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The vCIO guide for
Managed Service Providers

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| **Who** Should Read This?

This guide is written for owners of managed service providers (MSP) and IT consultants that want to future proof their MSP, elevate their vCIO practice and attract larger accounts. It is especially aimed at MSPs who want to move up the value chain and away from the commoditized day-to-day grind of maintaining IT infrastructure (see detect-to-correct).

Within this document we discuss the problems faced by professional managed service providers desire to distinguish themselves from the "me-too" trunk slammers. We address the issues faced by all managed service professionals that want to deliver greater value to their clients by solving their real business problems.

> **The problems discussed are universal for managed service providers. In short, this applies to you.**

| Managed Service Providers are facing Extinction

Managed service providers are facing extinction. The reality is that businesses are questioning the value of a faceless IT vendor with a passive "order taker" mentality. The MSP model superseded the IT break/fix model 15 years ago. Now, the MSP monthly recurring revenue model is being commoditized by the proliferation of "everything-as-a-service". Let's face it, the MSP model is knocking on heaven's door.

STRATEGY TO PORTFOLIO	REQUIREMENTS TO DEPLOY	REQUEST TO FULFILL	DETECT TO CORRECT
Drive IT portfolio to business innovation	Build what is needed not what is wanted	Catalogue, fulfill and manage service usage	Anticipate and resolve production issues

MSPs must move to the front of the value chain or risk being GUTTED

Managed service providers must reframe their practice from a commoditized remote management cost center to a high value digital enabler or risk being GUTTED!

| Problem

The company (your customer) starts their formal budget process (aka the trigger)—and are shocked by the total IT expenses. Investigating, they discover…

Chaos and Inefficiency—and YOU helped create it!

- Customer Service's using a Chat app, Sales are using Keap CRM, HR is using HUMI HR, Marketing is using HubSpot, Payroll is using a spreadsheet to track staff vacation, — five duplicate "people" databases, 15% of time is re-entering the same data, no integration, no single-page managerial reports. Can't see the overlap – flying blind.

- Plus, 5x the system cost, no coordination, no budget controls—and now they're grumpy because they discover why the IT expense is so HIGH.

You Get Blamed

- As their MSP they are angry with you – how did you let this happen? So, they hire a vCIO who quickly finds "where all the bodies are buried" including all the (air quotes) quarterly business reviews (QBRs) that were thinly disguised sales pitches. You're so busted.

- They now see the QBRs for the window dressing scams that they are – giving them a false sense of confidence that you were truly on top of their strategy. They now understand that you "sold them" all these separate systems and are ready to hang you out to dry.

You are just another "IT guy"

- Your "soft underbelly" is exposed – you're classed as just another "IT guy" and get gutted like a FISH…

- The new vCIO/Fractional CIO brings in their own IT team. She hands you a pink slip that reads, "SERVICES NO LONGER REQUIRED".

- You're escorted out – you're off to do more prospecting (your favorite task) only to get shampooed again (rinse and repeat).
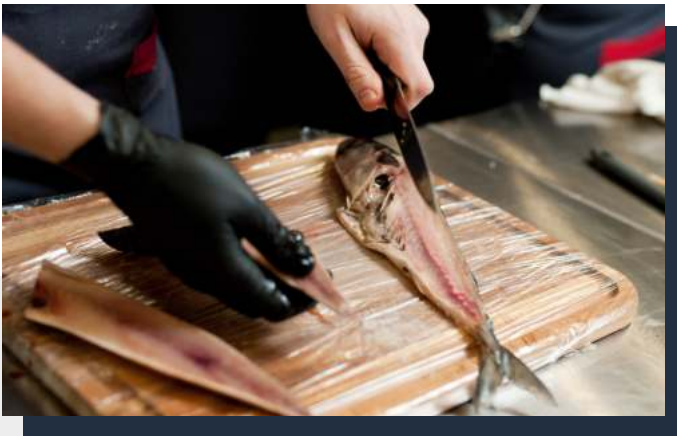
So what can you **do?**

Do nothing
Fine… expect the same results. Here fishy, fishy… (can you spell G.U.T.T.E.D?)

Go work for some other "IT guy"
Right, better to be an intern.

Help them hire an experienced CIO to take the lead
Let them take the lead, and they tell you what to do (fishy, fishy).

The Big **Question**

So, how do you elevate your practice, avoid getting relegated as the IT Guy, become the vCIO yourself, so you can provide both tactical and STRATEGIC value to your accounts… before the newly created budget exposes your weakness…

QUICKLY before you get replaced (again)?

Perhaps you should consider a Virtual CIO management platform

Let's evaluate the top four things you should look for when adopting a Virtual CIO management platform.

1 vCIO Methodology

2 Win New Accounts

3 FASTER time-to-market

4 Most Effective Platform

Let's consider each of these reasons in detail:

01   vCIO Methodology

A vCIO platform with a proven methodology that empowers the business to confidently put their money to work and solve real business-IT problems.

Stop being reactive

A vCIO platform reframes the discussion and reveals the big picture. By using real data to make the best technology investments, a vCIO platform hushes the "loudest guy in the room" syndrome and stops pet projects cold.

Confront the chaos

Have the courage to say no. Stop the "hallway requirement" chaos. We've been there, in the hallway and you encounter a colleague that gives you their "awesome idea" what do you do? A vCIO platform will empower you to maintain a central inventory of all ideas and demands for technology. It provides a repeatable process to capture all stakeholder's ideas.

Reset the IT model

A new approach is required to clean up the mess and get them where they want to go. A vCIO platform links ideas to strategies. By linking ideas with strategy management can see the "big picture" and assess the benefit early and spends money where there is the greatest return on investment.

Build the business

Identify processes that scales and grows the business (not just sell them more IT stuff)

Virtual
CIO

02 Win New Accounts

A vCIO platform helps you scale and land larger accounts.

Shine the Light
A vCIO platform uses real data to quickly point out the shadow IT and dysfunctional interdepartmental overlapping mess it creates.

Show real ROI
The platform will optimize the IT budget – concentrating on overall strategic needs (integrate, save money and time), not just fiddle with tactical silo department wants.

Become the Strategic IT Lead
With a vCIO platform a MSP now helps with direction, not just the IT Guy that places orders, installs and supports.

Introduce ROI-based IT
Identify processes that scales and grows the business (not just sell them more IT stuff).

03 Become a Virtual CIO FASTER (Learn to Service the Accounts)

A vCIO platform must enable you to become a Virtual CIO faster. The platform should include how to "be" a vCIO—whether beginner, or experienced, it should "meet you where you are".

You Get Skills
Sharpen or develop the skills to learn how to rapidly see the client's pain points and develop a plan. Using the platform provides the tools to guide you through a proven process—to assess and solve.

Become a Pragmatic Visionary
Look at the big picture and ensure you are only spending money on things you truly need.

Problem Solver
Assess the environment and consolidate technology costs or eliminate them altogether.

04 EASIEST, Most Effective Platform

A vCIO platform must include a complete "Kit" for everything that an MSP needs.

Systematic, hands-on training and onboarding

Training and onboarding to manage accounts as a vCIO is paramount in delivering exceptional outcomes. A vCIO platform must have structured hands-on training and a responsive onboarding process.

Franchised approach

A vCIO platform must be MSP friendly – preparing all the materials that an MSP requires including pricing, marketing, and client engagements case studies. A true vCIO platform will provide everything needed to learn and implement a successful vCIO practice.

Software. A complete system/platform – you fill in the blanks, the system tells you what to do (you can bill them for your value, or incorporate in your fractional CIO)

Overview. The customer persuasive presentation

Framework. Case study, storyboard.

Coaching. Model and coaching to internalize the software and process.

Peer community and mastermind group. 24/7 tips and tricks.

Templates. Partner program elements (collateral, pricing, case studies, etc.)

- **Plus, you can use it as the vCIO, or can sell the system to an in-house CIO (if they already exist). Either way—YOU add value.**

- **Now that you can see the value of adding virtual CIO services, you can see additional reasons for the software.**

Prioritizes demand

Make the best technology investments using real data. Stop the never-ending texts, emails, phone calls and the endless contentious meetings to reach a decision.

Maintain Demand Inventory

Maintains a central inventory of all ideas and demands for technology. Provides a repeatable process to capture all stakeholders' ideas (demands) for changes to the IT environment and enables demand assessment.

Perform Demand Assessments

Links ideas to the strategies they impact and the business processes and capabilities they affect. Enables management to see the "big picture." Assess the impact early in the demand process and identify the business owner's, the approval process and capture the anticipated benefits.

Generate Impact Analysis

Visualizes the request for change by graphically displaying the people, capabilities, processes, applications, technologies, and information impacted by the proposed change. Enables management to assess each request for technology using trade-off analysis and make investment choices based on preestablished criteria.

Stops Duplication

Stops the wasteful duplication of applications, technology, and IT systems. Optimizes your technology portfolio that perform the same or similar functions to save money, reduce IT complexity and streamline processes.

Business Application Inventory

Track all key business application attributes including contacts, life cycle, risk, value, and alignment. Determine gaps in the application, focuses investment dollars on the applications with the maximum return.

Administer Target Retirement Candidates

Administer the utility of technology using a lifecycle that tracks the stages of the technology (tolerate, invest, migrate, eliminate). Retire duplicate and unused applications to save money, reduce complexity and streamline processes.

Easy Coordination

Improves technology trade-off discussions using a repeatable and disciplined process to make better informed decisions, remove roadblocks and assess business value before money is spent.

Aligns Business Drivers with Programs

Maintains a central program inventory that links Business Drivers with Programs (business initiatives), highlighting which programs are delivering the most business value.

Aligns Projects with Programs

Links individual projects to a business initiative so management can monitor which projects are contributing the most to a program's progress.

Monitor Inflight Projects

Maintains a central project inventory that monitors the health and status of projects. Includes instant reporting on project status, state, and health –enables easy coordination of resources assigned to projects.

Data-Driven Insights

Your software should maintain a unified view of your entire technology landscape. Real-time dashboard data enables the right decision to be made on the spot. Increases productivity while reducing risk by using simple "what-if" data analytics.

Real-time IT Health Dashboard

Visualize the most current data using graphs and charts. Uses Gartner's TIME lifecycle rankings (Tolerate, Invest, Migrate, Eliminate) to identify emerging trends, monitor efficiency and eliminate redundancies while maximizing reuse.

Export data to Excel

Exports data to spreadsheets format for easy sharing and offline analysis.

Generate Detailed Asset Investment Report

Financial reports that detail the true cost of the entire technology landscape that is reported to management enabling simple investment rebalancing and asset management.

Now you've seen several of the general advantages of the Virtual CIO Management software. Unfortunately, not all vCIO management software is the same. Some have serious challenges...

Some don't include business strategy

When aligning technology with the business strategy some systems cannot link the relevant components automatically--forcing you to maintain it manually.

Missing program and project vitals

Many don't have detailed project data & analytics, so you have no visibility into overall project health. You're left in the dark without a way to improve.

No Portfolios

Few have an application portfolio management inventory or a service catalog, making it is impossible to link technical infrastructure to the business applications that it supports.

No Business Intelligence

Most systems lack customizable dashboards or a facility to modify or add unique dashboard panels.

Too Hard to Use

Most vCIO software is difficult to use and requires deep technical modelling knowledge to operate (steep learning curve).

Following are five additional areas you should consider within vCIO software.

① **Strategy Execution Management**

② **Program and Project Portfolio Management**

③ **Application & Technology Portfolio Management**

④ **Business Intelligence & Reporting**

⑤ **Ease of use for SMB's**

Let's look at each of these in detail…

01 Strategy Execution Management

Should include common features like demand management and impact analysis which help small and medium size businesses determine the right IT strategy. You want a solution that produces strategy using business language and manages technology as a business investment.

Document Strategic Business Drivers

Simply put, business drivers form the criteria that test investment decisions focusing scarce resources on what matters most. Key business drivers ensure that technology planning is aligned with what matters most.

Business-IT Strategic Planning

Business and IT alignment leverages information technology effectively to achieve the desired business strategy. Helps you cut through the noise and invest in the highest value companywide improvements.

IT Financial Management

Enables team members to maintain key financial metrics and record the annual investment for the entire IT spend, which puts you in control by using plain business language and dollars and cents.

02 Program and Project Portfolio Management

vCIO software must include common features like tracking project stages, project objectives and project timelines which are all needed to help small and medium size businesses prioritize their investments. But also look for…

Program & Project Repository

Programs, projects and their related objectives and key performance indicators are maintained in one, online, single database. Enabling anyone with the need-to-know to have real-time read access to their respective managerial data.

High-level Project Planning

Track projects by linking all the critical interrelationships between programs, projects, applications, IT Services, people, and processes. Avoids unexpected consequences, removes risk, and eliminates disruption to operations.

Program and Project Vitals

Track programs and their projects, status, budget, schedule, scope, and resources. Everyone in the organization can quickly see potential problems and quickly react so projects stay on course.

03   Application & Technology Portfolio Management

Look for common features like technology inventory and service catalog which are needed to help small and medium size businesses manage the critical technical infrastructure. You need to tie the business applications to processes – enabling owners to spot opportunities to tackle process challenges.

IT Service Dependencies

Links technical infrastructure to the business applications that it supports. Identify the critical business processes ensuring money is budgeted to support the essential business applications.

Technology Assessments

Generate IT Health Score. Understand the technical maturity and organization capabilities. Focus investments on the larger gaps.

Maintain Processes Supported by Application

Links processes to the business applications using a standard process reference framework. Direct investments to the highest value improvements.

Application Integration Data Flow

Tracks key data exchanged between applications. Documents where important information is stored, promotes data sharing, and streamlines operations.

Technology Inventory

Create a service catalog of the critical technical infrastructure. Set standards & reduces the time and cost of delivering technical services and improves the user experience.

04 Business Intelligence & Reporting

Includes common features like dashboards and exporting data to MS Excel. These help employees collaborate and coordinate activities. Some software lacks user customizable dashboards or can't drill down to instantly shift from an overview of data to a more detailed and granular view.

Multimatrix Report View

Enables "What-if" scenario planning using pivot tables and off-line data analytics. Helps you easily share data with others and collaborate, spot potential opportunities and connections among and between investments.

Real-time IT Health Dashboard

Visualize relationships between the business score, technology score and the criticality of applications, programs, and projects. Quickly assess where misalignment between the business and IT occurs using easy to read charts and graphics.

Generate Detailed Asset Investment Report

Track and measure the dependencies, constraints, and supports for each investment in the portfolio. Enables business owners to rank investment factors using money as the common denominator.

05 EASIEST for SMB's

There are numerous programs for multi-billion-dollar organizations, but they are way too expensive, overly complicated and require courses to learn, or a fleet of consultants—way too much overkill for the small companies that need the same information.

Easiest Onboarding

You need a method that uses a learn-by-doing approach and walks you through every step of the framework and implements the method along the way, saving time and money.

Easiest to Learn

Web-based design should be (really) simple to use with no learning curve.

Easiest to Buy

It should include simple monthly payment terms. Cancel anytime, no long-term contract.

| Wrap up

In summary, when trying to solve the typical CIO problems, you should consider vCIO software. It should help you:

- Prioritize demand to make the best technology investments in real-time data.

- Stops duplication and optimizes your technology portfolio to save money, reduce IT complexity and streamline processes.

- Improve technology trade-off discussions using a repeatable and disciplined process to make better informed decisions, remove roadblocks and assess business value before money is spent.

- Help you maintain a unified view of your entire technology landscape.

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Imagine This...

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You're out of the server room (stopped putting out today's fires) and into the boardroom

Your vCIO dashboard is boldly on the screen, and everything is there! All the projects, requests, budgets are visible, and everyone is talking.

You quickly point out the redundancies and areas for integration (and the team agrees to cancel the $50k app that's clearly already covered). Every team can see the status of each others' programs and projects in real-time – no department is an island.

The investment shortfall is visible and "real" Ahh haa! The CEO tells finance to increase the budget to cover it.

All smiles, all happy—your company is unstuck and in sync. Life is good!!

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