

The Data Economy Demands Cross-Functional Leadership:

Why CIOs, CDOs and CMOs must collaborate to drive innovation and growth



Not long ago, CMOs and CIOs seldom crossed paths. And CDOs? They were barely a blip on the horizon (if they were in the mix, their focus would have been more on consumer-facing digital vs. all-encompassing data).

Today a surprisingly collaborative CxO *triumvirate* has been formed, the implications of which may hold the keys to the future success of the modern enterprise.

While the dynamics of these particular C-suite relationships may have been tense at times – especially as CMOs took on increasing control of tech spend from their IT counterparts – an ever-increasing reliance on data, and the addition of the CDO to the CxO sandbox mix, has brought these one-time potential rivals into closer alignment than anyone might have ever imagined.

Kudos to all in strategic marketing, IT and data leadership who see themselves in this forward-thinking, innovation-driven, collaborative light. For those still looking to close the gap in order to drive a shared business agenda, your timing couldn't be better. Significant forces are at work that make collaboration more critical, and easier, than ever.

CIO / CDO / CMO: Similar goals; unique perspectives

The three members of the new CxO triumvirate share a lot more than similar titles. All three are extremely engaged in leveraging information and technology to drive a superior and differentiated experience, as well as enabling and acting on insights to facilitate strategic and operational advantage. They're also jointly responsible, in various combinations, for marketing and analytic technology spend and maximizing ROI on their shared investments and data assets.

Despite these common threads, they view the topic of data through slightly different lenses. While the CMO wants streamlined access to proprietary data, the CIO wants to protect it. Meanwhile, the CDO sits somewhere in the middle of this picture, with an eye on both protecting proprietary data, and maximizing the value extracted from it.

The interconnected agendas of the CxO data triumvirate



The upside is, regardless of their unique perspectives, they understand one another's inter-related objectives, though their unique responsibilities can lead to different approaches that impact how quickly they act to deliver improvements to business and data agility.

Celebrating shared vision (and accountability)

Anyone who questions the simplicity of improving on these critical CxO relationships doesn't need to look any further than their shared strategic visions. While they manage different processes, organizations and/or assets, they are all immersed in common initiatives to deliver on business objectives and strategies, as well as agendas including eliminating risk, improving ROI, enabling business agility and ultimately, driving transformation and growth.

Along with shared responsibilities comes shared accountability for making things happen in a manner that maximizes the upside while minimizing risk, making it critical they understand each other with clarity and purpose. This is especially true given CMOs' increasing investment in the martech stack and the fact that their goal of extracting maximum value from proprietary customer data requires buy-in and support from their CIO and CDO counterparts.

All in on optimizing the experience

Experience, they say, is the new brand. Whatever kind your organization is focused on — customer experience, digital experience, product experience, etc. — building and delivering it as part of an overall customer journey is a joint responsibility of the new CxO triumvirate.

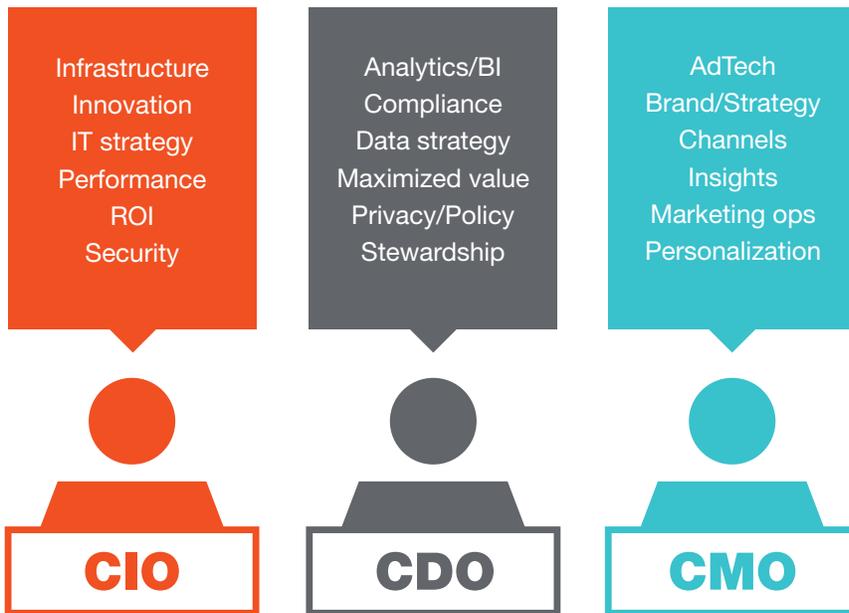
Experience, they say, is the new brand. Delivering it is a joint responsibility of the new CxO triumvirate, making strong relationships between them mandatory.

In fact, you might say that the "x" in "CxO" represents *experience* (an alternate use of this acronym being *chief experience officer*), given the fact that all three leaders (CIO, CDO, CMO) play important and interconnecting roles in delivering it. This makes building strong relationships between them mandatory.

While the addition of the chief data officer to the mix is a relatively new phenomenon, their responsibility is noteworthy, given how important data is to understanding the customer journey and deriving insights that fuel ongoing improvement to the customer experience. Not to mention the increasing complexity of protecting the privacy of customer data and using it in accordance with regulatory guidelines.

At a minimum, failing to agree on the experience agenda undermines efforts to build customer loyalty, retention and growth. At the highest level, it endangers the shared strategic mission and, in an environment of ongoing digital disruption, threatens the future of the enterprise itself.

The “x” in CxO symbolizes shared responsibility for “eXperience,” along with:



Personalization requires a staggering amount of data

You can’t speak of experience without personalization. Customers today crave and expect a unique, one-to-one relationship customized to their unique wants and needs. If they don’t get it, they often find comfort in the fact that change is just a click away.

Succeeding in this kind of an environment relies on a seemingly endless and growing stream of data from a myriad of sources, applications, systems and locations, all of which underlies every single customer interaction. **To make use of data to achieve customer centricity and deliver a competitive advantage,** it needs to be available, accurate, consistent, private and secure.

Delivering this type of data integrity has always been challenging, but with the increasing complexity and unprecedented scale of data, the ability to keep up requires all C-suite hands on deck. This is especially true for the CIO, CDO and CMO who need to collaborate to **break down data silos across the organization to create and hold safe a “single golden record”** for every customer, product, location, supplier and more. The ability to analyze, integrate and share that data to feed insights and create engagement has become the hallmark of strategic and operational business success. If you aren’t working together to create that single source of truth, you might want to start looking into it now.

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Protecting and maximizing the value of data

Security is a priority for CIOs, CDOs and CMOs, especially in a world where a high-profile data breach can do severe damage to brand reputation as well as lead to fines. The recent emergence of data privacy issues involving seemingly infallible digital juggernauts like Facebook has made privacy and trust into bigger concerns than ever before.

Wall Street Journal editor-at-large Gerard Baker captured this sentiment in his recent piece on privacy, “One year later, it’s a different world.” Add to that the complexity of regulatory and data governance concerns including the impact of the GDPR, falling trust in social media overall, and you have many companies, as Baker notes, [“seeking to rely more on their own proprietary data on customers rather than on third parties.”](#)

What’s important is that the goal of building consumer trust cannot be achieved without a close and trusted relationship between CIOs and their data and marketing leadership counterparts.

Attention CIOs / CDOs / CMOs: Meet your new cross-functional best friends

Just as organizations need to break down silos that prevent sharing critical data, the time is right to break down barriers that keep CIOs, CDOs and CMOs apart. There are so many common bonds that connect the three now that in many cases, bridging any such divide can be done in a few simple steps.

An easy way to get started is to discard any preconceptions that still might exist. Approach the relationship with an open mind and good intentions.

Cast aside prior rogue or shadow IT initiatives or competing agendas and replace them with empathy and collaborative insight. You might even move your offices closer together to encourage collaborative interactions.

**Digital transformation
demands cross-functional
leadership.”**

-Forrester

The important thing to keep in mind, as noted recently by Forrester, is that “Digital transformation demands cross-functional leadership.”¹ The bottom line being that businesses today are operating in an environment unlike anything anyone has seen before. Success in the age of data-driven marketing and digital business ecosystems requires a different and timely approach to management.

That said, simply **bridging gaps** that once characterized the relationships between members of the CxO digital marketing and experience triumvirate **is no longer an option**. The need for CIOs, CDOs and CMOs to collaborate to drive innovation and growth leaves no option. **It’s time to close those gaps for good.**

If you’re an executive interested in driving innovation and growth with a single source of truth, learn more about how multidomain master data management (MDM) can help. Connect with us at info@stibosystems.com or visit stibosystems.com.

¹Source: Challenge Traditional Leadership To Win At Digital Transformation - Chief Digital Officers Can Thrive, But The Role Is A Double-Edged Sword, a report by Martin Gill and Danielle Jessee, Forrester Research, February 5, 2018

About Stibo Systems

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