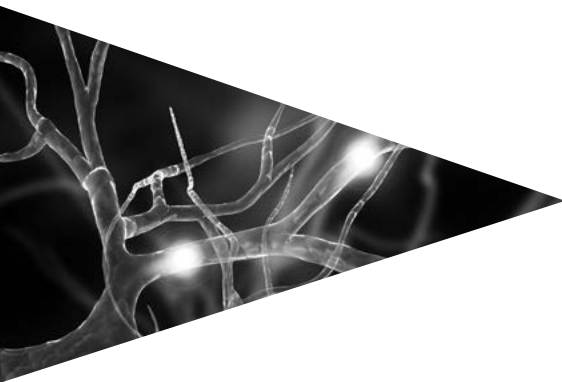


# The transition from CIO to CEO



Andrew Rashbass was interviewed for *The DNA of the CIO* report, in which he shared his insights and personal experiences of the role.

As CEO of the Economist Group, a UK media and publishing company, **Andrew Rashbass** is an example of a CIO who has made the switch up. He gives his view on the transition.

## How did your career progress to where you are today?

I started out at what was then Andersen Consulting, working on development programming, systems integration and that kind of thing. After some time at Associated Newspapers, I joined the Economist Group as CIO in 1997, before becoming publisher for *The Economist*, and then finally CEO in 2008.

## How do you think the role of the CIO has changed in recent years?

I think that technology is now at the core of what many organizations do; it is often a part of the products and services being sold. And many technologies have changed. You don't build them yourself, and you don't buy boxes and stick them in your own computer rooms. Therefore, the nature of the role shifts. It's not about hundreds of servers, it's about something much more akin to an ecosystem, which requires a different skillset. But I don't think this is particularly new. I think this transition has been going on for the best part of 15 years.

## Has this changed the way you measure the performance of the CIO?

I think there are a couple of areas where it's changed. One relates to how technology is often part of the product or service that you're delivering. I'm not talking about the IT organization to its internal customer; I'm talking about the actual organization to its real customers. So it brings the CIO very close to the measures of the business. And secondly, because of the shift to more of an ecosystem, whether that's with outsourcing or cloud computing, the CIO's relationships with the outside world have lots of metrics built in contractually for the services that you're gluing together. These are now much more fundamental to the organization.

### Which relationships do you think are most important for a CIO to be successful?

Obviously, the CEO is an important one. But I think more generally one of the ways to be a successful CIO is to ensure that with whomever you are speaking, that person needs to think that all that the CIO is interested in is them and their issues. The CIO's job is to engage with those people sitting around the top table. They have responsibilities that are important to that organization, and therefore CIOs need to see themselves as helping those people achieve success.

### What key lessons have you identified in the transition from CIO to CEO?

As a CIO, I've got to understand business, I've got to do complicated things, I've got to manage people, I've got to deal with lots of stakeholders. Is that fundamentally different from running a business? My take is that it is different because, basically, technology manages to the downside. If you're a CIO and I come to you and say, "I've got an idea for you, it will transform what your technology does, transform your cost base and the success of your technology organization, but there's a 5% chance that it's going to destroy the company," every self-respecting CIO will turn you down. A CEO manages to the upside if you come to a CEO and say, "I've got an idea that's going to transform your company and make it more successful, it's going to delight customers, it's going to make your shareholders happy, but there's a 5% chance that it's going to bankrupt the company," as a CEO you'll say, "that sounds great. Let's work out how to do it and manage the risks." In the end, many CIOs don't want to make that switch.

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