Advanced Practices Council

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Wisdom of CIOs

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SIM Advanced Practices Council (APC)
The Society for Information Management's (SIM) Advanced
Practices Council (APC) is an exclusive forum for senior IT
executives who value directing and applying pragmatic
research; exploring emerging IT issues in-depth; and hearing
different, global perspectives from colleagues in other
industries.

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Learning from Successful CIOs

What do seasoned CIOs think are the most critical factors that led to their success? What are the key lessons they learned in their career that they can share with others earlier in their careers?

To answer these questions, we interviewed six CIOs who recently left their roles in major corporations, two of whom were promoted to COO. All were active in the Advanced Practices Council of the Society for Information Management for many years.

As you will discover when you read these interviews, they were all successful CIOs with long and fruitful tenures in one of the most challenging senior executive positions in the corporate world.
We asked them multiple questions to learn from their extensive experience. We focus one question in this overview: *What are the top three lessons you've learned as a CIO that you would like to pass on to others?*

Five desirable attributes for CIOs have been identified by scholars and practitioners. These attributes are   listed   in Table 1.

Table 1: Desirable attributes of a CIO

Attribute	Description
Communications ability	Ability to interact effectively with all levels of management, particularly the top management team
Change management ability	Ability to successfully work with the internal power structure in order to meet organizational objectives
Strategic organizational knowledge	Knowledge of the organization, its operations, and the environment in which it operates
Strategic technology skills	Understanding of how to use existing and future information systems capabilities to address the organization's current and future needs
IS unit leadership	Provide leadership and direction to the IS unit's staff and foster teamwork and cooperation to meet the organization's goals

We matched each of the three key lessons specified by the interviewees to one of the five attributes to gain some insights into what they think collectively are the key attributes of a CIO (Table 2).

Table 2: CIOs' key lessons mapped to key attributes

CIOs and key lessons	Communication	Change management	Strategic business knowledge	Strategic technology skills	IS unit leadership
Bob MacTaggart (Leviton)					
Be an expert in all aspects of your business			x		
Know your business executives and how to work with them		x			
Get to know people		x			
Ed Trainor (Amtrak)					
It's all about the people – not technology					x
It's also all about the business			x		
The role of the CIO is changing				x	
Jonathan Palmer (IMF)					
Look outside your own organization			x		
Spend time outside IT			x		
Focus on Communication	x				
Mark Walther (Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board)					
The success or failure of an organization begins with its people					x
CIOs don't spend enough time thinking about the other side of the problem			x		
Pay attention to effective communication	x				
Tony Lombardi (Armstrong World Industries)					
Be a performer		x			
Develop your team					x
Be a flexible leader					x
Steve Pickett (Penske)					
Provide completed tasks and expect completed tasks		x			
Foster healthy discontent					x
Always act with integrity		x			
Totals	2	5	5	1	5

The CIOs emphasized the importance of being effective change managers, demonstrating strategic business knowledge, and leading those under their control. We now discuss each of these key traits only briefly, because we want to encourage you to enjoy the 'fine dining experience' of reading the interviews rather than our 'fast food' overview.

Change management
Organizational life is played out in a power structure, and this is a reality that all senior executives must deal with on a daily basis as they seek to achieve the goals set for IS by the organization. Bob McTaggart (Leviton) states his approach quite tersely "*Get to know people.*" Understanding the needs of those critical to a change process starts with knowing them.

Strategic business knowledge
The purpose of the IS unit is to assist the organization to meet its goals through implementing and maintaining information systems that effectively blend people, procedures, and IT to deliver value. This means the CIO must put the organization and its goals at the forefront. Jonathan Palmer (IMF) conveys very succinctly that the CIO's priorities are business value and outcomes. "*There's no such*

thing as an IT project. There are only business projects that deliver business value. You can't do them on your own. Remember, you're producing outcomes not outputs."

IS unit leadership
Successful CIOs have practiced the art of leadership for years. They have discovered how to harness the creativity and productivity of those in their unit. A CIO's success depends on engaging and motivating the unit's staff. Tony Lombardi (Armstrong World Industries) captures the essence of leadership in a few sentences. "*If you focus on the right people, you will get the right outcomes. Set a high bar and keep raising it. Be flexible as long as the work is accomplished. I've never been disappointed by doing this. When mistakes happen, I stress learning and moving on.*"

We encourage you to share the interviews, or key points, with your peers or those who report to you. Consider revisiting the insights yearly to remind yourself of the essential characteristics of being a successful CIO.

Tony Lombardi

Tony left Armstrong World Industries (AWI) at the end of April 2016 after 18 years, serving as its CIO since 2010. AWI is an international designer of floors and ceilings. Recently it split into two smaller companies, Armstrong Ceilings and Armstrong Floors. Tony was asked to help guide the separation before leaving the company. "They don't need a $3 billion CIO for a $1.5 billion company." "You have to go with the flow. I have a good relationship with the Board and I respect their decision," Tony noted. During the transition, he maintained solid operations, executed the separation, and set the new companies up for success.

How and when did you become a CIO?
Tony has both a B.S. and an M.S. in computer science. "I've been in IT for almost my whole career," he said. He worked for Unisys for 17 years, first developing and delivering solutions for government and commercial clients and then moving to product marketing for five years. "I created a variety of innovative data products in the pre-Internet era," he said. He joined AWI as a project manager to work on Y2K projects. "This was a great opportunity," he said. "I travelled around the world learning about the company and meeting the business managers involved. This helped me become known as a leader."

Over the next 10 years he served as an Applications Manager, Infrastructure Director, and Applications Director. During this time, he expanded his knowledge and management skills. For example, when responsible for HR applications, "I learned enough to be dangerous by engaging with the business and being a smart customer." By 2007, he was being groomed as a strong candidate for CIO. When the CIO at the time resigned, Tony was appointed to replace him.

What factors do you think have contributed to your success?
- Having integrity. "Doing what you say you will do."
- Developing relationships. "Be a good listener and develop a good team of people."
- Having an effectiveness and efficiency mindset.
- Transparency, collaboration, reliability, and flexibility.

What are the top three lessons you've learned as a CIO that you'd like to pass on to others?
1. **Be a performer**. "You have to bloom where you're planted," Tony said. This means exhibiting a set of competencies and behaviors appropriate to your culture, working collaboratively, being responsible, understanding and working with politics, and being inclusive. "Foster healthy debate about strategies. Work on your communication and get buy in from the beginning. It is very important to engage business people in IT work since they understand the nuances of their business.
2. **Develop your team.** Coach your team to foster collaboration and speak in business language. This is much appreciated by business leaders. "I have often used SIM's Regional Leadership Forum to assist me with team-building and have sent almost 20 people through the program. They come away with a much greater appreciation of what business is trying to accomplish and how they can effectively contribute!" As well, give people the freedom to

act and rely on their own wisdom, while helping them think about their work in the context of business goals.

3. **Be a flexible leader.** "I am not concerned about how many hours or days people work," Tony explained. "If you focus on the right people, you will get the right outcomes." Set a high bar and keep raising it. Be flexible as long as the work is accomplished. "I've never been disappointed by doing this. When mistakes happen, I stress learning and moving on," he said.

What accomplishment are you most proud of as a CIO?
"I am very proud that I have built a great team at AWI. My entire management team retained positions with one of the new companies. We had zero resignations through this uncertain period. They are all dedicated to our collective success and very strong performers."

"In addition, I was responsible for expanding our SAP footprint, implementing standard business processes throughout the U.S. and Europe where possible, and especially in the back office. Over the past five years, we've worked steadily to bring a number of integrated capabilities to our management. Although there are some downsides to using SAP, this has eliminated much of the 'spaghetti' in our back office. Reducing back office complexity has freed us up to do more front office work and better understand the consumer purchasing journey, which requires different capabilities."

What experiences best prepared you to be a CIO?
"Largely, it was growing up in the organization, knowing the business, the people and the IT architecture, systems, and infrastructure. I had good leaders and mentors as prior CIOs who were able to both encourage and correct. I also have a steady personality and some thick skin!" In addition, Tony credits:

- Attending SIM's Regional Leadership Forum. "This gave me a sense of the things I should be thinking about and helped develop some softer skills and behaviors."
- CIO "training." "I also attended the CIO Leadership Development course offered by Meta and Gartner CIO Boot camp before I became CIO. These helped me understand best practices."

What experiences do you regret not having?
"I would have benefitted from spending time in a business role at Armstrong."

If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?
"I originally saw the role of CIO as that of corporate steward of IT capabilities," said Tony. "Therefore I was less engaged with the business and delegated that to others. I don't believe we maximized business engagement as well as we could have by doing this. Striking the right level of business engagement for the CIO is important to doing your best job."

"In addition, I'm not sure that I communicated IT value to the business as well as I could have. I think I should have tied it more concretely to business strategy and objectives in terms they understood."

Do you have any regrets about what you have not been able to accomplish?
"I would like to have started developing the next generation of college graduate IT staff. We off-shored most of our entry-level positions so our hiring had to be at the more experienced level."

What advice do you have for other CIOs?
Get into the business and learn about how it creates value and what your customers value. Volunteer for broader business jobs. "I took on the leadership of our Global Business Services and it was a phenomenal learning opportunity," said Tony.

Develop a good team of people who understand performance, leadership, and business services. Be flexible and respect business decisions.

Create a network of personal and professional relationships. Engage more with customers and be proactive about doing this. Take every chance to orient IT investment towards business goals and strategic value. Find ways to deliver proactive value and to articulate the benefits of innovations.

What advice do you have for companies and CEOs about working with a CIO?
"View IT as a strategic business partner – both as an enabler of business capability and an engine for new opportunity - and not always for cost. When your CIO speaks about business value, drive the conversation toward alignment to strategy and those IT investments that deliver the right strategic return."

"Don't underestimate what IT can do," Tony said. Recognize that IT already runs much of the business so seek ways to get more out of what already exists. Support IT in creating a culture of innovation so it can incorporate new ways of differentiating the company and its products. With too many financial constraints, many facets of innovation disappear.

What are the biggest obstacles companies put in the way of their CIOs achieving optimal value?
"In companies with a long IT legacy, IT has an aging workforce and companies will not be able to replace experienced staff overnight. Without a strategy and finances to bring in and develop junior staff, who will not be as productive immediately, companies will soon lag behind in their IT skills and capabilities." Tony believes that companies also need better HR planning of all IT careers to broaden personnel and make them more business-centric.

How has the Advanced Practices Council helped you become a better CIO?
"The Advanced Practices Council has been very valuable, illustrating that my experiences were not unique, and there are practical solutions successfully used by others. There have been many helpful presentations that shaped responses to my own situations. Its research helped me explore the art of the possible. Both of these really influenced my thinking. I also had good conversations with individuals in the group about specifics that helped solidify my point of view and affirm what I needed to do."

Bob MacTaggart

Bob retired as CIO of Leviton Manufacturing at the end of 2015, having held this position since 2001. Leviton is a privately held company that creates electrical wiring devices, network and data center connectivity solutions, lighting energy management systems, and security and automation applications. It has about 7,000 employees, 125 global IT staff (plus consultants when needed) and three co-location data centers (two in the U.S. and one in China), and hybrid cloud solutions with Amazon and Microsoft.

How and when did you become a CIO?
Bob started his career as a pharmaceutical chemist after graduating with a BSc in chemistry and math. During the next 10 years, he held a variety of management positions from Director of Chemistry Laboratories to Chief Technology Officer in several pharmaceutical companies. Noticing the movement of much pharmaceutical work offshore and the growing role of automation in labs and factories, he decided to study for his MSc in computer science part-time while continuing to work full time. "I never set out to be in IT or management," Bob said, "but process automation was everywhere." In 1981 he was reorganized out of the business and into the IT department, where he became Senior Director of Global Operational Systems at Warner Lambert. In 1991 he became CIO of Anaquest Pharmaceutical, which was sold three years later, and then CIO of GT Interactive Software, a consumer product and computer gaming company. After it was sold, he moved to Leviton in 2001.

What factors do you think have contributed to your success?
 "My family motto is: *By* force *and valor, success nourishes hope*," said Bob. "I have never shied away from taking on difficult projects. I would get the projects no one else wanted. I was stubborn (and maybe stupid enough to take them on) and determined to succeed. In short, I make things work. That's why I've been hired and succeeded longer than most." Bob undertook one project which had failed five times over 20 years with major consulting firms. Bob took it on with a joint business IT team and was able to implement it without problems. "People were shocked," he recalled.

In addition, Bob believes his leadership and problem solving skills have helped contribute to his success. "You must understand what you need to do, put together a good team and resources, and then sell the solution, while taking care of stakeholders. I learned this lesson even before I joined IT. And if you think you must know everything before beginning, you'll never get started. Have a rough plan and then be agile and think about alternatives in a systematic way."

Finally, he credits team-building for much of his success. "You have to build solid relationships and get people to trust you," he said. "I go out of my way with good people. There are no scapegoats if you report to me because I own the issues." People skills are extremely important for a CIO. "Stress doesn't bother me. I don't get excited and I'm nice to everyone. If I do something, I don't expect anything in return." In addition, he built strong relationships with the heads of all the operational parts of his company. "I understand the business well. People like to tell IT how to fix their problems and this is how a lot of bad things happen. I like to understand the problem and what the need is first."

What are the top three lessons you've learned as a CIO that you'd like to pass on to others?

1. **Be an expert in all aspects of your business.** "It's important to learn what the business wants to get out of an IT project. People tend to see things as more complicated than they are. The best solution is the simplest and simple is hard! Step back and understand what they're trying to accomplish and then dig down." Bob recommends doing this in a tactful and sensitive way with senior executives who may not understand all the issues involved. "It's useful to write a proposed solution down and ask them what they think. You can help discern what they want if you make a few suggestions first."

2. **Know your business executives and how to work with them.** "I never had much psychological or sales training and it would have been useful," said Bob. He sought out some sales and marketing training and feels that it helped make him a better CIO. "I wasn't clued in to the subtleties. With sales and marketing, it's all about having the right image, acting like you're in charge, and developing your brand." To build these skills, he recommends asking for advice from others, bouncing ideas off many people, and finding out more about fellow executives. "Do something with them to get to know them better – sports, a project, help with their PC – anything," he said.

3. **Get to know people.** "I'm not sure everyone does this with their peers and direct reports," he said. "It is important to assess both their limitations and strengths, especially their emotional and political ones. A good CIO must utilize everyone's skills to build a team." Learning comes by observing how individuals handle issues. "You see their true character in this way. And sometimes, you must push back, especially when you don't understand everything about an initiative. It's always better to fight your battles up front." He concluded, "If you don't enjoy working with others you're in the wrong job. Life's better when you enjoy people."

What accomplishment are you most proud of as a CIO?

"I've never failed at any challenge I took on -- including major transformational projects in large companies and building business critical commercial state-of-the-art software and hardware products sold to customers. My approach has sometimes been contentious because I won't be forced into telling executives what they want to hear but rather what they *need* to hear. You need to be able to stand up to CEOs and boards to make your case with facts. This is not easy and requires courage, but it's better to lose your job than mislead and over-promise. I own issues and know how to handle them. Instead of blaming others, I choose to focus on problem solving. This gets more difficult the farther away from the detail you get but even then, make sure you understand the issues conceptually, and if needed, in detail."

"I also developed and taught courses for my direct reports in holistic systems analysis and project management, emotional intelligence, and social intelligence. I gave them tools, frameworks, and tests to validate their learning and then expected them to teach these skills to their own teams. With everyone trained, we now have multifaceted people who can play multiple roles."

"I'm also proud that I am widely valued and appreciated by others. When I announced my retirement, I was invited to 12 retirement dinners by people whom I developed and worked with over the last 45 years. I work hard to ensure everyone is trained and can work together effectively. This is a major

shift from the 'hero culture' of the past. I'm old school and hate to lose people. Our turnover is less than 1%. When hiring, I try to assess a person's character. If a person doesn't have a good character, there's no room for him or her."

What experiences best prepared you to be a CIO?
- Approaching problems systematically.
- Not getting pushed around when dealing with bullies. "Where I grew up, you had to survive in a tough environment. There were always bullies, just as in business. You can't be afraid of them. Don't let them control you and avoid them wherever possible," Bob said.
- Taking on difficult challenges and making them work.
- Taking ownership of what you do.
- Building strong relationships both inside and outside of IT.
- Caring about others and helping them.

What experiences do you regret not having?
"I would have liked more psychology, marketing and sales training, and maybe acting."

If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?
"I would have preferred to be a research chemist but this field wasn't stable enough for a man with five children," said Bob. "Thinking about, modeling, and solving problems are my passions. I never planned on being in management."

Do you have any regrets about what you have not been able to accomplish?
No.

What advice do you have for other CIOs?
- Leverage your strengths and have others cover your weaknesses.
- Read widely and keep up with what's new.
- Dig into problems until you understand them.
- Improve your capability to communicate effectively at all levels of the organization.
- Use commutes effectively. Bob had a daily meeting with his direct reports during his commute into work. On the way home, he worked with vendors.

What advice do you have for companies and CEOs about working with a CIO?
Make IT a part of the business. Change IT's name to one that reflects a business context like "Business Solutions." Change how you talk about IT and business because they should to be perceived as one business team. Make sure your language and actions reflect this. "Use 'we' language," Bob recommends. "Ensure the CIO speaks as part of the business unit or executive management team."

What are the biggest obstacles companies put in the way of their CIOs achieving optimal value?
Business leaders all secretly want their own IT staff with complete control over them because they

believe they're different, but many don't understand IT and how to leverage its value. To deal with this, CIOs need to change their language, talk about business impacts, and communicate more effectively, putting everything in a business context. These will help communicate the value of IT more effectively. "You have to believe and act that you are all part of the business."

How has the Advanced Practices Council helped you become a better CIO? How could it improve?
"Overall, it was a great experience both learning from my peers and from academics. I wish that I had joined it earlier in my CIO career." In addition, Bob used the Regional Leadership Forum extensively to develop his direct reports.

Jonathan Palmer

Jonathan has been COO of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) since 2012. The ABS is Australia's national statistical agency, providing trusted official statistics on a wide range of economic, social, population, and environmental matters of importance to Australia. Formerly, he was CIO of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for six years.

When did you first become a CIO?

Jonathan has had a varied career at many organizations in a variety of countries but always on secondment from the ABS. He began work with ABS during a "gap year" after high school, when he went on a study program that exposed him to computers. He decided to pursue computer science at university. Over the next few years, he worked at ABS and studied part-time at university. When he had enough qualifications, he transferred to the IT department. "I liked the work and felt it was where I belonged," said Jonathan. After receiving a BA in Computer Studies, he worked in applications programming, became an analyst, team lead, and then head of maintenance and development for the organization's largest systems. "This was exciting place to work as the organization was very IT dependent," said Jonathan.

Although the ABS is a good place to work, it is isolated. To keep up with developments in its field, it fosters relationships with governmental organizations around the world. "When I searched for new opportunities in 1986, I was able to take a job with Statistics Sweden in IT Planning," said Jonathan. "I learned a lot there. It opened my eyes about work in a different context and government system." Back at ABS a year later, he worked on new "luggable" technologies and was then promoted to the executive team as head of Applications Development with 250 programmers. After four years, he sought another outside placement and moved to Statistics New Zealand in 1996 for three years. Working as its first CIO, he delivered a complete refresh of systems to the organization.

Back at ABS in 1998, Jonathan wanted a fresh challenge. "I was ready to be a CIO," he said. "I felt that I had the full tool kit." But since this position wasn't available, he took a role in the business, working in the Information Services Division, responsible for statistics dissemination and ABS's first websites. "I enjoyed being a demanding client of IT," he said. "We had robust discussions and I got good results." In 2001 he was appointed CIO at ABS. "I went back to my passion but better equipped," he said. After six years as CIO, Jonathan again wanted to broaden his experience. "I didn't want to become insular so I joined the IMF as its first CIO. I gained an international profile during my six years in Washington and loved the diverse culture, working with a variety of IT professionals on an international scale, and with broad array of systems." But by 2012, it was time to go home. "My kids were graduating from high school and my wife and I wanted to be closer to our parents. The opportunity to move to the COO role in ABS came up and I took it."

What factors do you think have contributed to your success?

- Having a client service orientation.
- Communicating in business language. "An IT executive must be an interpreter for technical people because many IT people are unable to pitch ideas and communicate clearly."
- Innovation. Being able to construct and drive value.

- Being people-oriented. "IT staff is generally not people-oriented. In my many positions, I learned to sharpen my approach to performance management and to motivate and inspire others."

What are the top three lessons you've learned as a CIO that you'd like to pass on to others?

1. **Look outside your own organization.** Find other organizations and see what they're doing well. Don't keep reinventing the wheel. Get a multi-industry point of view and take what works elsewhere and apply it in your own context.
2. **Spend time outside IT** with your fellow executives in the business and with customers. "There's no such thing as an IT project. There are only business projects that deliver business value. You can't do them on your own. Remember, you're producing outcomes not outputs. IT can sometimes get stuck delivering technology that has no effective use."
3. **Focus on Communication.** "Think about how to engage effectively with the business," said Jonathan. "IT language is not always understood and IT tends to over inform and under communicate."

What accomplishment(s) are you most proud of as a CIO?
"I am pleased that I delivered many projects and developed the confidence to move to other challenges. For example, I was responsible for the strategy for Australia's first online census. We had to break the mold with this, using both our own staff and partnering with IBM to leverage their expertise in large-scale web applications. This project won a Computerworld Gold Award."

As the first CIO of the IMF, Jonathan worked to align IT with the rest of the organization and had to create this new top level staff position. He brought his knowledge management expertise to the IMF and worked on improving knowledge sharing and enterprise data for its customers. He also led IT at the IMF through the challenge of the global financial crisis.

These achievements have had different benefits. "Most of all, I really like doing groundbreaking stuff that delivers new value," said Jonathan.

What experiences best prepared you to be a CIO?
"Broadening assignments -- especially in the business – were very powerful experiences in helping me become a CIO and go further. They give you a healthy objectivity about business and IT and how they must work together. They also give you more confidence in your assessment of what the business needs," he said.

What experiences do you regret not having?
"I love the public sector and its mission but I would have liked a stint in the private sector – although there's only so much one can do! I learned about the private sector at APC meetings and found these experiences fascinating. I would have loved to manage IT in an environment of rampant growth. It would be so much fun to sit on a rocket!"

Jonathan also wishes he had had more people training and training in the psychology of how people work.

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If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?
"There's not much I'd do differently. I've enjoyed it all. I would have liked an MBA and to have tackled this early on in my career in order to have a few more tools in my bag."

Do you have any regrets about what you have not been able to accomplish?
"I would have liked to have had a role with more ability to innovate using IT. In the public sector, while there's still plenty of opportunity, there are no top line growth opportunities and no new lines of business. You can't go international at the Australian Bureau of Statistics!"

What advice do you have for other CIOs?
"Help others to get broadening opportunities and encourage your people to broker broadening opportunities for themselves by being part of a network. Bring people in from the business to learn about IT as well. These experiences can be very powerful and help with communication. Sponsor exchanges of staff while keeping a 'string' on people to be able to bring them back. Rotate people in your senior team even within IT."

"Engage well with your business. Have a service orientation but keep in mind it's not about 'the customer is always right' but about what's good for the whole organization. Be prepared to discuss this with the business. Constantly give the business new ideas and present potential emerging technologies that might be applied, but remember vision can be threatening."

"Develop relationships and your communication skills. Always be transparent and communicate clearly. Tell the business what you're doing to lower costs and make costs, plans, and performance highly visible. It's dangerous to assume that others are moving in the same direction as yourself so make sure you understand what your organization is looking for. Selling skills are essential. Work to develop these in yourself and your senior team. In general, communication and marketing skills are terrible in IT," said Jonathan.

What advice do you have for companies and CEOs about working with a CIO?
Give your CIO a seat at the table and make sure he/she is an integral and valued part of the management team. If well versed in the business strategy, your CIO will do a better job. In addition, insist that business leaders partner with IT and the CIO to deliver good outcomes. Finally, don't ask for the impossible, e.g., "replace my terrible system by lunch."

Develop your own confidence with technology. Since many business leaders, including CEOs, are still uncomfortable talking about IT, ask questions and attend significant conferences with your CIO.

What are the biggest obstacles companies put in the way of their CIOs achieving optimal value?
The biggest obstacle to achieving value on the business side is lack of business engagement and resources. Companies often fail to make the investments needed in areas such as training and business process re-engineering that are required to drive adoption and deliver value.

On the IT side, CIOs must ensure they address an initiative's entire value proposition through marketing and clear communication.

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How did your move to your new position come about?
"I love IT because it's always changing but when you've been doing it for a long time you can get weary. I was looking for a fresh challenge and a move back to Australia. The CEO of ABS kept in contact with me while I was in Washington. At the right time, I was proactive about seeking this position. I asked and it worked. I would encourage others to guide their own careers in this way."

What experiences as a CIO best prepared you for your new role?
"In IT I learned how to have a project orientation and drive change through well-scoped projects. Many business people still don't use the project paradigm. My IT experience has made me an astute user of IT and given me confidence to work collaboratively with IT. I feel that I know where to intervene and where to leave it alone."

"I also gained a client service orientation and learned about the importance of transparency about costs, performance management, customer satisfaction, and establishing benchmarks. In my new role, I am excited about creating a high performance organization and determining what this looks like. I can reinforce the importance of IT and ensure that its work is done in partnership with the business."

"My IT experience gave me opportunities to work closely with various groups reporting to the COO, such as HR and Finance. It was a powerful learning environment and I was constantly engaged in decisions.

"As COO I have a broader array of levers to pull and more influence on how decisions are made. Last year, we allocated $250M to revamp our systems and processes to transform our culture, performance, and relevance, so this role really extends what I was able to do as CIO."

"Finally, I learned the importance of developing soft skills in people and would like now to be able to develop programs to help do this."

What new insights do you have on the CIO role now?
"IT has unique knowledge of the whole business and a sophisticated understanding of how everything fits together. CIOs are exposed to every part of the business and because of this have a great deal to offer any business."

"The CIO role is challenging because there are powerful trends that will have massive impacts on the business and there will be huge changes ahead. There are also fantastic new opportunities coming that will bring fun and challenges both for CIOs and for me in my current role."

How has the Advanced Practices Council helped you become a better CIO?
The APC was an opportunity to listen to other CIOs. "I found the group to be a great network of great people and very rewarding, fascinating, and useful. I enjoyed the frank discussions and the diverse group of CIOs. It is safe territory to ask silly questions. I also liked being put in touch with thought leaders and liked the different ways it brings people together. I miss the meetings!"

Steve Pickett

Steve retired from Penske Corporation at the end of 2015 after 18 years as its CIO. Penske is composed of many different organizations in four major categories: automotive, transportation, performance (racing), and strategic investments, some of which are public companies and others of which are privately held. "It's been lots of work but it has all been fun," Steve said. "I had the opportunity to work for an exciting and growing organization."

How and when did you become a CIO?

Steve majored in economics and computer studies at university and his first job was in IT at American Motors designing crash test software. "I quickly learned that if I kept the customers happy, then I would be successful," he said. He then joined Volkswagen to help grow its U.S. business, but was disappointed when they closed plants and fired IT workers when the company changed its direction. "This was a learning opportunity about how to take something big and make it small, and how to be flexible," he said. Steve recognized that a business background was important for success in IT. Therefore, he went to night school to get his MBA. Feeling he needed to move faster in his career, Steve accepted a job at VW in Germany as an Executive Director of IT, reporting to the CIO. "This was a big step and a huge risk, but it paid off and enabled me to move forward more rapidly in my career," he said. He returned to the U.S. to become CIO of ITT Automotive, managing a worldwide organization and dealing with the challenges of diverse cultures.

What factors do you think have contributed to your success?

- Developing a mix of business and IT skills. "I spent time with each business leader and learned the real business language so I could translate IT-speak to the board and business leaders."
- Understanding my legal responsibilities to the stockholders. This is especially important in publically-held companies. "I had to understand SEC compliance rules and how we needed to do business," said Steve. "I had to be able to justify what I did at a board level to prove I was spending money wisely."
- Clearly understanding company governance in order to make proposals to the real decision-makers.
- Building trust. "It takes years to build up trust at a corporate and board level."
- Delegation. "You can't micromanage as a CIO."
- The ability and desire to move fast. "Acquisitions need to be completed quickly," said Steve. "IT can't hold the business back."
- Volunteer work. Over the years, Steve has served as the Chair of SIM's National Board and also worked on the boards of three charities in his home city of Detroit. "These volunteer jobs gave me a chance to work with different types of people and learn how to lead a small enterprise. It gave me an opportunity to give back and learn at the same time," he said.

What are the top three lessons you've learned as a CIO that you'd like to pass on to others?

1. **Provide completed tasks and expect completed tasks.** "Never walk into your boss's office without answers," Steve said. For example, don't just say "our security is compromised; add and here's what I'm doing about it."

2. **Foster healthy discontent.** "You should always have a little fear in the pit of your stomach," he advised. "If you're always a bit on edge you will perform at a higher level." A CIO should always be looking for a way to take the next step. Steve did this by planning quiet time to figure this out and to assess how he could do better in the future. "For example, my homework would be to research our vendors so I could be a better negotiator. I always constantly challenged my staff in this way as well. I never wanted them to feel comfortable."

3. **Always act with integrity.** "Don't embellish even if the truth hurts," Steve advised. "Ensure you know all the facts when justifying a project and present benefits that are realizable. You must do the right things right. This will build up trust."

What accomplishment(s) are you most proud of as a CIO?

"I consolidated commercial line of business and technical (engineering) computing functions into one corporate function at VW in Germany. There was considerable redundancy between these two functions but I was working in someone else's language so I had to prove myself through my actions. The idea was to share computing power which was idle during the day in Engineering and idle at night in the lines of business."

"At Penske, I combined the public and private computing environments, which had been separate with their own contracts and redundancies. With the CEO's support, we were able to complete this project in eight months and generate considerable savings and reduction in risk. In addition, this consolidation enabled the company to grow more efficiently. There were many in management who doubted this could be accomplished but it was worth the risk.   "This was an aggressive, calculated career risk but it worked."

What experiences best prepared you to be a CIO?

"I think the fact that I've always worked for high level people – never more than two people away from the CEO – gave me the chance to have different types of conversations than I had with others. I learned that you don't walk into their office with a problem and you should do your homework. Don't say you failed without knowing the reason why. Always show up with an answer, not half-baked ideas. I wanted to be *the* guy people could rely on for solutions."

"In addition, I built broad networks of people whom I could ask for advice. I joined clubs and picked sponsors from different walks of life – business, social, charity, and boards of directors. I sought to get advice from different angles."

"I also built a network of backers outside my area of expertise and sought to develop a mix of business and IT skills. It is important to learn how to communicate well about IT and how to manage. The key is learning to articulate what a particular change will do for the other person."

Finally, the supplier management role is crucial for a CIO to understand. "I did my first outsourcing deal in 1980," Steve said.

If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?

"I started out very technical and used it as a crutch for too long. I didn't broaden my horizons with the business fast enough and become really comfortable in this area," Steve said. "I struggled a while

when I realized I could never be a CEO because I didn't have enough financial background, but when I came to terms with this, I realized that I could focus on making what I did better. The management at Penske let me make the changes I thought were needed in the job and I really appreciate this."

Do you have any regrets about what you have not been able to accomplish?
"I would have liked to have been a lawyer and practice IP law but I couldn't take the three years needed to get a law degree. However, I took advantage of every opportunity to broaden myself – especially moving my family to Germany."

What advice do you have for other CIOs?
1. **Have guts.** Don't be afraid to make tough decisions and to execute them. "You must have a tough attitude and be willing to take these on *even if* they are career-damaging," Steve stated. "They can only fire you once!"
2. **Maintain a healthy life balance.** "You must be able to walk out of the office and leave your work behind," said Steve. "Have high expectations of others and high confidence levels in their work so you don't get the midnight phone calls. Don't be a micro manager. I gave significant responsibility and authority to my staff, watching the underperformers and looking for ways to make them better. I strenuously vetted my staff, so I didn't have a lot of rookies. I had people who knew how to do their jobs, gave them guidelines, and then got out of the way to let them do what needed to be done." "Time away from the office clears the brain and reboots it," says Steve. "It makes a CIO smarter."
3. **Get to know the business.** "This is extremely important. In Germany I realized that I didn't know enough about the business. I had spent my earlier years learning about all the different aspects of IT. As a result, I was basically pigeon-holed. I broke out of this by volunteering to write engineering release policies for eight divisions in my spare time. Taking on a project that is not in your theater of responsibility can help you break out of your stereotype. Today, a young CIO should be required to work with marketing. The CIO-CMO relationship is now extremely important because everything is on the web. The CIO-CFO relationship is also crucial.

What advice do you have for companies and CEOs about working with a CIO?
"Make sure you communicate your strategy clearly," said Steve. "Then it is much easier for a CIO to provide effective IT solutions. I worked with one company where there was no written strategy so I had to create one for the business to review. Business also needs to understand the basic IT cost elements and why doing it right the first time is important."

Senior executives also need to spend more time with their CIOs. "Most of the mistakes I've made are in not understanding what the business wants and not having the IT personnel to document it in detail. CIOs should also spend more time with business leaders learning their basic business constructs."

What are the biggest obstacles companies put in the way of their CIOs achieving optimal value?
"The biggest obstacle is treating the Office of the CIO as a cost center," he said. "It should be a *profit*

center where innovations, new ideas, and productivity improvements are created and developed. I believe the CIO must report to the CEO or Chair of the Board to be anywhere near productive."

How has the Advanced Practices Council helped you become a better CIO?
"I found the APC fostered great collaboration, helping CIOs to know whom to turn to with their issues. As well it was good to glean ideas from other industries so we don't all make the same mistakes. For example, a presentation about Intellectual Property rights several years ago helped make me better at doing due diligence." Steve also liked having presentations on people skills and IT staff aspirations and personalities. "I enjoyed having dialogues with various professors and would follow them as authors," he said.

Ed Trainor

Ed Trainor was a CIO for 25 years in four different companies and industries, retiring from Amtrak in 2012. Currently, he helps facilitate the SIM Regional Leadership Forums (RLF) in both the Pacific Northwest and the Pacific Southwest; in addition, he is an Adjunct Professor and Executive Director of the Center for Digital Transformation at the University of Southern California (Irvine).

When did you first become a CIO?
After graduating with an MBA in management information systems over 35 years ago, Ed began his career at Amtrak in the planning department, specializing in business planning and capital budgeting. "At that time, the IT function was perceived as doing a poor job at prioritizing, so I was soon asked to move into IT to help them with their capital budgeting for large IT systems," he said. He was later asked to take charge of applications development, reporting to the CIO.

In 1985, he was recruited to be CIO for Flying Tigers, a bulk air cargo airline based in California. A few years later it was taken over by FedEx and Ed joined the Southern California Gas Company as CIO. In 1993, he was recruited by Paramount Communications to be CIO of Paramount Pictures Hollywood. This subsequently became Viacom and Ed became CIO for the Viacom Entertainment Group. "In 2006, this company split into two and I was displaced," Ed said. "Amtrak asked me to come back to Washington as CIO, so we moved there for six years until I retired. Now we're back on the west coast."

What factors do you think have contributed to your success?
"People are the most important factor. It's all about the people," Ed said. "People have given me opportunities and the people on my teams have helped me accomplish what needed to be done. All my successes and failures have been as part of a team."

Furthermore, "at least two of my opportunities have come about due to my involvement in volunteer organizations," he said. Ed has served in several regional SIM chapter positions and as the National SIM President. "Getting involved in these types of activities outside of work and building relationships can lead to future opportunities," he stated.

Finally, "it's important to be able to navigate the culture of your organization. I've led IT in four different industries, each with strikingly different cultures. As CIO, I've had to understand and work with each type of culture to be effective."

What are the top three lessons you've learned as a CIO that you'd like to pass on to others?
1. ***It's all about the people – not technology.*** "People are often hired for their specific technical skills but if you concentrate on these types of skills, you won't be in your job very long. More and more, successful IT is about developing and using soft skills," Ed said.
2. ***It's also all about the business.*** "Technology is not why you're CIO," he said. "It's critical to understand your business and be a good partner."
3. ***The role of the CIO is changing.*** "The skills that we've used in the past as CIOs are changing. CIOs will need different skills because the job is evolving." Increasingly, digital transformation is enabling IT to move outside of the IT function and new forms of computing

such as analytics and the cloud are not occurring in the traditional IT arena. Some companies are dealing with this change by appointing a Chief Digital Officer (CDO) in addition to the CIO, but if a CIO wants to remain relevant, he or she must work differently than in the past and incorporate these new technologies and ways of working.

What accomplishment(s) are you most proud of as a CIO?

"I've liked seeing people who worked for me become successful and stay in touch with me," said Ed. "I always tried to give people latitude and room to grow. We all make mistakes and need to learn as a group. Yelling doesn't work. Real creativity takes a more collaborative environment. It's a challenge to create a learning culture and an environment that allows people to grow and move on. I've been most pleased when an IT person moves into the business, which only happens occasionally."

What experiences best prepared you to be a CIO?

"It helped that I started out as a business person and was able to first look at IT from the outside. Working in investment and planning enabled me to see across the enterprise but with a different point of view. Therefore, I came at IT work from a different direction," he said.

What experiences do you regret not having?

"I wish that I had a better technical background. I also wish I had more experience in different parts of the business," he said.

If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?

"My career chose me," said Ed. "I asked to go into IT. I don't regret much except spending too much time at work and away from my family. I regret not living a more balanced life. This question of work-life balance comes up repeatedly in the RLF meetings I facilitate. There's no easy answer but I think I went overboard and set a poor example for the people who worked for me. Overall, it's been a good career but not one that's been good for my family. I'd do this part differently if I had another chance."

Do you have any regrets about what you have not been able to accomplish?

"Looking back I can see some mistakes I've made but it's all generally been good, challenging, and enjoyable, so I don't have regrets," he said.

What advice do you have for other CIOs?

- **Focus on people.**
- **Be a good business partner.**
- **Adapt your skills and role for the world of the future.** "Be prepared for digital transformation," Ed said. "What worked for me won't work for today's CIOs. The world of the future will be one of customer engagement and changing business processes. CIOs will need to have a vision of how to improve their business with technology. This won't be accomplished through traditional IT. A CIO will need to be a leader and a focal point for these changes or risk being relegated to the back room."
- **Maintain your sanity.** CIOs should seek balance in their lives and ensure a healthy lifestyle.

What advice do you have for companies and CEOs about working with a CIO?
"CIOs need to be part of a company's executive committee. They should be given responsibility for strategic technology leadership and held accountable for it. Senior management must appreciate the potential of technology in order for this to occur. No CIO can be successful if the key leaders of the executive committee (CEO, CMO, and CFO) don't have this appreciation. Other business leaders must seek a true partnership with the CIO to deliver digital transformation. This change must be supported and led by the CEO and the Board of Directors. That said CIOs also need to step up and take on this role and accountability for it."

What are the biggest obstacles companies put in the way of their CIOs achieving optimal value?
If a company's leaders do not support their CIO, they will not achieve optimal value. "Their willingness to work in partnership creates an environment of success and within this, the CIO must ensure that they understand what is possible," said Ed.

How did your move to your new position come about?
"Two weeks after I retired, I was bored, so I sent out my resume to several universities in the area. UCLA was the first to ask me to help administer an IT program and I did this, but a while later USC Irvine invited me to teach so I switched because it was closer to my home. I now teach two classes: an MBA class in technology strategy consulting and a senior business class in the management of IT. Shortly after this move, I was asked to become Executive Director of USC's Center for Digital Transformation." In this position, which is 40% of a full time role, Ed facilitates a CIO Roundtable and also assists with an Annual Conference."

"I also wanted to stay active and give something back to my profession. When I was a CIO I had sent a number of people to the RLF groups and they had found it a positive experience, even a transformative one, so when I retired I offered to help co-facilitate the RLF in the Pacific Northwest and Pacific Southwest."

What experiences prepared you for your new position?
"Because I was a CIO, I have good relationships with many CIOs in the area and I understand what they're interested in, so this helps me with my role at the Center. As a teacher, however I wasn't prepared for all the work involved! I have renewed respect for those who do this full time. Although I work with someone who teaches the consulting component, I am responsible for preparing all the course material and grading." Ed said.

What new insights do you have on the CIO role now?
From his new vantage point in academia, it is clear that the role of the CIO is changing and will be very different in the future. "In my new role I can see trends and what's happening in the environment and there's much more change now than in my 25 years as CIO," he said. "These changes will require the CIO to take on a more broadly strategic role. Relationships with people will continue to be important but technology responsibilities are not so clear anymore. These are morphing into partnerships."

How has the Advanced Practices Council helped you become a better CIO?
"I found the APC helped me stay abreast of recent developments in many areas. The topics addressed are relevant and help educate CIOs, who can then educate others. The network it provided was useful when I needed to reach out for help. The APC is doing a great job," he said.

Mark Walther

Mark recently retired from his role as Deputy Executive Director and COO of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board (FRTIB). The FRTIB administers the Thrift Savings Plan, a tax-deferred defined contribution plan (similar to private sector 401ks), that provides federal employees (both civil service and military personnel) the opportunity to save for additional retirement security. It is the single largest defined contribution benefit plan in the country and has $460B of assets under management.

When did you first become a CIO?
Mark joined the federal government as a Presidential Intern after getting his MPA. This program is designed to identify potential future leaders and expose them to a wide variety of significant positions in management and leadership. Following his internship, he started at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in 1981 and has had a 35 year career in the federal government across five major organizations.

"My graduate degree was in public administration with a concentration in quantitative methods and I got involved early in office automation," said Mark. "This was an opportunity to introduce personal computers to business and I really liked it." He transferred to IT in 1987 and the rest of his career was spent in IT in different organizations until he became COO.

Mark was at NASA in IT service delivery and program management for 30 years. In the 1990s, he served as head of institutional IT at NASA Goddard in the early stages of clearly understanding the CIO role. "At that time the governance model was not mature and the focus was mainly on service delivery and infrastructure delivery. "It made me appreciate the value of governance, shared decision making, and customer service," he said.

In 2005, Mark was selected for a one year executive development program to train for the Senior Executive Service. Following this training he moved back to IT and became Deputy CIO for NASA Goddard, where he had "a seat at the table," working on strategic planning, the business value of IT, engagement with customers, and building a model to drive solutions forward. In 2010, Mark was given a special assignment at NASA Headquarters, where he had the opportunity to understand IT from a corporate point of view.

From there he applied to the FRTIB to be head of IT (known there as Chief Technology Officer to distinguish it from the Chief Investment Officer) and in 2011 he was selected as its CTO. In this job Mark was responsible for corporate infrastructure, services, the data centers, the call center infrastructure, and updating the organization's IT values.

What factors do you think have contributed to your success?
The federal government stresses five executive competencies: leading people, leading change, business acumen, building coalitions, and being results driven. Each year every executive in the federal government is measured against these metrics and over time Mark has worked to develop these competencies. "I really appreciate the training the government and, earlier, NASA, put into my management and executive development," he said.

What are the top three lessons you've learned as a CIO that you'd like to pass on to others?

1. **The success or failure of an organization begins with its people**. "You can't succeed without the right cadre," said Mark. "As an IT professional, I've evolved from believing the best person to hire is a technical one to understanding that the better people have the softer skills. Technical skill can be hired. To build collaboratively, you need soft skills."

2. **CIOs don't spend enough time thinking about the other side of the problem**. They get into group think that is not really diverse and doesn't incorporate an outside perspective. "I've learned how hard it is to approach problems out of the box and really think differently," said Mark. "This is both an intuitive skill and the result of building intentional diversity."

3. **Pay attention to communication and its quality.** This is important both for leadership and advocacy around new initiatives and as a model for your staff. "Relentless communication is important," Mark stressed. "Ensure you have a change management practice to support new initiatives and transformation. Embed responsibility for change management into every major initiative. We don't put enough effort into this and communication often falls short as a result."

What accomplishment(s) are you most proud of as a CIO?
"Without question it was driving the strategic planning for and leading a team through a major contracting (co-sourcing) initiative for Enterprise IT Services. This brought in managed services and a standards-based approach to service delivery (ITIL) for software delivery, cyber-security, and the data center," Mark said. "It changed our approach to sourcing from being directly contracted out without clear requirements to one that is based on exhaustive requirements, open market acquisition, and best practices. This success was considered by our Executive Director to be 'generational in scope'."

Critical to this accomplishment was backing from the Executive Director and the mandate and empowerment for Mark to bring in expertise and use his own knowledge and experience to improve IT practices. "This was vital in allowing me to marshal the resources and develop and implement the strategy within 18 months," he said. Also important was the recognition that the organization did not have all the in-house experience and ability to do everything. "We had to swallow our pride to go to co-source but this was critical in helping us craft the final product and realize its potential."

What experiences best prepared you to be a CIO?
"The best preparation was working as a development head and deputy CIO in an environment where there was much independence and decentralization in how to source and build solutions. I had to get stakeholders together to create value, adopt a federated governance model with shared decision-making, listen to the client, and convince everyone to pull together," Mark said. "This was a key turning point for me in learning how to build partnerships with business owners and developing their trust and confidence."

What experiences do you regret not having?
"I would have liked an earlier assignment embedded in a LOB. This would have accelerated my career path and help build the business value of IT."

If you had to do it over again, what would you do differently?
"I would have worked harder to become a major league baseball player!" Mark joked. He added, "Getting the Presidential Internship and landing at NASA were very positive experiences, but I believe I limited myself in the rotational assignments I selected. I got caught up in one LOB. I should have been bolder and learned more about the business of the agency. I eventually got this but only 20 years later. I would encourage anyone to look for opportunities to learn the business, embed oneself or co-locate. Don't focus only on IT. At the end of the day, it's all about the business."

Do you have any regrets about what you have not been able to accomplish?
"I have many regrets but these are a function of the high standards I set for myself and not wanting to fall short. If you're in the mode of continuous learning, you always feel you could do better. Continuous growth is sometimes rapid but sometimes snail-like. There are times when I felt I should have learned something earlier and could have done better."

What advice do you have for other CIOs?
- **Learn from your mistakes**. "All people make them but what you do with them shows your emotional intelligence. Realize there's opportunity in mistakes. Some recognize this more quickly than others. Be persistent and appreciate your mistakes; don't ignore or defend them. For example, I once deployed a new enterprise solution in order to achieve a homogeneous computing environment. In trying to deliver and get value I allowed myself to be convinced that a product was ready to deploy when it wasn't. As a result, there were rollbacks and heat and acknowledgement of mistakes. The lesson I learned was that perfection is the enemy of good and to allow more heterogeneity."
- **Learn how to deal with politics** in the decision-making process. "Decision-making in organizations is not straightforward and CIOs need to become savvier about how to work with the politics involved."
- **Be transparent**. All roads lead back to governance. "You must use governance to be clear about what you can and can't do and promote the business value of IT." This is fundamental to managing the effectiveness of IT and building trust and confidence.
- **It always begins and ends with the people you hire and the people you inspire**. "IT professionals get caught up learning new technologies and are mesmerized by gadgets. Be careful because technology can't have your back, give you advice, or advance the needs of the business like people can. I feel very strongly that you must tend first to the people."
- **Learn the business**. "Do everything you can to do this. This is the path to true strategic partnership and improved results. You need to understand the business, its plans, and the opportunities. You can't spend enough time doing this."

What advice do you have for companies and CEOs about working with a CIO?
"Make sure your CIO has a seat at the table. Give your CIO the opportunity to learn and understand the business. This will increase your ROI and ensure IT is more aligned with business needs. This should be reciprocal as well, with the business learning more about IT."

"Recognize that sometimes you must spend more before you can spend less. Allow for short-term investments to create opportunities to lower overall lifecycle costs."

"Empower your CIO. The CEO has to signal to the other senior team members that he has confidence in the CIO and is empowering him with the authority to make decisions and bring in solutions. However, this authority also comes with accountability for efficiency and improving the value proposition."

What are the biggest obstacles companies put in the way of their CIOs achieving optimal value?
"Limiting the scope of the CIO is the 'worst nightmare' situation. If the LOBs have their own IT budgets and the CIO doesn't have insight into and oversight for them, he is limited in his ability to reduce costs and optimize spending. This hamstrings the CIO in how he can plan and deliver value. You can provide this oversight without necessarily centralizing everything."

"The CIO must be set up as a peer of the senior leadership team, no matter what the reporting structure is. If this isn't done, the CIO is just an operations manager and not a strategic partner. Even if the CIO reports to the CFO/COO, this can be workable. At FRTIB, five "C" levels report to the CEO and five to the COO but they are all peers. It is also important for the CIO to have direct and regular access to the CEO and Board of Directors."

How did your move to your new position come about?
In 2014, Mark learned that his CEO wanted to shed his day-to-day activities and create a COO position. "I privately was interested but didn't speak about it. After my boss floated the idea of creating a COO position, I expressed that I had some of these capabilities because of my prior work experience in HR, procurement, finance, and facilities management." He noted that in addition to his experience in managing IT functions, his executive development training had enabled him to move out of his comfort zone in other areas. For example, he was Deputy Director of HR for six months and earlier had worked in a large department where many different functional leaders were on the same management team, so he had learned their perspectives. "There was radio silence for a long time but eventually I got the call and was chosen for the job." As COO, Mark is responsible for over 175 government staff and 660 contractors, with a ~$220M budget.

What experiences prepared you for your new position?
"I have unique skills in an organization where many are recruited from the outside for their expertise in financial services. I understand the responsibilities of government and had credibility as a long-term civil servant and my accomplishments and demonstrated competencies helped me get the job."

What new insights do you have on the CIO role now?
"Our new CIO has the misfortune to have the previous CIO as his boss! But I've learned I don't have all the answers. My successor has new ideas to stretch and grow IT in ways I didn't see. I've learned from   him."

How has the Advanced Practices Council helped you become a better CIO? How could it improve?
"I loved the intimacy of the APC. It's the right level to have meaningful conversations and it facilitates good dialog and debate. The APC is doing a good job. It gets top CIOs, has great academic and

practitioner speakers, and I found it exceptionally good learning with actionable items I could apply at the office. I also like the way Rick positions each topic and facilitates the dialog on it to make the information shared very meaningful and useful."

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