

Preface

Recently I attended a CIO gathering in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Several remarks made by different keynote speakers caught my attention. First of all, most of the speakers referred to an ongoing discussion on the future of the CIO position. Some said there will always be a need for a CIO, others stated that the CIO is in danger of becoming extinct because of a diminishing importance to the business.

Without further exploring this existential question, the conference went on. Server availability, the cloud, dual core mobile devices and other technobabble took the upper hand. Online applications such as Yammer and DropBox were discussed, the standard security questions floated up.

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I was shocked. Somehow these people must feel an urge to prove their added value, following the discussion on the future of the CIO position. At the same time, they are acting as good old CTO's as if nothing has changed. How will you ever bring evidence for your added value if you copy the operational responsibility of another CxO? And maybe even more important, how will you bring value to the I in CIO when all you focus on is the T in IT?

The decision whether or not to host a business application internally or externally (cloud) has – as far as I know – never made any information worker smarter in his operations. Of course unless information then suddenly becomes available to this information worker.

The intelligence of an organization is determined by the sum of all the clever minds working in it. This is especially true for knowledge-driven economies such as the western economies. In order for an organization to operate smarter, it has to focus on making these minds effective, preferably in an efficient way.

When we look at recent developments in for instance neuroscience, we see that the IT industry so far has been giving all kinds of tools to users. But these tools are not necessarily well designed for the users of these tools. IT has been giving us hammers with two steels (more force!), screwdrivers the size of broom sticks (reaches every screw!) and a saw that is completely safe to use (and doesn't cut through wood either).

What I am trying to say is that we are learning that in order to make human minds smarter, we need to consider IT no more than a basic hygiene factor. And focus on how to offer information so that it is optimally digested. Any tool used should focus on the needs of the (mind of) the information worker. These tools should acknowledge the fact that the human mind is not a rational decision maker per se. That it is biased and filters out information that does not confluence with our own vision. That it is easily influenced by earlier information provided, or by specific wording. That human minds have a tendency towards overconfidence in their own capabilities.

IT has a history of approaching users as rational actors as if they were interfacing on a logical level only. That's why you will not hear any traditional IT service or solution provider talk about the impact of neuroscience. They have yet to find an answer to the growing importance of our understanding of the human mind.

Other important trends are more easily interpreted by traditional IT. Social media, new generations of information workers and growing pressure on transparency are trends that impact the way we make information productive. But they are manageable from within the old dogma's.

This book is not for CIO's who are in fact CTO's. This book is also not for people who think that the way we are currently operating in terms of information productivity is *well enough*. Of course, it is. But it can be further optimized. And as far as we can tell, that is the single most important responsibility of today's CIO.

At that same conference in Amsterdam, one of the keynote speakers mentioned that European CIO's are closer aligned to their businesses than US CIO's. I would not dare to make such a generalization. I feel that any CIO that is open to learn from trends that are impacting information productivity, can be a successful CIO, whether in the US or in Europe. This book is aimed to do just that. To keep you up to date with recent findings and the most up to date beliefs on how to get that expensive production factor *information* work for you and your organization.

I wish you pleasant reading and promise you that we at Incentro will be on the lookout for new developments in this area. And when there's news, we'll let you know. As sharing information is one of the most basic ways to get information productive.

De Meern, The Netherlands

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