

not seem like much, but 500 miles down the road it would lead to a very different destination.

Technology Last

We interviewed many CIOs to gather their impressions about the first 30 days on the job. When we read through the interview transcripts, we were struck by their complete agreement on one point: The technology itself is the last thing you have to worry about.

What emerged from the interviews was a clear sense that a new CIO must focus on building trust, building confidence, and building relationships—inside and outside of the IT organization—during the first critical weeks on the job.

“The first thirty days set the tone,” says Mark H. Griesbaum, a longtime CIO who recently became president of TCS Online Services. “They give the IT organization a sense of what is important to you as a leader. They provide the business with a sense of whether you grasp the company’s key priorities and understand how IT can best meet those needs.”

Don’t expect people to beat a path to your door just to shake your hand. As a new CIO, your top priority should be reaching out.

“Communicate, communicate, communicate,” says Mark. “Build relationships with your customers across the organization. Listen carefully to what people are telling you. Focus on what is critical to them, and remember why you were hired in

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the first place—you must have had a set of competencies that set you apart from your predecessor and from the other candidates who applied for the job.”

For a new CIO, says Mark, a key task is learning what the business needs. “Focusing on technology is the biggest mistake a CIO can make. People don’t care about the details of technology, they care about whether you understand the business and you can add value to strategically improve your company and the services it provides to its customers.”

Each company is different, and each will have its own unique sets of issues and priorities. Your job as CIO is figuring out which priorities must be addressed today, and which can wait until tomorrow. Then you need to figure out the best way of explaining to everyone how you determined which projects will be pursued now and which projects will be pursued later.

Don’t be mysterious—be transparent and forthcoming. Explain your reasons, and invite people to engage in a

Lesson

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dialogue with you. Even when they disagree with you, they are more likely to respect you if they believe that you have honestly listened to their side of the story.

Building from Scratch

The first time I heard Greg Fell describe his first 30 days on the job as “unique,” I thought that he might be exaggerating. He was not. Greg has a terrific story to tell about his early days as CIO at Terex Corp.

“Here was a Fortune 500 company that didn’t have a CIO or an IT organization,” says Fell. “We had to build an IT organization from scratch, and launch an ambitious global ERP project to support management’s goal of transforming Terex from a holding company into an operating company.”

Terex Corporation is a leading global manufacturer of heavy equipment used in many industries, including construction, infrastructure, quarrying, mining, shipping, transportation, energy, and refining. In 2005, Terex embarked on a large-scale effort to unify the company’s multiple operating units under a single brand. The transformation

process would make it easier for Terex customers to do business with the company. It would also enable Terex to leverage its size and scale to become more efficient and more competitive.

But transformation would be complex, and IT would play a key role in ensuring its success. Here's the story, in Greg's own words:

When I was hired, the corporate office had fewer than 70 people. Most of them were lawyers and accountants. There were only two people in corporate IT. The rest of the IT people were scattered across 50 manufacturing sites. We had no networks connecting the sites, not even a common e-mail system. One of the division presidents was using an AOL.com address for his business e-mail. Everything was run locally, so it was difficult to track down reliable information or get questions answered. We didn't have what most companies would consider an IT infrastructure.

So we had to build everything from scratch: common business processes, an ERP system, a program management office, a global network to share information. I think this really was a unique situation for a Fortune 500 CIO. I had a clean slate, a blank sheet of paper.

In addition to building IT systems, we also had to create a supply chain process, a marketing process, and a lean manufacturing process.

On the upside, we had very few legacy issues. So we could focus on the critical systems that were absolutely necessary and we could be highly efficient. On the downside, however, I had no predecessor to blame when something went wrong.

Over the next four years, the company doubled in size, and the IT organization grew significantly. “When I worked at Ford Motor Co., we had an IT organization with about 10,000 people. Here at Terex, we’ve got about 400 people in IT, but I’m happy to say that we’re extremely efficient. It’s truly a unique situation.”

Greg credits his previous experience at Ford and his business savvy as key factors in his success at Terex. “Your knowledge of technology is the price of admission, but your success depends on your ability to understand the business and help it grow.”