



GO Global Organization  
Design Society

#### READINGS IN GLOBAL ORGANIZATION DESIGN

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## LEVEL 5 CIO'S: FLYING PIGS OR BLACK SWANS?

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# Anatomy of Agile Enterprise

## Three Breeds of CIOs



### Janne J. Korhonen

Janne J. Korhonen is an independent business and IT consultant, specializing in enterprise architecture, business process management, service-oriented architecture and pertinent governance models. He has over ten years of experience as an architect and consultant in a variety of extensive and mission-critical IT projects. With strong theoretical underpinnings, his consulting encompasses systemic co-development of business, organization and information technology.

I have [earlier suggested](#) that Enterprise Architecture be designed and built around organizational accountability levels and be divided vertically into three distinct yet interlinked architectures. It can be further argued that all IT work in organizations falls in respective "IT realms" (not all of which may be manifested in any given organization):

1. **Technical Realm**, with an operational focus and geared to present-day value realization;
2. **Socio-Technical Realm**, in which IT enables enterprise flexibility and capability to change; and
3. **Ecosystemic Realm**, in which IT drives value innovation and enables sustainable co-evolution within the business ecosystem.

These three IT realms also call for distinctively different managerial roles and respective capabilities. In the following, three breeds of Chief Information Officers (CIOs) are outlined, respectively: Implementer, Coordinator, and Strategist. The characteristics of the role and requirements for the capability of each type of CIO are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Three breeds of CIOs.**

	Role Characteristics	Capability Requirements
<i>Strategist</i>	Corporate role Strategic intent 5--10 years time horizon Ensures long-term resilience and viability	Shapes new contexts Uses power of vision and participation Multiple frames of reference
<i>Coordinator</i>	Demand-side Tactical portfolio 2--5 years time horizon Ensures business responsiveness	Capacity for envisioning future possibilities Holds opposing ideas in mind Applies conceptual frameworks
<i>Implementer</i>	Supply-side Operational excellence 1--2 years time horizon Ensures efficient and reliable IT system	Focus on functional and technical tasks Either-or mind-set Analytical problem-solving

### **Implementer CIO**

Implementers are on the supply side: delivering to the goals and requirements of business and being measured on the results expected from IT. They are responsible for implementing and maintaining an organization's IT solutions and technology infrastructure, which they aim to make happen in the most cost-effective and efficient manner. They are also the sensors of the organization, reporting operational issues and problems upwards. The time horizon of Implementer would be less than two years.

The focus of Implementer CIO is on operational excellence: making sure that the IT systems, processes and solutions create value in the present and can be developed to meet the likely needs of the near future. This calls for some degree of conceptualization: connecting things to develop a systematic response, taking into account factors such as risk, cost, and time to completion. Implementers know how to get things done and are great at devising systems, policies, guidelines, instructions and procedures that ensure smooth, reliable and stable operations. They are good in analytical problem-solving, yet typically limited by an either-or mindset.

### **Coordinator CIO**

Coordinators oversee the organization's IT strategy and, working together with business on the demand side, develop policies and goals for the IT department. They also manage the portfolio of IT investments and make investment and divestment proposals pertaining to strategic information systems, technology platforms and standards, etc., even though higher approval may still be needed before the investment can proceed. The time horizon of Coordinator would go two to five years out to the future.

The focus of Coordinator CIO is on ensuring business responsiveness: developing a functioning set of systems that addresses comprehensive business needs now and in the future. The objective of his/her activities is often to introduce innovative new systems or solutions, or to decommission the obsolete ones. This demands integrative, cross-disciplinary thinking. Coordinators must also be capable of assessing, prioritizing and revising goals as well as reorienting towards new goals. In comparison to Implementers, they have higher capacity for envisioning future possibilities and are better able to hold opposing ideas in mind. Their thinking is more systemic and often employs conceptual frameworks and other thinking tools.

### **Strategist CIO**

Strategists craft the organization's strategic intent pertaining to IT, co-create IT-driven business models with senior business executives and envision and enforce strategic IT capabilities. This breed of CIOs is very rare, often transcending the mere IT function, and likely to be found only in large information-intensive corporations. Strategist's time horizon would go beyond five years.

The focus of Strategist CIO is on shaping the organization's information technology and information systems landscape to ensure long-term business

continuity within the organization's environment. This requires long-term visionary insight into the developments in technology innovation, the industry structure and the society at large, as well as into the co-causal interrelationships and higher-order consequences of these developments. Strategists are the creators of the future: with the ability to take on multiple frames of reference, they harness the power of people and shape new contexts that enable the vision to come into being.

Categories: [IT Management](#)

Tags: [CIO](#), [capability](#), [chief information officer](#), [information technology](#), [manager](#), [role](#), [type](#)

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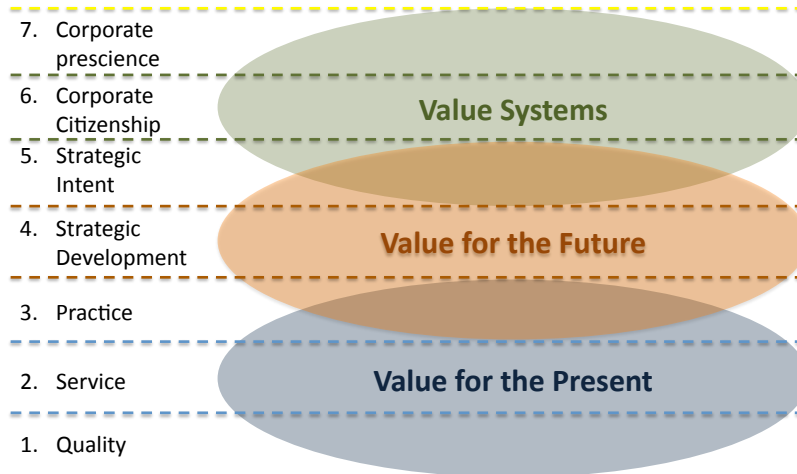
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# Level 5 CIOs – Flying Pigs, or Black Swans?

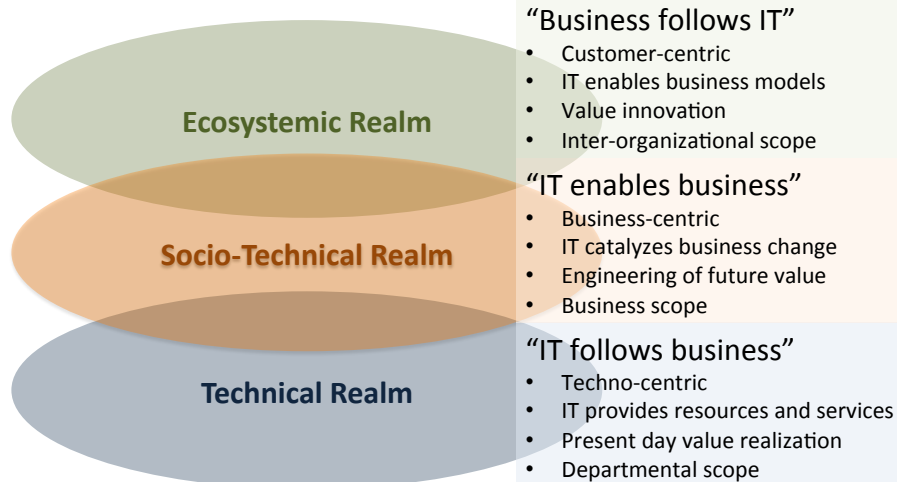
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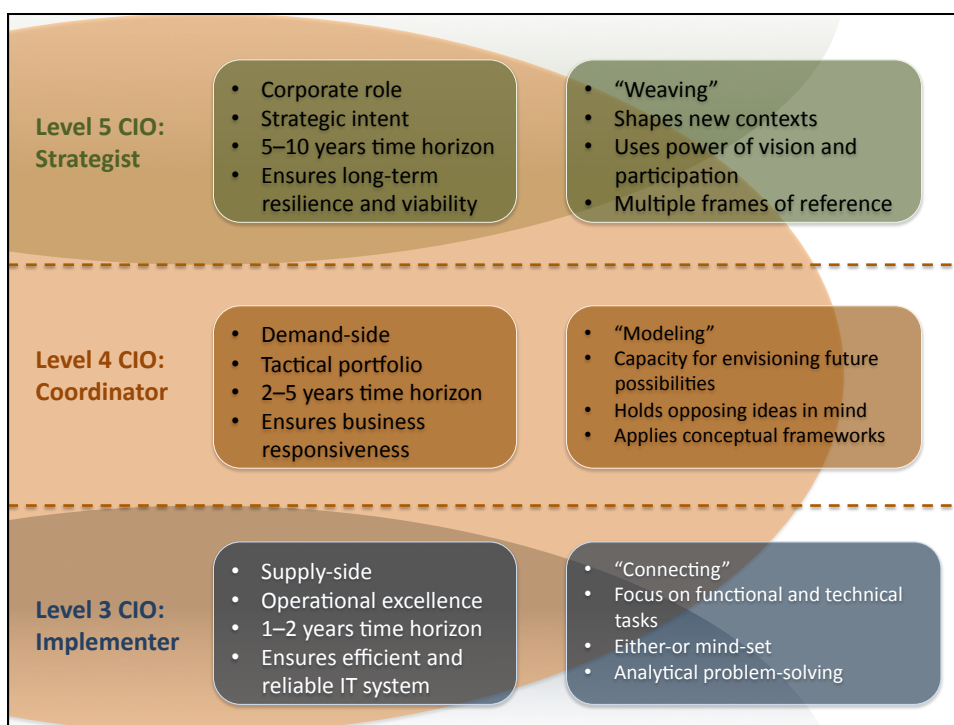
## Levels of Work



## Realms of IT



Korhonen & Poutanen (2013); Korhonen & Hiekkanen (2013)



## Level 3 CIO: Implementer



## Level 4 CIO: Coordinator



## Level 5 CIO: Strategist



- Crafts the organization's strategic intent as for IT
- Co-creates IT-driven business models with senior business executives
- Envisions and enforces strategic IT capabilities.
- Ensures that these capabilities support long-term business continuity

- The CIO requires long-term visionary insight into the developments in technology innovation, the industry structure and the society at large, as well as into the co-causal interrelationships and higher-order consequences of these developments





# GO Global Organization Design Society

## GO SOCIETY PURPOSE AND VALUES STATEMENT

To support the organizing of work in a responsible, fair and healthy manner in which people are led in a way that enables them to exercise their capabilities.

The Society believes this requires applying a systems framework\* emerging from reflective inquiry in which levels of work and capability are the initial paradigm and growth in human awareness is the essential process.

The benefits are organizational effectiveness, fulfilled people and organizations designed for value-creation, sustainability and social well-being.

*Note: inspired by the work of Wilfred Brown and Elliott Jaques*

The *Global Organization Design Society* was founded in 2004 to establish and operate a worldwide association of business users, consultants, and academics interested in science-based management to improve organizational effectiveness.

The GO Society fulfills its purpose by:

- Promoting among existing users increased awareness, understanding and skilled knowledge in applying concepts of Levels of Work Complexity, Levels of Human Capability, Accountability, and other concepts included in Requisite Organization and/or Stratified Systems Theory.
- Promoting among potential users of the methods, appreciation of the variety of uses and benefits of science-based management, and access to resources. The GO Society supports the learning and development of current and future practitioners by holding world conferences and professional development workshops, publishing books and a journal, and maintaining a resource-rich web site with related articles, monographs, books, videos, blogs, discussion groups, and surveys.

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