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Technology Leaders' Handbook
30
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"We congratulate Digitaltech Media for this handbook that is targeted to CIOs/CISO/CTO. The content looks well researched, and the topics covered are also relevant to all of us. We believe that CXOs like you, publications like Digitaltech Media and Sophos also have greater responsibility to make cybersecurity stronger with knowledge sharing.

A handbook like this, is a great example of the initiatives that we should jointly take to make the cybersecurity community stronger against the cybercriminals and cyberattacks."



Sunil Sharma

Managing Director,
Sales, Sophos (India & SAARC)



**Sophos stops
ransomware.**

Super 30- Shattering Boundaries, Striking the Right Chord

The CIOs, CXOs, CDOs, and CTOs today are more than mere technology leaders. They are fast-growing to become strategic growth leaders.

That said it is vital to understand that modern-day tech leaders are no longer focused only on IT management. They are now leveraging tech to create business value and improve organizational performance. Many of them are shattering boundaries to strike the right chord between operational excellence and innovation. From leading digital transformation initiatives to helping organizations achieve their revenue goals and upgrading information security and IT, technology leaders today are leaving no stone unturned to create the strategic roadmap to success.

The Digitaltech Media Technology Leaders' Handbook 2022 – a first-of-its-kind e-Edition is our unique initiative to highlight some of these eminent Tech Leaders who have made a difference to the industry. Given that CIO Day is celebrated every year on the 25th of April, we resolved to feature the top leaders in the IT space to celebrate their contributions and achievements in our unique way, i.e., through our digital handbook while also acknowledging their transformational efforts on the occasion.

Our '**Super 30**' list constitutes some of the most prominent and outstanding technology experts who have made excellent efforts to grow their organizations while leveraging the latest IT tools & technologies.

To choose these '**Super 30**' Tech Leaders, we held a survey where we inquired much about their journey, success, challenges & more. We also emphasized understanding their latest security/cybersecurity implementations to gather a more qualitative feedback, which further helped us prepare our list of Tech Gurus, who are leaders in their own right.

Read on to find out what these Tech Specialists consider the top priority of CIOs today and their message for fellow and other aspiring technology leaders.

Security Matters

Cloud Security
Network Security

Data Security
Application Security

Endpoint Security
User Security

NGFW | IPS | VPN | SIEM | SOAR | NAC | SDP | WEB | Mail | SDN | SDWAN | WAF | SSLi | NDR | UEBA
| SSO | MFA | EDR | MDM | DRM | IRM | PIM | PAM | PAS | CASB | SASE | DLP | VAPT | VA/VM | Cyber Risk
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Staying Ahead on Innovations & Trends to Add Business Value



Mukul Gupta
CISO, ATCS

Businesses are ever-changing and highly agile. Given the scenario, how can CIOs help move the business forward? Let's hear it out from Mukul Gupta of ATCS.

Gupta has over 13 years of experience in the IT, automobile, financial, and auditing segments, with a specialized focus on quality assurance, enterprise and IT risk assessment, operations, and different world-class models/standard implementation.



Top Priority of CIOs

With the information systems being at a level of risk, the problem has been aggravated by the introduction of highly stringent laws for data privacy.

In such a scenario, the top priorities of CIOs are:

- Ensuring that information is exchanged via the right hands
- Building awareness about security & privacy
- Joining hand with experts in the industry
- Building and evolving scalable and flexible infrastructure

Taking the Business Forward

A CIO may help grow the business by never getting comfortable with what is in their hands. They must stay ahead of the competitors, have in-depth knowledge, engage regularly with top employees and managers, and ensure that customers feel valued.

Staying ahead of the Curve

Staying ahead on innovations and trends is easier said than done. I strive to learn the latest in the industry and relevant for the organization to add value and support business.

Continuous knowledge upgrades through relevant forums, subscribing to newsletters, and reading blogs. Attaining certifications and attending industry conferences and tech events also help a lot.

Strategic Plan for next year

We plan to develop a highly resilient & scalable IT infrastructure with high flexibility for integrations. Hybrid models balance the weakness of the offerings and might be a successful strategy to implement robust, flexible, efficient, and secure IT organizations.

Team building and retaining the skills

Over time we have built a team that has a unique composition of professionals. We offer opportunities to the team members to challenge themselves and grow exponentially. We extend comprehensive training, both internal and external.

As far as retention is concerned, we extend flexibility & growth that makes people stay, rather than trying to retain.

Coping With Pressure

There are times when the business requirements are pressing too last minute or Adhoc, which takes a toll on the patience levels of the leads of such functions. Such situations are often challenging or conflicting, but it is important to learn that they are an inherent part of any system, be it our home or our office.

Motivation to do more

My strongest motivation comes from my kids. They are relentless and never get tired until they get what they want to achieve. I am fortunate to learn from a leader who is busy 24x7 and never gets agitated. He always has time to listen, act and react.

My Two Cents

"Keep it simple, relevant, and have a win-win situation."

Cybersecurity Implementations Carried Out to Safeguard the Organization

- Email security solutions.
- CASB solution.
- Identity and access management.
- Phish threat solution – Phishing Simulation, among others.

CIOs are Now Looking to Innovate and Adopt



Kamal Goel

Director IT & Chief Evangelist, Web Werks India

With expertise in IT infrastructure planning & management, networking framework, and data center management, Kamal Goel has carved his unique space in the IT fraternity. Below, he shares his thoughts on delivering business values through the solution and how CIOs are now looking to innovate and adopt the latest capabilities to improve speed, lower costs and expand footprint.



CIO's Top Priority

Revenue responsibility is becoming a standard part of the CIO job description. CIOs are now looking to innovate and adopt the latest capabilities to lower costs, improve speed, and expand market footprint while unleashing innovation.

Taking the Business Forward

Businesses have finally adapted to the new business models put in place due to the pandemic. Now is a good time for CIOs to focus on understanding the recent technologies that have proven to support business operations. The adoption of newer technologies will define how well a company innovates its products & services, grows market penetration, expands reach, simplifies payments, and keeps pace with the industry it operates within.

Team Building & Retaining Skills

My team believes in constant learning. The pandemic has allowed us to cater to the growing demands of our customers and support their business-critical applications and IT infrastructure. We have hired experts, including highly skilled people, to drive innovation and respond to fast-changing market dynamics. Retention is an outcome of a healthy work environment, constant motivation, and enabling the workforce through constant training. We ensure all these factors are implemented for the best outcome.

What Motivates you to do More?

I enjoy my work, which gives me all the motivation I require.

Safeguarding the Organization

Cyber security controls are the countermeasures that companies implement to detect, prevent, reduce, or counteract security risks. They are the measures that a business deploys to manage threats targeting computer systems and networks and these controls keep on changing to adapt to an evolving cyber environment. But first, it is essential to understand the appropriate controls to ensure effectiveness.

Hence, it has become important to:

- Educate your customers. Customers, in general, are not aware of cyber security. You need to educate your customer about cyber security.
- Train your employees. If there are any security breaches in your company, train your employees to spot the problems. It would be great to have a checklist for employees to follow each time.
- Implement security in your company. Security is important for every company. Make sure you have a company that the customer can trust.

Using Tech to Bring Brands & Businesses Closer to People



Anand Sinha

Global Head IT & Digital, Birlasoft

Anand Sinha is one of those enterprising leaders and planners who have massively contributed to the growth of business and technology in India. With more than 24 years of rich expertise and know-how in the field of IT, he has successfully led Business Transformation, IT Operations, Enterprise Program Management, Infrastructure, Cyber Security, and Stakeholder & Partner Management across varied industries, including Media, Telecom, IT Hardware, ITES, as well as software companies. Here, he sheds light on the responsibilities of modern-day tech leaders who must perform multiple roles to succeed.



CIO's Top Priority

CIOs have an important role in the organization, often evolving to expand and encompass different skills, responsibilities, and knowledge. They need to play multiple roles in terms of business strategy, customer engagement, business growth, and leadership.

Their top priorities are:

- Driving and embedding digital in the organization strategy.
- Remain agile & responsive to internal customers.
- Align and prepare the IT team to deal with industry disruptions.
- Enhance and retain top IT talent.
- Increase focus on cybersecurity across the organization.

Helping Drive Business Growth

Changing the mindset is of utmost importance where technology and business co-own goals. I have successfully driven digital transformation programs since the benefits and advantages of such a revolution are promising. I have also used digital technologies (where required) that are proven to be effective and efficient for business processes. Technology has the power to bring your company, brand, and business closer to people.

Staying Current on Innovation & Trends

While the conventional tools, such as reading & self-learning courses, are something that I leverage, attending various knowledge-sharing forums and innovation lab visits have proved to be very effective in staying current.

Strategic Growth Plan for Next Year

Embedding technology in an agile manner in every aspect of business (prioritized by the envisaged business benefit) is the strategic goal that we have embarked upon. We are focused on finding the right digital technologies and a structured approach to digital transformation that will, in turn, help businesses respond swiftly and effectively to digital platforms.

Building & Retaining Employees

While hygiene factors remain of prime importance, it is equally important to provide exposure as well as learning opportunities in the latest technologies. It is crucial to challenge them to enable them to address business problems. They must fail and learn from their experiences to grow. Flexibility is another aspect that has become more relevant than ever, given the hybrid work environment introduced by the pandemic. Finally, it is vital to treat your team members well and provide them meaningful opportunities to contribute to the business goals.

What Energizes You in Your Current Role?

The possibility to choose from the vast options of digital tools available today and create something new as well as see it grow from strength to strength is exciting.

Message for Fellow & Aspiring Tech Leaders

Be ready to take questions never asked before and get used to changing roles of the modern CIO.

Never Too 'Old' or 'Experienced' to Learn



Jasmine Gorimar

Digital Transformation Strategist
(Group Technology - Digital Transformation) Mahindra Group

Jasmine is responsible for the Digital Experience program at Mahindra Group. A passionate leader, she has managed and strategized numerous international digital transformation programs and is also skilled at mobilizing people and financial resources, thereby helping the company achieve its strategic business goals. Her other areas of expertise include commercial technology, IT Governance, IT Infra, IT Operations, and Info Security.



Read on to find out what Jasmine Gorimar has to share about the need to prioritize and develop a plan to manage challenges at work & life effectively.

Top Priority of CIOs Today

Advanced Cloud Computing: Cloud computing is gaining more value than ever as businesses shift to remote and hybrid work environments. It has extended into every locale through specialized and purpose-built solutions. In 2022, we will see these solutions transforming every business type. Robust cloud architectures are required to fulfill the needs of the end-users and optimize for factors like cost, performance, reliability, and security.

Modern Data Analytics: Data analytics is essential to improve performance – to support businesses in pulling critical information from massive amounts of data. Data volume is growing fast and the more it grows, the better are the chances of improving performance with increased insights.

Future-Facing Business: It is vital to invest time, money, and resources into business continuity planning (BCP) and prioritize business continuity by focusing on IT operations and support

Skilling or Finding Tech Talent: Finding new tech talents, performing skills assessments, designing talent strategy - creating the right culture within the organization to delight existing teams and attract the right potential candidates.

Intense Focus on Customer Experience: Customer experience will revolve around personalized, individualized, and authentic service that allows businesses to scale in a way that is profitable and long-lasting.

This involves continuously developing the right CX strategy by prioritizing customer needs using advanced technologies, AI/ML, and automation software.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

I join professional organizations, participate in panels, debates & conferences, and tech events, screen social media, read online tech news, and share ideas as well as prioritize learning!

One is never too old or experienced to learn!

Facing Challenges Head-on

I always believe in listening, talking, and focusing on behavior and events, and not personalities. I believe that to tackle any challenge, one needs to prioritize as you cannot be everywhere. It is equally important to develop a plan to work on each conflict. Finally, one must always build and share success stories.

What energizes you in your current role?

Impact! I am as valuable as the impact I can create directly through my transformation programs and indirectly via leadership.

Message for Fellow & Aspiring Tech Leaders

You must believe in yourself and your team! Prepare, listen, question, participate and challenge. CIOs need to prepare for continuous digital disruptions and build changes as an ongoing business capability.

Tech Leadership Requires Both Mind & Heart



Malini Rao

Head of Data Protection & Cyber Investigations at Wipro Technologies

Malini Rao is a cybersecurity and cloud security expert with deep expertise in Enterprise Security Architecture, Security and GRC, AI & ML, and RPA, among other technologies. She has spent more than two decades in the IT domain and is also one of the eminent speakers and one among the top 10 women in cybersecurity. In a conversation with Digitaltech Media, Rao talks about the need for tech leaders to improve efficiency to change how they operate and deliver value.



The Top Priority of CIOs

The CIO's Top are listed below:

- Digital transformation by sparking innovation and growth.
- Improve efficiency, changing how you operate and deliver value.
- Advancing automation, embarking on AI/ML, RPA capabilities, and adapting to the hybrid working environment.
- Data Security.
- Moving IT Assets to the cloud and securing the cloud.
- Zero Trust Architecture and strengthening cybersecurity skills.
- Upgrading talent recruitment and retention

Moving Business a Notch Higher

I have helped the business move forward from a data security perspective by ensuring the right data security controls for on-premises IT assets and clouds exist in the form of Data leakage prevention solutions, Data encryption, and Data security on cloud workloads.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

I always attend vendor as well as large Tech, CIO, and CISO conferences. I am also a board member of many CIO, CISO, and executive council forums that allow me to remain updated about new technology trends.

Growth Plan for Next Year

We plan to move most of the on-premise assets to the cloud and secure the data on the cloud, including cloud workloads, container security, data security on the cloud, ensure no confidential or sensitive data moves out of the organization and safeguarding the organization against cyberattacks.

Building & Retaining Workforce

I work in an organization that offers self-development opportunities and certification sponsorship for industry-standard IT and security certifications. This helps employees to keep learning new things and apply them on the job.

Meeting a Recent Challenge Head-on

During the pandemic, connecting people and being empathetic toward them was extremely important. We had to manage our customers, vendors, employees, and everyone else during the situation, and it was very tricky. I focused on having transparent and clear communication to overcome this challenge.

Motivation to Do More

I have chosen cybersecurity as a career because it is fun, rewarding and always keeps me on my toes. My high-performing team, challenging cybersecurity threats, adversaries, new security controls, and constantly evolving risks and remediation approach keep me motivated and energized.

Message for Fellow & Aspiring Tech Leaders

Theodore Roosevelt once said- "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care." Technology leadership is a demanding position. It requires both sides of one's capability, i.e., the mind and the heart, so always practice being smart yet kind, knowledgeable yet humble, busy but approachable as a Tech Leader.

Cybersecurity Implementations to Safeguard Organization

In the recent past, I have led and implemented next-generation security solutions such as Endpoint detection and response solution, data leakage prevention solution, data classification and labeling solution, cloud access security broker, insider threat use cases for data security, zero trust architecture and more.

Driving Success through Automation & Digital Transformation



Satish Pai

Head-IT, JL Morison (India) Ltd.

Increasing the level of automation in the organization and automating day-to-day workflows lies at the heart of successful digital transformation. Satish Pai, Head-IT, JL Morison (India), believes that automation can help set you on the path to true digital transformation.

A keen and thorough implementer, Pai has over 22 years of rich industry experience in IT and has worked across multiple IT domains, enabling a silo-less and integrated approach.



Below, find his views on how tech leaders can focus on business-oriented discussions, aside from technology, for the best outcomes.

Taking the business forward

We have implemented the PowerBI-based Analytics platform and started with Sales Function. This enables the top management team to get KPIs on a day-to-day basis.

Staying ahead

I have been attending IT events, reading articles based on IT and innovations happening across the globe, and meeting peers from the industry to stay ahead of the curve.

Strategy for next one-year

Our strategy for the next year would be all about increasing the level of automation in the organization and extending the BI Analytics platform to other functions.

Team Building and Retention

I give them the freedom to work and assign them challenging tasks. I intersperse routine work with the work that provides them with continuous learning and allows them to upgrade their skills.

Motivation to do more

I get energized by knowing that every moment is spent creating an impact on business using Digital Transformation. The support of my boss, as well as my fellow members of the leadership team, ensures that my energy never dips.

Inspiring the Younger Generation

Do not concentrate only on technology but engage in business-related discussions with your peers. This will help you understand the use cases of the technology, allowing you to position the solutions better within the organization.

Safeguarding the Organization

We haven't done anything in cybersecurity last year but are creating an agenda around the same that shall be implemented by next year.

Challenging Boundaries and Believing in Herself



Meetali Sharma

- Head - Risk, Compliance & Information Security
SDG Software (I) Pvt. Ltd

Meetali is a Compliance, Information Security, and Cybersecurity expert with 18+ years of experience in the IT sector. An honorary member of the Member of Incident Handler's Advisory Board- ECIH, she has also held the position of Director at ISACA New Delhi Chapter. Read on to discover why she thinks that ensuring business continuity is the top priority of CIOs today.



CIO's Top Priority

With the shift to remote work, the security of the information being shared from the employee's home has come into question. Ensuring data security during remote working along with business continuity will be the top priorities of the CIOs.

How have you helped move the business forward?

When the pandemic struck, it was important to ensure that business continues without disruptions. We invoked our business continuity plan (BCP) to deal with the uncertainty. Fortunately, we had already developed an effective and robust BCP to ensure smooth operations and functioning. We triggered the BCP and made a specialized task force to identify and create a plan of action.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

I keep reading a lot of information related to technology on the internet. Subscribing to good tech journals and magazines is another way to remain updated with the latest in technology. Learning is a continuous process, and one should always stay foolish to learn.

Growth Plan for Next Year

Our strategic plan for the next year would be to monitor the risks and threat landscape for our organization continuously and strengthen the controls to mitigate those risks. Since every employee is a custodian of information security, our focus would continue to be on employee awareness and training employees through sessions, newsletters, phishing simulation drills, BCP drills, etc.

Building Team and Retaining Employees

I try my best to ensure the same through constant communication, collaboration, skills enhancement through training & workshops, continuous feedback, open communication, measuring performance against KRAs, and empathy towards each member. It is critical to ensure that employees love their work and are assigned appropriate roles as per their competencies.

Handling a Recent Challenge

The most recent and biggest challenge was to ensure business continuity. This also included enabling remote working for all employees in a very short period.

Motivation to Do More

Few factors that energize me in my current role are flexibility to work, trust, and ownership shown by executive management, equal opportunity when it comes to managing critical projects for the organization, ability to influence more women to come forward in technology and contribute to the community through events, webinars, blogs, and articles.

Message for Fellow & Aspiring Tech Leaders

I believe that there is no word like "Impossible" – it is "I m possible". It depends on your willpower and perseverance of when and how to succeed. You have to believe in yourself and set your own goals first and then follow the path strictly and keep challenging your limits.

New Cybersecurity Implementations

We started giving advisory services in the form of Compliance As a Service (CaaS) to customers around areas related to Cybersecurity, Compliance & BCP.

Adapting Emerging Technologies to Meet Business Objectives



Venkata Ramana Ratnakaram
Head-IT, Arslan Security

Venkata Raman is an award-winning Business & IT transformation leader with more than 20 years of experience in IT. He has driven organization growth, profitability, and performance and has acted as a change agent, creating transformative strategy through tech & data-driven decisions.



An expert in Business process automation and digital transformation, he relies on emerging technologies including ML, AI, IoT, and RPA to deliver business value. Here, he discusses the need for providing tech-driven insights for better growth and decision-making.

What do you see as the CIO's top priority?

Driving and embedding digital transformation in the company's business strategy is the top priority of CIOs today. Apart from this, CIOs must also provide technology-driven business insights for better decision-making and gains. Tech leaders must focus on long-term innovations and invest in technologies, applications, and software that is flexible, agile, as well as scalable for development, design, release management, audit, changes, and compliance.

Moving the Business Forward

Adapting new technologies, simplifying the existing processes using technology, and introducing process automation wherever possible are some of the ways in which I have helped my current organization move forward.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

I believe it is important to keep updating with new happenings in the tech domain. Other factors include participating in CIO discussions, attending tech events, and researching. Each of these aspects can help us stay current on innovation & trends.

Growth Plan for Next Year

Adapting emerging technologies and process reengineering are my growth plans for the next year.

Building Team and Retaining Employees

Keep encouraging the team to go out of the box and recognize the best employees. Regular team meetings are another way to understand the employee perspective and motivate them to do better.

Handling a Recent Conflict/Challenge

I ensure zero conflict at the workplace by following strict compliance with w.r.t roles & responsibilities. I make my workplace process-driven rather than people-driven.

What energizes you in your current role?

My leadership team, colleagues, and clients are what inspire me at work.

Message for Fellow and Aspiring Tech Leaders

Keep updating your knowledge, set career goals, and Never Give UP at any point.

Latest Cybersecurity Implementations to Safeguard Organization

We moved surveillance systems, workforce management, and data backup to the cloud for better redundancy and security. We have successfully developed a remote working culture within the company, and every employee is now self-sufficient in handling their jobs independently.

The CISO Journey Demands Constant Learning & Evolving



Kamal Dhamija
CISO, IGT Solutions

Having started his journey and garnering expertise in multiple domains of security, for instance, Managed Security Service, Security Operation Center, Network Security, Identity Access Management, Governance & Compliance, Vulnerability Assessment, etc. Kamal Dhamija took to the role of a Solution Architect and then became a leader. He currently works as the CISO for IGT Solutions and is passionate about every aspect of security.



Below, he throws more light on how organizations tend to forget about security while focusing on increasing their business and sales.

CIO's Top Priority

CIOs need to understand the nature of business and how digitalization technologies can be leveraged to rapidly upscale and increase the business, as well as meet the customer requirements. CIOs must determine how technology can be used to expand the business and provide those deliveries for business executives while keeping security in mind.

Helping the Business Move Forward

Sometimes while increasing business or sales & revenue for an organization, we tend to forget about the security. As a CISO, I am responsible for ensuring that whatever business we are doing for clients, the delivery is secure enough while keeping our branding, security parameters, and regulatory requirements in mind.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

I attend conferences, read articles about the latest happenings in the IT space, and update about cyberthreats. I try to understand how these cyberthreats have evolved and the mitigations and conduct the POC for the latest cybersecurity solutions available in the market.

Growth Plan for the Next Year

I plan on providing solutions related to upcoming cyber threats both quickly and effectively. I also intend to look into the cyber resiliency plan for the organization to ensure nothing goes wrong.

Building and Retaining Employees

I always give them examples of my professional experiences. I also motivate them to learn because if learning stops, then they won't be able to sustain it.

Handling a Recent Challenge

When you run a project, you have different people and processes to manage there. As a CISO, I have noticed that when every team member is performing a task, they get stuck somewhere and don't try to resolve the issues or close the loops. Making every team member realize their function and responsibilities often becomes a challenge, and this is where tech leaders like us have a key role to play.

What Drives You?

I was always keen on the area of security. I was a hacker and would hack the computers of my colleagues. I would say that I excel in this domain, and this is what drives me at work.

Message for Fellow and Aspiring Tech Leaders

Never think that after completing a particular certification, you would become the CISO for an organization. Secondly, never assume that you have to first achieve something within an organization and then get the role of a CISO. It is an entire journey where you have to keep on learning and evolving.

New Cybersecurity Implementations to Safeguard Organization

I focus on understanding the security posture of any organization in terms of where they are standing today. Based on such evaluations, I have started designing the defensive architecture and strategy for my organization to secure them in the next 2-to 3 years.

Technology Leaders Must Plan for the Unplanned



Sajith Chakkingal

Leader of Global Technology Services & India Technology Centre, TMF Group

Sajith Chakkingal has many awards & accolades to his credit, including the Community Leaders Award from the Government of Maharashtra & CASI Global. He brings 20+ years of experience in the IT domain, with deep expertise in directing IT Management functions. Sajith has successfully managed, led, and mentored cross-functional teams across varied environments, thus helping organizations maximize their productivity.

Below, he elaborates more on the role of CIOs in the fast-changing business landscape while stressing the need to ensure digital client experience to assist organizations in gaining valuable insights. [Read on to find more.](#)

The CIO's Top Priority Today

Keeping it running and transforming are the top priorities for technology leaders today. Most importantly, they must catch up with the latest technologies and create a business value out of it to survive or sustain. Every CIO today has a larger role in the adoption and value chain.

Spearheading Organizational Growth

The last few years have been very challenging for every technology organization. The pandemic, followed by the geopolitical situation, has increased expectations from the tech teams. We have managed to match these expectations during this period while driving forward our digital journey to operate and transform as an organization.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

We have our digital learning platform that helps the tech teams to remain updated on the latest technology trends & innovations. Internal and external forum participation is another aspect that helps us here. We are also connected with the R&D teams of various OEMs and have always been the early adopters of the technology, thereby focusing on driving value through the same.

Strategic Growth Plan for the Organization

Digital Client Experience- a technology strategy that brings together transformative and disruptive technology capabilities to create new digital delivery models, and enhance client experience, as well as provide valuable insights & analytics.

Building Team and Retaining Employees

I believe in creating internal opportunities and cross-training employees to help them imbibe future technical capabilities. Ensuring that they undergo training on cloud capabilities and the latest digital technologies is another way to keep them motivated apart from the monetary aspect.

I feel glad that I have a team that loves to face challenges head-on and do more when it comes to technology.

What Energizes You in Your Current Role?

Every day is different for me when it comes to my job and office experience. It helps me to keep myself motivated and energized. I have colleagues who challenge and push me to perform better while also achieving the next level, which I find exciting.

Message for Fellow and Aspiring Technology Leaders

Technology leaders must stay updated about the latest technologies & trends. Tech leaders must plan for the unplanned and keep some amount of bandwidth to deal with the unexpected always.

Building a Strong Technology Team is a Key Priority



Subhojit Roy

Technology Consultant & Advisor, Ex CIO,
SBI Funds Management

With over 25 years of diverse experience behind him, Subhojit Roy, Technology Consultant & Advisor, Ex CIO, SBI Funds Management, has successfully carved a niche in the asset management domain. His expertise includes strategic planning & budgeting, enterprise architecture, technology evaluation, program management, and implementation of large cross-functional projects. Below, discover what advice he has for the technology leaders of the next generation.

CIO's Top Priority

CIOs today must emphasize the growth of the business through customer focus and innovation-oriented strategies and technologies supporting them. They must develop a data-driven vision for the company. CIOs also need to ensure that they work closely with CISO and information security teams to protect and mitigate all risks as well as threats from cyber & other related areas.

Taking the Business Forward

Following are some of the ways in which I have helped organizations move forward:

- Built a short-term as well as a medium-term technology plan for the company, focusing on business growth and customer.
- Sought opportunities for innovation through new technologies & processes and carried out as many PoCs as possible.
- Created teams based on the agile framework for all critical projects.
- Built an environment of collaboration and trust among all stakeholders.
- Delivered projects in time and quality to establish the credibility of the IT team.
- Built a strong internal technology team.

Staying Ahead of the Curve

We need to understand the business and customer pain points and accordingly think of new technologies or solutions to address these areas. Adoption of new technology is very important. I communicate with different individuals in the ecosystem, such as OEMs, systems integrators, new companies as well as the technology team. Communication and networking within the CIO fraternity are required to keep track of new ideas and trends.

Future Roadmap

- Higher cloud adoption
- Data analytics for different functions for business growth and risk management
- Building a stronger internal IT team

Team Building and Retaining

Correct mapping of current and future technology roadmap is essential for building and retaining employees. It is equally important to prepare an organizational structure based on the above. Having a mix of experienced and recruits/ junior team members and grooming the recruits is crucial.

Motivation to Do More

What inspires me in my current role is my ability to plan and execute projects that can drive business growth for the company. I believe that the support of IT team members and other departments is also vital.

Advice for the Next-gen IT Leaders

Try to become a strong leader within your company through excellent project delivery, innovation, communication, and trust-building. It is important to build a strong IT team with a culture of openness, trust, freedom, and recognition. Work in collaboration with other CXOs and business functions and demonstrate the benefits of technology.

Security Implementations Carried Out in the Past Year

- Network access control.
- Multi-factor authentications for all critical applications.
- Mobile device management.

Embracing Change & Challenges with Courage and Collaboration



Dhaval Kamani

Vice President – Head ISS INDIA at DBS Bank

Like it or not, CIOs are in the spotlight. The clear suggestion is that CIOs need to leap from tech leader to business driver, and the actions they take in the next 12 months will largely determine whether their business can meet its objectives. Having worked with leading organizations such as Mashreq Bank, Yes Bank, and HSBC InvestDirect (India) Ltd., Dhaval Kamani is a highly skilled professional and certified ethical hacker. In an interaction with Digitaltech Media, Dhaval identifies areas where CIOs can focus their efforts to be one step ahead of time.

Read on to find his views on the changing role of tech leadership and how CIOs can boost business growth and bottom line to steer their organizations a notch higher.

CIO's Top Priority

Contextualizing security risks to business stakeholders for early warnings with focused governance on key risks is one of the top priorities of CIOs today. Technology leaders must also build continuous awareness around cyber threats, impact assessment on the digital landscape, and critical data.

Taking the Business Forward

We have helped drive business growth by engaging in business from the early stages until the end state of implementation. We assess potential security risks and guide business and technology partners for risk mitigation to minimize security as well as reputational risks for secured business.

Staying Ahead of the Curve

Tech leaders must stay tuned with like-minded peer groups, mentors, podcasts, and other subscriptions to remain ahead of their competitors.

Strategy for Next Year

I plan to harmonize and integrate the systems of the acquired Bank (Lakshmi Vilas Bank) with DBS Bank.

Team Building and Retention

To build a potent team, tech leaders must hire passionate people with the right set of attitudes and values, build trust with open dialogues, invest in their career growth, empower, and empathize at the right time.

What Motivates you to do More?

A new avenue of challenges and support from management & team is what that motivates me to do more.

My Two Cents

In the last two years, we have made the impossible-possible in different ways. I would advise aspiring tech leaders to embrace change and challenges with courage as well as collaboration.

Safeguarding the Organization

Heightened remote secure access management, effective data loss prevention mechanism, and secure web access, are some of how we have ensured the safety of our current organization.

Cybersecurity is at the Heart of Every Business Strategy



Piyush Mistry

Head of Technology, Dvara SmartGold

An IT professional with demonstrated leadership in cloud computing, mobility, and virtualization, Piyush Mistry is Head of Technology at Dvara SmartGold. He has more than 20 years of experience in leading IT and technological innovation.

Mistry is currently working on conceptualizing, developing, and implementing innovative business technology solutions. He trusts that IT can contribute to business value where an organization can gain an advantage by making the best use of technology. Read the excerpts below.

CIO's top priority

The top priorities of CIOs include:

- Cybersecurity & Information Security.
- Improving Digital & Advancing in Automation.
- Recruit talented professionals.
- Quality of Data instead of Quantity.
- Taking the Business Forward
- Committing the Business requirements.
- Learn to delegate the task to the right people.
- Focussing on customer service.
- Continue technology to be upgraded as per business requirements.

Staying Ahead of the Curve

I spend time on technology news/posts and social media as well as Ted talks. I also attend conferences and tech events and keep sharing & exchanging ideas with peers. It is crucial to stay abreast with the latest technological updates to match business requirements.

Strategy for the Next Year

A well-created IT strategy is the roadmap to success as it allows organizations to help clients by implementing strategies. IT can contribute to Business value where an organization can gain an advantage by making the best use of technology.

The IT team should know the priorities that the business intends to invest in. Setup Processes and discipline them.

Team Building and Retention

The very first is to provide them with competitive compensation and benefits. Tech leaders must show them appreciation and pair them up with the right mentor. Frequently share their performance reviews, and provide professional development opportunities like training, self-growth, etc. Involve them in team-building activities.

Coping With Pressure

Speak with people about what kind of issues they are facing. Ideally, this discussion should happen outside the office, such as at coffee shops, food outlets, etc. In a few days, provide him/her your inputs with a resolution/workaround solution on the issues highlighted. This will help them, and they will feel your support.

Inspiring the Next-gen IT leaders

By Stephen Covey – “Effective leadership is putting things first. Effective Management is Discipline carrying it out.”

Safeguarding the Organization

Cybersecurity is the heart of any business in today's digital world, and includes:

- VAPT, Security Audit, IAM, PAM, XDR, Endpoint Security, Mobile Security, Sandbox technology, Cloud Security & Assessment, BCP & DR.
- Security Awareness Training and review of the latest cybersecurity cases.

Building Proactive Automation Strategy for Success



Dr. Mukesh Mehta

CTO-CISO, Batlivala & Karani Securities India Pvt. Ltd.

Dr. Mukesh Mehta brings over 25 years of experience in IT. He received the honorary Doctoral Award from the Azteca International University in Mexico, US., and is a highly efficient Solution Architect and Project Manager with deep expertise in Delivery, IT Operations, Implementation, Design & Development of applications, and Business Process Reengineering.

Below, he elaborates more on the growth strategy for his current organization and why tech leaders must continuously focus on automation for business sustainability.

The Top Priorities of CIOs

CIOs in 2022 should launch a proactive automation strategy and be on the front line of evaluating and integrating new cloud technologies. They need to stay on top of the latest product developments to determine which will be most helpful for their organization's digital transformation. Modern-day CIOs should focus on strengthening cybersecurity skills, improving digital skills, and ensuring continuous focus on automation for sustainability.

Steering the Organization Forward

CIOs should suggest businesses prioritize the areas where automation is already built into platforms and applications. This will help the organization succeed in speed, savings, and quality before moving to more autonomous capabilities.

As a CIO, I spend about 45% of my time planning and innovating within the IT organization along with business, academic units, as well as governance bodies.

Strategic Plan for Next Year

Next year we plan to automate redundant & cost-inefficient processes. This will not only help enterprises accommodate evolving customer needs but also better position the organization to affordably meet increasing business expectations.

As CIOs, the biggest priority for the coming year will be privacy. We need to ensure that our strategy, policies, and processes are focused on protecting our data and customer privacy.

Building Team & Retaining Employees

Retaining the right talent is becoming a serious challenge. It is not just about throwing money at the problem but investing efforts into talent acquisition, deployment and retention. This requires both time and money. I strongly feel CIOs need additional skills to prioritize hiring and retention efforts.

Overcoming Challenges

Conflicts are an integral part of the journey, and as a leader, we need to have skills to address both types of conflicts, i.e., across peers or within the team. I take technology as a catalyst for collaboration and try to resolve the same by integrating data and the applicable analytics. This thinking requires you to identify the key moments in which to act. This is highly dependent on having the right data available to discuss across the table.

What Energizes You in Your Current Role?

It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent; it is the one most adaptable to change. A quote by Charles Darwin is the best-fit statement to keep me motivated and full of energy.

Latest Cybersecurity Implementations

Cybersecurity has been one of the top CIO priorities for many years now and will remain the prime focus for the next few years. CIOs need to have a proactive mindset to constantly ensure their company's systems are secure and protected from internal as well as external threats. Apart from cybersecurity, CIOs also need to double down on privacy to protect customers, clients, partners, and employees.

Co-ordinating People, Processes and Tech is Every CIO's Top Priority



Srinivasa Rao Muppaneni

Group CIO, Telangana State and District Central Cooperative Banks

A highly creative and passionate banking and strategic technology leader, Srinivasa Rao Muppaneni has more than 35 years of industry experience. His areas of expertise include banking, IT project & delivery management in banks & technology firms. In a recent interaction with Digitaltech Media, Muppaneni shared more about coordinating people, processes, and tech to ensure the best outcomes for the organization.

What do you see as the CIO's top priority?

Coordinating the people, processes, and technologies within the IT organization to ensure they deliver outcomes that support the business goals is what I feel is any CIO's top priority today.

Steering the Organization on the Path to Success

Understanding new technologies and creating innovation hubs to benefit business are a few ways to steer the organization to the next level. It is important to become a champion of industry and organizational digital business strategies. Additionally, CIOs must engage middle and senior managers to co-create innovative solutions in partnership with vendors.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

Over the years, I have attended several industry events, read about technology, and kept an eye on what big organizations are doing to stay current on trends & innovations. Making the most of your social media and listening to your stakeholders are other ways to stay abreast with the latest developments in the IT industry.

Strategic Plan for Current Organization for Next Year

Next year we intend to focus on the following areas:

- Hybrid workplace enablement.
- Business process automation.
- Expanding Digital technology.
- Collaborative data platforms.
- Blockchain applications.
- AI and ML tools evaluation
- Next-generation EDR.

Building Team & Retaining Employees

The best way to build and retain your team is to understand employee requirements and the market scenarios. Motivating and guiding the teams in professional and personality development areas is the key to ensuring organizational growth.

Handling a Recent Challenge

Any business challenges and conflicts that we face are resolved through negotiations as well as team meetings.

What Energizes you in Your Current Role?

Freedom to manage the operations, support from the top management, and employee confidence are some of the reasons why I feel motivated and excited about my current role.

Message for Fellow and Aspiring Tech Leaders

Tech leaders today must stay abreast with the latest developments in relevant technologies. They must prepare a strategy for implementing required enhancements and new initiatives in alignment with the organization's business objectives.

Latest Cybersecurity/Security Implementations

Implementation of the Cybersecurity Operations Centre and integrating all the components to the SIEM for continuous monitoring and remediation are a few steps that we have undertaken to safeguard the organization. Implementation of the DLP, PIM, PAM, DAM and EDR at the organizational level are other ways of ensuring the best protection.

CIOs Must Innovate to Remain Ahead of the Curve



Tushar Zade

CIO & CDO- Aurigene Pharmaceutical Services

“It is important to be a trusted ally to your business leader”, suggests Tushar Zade to the next generation of IT Leaders. With over 13 years of experience in managing IT Operations, ensuring all-time audit readiness, and digital transformation of key processes across the value chain & digital disruption through breakthrough innovations, Tushar has made a mark for himself in the industry. Here, he talks about some of the prime focus areas for CIOs today and how he plans to steer his current organization to the next level.



Top Priority of CIOs Today

CIOs today must have an outside-in perspective from their competitors and other industries. They should innovate for building the digital future of their organization and helps it to remain ahead of the curve.

Taking the Business Forward

There are three basic buckets of businesses today. These include Customer Acquisition, Customer Satisfaction, and Productivity. Every bucket gets powered by various digital initiatives across the value chain.

Staying Ahead of the Curve

I join various panel discussions as a speaker, and in turn, get a chance to understand what my peers are doing and learn from them. I also participate in several national and international forums to learn from the best in the world and understand how tech is changing the way business is done.

Building and Retaining team

In the end, it's all about people, i.e., your team, including internal & external stakeholders. It is not always about the monetary benefits that employees look for. They also feel contented when offered challenging tasks and get a pat on their back for completing the task.

Besides all these, I continue playing a mentor for my team instead of behaving like a boss.

Motivation to do more

I enjoy my role a lot as I solve real-life business problems daily. The most exciting part for me is to see the adoption of the digital initiatives implemented by my team that further brings in a solid business impact.

My Two Cents

Do not pick any project without defining a business benefit, adoption metric, and tracking plan. Prioritize your work at hand and align projects with the overall organization strategy. Be a trusted ally to your business leader and not a transaction digital leader.

Steps Undertaken to Safeguard the Organization

As we move closer toward digital transformation, organizations have become more vulnerable to cyberattacks. The cloud-first strategy also invites a lot of security issues unless there is the right architecture defined for prevention. Given such a scenario, robust cybersecurity architecture is a must for each company. Apart from this, an adequate governance setup for regular tracking is also important.

As the world promises an evolution of tech leaders into technology-empowered business leaders, Dhaval Pandya shares his insights on how CIOs can move ahead in this competitive world while taking their teams along.

Making headway

Changing the mindset is of utmost importance where technology and business co-own goals. The key is shifting from a service provider to becoming a strategic business partner to demonstrate the value that technology can add to the business.

Staying ahead of the curve

While the conventional tools such as reading and self-learning courses are something that I leverage, attending various knowledge-sharing forums and innovation labs have helped to stay current.

Strategic Plan for the Next One-Year

Embedding technology in an agile manner in every aspect of business (prioritized by the envisaged business benefit) is the strategic goal that we have embarked upon.

Team building and retaining the skills

Of course, taking care of hygiene factors remains relevant to retaining talent, but the digital age that we are living in today provides exposure and learning opportunities in some of the contemporary technologies. As a result, challenging to adapt them to address business problems and more importantly, allowing them to fail & learn from them is extremely important. Flexibility is another aspect that has become more relevant than ever, given the hybrid work environment that the pandemic introduced.

Motivation to do more in the Current Role

The possibility to choose from the vast options available today and create something new while watching it grow from strength to strength is what I find exciting.

A note to Future IT Leaders

Be ready to take questions never asked before and get used to changing roles of the modern CIO. It is no longer about walking the extra mile. Be prepared to walk the full stretch.

Building Sustainable & Resilient Organizations



Deepak Bhosale

General Manager-IT, Asian Paints

Deepak believes in constantly creating newer sources of business differentiators through technology. He further opines that building a sustainable & resilient organization and destroying anything that does not add value should be every CIO's main priority.

Over the last 20 years, Deepak has been focusing on a wide range of technology solutions in the area of Business Applications, Networking Infrastructure, Data Centers, and Cyber Security. Read on to discover his views on the role of CIOs today and the strategic growth plan for his current organization.

CIO's top priority

For some CIOs, laying down the foundations of a digital organization is of prime importance and for others, accelerating the digital initiatives and bringing in the next wave of technology-led business differentiators is the key.

Common CIO priorities include Cyber security, Digital dexterity, Automation and Intelligence (AI/ML), Talent, and skill development.

Taking the Business Forward

Our investments in technology have helped us to create engaging customer/partner/employee experiences while bringing in more efficiency in our operations.

Staying ahead of the curve

Any IT professional cannot afford to be out dated, as technology is evolving more rapidly than before. While a portion of my day is set aside for scanning the tech landscape, I seek a lot of my learning from my peers and IT partners/vendors. I also validate my thoughts on technology by blogging or speaking at conferences.

Growth Strategy for the Next One Year

Next year we will continue to focus on using technology to help our businesses build our market share while also aiding us in launching newer products and services.

Team Building & Retaining

The past few of years have changed the dynamics of the workplace. I prefer to stick to the basics, i.e., the work needs to energize the employee wherein there is a constant value addition to self and the organization.

Motivation to Do More

My role demands that I keep Asian Paints on the cutting edge of technology. This implies that we need to constantly create something new and maybe the first of its kind. The amount of confidence the business has in technology is at a different level. These positive pressures keep you on your toes and always in the learning space.

Advice for Aspiring Technology Leaders

Most promising leaders fail, despite having a great understanding of technology. They fail to understand the real customer challenges on the ground. Aspiring technology leaders need to think of themselves as business leaders and focus on the challenges faced by businesses. Further, they also need to connect the dots between business challenges and technology possibilities to create value that can surprise the other CXOs in their organization.

Safeguarding the Organization

Making periodic assessments of our security posture in the context of the environment we operate. In the last couple of years, we had quite a few implementations on cyber security at the Datacenter, Applications, Networks, and End-user devices in the areas of OT security, XDR, Proactive threat detection, Micro-segmentation, etc.

Leveraging Technology to Improve Business Efficiency



Udit Pahwa

Head - Information Technology, Huhtamaki India

Udit has more than 25 years of experience in leading Digital Transformation and Business Process Digitization. Pahwa has a proven record of success in creating robust Information Technology (IT) infrastructure and architecture. Below, he explains why cybersecurity remains the top priority for CIOs today and how he has leveraged technology to add business value.

CIO's top priority

Cyber security remains one of the top priorities for every CIO today. The dynamic and ever-evolving threat vectors and attack landscapes are a constant challenge for every IT leader to counter. Besides this, the other top priority is leveraging digital tools to enable agility and improve the efficiency of business processes.

Taking the Business Forward

I focus on enabling an individual in the enterprise to increase his output at a personal level. I have also focused on making business processes more efficient and delivering in an improved manner. I also emphasize better and more effective decision-making by using data analytics. I believe that digitization and digitalization are two forms of helping the business move forward.

Staying ahead of the curve

I attend seminars and workshops organized by OEMs as well as events organized by industry associations, peer networking groups, and professional bodies to stay tuned with developments.

Building & Retaining the Team

Team building involves grooming every member in areas of their shortcomings and helping them grow in confidence. Empowering the line organization to work independently, instilling a sense of confidence that failures would be tolerated in the journey of success, Re-skilling, and Upskilling team members continuously are some of the ways of building a successful line organization.

Coping With Pressure

Change management is a constant challenge when technology initiatives are involved. In one such recent initiative, where we moved from the manual method of working to a digitized tool-based working, there was resistance. The exiting manual work process, which was replaced by a tool, had the potential of saving 1 FTE for the function. The conflict was addressed by making the user community realize 'what is in it for me'. How the available time can be best utilized for more domain-specific, and value-added work was explained as well as buy-in was obtained.

Motivation to Do More

I have the ability and capability to leverage technology that adds value to improve business agility as well as contribute to the growth of the top-line/bottom-line.

My Two Cents

Always put yourself in the shoes of your user and think from his point of view. Speak the language of business and not technology.

Safeguarding Your Organization

Advanced endpoint protection, email content filtering, SEIM, SOAR, and conducting user awareness sessions are the security initiatives that have been undertaken.

Pushing Limits to Realize Business Goals



Pooran Jaiswal
Group CIO, TBZ Ltd.

Automation has taken a front seat in the past decade, using artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotic processes. Though the new technologies are more effective when compared to the past ones, they have also raised many other challenges like security threats.



Pooran Jaiswal, Group CIO, TBZ Ltd, explains what has become the CIO's top priority with growing technology usage across the world. Jaiswal has close to 22 years of experience in the IT industry. Before starting his start-up, he was Group CIO, Enetro Healthcare, and has worked in various domains such as media, finance, real estate, and Ed-tech.

CIO's Top Priority

For the CIO, automation and security became the top priority, thus allowing their organization to utilize the power of technology and keep their IT infrastructure secured and protected from all sorts of threats at the same time.

Taking the business forward

I used various technologies like mobile apps, machine learning, and artificial intelligence to create customer-centric applications and help companies generate more business using online commerce solutions. Not to forget the internal processes that were too human-dependent, also automated. The dual automation (frontend and backend) helped businesses move ahead faster.

Staying Ahead of the Curve

- Challenge yourself.
- Look for more success.
- Keep on improving the technology- test, verify and monitor before implementing it in the organization.

- Work closely with stakeholders, especially with business teams.
- Have an Eagle's eye.

Team Building and Retention

Retaining employees has become more difficult than implementing new technology in the current scenario. During the lockdown, many companies have fired their loyal employees without even thinking of the long-term impact to save the cost, but it has backfired the whole world.

Nowadays, employees are no longer loyal to their company. They are using the offers in hand to negotiate with other companies. We make sure we pay enough to our team members per market standards and provide them with various perks and facilities to keep them motivated.

Coping With Pressure

One of the biggest challenges we faced was to keep the team on the same page while working from home in different time zones and situations. Getting the work done by team members working at different pace, is more challenging than getting them to work when they are in front of you. No matter what kind of technology we use, we can never match the output of physically working together, except in a few cases.

Innovation and Disruption - Surefire Ways to Success



Paresh Goswami

IT Head, Suzuki Motor Gujarat Pvt. Ltd.

Paresh embarked on his journey in the IT sector as a network engineer and has since evolved to gain expertise in varied segments, including Power, Distribution, and Manufacturing industry. He has spent 15+ years in the industry, and in his current role, Paresh is responsible for Business Transformation, IT Strategy, Information Security, Enterprise Architecture, and Project Delivery.

Continue reading to discover his views on the top responsibilities of CIOs and the need to innovate and disrupt oneself.

CIO's Top Priority

The top priorities of a CIO in contemporary times include the following:

- Hybrid workplace enablement.
- Next-Gen IT Security focus.
- Widespread automation in the Automobile industry
- Smart space technology.
- Collaborative data platforms / Data-driven organization.
- Blockchain applications.
- Artificial Intelligence.
- Next-generation EDR.
- Improve responsiveness to internal clients.
- Dealing with industry disruption.
- Finding and keeping top IT talent.
- Increasing focus on cybersecurity.

Moving the Business Forward

I play a critical role in creating a competitive business advantage using technology. I have also led my current company into the digital space, coordinating the multiple parts of the business that connect through the internet. I am also engaging in strategic conversations with my peers and overseeing the organization's digital transformation journey.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

Joining a professional social group such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Youtube as well as finding a mentor, are how I stay updated about the latest tech trends. Other ways include attending industry conferences, tech events, and prioritizing learning.

Growth Plan for Current organization for the Next Year

- Digital transformation through SAP Product (SF/ARIBA/S4HANA and others).
- Improve IT Security Posture in SOC/DLP/XDR
- AI, IoT, and ML.

Building Team & Retaining Employees

Responsibility: Individuals want opportunities to develop at work, so give them responsibilities that allow them to grow and gain new skills.

Respect: People need to feel appreciated and respected to engage in their work.

Rewards: Give rewards as and when possible.

Motivation to Do More

I focus on growing beyond technological expertise and understanding processes and improvements. I also need to assess how to shift department roles and focus as automation becomes pervasive. This is what motivates me to do more in my current role.

Message for Fellow & Aspiring Tech Leaders

While it is fine to celebrate success, it is more important to learn from the lessons of failure. If you don't innovate fast and disrupt your industry and yourself, you will only lag.

Latest Cybersecurity Implementations

We have implemented the below-mentioned technology in the past two years:

- Cisco 2 FA
- Zscaler Proxy
- Commvault End-user Backup solution.
- VDI (Horizon)
- Palo Alto Security firewall solution.
- Forescout NAC.
- SOC support for 24 x 7 monitoring.

A Passionate Leader and Change Driver



Kushal Varshney
CTO, Virescent Infrastructure

A tech leader with over 14 years of expertise and know-how in heading a vast array of IT functions, including handling M&A, building start-ups, and transforming organizations across varied geographies and industries, Kushal Varshney is an inspiring thought leader and a force to reckon with. Presently the CTO of Virescent Infrastructure, Kushal has previously worked as the CIO of prominent companies such as CleanMax Solar, Deloitte, Mahyco Seeds, Raymond, and IBM.



Below, he highlights some of the top priorities of modern CIOs while emphasizing how CIOs will continue to remain business enablers.

The Top Priority for a CIO

The modern role of the CIO has evolved as technology & digital data have become ubiquitous as well as vital for business success.

Some of the key priorities for CIOs:

- Cloud/ SaaS/PaaS etc., need to be at the centre of our tech strategy.
- Robust hybrid work environments that function effectively and still facilitate secure platforms and delivery systems.
- Increasing focus on cybersecurity.
- Avoiding any cybersecurity talent issue or upskilling internal teams.
- Planning for SASE (Secure Access Service Edge) solution implementation.
- Driving automation and embedding digital transformation.
- Strengthening the privacy and data governance posture of the organization further.

Helping Business Move Forward

- During the pandemic, we built World-Class IT systems from scratch; established Governance, Risk & Compliance, IT Policies, Operations, Networks, Hardware, Cloud Infrastructure, Security, and Communications.
- Collaborated in 15# M&A (Merger & Acquisitions) transitions and now manages 500 MW of operating solar assets across seven states in India.
- Set up India's first Renewable Energy infrastructure investment Trust (InvIT).

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

I read online articles (Digital Tech Media and other publishers), attend conferences, and stay connected with peers across different industries. I participate in insightful panel discussions that help me stay current on innovations.

New Cybersecurity implementations

- Azure Active Directory for Access Management, Bit-Locker encryption key management, SSO (Single Sign-On), and Multi-Factor Authentication.
- Sophos Intercept XDR for End Point Security and SCADA Servers security.
- Checkpoint Antivirus with managed services for Cloud VMs.
- Fortinet Firewall at all sites (15+).

Building Team, Retaining Employees

Apart from a flexible work environment and employee-friendly policies, we provide the team with good content that keeps them motivated. I also guide and mentor my team, handhold them when required but always prefer to make them self-dependent and own the complete delivery.

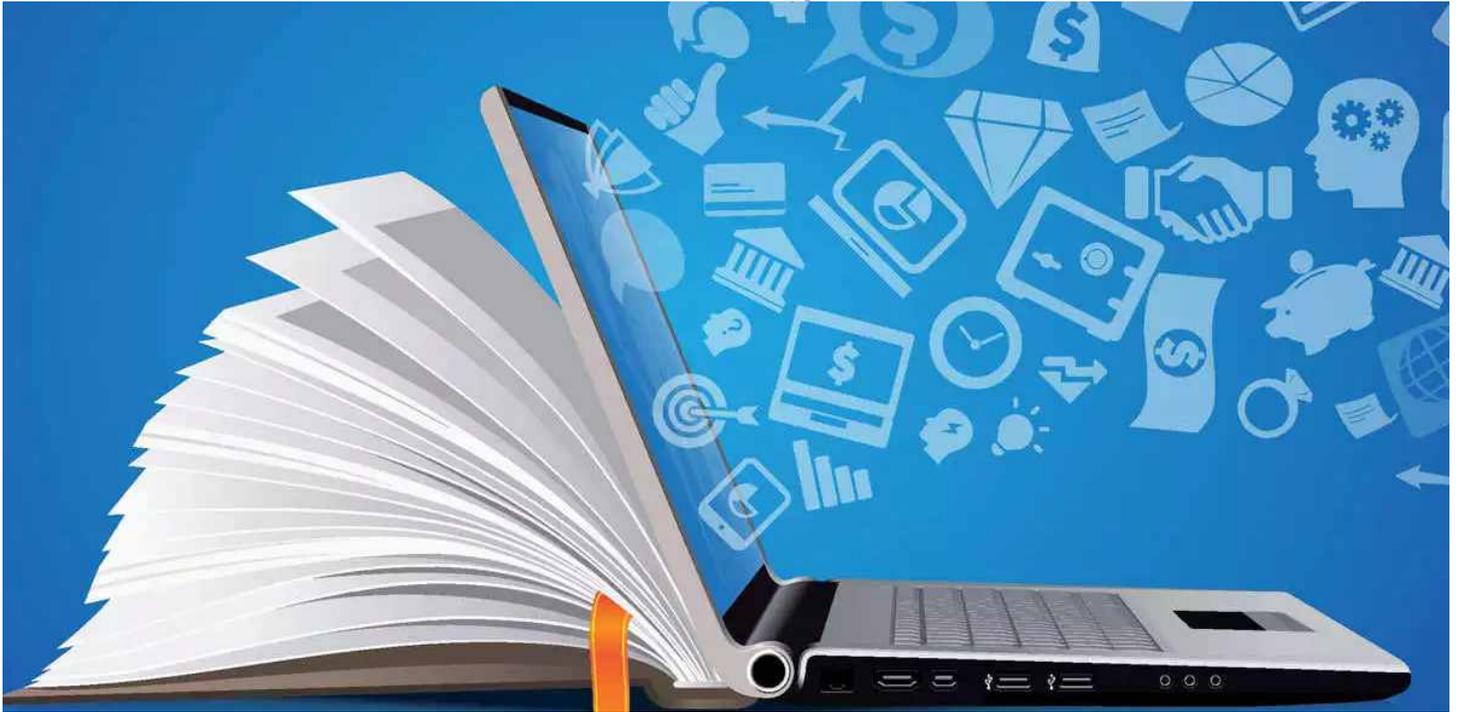
Passionate Change Driver

I am a passionate change driver and love to explore new things. In the last 1.5 years, we have grown from zero MW to 500 MW.

Message for Aspiring Tech Leaders

The modern role of the CIO requires them to understand Business Strategy. A transformative CIO is a business leader and flag bearer of change management, and we will continue to be a Business enabler and Innovator in the Industrial revolution 5.0 as well.

Accelerating Innovation to Improve Student Learning



Ankit Jain

Deputy General Manager - ICT - Podar Education Network

With over two decades in the industry, Jain is a pioneer in ICT policy review and project management, implementation and strategic planning for schools, IT procurement management, and infrastructure resource management.

As we enter the new decade, higher education institutions need to accelerate innovation to improve student learning points, Ankit Jain, Deputy General Manager - ICT - Podar Education Network. He also talks about some of the practices and how they will help institutions succeed in accelerating innovation.

CIO's Top Priority

CIOs need to have a thorough understanding of their company and its business objectives. They are no longer just responsible for overseeing IT departments but also need to find IT talent and increase focus on cybersecurity.

Staying Ahead of the Curve

We have a dedicated innovation center that looks into various aspects of academics and quality. We have also developed new software that will meet the needs of all the stakeholders in the future. Further, as schools are opening, we are expanding our reach of Innovation labs to ensure students get the best of the world.

Strategies for the Next Year

We intend to bring in more specific feedback for students using tech and allow them to learn at their own pace. Additionally, we are giving new hardware for Robotics, 3D, etc. The IT and the Innovation center are working more closely to ensure that students, parents, leaders, and teachers get the best support through joint efforts.

Team Building and Retention

We did lose some good talent but managed to keep most onboard through transparency and continuous dialogue. Today, when we are ready to leap past the pandemic, we are giving the deferred salaries to all stuck with us. This is a huge exercise if you consider 7800 employees across geography.

Additionally, we kept looking forward to innovations that ensure that the best of our talent feels satisfied.

Coping With Pressure

The biggest challenge was to continue supporting the existing infrastructure as there was a huge demand for hardware at all locations, but we managed to achieve that.

Motivation to do More

First and foremost, working for students is the biggest motivation. Secondly, we ensure no dull moments exist between management and the team. Third and last is responsibility. We know that our teams look up to us and cannot afford to let our guards down.

My Two Cents

“Look at solutions and ensure they are simple.” Sometimes when we try to be unique, we forget to be simple, and even the best products fail.

Safeguarding the Organization

We have Sophos Firewall at every location of our schools. Our complete data is hosted in an AWS server so that users can safely and easily access the data from anywhere across the globe.

Cloud & Cybersecurity-The Key Focus Areas for Tech Leaders Today



Dr. Chitranjan Kesari

CIO/CTO/CDO/CEO, Hive Carbon Zero Developers Ltd

A multi-award winner, Dr. Chitranjan Kesari is a renowned speaker, business coach, and mentor with a diverse working experience with brands such as Kanakia Group, Lodha Group, and Jindal Saw Ltd., among others. Currently working as the CIO and IT Head at Hive Carbon Zero Developers, Dr. Kesari is responsible for providing strategic advisory and guidance to drive company growth & success. Here, he brings to light the roles and priorities of modern-day tech leaders while emphasizing the need to focus on cloud security and digital transformation.



CIO Top Priorities

Our top priorities include being cloud-ready while also focusing on cloud security. Tech leaders today must advance automation, strengthen cybersecurity skills, improve digital dexterity, and upgrade talent recruitment as well as cloud & SaaS. We need to focus on enabling our users to work from anywhere.

Scaling the Business

I involve with the business team to enhance our digital transformation journey and ensure a smooth sail. Recently we have implemented a sales force to improve sales & service and client interaction.

Staying Updated on Innovations & Trends

Being a writer and innovator, I am investing a lot of time in self-improvement and garnering knowledge about the latest technologies. Since I am a part of the global knowledge hub, I am able to work and enhance my knowledge daily.

Strategic Growth Plan for Current IT Organization

We plan to focus on Cloud, SaaS, Zero Downtime, and building a secure working environment for our users.

Building Team & Retaining Employees

It is important to retain employees since almost every organization is dealing with attrition today. I retain employees through daily interaction both at a personal and professional level.

Solving a Recent Challenge

I have worked across different segments, including Infra, Construction, Real Estate, and Engineering. In my role, I am responsible for regularly innovating and extending the right amount of support to our customers. We face plenty of challenges on a day-to-day basis but manage to resolve them through client interaction and complete involvement at every stage.

What Energizes You in Your Current Role?

- Handling multiple new projects to enable businesses to work from anywhere.
- Improving the Digital Transformation landscape of our company and securing it adequately.
- Training users to improve their business.

Message for Fellow & Aspiring Tech Leaders

Tech leaders must work on their knowledge and health as well as resolve to give back to society by extending knowledge to the needy.

Cybersecurity/Security Implementations in the Past Year

Today, ransomware attacks are the biggest business pain point. We are doing our bit to improve the basic security and protect users. We are early adopters of Cloud and SaaS as security is one of our main focus areas.

Aligning IT with Business to Drive Innovation



Manikkam Subramaniam

Sr V.P., Heritage Group

Senior Vice President at Heritage Group, Manikkam Subramaniam, has led several projects and nurtured organizational growth through efficient planning and key strategic initiatives.

With growing cyber-threats, safeguarding the organization has emerged as one of the top responsibilities for IT leaders. Manikkam Subramaniam shares his experience on the prime areas where a CIO should invest in tackling growing cyber-crimes.



CIO's Top Priority

- Strengthening cybersecurity skills.
- Improving digital dexterity.
- Advancing automation.
- Committing to sustainability.
- Upgrading talent recruitment and retention.
- Committing to the cloud.
- Reinforcing privacy.

Taking the Business Forward

I have always aligned IT with business and emphasized driving business innovation. One must stay abreast with the latest technologies and focus on areas, such as IT Governance, to support business operations to accomplish business goals. Other aspects that tech leaders must focus on include Security/Risk Management, Digital Migration Strategies, managing BYOD, and looking at ways to cut costs.

Staying Ahead of the Curve

Technology leaders must find a mentor and devote time to reading tech news daily. Other ways to stay ahead of the curve include sharing ideas with your peers and watching Ted Talks and start-up businesses. It is crucial to experiment and branch out.

Strategy for Next Year

I do not have any formal business strategy. Instead, I have focused on separating information technology and business strategies and creating a single business strategy with I&T embedded.

Team Building and Retention

Following is required to build a team and retain employees:

- Effective onboarding process
- Play with their strength

- Hire "A" player
- Develop great Managers and a value-driven culture
- Set the right expectation
- Create a culture of embracing failures
- Build trust by giving extra responsibility
- Give timely promotion and incremental rewards
- Consider employees in their decision making
- Offer support, security, and additional benefits
- Celebrate special days and festivals
- Upgrade office equipment
- Flexibility in work schedules.

Coping With Pressure

Challenges are an inevitable part of any organization. But they don't necessarily have to be viewed negatively. One must look for a positive outcome from the situation. Be a patient listener and interact in a dignified and respectful way with your teammates. It is essential to understand the other perspective before responding.

Motivation to do More

I never care about things that don't matter. I always do what I feel is right and celebrate the wins with my team.

Safeguarding the Organization

We have focused on the following to ensure the best security for our organization:

- Increasing the use of multifactor authentication.
- Increase attachment to cloud services.
- Data Privacy as a disciple.
- Covid-19 Phishing scheme.
- Increase the need for cybersecurity professionals.
- Increase the need for a chief security officer.
- Critical need for real-time data visibility.

Scaling Business with Agility and Precision



Srinivas Rao Kollipara

CIO, L&T Infrastructure Development Projects Limited
(L&T IDPL)

With over 25 years of Indian and global experience in strategic technology and managing numerous roles, including Leadership, Technologist, Catalyst, and Operator, Srinivas Rao is a versatile tech leader focused on delivering business value and unparalleled performance.

Below, find excerpts of his interaction with Digitaltech Media and what he feels are some of the biggest responsibilities of tech leaders today.



The Top Priority of CIOs

Some of the top priorities of CIOs include Disruption, cybersecurity, cost optimization, resiliency, faster delivery, adopting a hybrid cloud/infra model, and digital dexterity. Apart from this, modern-day tech leaders must also focus on automation, staff training/upskilling/cross-skilling, and retention.

Upscaling the Business

Tech leaders today can move the business forward by designing a composable team. There is a need to take business responsibility, accountability for outcomes, implement numerous new platforms, tools & technologies, such as low code/no-code platforms, open-source RPA tools, and integrate various applications/systems to create a master hub for various master data and bring a single source of truth across transactions.

Growth Plan for Current Organization

To create a digitized and central platform of processes, systems, applications, and infra that will cater to multiple domains as well as are flexible to adapt. We plan on bringing digital transformation across functions, implementing the best of the security, and adhering to 390+ controls/checklists across 19 security domains. Minimize or eliminate business loss through the design and implementation of BCP plans.

Building & Retaining Employees

It is crucial to introduce a culture that adheres to the thumb rules such as:

- Adapt to change
- Business thinking
- Create value for stakeholders
- Innovate to grow
- Work dynamically
- Navigate uncertainty
- Develop and work with composable teams
- Flexibility to work from anywhere, access anything from anywhere
- Empathy

Handling a recent Challenge

We recently implemented numerous projects under the brand umbrella named "Fusion". This was quite a challenging project for us, as people were on and off the project on several occasions. Besides, we could not see each other due to the pandemic, and managing this massive project was getting difficult as around 14 companies were involved in it.

Fusion consisted of SAP S4 HANA, mobile applications, vendor collaboration platform, and multiple 3rd party systems, all integrated with SAP and other applications. This program won numerous awards/recognitions internationally and at the national level, including the SAP ACE award in the "Game Changer Category" for the best innovative enterprise-level program and IDC Industry innovation award under the category "Innovation in Operations", as well as SAP Global innovation award finalist (final winners to be announced in mid-April'22).

Latest Cybersecurity Implementations

While we have already undertaken the usual security measures, we have started a new design and are taking a mix of global security frameworks across 90 domains now. We will be coming up with a completely new architecture and framework that will be implemented once we have finished our study with 3rd party security experts.

Message for Fellow and Aspiring Tech Leaders

Be agile and design systems/applications that would give the organization the edge to carry forward the business in this dynamic world. It is crucial to design composable teams and take joint ownership of responsibilities. Tech leaders today must focus on automation and integrations as well as usage of the latest platform/technologies.

Tech Leaders Must Function as Business Enablers



Alexandre Blanc

Conseiller stratégique et sécurité chez VARS - Strategic and Security Advisor at VARS Corporation

A Privacy enthusiast, Alexandre Blanc holds expertise in cyber risk as well as global threat landscape analysis. Currently working as the strategic advisor at VARS Corporation, Alexandre is a certified ISO/IEC 27001/27701 Lead implementer and the proud holder of LinkedIn Top voice 2020 in technology and Cyber Sentinel Award 2020-21.

Sharing his thoughts on how CIOs have become the key stakeholders of businesses today, Alexandre also discusses why tech leaders must gain awareness of the evolving threat landscape and latest market trends.

The Top Priority of CIOs Today

With organizations becoming data-driven, CIOs have become the key stakeholder in business resilience. CIOs today must have strong business acumen and understand the strategic positioning of the vertical they operate within. This will help them gain awareness of the quickly evolving threat landscape and market trends. It will also enable them to take adequate measures to reduce the risks, lowering the likelihood of an incident and its associated impact.

Helping the Business Move Forward

Tech leaders today must function as business enablers. They should act as a strategist and ensure top security and privacy by design while helping businesses to become agile and flexible. I assist my current organization to achieve the best possible collaboration with partners and customers while also focusing on managing expectations and reducing friction.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

Market, technology, trend, and threat landscape monitoring are a few ways I like to keep myself updated. Knowing what others in the same vertical are doing in terms of innovation and resilience is of prime importance to me.

Strategic Growth Plan for Organization

My current organization is focused on providing managed security services.

Hence, we are required to maintain the right cyber posture and processes as well as support businesses to achieve the same. As we are a team training on ISO 27001 (ISMS) and 27701 (PIMS – privacy), we focus a lot on the maturity of organizations, ensuring all the processes are well-organized. The plan is to allow SMBs to achieve the same if not better maturity on their IT processes when compared to large organizations, thus bringing processes & tools to help them achieve their goals.

Building Teams & Retaining Employees

One of the biggest challenges today is to retain skilled employees, which requires building a great organizational culture, flexibility, proper remuneration, and work-life balance.

Motivation to Do More

All of us require achievements to wrap our day on a positive note. I always strive to make a difference, bring something to the people I interact with, and empower them. In my role, I focus on motivating people to deliver desired results for their personal and professional growth.

Security Implementations in the Past Year

I have helped several SMBs to enhance their security posture. SMBs often have to deal with limited resources, especially when it comes to internal IT and security. It is here that I introduce managed solutions to support their mission further. I help firms adopt best practices, deploy overlapping security controls, cover their attack surface, and avoid monoculture to ensure the best outcomes.

Fostering Leadership Values and Efficient Management



Dr. Mohammad Khaled

PhD - Safe Digital Thought Leader

Dr. Mohammad Khaled of Safe Digital is one of those prominent global Tech Leaders who has created a unique mark for himself in the IT domain. He brings more than 19 years of experience with him and was recently featured among the 100 Power Leaders in Tech in the UAE. Dr. Khaled is proficient in areas such as Corporate Governance, Cyber Security & Resilience, Corporate Excellence & Innovation, Smart & Safe City, Digital Transformation, and more. Below, he shares more about the new priorities for tech leaders and the need for a strategic partnership to fuel faster change.

CIO Top Priorities

The new priorities of CIOs for competing in the current Global Post Pandemic Scenario include:

- Reduce Friction in the Hybrid Operating Model.
- Improve Your Governance, Risk, and Compliance Framework Readiness.
- Design Thinking Approach to Innovation, Transformation, and Digitalisation.
- Customer-Centric Digital Transformation.
- Support an Employee-Centric Retention Strategy.

Helping the Business Move Forward

In my role, I am currently emphasizing creating strategic partnerships to fuel a faster change Management Governance Process. I have also taken an agile and incremental approach to transformation and unlocked the Decision-Making Power of Data. Apart from this, there is a renewed focus on cybersecurity. I believe that the pandemic has dramatically expanded the threat landscape and forced companies to rethink their approach to cybersecurity.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

Some of the ways in which I like to keep abreast with the latest trends are:

- Focusing on Digital Transformation roadmap and execution.
- Creating innovative ways to manage a workforce that suddenly became distributed as opposed to having most people on the same site.
- Revising CISO Framework and Security issues posed by BYOD policies and unsecured home networks.

Growth Plan for Current Organization

The strategic plan for the current IT organization includes:

- Enhance Digital Transformation Roadmap.
- Deal with Industry Disruption.
- Leverage DevOpsSec Engineering.
- Increasing focus on privacy and security of customer data.

Building Team & Retaining Employees

I offer a competitive salary and work towards building a great company culture. It is important to develop talent and encourage employee referrals.

Handling a Recent Challenge

The pandemic created a big mess, and hence we adopted the following:

- Welcome healthy disagreement.
- Pre-empt unnecessary conflict.
- Familiarize yourself with different approaches.
- Respect boundaries.
- Resolve emotions before disputes.
- Address tension when it arises.
- Act quickly.

Motivation to do More

I foster leadership values and efficient management. Additionally, I always focus on creating a culture with the willingness to experiment.

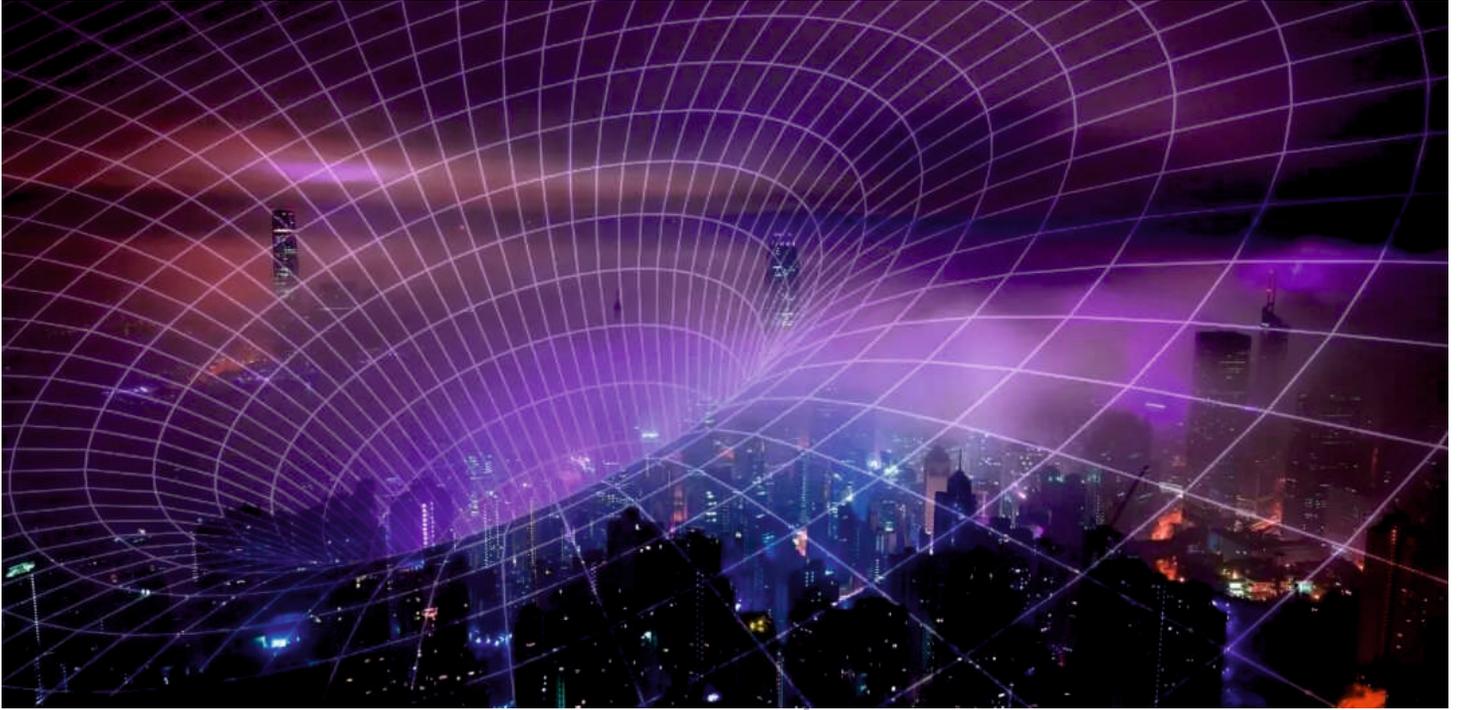
Message for Fellow and Aspiring CIOs

As Apple's Steve Jobs said, "It doesn't make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do." This is a prudent methodology to foster a workplace innovation culture. Empower the workforce to evangelize the delta between arduous tasks and the relevant solutions with an emphasis on team empowerment and reward schemes. Great People make Great Companies, so focus on the people ecosystem.

Latest Security Implementations in the Past Year

- Bigdata Analysis for various types of Internet Threats, such as Malware, Mousetrapping, Overseas Money Transfer Scam, Pharming, Phishing, and RootKit.
- Smart City Cyber Resilience Framework.
- Governance, Risk, and Compliance for IoT Systems.
- AI-based Anti-Threat Systems and Subsystems Modelling.

Focusing on Agile Execution to Accelerate Business Growth



Saloni Vijay

Head Risk, and Security Assurance, Vodafone Idea

Technology keeps changing, and things are moving fast in this tech world. As new trends constantly emerge, Saloni Vijay, Head Risk and Security Assurance, Vodafone Idea, believes it's important to keep up to date to drive innovation, accomplish business goals, and remain competitive.

Vijay is an IT professional with 20 years of experience and has a deep understanding of business and the skills to design solutions to meet business expectations from a technology perspective.

CIO's top Priority

- Providing seamless and unique experience to employees from wherever they are working.
- Improve the organization's security posture by putting proper processes, tools, and technologies.
- Investing in new technologies & innovative products and forming external partnerships would be one of the top priorities.

Taking the Business forward

We have collaborated with the business team, understood their needs and that of the customers, and created a strategy to respond to market shifts. We have focused on transformative business issues, agile execution, and the data capabilities that allowed organizations to pick up the pace.

Apart from this, we have aligned our priorities with the broader business strategy and keep all key stakeholders informed, motivated, and onboard with the transformation.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

Some of the ways in which I like to keep abreast with the latest trends are:

- Focusing on Digital Transformation roadmap and execution.
- Creating innovative ways to manage a workforce that suddenly became distributed as opposed to having most people on the same site.
- Revising CISO Framework and Security issues posed by BYOD policies and unsecured home networks.

Staying Ahead of the Curve

- Become a part of a professional network.
- Leverage teams, partners, peers, suppliers, and mentors and learn from each other.
- Access newsletters, technology news, research reports, attend webinars/seminars, and stay connected on social media.
- Learn from the next generations. They're pushing the limits of new technology, breaking rules, and playing with the possibilities.

Strategy for Next Year

In the era of digital transformation and adoption of new technologies where sensitive data is constantly at risk of being compromised by malicious actors, strengthening security posture is the need of an hour which can be done by:

- Performing a cybersecurity risk assessment.
- Prioritize business impact.
- Implement a DevSecOps practice.

Building and Retaining the Team

- Appreciating & rewarding the employees.
- Maintaining work-life balance.
- Providing additional training or education opportunities.
- Encourage collaboration and cooperation among team members.

Coping With Pressure

There was conflict created for a process where management, teams, and strategy changed, and no one owned the process. We have gone collaboratively and listened to everyone's views on the process, how it was happening earlier, the current process and what should be the ideal way to finalize the new process.

Later we created the RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, and Informed) matrix with agreement from all parties to put proper process at work.

Motivation to do more

I am driven by my passion to learn more about new technology and Cybersecurity. Of course, working with great people in a great culture is another factor that keeps me motivated.

Safeguarding the Organization

- Strengthen the multifactor authorization and implemented it in most of the critical applications.
- Enabled network segmentation.
- Cybersecurity training for employees.
- Enabled automatic detection and remediation of vulnerabilities throughout the year.
- Implemented security and privacy principles.

Driving OTT Expansion by Choosing the Right Tech



Harmit Singh Malhotra

CTO, Enterr10 Television Pvt. Ltd.

Harmit Singh Malhotra is a highly experienced Broadcast Manager with a proven track record in the broadcast media domain. His expertise includes Team Building, Networking, Servers, and Domain Name System (DNS). Before joining Enterr10 Television, Harmit worked for Republic World as the GM-IT & Info Security (Broadcast & Corporate), and CNBC-TV18 as well as Star TV Network.

Here, he discusses the role of tech leaders in the Media & Entertainment sector and how he plans to focus on expanding the OTT platform for his current organization.

CIO's Top Priority

From a media & entertainment perspective, the role of a CIO is to ensure the best delivery of content. While television has a fixed transmission, digital is evolving every three or four months, and currently, there is no legacy in this space. This is the best time to strategize as per customer requirements. OTT platforms today are using the hybrid approach for monetizing content. Choosing the right tech as per the business need has become the top priority of every CIO in the media & entertainment domain.

Helping the Business Move Forward

OTT is the new or the second screen for everyone after television, and is easily accessible too. On the other hand, on television, once a program is over, you cannot go back and watch it. However, things don't work like that in OTT, and you can always quickly go back to the content you were watching. I am currently focusing on expanding the OTT platform for my current organization.

Staying Current on Innovations & Trends

In this agile world where technology keeps changing every moment, a technology leader must stay updated with the current trends & innovations in the industry. It is important to stay hungry for knowledge. I attend various summits and participate in panel discussions to gain different perspectives from the best leaders in the industry.

Building Team and Retaining Employees

Besides monetary benefits, other benefits such as flexibility to work, openness to speak, ownership of work, rewards, and recognition play a significant role in employee retention. I always try to give my team members something innovative to work on.

Message for Fellow and Aspiring Tech Leaders

If you are not passionate about learning something new each day, then the position of tech leader is not the right fit for you.

Security Implementations

In the media industry, content is always important. Hence, we have ensured the implementation of the anti-piracy solution to safeguard the content. As a result, those trying to copy our content can be caught, and a case can be raised with Google and Facebook to bring down such fake channels.

