

CIO Leadership Profiles: Implications of Matching CIO Authority and Leadership Capability on IT Impact¹

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Executive Summary

Ultimately, organizations invest in information technology (IT) initiatives to improve their level of performance. However, there have been mixed results from the payoff of IT investments. This article presents evidence that the variation in benefits derived from IT is in part due to the organization's CIO leadership profile. This profile is determined by whether the CIO's level of strategic decision-making authority is high or low, and whether his or her strategic leadership capability is high or low. We label the resulting four CIO leadership profiles: (1) IT Orchestrator, (2) IT Laggard, (3) IT Advisor and (4) IT Mechanic, and have identified the typical characteristics of CIOs that match each of these profiles.

Based on empirical data collected from a field study,² we show that the level of IT contribution to a firm's performance varies according to the leadership profile of its CIO. We show how organizations can assess their current CIO leadership profile and provide recommendations for CIOs who need to change their CIO profile to best fit their organization's goals. Over time, there will be a shift to IT Orchestrators, and CIOs lacking the necessary characteristics should plan to acquire them.

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