



**CIONET UK COMMUNITY
PROGRAMME 2024**

TAKING A HUMAN-CENTRIC APPROACH

TO INCREASE SUCCESSFUL
TRANSFORMATIONS

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Mark Samuels, CIONET UK Chief Editor, and Roger Camrass, CIONET International Research Director.



The context for the event

Our fifth Community Event of 2024 considered how CIOs can help guarantee success when digitalisation calls for disruptive change. The event, which took place on September 18 in the medieval Crypt at St Etheldreda's in London, was convened by CIONET International Research Director Roger Camrass and included Keynote, Digital Campfire and Panel sessions.

Roger introduced the event and said research suggests that 70% of technology projects fail. However, these failures aren't usually due to technology issues. Instead, failures are often due to cultural concerns and the lack of preparedness of humans to embrace change. CIOs must recognise technology is the easiest part of the IT implementation process. Get the culture right, and you will generate value from technology.

Before the evening's main session, Roger welcomed CIONET UK Director Mark Foulsham, who introduced DiversITy-talent, a charity that creates opportunities for diverse talent by changing misconceptions about careers in business and technology. Mark gave examples of the charity's work. Roger then interviewed our Keynote speaker.

Keynote: Lucia Pino-Garcia, Chief Technology Officer at Ninety One

Lucia is responsible for technology at global investment manager Ninety One. Before joining the firm, she spent over six years at JPMorgan Asset Management.

Who is Ninety One, and how do you engage with the business agenda?

Ninety One was founded as Investec Asset Management in 1991. The company was demerged from Investec in March 2020 and changed its name in recognition of the brand's 1991 formation date. Ninety One is an Anglo-South African firm and a constituent of the FTSE 250 index. The company had \$130bn assets under management in 2023.

Lucia said technology staff must use the same language as their business peers. She said IT professionals often see 'the business' as something separate. She encourages her team to include IT as part of the business. It's an approach she's taken throughout her career.

Lucia explained how she insisted on having a desk on the same floor as the investment team when she joined J.P. Morgan in 2013. She said IT must engage closely with the business as an equal partner. Her message to business colleagues is: "You get the technology you deserve."

What does digital transformation mean for Ninety One?

Lucia said the term 'digital transformation' comes imbued with a sense of delivering an expensive one-off project. She prefers the term 'continuous improvement'. To place the concept of business transformation in context, Lucia asked the audience: 'What do J.P. Morgan, Sainsbury's and Domino's have in common?' The answer is that the CEOs of all three companies have said publicly that they are running technology firms. She said this use of language shows technology fuels modern business practices.

Lucia said all CIOs and their C-suite peers must recognise that their businesses won't thrive and survive if they don't keep pace with technological developments. The pace of change also continues to quicken. She said Ninety One shows its digital credentials in this period of rapid transformation by describing itself as "tech-enabled".



You use the term 'The Three Es' – what does this phrase mean?

Lucia encourages Ninety One's 1,200 employees to have a mindset where people are curious about the company's technology and eager to explore innovation. The Three Es is her attempt to classify the personas of technology users. She wants everyone in the company to be **enthusiasts** of technology. **Explorers** are specialists, such as data scientists, who are curious for more innovation. **Experts** are people like engineers and developers who understand technology to its core. She asks people to self-identify their personas, and employees receive training according to their level.

How can you foster innovation within an organisation?

Lucia defined innovation as new ways of doing things. She encourages innovation across her 150-strong global team by asking people to work in small teams of five. She explained how she gives a team a bag of Scrabble letters and asks them to find as many four-letter words as possible in five minutes. She returns to the room and asks the teams to discover twice as many four-letter words in another five minutes. She then returns and asks people to find even more words. The process encourages people to look for new ways to deliver results.

Lucia said innovative processes are about meeting stretched targets. She also likes to get people across the business together, to remove them from their day-to-day routine, and to make them "think outside the box".





**Resistance hinders innovation.
How can CIOs find and
overcome obstacles?**

Experimentation is messy, particularly if you're exploring emerging technology. However, there's a risk you'll be left behind if you wait. Communication is the key to keeping up with the pace of change. Executives must create collective ownership for innovation and get people to move together towards well-articulated goals.

It's also important to understand why people resist change. Successful executives will look to understand resistance as part of their transformation roadmap. Lucia gave the example of generative AI. She said it can be tough for people to work out how to get started. Her team is exploring how the technology might boost productivity, but they are not using the tools in client-facing areas. The key to success is to explore emerging technology now.

**What is your advice for
the audience?**

Technology is the easy part of transformation. Get a seat at the table and establish connections. CIO should remember that women remain the minority in most IT departments. Think about how to promote diverse talent and encourage people to break through. It's difficult to drive change as a woman if you don't have role models to learn from.

Digital Campfire: Coventry Building Society

Roger interviewed Ian Black, Head of Transformation at Coventry Building Society, and Claire Dearman, Head of Agile Practice at Coventry Building Society.

Why did Coventry Building Society adopt the cloud, and what were the challenges?

Claire said the building society appointed a new CEO two years ago who wanted the organisation to expand. However, it was recognised that legacy technology constrained growth potential. A decision was made to deal with legacy infrastructure, and Coventry worked with Cognizant to transform its IT infrastructure via a shift to the cloud.

Claire said putting people first was the key to ensuring the cloud was accepted and adopted. The cloud transformation required a “hearts and minds piece” as internal staff felt comfortable using legacy technology. The team managing the cloud transformation spent significant time communicating the value of a shift to the cloud. They engaged staff and explained the new skills they would learn through the transformation process.

What difference does cloud make to Coventry Building Society?

Claire said the cloud helps the organisation to quicken the pace of delivery. Users can stand up environments in minutes rather than weeks. Coventry has worked with Cognizant to ensure users know how to use the technology to help the organisation reach its North Star. This training ensured people understood their roles and laid the foundations for a language change – people now talk about heritage rather than legacy systems.

As part of this training process, Ian explained how Coventry worked with Cognizant to establish a Cloud Centre of Excellence to ensure people knew how technology-led change would be important within their day-to-day roles. The training process ensured employees considered the storage and security implications of the cloud. The training programme also brought key stakeholders into the transformation process.

How have engineers adopted the cloud?

Ian said moving to the cloud involved some tough conversations. The key to success was being clear with engineers about the benefits of the cloud. Coventry was transparent with its engineers during the training programme. This transparency ensured engineers adapted to change quickly and delivered new value to employees and members. Claire said this transparency included honest conversations with leaders to explain how the transformation would happen and how they could bring other employees on the journey.

How did you make the board recognise the importance of digital transformation?

Claire said her team educated the board about the significance of a shift to the cloud. They outlined the benefits the change programme would deliver and linked these to the business strategy. Through these discussions, the board recognised the organisation had to embrace human-first and digital-always change. The pace of change technology-led change has now increased, and people across the organisation are engaged in digitalisation.

How did Cognizant help to power the transformation programme?

Claire said Cognizant was a great partner because the firm understood that Coventry's project was as much a people project as a technology initiative. Cognizant and Coventry worked side by side. The consultants from Cognizant took the time to understand internal challenges. While they worked on technology, they also collaborated on the training programme.

Ian said Cognizant understood the values of Coventry. More specifically, the focus on people-centred skills during the training programme helped the organisation to achieve its goals. Cognizant stayed close to Coventry throughout the programme, designing the Centre of Excellence and ensuring engineers were upskilled in cloud technologies.

Panel Discussion with Distinguished Leaders

Roger led a conversation on human-centric transformation with the following executives:

- **Scott Chambers**, Co-Founder & Managing Partner – Caerus Change
- **Tracey Jessup**, Chief Transformation Officer – De Montfort University
- **Que Tran**, Vice President of Technology and Transformation, Europe – DP World
- **Doug Crawford**, Managing Director – Entelect



Scott Chambers, Co-Founder and Managing Partner at Caerus Change

What is psychological safety, and how easy is it to establish within a business?

Scott explained how psychological safety is a belief that an individual won't be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes. Psychological safety is not an excuse to be rude or unaccountable for the things you say. It's about creating space so open communication can happen, and people can talk about their fears honestly.

He said it's not easy to establish psychological safety. Our egos sometimes mean we don't want to speak out for fear of looking stupid. Psychological safety is unlikely to occur naturally within an organisation. Any leader that wants to establish psychological safety has to work at it.

How can executives get people from different cultures to talk effectively?

Scott said you need to get people to speak up and share their ideas and concerns about the changes. If you're leading change, the best way to get people to buy into your ideas is to recognise that you don't have all the answers yourself – be vulnerable. Talk about what you can do as an individual and what you can't. Getting people from different cultures to work together is about creating the appropriate forums for participation, ensuring participation and discovering solutions together as things progress.

You've completed research into the role of leaders. Can you tell us more?

Scott said his organisation has produced a case study alongside Microsoft for Harvard Business School. Scott explained how Cindy Rose, President of Microsoft Western Europe, inherited an organisation struggling to hit its hyper-growth targets. The study analyses Cindy's approach to building psychological safety and transforming organisational culture. With Caerus' assistance, Cindy worked with general managers in each European region to encourage open and honest communication and collaboration. The research highlighted how psychological safety can help to engage people and boost performance during profound change. The case study is available [here](#).

How can CIOs set their teams up for success?

Scott offered three top tips: frame your work (what are you doing and what's the benefit for the stakeholders?); invite participation (ask people to contribute their ideas, ask open questions and model intense listening); and respond productively (thank people for their ideas, even if you don't like them and ensure lessons are learnt from failures). Scott said his organisation works with teams to measure psychological safety and to see things as they really are. In doing so they often discover team members know things they don't talk about. They also find leaders typically have an inflated sense of the psychological safety within their teams.

Tracey Jessup, Chief Transformation Officer at De Montfort University

Is it realistic to assume a high level of tech literacy in our organisations?

Tracey encouraged attendees to run a baseline audit to discover the level of organisational literacy. She ran induction meetings at De Montfort and found many people thought the IT department bought technologies in isolation from end users. Tracey ran 'My University Days', where the IT team showed users how to meet their business requirements by implementing the right technologies. These meetings had a huge impact on the IT team's work. She said the lesson is CIOs should never make assumptions about IT literacy.

What are students' expectations of technology?

Tracey joined De Montfort in 2021. Many students struggled during the coronavirus pandemic and the shift to remote learning when as many as 24% of students tried to complete their academic work on mobile devices. Young students have grown up using technology and can't remember a world before the iPhone. These individuals have huge expectations. They expect a seamless experience and are confused when they switch between systems that don't connect effectively. Vendors have contributed to that problem, and they must build user-centred and integrated platforms rather than clunky and disconnected systems.

What role does digital education play in a transformation process?

De Montfort has limited funding, so establishing the right digital mindset is crucial to success. The institution has focused on giving people the confidence to use technology rather than relying on old-school training. Tracey explained how De Montfort has created a digital champions network to help people develop their skills. The network has involved as many as 200 people from across the university. Individuals benefit from this network because they know there's a champion they can talk to about their digital education concerns. Tracey encouraged other CIOs to take a similar approach. She urged attendees to consider how a network of digital champions could work in their business context.

Why have some universities been slow to take part in large-scale digital change?

Tracey said universities are in a turbulent period, and the UK funding model for academia must be improved. The way universities work will have to change to meet the funding challenges in the sector. She said the winners will be the organisations that embrace technology.

Que Tran, Vice President of Technology and Transformation, Europe at DP World

We are in a period of massive technological change. What have you learnt as a CIO?

Que said the pace of change in information technology is much greater than in other functional areas, such as finance and HR. Technology cycles are getting faster – increasing from 10 to five years to 24 to 18 months – and the power of processing, connectivity and storage increases exponentially. He said IT teams cope with the pace of change through structure and processes, such as governance, project management, service level agreements, and iterative product development. The rest of the business has seen the benefits of these coping strategies and is adopting techniques such as Agile and SCRUM.

Que said the importance of technology to business transformation is seen in the upward trajectory of senior IT professionals. The role has shifted from data processing manager to IT manager to CIO and onto CDIO. Senior IT professionals have adapted to change and evolved. They've implemented new technologies quickly using robust frameworks. However, modern digital leaders must understand the business problems they're trying to solve. Can we track and measure the benefits of technology? Consider revenue creation, and not just cost optimisation, to deliver revenue. CIOs progress by proving the value of technology.

Are CIOs respected for their role in leading change?

Que said CIOs have a 360-degree view of the organisation. However, many CIOs don't shout enough about their successes, which is unfortunate as the rest of the business quickly picks up on technology's failures. This relationship with the rest of the organisation is complex as transformation is a never-ending process, and technology is characterised by rapid change.

CIOs must tell their business peers that technological change is constant. There is a need for careful planning and fast action. The IT industry has witnessed huge changes during the past five years (including dealing with the coronavirus pandemic and managing the rise of generative AI). CIOs have had to adapt to more frequent occurrences of previously rare "black swans" and continue to ensure IT operates effectively while implementing change.

Doug Crawford, Managing Director at Entelect

Technology is straightforward, but change is difficult to accommodate. How can CIOs cope?

Doug said the key to success is forming genuine partnerships. Get the fundamentals right from the beginning by focusing on these three areas: risk and reward balance, team dynamics, and building trust. When it comes to building trust, CIOs must understand the priorities of all participants. These priorities will change, so you need to re-visit project aims. Also, be transparent. Focus on delivering repeatedly and consistently.

For team dynamics, Doug advised CIOs to ensure their organisation works as a unit and connects with client requirements. Make sure you have the right personalities attached to the right projects. Finally, he said achieving the right balance between risk and reward is tough. Risk-sharing models rarely work. Instead, try to reduce the risk for all parties in a project to help people stay confident. Also, don't be beholden to long-term transformation targets. Continually revisit project aims and recommit if an initiative isn't delivering results.

How should CIOs address governance structures?

Doug said human-centric change is crucial. Create clarity around objectives and ensure all stakeholders have visibility into project progress. Plaster the project aims onto the office walls and ensure leaders drive the message home. Project leaders should flow value through the organisation. Collaborative and constructive discussions about technology architecture and security will help to de-risk a project and lead to better results for everyone.

How can CIOs employ metrics to guide the project process?

Key metrics, such as value creation, cost reduction and service delivery, help CIOs evaluate progress quantitatively. However, qualitative measures are just as important. Remember that quantitative measures are a lagging indicator of results because there's a gap between cause and effect. Instead of "managing from the moon", get in the room and listen to your team. Find qualitative indicators that relate to sentiment and delivery. Use these insights to run sessions that develop a sense of psychological safety.

Conclusion: Embracing Cultural Change

Attendees asked questions about team engagement and the assessment of psychological safety. Roger concluded the event by stating the event illustrated how CIOs are at the forefront of change. The technology organisation must deliver change and create an effective ecosystem of support. Rather than focusing on IT software and hardware, CIOs must be better at the soft factors of transformation, which Roger referred to as "wetware". Successful leaders embrace these considerations and take their organisations on a cultural journey.

Authors



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Mark is a business writer and editor, with extensive experience of the way technology is used and adopted by CIOs. His experience has been gained through senior editorships, investigative journalism and postgraduate research. Editorial clients include the Guardian, The Times, the Sunday Times and the Economist Intelligence Unit. Mark has written content for a range of IT companies and marketing agencies. He has a PhD from the University of Sheffield, and master's and undergraduate degrees in geography from the University of Birmingham.

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A pioneer of today's Internet as an ARPA research fellow at MIT in the seventies, Roger has spent over fifty years helping corporations harness the power of new technologies such as AI, cloud, mobile communications, e-commerce, voice recognition and satellite. He was a partner at EY responsible for e-commerce during the dot.com boom. He is a Cambridge University and MIT graduate and a visiting professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

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