If I were a CIO…

Author: Bart Stofberg

IT adviser Bart Stofberg enjoys going to work. The main problem he encounters is that the days aren't long enough. And – like so many other IT managers – he would like to become a CIO for once, in order to tackle some matters his own way.

If I were a CIO, then… then I would make sure that everyone working in IT enjoyed going to work as much as I do now. I would give everyone jobs that showed off their expertise to the best advantage, and I would give everyone the time and space to use that expertise to the full. I would form my own management team, comprised of local information managers representing the business units, a 'common interest information manager' to ensure synergy, and an IT director to ensure that IT provides the information and delivers the service needed by the business.

Qualitative responsibilities

If I were a CIO, I would give the members of my management team clear qualitative result responsibilities. Result responsibilities because I would like to manage by what

they contribute to the business rather on what they do. Qualitative because I would like to – and need to – give them the space to engage in the thinking process, in order to contribute optimally to business results. And qualitative result responsibilities mainly to give everyone the time and space to decide for themselves how to use their expertise to the full. The local information managers have to ensure that the provision of information and IT contribute optimally to the success of their business units. The common interest information manager has to ensure optimal synergy (i.e. higher quality at lower costs) of the provision of information and IT within the business. And the IT director has to deliver the provision of information and IT needed by the business. My role, in consultation with the board of directors, would be to ensure a good balance between all these interests.

Not only my MT…

If I were a CIO, I would not only manage my own MT in this way. I would have everyone in the IT chain managing like this. Everyone should have the ambition to make an optimal contribution to the success of the business on the basis of clear qualitative result responsibilities and their own expertise. Because I would like all these experts to work together loyally, I would make sure that the right people were in the right places and that everyone was given the space to use their expertise to the full, and use it as the basis for engaging with the ideas of others and of the business. Then I would give all these experts the time to be creative and to make the right decisions. I wouldn't hurry them along with short-term goals, and I would absolutely not use measurable targets. Most businesses seem to think you can run a good marathon with 422 good 100-metre sprints, but of course that is not the case. A marathon is built up very differently – both in athletics and in the business world.

Everyone should be able to think along

If I were a CIO, I would want everyone to engage in the thinking process. So then I would also have to ensure that everyone has access to all the relevant information. Strategy and policy must be set, and everyone must be familiar with them. Program management, project portfolios, service portfolios and architecture make strategy and policy concrete enough that I know we are all going the same way, while also giving the experts sufficient direction and freedom to be able to use their expertise to the full. As long as the content is good, program management, project portfolios, service portfolios and architecture are not stifling. On the contrary, they are the breathtaking ambitions of dedicated experts.

A successful business in Europe

In a globalized world, we have no choice. Where a certain standard quality suffices, we have to outsource the work to countries that are cheaper than us. We even have to outsource certain forms of expertise, as other countries can deliver better quality at lower costs. If we want to be successful in Europe, then we have to be more creative, more entrepreneurial and more innovative than others. If I were a CIO, I would ensure

that in my business IT would make a big contribution to the competitive capacity of the business. I would outsource simple services and elementary expertise to other parties. But what remained within the IT organization and elsewhere would be very creative, very entrepreneurial and very innovative, because everyone really enjoyed going to work, and because everyone was given the space to use their expertise.

Enjoying work

If I were a CIO, my people would always be cheerful about going to work. I would give them the time and space to do what they were good at. And by receiving the time and space, they would make an optimal contribution to the success of our business. I would show that I had faith in my people and their expertise, and this would give them lots of energy. I would give them the time to be creative and to engage in the thinking process. I would ensure that they felt secure enough to make decisions and that they felt secure enough to often make the right decisions as well. I wouldn't reproach them for mistakes, providing they were not unnecessary ones. The business would flourish; it would profit optimally from the creativity, entrepreneurship and innovative capacity that was released, and from better products, less complexity, faster time-to-market and much more besides. Even better: we would take the whole business in tow.

Management based on enjoyment

If I were a CIO, I would base management on enjoyment. I would ensure that everyone worked together on the basis of burning ambition, trusting fully in each other's reliability, each other's loyalty and each other's expertise. I would ensure that everybody's talent was recognized and that this talent was continually challenged and developed. Together, we would continually optimize our cooperation. Instead of a satisfaction survey, I would hold a dissatisfaction survey. I don't want to know whether everyone is more or less satisfied, but rather the reasons why people are dissatisfied, so that we could really do something about it. Dissatisfaction is often caused by very banal things, such as travelling times, parking problems or one particular colleague with whom you really don't click. There is a lot you can do about that. Qualitative management makes it possible, for instance, to work fewer hours in the office, which makes travelling times and parking suddenly less problematic.

If I were a CIO, then…

If I were a CIO, then IT staff would really enjoy going to work each day again. Then the business would reap the benefits of the creativity, entrepreneurship and innovative capacity of IT. Then the board of directors, business managers and IT users would be really satisfied with their IT. And then I would enjoy going to work each day – just as I do now. The days would fly past. And we would all see that as a disadvantage – the only disadvantage.

Quint Wellington Redwood is a leading global independent consulting firm dedicated to resolving IT-related organizational challenges. Operating in more than 49 countries and across four continents, Quint provides strategy, sourcing and service management to leading organizations from all industries, creating and implementing best practices worldwide.

Quint was founded to help organizations get more from IT, not by adding more or new technology, but by simply managing IT better. The firm's portfolio of services includes education, consulting and measurement, integrated across the domains of business and IT. Quint's "Dare to Challenge" mission challenges itself and its clients to implement changes that deliver true results, outperform the competition and create a measurable return on investment. Quint's vision is to reinvent not only its clients' organizations, but also the consulting industry itself.

Quint
Wellington Redwood