



LEADERSHIP LESSONS FOR NEW CIDOS

*By Ken Spangler
Adjunct Faculty
Heinz College of
Information Systems
and Public Policy*

Stepping into the role of Chief Information and Digital Officer (CIDO) is one of the most exciting—and most challenging—leadership transitions you can make. You're not just responsible for technology. You're responsible for helping the entire organization transform in the digital era.

I've led large-scale transformations and worked alongside some of the best leaders in the industry. Here are a few lessons I believe every new CIDO should keep front of mind.

LISTEN FIRST

My single best piece of advice can be summed up in one word: **listen**.

Even if you've been with the company for years, approach the role with a clean sheet of paper. Step back. Immerse yourself. Assess and analyze. Then decide and act.

The temptation is to make quick changes. But the leaders who succeed take the time to understand the landscape, build relationships, and learn where the real opportunities—and risks—are.

BUILD PARTNERSHIPS ACROSS THE C-SUITE

Today's executive landscape is crowded with new technology titles: Chief Digital Officer, Chief Data Officer, Chief Transformation Officer, and more. For a new CIDO, that can create confusion.

Your job is to bring clarity to roles and decision rights, while building strong partnerships with your peers. The most successful CIDs understand that technology and business are inseparable. Decisions must be made together. Partnership at the top sets the tone for collaboration throughout the organization.

LEAD THROUGH OUTCOMES, NOT JUST TRAITS

The best CIDs don't just exhibit strong leadership traits—they deliver outcomes. In my experience, they do three things exceptionally well:

- **Sell and partner upfront.** They create alignment by clarifying the vision and the plan, while also aligning partners that are important for the execution journey and shared success.
- **Architect solutions.** Not as technical architects, but as leaders who bridge business and technology to design the path forward.
- **Build and execute at scale.** They lead teams that can deliver results at the speed the digital era demands.

And one more point: strategy alone is overrated. The real test is whether your strategy is understandable, actionable, and inspires a shared passion to execute.

FINAL THOUGHT

If you're stepping into the CIDO role, remember this: success isn't about mastering technology. It's about listening, building partnerships, and leading in a way that turns vision into execution. Do those things, and you'll not only earn your seat at the table—you'll shape the future of your business.



Ken Spangler is the former Executive Vice President & CIO of FedEx Global Operations Technology, where he led large-scale technology transformations and enterprise innovation across one of the world's most complex logistics networks. The only executive to serve as CIO for each of FedEx's major operating companies, Ken spearheaded global initiatives in AI, IT strategy, and enterprise business agility. Now an adjunct professor at Carnegie Mellon University, he brings more than 37 years of executive technology leadership to the classroom, helping the next generation of digital leaders align innovation with strategic impact.

Learn from leaders like Ken Spangler in the **Chief Information and Digital Officer (CIDO)** Executive Education Program at Carnegie Mellon University's Heinz College.

EXPLORE THE PROGRAM ►

Lead the Future of Digital Transformation

Carnegie Mellon University's **Chief Information and Digital Officer (CIDO) Certificate Program** prepares leaders to master the expanded and evolving responsibilities of today's digital-first executive - combining technology leadership with strategy, innovation, and enterprise transformation.

Why Choose CMU's CIDO Program?

- Learn from our **world-renowned experts** in technology and policy (CMU is **ranked #1** in Information & Technology Management).
- Gain the **frameworks and tools to drive digital transformation** across the enterprise.
- Explore cutting-edge topics including **AI, data strategy, cybersecurity**, and emerging technologies.
- Build a powerful **peer network** with experienced executives from diverse industries.
- Position yourself and your organization to **thrive in a rapidly evolving digital economy**.

Elevate your leadership. Expand your impact. Become the digital strategist your organization needs.

Program Logistics



~6 months



Hybrid: virtual modules, plus in-person sessions (mid-session and practicum) in Pittsburgh, with virtual option available



Virtual modules are held in the evenings (4 - 9 p.m. ET), generally on Wednesdays

