



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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### **Moving to the Top**

There is little difference between the leadership styles of CEOs and CIOs. Both are equally competent when it comes to leading an organization. However, the corporate mindset does not concur with this fact. It relies on pre-conceived notions about CIOs being great professionals but not competent enough to lead (non-IT companies in particular). It was only during the IT boom that the corporate fraternity started perceiving CIOs as a better option for the leadership position.

Armed with knowledge and relevant insights into the field of IT that provided the competitive advantage, CIOs were perceived as the perfect choice for leading organizations. Other senior managers were left behind during the era of the IT boom.

Now, the initial mindset against CIOs taking over the company reins is back to haunt the corporate world. It is believed that despite the knowledge and proficiency to carry out tasks effectively, CIOs are not as effective as CFOs or CEOs because they lack personality.

These erroneous notions were dispelled by a recruitment and development firm that conducted a survey and prepared a success profile from more than half a million executives. The results showed that all leaders have similar qualities, regardless of their field. Of course, a few differences are inevitable owing to individual backgrounds and field of competence. The research has largely focused on the comparative competence of CIOs and CEOs, and the results suggest that both leaders are equally adaptive, good team players, likeable and have a good sense of humor.

#### **Success profiling**

The assessment of the success profiles of leaders was based on an assessment tool that emphasized the leadership aptitude of executives as well as the thinking styles of leaders. This component set the tool apart from the typical assessment tools that work on the principle of skill mapping.

The assessment profile is implemented online, providing executives with two questionnaires comprised of questions based on hypothetical situations. The result of this test is compiled with the existing data about the applicant's career profile. Following this, the top twenty and the last twenty are identified, their profiles singled out and compared on the basis of compensation, career path and the company. Further, only senior profiles are considered and the others are kept out of the study. The traits of the senior IT managers including CIOs are then collated against those of successful CEOs.

The exercise aimed to bring out the similarities and the differences between successful CIOs and their not-so-successful contemporaries along with a comparative analysis of leadership potential in a CIO and a CEO. The results were in favor of CIOs taking over the organization's reigns. The study revealed that CIOs use a more interactive approach



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to leadership as compared to others who still believe in the traditional command-and-control leadership style.

In addition, the assessment also pointed to the need for “*social-participative*” style among leaders (specifically CIOs). The highest scorers on the test demonstrated great desire and drive to extract information from employees on not only technology-based issues but also other organizational matters. In addition, these CIOs showed a penchant for consensus-building by collaborating with peers and subordinates alike on all matters concerning corporate well being.

Emotionally too, CIOs scored well by demonstrating empathy and sensitivity in a variety of situations. As organizations become more complex and technology-dependent, CIOs should be aware of what employees need in terms of technology and accordingly cater to their requirements. CIOs also need to be proactive in sensing future technology trends. The CIO should guide employees correctly in this field. Since IT and business strategy are closely interwoven, failure in one could spell doom for the other.

### **The “think” gap**

The assessment dominantly suggests that CIOs and CEOs are alike, and both could prove equally competent as leaders. However, thinking styles differentiate between the two. CIOs follow the *creative-complex* style, which typically implies acting by collaborating data, identifying various possible alternatives to a problem, and constantly trying each one till the desired outcome is achieved. However, CEOs and other management leaders resort to *satisficing*, which means acting decisively on the basis of the available information without seeking further details. They believe that it is better to make a decision, whether it is the best decision or not, than to make none at all.

However, experts attribute this difference to the nature of their respective professional fields. Regardless of the similarities and the differences between the IT and management leaders, the study confirms that CIOs have it in them to make it to the top and remain there. As technology permeates the organizational fabric like never before, more and more CIOs are destined to occupy the hot seat.