



The Role of Chief Automation Officer in Digital Transformation

Today's savvy business leaders recognize the need to adapt to changing technology or risk being left behind. And while we may not be able to control what that technology will be or which direction it will take us, we can take advantage by responding quickly and making the necessary adaptations before our competitors. That's why the role of **Chief Automation Officer – CAO**, is becoming much more necessary.

A recent study by PMG revealed that the biggest obstacle to successful adoption of automation was the lack of a holistic approach. In fact, 59 percent of respondents agreed that automation implemented on an ad hoc basis leads to incompatibility and subsequent inefficiency. Most organizations today require not only a unification of silos but also the ability to align automation strategies between different physical locations, some of which may be situated half a world away.

How can one expect to effectively align IT functions with the business as a whole when automation – the very technology that's designed to enable better business decisions – is not adequately represented in the C-Suite? A CAO brings valuable perspective with the ability to see automation from a global viewpoint. As a result, automation becomes a critical component of the overall strategy rather than just a means to deliver it.

Organizations with multiple technology centres located worldwide recognize the importance of global collaboration to the forward progress of the company. There is little overall business value if you've achieved continuous process improvement in just one office but not the others. You may have certain specialists deployed across the globe who are highly skilled at managing automation technology, but if there's no central strategy and one leader, their abilities cannot be maximized.

The CAO's purpose is to drive this type of simultaneous widespread orchestration. While automation specialists focus on their specific IT departments, managing the day to day

operations, the Chief Automation Officer spends his or her time looking outward and forward. This role is absolutely essential to achieving rapid, sustainable transformation, as the ability to orchestrate automation on a global scale and unify strategies is what ultimately enables businesses to adapt at the speed of thought.

Automation is critical to an organization's ability to reallocate capital from today's business operations to the needs of tomorrow. It allows IT to shift from reactively putting out fires to taking a more proactive approach, which is necessary for successful digital transformation.

The good news is automation is evolving at relatively the same pace as the complexity it is designed to simplify. Disruption that would otherwise be overwhelming is now becoming entirely feasible thanks to automation and orchestration solutions that provide a competitive edge. Deriving business value from the IoT, for instance, is made possible by automation strategies that process and analyze the data being procured. Automation essentially frees up funds that can then be used to fuel innovation.

The CAO is responsible for taking optimized workflows and applying them wherever feasible throughout the entire organization. This creates more compliant and easily auditable processes. And because this approach eliminates repetition and duplication of work, the entire operation can run more consistently and efficiently. Furthermore, by evaluating how automation is utilized throughout the company, the CAO is also able to optimize the allocation of human resources, removing bottlenecks and improving productivity across the enterprise.

Another area where the CAO can be highly beneficial to the company is in his or her ability to seek inspiration from the rest of the workforce. One company was able to uncover nearly 300 innovative ideas simply by asking employees to suggest processes to automate. In the absence of this communication between upper management and frontline workers, these suggestions, and the positive changes they brought about, would have remained private.

In conclusion, automation remains a catalyst for change, driver of innovation and procurer of productivity. With the overarching visibility and control a CAO provides, automation strategies will have the flexibility and scope needed to stimulate disruption and achieve digital transformation.

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