



Outsourcing CIOs

Hiring fulltime IT staff is expensive, and not always necessary for smaller companies. A recent trend is for companies to outsource Chief Information Officers (CIOs). The cost-benefit for the smaller companies is it gains a professional manager who is an expert at IT strategy and implementation, without dedicating key personnel who can better serve the company in their own roles. It allows each professional to remain the true his or her own skills set without the requirement of having yet another manager on the pay-roll full-time. They can hire someone for a short period of time that they otherwise could ill afford.

Smaller companies, especially those that are just starting out, have a difficult job to do in attempting to succeed in this economy. They are attempting to gain clients based on their particular area of expertise. They need to work at improving what they do. For the most part, these companies use computers and technology to assist them in doing their jobs, but the primary focus of the company is not computers. Computers are merely a tool they use. These companies are often too small to have a dedicated staff of IT professionals or even one full-time employee dedicated only to IT. These managers know they need computers to get the job done, but they may not know the role technology plays for each staff member.

Computers and computer-driven technology plays such a vital role in running their business, these companies need to someone that is an IT expert to get the business up and running, but they only need these people for a short while. Due to these factors there is a growing trend to outsource Chief information Officers (CIOs). These individuals are often hired from Virtual CIO firm, and organization that contracts out [IT professionals](#). Often a CIO works only part time at the position and does much of the work remotely, or will work for a short period of time that may be up to two years. Outsourcing allows these small to mid-sized business to gain a seasoned expert in the IT field without having to hire that person for a permanent or full-time position.

The role of the outsourced CIO is similar to that of any member of upper management. The difference is the emphasis on their role. When the CIO is hired, they generally reports directly to the [Chief Financial Officer](#) (CFO). It is the CIO's position to help the company get up and running successfully all budgetary constraints. The CIO does this through knowledge of people, software, and hardware that the company will need. It will be her job to work with the other members of the team to implement a strategy that provides IT services to everyone on the staff that needs them- and make sure they can do their jobs in a way that uses resources

to greatest advantage. That is, he/she needs the employees to be able to work efficiently with the materials that are provided, and be able to get those materials at a reasonable rate.

To do this, the CIO will have to work directly with the management team and the general staff. The CIO needs to understand the company's goals and objective, and their vision at how to go about achieving it. She then needs to determine how the IT department can work to achieve these goals. The CIO then needs to write a comprehensive plan for providing these services and get these approved. When everyone is on the same page, the CIO will need to acquire the appropriate resources to complete these goals and objectives.

Why is it that the existing staff could not be doing these things? They most definitely could- but it is unlikely that they have the pre-existing knowledge-base that a dedicated IT person brings to the job. The CIO, especially one that has been outsourced out of a virtual firm, comes to the company with a wide base of knowledge. He/she knows of software that can be used to complete jobs more effectively; remains current on hardware and technology that can be used; he/she knows vendors that can be called upon for either a good price, or quick supply or both. The CIO also knows how to obtain the necessary staff, either through assisting in the interviewing process for full-time hires, or working to gain more temporary employees to fill short-term needs. The IT professional will also know what IT standard operating procedure for use and be able to assist the company into putting that into policy. To have another employee without the appropriate background doing the job is probably not an efficient use of their talents.

It is the [CIO's job](#) to get the IT program up and running- and then go. Many of these CIOs will be at a particular company for over a year, thus a relationship is built between the CIO and the company's management. This, too, will be helpful in the future. When the company calls sometime in the future,



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the CIO will be able to hit the floor running because of this previous history.

This is a growing trend. Small and mid-sized companies cannot afford to hire full-time staff devoted to the implementation of IT strategy. These companies do not need more managers in their ranks, either. There finding it makes

more sense to hire someone for a period of time that already has the necessary skill set instead of trying to have existing staff become experts in more than one field. It is expected that, eventually, all [CIO positions](#) are outsourced. This is not only because many companies do not have a need for a permanent CIO, it is also because the number of qualified CIOs continue to dwindle.

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