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**WHY IT LEADERS LOSE  
THEIR JOBS?**

FROM FALSE PROMISES  
TO ROLE CHANGES,  
CIOS EXIT WHEN THEIR  
ABILITY TO EXECUTE  
THEIR STRATEGY OR  
GROW THEIR CAREERS  
HITS A ROAD BLOCK —  
A TREND THAT MAY BE  
ACCELERATING, THANKS  
TO THE RISE OF DIGITAL  
TRANSFORMATIONS.

IF YOU ARE A CIO, OR IT  
DIRECTOR, LOOKING TO  
AVOID THIS FATE, PAY  
ATTENTION TO THE TOP  
ISSUES THAT CAUSE IT  
LEADERS TO QUIT OR LOSE  
THEIR JOB.

# 10

# Critical Reasons Why IT Leaders Quit (or Lose Their Jobs)

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**A Special Report Prepared by**

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## Critical Reasons Why IT Leaders Quit (or Lose Their Jobs)

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With the average tenure of a CIO between 3-4 years, here are several considerations to keep in mind to avoid losing your job..

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CIO departures are often spurred by broad changes in corporate strategies or roles. CIOs also exit because they can't secure the budget they require, or they find their strategy de-emphasized. And sometimes CIOs leave because they don't mesh with the corporate culture, or fail to get their jobs done.

This guide was written with one goal in mind: to elevate the performance and value of IT leaders. For this article, several current and former IT executives were asked to share their perspectives.

### TIP NO. 1 – SECURITY BREACHES

CIOs are generally held responsible for any gaps in a company's cybersecurity. When a data breach happens, it can land a company in the headlines for all the wrong reasons. There are also massive financial losses as well as the reputational damage. If the breach was preventable, but happened because the CIO didn't do a good enough job, the CIO can probably expect to be looking for a new job.

### TIP NO. 2 – MISPLACED PRIORITIES

When the CIO's priorities don't align with the company's most pressing priorities, this is a recipe for disaster. The IT team's energies, time and focus should be channeled into areas that are most critical to your organization. Whether it's a Customer Experience program (CX), or the company is formulating their digital transformation strategy, it's important to 'demonstrate' alignment with company objectives.

### TIP NO. 3 – STRATEGIC MISALIGNMENT

CIOs also part ways with companies over misalignment on what a digital transformation means. Some view transformation as an effort to connect with customers and generate revenue, while others view it as a way to cut costs and improve operational efficiencies. You need to develop good listening skills in the course of an interview, and certainly, the first 60 days so you know what you're getting into. A CIO's inability to align on a roadmap is a top reason why digital transformation strategies fail.

### TIP NO. 4 – SYSTEM COLLAPSES

System collapses don't happen often, but when they do the results can be spectacularly bad. They can happen for a variety of reasons – and go beyond being just a regular system outage or downtime. A CIO's job is to have policies, procedures and practices in place, so when systems go down and stay down, this doesn't become an issue for the CIO's tenure. If the disaster recovery processes take too long – and becomes too costly, you will quickly find yourself out of a job.

### TIP NO. 5 – STAGNATION

For some CIOs, the end may not come soon enough. Your company may say they want you to be here for 10 years, but that may not be a good idea. The problem is that the IT organization can stagnate with the same leadership, particularly if that leader has not groomed successors. An enduring CIO also won't build high-performing team, as those who view their career development as stalled or blocked will move on.

### TIP NO. 6 – JOB HOPPING

Conversely, CIOs who only last 12 to 24 months don't do themselves any favors because it makes them seem like job hoppers who can't commit or get along with colleagues. Tenures of 4 to 5 years gives CIOs enough time to usher in change, stabilize and augment the function and move on before the organization grows stale. The sweet spot is the 4- to 5-year time horizon and that's where you need to set your sights.

### TIP NO. 7 – SPENDING TIDE

Despite your best efforts to put spending controls in place, many CIOs ultimately fail to keep the overall IT costs under control. You might be able to keep those costs directly under you, but user departments find a way to fund the spending you try to suppress. Eventually, finance will call you out when they get around to aggregating all the IT related spend across the organization, which can be 50% to 100% higher than expected. You may not be responsible for all of it, but you're often judged, and sometimes held accountable for this overspend.

## TIP NO. 8 – TWO IN ONE ROLE

CIOs are increasingly asked to maintain internal IT *and* drive digital product and service innovation, putting many of them in a difficult position. Many come from a traditional enterprise IT background, and now they're being asked to deliver on programs that are not necessarily part of their experience or where they've operated much of their career. This can expose a CIO's weaknesses, create frustration in the job and begin the process for a career change.

## TIP NO. 9 – VICTIM OF SUCCESS

Sometimes CIOs are promised the opportunity to drive digital change, only to see it snatched away — a bait-and-switch tactic. One CIO for an oil and gas company, was hired to overhaul a failing IT systems for what he was led to believe would support a digital transformation. Once the CIO, who reported to the CEO, got the systems stable, the CEO hired a CDO to drive the digital agenda. The CIO quit; he didn't want to watch the company build digital products using his budget, people and infrastructure.

## TIP NO. 10 – CHALLENGING TIMES

The job is getting tougher, it's getting more complex, and it requires not only tech skills but business acumen and leadership capabilities. The influence of CMOs on IT decisions is becoming greater as the demand for data analytics for marketing activities is increasing. If you're an old-school CIOs with an IT-business-as-usual approach, you may find yourself less involved in key business decisions, and your value diminished.

I hope this special report provided some important insight. Please contact me if you would like information on similar topics, or ideas to improve IT performance while advancing your career.

**Network Insiders** is a technology services advisory firm under the Telarus brand. We provide unbiased expertise to help businesses solve problems that involve technology.

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