



Chapter II

Historical Perspective

Introduction

The presentation of this chapter starts with a brief discussion of the history of the emergence of the CIO role in organizations. The chapter then discusses some of the current research about the role of the CIO. This section is divided into a discussion of research, which has investigated corporate level factors and research that has investigated unit level factors. Corporate level factors are those aspects in the environment that may serve to facilitate successful performance by the CIO. Unit level factors are those aspects directly involved in the area of responsibility of the CIO within the organization. Finally, conclusions are presented, which outline how the results reported in this book are beneficial to both academics and those practitioners who may be CIOs or who may be considering working toward becoming a CIO.

Emergence of the CIO Role

Some early research identified the emergence of the CIO and the necessary skills for information systems managers.

In 1986, *Business Week* (Bock, Carpenter, & Davis, 1986) reported on the emergence of a new breed of manager, the “chief information officer” and their introduction into the executive suite. The CIO was expected to be able to relate to the company’s nontechnical managers and those more technical managers of the then named data processing department. A very interesting point made by the Business Week article was that the emergence of the CIO was similar to the rise of accountants in the 1960s to the position of chief financial officer. Thus, the emergence of the CIO role followed the emergence of the CFO role by 20 years. Further, the role of the CIO included three main functions. They are described as follows:

- Oversee corporate technology
- Report to the highest ranking executive
- Develop long term strategy and planning

Also, in the late 1980s, it was estimated that approximately one-third of major companies in the United States had identified the necessity for a CIO role and had filled the position (O’Riordon, 1987). The emergence of the role suggests that these companies at that time had recognized the strategic importance of information technology and the necessity for a senior manager to hold responsibility for its application in support of business goals.

O’Riordon (1987) suggested the following characteristics of a successful CIO:

- Business-oriented
- Takes a broad perspective of corporate requirements
- Able to work across traditional departmental boundaries
- Understands how technology can support the business operations
- An innovative thinker
- Flexible
- Good communication skills

Job advertisements for information systems positions from 1970 to 1990 were reviewed by Todd, McKeen, and Gallupe (1995). They investigated specific positions related to programmers, systems analysts, and information systems managers. It is the latter position that is of interest here. At the time of their research (Todd et al., 1995), it was considered that successful information systems managers should have a blend of technical knowledge and sound business-related skills. Further, in general, they should possess effective interpersonal skills. Over the 20-year period of their investigation, Todd et al. (1995) determined that there had not been much

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