

# THE CIO CV – MARKETING SKILLS ESSENTIAL

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As businesses struggle to do more with less, the pressure falls on the IT function and the CIO to demonstrate the value add of IT or risk being seen as a cost centre to be cut. This pressure, to demonstrate the business value of IT will continue to increase and CIOs need to accept this and gear themselves up to deal with it. The flip side of this is that if they can demonstrate this value perhaps the much coveted seat at the board room table is within reach.

In the past, many CIOs have been focused on operational issues and have been stuck in reactive mode. Often those that do very good work either providing critical operational services or completing valuable projects do not take the time to ensure that their organisation in general and their colleagues in particular know what is being delivered by the IT organisation. IT functions can work very hard to bring projects in on time and within budget but once a project is delivered they move on to the next without making sure the business understands and acknowledges the value delivered. In short, many CIOs just do not get the need to market themselves and their departments.

Many IT staff view marketing as some activity that takes place elsewhere in the organisation. The reality is that to be a success, the CIO needs to have and use strong marketing skills. IT organisations have a tendency to keep the head down – it's the nature of people working there who may not be comfortable singing their own praises. This serves nobody.

CIOs need to be marketing IT. They need to look for champions in the business who are prepared to say 'you did a good job on this.' In our experience plenty of business managers would be very happy to do this but they are not asked. CIOs need to pay more attention to

the view of IT among the user base and especially the view of senior executives. They need to be more vocal about telling others about their achievements. This is not the time for shrinking violets.

Marketing is now an important part of the CIO role. IT is a very good place to start if the business wants to introduce efficiency, so by making the case for your team, IT starts to be valued a lot more highly by other lines of business. Many other support functions would love the opportunity that IT departments have to do projects or implement technologies that can be linked directly to cost reductions or business improvements.

We are not talking about spin here. We are talking about ensuring those that matter realise the contribution many hardworking IT teams are making. It is also important to ensure that we are clear as IT professionals about the value and benefits. They need to be benefits that can be clearly demonstrated and we need to be defining the benefits and how we will measure them at the start of projects. It is not about implementing technology because it is new or interesting for us. It is about making a real difference to businesses and being willing to ensure that the contribution of IT is acknowledged.

Given the current climate and the pressure on budgets, CIOs can help their cause by having quick wins: taking a phased approach to projects rather than embarking on multi-year jobs, so the success of the work can be measured on an ongoing basis.

The bottom line is that marketing needs to be part of the CIO's job spec. It is not enough just to show you keep the lights on. The question for the CIO is are you up for the challenge ?