

THE CIO AS A MAIN PLAYER IN TRANSFORMING PROCURE-TO-PAY & ORDER-TO-CASH PROCESSES



EDITORIAL

While always central to business operations, the role of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) has often had an image problem. But this has now changed: The sweeping digital transformation in the corporate world has brought CIOs out of the shadows. COVID-19 has further accelerated this phenomenon.

STATUS BOOST

The role of the CIO has been an essential one for a long time. But have they become better understood and acknowledged? Undoubtedly. Not only do they finally occupy the fitting position of **digital strategist and coordinator** that they merit, but they are now clearly recognised as such.

EVOLUTION

This evolution inevitably impacts the CIOs and their teams. No longer confined to the roles of technical experts and enforcers of IT practices, they have instead become the craftspersons for the transformation affecting every business unit in a company. **Accelerated automation of the Procure-to-Pay (P2P) and Order-to-Cash (O2C) processes** are at the heart of these transformative challenges. Paperless solutions enable the automation of all supplier and customer cycles, which in turn improve overall company performance by reducing processing times, improving cost control and achieving full traceability.

CHALLENGES

Apart from these technical solutions, other essential contingencies need addressing: security, change management and the continuous optimisation of the information system. There are lots of demands placed on the CIO.

CIOs ARE MUCH MORE THAN IT-SUPPORT

Who would think nowadays that CIOs and their teams should be confined to mere support functions? While these are fundamental and remain a strategic part of ensuring the continuity of most company activities, they only constitute a small segment of the CIO's mission.

LESSONS LEARNED

Beyond the drama and chaos caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, an excellent learning experience emerges: according to a recent study, 76% of CIOs believe that remote working due to lockdowns boosted the use of collaborative apps, such as company social networks, project and meeting management tools, and team messaging platforms.

FROM FIGURES TO REALITY

While the CIO's ability to anticipate and plan ahead are the primary safeguards of business continuity, they are also in charge of equipping teams with efficient automation tools and collaborative solutions such as SaaS, AI and RPA technologies.

This also includes the adoption of automation solutions suitable for effectively managing and optimising customer and supplier invoicing or order management processes. With entire companies having to swiftly adapt to remote work in the Spring of 2020, those that could count on the action and involvement of a visionary CIO had the necessary equipment to weather that storm. Companies that had already adopted **automated solutions for P2P and O2C processes** were able to continue business activities and thereby contribute to keeping the economy going, whereas businesses that had confined their CIOs to support functions had to scramble and admit to themselves that they had squandered a valuable resource.

TOWARDS A STRATEGIC FUTURE

Strategic planning requires getting away from day-to-day distractions that hinder and interfere with reflection and foresight. The latter is actually indispensable for making decisions that will have a lasting impact on a company's key processes. Without thorough foresight, the containment of shadow IT is nearly impossible. If the CIO does not offer employees the professional tools they need to perform their jobs, they will often adopt workaround solutions that endanger a company's security strategy. Because **cybersecurity and data security should take a prime position among the core values of a company,** CIOs need to opt for solutions that are reliable, stable and resilient.

KEY NUMBER



76%

of CIOs believe that remote working has boosted the use of collaborative apps



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Nicolas Rousseaux | IT Project Manager at Butagaz



THE CIO ACCORDING TO...



CIOs are a key piece on the chessboard of corporate digital transformation. They support and direct strategy.

To be up to the challenge, they have to possess multiple skills, be driven by a passion to satisfy internal customers (i.e., the business units) and keep their attention on the financial functions at all times.

David Dogimont | Associate at Mazars services for digital transformation and efficient outsourcing of financial functions



At last, the CIO is no longer an invisible player — COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of this key role.

But as the guarantor of corporate digital transformation, they have to demonstrate a real understanding of business needs in order to provide suitable solutions for addressing the challenges. A capacity to listen, show empathy, goodwill and understanding are qualities that are essential to a CIO's mission.

Nicolas Bragard | CIO at Esker

THE CIO IS THE ARCHITECT — AND ARTISAN — OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

Digitisation is no longer a choice. It's a strategic necessity that affects every line of business in a company. Going digital means rethinking all internal processes, with an explicit emphasis on management processes. These, in fact, play a crucial role in the financial efficiency of a business, as well as for the relationships within its ecosystems.

FROM CONCEPT TO REALITY

Lurking behind the vision, the concept, there is the reality of transformation. This is decidedly more complicated than simply rolling out IT solutions.

Digital transformation is based on different organisational, human and technical factors. These are subject to constant decision-making processes and adjustments in order to ensure durable performance while simultaneously interrupting day-to-day operations as little as possible.

Three key arguments for adopting automation solutions for P2P and O2C processes are:

- Acceleration of document processing times, such as invoices, orders, remittances and delivery notes
- Visibility and traceability that can limit legal disputes and resolve them faster
- Simplified processes so employees can focus on higher-value tasks

THE TASKS

At all stages of a digital transformation project, a CIO must take on the role of visionary, instructor and ambassador as well as safeguard strategic uniformity and consistency. A key player in process automation, they possess a unique understanding and knowledge of the company's information system, including all its strengths and weaknesses. Directly involved in the rollout of the solutions and change management, they act as architects that define budgetary routes for accomplishing digital transformation.

THE PRIORITIES

To fulfil their mission effectively, a CIO must engage directly with all business units to take their pulse in terms of needs, concerns and hesitations. Furthermore, they should use this opportunity to provide empathy, educate and enforce guidelines to develop and demonstrate the company's digital transition.

THERE ARE THREE KEY REASONS TO ADOPT DIGITAL SOLUTIONS FOR P2P & O2C PROCESSES:



- Accelerate document processing times: invoices, orders, remittances, delivery notes
- Gain visibility and increase traceability to limit legal disputes and resolve them faster
- Simplify the process so employees can focus on higher-value tasks



The key factors leading to the success of the project were the close collaboration with Esker, effective change management and the ability to measure operational efficiency at every stage:

- Facilitation of interdepartmental cooperation
- Comprehensive change management strategies that involved end users from the onset of the project
- Reporting and dashboards providing clarity on the data flow results

Jean-Luc Vielmont | CIO France at Algeco

THE CIO ACCORDING TO...



CIOs have always been the safeguards of business continuity by placing the support function at the heart of their mission.

Nowadays, however, the CIO has become the architect of digital transformation. Their vision needs to be applied both to the day-to-day and to planning for the future. They foster synergies between business units thanks to their expertise and overall knowledge of the information system.

David Dogimont | Associate at Mazars



The CIO's advantage is an ability to detect and measure the return on investment of each action to advance a company's digital transformation. To meet this challenge, they need to step away from the day-to-day operations. Support ticket fatigue is a real risk. This is why opting for solutions with built-in ergonomics that are reliable, resilient and secure are the most effective launch pad for a company-wide digital transformation project.

Nicolas Bragard | CIO at Esker

COLLABORATION WITH ALL BUSINESS UNITS ARE PART OF A CIO'S CROSS-FUNCTIONAL MISSION

Although digital transformation can be seen as an almost monolithic and all-encompassing project, it's actually quite the contrary: Each business unit in an organisation has its own needs and expectations.

THE NOTORIOUS SHADOW IT

Due to the massive use of digital tools in private and public life, employees can have strong opinions about technology or even take matters into their own hands, thereby complicating the introduction of a comprehensive IT strategy. This factor is evident in **the surge of shadow IT**. According to a recent study by Citrix¹, during the first months of remote work due to the COVID-19 pandemic, **70% of IT managers worried about data security**. Some **54%** documented an **increase of unauthorised software installations**.

TAKING ACTION

There are a number of ways a CIO can turn these challenges into opportunities for speeding up and facilitating digital transformation. By meeting up with all business units on both a formal and informal basis allows the CIO to take charge of the process by listening to all stakeholders and advocating for the project. Some ideas to facilitate this cooperation are:

- Forming brainstorming groups
- Creating exchange clusters
- Organising conversations on needs, uses and solutions

THE CIO: A CATALYST OF TRANSFORMATION

Due to the relevance of their analyses, thorough knowledge of business use cases and an inherent tendency to serve mainly internal stakeholders, **CIOs and their IT teams are the key strategists and coordinators of an effective, pragmatic and uniform approach to the digital transformation process**.

Listening skills, critical analysis and the ability to convey relevant instructions and recommendations are all essential qualities when the involvement of corporate Executive Committees (COMEX) comes into play.

KEY NUMBER



70%

of IT managers worry about data security during remote work



The benefits of the project are already remarkable.

When we rolled out the solution, we aligned best practices on processing supplier invoices between the group's entities. We also established KPIs and are now able to make quantitative comparisons. Beforehand, everything was managed manually and inconsistently, whereas now our processes are nearly fully harmonised company-wide. It's a huge accelerator for continuous improvement and the group-wide adoption of the solution benefits all entities.

Cherif Bengourina | Finance/HR IT Manager at Manutan

¹<https://investors.citrix.com/press-releases/press-release-details/2020/Emerging-from-Digital-Shock-Citrix-Survey-Shows-IT-Leaders-Preparing-for-New-Work-Order/default.aspx>



THE CIO ACCORDING TO...



The CIO is a natural ally for every business unit and they always have been. But now, they know it and, better still, own it. Increasingly taking their rightful place on executive boards, they are also continuously adjusting their perspective. Opening up communications and meeting with individual business units gives CIOs the chance to show that they are willing to include outside input into their decision-making process.

David Dogimont | Associate at Mazars



Because information systems are usually not perceived as a cost centre but rather a profit vector, it makes sense for the CIO to be a full member of the executive committee. That is where they can lay the foundation for digital transformation processes. The decisions made by the information systems team have very real ramifications throughout all of the business units. This demands a real awareness of the CIO to the needs of all business units as well as the ability to communicate effectively, constituting a multifaceted and fascinating mission for the CIO .

Nicolas Bragard | Esker CIO

CONCLUSION

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION... AND THEN WHAT?

Going faster, being more efficient and responsive: This is the essence of an Esker-designed digital transformation. We don't believe in technology for its own sake, because, most importantly, **IT is a tool for benefitting humans**. Our teams work hard at being attentive, helpful and empathetic in order to make the highly anticipated digital transformation a reality.

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated that businesses that were already in the process of the digital transformation were able to rethink their processes, adapt quickly and cope with the uncertainty. Does this mean that we can sit back and relax now? Most certainly not!

The automation of P2P and O2C processes continues to accelerate, with businesses facing tight deadlines. Regulations regarding mandatory e-invoicing in the next few years are being enacted worldwide, which will push businesses to automate their cash flow processes. **By utilising the experience and expertise of partners like Esker, CIOs will be able to ensure a smooth and stable transition to automation.**

ABOUT ESKER

Esker is a global cloud platform built to unlock strategic value for finance and customer service professionals, while strengthening collaboration between companies by automating procure-to-pay (P2P) and order-to-cash (O2C) processes. Founded in 1985 and used by thousands of companies worldwide, Esker operates in North America, Latin America, Europe and Asia Pacific with global headquarters in Lyon, France, and U.S. headquarters in Madison, Wisconsin.





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