

IS THE CHIEF INNOVATION OFFICER ON BORROWED TIME?

Despite being a relatively new acronym to the C-suite, some think that the CINO might just go the way of the dodo and in double quick time if companies continue to think of innovation as something that happens throughout the organisation, rather than just a handful of departments. Take the likes of Google, who from their very earliest days have created a structure within which innovation is obligatory, not optional. There, everyone is responsible for innovation.

That said, the CINO's role isn't to promote company-wide innovation. Yes, they may play a role in developing a cultural change within an organisation that isn't already innovation-led, but really the CINO's remit is to identify and develop areas of the business where focussed innovation can contribute to the company's over-arching strategy and growth model. Great ideas still need someone at the helm to steer them into an actionable position and this is where the CINO is worth his or her weight in gold.

They are or at least should be the grist to the innovation mill, the person who can put processes in place to turn great ideas into value-driving results. One of the CINO's most underplayed roles is that of bringing together often siloed parts of the business. Very often it's the CINO that gets marketing, PR, finance, product development etc all at the same table at the same time. Without them, these silos can go about their work at different speeds and with different goals through lack of communication.

So who is the CINO and if you're in the market for one, what traits should they possess? Ideally, a good CINO requires diplomacy in spades, positive influencing skills and a galvanising personality, matched with plenty of pragmatism. They also need to have the confidence and authority to be able to go and demand the necessary changes in organisational structure so that every department is playing to the same tune.

So it's true then that everyone should be responsible for generating innovation, but the CINO is integral to turning those ideas into reality.