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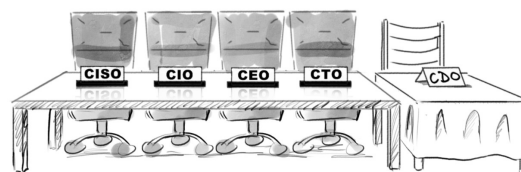
Relating to the rest of the C suite

This is the tenth in a series of blogs concerning 'Data', written by [Caroline Carruthers](#), Data Expert from Carruthers and Jackson. This blog looks at the key skill of relationship building.

Caroline Carruthers | 28 March 2019

QA Group is working in close partnership with [Carruthers and Jackson](#) to deliver consultancy and learning interventions to help executives, senior stakeholders and the wider organisation understand how to [deliver transformational value from data](#). The following is part of a series of ten blogs by Caroline Carruthers, re-published with permission especially for QA's customers and for any other organisation seeking revolutionary opportunities from the best use of data.

There are more C suite roles than there used to be, the long established roles of Chief Executive and Chief Information Officer now have to compete for room at the table with roles like the Chief Information Security Officer, Chief Digital Officer and of course the Chief Data Officer – it's getting a bit crowded around the table.



Relationship building is a key skill for the CDO as working with the data means you are cutting across the silos in the organisation therefore potentially messing in everyone's back yard, so you better be able to ask nicely before you do or have some air cover for when an areas feels pain for the greater good!

Whilst the CDO needs to form a working relationship with any other stakeholders in the company, not just the rest of the C-suite, the one that causes the most concern is the Chief Information Officer (or CTO), it definitely generates the most questions at conferences.

The difference between a CIO and CDO (apart from the words data and information...) is best described using the bucket and water analogy. The CIO is responsible for the bucket, ensuring that it is complete without any holes in it, the bucket is the right size with just a little bit of spare room but not too much and it's all in a safe place. The CDO is responsible for the liquid you put in the bucket, ensuring that it is the right liquid, the right amount and that's not contaminated. The CDO is also responsible for what happens to the liquid, and making the clean vital liquid is available for the business to slake its thirst.

If you have a CIO who is responsible for both, then you are doing great and you probably don't need a CDO as well. However it's a really big role to cover both, and in the past lots of organisations assumed the CIO was doing both while the CIO assumed the business was accountable for the data – hence leading to some of the problems we are facing now. Just remember what happens when you assume anything!

The other role that it's important for the CDO to relate to is the Chief Executive. By tucking the CDO under other roles like the CIO, it becomes tangled up with the technology. This just confuses the business who have a hard enough time sorting through the difference between looking after the data and information and looking after the [tools](#) you use to look after the data and information.

Where the business places the CDO, also demonstrates to the rest of the organisation how much you value your data. Placing it so far from the Chief Executive that you can see too much daylight between the CEO and CDO isn't really telling anyone that you value your information. However we're not suggesting that it's the most important role in the organisation either, just that you need to strike a balance that works for your organisation.

If you place getting value high on your agenda then that should reflect where you put your CDO as it helps with the reach across the business. If your major focus is risk adverse, then perhaps your [governance or technical authority function](#) is the right place for you.

The onset of [GDPR](#) has made one other relationship outside of the C suite of rising importance to the CDO. This is the relationship with the DPO. Both the DPO and the CDO may be new to an organisation, so there is perhaps the double whammy of two previously unknown roles at the table who at the same time will be trying to work out their own new working relationship. However, both being

'data' professionals and understanding the value and importance of data, they should be close allies and a strong and consistent voice to their C suite colleagues.

So in a nutshell relationship building is a key part of being a CDO!

[View the previous blogs in this series >](#)

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About Carruthers and Jackson

In the world we live in, data is recognised as an asset but organisations are still struggling with how to drive the true value from it. We look to all the exciting advances being made around innovations like Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence (augmented intelligence), but if organisations don't get their data right first, they are just building houses of cards. Carruthers and Jackson was set up to make sure this doesn't happen to you.

For more information on the products and services Carruthers and Jackson offer, please visit www.carruthersandjackson.com



Caroline Carruthers

Data Expert | Carruthers and Jackson

Caroline Carruthers was the first Group Director for Data Management for the Lowell Group and was the first Chief Data Officer for Network Rail. She has been a data cheerleader for more years than she can remember, and is a strong advocate of getting the basics right, and as such she adheres to the KISS principle (Keep it Simple, Stupid) in her approach to even the most complex issues. She is passionate about technology, and as a trustee for CILIP (Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals), she champions a growing professionalism of data and information-related disciplines so we can achieve 'data nirvana' a bit quicker.

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