



# CIONET OPINIONS

## The new CIO: an orchestra maestro on a jazz improv concert



By Thomas Zimmerer

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Once upon a not very long time ago, the CIO left a shadowy role in the backstage supporting the orchestra to suddenly become the maestro conducting a large orchestra through a beautiful symphony. As the new maestro, this new CIO had to breakout from the service provider position to become a legitimate and prominent part of the C-suite.

In this new role, the CIO became the person who sets the tone, who is able to bring out the best of every performer in every concert, who knows which instruments need to be involved at each moment and who understands how each one contributes to the whole piece. On top of that, while conducting the orchestra, this maestro must also be able to think about the following movements of the symphony to ensure all sections and every individual performer are ready to play it in harmony.

So far, so good, but like in any orchestra playing a symphony, there are months of individual practice and group rehearsals beforehand, the concert strictly follows the

sheet music and there is little room to more than some nuances and interpretations of that composition. What happens when suddenly the audience expectations change? Maybe the maestro can choose another symphony, but it will take time for the orchestra to be ready to perform it before that audience. By the time they are ready, the audience expectations change again and there very well might be a different concert they choose to go to. What needs to happen is a real time adjustment of the performance and a score that lays out the piece structure, but allows for improvisation over that structure. Opting for a jazz improv concert instead of a classical symphony would achieve this agile flexibility, but both the maestro and the orchestra must be able to swiftly change their way of performing and keep on doing it flawlessly without a full detailed score.

This reality, with ever changing customer expectations and potential disruptors lurking around is what businesses have been experiencing since the 4th Industrial Revolution. As digital transformation comes





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into play, what once may have been a good, though risky, business decision, is now a strategic and mandatory priority for businesses, no matter how bad or well business is going or how big or small the threats are. With innovation and speed becoming critical in this new reality, the CIO needs to evolve even further to be able to successfully drive digital transformation.

However, becoming and being this jazz orchestra maestro are not easy tasks and it actually takes a very specific profile to endure this constant switch between conducting the orchestra during an improv jazz performance, being a visionary capable of quickly and continuously developing new ways of performing to please the audience and inspiring all elements to play brilliantly throughout every time.

But how can this maestro transform an orchestra used to perform classical pieces into one capable of delivering a jazz concert and improvising throughout? Well, most people dislike change and that is because they are afraid of what they do not know. Even when people say they want to change, the

commitment is rarely truly present as there is always a fear of one's job becoming obsolete, although that might happen as well if the orchestra is unable to keep performing. Sometimes, though, if one's job becomes obsolete, it actually means that they have learned a new one in the process that may be much more satisfying. The key to drive this change process with the least entropy as possible is to keep showing everyone that the new world and the new way of doing things is better.

For some CIOs, this new role can be overwhelming and these have no choice other than to step back to a more functional role as IT managers, making sure in the backstage that the orchestra is able to perform. However, for others – those who have been thriving as true CIOs – it can be an even more rewarding job. In order to achieve the necessary fusion between business and IT, this CIO must have a different mindset and personality and, although a technical background is no longer a top requisite, this new breed of CIO still needs to understand IT. The difference is that this knowledge and experience must come on par with business savviness and people

management skills. That is what will enable the new CIO to assess all variables, develop new services and business models and implement them while always being fully aware of the changing environment.

So, can you hear it? That is the sound of the true new CIO being an orchestra maestro on a jazz improv concert delivering a true new masterpiece. Applause. Standing ovation. Encore!

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