

■ Lance B. Eliot, Feature Editor, Elliot & Associates

LANCE ELIOT RECENTLY WAS INVITED to give a keynote presentation at a conference in Taiwan that hosted over 600 IT managers and executives. His presentation, transcribed and shown in the column this month, explores a number of important global IT issues. Readers may note that the piece mentions the Society for Information Management (SIM), a society of approximately 3,000 CIO's worldwide. Lance serves on the board of directors of SIM and describes in his presentation the various means by which SIM is pursuing global issues of IT for its members.

Global Trends of the CIO

Lance B. Eliot, Feature Editor

I would like to thank you for inviting me to speak to you about the international status and trends of the chief information officer (CIO).

In my presentation today, I want to explore three major points about CIOs and global trends:

Organizations are seeking CIOs who (1) have world-class caliber, (2) can think and act both locally and globally, (3) and are prepared to be global leaders.

I will address each of the points, and then offer some concluding remarks.

World-Class Caliber

Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) are increasingly seeking CIOs who have a world-class caliber. Publications within the Information Technology (IT) industry and outside the industry also make reference to the need for modern organizations to have world class leaders, especially in the area of IT.

But, what does the phrase "world class" really mean? How can we determine whether a CIO is truly world class or not?

In working with numerous global companies, I have worked side-by-side with many CIOs who are considered world class. In reflecting upon how they achieved such status, I have developed four major measures to identify the world-class CIO categorization.

First, a world-class CIO is one who has gained external proof of success for their ability to lead an IT function. These CIOs have established a track record for successfully implementing the use of IT for sustainable competitive advantage. The competitive advantages are valued within

a single country and across geographic boundaries.

Second, world-class CIOs have gained internal proof of success for their ability to manage an IT function. Managing an IT function involves overseeing the IT department, structuring the IT department to fit appropriately to the business, growing and maturing the IT department, integrating the IT department with its customers, and otherwise successfully managing the people, technology, and processes in a global setting.

Third, a world-class CIO exhibits the personality characteristics required to operate at an executive level and work directly with the other top executives of the organization. Characteristics of such CIOs include a commitment to pursue their beliefs, a blending of technology and business acumen, demonstrated business ethics, an ability to foster business relationships, and other executive level traits.

Fourth, world-class CIOs are acknowledged for their accomplishments and recognized by the IT industry and CIO peers for their contribution to the IT profession. Such contributions can take many forms: participation in professional societies such as SIM and the ITMA; speaking at conferences and other important events; being quoted in articles and industry analyses; and by gaining respect as a contributor to the evolving IT industry.

My list of four measures provides a means to formerly understand the somewhat vague notion of "world-class" and help provide guidance to those who seek the world-class title, or those CEO's that want to find a world-class CIO.



Lance B. Eliot

is president of Eliot & Associates, an information technology consulting organization based in Southern California. He holds a PhD in information systems, MBA and BS in computer science, and has also

earned the C.D.P., C.C.P., C.S.P., C.D.E., and C.I.S.A. certifications. He is the author of over 150 articles and columns, and the author or co-author of two books. He has served on the editorial boards of publications produced by the IEEE, ACM, DPMA, and similar organizations. Dr. Eliot has over ten years of experience in industry as a chief information officer (CIO), data processing manager, systems analyst, and software engineer.

I ask you to consider how you are doing in each of the four areas I have identified. Reflect upon your own strengths and weaknesses, and begin thinking about how you can bolster your own personal world-class caliber.

SIM has sought to aid the creation of world-class CIOs by offering a number of vital programs and publications to our members.

For example, the Leadership Development Institute of SIM is a novel educational offering that helps to grow IT professionals into the CIO role, via our regional learning forums, and lifts CIOs to a higher level of performance via other educational seminars and workshops.

We encourage CIOs to learn directly from their fellow CIOs, doing so as a result of programs such as our working groups. Working groups are focused forums that often last a year or more, and bring together CIOs interested in similar topics to share ideas and insights that they have gained from their experiences.

These efforts by SIM, including the joint efforts with our alliances, are designed to provide immediate benefits to our members today, and simultaneously offer a longer term perspective on growth in the IT field and the CIO profession.

Local and Global

Demands upon business have rapidly increased in the last decade. Organizations find themselves competing in a global economy. Accordingly, more and more businesses are implementing global IT solutions.

There are numerous challenges in trying to implement global IT solutions. Project teams may only be comfortable with local IT solutions and not understand or be able to craft global solutions. IT infrastructures in different parts of the world may be incompatible, or may not exist in some places where a global solution is intended to be fielded.

Recognizing this challenge facing CIOs, SIM commissioned a study by its Advanced Practices Council to examine the global dynamics of IT implementations. The resulting study was recently published in book form and has become a component of our practice-driven research in IT Management Series.

Authors Rosan Collins and Laurie Kirsch examined how companies are addressing their local and global IT concerns. Their effort has provided some foundation for capturing and describing industrywide guidelines for global IT implementations.

In one section of their analysis, they describe the challenges faced when crossing real, physical boundaries. Global IT solutions must contend with differences in locations, languages, time zones, currency, laws and regulations, as well as a myriad of other substantial differences beyond a traditional localized IT solution.

Indeed, part of the rise in packaged enterprise software solutions comes as a result of organizations that want available globally adept IT solutions, rather than having to retrofit legacy home grown systems or develop new systems from scratch. Turning a localized IT solution into a fully globalized solution is often a formidable task.

There are also cultural boundaries that must be crossed when shifting from a local to a global perspective. Different cultures have different expectations about how systems should work and be blended into work routines. In fact, cultural boundaries are frequently more difficult to overcome than technological boundaries.

CIOs are finding that they can aid their own global IT implementation efforts by instilling a global mindset in their IT staffs. IT project plans are increasingly including an up-front global analysis before a project fully gets underway. This analysis helps to determine how the eventual global reach of the project will impact selection of personnel, scheduling, and execution.

In some cases a CIO will outsource a project or parts of the IT function to gain a global perspective; however, many CIOs are finding it prudent to invest in their own IT function by training their IT personnel on global issues, by rotating IT personnel to global sites, by setting up ongoing communication between IT personnel across the globe, and taking other actions to enrich their own IT personnel regarding a global mindset.

CIOs as Global Leaders

As the preceding two major points have made evident, CIOs are being evaluated by their world-class merits, and they are be-

ing required to develop and field systems that are both local and global in scope.

Ultimately, we see that CIO's are destined to become global business leaders. The rise of electronic commerce has clearly demonstrated that the business of today and the future will be competing on the global stage. IT is the critical enabler for future business competition. And CIOs serve in the essential role of guiding and shaping IT usage by business.

Recent studies suggest that corporations around the world will save up to \$1.25 trillion dollars by doing business over the Internet by the year 2002. The digital marketplace is already here. Customer contact is now becoming instantaneous.

SIM's annual conference, held in October this year, has embraced the electronic commerce issue and focuses on managing IT in an e-commerce world. It is our contention that IT executives are assuming increasing leadership roles in today's business; not only IT leadership, but general business leadership.

How businesses operate, the markets they serve, the products they produce, and all other facets of business are being shaped and driven by IT. By bringing together the world's top CIOs, and gathering our members in an interchange format, we hope to further shape CIO jobs, careers, organizations, and the future.

Conclusion

I hope that my remarks will provide new energy to your discussions about IT and about the role and future of CIOs. It is an exciting time to be involved in information technology. Global changes will drive advances in IT, and advances in IT will drive global changes. ■

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