

6 Communication Tips for Technology Leaders in the Age of Digital Disruption

Technology leaders—whether CIOs, VPs, or directors of Enterprise Architecture—who prioritize a new way of communicating can become strategic drivers of the successful digital transformation of a company. To assume this role, it is critical that technology leaders organize, guide, and advise people at all levels of the company—from the Board of Directors to technology teams, according to Tim Goggin, CEO of Sappington.

The reality of digital business transformation in today's enterprises has created new technology ambitions among business leaders and has increased responsibilities for IT leaders. Transformation has also amplified the disparity between business and technology due to a lack of communication talent. Ultimately, the burden of improvement falls on the shoulders of the technology leader, requiring him or her to address the challenge of ineffective communication.

In an article on CIO.com, Brendan McGowan, CIO Executive Council (CEC) Global Media Bureau & Client Research Manager, reported that communication between IT and non-IT workers is in crisis. The claim is based on the results of the 2015 "Power of Effective IT Communication Survey," sponsored by the CEC and led by McGowan. In the final research report, "IT Communication in Crisis," McGowan says that "only four out of one hundred IT leaders believe that they are highly effective in communicating with their non-IT colleagues."

To help tech leaders harness this opportunity and assume the leadership role in which they belong, Goggin offers a compilation of tips from various experts and Sappington's experience:

- **Expand involvement in board meetings.** Start developing relationships with the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee. It requires courage and vulnerability to demand more time to present ideas and concerns at board meetings, while establishing ongoing dialogues with the CEO and other corporate leaders.
- **Reach to understand the business.** The report "IT Communication in Crisis" advocates that technology organizations start to understand why the company exists and examine the strategic plan for advancing the company. With this knowledge, technology leaders can bring a unique perspective to the business because they are closest to all of the potential digital opportunities for growth.
- **Communicate about growth opportunities.** Engage business counterparts and win them over by sharing information about growth opportunities through technology. Technology leaders know the potential of platforms and can help the business understand how technology can be a platform for growth.
- **Create your Digital North Star.** The transformation into a digital business requires refining the company's vision to lead with digital. It is the technology leader's responsibility to help create a simple, one-sentence vision for the company. This action can unify the executive team and board of directors.
- **Converge with business.** The CEC's report suggests that technology and business need to do more than align, they need to converge. In this new world of digital business transformation, technology leaders can guide the dialogue to help these disparate audiences focus on the digital vision as one purpose.
- **Speak as a human being.** One of the obstacles to bringing business and technology together continues to be the almost constant use of different lexicons. Business jargon and tech speak can sound intellectual, but if one side doesn't understand the other, authentic collaboration is thwarted. The CEC's report validates these points, as well as the long-held Sappington belief that technology leaders benefit from skipping the use of acronyms.

Technology leaders who tackle these areas of improvement are better prepared to manage the digital transformation of their company. By prioritizing communication they set themselves up to succeed in an ever-changing role.