The CIO Imperative

Leading in the Digital Future

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Overnight the world changed, and organizations rose to the occasion to adapt and thrive. They rapidly implemented and increased the velocity of their digital transformation initiatives, overcoming enormous challenges in short order. Digital leaders, those organizations already embracing digital transformation, were better prepared to face those challenges and able to quickly pivot to outpace disruptions. Now, as the pace of change intensifies, every organization is asking, "Are we ready for what's next?"

No matter what the next wave of change brings, and regardless of how intensely the pace of change accelerates, the CIO of the future must be a Connected CIO. Using technology as a catalyst, the Connected CIO is uniquely equipped to help their organizations seize the opportunity to disrupt the status quo and transform. The most successful organizations are already thinking digital-first and reimagining how to differentiate with technology, and now is the time for CIOs to optimize the business for continued success.

Every industry was already undergoing transformation, but **the pace was rapidly kicked into overdrive.**

The Urgency of the Connected CIO

For CIOs, digital transformation must be prioritized above competing initiatives. The support of this claim is evident; because those who have made it the top priority are seeing quantified, tangible outcomes, and have fared better overall in today's unpredictable business climate. Those organizations are better prepared to face the future and those CIOs are ready to rise to the occasion as their organizations increasingly rely on them.

By 2023, global crises will make 75% of CIOs integral to business decision-making, as digital infrastructure becomes the business operating system while moving from business continuation to re-conceptualization.[1] The Connected CIO is at the helm, playing a crucial role in adopting new and more efficient technologies.

These technologies can reduce costs and improve agility, enable increasingly digital workforces at scale and create ongoing and data-driven value, whether that is in terms of revenue or new services. Achieving these benefits requires strategic investments, but these pay off as organizations at the forefront of rethinking IT are already outperforming their peers.

Digital leaders have proven prowess to react more quickly, strategically and at a lower cost to turn the unexpected into opportunity. In findings from the Dell Technologies Digital Transformation Index, 96% of digital leaders say their ability to collect, analyze and act on data has made it easier to adapt and survive, and 61% are already transforming services and consumption models to meet new needs in today's unique business climate.[2]

Now is the time to become a Connected CIO,

ready to seize the coming opportunities of the data decade and focused on enacting change for your organization across three imperatives:

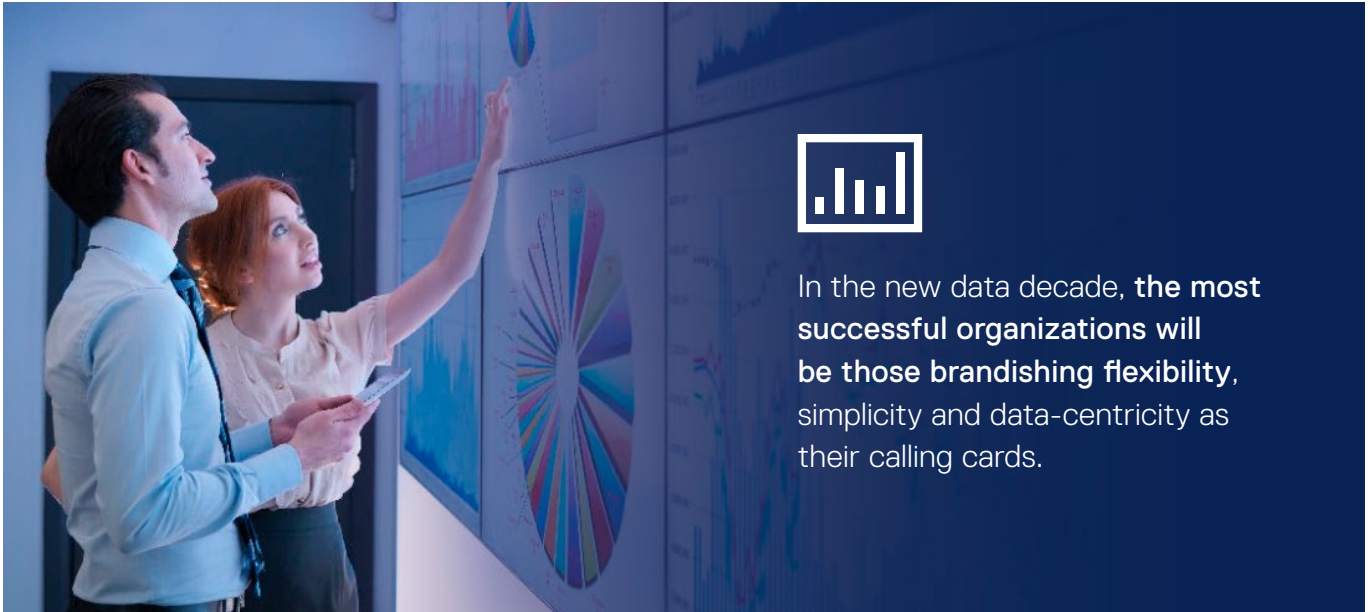**Increasing business agility** with multi-cloud flexibility

Enabling teams to work and learn from anywhere with a digital workplace

Creating new value by innovating with data

By prioritizing investments in these key areas, Connected CIOs are well-positioned for the future.

In the new data decade, **the most successful organizations will be those brandishing flexibility**, simplicity and data-centricity as their calling cards.

Today, the role of the CIO is more integral than ever as organizations navigate mounting competitive pressures, customer demands for immediacy and a growing deluge of hyper-connected and hyper-distributed data sources. The CIO must steer the business to success in the data decade.

Connected CIOs have already prepared their organizations for the unknown and readied themselves for new opportunities. And their organizations are leading in their industries. The events of 2020 have allowed these organizations to demonstrate their agility by responding to unforeseeable events, converting challenges into revenue generating opportunities.

Increasing Business Agility

The push to become more agile isn't new. But today there is an urgency surrounding it:

89% 89% say recent disruption has shown they need a more agile/ scalable IT environment.[2]

74% 74% of organizations report they are investing in on-demand digital services,[2] which isn't surprising given that "lack of the right technologies to work at the speed of business" ranked among the top 10 barriers businesses face to transformation.[2]

Looking back at 2020: an impetus for change

An unprecedented year, 2020 saw a lot of change. The Dell Technologies Digital Transformation Index[2] found:

80% 80% of organizations fast-tracked at least some digital transformation programs.

79% 79% are reinventing their business model as a result of the disruption caused by the pandemic.

What these organizations managed to accomplish in a limited amount of time is truly remarkable. But many organizations are still concerned about the future.

50% 50% worry they haven't transitioned fast enough.

94% 94% say they are facing entrenched barriers spanning across technology, people and policy.[2]

Outpacing disruption hinges on the ability to respond to the unknown, which includes an ever-evolving organizational and global climate. This necessitates more flexibility, choice and predictability in how technology is used. It also requires the ability to consume technology in a way that's simple, aligned to the business and in a manner consistent across all of the organization's clouds and edges.

Digital leaders are increasingly relying on IT to position their organization to meet both anticipated and unexpected opportunities. The benefits of multi-cloud flexibility reach beyond external outcomes such as product delivery, customer experience, customer satisfaction and maintaining business continuity amidst great change. Multi-cloud flexibility also offers the internal benefits of improved productivity and the ability to quickly pivot resources when and where they're needed so they can deliver the best outcomes.

It's time to reimagine the way you use your resources to meet the requirements of this real-time, always-on world. By 2025, 65% of CIOs will implement ecosystem, application and infrastructure control systems, founded on interoperability, flexibility, scalability, portability and timeliness.[3] Adapt and lead by embracing agility. This ensures you can quickly move in whatever direction is needed.

How increasing business agility positions you to be ready for what's next:

Greater efficiency: Get freedom of choice in technology consumption and payment.

Maximum productivity: Bring public, private and edge clouds under a single pane of glass to minimize the number of tools and eliminate management and development silos.

Optimized infrastructure: Deploy, operate and scale all workloads.

Predictable results: Provide meaningful, scalable business outcomes with streamlined and on-demand IT solutions.

But data migration, bandwidth restrictions and latency limitations have caused critical cloud-consumption issues. It's becoming increasingly clear that not every workload belongs in a public cloud across the entire length of its lifecycle. Additionally, an increasingly diverse cloud landscape has created enormous IT complexity. As a CIO, you need to find a way to deliver timely, flexible IT services with the agility of the cloud, yet without the limitations and complexity. As outlined by a new report from Dell Technologies and Forrester, it's critical for organizations to adopt a new IT model in order to be resilient and meet future, potentially unanticipated, business needs.

Only 41% say having the right technologies to work at the speed of business enabled them to successfully accelerate this year.[4]

Enabling Teams to Work and Learn from Anywhere

Leaders across every business and industry have long embraced change and disruption to capitalize on opportunity and innovation. Today, the pace of change has been drastically accelerated, mandating an immediate and equally accelerated wave of workforce transformation: enabling people to work and learn from anywhere. The key challenge of the CIO is ensuring that happens consistently, securely, cost-effectively and efficiently, no matter what form their digital workplace takes on.

Today, more than one in two employees work remotely, up from about one in four before the pandemic, representing a continued trend.[4] The new reality of work is that you're managing more dispersed people and applications than ever before. And as the workplace continues to evolve in support of a more fluid and permanent remote setting, the need for modern devices and a flexible and responsive IT environment cannot be understated.

Now is the time to optimize for continued success in the next frontier of our digital future. Work environments of the future will include traditional offices, homes, customer-sites and other remote settings. Some people may use a hybrid model within a single day. Digital leaders will be the ones who create a long-term and sustainable strategy for remote work and learning—ensuring their teams have the right resources and devices to be productive from anywhere.

How enabling a digital workplace positions organizations to be ready for what's next:

- **Empower talent:** Deliver personalized and intelligent work experiences that support seamless productivity from anywhere.

- **Safeguard security:** Provide an agile and secure infrastructure that enables your teams to be as safe and efficient online, as if they were in the office.

- **Increase flexibility:** Facilitate borderless innovation so your end-users can work or learn from virtually anywhere.

Gartner finds **74% of companies plan to permanently shift to more remote work** post-COVID-19.[5]

As more people gain the skills and desire to maintain a flexible work environment, this trend is here to stay.

Critical questions to ask as you strive to establish clear digital workplace objectives.

- Can your people be just as productive outside the walls of your organization as within?

- Can you efficiently and cost-effectively manage all the technology you already have in the workplace?

- Do you have an overall governance plan for this technology?

- How readily can your teams access or receive the tools and resources they need to perform?

- Are your organization's mix of technologies hindering automation or the user experience?

- What are your smart space and agile worker strategies?

Creating New Value by Innovating with Data

Today, organizations manage 13.53 petabytes of data on average, which is already a staggering 831% increase since 2016.[6] While that number may be shocking, it's no surprise that the world around us is becoming increasingly digital. The objects we interact with every day are becoming more intelligent and connected sources of data. To be ready for what's next, it's crucial to have the ability to collect, analyze and act on that data. However, in this "Internet of Everything" world, we've reached the limit of human capacity to effectively create new value from all these rich data sources.

The most successful organizations in the data era will go beyond human scale and harness emerging technologies to innovate with data and create new value. In the past 12 months, 61% of organizations have used insights and analytics from their data management practice to develop a new product or service,[7] and 65% of organizations have used those insights and analytics to make a major strategy adjustment.[7] The reality of the data era is that the pace of innovation is determined by how quickly you can turn data into insights. By 2025, 80% of CIOs, alongside lines of business, will implement intelligent capabilities to sense, learn and predict changing customer behaviors, enabling exclusive customer experiences for engagement and loyalty.[8]

How adopting emerging technologies will help organizations create new value and be ready for what's next:

- **Improve insights:** Emerging technologies can help put any data to work, anywhere, to create new value.

- **Offer personalization:** Internet of Things (IoT), edge and 5G capabilities enable the real-time, individualized experiences customers expect.

- **Intelligently innovate:** Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), among other emerging technologies, are critical for creating new value from rich data sources and staying ahead of the curve.

Data Management: The foundation to innovating with data

Embracing a data-first, data-anywhere business model with emerging technologies will help organizations lead in the data era. But in order to do that, they must first lay the technological foundation to set your organization up for success.

Today, many organizations have traditional IT strategies with inefficiencies that inhibit the flow of data. As a result, they may be making decisions with out-of-date, invalid or otherwise incomplete data, potentially compromising their ability to seize new opportunities. To win and retain customers, streamline supply chains and thrive in the data decade, you need relevant, complete and real-time data insights.

This requires a modern data strategy and modern data technologies to accommodate the exploding volume and types of data coming from hyper-distributed locations. Digital leaders are moving away from centralized data storage concepts while maintaining regulatory and compliance needs. In doing so, they free their AI and ML workloads to act on all their data in real-time, regardless of location.

96% of Digital Leaders say their ability to collect, analyze and act on data has made it easier to adapt and survive.[9] 91% of businesses agree that extracting valuable insights from data will be more important for their business than ever before.[9]

Organizations that increased their use of digital channels to reach customers or citizens are **3.5 times more likely to be top performers** than trailing ones.[10]

Achieving Tomorrow's Digital Transformation, Today

As the pace of change intensifies, every CIO is more embedded in the organization than ever before. Ushering in change to help make businesses ready for what's next, the Connected CIO will use technology as a means of achieving business imperatives. The Connected CIO is uniquely equipped to achieve business outcomes with IT because of their deep understanding of the context of business needs. They are the tip of the spear, trailblazing digital transformation and leading the organization and helping it flourish in an increasingly digital, data-driven and cloud-diverse world.

While it's impossible to have all the answers, Connected CIOs will guide their organization for success by prioritizing the digital transformation initiatives that improve business agility, enable their teams to work and learn from anywhere and enable them to create new value by innovating with data.

Confidently Lead in the Data-centric Future

Connected CIOs are prepared for the new and unknown, today, which can seem like a daunting feat. However, they don't have to embark on the journey alone. At Dell Technologies, we believe that change brings rich opportunities and that technology is the fulcrum driving human progress. We are now at the crux of a monumental data era, where intelligent and emerging technologies are improving the world in ways we never thought possible.

To be ready to meet the opportunities of our data-centric future, organizations need a partner who can help them reimagine IT as their essential engine to innovation. With Dell Technologies, you get an ally relentlessly focused on creating integrated, holistic solutions that help you turn data into insights and action— flexibly, responsibly, reliably and securely. We'll stop at nothing to help you harness the transformative power of technology so you can move your organization forward with confidence and be ready for whatever comes next.

Why Dell Technologies
Leading is nothing new for us. That's why advancing sustainability, cultivating inclusion, transforming lives and upholding ethics and privacy are embedded in everything we do. Powered by a workforce that values and celebrates different backgrounds, we create solutions that harness and amplify technology in the most meaningful ways. From healthcare to education to a digital economy, we believe in the power of technology to help solve complex societal challenges.

Click here to learn more about Transformation Leadership Trends, Resources and Stories with Dell Technologies Perspectives.

Learn more about Driving Agility with Multi-cloud Flexibility.

Learn more about Creating New Value by Innovating with Data.

Learn more about the Working and Learning from Anywhere.

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