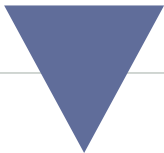# REAL NUMBERS

BY PAUL A. STRASSMANN

CHECK: HOW TO VERIFY IF YOU ARE IMPORTANT

A DEFENSE DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVE ON ITS CIO CAN SERVE AS A BLUEPRINT FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

How can you tell if information technology matters? Start by examining the role of the chief information officer.

If the CIO does not have the authority to set and execute information management policies, information technology cannot be sufficiently important in a company or other organization. Without an empowered CIO, accountability for technology will be diffused and unfocused.

My checklist for verifying the importance of a CIO is drawn from a 14-page Department of Defense document called Directive 5144.1, issued on May 2.

The directive spells out the new responsibilities of the Defense Department's CIO, a position now held on an acting basis by Linton Wells II ("Unfilled Promise," May, p. 32). The missive contains a comprehensive list of duties—and includes the authority to stop projects and enforce compliance with the department's information-technology architecture.

As a result, the new CIO stands to become one of the key movers for delivering the "transformational" changes recently announced by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. This includes ending proliferation of specialized communications networks such as MilNet (an ARPANet-based network for nonclassified information) and AutoDIN (a global data-switching system). The Pentagon will then migrate toward a unified Global Information Grid, which will create a uniform method of collecting, processing and managing information, anywhere it is stored or used.

The Defense Department's directive can also be applied to corporations and other business units.

Take, for example, the question of who is the CIO's boss. If it's the chief executive, that's a good sign that information and the technology used to manage it are taken seriously by the organization. At Defense, Wells now reports directly to Rumsfeld and his deputy, Gordon England.

Then, follow the money. Does the CIO control expenditures? A tight handle on the purse strings earns respect. Wells has direct control over budgets and costs. The scope is not limited to hardware, software and telecommunications; it also covers oversight of information-related activities such as administrative work because people, not computers, generate information productivity.

Then, ask yourself this question: Is the CIO accountable?

Here's a good checklist, culled from the Defense Department's directive:

▶ Does the CIO put in place measures for the evaluation of results?

▶ Is the office of the CIO set up to periodically report on the progress achieved on all major projects?

▶ Can the CIO authorize investigations?

▶ Does the CIO have the authority to approve the continuation, modification or termination of projects?

▶ Does his reach extend to scattered but increasingly critical functions such as records management, custody of archives, printing and copying, fax, cell phones, wireless transmitters and videoconferencing?

▶ Is the CIO empowered to oversee the development of his staff to ensure that qualified personnel will be available to support future information management tasks?

And, perhaps most important in our insecure world:

▶ Does the CIO take responsibility for the security of network services?

The actual checklist is much longer and can be found at *go.baselinemag.com/julo5*, along with the Department of Defense's directive. But the key to understanding it is this: There is only one answer to each question.

If you or your CIO answer "no" to any item on the list, I would conclude that information technology does not matter much in your organization. ◀

PAUL A. STRASSMANN (PAUL@STRASSMANN.COM) HELD FIVE TOP TECHNOLOGY POSITIONS FROM 1962 THROUGH 2003, INCLUDING STINTS AT THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AND NASA. HE WISHES THAT HE HAD OPERATED UNDER CHARTERS SIMILAR TO THE ONE ANNOUNCED BY THE PENTAGON.

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PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE FREEMAN