

The Suitability of CIOs as the Company-Wide Digital Leader: Current State of Research

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Digitalization has now reached all sectors of industry, and no company seems immune to the changes that are taking place. As never before, the development of new, innovative business models depends on investments and know-how in information technology (IT). One could now assume that this will lead to an increasing importance of the internal IT organization in the companies. However, it is important to remember that business success in the digital era can only be achieved if innovative business ideas are perfectly combined with technological possibilities - a capability that was previously not in demand in companies. Against this background, the question arises in particular for the person responsible for corporate IT, the chief information officer (CIO), whether he is the driver or just follower in the digital transformation of the companies.

Due to its extremely high speed, digitalization poses a great challenge to research, which is currently not completely solved and leads to the situation that practice leads research in this area (Haffke et.al. 2016, 5). A bibliometric study analyzing the leading IS research journals showed that only 2.5 percent of the publications deal with the topic of digital transformation and only 0.2 percent with the influence of digital transformation on IT (Gerster 2017).

In the last three years, however, the literature has been trying more intensively to clarify the phenomena and mechanisms of digitization, and in particular to examine how internal corporate responsibility for digitization should be assigned. CIO research examines whether the CIO can familiarize himself with core business issues to such an extent that he can lead the digital transformation. In addition to this, a new branch of research, the CDO (Chief Digital Officer) research, examines this new top management position that has created the practice for implementing and managing the digital transformation (Tumbas et.al. 2017, 121).

Basically, the position of the CIO has been researched for almost 40 years now. In the course of time, there is a clear change in position from "a supervisor of the technological infrastructure" to a mature management position. There is a consensus in the literature that the field of responsibility of CIOs is moving away from the pure management of corporate IT to co-inventing and co-implementing new business innovations enabled by the new digital technologies (Carter et.al. 2011, 26). However, the "Co-" is decisive here and should be interpreted rather in a supporting direction. As part of this study, a literature review was conducted from the CDO perspective. This review included 34 studies, eleven of which also looked at the suitability of CIOs as CDOs.

The results are very clear: the necessary deep understanding of the business and business models is not (yet) available among today's CIOs. The literature is rarely unanimous in advising against assigning overall responsibility for digital transformation to CIOs. Nevertheless, CIOs should not see more suitable, business-based CDOs as a danger, but as a change to drive innovation together - here they will always remain a valuable and requested partner and consultant for technological issues.

Keywords: Chief Information Officer, Chief Digital Officer, Digital Transformation

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