud](#), this is the perfect moment to compare the costs and capabilities of on-premise enterprise software with the savings and benefits of moving to the cloud. With that information in hand, today's CIOs should **identify at least 2 or 3 cloud technologies** that provide a safe, reliable, economical path to the world their successors are likely to inhabit. Even better, they should start making specific plans for the cloud migration that's sure to come.

4

Decide how to simplify your IT infrastructure

A CIO.com survey shows that **23% of CIOs want to simplify their IT infrastructure**. That's not surprising, given the fact that complex IT environments, often cluttered with legacy technologies, create barriers to the kinds of digital transformation that many industries are experiencing. It's also understandable; companies have faced decades of pressure to achieve faster growth at lower costs. But the task of rationalizing the IT environment never becomes urgent enough to become top priority. Now is the time to **launch an initiative to simplify your IT infrastructure** to develop greater agility. It's often a multi-year task, but it's a task that can yield permanent benefits. More importantly, it can unshackle your company from the constraints of legacy technologies. In the very near future, your ability to respond to technology-driven disruptions will be a key factor in your business success. As an issue of succession planning, it's better to take that on now, so that your next generation of IT leadership can focus on more strategic issues.

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