



CIO Credibility: Proven Practices From the Public Sector

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Foreword

The public sector is transforming itself in the face of budget constraints, new technologies and legislative requirements. Information technology is at the center of this transformation, placing new demands on the CIO.

CIO Credibility: Proven Practices From the Public Sector was carried out by the Gartner EXP research team, led by Mark McDonald and Marcus Blosch (Gartner EXP vice presidents and research directors). More than 30 public sector CIOs and technology executives were interviewed to understand how they respond to major transformations and to answer the question, *What are the practices public sector CIOs use to be successful?* The results show that public sector CIOs use proven practices that concentrate on building credibility to generate influence, trust and resources.

Many organizations and individuals contributed to the research:

- The public sector CIOs listed on the opposite page.
- Other members of the Gartner EXP research team: Marianne Broadbent, Richard Hunter, Andrew Rowsell-Jones, Chuck Tucker, Roger Woolfe and adjunct researcher, Barbara McNurlin.
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Note: Public sector CIOs execute a wide range of responsibilities in running an IS organization, such as procurement and contracting. Those practices are important, but they are not the focus of this report. This report focuses on the proven practices related to CIO credibility. It involves different levels or jurisdictions in the public sector, from national to regional or local institutions. "Agency" is used as a generic term for the organizational unit. It may mean a ministry, department, agency, commission, authority or departmental organization.

Executive summary

As leaders and managers, CIOs need credibility to fulfill their role and that of IT in transforming the public sector. Three key practice areas build and sustain that credibility: gaining executive attention, aligning with the executive agenda and delivering business results. Using proven practices in these areas, CIOs generate the influence, trust and resources to fulfill their leadership role.

Section 1: Manage the credibility cycle

Public sector CIOs manage a credibility cycle that underpins their leadership in the face of budget constraints, new policy requirements and technology developments. Each challenge requires the CIO to exert influence, foster trust and acquire resources. In interviewing public sector CIOs, one thing became clear: CIOs use a range of proven practices.

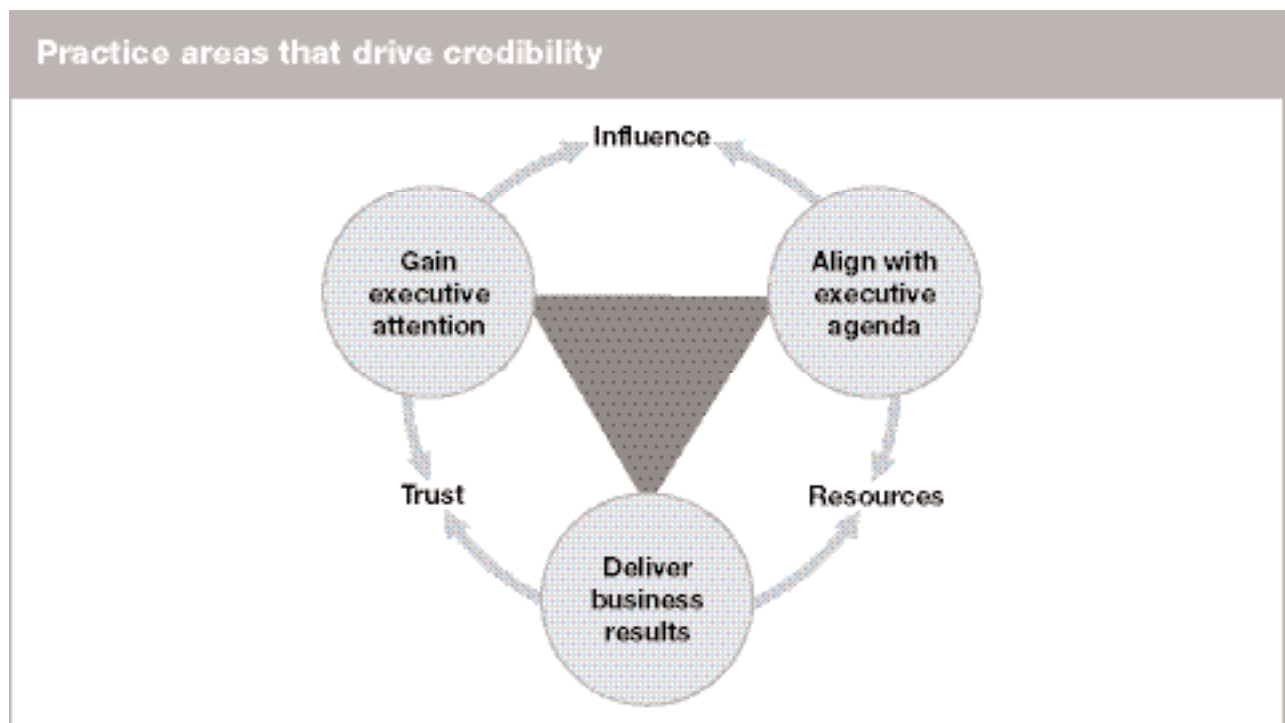
- Credibility underpins the leadership of effective public sector CIOs.
- Transformation initiatives revolve around CIO credibility.
- CIOs manage a credibility cycle within and across their organization.
- Effective CIOs emphasize three key practice areas to build credibility and generate influence, trust and resources.
- There are no silver bullets...only credible leaders.

Section 2: Gain and maintain executive attention

Executive attention is a scarce commodity, particularly in the public sector. CIOs need the right combination of relationships, political intelligence and networking to maintain appropriate executive attention.

To gain and maintain executive attention, public sector CIOs need to:

- Build bi-directional relationships by finding executive partners and champions
- Structure and manage IS activities to seek the right kind of attention
- Raise their political intelligence to understand what is getting attention
- Generate attention from multiple sources
- Keep people informed to avoid the “logic of resistance”
- Measure attention qualitatively with a self-assessment
- Understand that attention is mutual



Section 3: Align with the executive agenda

Alignment with the executive agenda shows support, builds influence and garners resources to deliver on the mission. The budget process rewards alignment and requires a focus on addressing business problems and opportunities. Alignment involves upgrading governance and explicitly connecting the IS organization with the agency's mission and vision.

To align with the executive agenda, public sector CIOs need to:

- Recognize that budget decisions reward alignment
- Make alignment a change process, not a regimented plan
- Go beyond an “X” in a box when connecting projects to results
- Be responsible for alignment, using a self-assessment

Results come from knowing and using what works

Experienced public sector technology leaders realize that *you do not know, until you are on the inside*. This report is an inside look at proven practices—the ones leaders actually use.

Examples of practices from the following public sector agencies are in the report. From Australia: Office of State Revenue, New South Wales; Department of Administrative and Information Services, South Australia; National Office for the Information Economy, Canberra. From Canada: The Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada. From Italy: CONSIP S.p.A., Rome; Regione Toscana, Florence. From the United States: City of Philadelphia; Department of Energy in Washington, D.C.; Federal Trade Commission in Washington, D.C.; Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority in Chicago, Illinois; New York City Housing Authority, State of New York; State of Ohio; U.S. Patent and Trademark Office in Washington, D.C. From the Netherlands: Department of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality; Department of Transportation and Waterways.

Many of these practices will be familiar to you, and others may be new. But all are used by your public sector peers today. (The term “best practice” is misleading because no one practice works “best” in all circumstances, given the diversity found in the public sector.)

Use this report to:

- Identify challenges you face in building credibility
- Assess your current practices in those areas
- Select practices to address areas of opportunity
- Contribute your proven practices to the Gartner EXP members' Web log

While it may seem difficult to produce “ah-ha's” using a proven-practices approach, one theme became conspicuous by its absence during the research: the management fad. Public sector CIOs are delivering results without turning to new management fads or supposed silver bullets.

Section 4: Deliver business results

The public sector is a complex environment involving many agencies, jurisdictions and constituencies. That puts a premium on collaboration, bringing different groups together to realize results. The IS organization and the business need to collaborate and have the required horizontal and vertical dialogue to deploy new solutions and harvest innovations in the field. This collaboration rests on the bedrock of discipline that must remain at the core of IS.

To deliver business results, public sector CIOs need to:

- Reconnect IS with the business
- Find good business relationship managers
- Create horizontal and vertical dialogue to foster innovation and turn outcomes into results
- Keep operational discipline at the core of IS
- Vest external service provider interest in successful delivery
- Fuel the credibility cycle with results, using a self-assessment

John Rimmer, CEO of Australia's National Office for the Information Economy, summed up these factors in his definition of effective CIOs: "They are people who can combine visionary leadership with achieving results on the ground. They can articulate how the business transacts through technology. They can engage the trust of the CEO, and they understand the synergies across government."

A tall order, this requires a high degree of CIO credibility, the subject of this report.

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