



## CIO to CEO

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**Abstract:** CIO can transition to being CEO by acquiring management skills and leadership qualities and acquiring a business mind.

When I was a journalist at Economic Times, I interviewed T S Vijayan, who then headed the Information Technology division at LIC, the largest Insurance company in India. He later became the Managing Director of LIC and Chairman of LIC.

That is not shocking of course, but rather surprising. It is expected that Marketing Head or Finance Head or even Production Head to become CEO. But to expect an Information Technology Head to become Managing Director and Chairman is rather unusual.

That is why it merits an essay. Writing an essay such as CMO - Chief Marketing Officer to CEO is rather redundant, because marketing is so central to an organization, that it would be expected for CMO to become CEO.

But Information Technology is seen as a marginal function. After all, EDP - Electronic Data Processing departments began barely 70 years ago in organizations. Today information technology may be ubiquitous, but still, information technology is an extension of manual registers how can those who are evolved manual register maintainers ever become CEO?

*Peter High points out in an article in Forbes that whereas in 2011 this idea was considered absurd, by 2014 many CIOs were harbouring CEO ambition.* Information Technology is now not a support function like catering or housekeeping but can be a competitive differentiator between organizations. Hence to expect CIO to become CEO is not weird.

Just because many CIOs harbour the ambition to become CEO does not mean that they are likely to become CEO any time soon. Very few CIOs will become CEOs. But being too technical and not adequately business savvy is one way to ensure that CIO does not become a CEO.

*Houssam Kaddoura has written a book - CIO going on CEO on how Information Technology professionals can pave their way into decision-making circles and be considered important and have a say in how the company is run and possibly become CEO.* For a CIO to become CEO there are a few ways:

1. Have a strategic business mind
2. Build Networks
3. Develop Leadership qualities
4. Broaden Scope beyond Technology
5. Build Strong Team

These days most CIOs do not come from a technical background. In fact, you can be a CIO with a technical background but you cannot be a CIO without a technical background. However, it is important to understand technology adequately.

Here are reasons why the transition from CIO to CEO is possible

1. Many skills between CIO and CEO are transferrable.
2. CIOs get the big picture
3. CIOs know how to leverage technology effectively



For a CIO to become CEO takes many things such as

1. Understanding Organization Culture
2. Understanding Organization Vision
3. Understanding Finance and Marketing

Thus it is safe to say that transition from CIO to CEO though not likely is at least possible. But for that CIOs will have to groom themselves and become more business-like and less technology-like.