

About a year ago, TENG members were invited by David Preston to participate in an opinion survey that would answer key questions concerning the role of the CIO today. This newsletter is the third of a series of three that contain analysis of his findings. I am very grateful to him for asking our participation in his research and for his sharing of its outcome. A copy of this newsletter with the data in tabular format has been uploaded to the Files Section of the Discussion Group. If you wish to contact David, you will find his phone number and Email address at the end of the article. Ed

The Link between CIO / TMT Similarity and Networking

Increased networking between the chief information officer (CIO) and top management team (TMT) allows for additional opportunities for the CIO to communicate with the TMT. Networking consists of the frequency of informal interactions, communication, and socializing between the CIO and TMT. Successful CIOs have been found to informally communicate and socialize with the TMT and in return have been able to understand the goals and vision of the TMT and the business (Earl and Feeny 1994).

There is evidence that both common demographic characteristics and common experiences/professional backgrounds between the CIO and TMT influence the degree of informal interaction between the two parties. This study evaluates common demographic characteristics with regard to: a) age; and b) gender. In addition, this study evaluates common experiences and backgrounds with regard to a) personal interests; b) organizational tenure; c) tenure in the current executive level position within the organization; d) functional background; and e) educational level. CIO/TMT relational similarity parties leads to interpersonal attraction between the two parties and facilitates informal interactions between the CIO and TMT since individuals are more likely to communicate with, act favorably toward, and maintain their association with individuals who are similar to themselves with respect to demographic and experiential characteristics than with individuals who are dissimilar to themselves (Young and Buchholtz 2002). Moreover, a lack of demographic and experiential similarity among senior executives can lead to unfavorable outcomes such as less frequent communication, less informal communication, and less productive work relationships (Young and Buchholtz 2002). Based on this support, we developed the research model presented in Figure 1.

This study requested that both the CIO and TMT members from various companies take part in this research study by completing a mail or web-based survey. A total of 126 organizations returned the CIO survey and at least one corresponding TMT member survey. The research model posits that the dependent variable “CIO/TMT Networking” is influenced by two primary independent variables:

- 1) CIO/TMT Demographics (age & gender)

2) CIO/TMT Backgrounds (personal interests, organizational tenure, positional tenure, functional background, & educational level)

The research model was tested using a partial least squares approach through PLS Graph and all relationships were found to be statistically significant (0.05 level of significance). We find that common CIO/TMT demographic characteristics and common experiences and background characteristics were found to increase the level of networking between the CIO and TMT. Based on these results, the CIO should be proactive in developing common interests with the TMT members. In addition, the findings provide important implications from a human resources perspective. The organization can select a CIO based on the degree to which the CIO has common characteristics or common interests with the. Our findings may also extend beyond the CIO/TMT relationship and may be relevant to other areas of executive development.

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BIOGRAPHY

David Preston, PhD is an Assistant Professor of Information Systems at Texas Christian University, located in Fort Worth, Texas. His research interests include IS leadership, CIO research, IS strategy and alignment, and IS outsourcing. He has work experience as an engineer, project manager, and management consultant. His work has been published in the Journal of Logistics Information Management and the Journal of Information Science and Technology. Please feel to contact David Preston at d.preston@tcu.edu or (817) 257-6154

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