

By 2021, CIOs could be responsible for culture change

In an era of continuous change, a proactive and adaptive culture is a critical asset and CIOs will play a key role in establishing the right mindsets and practices. Gartner predicts that by 2021, CIOs will be as responsible for culture change as chief HR officers (CHROs).



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“A lot of CIOs have realised that culture can be an accelerator of digital transformation and that they have the means to reinforce a desired culture through their technology choices,” said Elise Olding, research vice president at Gartner. “A partnership with the CHRO is the perfect way to align technology selections and design processes to shape the desired work behaviours.”

The mission and values of an organisation usually fall into the remit of HR. The partnership between IT and HR can shed light on how IT can make technology and process design decisions that foster the intention of the desired organisational culture. Enterprise architecture can adopt principles that align to the cultural traits, and when business analysts design processes they can create them with the intended traits in mind. Hence, IT supports the way an organisation behaves in cooperation with HR.

However, culture change is a process. This means that there will be barriers to digital initiatives - in peoples' mindsets and practices. “A great way to jump-start culture change and enable adoption of new technologies and processes is the culture hack. Start with a small, motivated user group and use it to showcase fast wins and results,” Olding said.

What to expect

Other culture predictions from Gartner include:

By 2021, 80% of mid to large enterprises will change their culture as a way to accelerate their digital transformation strategy.

A recent Gartner survey found that 67% of organisations have already completed culture change initiatives or were in the process of doing so. The reason for many of those initiatives was that the current culture has been identified as a barrier to digital transformation.

“In 50% of cases, transformational initiatives are clear failures and CIOs report that the main barrier is culture,” said Christie Struckman, research vice president at Gartner. “The logical conclusion is that CIOs should start with culture change when they embark on digital transformation, not wait to address it later.”

Through 2022, 75% of organisations with frontline decision-making teams reflecting diversity and an inclusive culture will exceed their financial targets.

Organisations today need better decisions made fast, ideally at the front line. To achieve this objective, teams must consist of multidisciplinary, diverse members with the autonomy and accountability to act and to realise financial targets. Diversity & inclusion (D&I) is critical for the success of those teams.

“D&I initiatives will only contribute to business results if they are scaled properly and actually reach frontline employees,” said John Kostoulas, senior research director at Gartner. “Organisations often overlook extending D&I programmes, such as unconscious bias training, to frontline employees. Numerous technologies can enhance the scale and effectiveness of D&I programmes, such as by diagnosing the current state of inclusion, developing leaders who foster inclusion and embedding inclusion into daily business execution.”

D&I initiatives are an area where CIOs and CHROs can cooperate easily and effectively. For example, CIOs can champion empowerment behaviours, as they already gained a lot of experience with agile development and product teams working together. The IT department must partner with HR to set up programs for monitoring, measuring and enhancing inclusion. “It’s worth the investment. Gartner research shows that inclusion can improve performance by over 30% in diverse teams,” Kostoulas said.

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