

## IT Leader Concerns

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At a recent even, I met a number of industry leaders from across various sectors, to discuss issues that are at the top of the CIO's agenda. The latest emerging trends that were discussed included sustainability and green practice; social media as a new communication channel; and mobile as a new workflow, communication and engagement tool.

However, something which has often stood out above all these other issues is collaboration with business partners. As we come out of the recession, CIOs understand the need to collaborate with other businesses in order to be successful. By collaboration, I mean the ability to communicate and connect successfully with other divisions within a company, and also with its external partners, so that they can share the necessary information which helps them achieve their business goals.

CIOs also expressed the importance of customer experience in relation to the success of their business. Again, this is closely linked to collaboration. One of the main concerns is that the delivery of a unified customer experience – be it on a local, regional or even global level – requires not just integration and collaboration among partners, but a trusted network of both internal, external and end-user customers in order to create a sustainable business opportunity.

Collaboration that generates actionable insights can predict the needs of the customer and deliver a unified experience that retains business and secures customer loyalty – by allowing companies to fulfil the customer's order as requested. It is clear that to survive in the internet world, you have no choice but to improve and optimise your customer experience.

Another concern voiced by CIOs is that they find their companies sit in multiple points of the collaboration network – from being the provider, being the vendor, or being the partner – which creates the need to manage each type of relationship appropriately. Globalisation, or perhaps now, global centralisation, is also important as many CIOs have recently been placed at the helm of programs aimed at centralising global resources, teams, vendors and opportunities.

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In my opinion, three key issues are at play:

- **Globalisation:** this is changing corporation and vendor sourcing relationships and more activity is now focused in a central location, even for a global organisation
- **Changing needs of the network:** reflecting the need and the action of outsourcing non-value added functions and operations
- **Complexity:** integration of people, process and technology

There is not one single solution to address these issues. The business drivers that are at work today are the same as what we have seen before: revenue, customer experience and the ability to do more with less. The idea of a Business Collaboration Network is not new – but it is becoming more and more critical to optimise business performance, as we climb out of the recession.

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