

**How a vCIO can  
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# How a vCIO can simplify your tech-stack and streamline your technology roadmap to gain a competitive edge.

**Technology is revolutionising how businesses achieve a competitive edge.** Keeping pace with the latest developments is becoming increasingly demanding. CEOs and boards are now confronted with the difficult task of determining which solutions will provide a competitive advantage. **Virtual CIOs can offer businesses the strategic expertise to address this challenge.**

Technology is expected to offer businesses a silver bullet to delivering performance improvements. Yet, navigating the latest apps, software platforms, SaaS solutions and required hardware is becoming increasingly complex, and expensive.

For companies without an experienced senior leader to develop a customised technology strategy, grasping the actual value technology can offer may be ambiguous.

To prevent lagging behind competitors, SME leaders and boards without a senior technology leader are deciding whether to quickly embrace technology or proceed cautiously. Either option could inadvertently hinder business performance by exposing the company to unnecessary risks or see the company simply failing to keep up with customer expectations.

There is also a misconception that IT Managers/Heads of IT have the necessary knowledge and skills to adapt to the changing landscape. Their roles generally centre on supervising daily IT operations rather than ensuring business performance through IT.

A virtual Chief Information Officer (vCIO) is a specialised technology professional who assumes C-Suite responsibilities, and is aligned with the business leader goals and vision. Their expertise is to align your IT strategy and budget with your business plan. Ultimately, they ensure you have a bespoke technology strategy and governance framework that drives operational excellence and competitive advantage.

# Is a vCIO the same as an MSP?

As organisations become more reliant on technology, CEOs need more than an IT manager to inform their business on how to match their technology requirements with their business goals and protect them from digital threats to achieve sustainable growth.

The easiest way to think of the difference between vCIO and MSP is:

- **A Managed Services Provider (MSP)** is similar to having an on-site IT manager. They manage a company's information technology (IT) infrastructure and end-user systems, essentially providing outsourced IT services. This individual will offer traditional IT support across the whole organisation.
- **A Virtual CIO (vCIO)** is a C-Suite/Senior leader who can work with the CEO to design an effective technology strategy that addresses the immediate, short-term, and long-term objectives of a business. This individual will sit alongside a leadership team, evaluating new and existing technologies and ensuring robust IT posture to enable the business to succeed.

## The advantage of appointing a vCIO:

- Finding the right full-time talent is harder than ever before
- Access to broader commercial insights into external market trends
- Reduce your risk profile by heading off any potential technology-led threats (internal and external)
- Reduce tech-stack cost and fatigue
- Cost effective way to attain senior experience without a full executive level salary

54% of organisations experiencing a shortage of tech skills

source: Statista

50% of tech-recruiters confirm difficulty in finding qualified talent

source: McKinsey

40% of SMEs lack the tech skills and knowledge to successfully manage their business

source: World Economic Forum

# Why partner with a vCIO?

A vCIO allows companies to gain access to knowledge and expertise they normally wouldn't be able to afford, or maybe haven't considered, and there is significant value in that.

The role enables SMEs to access large enterprise-quality expertise that complements existing roles like CFO, CMO, and COO, i.e., roles requiring highly skilled and knowledgeable people who can lead and positively impact the organisation's success.

It is not uncommon for a CEO of an SME to ask a COO or CFO to include IT Strategy into their role scope; despite this not being their core capability. Generally, it's because the CIO role is just not big enough to justify a full-time professional or they don't have the budget to bring the role in-house.

Given the rapidly changing technology landscape, it is no longer possible for someone without a strong technology background to effectively manage the technology requirements needed to support the business.

Partnering with a vCIO allows a CEO to access an experienced resource that knows the technology well and understands how it needs to be applied specifically at a business level.

exhibit 1: vCIO areas of focus



## IT Leadership

C Suite-level tech strategy without the cost of a full time executive



## Strategic Insight

Customise your technology investment to deliver your business plan



## Investment Impact

Technology solutions designed to drive an ROI



## Scalable Transformation

Planned introduction of innovative technologies to address real business requirements aligned to your plan

# vCIO as a member of the Executive Team

A vCIO, as part of your Executive Team, has a vested interest in your success, with the authority to make informed decisions about the role technology plays in your organisation. An example of this would be what budget should be considered across all elements of your technology stack.

Businesses commonly categorise technology as either Architecture or Service Delivery, yet this approach fails to consider crucial factors that influence challenges, opportunities and risks. To manage this issue, a senior role with expertise in overseeing all aspects of your technology infrastructure is essential. This role should possess the required skills and framework to enhance your business outcomes effectively.

## The role of a vCIO

With businesses increasingly reliant on technology, the role of the vCIO ensures Executive Teams have a single point of responsibility for owning the end-to-end technology strategy that supports the business plan and objectives.

The vCIO is responsible for auditing and documenting the business' technology stack to:

- Establish a clear understanding of role of each software platform within the company to identify any redundancies or inefficiencies that may exist
- Develop a tailored roadmap to create a right-fit tech stack to drive the business plan
- Identify any hardware gaps that may influence optimal use of required software
- Lead the ongoing development of the recommended technology end-state position

The end state should ensure the business is only investing in technology that aligns with the business goals. This helps safeguard the organisation from both internal and external threats, and enabling growth and performance.

# How to utilise a vCIO

Technology is now integrated into every business. Consequently, this leads to departments implementing tech solutions designed to specifically address their individual needs without a whole-of-company lens perspective.

This siloed tech decision-making is problematic as it leads to an over-investment in software, tech redundancies, heightened vulnerabilities to hackers, and a disjointed tech stack that does not adequately align with the business strategy.

For ambitious businesses, a well-structured tech-stack is crucial. A vCIO aligns IT requirements across the organisation with an eye on the long-term business strategy.

## A vCIOs process to deliver improved efficiency and performance

- **Auditing:** Engaging in a methodical process to evaluate current practices, pinpointing issues and opportunities
- **Planning:** Identifying necessary actions and timelines to steer the company toward its goals. If planning is treated as a distinct formal process, it is capable of outlining, prioritising, and scheduling all strategic technology initiatives for the business within a suitable timeframe.
- **Change:** Following a systematic process reduces risk and enhances project success in technological changes. A vCIO must ensure feasibility and alignment with business requirements to meet needs within budget and time. Managing the required change is the key focus for a vCIO, targeting improvements and ongoing enhancements.
- **Transformation:** Navigating ongoing digital transformation is a minefield. Whether it involves a merger, new software adoption, compliance alignment, POS hardware upgrade, or a consolidation of hardware and software, your vCIO will provide the necessary guidance. Your vCIO will lead your team (or theirs) to implement the recommended solutions.

# Key deliverables of a vCIO

- **Gaining clarity** on the current and future states of the business.
- **Ensuring technology** and the business collaborate toward common business objectives.
- **Minimising operational disruptions** and managing them effectively when they occur.
- Ensuring thorough and effective **Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery** planning and testing.
- **Defining your requirements** and working on SLAs from your technology support to enhance productivity and reduce downtime.
- **Structuring and optimising** your technology for efficiency. Ensuring that hardware, software, services, contracts, and cloud services are well-selected and implemented to boost staff productivity.
- **Monitoring, managing, and reporting** on technology performance.
- **Managing change projects**, assessing their feasibility, defining business requirements, and ensuring successful implementation and staff adoption.
- **Leveraging cost-efficient tools** for effective staff communications that promote collaboration and information sharing.

**Are you are ready to take the LEAP?**

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LEAP forward  
starts with  
a simple step.

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