



**CIONET UK COMMUNITY
PROGRAMME 2024**

DEVELOPING DIGITAL LEADERSHIP

**REFRAMING LEADERSHIP
FOR THE DIGITAL AGE**

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Developing Digital Leadership: Reframing Leadership for the Digital Age

This article is written by [Roger Camrass](#), Director of Research at CIONET International and [Mark Samuels](#), Chief Editor at CIONET UK. The content is based on the second UK Community Programme event of 2024, held on 21 March at BMA House, London.

The context for the event

The demand for digital leaders has never been higher, but qualified candidates are in short supply. The imperative is to develop leaders who engage directly with business challenges and rise to the C-suite and board. Henley Business School has a unique and well-proven approach to leadership development. In this event, we explored the importance of digital leadership. We heard from industry experts and CIOs about the skills digital leaders must possess.

CIONET Research Director Roger Camrass introduced the event and its place within CIOFEST, where other CIONET events were taking across Europe simultaneously. He introduced this year's CIO Cookbook, the third volume of CIONET's best-practice guide to digital leadership. The Cookbook presents the Master Chefs of European IT who are orchestrating their digital kitchens to produce transformation recipes that delight their businesses and customers.

The evening's session covered the skills of modern digital leaders and the role played by Henley Business School. The starting point was a keynote presentation. Roger held a Digital Campfire with Dr Mark Powell, independent consultant, lecturer and author, and Claire Hewitt, Head of Learning Design at Henley Business School.



Session One: Digital Campfire

1. What inspired Mark to write his recent book, *The Fifth Phase*?

Mark was inspired by frustration. He has seen first-hand how executives are eager to use technology to transform their businesses. However, he regularly sees a problem – while technology could lead to massive changes in theory, organisational transformation is hard in reality. Rigidity and stakeholder politics mean technology is often not implemented effectively.

Mark emphasised the need to change how we think about artificial intelligence (AI) and data. These innovations should be presented as the next game-changing concept in how modern businesses work and succeed. We also need to change how we think about the relationship between business and technology. Roger said the Cookbook shows how successful digital leaders are bridging the gap between business and IT.

2. What does leadership mean in practice, especially in the context of 'digital'?

Claire said there are two sides to effective leadership: people and purpose, and mindset and behaviour. People and purpose are about communicating transformation through digital enablement. If you get that element right, the business will follow you on your journey.

For mindset and behaviour, she said leaders should be enablers and help people see the value of change. The creation of a strategic vision must be a collaborative process. Leaders who bring people together to share their vision and purpose are more likely to succeed.

3. What are the key challenges facing digital leaders?

The key challenges are influence and stakeholder engagement. Mark referred to a project where he had to help 100 managing directors work together on a transformation. The business positioned technology wrongly, and the understanding of digital was poor. The CDO role was inevitably split into two areas: technology and business.

He runs masterclasses with boards. Delivering tech-led transformation isn't about talking. Success is about showing the business what can be achieved through digitalisation. CIOs must bridge the gap between business and technology. Effective stakeholder engagement is crucial.

4. What are the critical digital leadership capabilities?

Claire suggested four capabilities. First, **be clear** about what you want to do. Tell stories, communicate, connect and engage. Inspire people and get momentum behind your vision. These communication skills can be taught. Second, **be forward-looking** – search for weak signals, trends, and leaps of imagination, and then take calculated risks on innovation. Collaborate to bring your ecosystem of partners together.

Third, **believe in what you're doing**. Bring energy, act as a role model, be persistent, be energetic, and maintain resilience. Fourth, **be flexible**. However clear your outcome might seem, there's rarely a straightforward route to the goal. Be open to new ideas and create a can-do culture to deliver change. Again, flexibility is a skill that can be taught.

5. How does Henley Business School help organisations develop leadership skills?

Claire said the CIO position is a magnified vision of leadership. Technology leaders have an all-encompassing view of business processes. This outlook should allow CIOs to drive business change. She said Henley works with 'pracademics' like Mark, who turn management theory into practical advice. They analyse techniques and create models to help other leaders learn. Rather than "chalk and talk", Henley focuses on real-life examples, frameworks and the development of best-practice techniques to be used in your working environment.

6. Why would a relationship between CIONET and Henley Business School be a win-win?

Mark has spent many years teaching digital leaders. Effective leadership is about developing a spectrum of skills and enabling a behavioural shift. Henley is great at getting people to re-imagine their leadership approaches.

He said the CIO community holds a lot of knowledge. The collaborative approach to management education between CIONET and Henley has the potential to develop a unique perspective that allies CIO knowledge to a behavioural lens. Mark wants the course to help CIOs reach the boards of blue-chip enterprises, which is still far too rare.

7. What might a leadership course between CIONET and Henley Business School look like?

Roger said great CIOs develop leadership skills. Henley and CIONET want to work together and teach leadership skills aligned with business requirements that help CIOs reach the top.

CIONET is looking for about 30 executives interested in the first course. Henley will work with CIONET members to tailor course content to their requirements. Claire said a typical course will include residential sessions, surgeries, and coaching and mentoring classes. Roger said the course will be a serious commitment in time but will produce valuable results.

Session Two: Panel discussion

Four distinguished panellists were asked to comment on digital leadership from the perspective of both their organisations and professional experiences:

- **Sanjay Patel**, Formerly Group CIO and VP Strategic Transformation – Tate & Lyle Plc
- **Norma Dove-Edwin**, Executive Director – HSBC
- **Katie Hevey**, Partner, Digital & Technology Practice – Savannah
- **Hena Jalil**, Business CIO – BT

Katie Hevey, Client Partner, Technology & Digital at Savannah

1. What brief might you receive for a CIO role from a large organisation?

Katie said the brief depends on the CEO's values. Are they looking for a CIO who focuses on creating an IT service function or someone who enables business transformation through digital and data? She's seen an uptick in CEOs who want commercial, business-enabled CIOs.

CEOs are looking for CIOs who speak the language of the business. CIOs must translate the potential for technological change into the business' long-term outcomes and think about how IT will help the organisation achieve its objectives.

Katie said CEOs want CIOs with these characteristics: evangelist, realist, expectations manager, educator, translator, psychologist (getting C-suite leaders on board by understanding their demands), and a sense of empathy (CIOs must satisfy every C-suite member).

2. How can a CIO change their mindset from IT service provider to business value architect?

Be brave and put your ideas forward, said Katie. You might not report directly to the CEO but you need the capability to present new ideas, show the value of these innovations and translate the potential for change into business objectives.



Sanjay Patel, Formerly Group CIO and VP Strategic Transformation at Tate & Lyle Plc

1. How does a CIO transition from a strong IT director to a great business leader?

Sanjay said the transition requires a mindset shift and hands-on experience in other functions. Many IT directors have not experienced key business concepts, such as profit and loss, supply chain or sales. CIOs who transition from being strong IT directors into business leaders recognise early in their careers that they are part of the business.

He said CIOs should spend time outside IT in other business functions. Sanjay has worked in sales, supply chain and human resources. IT leaders who understand the day-to-day issues of other departments can envision how technology can be used to improve the business. Let's turn IT leaders into business leaders who can talk with non-IT executives about their priorities.

2. It's still rare for CIOs to become CEOs. Why do CIOs move sideways and not upwards?

Sanjay said business leaders in other functions aspire to be CEOs. CFOs often become CEOs and COOs, sales and operations heads also move into C-suite roles. The challenge is visualisation – CIOs don't see themselves as CEOs. There isn't a glass ceiling that CIOs need to smash. Instead, IT leaders need to shift their mindset.

He said boards now understand the potential for technology to change the business. However, they still don't see the potential for CIOs to become CEOs. Many CIOs also don't believe they hold the potential for senior roles. Sanjay has seen the disconnect between IT and business. While IT professionals undertake technical training, finance and sales professionals complete MBAs and business courses.

3. What new skills should CIOs acquire to develop digital businesses?

CIOs must think in terms of business strategy. They should use digital to envisage the future shape of the company. Educate the rest of the business about what technology can do. This education process should show how digital can support the creation of new business models.

CIOs must ensure digital is at the core of business strategy. This approach takes courage. Be a strong and credible leader. Find C-suite sponsors who see the potential for digital to change their functions for the better. Your role as CIO is to orchestrate digital business transformation.



Norma Dove Edwin, Executive Director, HSBC

1. How can digital leaders frame board-level conversations to achieve desired outcomes?

Norma said technologists have a different way of thinking. Great coders have two options as managers – they can become business or technical specialists. The problem for IT leaders who are technology specialists is they don't get recognition and won't climb the career ladder.

She said boards want to know CIOs can control risk, manage money effectively, deliver savings, and drive growth. Change your language so everything is linked to business goals. Don't talk about bits and bytes. You will lose the board when you talk about technology in a firewall. The board will be interested when you show them how a firewall reduces business risk.

2. How can CIOs prioritise the right areas and move up the career ladder?

Norma said alignment is the key to success. Boards need strong CIOs with a director's mindset: 'My only goal is to run a company and achieve these goals.' Ruthless prioritisation is essential. Things that aren't connected to these goals don't matter. Align with the CEO. Focus everything on the company's four or five strategic goals.

Career-focused CIOs develop a strong voice. For example, in the supply chain, pioneering CIOs talk about where technology can add value through optimisation or automation. Try and get a seat at the boardroom table so you can understand what's happening in other lines of business. Partnership is key. If you partner successfully, you can bring something to the table.

3. There are multiple digital leadership roles. Does it make sense to divide the CIO role?

Norma said a job title is a nice-to-have element rather than an essential success factor. CIOs often strive to be associated with a new area of the business, such as 'digital' or 'product'. However, it's your responsibilities that matter rather than your job title. CIOs must recognise that purpose and accountability are crucial.

Hena Jalil, Managing Director & CIO, Business at BT Global

1. What are the challenges and opportunities you face when recruiting and developing talent?

Hena is looking for people with a blend of technical and business skills. She wants people who can make bold decisions. A strong understanding of technology means you understand how technology can power business transformation. CIOs need confident people who push technology and help their companies achieve their goals.

BT has set up a digital campus where it trains and rewards people. The approach is all about levelling up so people can embrace challenges and meet business outcomes.

2. Should we do more to professionalise the IT industry?

Hena said professionalism gives people a clear track to the top. The modern world is digitally driven. CIOs are in a prime position to develop strategy. Rather than focusing on cost savings, CIOs must show how technology can help the business boost growth and revenue.

3. How do we boost diversity in the IT industry?

Hena started working in the IT industry 20 years ago. There were often just a few women at industry events. At tonight's CIONET event, three of the four panellists were women. However, there is still a long way to go despite this progress.

BT has built relationships with Code First Girls, Women Returners, Black Girls Tech Summit and Girls Talk London. Hena said diversity is a multifaceted goal that includes sexuality, gender, race, disability and neurodiversity targets. Leaders must hire for potential rather than experience. Remember that talent is everywhere.



Conclusion: Great leadership matters

After questions from attendees, Roger thanked the panellists and the earlier keynote speakers for their contributions. He thanked the business partners and asked Tal Elgar, EMEA Sales Director at Intel, to give a brief presentation of lessons from the evening. Tal talked about the strength of the CIONET Cookbook, the tension between CIOs and lines of business, and the importance of vision, purpose and collaboration. Roger concluded the event by saying that CIONET is eager to hear from its members about the potential for a partnership with Henley Business School.





Roger Camrass
Researcher director

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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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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