

Can a Fractional CIO/CTO help your business?

In 2020, the Covid-19 crisis exposed how organizations are using technology. The differences between those organizations who just wanted to keep the lights on and email flowing versus those that had a technology plan became evident. Organizations with no plan had to scramble to successfully execute in the new reality.

Still, not every company can afford to bring in a full-time technology leader to help build a solid plan. CIOs / CTOs can be an expensive hire. If you bring one on board, you want them to focus on technology *strategy*, not day-to-day tactical user technical issues.

The answer to this hiring dilemma is to engage a fractional, or part-time, CIO.

A fractional CIO is an individual that has held the role before and has developed technology roadmaps, executed budget planning, established software selection processes, and created IT governance. It makes sense to bring in the skills needed for the time needed and no more – for a fixed period, a particular project, or for a set number of hours a week or month.

Fractional CIO Success Stories

A regional staffing firm was suffering from aging infrastructure. Their internal IT resource, while a good technical resource, was unable to see the big picture and define a technology roadmap that would allow planned growth. The fractional CIO analyzed the actual IT spend which had never been exposed. After thorough analysis, a technology plan that included retiring all locally hosted servers, aging phone equipment, and upgrading the company to O365 was proposed and implemented. This technology plan provided the CEO with a very clear cost of doing business and removed the dependence on physical facilities. This way of working and utilizing technology proved so effective that when the Covid-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, this company simply sent staff members home and business continued without interruption.

The fractional CIO also engaged with an integration partner to provide flex IT support which reduced the need to hire additional full time IT staff. The introduction of a Service Management tool allowed this vendor and internal staff to be optimized.

A regional services SMB found themselves “chained” to custom software that was years out of date. Rapid growth in the business had taken all of the efforts of the officers of the business. Underlying infrastructure was ignored if it continued to function. Very little attention was placed on the state of the technology supporting the company. Early in the business a MSP was engaged and because of the importance of growth, came to be the principal resource for all IT-related issues. While this provider had delivered good service, cost had increased substantially with no checks and balances (having no internal IT resources). After a failed attempt to procure a new software solution, a fractional CIO was brought in to provide a technology roadmap, business software solution, and a corresponding budget.

- *A technology roadmap was delivered that included moving all technology to a hosted environment, users migrated to O365, Teams implemented, and all phone systems moved to Microsoft PBX.*
- *A provider was identified that provided a state-of-the-art solution that better matched the evolved business.*
- *Finally, an IT resource was identified to be the internal staff that handled level one issues and the interface to the MSP.*

What CIOs wish CFOs knew

Full time, strategic C-level technology executives are expensive, and chances are that a SMB does not need this level of full-time expertise. Part-time, experienced, and talented CIOs can still be part of your team, but at a fraction of the cost and with a frequency that makes more sense.

Because many SMBs are working with a small IT team, they will try to maximize the roles into fewer hires. This usually means a multifunctional resource who is intended to provide all IT functions. The problem with this strategy is that someone who is a strategic thinker is usually not focused on day-to-day, *keep the lights on* functions. And, when a hands-on technical resource is obtained, there is questionable effort devoted to IT strategy.

A much better solution is to acquire the services of a solid *keep the lights on* resource and then procure strategic or CIO level services from a fractional provider as they are needed.

A fractional CIO will be able to analyze where IT is from a maturity focus as well as the actual IT spend and investment. This can then be used to develop a strategic roadmap for the company to execute. The fractional CIO can be retained to periodically monitor the progress, engage with MSPs and give coaching to the internal resource. The fractional CIO can also manage new projects as they are initiated and turn operation over to internal resources as they are implemented.

If any of this sounds familiar, please give us a chance to discuss how SGC can help you.

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