



"Theseus Battling Centaur"

Leadership: Data Odyssey For The Data Officer

By Chris Pehura

"Look at our executive team. Do you see our A-team? Do you see their exhaustion from balancing the day-to-day with the ten year vision? Do you see them as political warriors with battle scars, scars that could tear the whole team apart?"

Executives set the goals and expectations for our organization for the next decade. They get us to the finish line by managing our corporate capital and assets. Executives are the living and breathing personifications of our organization's groupthink, politics, cultures, and organizational structures. The CDO, the Chief Data Officer, though an executive is a little different. Besides being an executive, the CDO is also the political personification of our data, our Big Data, and how to best leverage our data both operationally and strategically. The CDO supports our executive team by strategically managing our data, our data assets, and our data capital to drive, multiply, and maximize our organization's revenue growth.

"How would our executives work with our CDO? How would they respond to this new perspective on strategy, politics, and capital? How would they respond to our CDO's vision?"

The CDO, the true CDO, is a new kind of executive. And there lies the problem. Our executive team is just not ready for this new kind of executive.

"Executives get where they are by their intuition, honing their strengths, and complementing themselves with the right people. Rarely do they have a point of context on how to best relate to and work with our CDO. This leads to misunderstandings and political power plays that architect our CDO to fail."

Executive teams are glued together by political balancing and sheer will. They have a history of systemic problems within the team and throughout the organization. So when the CDO comes aboard, it's politically tempting to get the CDO to fix all of these problems. To avoid this "passing the buck", our CDO's "support" must be very clearly defined.

"Because our CDO's position involves support, the other executives see our CDO as a subordinate where they can just delegate their problems. This exponentially widens our CDO's scope while narrowing our CDO's political influence. To avoid this, the CDO must share a clear vision with our executives about the data-driven organization and how our corporate data capital builds that organization."

The CDO must have a clear vision, a big picture of how our organization and our executive team can become data-driven. And this big picture is not crafted in a vacuum. It is crafted surgically by scaffolding the narratives and visions of each and every executive into a data-driven narrative; an emotionally charged data-driven narrative. This gives our executives the common language and political context to work with our CDO.

"There are many approaches for stitching these narratives together. They range from NLP, to management science, management consulting, and powerful storytelling. The fastest way to craft the data-driven narrative is to talk with each executive separately, fast-track executive team commitment for the unified narrative, and then if possible spark excitement about the narrative with the executive board."

To support the data-driven narrative, our CDO must have a separate budget to build the data-driven organization; a budget not just for business opportunities but also for strategic programs, and strategic business outcomes. The CDO must have this separate budget to politically survive.

"There is a lot of political resistance for our CDO to get a separate budget. Data initiatives are not given their own budgets. Data initiatives only have percentages assigned to them from other budgets. So when costs go over in these other budgets, the first things cut are the data initiatives."

With the secured budget, our CDO establishes the data office, a power house for our data governance, data-driven competencies, and data management. But the data office needs to be more than just about data. The data office must be the power house for all our forecasting and planning for our entire organization. And this powerhouse must support all aspects of our organization's life from its cradle to its grave.

"The data office requires a significant amount of political influence for supporting business planning, business development, regulatory compliance, culture alignment, and human capital development; even more political influence is needed for establishing effective data governance. It's a drawn-out battle for this level of centralization and standardization. It's a journey through policies, requirements, how to do reporting, and how to best leverage the

workings of artificial intelligence from accuracy and confidence to risk management and real-world probabilities.”

Being the CDO is a rollercoaster of driving the data-driven narrative, surviving political saber-rattling, and repositioning the data office as the power house for all forecasting and planning. As data innovation advances, as technology advances, the CDO, this new kind of executive, will become the primal template for each and every one of our executives on the executive team.

Welcome to the data-driven organization.

About the Author



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Data-centric Business Management



Chris is a management consultant with a data emphasis helping Fortune 100/1000 companies strategically evolve and reinvent their businesses to maximize their revenue growth. Through realignment, to overhauls, to rebuilding things from the top down and ground up, he integrates and solidifies leaders, strategies, and solutions into all aspects of the organization. As practice director for [C-SUITE DATA](#), a Canadian based consulting firm specializing in data and Big Data, Chris serves as a coach, trainer, and the voice for how data is the new capital that drives, multiplies, and maximizes revenue growth.



where leaders, business management, and data converge