

## If I Were in Charge: Part 2.

Dr. Tom Johnston  
Mindful Data, Inc.  
[tjohnston@mindfuldata.com](mailto:tjohnston@mindfuldata.com)

In a business, *everybody's* job is to improve the bottom line. And always, this is done by either minimizing expenses and liabilities, or by maximizing revenues and assets.

### ***Executive Management.***

From one quarter to the next, from one year to the next, it is the job of executive management to decide how best to accomplish this goal. Should we use our finite resources to increase market share or to lower production costs? Should we begin to rebuild our IT infrastructure or develop a new product line? Should we diversify by acquiring another company, or consolidate by selling off a division of our own company? Should we borrow money to take quick advantage of an opportunity that may not be around for much longer, or pay off debt and pile up cash in anticipation of future opportunities?

### ***The CIO and IT Management.***

In the IT department, everybody's job is to improve the bottom line by minimizing the cost of managing information, and maximizing the value of the information managed. As part of the executive management team, it is the job of the CIO to insure that the IT department is responsive to the changing tactical and strategic objectives set by executive management.

The degree to which the CIO is a full partner on the executive management team varies from one company to the next. To the degree that the CIO is a member of executive management in name only, there is a risk of mis-alignment between the objectives of the business and the activities of IT.

If the pilot of a corporate jet knows only that his passengers want to fly to Europe, he may fly them to London when what they really wanted was to fly to Milan. If we apply this metaphor to business, we may ask how misunderstandings on an equivalent scale could arise. The answer, as Paul Newman said in the movie *Hud*, is that "What we have here is a failure to communicate"!

There are two basic kinds of reasons for failures to communicate: apathy and ignorance. Let's briefly look at each of them.

## **Apathy.**

When times are good, and the money just keeps rolling in, the incentive to minimize costs or to increase revenues is at a low ebb. Along with other senior VPs, the CIO tends to focus more on increasing his power within the business, i.e. on increasing his budget and headcount. When hard times arrive, the response, across the board, is panic. Budgets are cut. Within IT, it begins with a hiring freeze, and moves on to cutbacks. Early retirement offers are taken, and those IT employees with a deep understanding of how to make things work efficiently and effectively leave. As cuts work their way down the IT management chain, directors and managers retain the personnel they are most comfortable with, and let the others go. Often, this approximates a "last hired, first fired" policy. Nearly always, it means that those who have been content to attend meetings and shuffle paper and code, and concerned to not rock the boat, are retained. All too often, panic in executive management results in cutting the muscle, not the fat.

## **Ignorance.**

So much for apathy. What about ignorance? Here, the problem is that without the shared understanding of a common vocabulary, it is all too easy for two parties to think they have understood one another, only later to find that, as George Bernard Shaw said of the United States and Britain, they are two countries divided by a common language.

The CEO: "Why have the costs of migrating our two most important legacy systems to this "service oriented architecture" thing gotten out of control? Why are you now telling me that it may be another *year* before the work is complete?"

The CIO: "SOA is infrastructure work, and so the risks involved are high. The data exchanges between these legacy systems turned out to be a lot more complicated than we thought they were going to be. The documentation was lousy, and as part of our cost-cutting last year, the one guy who understood them both was let go. His technical skills were out of date, the new hires cost a lot less, and we figured they could learn the systems on the job."

The CEO: "So why the hell didn't you tell me this was a high-risk undertaking?"

The CIO: "All IT work involves risk, and the risk increases with the number of systems affected by any one project. Besides, I told you this was a big project, that it involved infrastructure, and that there was risk involved."

The CEO: "Well, you sure didn't tell me clearly enough."

## ***The IT Department.***

Within the IT department, directors and managers are in charge of the various assets and activities of the department. Network management, platform management, data center management, data management, application development, legacy system software support – all these areas seek to minimize the cost and maximize the value of focussing the use of the assets they manage to support the objectives given to them by the CIO.

But who coordinates their work? Whose job is it to make sure that all the pieces of an IT department work harmoniously together, that all the activity is focussed on the objectives laid down by the CIO?

## ***The Enterprise Architect.***

This is the job of the enterprise architect. As I said last time:

"The focus of the enterprise architect is both strategic and tactical. Strategically, her job is to optimize IT over the long haul. Tactically, her job is to influence projects so they produce artifacts of maximum value, with minimal disruption to the environment they will take their place in."

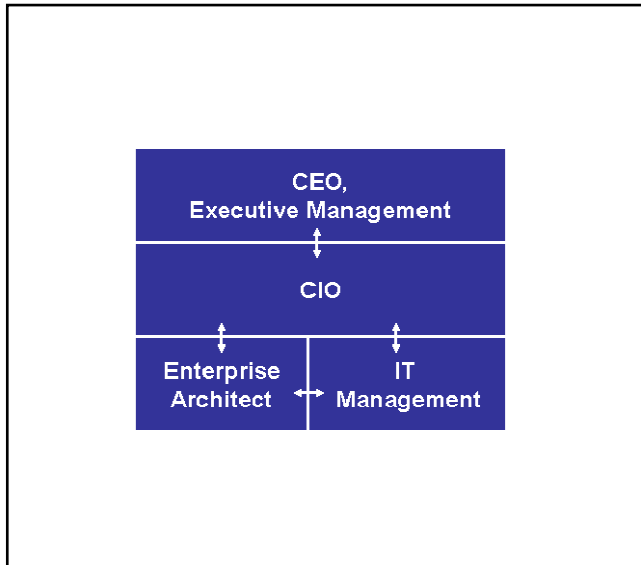
Some CIOs come from the business side of the house, although occasionally someone does work their way up through the IT ranks to become CIO. In either case, the enterprise architect should be in constant communication with the CIO. Just as a failure of executive management and the CIO to communicate inevitably degrades the efficiency and effectiveness of the IT department, so too a failure of the CIO and the enterprise architect to communicate degrades it as well.

If the CIO is the owner of the IT department, the enterprise architect is, well, the architect of the work that department does. Directors and managers are like sub-contractors, each running their own businesses. Since each has only one customer, of course, they do their best to satisfy that customer. But the CIO's job is to keep things running, to upgrade them periodically, and to replace them occasionally. If the CIO attempts to coordinate all these things by directly coordinating the work of his directors and managers, then unless he happens to have the broad and sufficiently deep understanding of IT technology and the semantics of data that an enterprise architect should have, it will be like an owner commissioning a new building and trying to function as both architect and general contractor.

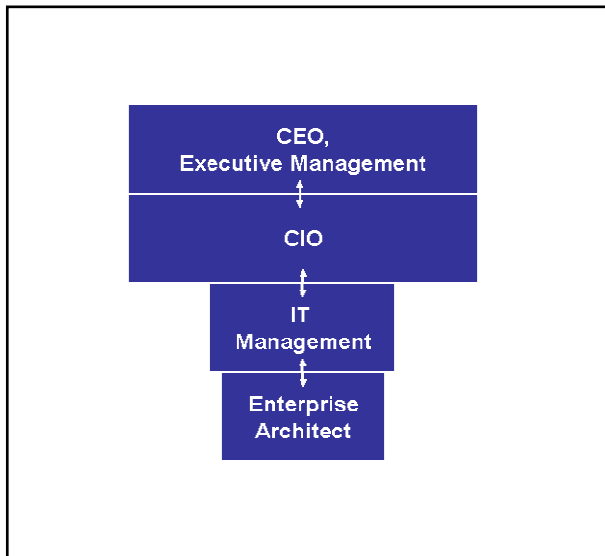
The architecture metaphor has been around in IT for so long because it works. It works so well, in fact, that we are hardly ever aware that it is, or was, a metaphor, borrowed from the work of planning and constructing physical buildings. But in the last sentence of the previous paragraph, we introduced another role borrowed from building construction, that

of general contractor. Is there a general contractor role in IT? Is it distinct from the architect's role?

We'll take up this question next time. Meanwhile, Figures 1 and 2 below illustrate two ways that the role of enterprise architect can be positioned within the IT organization.



**Figure 1. Enterprise Architecture: a Direct Link to the CIO.**



**Figure 2. Enterprise Architecture: Reporting Through IT Management .**

Next time, we will also discuss these two ways in which the role of enterprise architect can be positioned within the IT organization.

