Serious Insights

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The Tens—Why Firms Don't Need Chief Mobility Officers

1 Creates a silo Appointing a Chief Mobility Officer immediately creates tension with non-mobility technology professionals, and the architectures and applications they steward.

2 Creates another layer to slow innovation Firms complain that they are not innovative, and then they do things, like create high level executive roles that become barriers to innovation. We live in a global, networked world, to think that a "chief" anything related to technology could offer the best approach to the array of mobile offerings is untenable. Mobility is everywhere, and it needs to be an option for anyone thinking about solving a business problem. Mobility isn't the problem.

3 Everyone needs to think mobile Every IT solutions professional needs to be cognizant and versant on mobile technology. IT should make sure that every person responsible for solutions is equipped with mobile devices, and is empowered to download, experiment and develop in labs, mobile applications that may solve business problems better than traditional PC-based applications. If they don't have experience, they can't make good decisions. A chief will constrain experience, not spread it.

4 Doesn't Solve the Problem The problem is knowledge and experience, not the innovative onslaught of options. I have said it for years, to vendors and to end users, *mobile* is just another way of delivering IT value. It should be integrated into designs and architectures in an organic way. Artificially calling it out is like appointing separate people to think about ERP depending on how it is delivered, vs. how it is used. Yes, HR should control their ERP implementation, but in the context of all other data use and priorities, and in an integrated way. Those who still use input through emulators and those who use web browsers may require some technical specialization, but ERP is driven by enterprise strategy, not the technology.

5 It's the Architecture Mobility is about delivering enterprise data through mobile devices. The architecture should set rules for how that is handled. If the applications violate the architecture guidelines, then they don't get recognized.

6 Security is a false argument Data has many ways of getting out of a company. Mobile applications simply offer another channel, but they don't increase the danger dramatically. If password and encryption policies work for PCs, they work for mobile devices. The biggest threat is still human, and that means regardless of technology, people will find a way. Don't use security as an excuse for a failure to innovate.

7 Learning should be integrated When people play with technology they learn. When technology applied to a business problem fails, people learn. Lessons learned may be contextual, but given the broadness of the business experience today, those lessons may apply to multiple contexts. Creating a mobility silo will reduce the flow of knowledge across the organization.

8 Coping is Not the Goal Some of the reporting of Forrester's recommendation to appoint a Chief Mobility Officer uses the word "cope" as the responsibility. Coping is a containment assignment, not a value-add assignment.

9 Tech Jobs Shouldn't Be About Transitions Some may argue that jobs titles like Chief Mobility Officer are about transitions. We have seen Chief Quality Officers and Chief Innovation Officers. I was never in favor of those roles either, but at least they were introduced to focus on major conceptual shifts. Mobility does not hold the same gravity as quality or innovation. Mobile applications may be overwhelming today, but they don't need a gatekeeper, they need empowered, educated technologists, and that education isn't a decades-long battle of wills, but weeks at most given access, tools and permission.

10 Senior Architect, Not As Sexy but More Accurate Chief anything implies a CxO level appointment. Organizations already have CIOs. What the CIO needs are advisors who can provide clear perspectives on the rapid integration and adoption of mobile technology. CIOs should be heeding the advice in this note and empowering their people to broadly understand mobility through experience, not looking sideways to a colleague appointed to second guess them.