

The Changing Role of the IT pros

CIOs and high-level IT executives are seeing a dramatic change in their company roles. According to a new research study, conducted jointly by the MIT Sloan CIO Symposium and *SeachCIO.com*, it was found that the change in CIOs' and IT professionals jobs and responsibilities is "not just evolutionary change, it's revolutionary."

One of the changes that IT executives are experiencing is the shifting away from being managers of day-to-day IT operations to becoming true business partners. IT now is being invited to "do more to promote alignment between business goals and IT programs and priorities."

The study reports 56 percent of IT executives and 48 percent of IT managers said they were now contributing more to business strategy than in 2010. In contrast, only 27 percent of IT executives and 45 percent of IT managers said they were spending more time "overseeing IT operations."

As a manifestation of the changing roles and tasks required of them, IT executives and managers are being called upon to develop new skills. In a list of skills needed for their new roles, 58 percent of IT executives and 54 percent of IT managers ranked compliance/security highest as the skills needed to "better fulfill" their roles.

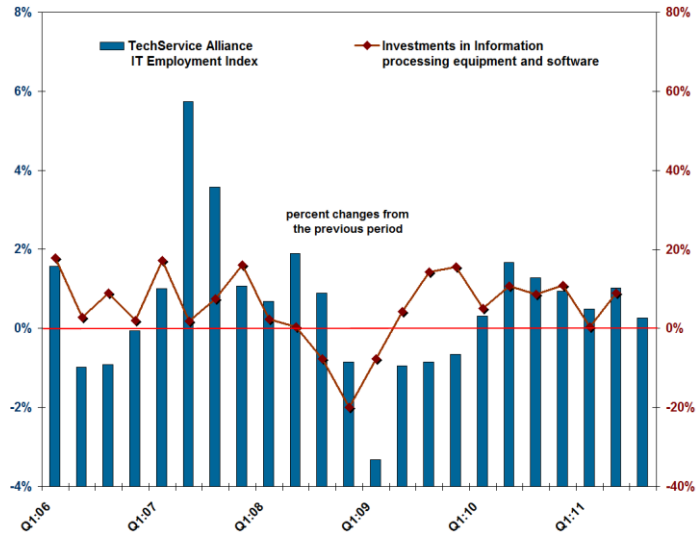
Both IT executives and IT managers participating in the survey ranked five skills sets similar in importance following compliance/security: people skills, business management expertise, technical and financial. Legal skills were considered the least important.

"What will the IT dept will look like in 2015?"

After posing the question at a recent TechRepublic meeting, editor-in-chief Jason Hiner answered it himself by blogging that "the oversized, centralized IT department of 2011 is a relic that's never coming back."

Hiner went on to explain that ten years ago, IT departments were busy helping set up "a lot of new stuff" and were assisting some workers – mainly baby boomers – making the transition into the computerized workplace. Many technologies today don't need as much IT resources to deploy, provide end-user support for, and maintain.

"IT department of 2015 will have fewer full-time staff members, will hire more consultants, and will focus on software, mobile, and the cloud."



Sources: TechServe Alliance (www.techservealliance.org) and U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA)

Hybrid IT isn't the technology in a Prius

One new term or concept emerging from the shifting manner of how IT is being deployed throughout an organization is being labeled as *hybrid IT*. But the definition of *hybrid IT* is still developing.

According to *SearchCloudComputing.com*, a website focused on cloud computing news, analysis, and case studies, *hybrid IT* is "an approach to enterprise computing in which an organization provides and manages some information technology (IT) resources in-house but uses cloud-based services for others." They report three driving forces for *hybrid IT*: an organization's requiring control of its data, the cost advantage of cloud computing, and the need for IT to rapidly respond to the organization's business needs.

Hybrid IT is also being referred to as *business technology*, or *BT*, according to *SearchCIO.com*, and reports that Forrester Research, which has discussed the concept of *BT* for some time, advises that internal IT organizations should not necessarily focus on "dictating which technology is used on the job," but rather zero in on "consulting and educating workers." *SearchCIO.com* explains the term as technology becoming "so tightly tied to the business in the future that IT will become everybody's job."

Although no timeline was offered, *SearchCIO.com* reports that an executive advisory consultancy, found in a survey that only 25 percent of IT staff headcounts will remain in corporate IT. Thirty percent will migrate to "multifunctional shared services groups or business units," and the remainder will be shifted to external providers." The IT department as a service provider may be a thing of the past as it becomes more of an integrator and broker.

Unemployment rates low for IT professionals as 2011 winds down

The unemployment rate for IT professionals was significantly lower in the third quarter of 2011 than the overall labor force. For the same period, the overall published unemployment rate remained unchanged at slightly greater than nine percent.

Occupations	Q3 2011
Computer and information systems managers	3.2
Computer hardware engineers	1.9
Computer network architects	0.2
Computer programmers	2.5
Computer support specialists	6.8
Computer systems analysts	2.3
Network and computer systems administrators	4.7
Software developers, applications and systems software	3.3
Web developers	5.6

Source: unpublished tabulations of Current Population Survey data furnished by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Hiring plans for 2012 remain robust

Computerworld's recent annual survey regarding 2012 IT plans found that 29 percent of the 353 IT executives surveyed, plan to grow their IT staffs. This is a 6 percent increase from last year's survey. Only 17 percent plan to decrease their IT employee headcount in 2012 while 54 percent expect it to remain the same.

According to *Computerworld*, programming and application development - which includes mobile app development - is one of the more sought after skills that employers will be looking for in 2012 with 61 percent of survey participants planning to hire for this skill set. This is up from 44 percent in last year's survey. 23 percent also plan to hire IT professionals with business intelligence skills, up from 13 percent last year.

But not all IT skills will be in growing demand in 2012. Although 35 percent plan to hire for help desk / technical support, this is down from 43 percent last year. Perhaps as technology becomes more dependable and users who have become more technologically savvy, IT departments no longer require large staffs to assist end-users, which could be a contributing reason that the unemployment rate for computer support specialists (see the table, above) is higher than for other IT occupations.

Feds closing data centers

While the number of Federal data centers grew four times from 1998 to 2010, the average amount of computing power used by those centers was only 27 percent. At the end of 2010, the federal government announced a plan to reduce the number from nearly 2,100 centers to about 1,300 through closing and/or consolidating of more than 800 centers by 2015.

But *Computerworld* reports that federal CIO Steven VanRoekel recently made known more ambitious plans that will now include the closing of data centers of 100 square feet or more. The previous plan involved facilities with a minimum of 500 square feet. Originally scheduled to close 373 data centers by the end of 2012, they now plan to shutter 472 centers by the end of next year. Federal agencies have said that they are able close 962 centers by 2015, but VanRoekel, said new goals are in the process of being determined and the final count may be higher.

The government budgets approximately \$80 billion annually on IT.

Tips & Tricks

How to Get the News, Without the Ads

Don't want to be bothered by all the ads in your morning news websites or any website for that matter? Just cruise over to their mobile versions - and you don't need a smartphone - any PC will do. Although media outlets often pare down their web content for smartphone visitors, mobile versions usually still have the most important information.

Although many technologists have long abandoned the use of www. before a domain name when surfing the web, try substituting "mobile." or "m." as a prefix. You'll access the barebones content if the company or media outlet has a mobile-specific presence. If this does not work, add /m after the regular homepage URL. This tip also works great as well for ebook readers with browser capabilities and internet connectivity

This brings up a lot of potentially new projects to pursue for IT working with marketing executives. A mobile presence, simply due to the nature of a much smaller screen, should not be a physically smaller version of the company home page. Instead, thought should be given to what mobile users are looking for in terms of information and services.