

smartCIO

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Ben Fitzgerald,
Chief Technology Officer,
Tennis Australia

Tennis Australia Aces Adaptability Delivering Technology Solutions in Uncertain Times



Abhishek Singh,
Chief Digital Officer,
Royal Golden Eagle (RGE)

**Coherence
Across Complex
Infrastructure**



Yee Lin Chong,
Head of HR Digital Solutions,
Asia Pacific, Air Liquide

**CIO & CHRO
collaboration for
business resilience**





Foreword

New ways of working, global uncertainties, and technical complexities have changed the way organisations operate. When existing technology systems are unable to adapt, IT - led by the CIO - needs to be the change leader with the business.

The CIO leadership role must be focussed on adaptability, especially when it comes to IT architecture. When systems cannot adapt, organisations fail to close the technology acceleration gap, affecting the entire business - IT, Finance, and HR. A forward thinking digital strategy is required to create a robust and adaptable IT architecture.

In Issue 7 of smartCIO, we speak with technology leaders about building an adaptable IT architecture. Implemented correctly, it unifies an organisation, empowers leaders and employees while allowing the business to make smarter and faster decisions.

Tennis Australia Chief Technology Officer, Ben Fitzgerald, shares his experience in running the IT infrastructure for a Grand Slam event during a pandemic. Adaptability was vital in providing technology services to players, fans, and employees in an uncertain environment.

Maintaining a coherent IT ecosystem across different regions, cultures, and ambivalence towards technology were challenges Abhishek Singh, Chief Digital Officer at Royal Golden Eagle faced. With an adaptable mindset, he has successfully embarked on the digital transformation journey for the resource-based industrial group.

Thinking strategically about adaptability and agility allows businesses to thrive during uncertainty. With the outlook for the Asia Pacific region in mind, Lawrence Cheok, Associate Research Director of Digital Transformation at IDC shares insights from the recent study, 'Thriving in Uncertainty: How Digital Agility Maximises Business Success.'

From a HR perspective, Yee Lin Chong, Head of HR Digital Solutions, Asia Pacific at Air Liquide, believes synergising the CIO-CHRO roles is key to successful digital transformation. Doing so has enabled the company to implement an adaptable infrastructure to meet the HR needs of the business.

Finally, Workday Staff Writer, Bob Hansen, looks at how adaptable cloud technology can make financial planning a year round process. This means organisations can identify financial trends before they have an adverse impact on operations.

The last few years have proved the future is uncertain. Building an adaptable IT architecture is the most effective way organisations can prepare for future conditions and events.

Sandeep Sharma
President for Asia,
Workday

Contents at a Glance

How technology helps Tennis Australia ace adaptability

Tennis Australia is no stranger to IT adaptability, especially after hosting one of the sport's Grand Slam events, the Australian Open, during COVID-19. Chief Technology Officer, Ben Fitzgerald, and his team delivered technology solutions for players and fans in an uncertain environment.

Maintaining a coherent IT ecosystem across culture and geography

The natural resources industry is known to be conservative as far as tech is concerned. This provided a challenge for Chief Digital Officer at Royal Golden Eagle, Abhishek Singh, when he began a digital transformation journey spanning different regions and cultures.

Stronger together: CIO and CHRO collaboration for business resilience

Synergising the CIO-CHRO roles drives ongoing business transformation and accelerates IT change. For Head of HR Digital Solutions, Asia Pacific at Air Liquide, Yee Lin Chong, a strong partnership with the CIO was key to a complex but successful digital transformation of the HR function.

Agility in action: Creating an adaptable IT infrastructure

Strategic agility is a competitive advantage for organisations to not just survive, but thrive, in the face of changing business conditions. Associate Research Director of Digital Transformation at IDC, Lawrence Cheek, discusses IDC's latest study, Thriving in Uncertainty: How Digital Agility Maximises Business Success.

How to make financial planning a year-round process

Financial planning needs to be a continuous, year-round process not a last minute dash every EOFY. Workday Staff Writer, Bob Hansen, looks at how cloud planning technology, as part of an organisation's adaptable IT architecture, identifies financial trends and shifts all year round.

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How technology helps Tennis Australia ace adaptability

Ben Fitzgerald, Chief Technology Officer, Tennis Australia

The world of sport lends itself perfectly to adaptability. You have to adjust your moves based on what your opponent throws at you, revise your plays according to your scores, and tailor your tactics to win the game.

Tennis Australia is no stranger to adaptability. As the governing body for tennis in Australia, the organisation promotes the sport across the country, fosters player development, invests in facilities, and stages local and international events, the most notable of which is the Australian Open held annually in January.

“We wait for it all year round, and when it gets here, it ramps up quickly and there’s so much adrenaline,” said Ben Fitzgerald, CTO at Tennis Australia. “During the summer, we try to put on as many events as possible for the playing contingent to give them as much opportunity to warm up for the Australian Open and compete for ranking points and prize money.”

This two- to three-month period is a time of excitement and action, but it’s also an exercise in adaptability for Ben and his team. “The event window is a dynamic

environment and the most demanding part of our business. We need to be highly adaptable to support that, and we try our best to run and manage those events through technology,” he said.

Enabling business continuity through innovation

No more was an adaptable IT architecture more important to Tennis Australia than during the 2021 Australian Open. The COVID-19 pandemic posed issues that the team had to contend with, such as delaying the start of the tournament, accommodating mandatory quarantine, a lockdown, and putting in place health and safety restrictions.

“The lack of certainty was the most challenging component, and we considered the entire range of scenarios that might play out – from having no event to a normal event and a few variants in between. We were pragmatic

in our planning and clear on what was achievable, allowing for some flexibility to adapt to each scenario,” said Ben. “We tried to minimize our cost impact on the business as much as we can, but at the same time, run the right services to support the event.”

This meant investing in existing technology solutions – such as the electronic line calling system to automate line judging – and building new ones. Ben and his team developed a platform to manage contact tracing and enable data sharing with the state government, satisfying their requirements for running a safe event. The team also deployed traffic light-style indicators for indoor venues to manage capacity, as well as a remote video conferencing platform for international media partners who weren’t able to make it on-site. To ensure Tennis Australia’s existing IT architecture could handle the large volumes of data gathered and shared, the team conducted a significant upgrade of the organization’s network and infrastructure, and added redundancies around that.

Ben was aware that he had to break down silos to realise the organisation’s vision of an adaptable IT architecture, so he involved departments outside of IT from the start. “Collaboration is one of our values at Tennis Australia, and it’s more effective to work through that journey together,” he said. “We have finance, for example, as one of the resources that helps shape our approach and provides feedback on how we should invest in different technology areas to

Tennis Australia Chief Technology Officer, Ben Fitzgerald, and his talented IT team are responsible for delivering all the technology supporting the Australian Open, one of the sport’s Grand Slam events. Recognised as a digital thought leader and innovator, his experiences also covers retail, e-commerce, telecommunications, and media.

make sure we're spending in the best possible ways."

Despite the challenges Tennis Australia faced, the 2022 Australian Open was a success. "We received amazing feedback and it was a rewarding outcome. It was an example of business continuity through innovation," Fitzgerald said.

Finding the right balance with the help of technology

Even without the uncertainty and disruption of a pandemic, Tennis Australia must adapt to the ever-changing needs of its customer ecosystem – from players and fans to the behind-the-scenes workforce. It's a delicate balancing act, so the organization applies a two-pronged approach: offering the best experience possible and tailoring its team to fit the seasonal nature of the sport.

To deliver the best experience possible, the technology team created dedicated technology

"For us, the right business culture is everything and I am not understating this point."

solutions for each customer type. For instance, players and their entourage have an app to make day-to-day navigation of the event easier, giving them access to their accommodation, transport bookings, match schedules, and bookings for practice courts. "We go above and beyond in all facets of the player experience, and we try to make the items that players need to manage as easy as possible through technology," said Ben.

Meanwhile, the organisation provides employee portals and employee engagement tools for both its regular workforce and seasonal workforce, which tends to reach thousands over the event period. Similarly, the fan base

uses digital products – including apps and websites – to watch live feeds and highlights, keep up with match results, and purchase merchandise online.

To fit the seasonal nature of the sport, Tennis Australia adjusts the size of its team and their functions. "The team size does fluctuate based on time of year," Ben said, noting that during the Australian Open, they have an event mode team to run tactical support, day-to-day operational support, and service management support.

A culture of adaptability

Tennis Australia also has a strategic program team that runs

Collaborative problem solving and planning as a team





Tennis Australia technology team members

various projects throughout the year to support different customer types. “During the quietest part of the year when everyone’s recovering from the lead up to and running of the events, we get a chance to sit down as a group and talk about pain points and what has gone well,” said Ben. “Through that process, we identify new technologies to improve the way we support different parts of the business and then pull that into a strategic program proposal. That annual cadence allows for a deliberate review and planning checkpoint each year.”

This planning process is crucial for the team, enabling them to constantly innovate. “We have an enormous appetite for innovative technology, so if we aren’t finding new opportunities ourselves, the business is sharing with us their thoughts on what they’ve found and what they think can help their specific use cases in their departments,” Ben said. “Then, we try to find

foundational technologies that we can maximize for reuse and can provide support across the board.”

Moreover, the planning process allows the organization to continuously recalibrate and turn insights into actions that will benefit their customers. “We have a human-centered design practice and we understand customer journeys, so I challenge the tech team to be the most customer-centric team it can be,” said Ben. “We are customer-led in terms of project ideas, proposals, and opportunities, and clear on how they will benefit customers. So when we sit down every year to plan our strategic program, we get a sense of which project supports which customer, and which customer type might need more support or attention.”

Beyond mitigating uncertainty, breaking down silos, and continuous recalibration, Ben credits his team for their key role in helping Tennis Australia achieve

IT adaptability. “I would put it down to team culture and an absolute can-do attitude,” he said. “We’ve got some really talented technologists whose skills and experience are first class. We wouldn’t have gotten here without their determination and a commit-early-and-hard attitude, so there’s a lot to be said for the importance of and strength in team culture.”



Maintaining a coherent IT ecosystem across culture and geography

Abhishek Singh, Chief Digital Officer, Royal Golden Eagle

With a rich job experience ranging from founding start-ups to working in product management, Abhishek Singh was appointed Chief Digital Officer at the resource-based industrial group Royal Golden Eagle (RGE) in 2018, a company headquartered in Singapore and with operations in Indonesia, China, Brazil, and Canada.

RGE mainly focuses on sustainably produced natural resources, employing over 60,000 employees across different countries. The complexity of ensuring tech support for everyone is daunting, not least due to the different levels of maturity in the different markets RGE has dealings in. Acknowledging that RGE is a segmented company is the first step to tailoring adaptable infrastructure and designing IT architecture that is based on business solutions that the company is working towards.

The natural resources industry is known to be conservative as far as tech is concerned. Considering that RGE operates in countries which are relatively less developed, the challenge to coordinate workflows with tech is one that Abhishek openly admits to.

Multinational, cross-cultural tech challenges

RGE faces three main challenges, the first of which is the management of data towards business decision making, or decision support systems, using AI and machine learning. The second is the industry-wide issue of cybersecurity concerns, and the third is the need for the company to operate across heterogeneous IT infrastructure.

"We already have some applications as simple as set-up on a couple of desktops, to complex ones such as the data centre of Hong Kong, including a recovery centre," said Abhishek.

After becoming Chief Digital Officer at Royal Golden Eagle, Abhishek Singh, has been overseeing the ongoing digital transformation of the multibillion conglomerate and its affiliate companies. With an interest in AI, enterprise architecture, and big data he placed 14 in IDG's CIO75 ASEAN 2021.

With some regions being unable to adopt cloud platforms due to possible compromising situations, a significant challenge remains for RGE.

Eliminating silos in the company

However, Abhishek's drive to maintain coherence across a complex infrastructure has been successful at minimising parts of the company that work autonomously. He attributes this to diverting responsibilities for technology issues to either the CIO or himself. As a result, outstanding IT issues are coordinated and relayed to the respective offices and Abhishek will then convene a "digital and IT board" where he discusses these issues with his peers.

"There are no silos from an execution perspective, but application-wise, silos are still present because of the varying

degree of requirements from a physical standpoint. So for example, we have factories which operate in environments where we may still be working on a 2MB/s line. Sometimes you do not even have 2MB/s," he said.

While technology has helped eliminate silos to a large extent, other factors such as good corporate governance helps bolster the tech support available.

Keeping IT ready for action

"You may be operating in an industry that is traditional, but employees and people in charge are all digitally connected," said Abhishek.

As with all things tech, change occurs quickly within the industry, including human resources, but Abhishek firmly believes that the changing employee demographics pose an advantage as millennials



Staff in Brazil celebrate the rebranding of Bracell

‘bring their own consumer experience into the workplace’.

High expectations from employees for technology platforms in terms of usability and flexibility are factors in helping the company continuously assess software efficiency and seek applications that can better complement company operations.

Ensuring all employees remain connected is also key to ensuring inclusivity in the company. Abhishek said there are currently 5,000 tablets available throughout the workforce. These tablets are also issued to field operations employees who engage in farming and plantation management, as well as employees responsible for making deliveries.

Abhishek believes that issuing tablets is a way for the company to show that it cares about their employees. While this serves to

further raise expectations from employees, Abhishek takes this development in his stride and asserts that it will help keep the company ready to provide IT support and enable efficiency.

Employee Tech Pro-activity

“If an employee in the procurement business says, “I heard about this new software”, all they have to do is ask an architect and get permission to start using it,” explained Abhishek.

Ownership of the architecture is therefore key, and anyone in the company can make a request to reassess it. This specific company policy is highly publicised and encouraged, and Abhishek is well aware of its great potential in enabling RGE’s digital department to become more agile and adaptable.

By allowing anyone to experiment with software other than those already being used or prescribed by the company, Abhishek has created a new standard in the way companies can approach tech stacks, notably personalising the employee experience and keeping the department ever ready for new developments in industry technology.

The investment is worth the payoff

Despite only having this workflow in place for the last few years, Abhishek emphasises that it has enabled faster decision making. While there remains work to do, he is aware that RGE is a large company, and it’s not ‘easy to get everyone to understand the same thing at the same time’.

“You may be operating in an industry that is traditional, but employees and people in charge are all digitally connected.”

Encouraging ownership of the workflow

Abhishek shared an anecdote of one of the first employees to take advantage of this company policy, specifically on an employee that initiated a system migration from Oracle to an open-source data solution. After sufficient research, the company concluded that significant savings could be made for the company with this shift.

In addition, Abhishek realised that this freedom to experiment with new applications and software would not only help the company but improve work culture in terms of encouraging an openness to alternative methods of structuring workflow and tech stacks.

Indeed, whether it was an employee wishing to use Basic4Android (B4A) programming language to create mobile apps or another employee intending to adopt open-source software to do their job more effectively, Abhishek's cultivation of a tech stack open to experimentation with different types of technology has definitely paid off as RGE's



Digital technology is being used to optimise supply chains

tech stack constantly improves to be innovative in an industry known to be conservative and traditional with processes.

Technology that unites

Having played a leading role in improvements within the company in his four years of employment, Abhishek has been committed to ensuring that a

company in the natural resources industry can greatly benefit from implementing smart technology in its workflow, and demonstrating how good policy making with respect to technology adoption can benefit employees, regardless of whether they work in an office or in a plantation.

Drones are used to remotely monitor plantations



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Stronger together: CIO and CHRO collaboration for business resilience

Yee Lin Chong, Head of HR Digital Solutions, Asia Pacific, Air Liquide

In this day and age, digital dexterity in terms of skills and technology is pivotal to surviving digital disruption. For this reason, synergising the CIO-CHRO roles is crucial to drive ongoing business transformation and accelerate IT change. This strategic partnership facilitates cooperation at all levels of the organisation and enables future-proofing of the business while enhancing employee satisfaction.

A digital-first culture needs to take on an employee-first mindset to win in today's world of work. C-suite executives must learn to build followership momentum in addition to leadership power. A common impediment to fully involving the rest of the company in new digital initiatives is often attributed to the lack of a digital culture within the organisation.

Many forget that the introduction of new technologies calls for behavioural and mentality transformations as well as change management, especially when employees are required to interact, cooperate, and learn novel new ways of working. Such a shift requires both IT facilitation as much as people management capabilities.

A pressing HR problem

Air Liquide, a multinational world leader in gases, technologies and services for Industry and Health, recognised the importance of digital transformation to reinvent and streamline their HR business operations. Chong Yee Lin, Head of HR Digital Solutions, APAC highlighted, "Our growing needs include providing a consistent employee experience, empowering managers in people decisions, enhancing employee engagement, managing remote and virtual teams efficiently, and using automation to deliver a new centralised HR Operating Model to unify teams. When the pandemic hit, we were in the early stages of building a roadmap for adaptable HR IT transformation infrastructure. We had the blueprint for HR transformation but not the IT systems. The pressing decision

“Immediate usage of the new technology was 70% in the first few weeks and continued progressively upwards, reaching full usage adoption today.”

was how we could stay the course in the difficult, rapidly evolving business climate and meet our objectives.”

Yee Lin continued: "Our HR operations were decentralised with multiple, disparate, outdated and non-connected systems proliferating across countries. HR teams were operating with inconsistent processes, even manually employing traditional tools such as Excel and Google Sheets.”

Many organisations are working towards implementing flexible work solutions in the hybrid office of the 'new normal' with an emphasis on enhancing agility, mobility, and responsiveness to disruptive workforce trends. Developing a unified, user-friendly digital architecture that eliminates complexity, provides consistency, ensures convenience and functionality, while improving the level of HR services has become increasingly important.

In line with the integral role IT plays in the modern workplace, today's employees expect and desire a good people experience,

to be engaged at key moments that matter in the employee lifecycle of events in their career with the company. This calls for prioritising human-centric work practices and processes, so individuals feel valued, heard, and supported. Automation initiatives must recognise the changing workforce expectations for consumer grade, seamless tools, and services, coupled with a human touch. It is no less than the convenience and satisfaction they experience in their everyday lives beyond the workplace, such as on social media.

As corporations invest in and build people, processes, and tools to be future-ready, they still face the ever-increasing trend of the Great (Workforce) Reshuffling and Resignation, testament to the fact that employee engagement and satisfaction need to be addressed.

The dynamic duo: CIO & CHRO collaboration

The key to successful collaboration is constant curiosity and communication between CIOs and CHROs. Sharing her first-hand experience, Yee Lin explains, "It was a complex HR

transformation journey with many moving parts in the infrastructure landscape. We had new systems and cloud services requiring IT evaluation, procurement, and implementation. These needed to reflect the guiding principle and ultimate objective to increase employee experience. Working with the Office of CIO is key as IT has the right framework and expertise to source for, evaluate and recommend best-of-breed 'right-fit solutions' available in the market to deliver services securely and robustly."

In today's world of work, key changing global workforce trends point towards employing digital dexterity, using skills, processes, and technology. HR trends continue to revolve

around finding the right talent, upskilling talent, and retaining talent. IT leadership plays a pivotal role in partnering with CHROs to spur innovative digitisation to meet these people and business challenges.

By leveraging the skills of the CIO, an appreciation of the business landscape, and in-depth understanding of current 'best-of-breed' technology offerings and trends, CHROs are able to make informed decisions that can integrate well in the overall enterprise technology landscape.

For digital innovation and enhancing HR automation capabilities, Yee Lin emphasises the importance of using real-time data. "This is not a wish list, but

in today's workplace, this is a 'must-have' to be able to leverage real-time data and analytics to empower people managers to take quick action in people decisions, help businesses determine future workforce plans, predict turnover in critical roles, make hiring decisions, connect metrics to goals, and be guided by market benchmarking."

She added: "The office of the CIO is a key component and plays a central role in steering IT while understanding business and CHRO needs, showcasing industry best practices, shaping transformation, offering support during the implementation process, and integrating new technology seamlessly into the enterprise landscape. Air Liquide underwent a rigorous RFP process and the APAC team worked closely in collaboration with their global IT counterparts for a successful deployment of its HR digital transformation initiative."

Yee Lin shared how, with the close collaboration with IT teams, the APAC organisation now uses one unified, user-friendly HR cloud platform. It integrates with IT enterprise systems for security access provisioning and management, connects countries, and business entities with one common people experience, enables employee and manager self-service, provides automated workflows, and overall improving of HR service delivery through digital tools.

"The immediate and tangible results were certainly encouraging."



The statistics speak volumes

Upon measuring the adoption rate of Air Liquide's new digital endeavours, Yee Lin noted, "Immediate usage of the new technology was 70% in the first few weeks and continued progressively upwards, reaching full usage adoption today. Through the automated central system, managers now have real-time access to people information and analytics. They are also able to manage geographically dispersed teams throughout the employee lifecycle including hiring, compensation, employee movements, time management, absence management, overtime controls, and work schedules."

She continued, "With automated and centralised workflows, many processes were managed more efficiently. Processes that previously took weeks, like leave, pay and overtime approvals, are now completed in less than two days. The full usage adoption metric achieved today speaks for itself. Furthermore, we have received positive and encouraging feedback from our employees on the new digital employee services."

Introducing new ways of working with digital tools such as mobile device access for the first time, can be challenging. Speaking from personal experience, Yee Lin shared, "In certain markets such as in China, where different mobile devices like Huawei are used, extra details are taken into consideration during the implementation process. We had to check if the intended solution is feasible and accessible in

remote locations, as well as to track network response time from these locations, and identify the workarounds needed.

"For the first time, mobile device geo-fencing technology was successfully introduced for time clock and attendance tracking in several APAC locations, replacing outdated physical time clocks at dispersed locations. This provides employees with added convenience."

The new digital platform enables the organisation to have a better outreach with not only the managers and professionals, but also the frontline and remote blue-collar workforce across diverse businesses, geographies, languages, and cultures in APAC.

The future of work

When IT and HR collaborate to provide their employees with exceptional digital experiences, organisations benefit from

With an extensive HR career across the IT and financial sectors, Yee Lin Chong is Head of HR Digital Solutions, Asia Pacific at Air Liquide. A HR technology leader, her focus is HR Business Processes, HR Operations and HRIS Implementations. She believes technology is integral to successful HR policies.

improved engagement, higher productivity, and greater business continuity

Looking ahead, Yee Lin revealed, "We seek to continually engage employees at key Moments that Matter in the employee life cycle, throughout their careers with Air Liquide."

With modern technology architecture, Air Liquide is well-placed to add more cutting-edge technology capabilities on the roadmap ahead, for recruiting, talent management, onboarding, performance management, learning, and development. Digitisation enables us to also collaborate with our finance counterparts to bring employee cost and expenses data into the big picture for better analytics and workforce planning. We need to work closely with the office of the CFO to achieve this."



Agility in action: Creating an adaptable IT architecture

Lawrence Cheok, Associate Research Director of Digital Transformation, IDC

Scaled digitalisation has propelled Asia Pacific's transformation to a digital-first economy, as organisations extend their use of technology to be more agile in responding to and capitalising on changing market dynamics. Although organisations have significantly progressed in digital agility in the last two years, there is a widening gap between leading and lagging enterprises.

Leveraging agility for competitive advantage

Strategic agility is a competitive advantage for organisations to not just survive, but thrive, in the face of changing needs and trends. The IDC Study, *Thriving in Uncertainty: How Digital Agility Maximises Business Success*, found agility leaders (those in the integrated and agile stages) to have nearly doubled from 20% to 38% between 2020 and 2022. In only two years, 18% of Asia Pacific companies have transformed into agility leaders, with technology permeating the corporate strategy and roadmap. The majority, however, are still behind in terms of digital agility, with 62% in the slow or tactical stages. They are referred to as agility followers.

From a functional standpoint, agility leaders have a more comprehensive picture of their people for workforce planning and talent development, which is also in sync with finance in cost accounting and budgeting operations. These leaders are also using predictive analytics to help HR and finance better anticipate and respond to change. In contrast, follower organisations lack this enterprise-wide synergy due to their tactical approach of technology adoption.

The evolving functions of CIOs, CFOs, and CHROs

Lawrence Cheek, Associate Research Director of Digital Transformation at IDC, defined CIOs as digital orchestrators. As the backbone of an organisation's digital agility, a CIO's job scope must go beyond traditional IT

risk management and operations to include the transformation of the organisation's technological architecture, to establish resilience and overcome application silos and data fragmentation, which are key inhibitors to effective collaboration and decision making. The CIO must also ensure that the architecture is nimble in supporting new business models and facilitating participation in digital ecosystems. CIOs must enable better business outcomes, agility, and resilience through the use of cloud-based technology to enable the transformation of the enterprise into a digital business.

Working closely with the CIO, the CFO's position must develop as well, from finance management and capital allocation to be the arbitrator of enhanced corporate decision-making. Cheek highlights that it is critical for today's CFOs to provide financial insights for improved and pre-emptive decision-making across all levels. As such, CFOs must

As Associate Research Director of Digital Transformation at IDC, Lawrence Cheek focuses on digital transformation (DX) research, and looks at how enterprises are transitioning from scaling DX internally to becoming digital businesses in the digital economy.

integrate and automate finance solutions and processes and leverage data visualisation to surface business insights.

Simultaneously, the function of the CHRO must grow beyond human capital management to cultivate an agile workforce capable of keeping up with change by employing technology to create a flexible, hybrid-first work model. An agile workforce empowered by a hybrid-first work model, that adapts to different work environments and meets changing business demands. “CHROs must enable hybrid-first work models, scale hybrid-first employee experience, and cultivate a digitally-savvy workforce,” Lawrence added.

Barriers to agility

Often, executives fail to fully comprehend how a company can promote and profit from agility. Instead, they frequently operate in ways that contradict agile principles and practices, harming the performance of agile teams in their firms instead. IT executives may also be saddled with technical debt due to a lack of strategic technology planning, where accumulated expenditures result in risky, complicated, and expensive IT systems.

Additionally, data silos and reporting discrepancies have affected organisational decision-making. With a lack of insight into system dependencies and workload redistribution to meet changing demands, such an approach nullifies the risk management and business continuity procedures.

“Fixed structures, no matter how relevant in their time, cannot withstand the fast-changing, dynamic world we live in.”

According to the IDC-Workday Digital Agility Index Survey 2022, the top IT challenges identified are:

1. IT Agility:

Choosing the right technology solutions that can help drive business agility while avoiding technical debt.

2. Platform Integration:

The lack of consistent integration across systems creates data, reporting, and business process issues that impact decision-making.

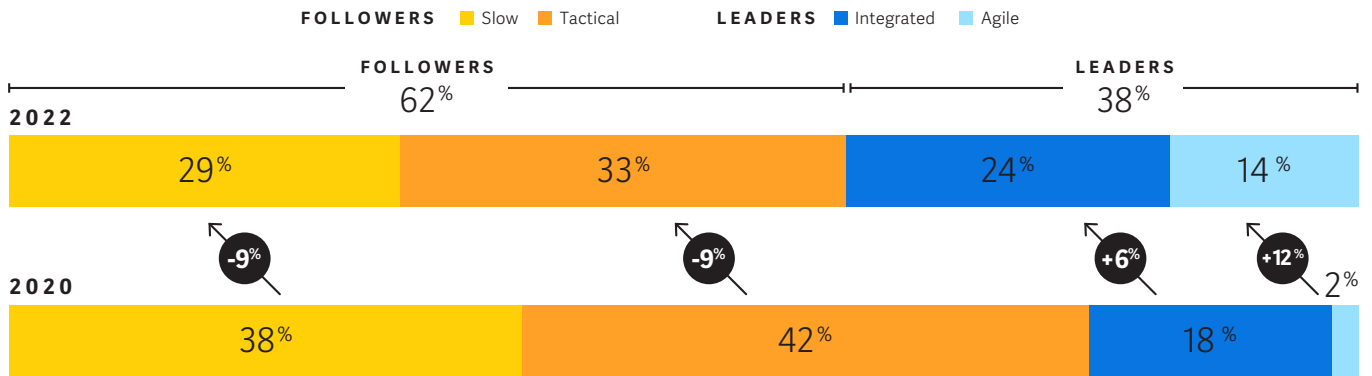
3. IT Resiliency:

Delivering digital resiliency at scale to effectively respond to rapid changes and capitalise on disruptions.

Digital agility goes beyond responding to changing circumstances. Rather, it allows organisations to capitalise on change as an opportunity.

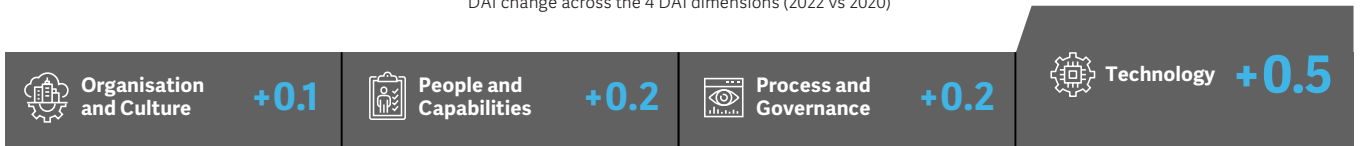
“Organisations need to develop two key capabilities in response to a digital-first economy. Firstly, contextualisation which involves being aware of current events and secondly, the ability to make decisions in response to these changes in real-time,” Lawrence emphasised.

Asia/Pacific Organisations Are More Agile...



...Driven by Increased Technology Adoption

DAI change across the 4 DAI dimensions (2022 vs 2020)



Source: IDC InfoBrief, *Thriving in Uncertainty - How Digital Agility Maximises Business Success*, July 2022.

[Full report →](#)

Adopting agile IT architecture

To combat these challenges, agile leaders need to be supported by robust architecture. The ideal is to build a self-governing, self-healing, and self-optimising architecture for business resilience. A solid IT infrastructure that enables business continuity in times of quick-paced globalisation, as well as the agility to swiftly recover from interruptions, is the foundation of a resilient organisation.

CIOs must build an adaptable IT architecture built on composable services to enable business development. As new digital goods and services develop, a modular as-a-service architecture design maximises IT asset reuse and minimises the build-up of technical debts.

The study compared agility leaders and followers and found 40% of leading organisations use an adaptable as-a-service architecture to enable business development. In contrast, half of agile followers' IT environments are built on monolithic architectures with tactical approaches to technology updates, exposing the organisation to risks, complications, and expense.

IDC predicts by 2024, "40% of CIOs will fail to effectively evolve IT's capability to deliver modern digital infrastructures, provide ecosystem tech governance, and support architecture-driven business outcomes."



To mitigate this, CIOs can develop an adaptable organisation by focusing on these key areas:

- Build digital resilience by automating IT operations & accelerating cloud adoption to handle demand fluctuation and outage and security events.
- Drive business agility by migrating core systems to the cloud and codifying business processes to enable automation and IT asset reuse through an as-a-service architecture.
- Improve integration flexibility by investing in data management and API integration and management focusing on reducing technical debts.

In executing these initiatives, CIOs need to work with HR, finance and operations to create a cohesive and agile technology architecture that enables greater enterprise synergy.

The future is agile

Companies that effectively scale up agile notice significant improvements in their operations. They are able to read shifting situations, prioritise, devise flexible solutions and avoid the continual crises that plague traditional hierarchies. Disruptive technologies will become less disruptive and more akin to adaptable business as usual. Companies are now forced to decide if they want to be an agile leader or an agile follower in these fast-changing landscapes.

"Fixed structures, no matter how relevant in their time, cannot withstand the fast-changing, dynamic world we live in," Lawrence shared, quoting Nassim Taleb's Antifragile.

Lawrence predicts: "The organisations positioned for success and deemed antifragile are the ones that are agile."

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How to make financial planning a year-round process

By Bob Hansen, Workday Staff Writer

Making financial planning a continuous, year-round process will improve your company's agility and help it reach its strategic goals.

There's no doubt that holding on to legacy planning technology and processes can cost your company more than it saves. That's especially true in today's data-driven, accelerated world where business agility is now a determining factor for success.

Instead, to think fast and move first, organisations must embrace a new, modern planning model with adaptable IT infrastructure or risk being left behind. Yet many financial pros are still bogged down in rigid, time-consuming spreadsheets and old-school annual planning cycles.

Cloud planning technology, as part of an organisation's adaptable IT architecture, helps companies uncover the key drivers that impact teams' performance—and identify the trends and market shifts that could hit the bottom line in the coming year. Taking a more active approach to financial planning also can give decision-makers the objective intel they need to invest in good opportunities or cut back on those that aren't performing well.

Making financial planning a continuous, year-round process helps companies make swifter, more strategic decisions. Here are three proven ways to create more dynamic financial plans that will improve your company's agility and help it reach its strategic goals.

Tactic 1: **Focus on strategy**

Don't let yesterday's processes drive your company's current and future financial plans. If teams are focused on doing what they did

last year, business performance will stagnate.

To succeed in a rapidly evolving marketplace, companies need a clear strategic vision—and a detailed plan to execute it. And that plan needs to be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.

But business leaders can't make responsive, strategic decisions without uniform data from across the organisation. If teams are using multiple systems, they'll lose valuable time logging into each program to collect, validate, and compare data. Everyone knows that manually aggregating data is an error-prone and time-consuming process. Yet many companies continue to house operational and financial data in separate systems.

Conversely, a central data repository acts as a convenient, single source of truth for accurate information about company performance. Cloud-based adaptable systems allow people from across the company to upload their team's data and gather information from other departments to inform their decisions.

With this type of tech, teams can stop wasting time debating whose data is right and focus on deciding which investments will do the most to help the company meet its strategic goals. When all departments are using the same dataset to achieve a shared strategy, the company will stop existing as a collection of independent cogs and become a cohesive business where everyone moves in tandem.

A centralised, cloud-based database is also always up to date and accurate, which lets leaders make decisions based on numbers they have confidence in. The right software will even automate the data collection process, eliminating the potential for human error. And if manual changes need to be made to reports, models, or forecasts, a central repository ensures updates are spread across all datasets instantly. That eliminates the need to make the same adjustment to multiple spreadsheets.

Tactic 2: **Plan in real time**

In today's business environment, market shifts can disrupt a business virtually overnight. And in these transformative times, static reporting can put your company at a significant disadvantage. When leaders need to decide how to respond to an immediate shift in the business landscape, months-old data won't be much use. What happened yesterday needs to be reflected in today's key performance indicators (KPIs).

For example, if a competitor suddenly emerges or releases a new product, leaders need to know what kind of threat that could pose to the company's market share. If they can easily access current figures, they can adapt on the fly. But if it takes days—or even weeks—to gather, verify, and analyse information, the business runs the risk of losing ground.

The ability to feed analytics models with fresher data is a key factor allowing successful

“When your company has planned for the unexpected—and backed up that planning with data—teams will be able to spring into action when change comes knocking.”

financial planning and analysis (FP&A) teams to take a more forward-looking approach. For companies to be competitive, they need access to real-time, structured, and unstructured data that is shared extensively across the enterprise.

In addition to real-time data, dashboard and modelling software can also provide insights into the factors doing the most to drive business results. Plus, cloud technology allows teams to self-report and drill into actuals without asking the finance team to run a custom dashboard. This lets business partners analyse their own performance data, such as the drivers influencing variance over the past few months. It also frees up the finance team to focus on creating forward-looking forecasts rather than managing a constant stream of one-off requests.

Tactic 3: Prepare for multiple outcomes

While it's easy to fall into an annual financial planning routine, the company's ability to adapt and quickly change course can mean the difference between hitting its target and falling short.

An annual planning process constricts the finance team by placing a hard stop at the end of the fourth quarter. It ties the strategic decision-making process to the beginning of the year and limits the company's ability to respond to changes throughout the year. For instance, if something monumental happens in the third quarter, the company may need to shift resources to react. But if people and budgets are locked in place through the end of the year, that response time could be delayed.

Moving to a continually rolling forecast allows leaders to see how a change might impact company performance over different time frames, whether that's three months, 12 months, or two years. The finance team can continually look ahead to see how performance might shift based on recent events or likely disruptions on the horizon.

A rolling forecast and budgeting process also makes it easier for a company to make more targeted and effective investments. For instance, if you ask a manager to commit to the number of people they'll need over the course of an entire

year, they'll round up for safety. But if you make hiring decisions quarterly, you may not get as many new employee requests at the beginning of the year.

Rolling out a process that allows teams to request resources more frequently makes it possible for the company to grow and change more organically. Rather than hiring five people in January, a team can hire one or two people to capitalise on a new opportunity. They can then request additional head count if things pan out as hoped. This has the potential to make the hiring process more streamlined and drive down staffing costs.

Scenario planning improves agility

Scenario planning is another approach that can help make your financial plan more flexible. When leaders take the time to analyse how a few likely obstacles or opportunities could impact the business—and create plans to deal with those changes—your company will be ready to react with speed and agility if these hypotheticals become reality.

Scenario planning can give leaders the tools they need to jump on a new opportunity or dodge a direct hit while other companies are still going back and forth about how to respond to a market shift. Research shows this type of predictive planning is helping companies get ahead. Companies that possess superior analytical powers and excel at pursuing profitable growth use predictive analytics far more extensively to plan and manage risk.

In short, analytics is changing how organisations make decisions and take actions. But in order to make data an effective business planning and decision-making tool, it must be used and managed appropriately. Data by itself has limited value but when managed as a strategic asset, data can change how organisations compete and win.

With a combination of adaptable centralised data platforms, real-time intel, scenario plans, and rolling forecasts, you can take a much more effective approach to financial planning. When your company has planned for the unexpected—and backed up that planning with data—teams will be able to spring into action when change comes knocking. And leaders will feel confident in the decisions they've made.





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