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THE TRANSFORMING ROLE OF THE CIO

One of the most valuable parts of my role as a VMware CTO in the Asia Pacific region is speaking at the CIO Forum events.

A highlight of these events is the opportunity to meet many CIOs together and understand the shift that they are witnessing in their organizations and industries. One theme that has emerged in my keynotes has been how the role of the CIO has changed over the last five years – from operational to strategic. The conversations I have during these events illustrates several emerging focus areas for CIOs:

Differentiation – How does technology differentiate the company from its competitors? Traditionally, this was not the CIO's problem, as he was more focused on cost reduction or control rather than business growth. Today, this has changed across all industries, as boards are focused on speed-to-market and agility and expect IT to help them deliver these outcomes. A simple example of this is the automotive industry: car manufacturers today depend increasingly on their software to derive competitive advantage, not just to run back end systems.

Customer Experience – We've seen how technology can enable a shift in customer experience, leveraging apps, cloud-based solutions and mobility. Five years ago, "mobility" was likely to mean BYOD or device management for the CIO. Today, that conversation is about how mobility can affect an organization's products, services, day-to-day operations and speed-to-market, engaging customers and improving the customer experience. Data show that [relatively few organizations](#) fully leverage mobility today, so there is still plenty of room for growth here. A good example of a customer leveraging mobility is [ANZ Bank](#), who have adopted VMware Workspace ONE to make employees more effective. They have 18,000 devices across 34 countries allowing 50,000 employees to work flexibly and remotely, meeting customers outside of traditional branch locations. The bank has developed more than 20 custom mobile apps to date, modernizing the customer experience, reducing waiting times and enabling new modes of interaction with customers.

Revenue – Another aspect of the transformation of the role of CIOs has been the impact technology innovation is having on business growth – the discussion has moved from bottom-line to top-line growth. VMware's own CIO exemplifies this – Bask Iyer and his team have developed applications, initially targeted for internal use, that have led to innovations in our own products. The IT department becomes a driver of new revenue, rather than a cost center.

Security – In a big shift from five years ago, [most CIOs see security as their responsibility](#). Furthermore, they are responsible for security even as they no longer own every aspect of the infrastructure, applications and devices. [Transforming security](#) is a strategic priority for VMware, and we're helping clients like [Bharti Airtel](#), [State Bank of India](#), Nissan China and [Telin Singapore](#). Furthermore, it's no longer acceptable to trade off agility for security – both need to go hand in hand.

It's a much more complex and heterogeneous world that the CIO needs to manage today, and a major challenge is leveraging digital technologies to drive the business forward, while maintaining the core applications the business depends on. The CIO's role is certainly challenging, but also more central to the business than ever.

