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Marketing IT to the Business:

Successful CIOs Share Best Practices

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Executive Summary

How do great CIOs effectively communicate up and down the organization to enhance perceptions of the IT department and sell their technology vision? How do they ensure that senior executives buy into their technology strategy and make it a part of the business strategy? How do they win the hearts and minds of users around technology-enabled process change?

The IT Media Group interviewed several leading IT executives to answer these and other questions around raising the stature of IT and gaining buy-in for IT strategy from all levels of the organization. What we discovered were a remarkable and highly diverse group of approaches for doing so. This paper examines three of these approaches in detail, and provides insightful commentary from CIOs in various industries.

Sav DiPasquale reveals many of the secrets that made him one of the world's best internal marketers of IT while he was CIO of GlaxoSmithKline Canada. His aggressive use of a variety of marketing techniques underpinned his many successes with

Great CIOs raise the stature of IT within the business, get enthusiastic buy-in from users, and ensure that IT strategy becomes an essential part of business strategy

GSK, helping him win *Canadian CIO of the Year* honours.

Eugene Roman is a passionate believer in marketing the IT organization to the business in unique and provocative ways. While helming IT for three major companies – Bell Canada, Open Text and Canadian Tire – he employed some of the most eye-popping and effective techniques ever conceived for raising the profile of IT and ensuring its success.

Roman Coba, CIO of frozen food giant McCain Foods, relies on more traditional approaches for building credibility for the IT organization and ensuring that it plays a strategic role in the business. The key to his success lies in the comprehensive and meticulous execution of those approaches.

In addition to examining the successful strategies of these three IT executives, this paper also draws on interviews with several other IT executives, providing further examples of effective techniques for elevating the stature of IT and gaining buy-in for IT strategy throughout the organization.

The CIO as IT Marketing Champion ➔

The CIO as IT Marketing Champion

While helming IT at pharmaceutical firm GlaxoSmithKline Canada from 2002 to 2010, Sav DiPasquale wielded a variety of marketing tools to raise the profile and stature of IT within the company. When it came to pure marketing savvy, he was the Coca-Cola of CIOs.

Now president and CEO of Orgenesis, a firm developing alternative treatments for diabetes, he still believes passionately that marketing IT is a CIO imperative.

While most CIOs tend to balk at the notion of marketing IT, DiPasquale thoroughly embraced it. And it paid off handsomely. His marketing efforts resulted in an IT organization that worked more effectively with the business, got great buy in from end users, and that boosted its own morale in the process. In part because of these successes, DiPasquale was voted '06 *Canadian CIO of the Year*.

Fundamental to his marketing approach was the building of an IT brand. A key identifier for the brand was a logo that appeared everywhere, from the golf shirts worn by IT staff to every PowerPoint slide the department produced. It consisted of the word "MAXIMIZING", followed by four bullets – Innovation, Value, People, Alignment – the four pillars of IT.

The branding didn't stop there. Impressed by companies like Starbucks, where customers are treated consistently every visit and where every outlet has a similar feel, DiPasquale was determined to impart a similar brand consistency to the IT organization.

"You have to get everyone in the IT world to understand why we have a purpose and what that purpose is, so you galvanize them around a common theme," he said. "We gave everything the same look, feel and colour. We had meetings focused on ingraining consistent behaviour in our people: everybody smiles; everything is finished; no calls are left undone; no offices are left in shambles. We raised the bar on our service capability."

Segmenting the audience

Similar to traditional brand marketers, DiPasquale believes in segmenting the audience and figuring out the key motivators and drivers for each.

"Find out what your customers want and then market to them," he said. "You have to get the timing right for the messages to each segment, and those messages need to emphasize the value-add rather than just features."

Aligning with the CEO

Most importantly, DiPasquale believes high-level marketing messages must align with the strategy of the CEO (or the equivalent of the CEO). If, for example, the CEO is pitching collaboration, working with external partners, and driving faster agility in the business, then the CIO's prime marketing focus should be around solutions that are going to help enable those capabilities.

"You can do all sorts of things around marketing and branding, and you can have fantastic programs and skills, but if you're not working on what the CEO cares about, you're in no man's land," he said. "The first order of business then is to find out what the CEO wants from IT. If the CEO doesn't initiate that

conversation, you have to initiate it; probe, probe, probe until you can figure out what levers to pull."

Understanding line executives

The same holds true with line executives. DiPasquale sat down regularly with all the line GMs and VPs and asked them a variety of questions. What's working and what's not? Where can I add value? How are my people doing? How are our services? He wanted to get those issues off the table and be excellent at the basics in order to set the stage for the conversation around innovation and investment.

Understanding the priorities of the line executives is the key in marketing to them. If they are cost conscious, for example, then the CIO should market them hard on how IT will to drive down costs and simplify the operating environment to reduce cost.

But DiPasquale cautions against over-marketing to the executives. This could backfire if they think the CIO is creating demand for things that they don't have the budget to provide.

Winning the hearts & minds of users

When marketing to the rest of the organization, the IT message needs to be around bringing new things out to make users more productive, to help them in their day, and to make life simpler for them.

DiPasquale used a multitude of techniques to do this, including posters, banners, show-and-tell sessions, newsletters, intranet blasts, computer room tours, town halls, getting on the agenda of divisional meetings, pilots, contests, give-aways, demos, and vendor expos.

"You've just got to try things; build word-of-mouth and get it out there; plaster it on people's desks and make sure they know how to do it. But the number one way is to let people test drive it. We did this by having 'real-world days', where people could come in and try some of the things we were working on."

If there's a need to build excitement and awareness around IT initiatives, DiPasquale recommends "jazzing up" the innovation messages to IT ambassadors and change agents – the leaders that really want to embrace innovation.

Leaders reporting to the CIO must be strong advocates and communicators. And CIOs themselves need to be part of the marketing effort. "Take half an hour and go tell a story – could be about a success, could be what's coming," he urges. "Get immersed in your business. You have a right to be there; you don't have to ask for permission. IT is embedded in the company; you have to be able to talk about it."

DiPasquale also emphasizes the importance of outside recognition of the job IT is doing, as a means of raising the profile and validating the capabilities of the IT organization.

"If you want to say you are a world class, you need to have external support on that. For example, we always submitted to CIPA [Canadian Information Productivity Awards], and we won numerous CIPA and IT industry awards for plant automation and CRM. I think that gave us tremendous credibility. People never questioned our credibility and our capability to deliver," he said. "So as a department, we proactively did that. It was all part of the

branding, marketing and messaging around our ability to support the business."

Crafting the message

If there's one thing that distinguishes DiPasquale from most other CIOs when it comes to marketing, it's his willingness to commit his own resources to the endeavor. During his tenure as CIO, he had a dedicated person working exclusively on IT marketing. To some, this is a radical approach, but to DiPasquale, it's a vital one – so much so that he continues this practice today.

"I contract out communications because I believe in it. If I don't do this, I fail as a business," he said. "You absolutely have to believe in managing the message. All of our IT communications were professionally written and had the same look and feel, from announcing appointments to communicating changes in directions and programs."

If you wonder how he managed to do bring a communications expert on board, DiPasquale said it was easy. He simply reduced the number of programming contractors by one and used that money for the contractor.

Job One for this expert was to ensure that messages weren't in 'IT speak' but written in business language and plugged into the corporate agenda. He was on-site and on the leadership team, participating in all the leadership meetings. If there was a major change initiative, he would create the communications package around it, making sure it aligned to the company and to IT's values, messaging style, and brand. The communications expert was involved in the whole gamut of IT marketing initiatives, including newsletters, intranet, dashboards, posters, and street events.

Some would argue that DiPasquale's methods were over the top, and indeed he did occasionally hear comments that IT was pounding its chest too much and getting too much attention. In his eyes, that's a good thing. Far better, he argues, for people to be saying "You guys are everywhere" than "What the heck do the IT people do around here and how can I get hold of them?"

What you can learn from Sav DiPasquale

► *Use a logo and consistent look, feel and colour to help brand the IT organization.*

► *Try things. Use a multitude of marketing techniques to get your message out.*

► *Segment your audience and figure out the key motivators and drivers for each.*

► *If possible, make room in your budget to hire a communications professional.*

IT Marketing to the Max

When Eugene Roman joined Canadian Tire as CTO in the summer of 2012, he convened a town hall meeting of the company's 1400 IT employees. The first thing he said to them was, "The problem with IT is that it's obsolete as we know it."

Roman had chosen his words carefully and knew the kind of reaction they would provoke. But he succeeded in grabbing everyone's attention as he expanded on his message, "Information technologists are losing the battle for the digital future. There are many reasons for this but the primary one is that they're not good at selling ideas."

Quickly and succinctly, he had set the stage for the introduction of his thoughts around MIS, which in his world stands for Marketing of Information Systems.

Roman puts huge emphasis on internal IT marketing because it is the technologists that know what's possible with technology, yet they are not trained in selling business cases and positioning new ideas. The way to overcome this problem is by well crafted marketing.

"You've got to create a tipping point within the organization around the next generation of technology, and there are different ways to message this," he explained in an IT Media Group interview. "If you just say 'we're going to do these projects', you're going to get nowhere. You need to have a digital campaign led by the IT team – and it's very much like a political campaign. The marketing anchors around it are critical. If you get them wrong, resistance grows."

As Roman concluded the town hall meeting, he fired up his audience around the 'big idea' underlying his opening statement. "Information technology is being replaced by interactive technology. That's what the world is about today. Yet how good are we at positioning it and pitching it and getting it delivered?"

This caused people to sit up and take notice. Yes, they'd done work around interactive technology but they'd never thought of it as being vitally important. By meeting's end, Roman had inspired a group of IT evangelists, who are now communicating and selling his message around the importance of interactive technologies across the company.

Roman believes that it's a must for the head of IT to be an evangelist too, especially with the executive team. The best support for IT are the HR and Finance people, who most IT teams either don't get along with or are underserved by. "When I got to Canadian Tire I said I wanted to make HR and Finance people our best allies, because they touch everything, just like IT does," he said. "Those three groups coming together in a symbiotic way can enable pretty well anything in the company we're involved in."

Triggers, Traps and Tricks

Canadian Tire isn't the first company to benefit from Roman's unique marketing skills. He used them to great effect for the past decade and a half at Bell Canada, where he was Group President Systems and Technology, and at enterprise software firm Open Text, where he was CIO and CTO.

The first principle of his marketing approach is KISS – Keep It Simple Systems.

"Systems people tend to talk in fairly complicated terms about things that are quite foreign to most business people. Terms like cloud storage and enterprise apps on tap are useful if you know what they mean, but there's a limited under-standing among business people because it's not core to their thinking," he said. "The MIS approach is about breaking down those barriers and marketing IT internally just as you would any other program – with the emphasis on understanding and getting things done to benefit the corporation."

In order to sell the idea of what's possible... you need to create a Trigger – a tempting business benefit that will stir up interest in the idea.

Roman has been tweaking the approach over the years, and now employs a model that he's taught to selected Masters students at two universities. As part of the MIS framework, he uses what he calls *"The Three T's":* the Trigger, the Trap[1] and the Trick.

In order to sell the idea of what's possible (how good use of technology can benefit the company) you need to create a Trigger – a tempting business benefit that will stir up interest in the idea.

You must also avoid Traps, which arise when the business rejects potentially important technology.

Examples would be, "We don't need online shopping" or "We don't need cyber risk protection". Traps most often revolve around infrastructure.

A Trick is an invention of Roman's and it refers to a clever means of drawing attention to an idea in such a way that it goes viral internally and gets absorbed without pushback. Roman credits Seth Godin, author of the book *"Unleashing the Ideavirus"*[2], for inspiring this approach.

"What MIS does is unleash ideaviruses on the organization by using Tricks that create that 'Aha!' moment," said Roman. "It's about improving usability but doing it in a cool way that makes people say, 'Wow, I've got to have that!'"

An example of a Trick is the use of a striking word that attracts and intrigues people. When he was CTO of Open Text, the company faced growing competition from firms creating enterprise apps that were faster, more agile and much cheaper to build. The company needed to change quickly in order to counter this threat, but for many, change is uncomfortable and buy-in is slow. So to spur rapid change, Roman launched a Trick on the organization – one that would spark interest in change and do it in a very visual way.

[1] *The Trap and the Trigger are terms relating to Threat and Opportunity, originated by Restoration Partners Ltd., a UK-based boutique technology merchant bank which provides advisory services to technology companies.*

[2] *"Unleashing the Ideavirus" by Seth Godin, Hyperion, New York, 2001*

"We created a team called Terranovians, people of the New Land, who were to spearhead this change. There were only 12 of them but you'd think there were hundreds," said Roman. "The Terranovians worked on a floor that didn't exist, in a location we called Area 51. When you pushed the elevator button for the fourth floor, nothing would happen. If you walked up the stairs, you could look through a small window and see a dozen people in an area of 20,000 square feet working on something special. But you couldn't get access. That fired up interest in what the change team was doing."

The Terranovians were intentionally made very visible in the company. They were given a lanyard and a compass to hang around their neck, with north pointing to the word 'Apps'. Over time they were given other talismans related to change, such as a light that hung around their neck to shine the new way forward, and a Timex Expedition wristwatch, worn uncomfortably on the left hand, signifying the pain of change.

"Things that are visual really resonate with people. If you can see something, you can get engaged," said Roman. "We live in a society where experiences matter. Experiences sell."

What's in a name? Plenty!

Under the Marketing of Information Systems

> *"Things that are visual really resonate with people. If you can see something, you can get engaged ...experiences matter. Experiences sell."*

framework, people in IT are taught to use ideas and language in an enabling way.

"How a project is named is tantamount to its success," asserted Roman. "Most IT people come up with project names that would bore you to death. But if it's part of MIS, it had better be interesting and compelling."

A case in point is the introduction of next generation wireless for Canadian Tire stores. Rather than simply calling it that, the IT the team did a two-hour whiteboard jam on it and Project Icon was born. There was meaning to the name – *I*nternet *Con*nectivity – and the executive stakeholder bought into it immediately.

Another name that gets a lot of play at Canadian Tire is iExperiences. When Roman asked the IT team "What business are we in?" their response was "We're in IT." He countered, "No we're not; we're in the iExperiences business – that's our whole raison d'etre." Roman was intent on using the concept of iExperiences as an ideavirus, and in order to keep the idea fresh and intriguing, he would not define the term. "It's irrelevant to the marketing of the idea," he explained. "Apple doesn't tell you what iPod, iPad or iPhone stand for. That's for you to figure out."

While at Bell Canada, Roman launched the company's highly successful exCITE centres for rapid innovation and development. Never one to leave a

good idea behind, he created similar centres at Open Text and now Canadian Tire, where they are used in the building of smart stores and are called SMART solution centres – SMART standing for Simplified Managed Agile Responsive Technology.

Kevin Albert, one of the best people in the exCITE program at Bell Canada, has been brought to oversee all of Canadian Tire's SMART solution centres. And he's brought a good Trick with him. Because automotive products and services are such a big part of the company's culture, he opened a Digital Garage.

"We actually built a garage, and really cool IT things are coming out of it," said Roman. "We tell people to come take a look at what we're doing in there, and it's one more way to get people interested in what we're doing."

He added, "Good marketing compels people to get excited, to find out more, and to become advocates. It doesn't happen overnight; it takes a year or two. But if you can get to that stage then it becomes the culture of the company."

Traditional means to a superlative end ➔

What you can learn from Eugene Roman

► *The head of IT must be an evangelist, especially with the executive team*

► *Make HR and Finance people your best allies*

► *Things that are visual really resonate with people. If you can see something, you can get engaged*

► *How a project is named is tantamount to its success*

Traditional means to a superlative end

As a CIO, you know you're on the right track when your company prominently declares that technology is fundamental to its success, even though it's not in an industry associated with technology. Visit the web site of McCain Foods Ltd, an international leader in the frozen food industry, and you will find just such a declaration:

"Standing out from the pack is no easy feat, but McCain aims to do just that by investing more than ever before in science, technology and market insights to develop innovative products…"

CIO Roman Coba has done an exemplary job of enhancing the stature of IT at McCain and ensuring that it plays a strategic role in the business. And he's done it not by aggressively marketing IT or using provocative techniques like 'ideaviruses' but by using a mix of approaches that most CIOs will be familiar with. His success lies in the comprehensive and meticulous execution of those approaches.

Getting strategic alignment right

In order to get alignment right at McCain, the IT organization built a five-year strategy around the business strategy.

"We had to determine what foundational blocks we needed to put in place year over year to enable the business to fully realize its five-year strategy," said Coba. "And we've done that pillar by pillar, looking at all our key towers and meeting with our business partners. I call them business partners because we live with them very closely on strategy and on day-to-day execution against the strategy."

The IT organization went a step further, thinking not only about the direct end result but also about what was possible. If, for example, the business wanted to grow by 60% in four years, IT looked at what solutions might be possible to enable that growth. With the use of predictive analytics, for example, Coba and the IT team feel confident in the company's ability to predict the crop yield of a potato field in four years. This opens the door to putting business processes and practices in place to collect specific information that can feed such a model.

"We've gone out to the business and sold them on some of those concepts. And we've got them to start realizing what the potential of technology is," said Coba. "People tend to think in today's sense; we're trying to get them thinking in tomorrow's sense."

Building credibility for IT

In order to get business buy-in for such ideas, first and foremost you have to start building a good rapport with your business units, according to Coba.

At McCain, IT has to sell its capabilities both regionally and globally. Each region typically has an IT manager or director whose sole responsibility is understanding and supporting the business, adding value to it, and potentially delivering programs that originate centrally. Those managers have a team of BAs that are aligned by functional towers and entrenched within the business – so much so that in some cases they would be thought of not as an IT person but as a business person.

Globally, IT has managers or directors who are assigned the global work streams that encompass some of the regional work. For example, the IT director responsible for development on heritage systems is connected at the hip to the VP responsible for the integrated supply chain. The IT director goes to planning sessions, works with the supply chain team, solutions with them, brings subject matter experts to the table, and provides guidance as to where IT can add value.

The IT organization at McCain does not rely on marketing tools such as blogs, intranet and newsletters to build credibility for IT and get the word out. "We used to do monthly communications but we found it fell upon deaf ears," said Coba. "People have a plethora of information that comes at them all the time. They will pick and choose, based on today's priorities, what they're going to look at and what they want to do."

Instead, emphasis is placed on personal face-to-face time, continuous communications and support, and continuous dialogue regionally and globally. Because the company is globally dispersed, Coba logs over 100,000 miles a year strictly to get into the regions, speak to the business units, understand their pain points, share IT's plans, and provide a direct connection. At the same time he deals with all the leadership team members informally around where IT is going, what projects it is working on, what the

> *...emphasis is placed on personal face-to-face time, continuous communications and support, and continuous dialogue regionally and globally.*

issues are, and how IT has aligned to their strategic plans and direction.

"At first, to build credibility, I had to book meetings to be in there every month or every quarter, and have a formal discussion," said Coba. "It's evolved to a more fluid conversation now. They'll say things like, 'I understand we want to do the following, Roman, can we have a conversation before we start? How should we align?'"

Getting buy-in for large technology projects

Though Coba and the IT team don't make liberal use of marketing techniques on an on-going basis to enhance the view of IT within the business, they do use them when the occasion calls for it.

When introducing a large technology project, for example, success depends on getting buy in from the top down. To do this, the McCain IT team spends time educating and gaining alignment of the leadership teams globally. Once they've done that, they go on a road show regionally to communicate the commitment around the project, and to explain the implications and the value of it to everyone as a whole. When the implementation starts in a particular region, IT makes sure that it does a good job of communicating, down to the functional levels, what the impact of the project will be, what the value will be, and what it means to them personally.

The McCain IT organization uses a variety of methods get its message out globally, and down to the functional levels. First and foremost are town halls, team meetings and direct communications – having them hear it. Second are continuous e-mail blasts. Third are newsletters and blog posts, which are done on a fairly continuous basis.

"We also use video. We've got TVs in a lot of buildings, and we build video streams that are more like commercials. We're not *selling* the project, we're just continuing the awareness of it coming," said Coba. "And the aim is to make it a business video, not an IT video."

He added, "You can't assume that one form of communications only will work; you have to do everything from face-to-face, to e-mail blasts, to blogs, to wiki's – whatever forms of communications and dissemination you have access to."

Branding IT projects

During the recent introduction of SAP globally, IT used branding to help gain acceptance, dubbing the project One McCain. Rather than a pure-play technology project, the SAP implementation was designed for the unification of all of the company's regions and the move to standard global processes.

To help reinforce these ideas, a logo was also created for the program, consisting of a sphere overlaid with a "1", and with the McCain logo

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appearing within the globe.

"Every time we'd walk into a country or region or department and start talking to people about it, their first inclination would be to say, 'Oh, we're implementing SAP.' And we would push back and say, 'No, this is One McCain. It's a business transformation project. It's business staffed and business led, with IT enabling it. That's how we positioned it," said Coba.

To help the branding, key words and phrases were continuously used in all the communications for change management and everything else related to One McCain. It was all around "solving it once", around "simplification", around "enablement", around "insight".

Branding techniques were also used during the roll out of a suite of tools for unified communications, sometimes referred to as U dot. The five- or six-pillar program was to be introduced in phases, starting with Voice over IP, then Communicator, then WebEX, and so on.

IT sat down with marketing and communications people and came up with the slogan, *Follow the dot*. "We used 'Follow the dot' as a way of connecting the multiple pillars, and it became our token phrase for the whole program. We supported the phased in rollout with e-mail blogs, and online training courses mixed with video. So we used different avenues to point people to certain things."

An icon in the form of a caricature, inspired by the 'Follow the dot' theme, was also used to help brand the unified communications program.

Email blasts and blogs became more frequent when program pillars were about to go live, but at this point IT began to get feedback that they were over-communicating.

According to Coba, it's a fine line between too much and too little, and you just have to find out where that fine line is. You can't take the same approach to every department and every area of the business. You have to tailor it based on who your constituents are and how they operate.

"It's unlikely you'll be able to get everybody to buy in right away, but over time persistence pays off, and small wins eventually persuade people to get on board," he said. "But it's a long journey; you have to slog it out. And in our case, we achieved our goals by taking a subtle, more integrated, and natural approach."

What you can learn from Roman Coba

► *Determine what foundational blocks you need to put in place year over year to enable the business to fully realize its long-range strategy*

► *Use icons, slogans and key words and phrases to support project branding*

► *Embed IT directors whose sole responsibility is understanding, supporting and adding value to the business*

► *Know where the fine line is between too much and too little communications*

What you can learn from other CIOs

Pawel Siarkiewicz, Genus Capital management

The CEO and members of the executive team at Genus Capital Management meet monthly, giving VP Operations and Technology, Pawel Siarkiewicz, plenty of opportunity to talk about IT issues, and how the strategic priorities of the firm relate to IT.

He also puts together dashboard presentations for the company which have key metrics from all the different departments as well as IT. "It's one location where we can look at the whole company, and IT is integrated into that, as opposed to being treated in a special way on its own," said Siarkiewicz.

Recognizing that communications can break down at the lower levels because everyone is so focused on their own job, Siarkiewicz has set up cross-departmental committees where project issues can be discussed.

"These committees own the full service of the product – the thing we are trying to do – and involve everyone, as opposed to having IT working on the IT piece and Finance on the finance piece," he said. "We have monthly meetings where longer-term and other issues can be discussed. And all the stakeholders are present so we can look at things, talk about them, see what the impact is."

All the projects at Genus have names that are short, fun and easy to refer to. "We also do things like create meaningful icons for tools," said Siarkiewicz.

"...Any time you launch a new product or solution, I would say brand it with a logo and a name, and keep referring to it by that name."

"For example our internal equity research tool is called RAMkit and it's got a picture of a ram's head. It's just a fun word that's easy to use and easy to say. Any time you launch a new product or solution, I would say brand it with a logo and a name, and keep referring to it by that name."

Sanjiv Purba, CIO, Home Trust Company

When launching major projects at Home Trust Company, CIO Sanjiv Purba takes great care to get the business messaging around them right.

"All our projects are identified by names that the business understands. And if we talk about a system, it's always described in business terms, such as deadlines, people, benefits, and deliverables" said Purba. "We avoid talking about the complexity of the technology, but that can hurt you as well because if people don't understand the complexity, their expectations will not be in the real world. So it's a balance."

When launching a major SAP implementation recently, the program went under the banner 'Project Axial', the idea being that SAP sits in the hub, with various phased-in parts of the program radiating out from it like spokes.

"There were a lot of discussions around why we are doing this, how it will affect people, and what the benefits will be once we get to the end point," said

Purba. "We created newsletters and had a web site specifically around the project. We also had weekly and biweekly meetings, and we had messages from different business executives about where the project is, its status, and what's happening to it."

Town halls were also held at a nearby hotel about three times a year, getting people out of the office and into a different setting to talk about various aspects of the implementation. The entire project team attended, including the business, subject matter experts, project managers, and occasionally even the president or the CEO. Everybody on the project team was also invited to monthly evening off-site get-togethers, simply to unwind and be able to talk with each other in a casual setting. These proved very effective.

"You can't assume that one form of communications only will work; you have to do everything from face-to-face, to e-mail blasts, to blogs, to wiki's…"

A huge multi-faceted communications effort was undertaken as the project was coming on stream, relying heavily on the intranet to get the word out. Some of the messaging done on video by the company president, other executives and Purba himself talking in a very conversational way about the project.

It all paid off in a successful launch and, happily, no downtime since Project Axial went live July 2011.

Sumit Oberai, Indigo Books

When Sumit Oberai took over as CIO of Indigo Books

in 2009, the company was already in the process of rebuilding the partnership between IT and the business. "The mantra over the first couple years of this rebuilding period was that the 'new IT organization' would be a business partner, not an order taker. That was the mindset that we wanted to create in our teams," said Oberai.

Getting to that point would require a particular emphasis on communications. Every other week Oberai had separate meetings with the CMO, the head of Online, and the head of Retail Operations – the three areas he was responsible for. Included in those meetings were some of his key directs and some of the business leader's key directs.

The meetings started off with minor systems issues and problems but they evolved over time to discussions around what key business issues needed solving, and how IT could help in their solution. Changes in the IT org structure also helped turn around the relationship between IT and the business, but constant, frequent communications with key business leaders was vital.

Now that he sits in the CIO's chair, Oberai makes sure that strong communications with the business units continue. He also meets frequently with CEO Heather Reisman to ensure that IT is aligned with corporate priorities.

Mark Bryant, CIO, MMM Group

As CIO of MMM, an industry-leading program

management, planning, engineering and geomatics firm, Mark Bryant sees his role in garnering support for IT as one of "continuous evangelization".

Bryant sits on the executive team and sometimes brings IT staff in with him to demonstrate products and services IT is building. Twice annually he does a tour of all of the company's major offices coast to coast, meeting with senior management and regional managers in each office.

"I sit down with them and do two things," he said. "I find out what we are not doing well and what we could do better, and I talk about what we are planning to do in the future – where we can continue to enhance, automate and innovate. Sometimes I make a formal presentation and sometimes I do it informally."

The IT organization continuously communicates to the rest of the company via multiple channels. "The reality is everyone has a different preference as to how they want to be communicated to. There is no one shoe fits all," said Bryant.

At MMM, Bryant himself is a channel; the corporate intranet is a channel; newsletters are a channel, and e-mail is a channel. Because the company already has the technology to do it, Bryant is also considering the use of recorded messages pushed out to everyone's phone as a channel. These would only be used for select important messages.

The company is also looking at "LIVE" video streaming delivered over the network right to the desktop as another channel, but this means of communication would likely be reserved for messages from the President or CEO.

"Leveraging multiple channels to deliver our communications, delivering them in the language the business can understand, and using the right technologies to do so is paramount to customer service, choice, satisfaction, and evolving our technology platforms to other useful areas in the business," said Bryant.

Conclusion ➔

Conclusion

While the CIOs we spoke to all have their own unique approach to the task of raising the profile and enhancing the image of IT within the organization, a variety of common practices can be found amongst them. Here are some key ones that may be helpful to CIO readers.

► **Build business buy-in for your ideas**
Lay the groundwork for your initiatives by building a good rapport with your business units. Consider embedding directors and key IT personnel in the business, and make their sole responsibility understanding and supporting the business. Segment your audience and discover the important drivers and motivators for each.

► **Use a variety of communications methods**
When it comes to getting the IT message out, it is important to communicate through a wide variety of channels. Some of the options available include face-to-face, intranet, town halls, divisional meetings, lunch-and-learns, vendor expos, informal off site gatherings, training sessions, newsletters, blogs, fliers, posters, recorded phone messages, and video.

► **Take advantage of established marketing tools and techniques**
Consider branding the IT organization and even specific projects. Make use of logos, icons, consistent colors, consistent behaviour, consistent messaging. Think about designating funds for the full- or part-time services of a marketing professional.

► **Be an evangelist**
Establish good connections with members of the executive committee, other key executives, and especially the CEO. Get out in the business to deliver your message, not only locally but to other regions as well. Make your direct reports and super-users evangelists too.

► **Get creative**
If you want people to sit up and take notice of the IT organization and awaken them to the possibilities of IT, you have to give rein to your imagination. Use striking with names. Generate provocative ideas. Release an ideavirus. And get your team involved. Brainstorm with them around creating a buzz and figuring out ways to spark interest and curiosity in what IT is doing.

► **Find means of validation**
Enter industry awards events. Communicate your successes to other parts of the organization – especially if you are a Canadian subsidiary. Celebrate, publicize and reward your accomplishments, both within IT and the user community.

As can be seen from the above, there are a wealth of tools and approaches that CIOs can take advantage of to raise the profile and enhance the image of internal IT. And while each CIO must determine what is right for his or her enterprise, it is the conclusion of this paper that all CIOs need to pay attention to enhancing IT's reputation and perceived worth up and down the organization.

The IT Media Group serves the Canadian IT management community by creating great resources for CIOs and producing events that enable true IT executive peers to share knowledge, opinions and best practices. Based in Toronto, ITMG's leadership team includes three of Canada's top IT communications professionals. John Pickett and Dave Carey are two of the country's best known and longest serving publishing personalities focused on IT management. Nasheen Liu brings a wealth of first-tier IT marketing savvy to ITMG's vendor relations portfolio. For more information, please visit:

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