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Building Influence and Network Equity

John Hagel argues we are now in the early stages of "the big shift," from traditional push-based models of commerce and engagement to new models based on pull. CIOs can gain clout in their organizations and beyond by understanding and adopting the leadership qualities required in a pull-based world.

Are you a push or pull leader? Leaders demonstrating pull characteristics are ones who embrace adversity, continually ask questions, seek out new resources to help answer those questions, and build far-reaching networks to accomplish goals. They are also leaders who will be in high demand in the future, said John Hagel during a talk to IT executives at [Deloitte University](#) last fall.



Hagel spoke broadly about "the big shift" he sees slowly gaining momentum today: from managing by a more reactive push model to instead managing by pull. A longtime business strategy consultant and co-founder of the [Deloitte Center for the Edge](#), Hagel proposed that leading by pull can help individuals more quickly build personal influence and network equity in their organizations and beyond.

Moving from push to pull is also important for business survival in a rapidly changing global marketplace, says Hagel. In past decades, businesses have operated on a traditional push model of predicting demand for product or services and organizing people and resources to fill that demand. Yet increasingly, this model is not delivering results. In terms of return on assets, the performance of U.S. public companies has declined by 75 percent since 1965, suggesting that push models are failing. By moving to a pull model, which is more connected, interactive, and proactive, companies and their leaders can compete more adeptly in today's volatile and global business climate.

"In the big shift, the method of influence is no longer about the answers, it's about the questions," Hagel says. "Are you raising questions that nobody's thought about before that can have a huge impact on outcomes?" In other words, leaders who continually seek out new questions are in effect, seeking out new business models or processes that could bring their companies to the next level of competition or innovation.

The pull model centers on bringing together the right people and resources when and where they are needed to respond to demand as it occurs and to spark innovation. Hagel describes the three levels of pull as:

- Access: The speed at which you can find the people or answers you need.
- Attract: The capability to serendipitously connect with people or ideas you weren't aware of.
- Achieve: The ability to learn faster and accomplish more in a rapidly changing world.

Elements of Pull

CIOs have been coached for years to be more in tune with the business. And while many are, they may not demonstrate the forward-looking characteristics that successful leaders need today to cope with unpredictable and dynamic change. Hagel's playbook can help IT leaders

Deloitte Insights Video



Ambient Computing: Imagine the Possibilities

Ambient computing, the ecosystem of Internet-connected things that respond to real-time conditions in the business environment, means organizations can oversee information flows between devices, perform analytics, and ultimately use that information to create better business processes. Tom Galizia, a principal with Deloitte Consulting LLP, describes some current and potential uses of ambient computing.



How CIOs Thrive as Chief Integration Officers

Technology's relevance in the workplace has never been more pronounced, and CIOs are in a prime position to serve as the connective tissue between business and IT initiatives, says Peter Vanderslice, a principal at Deloitte Consulting LLP. In this video, he discusses how CIOs can seize and define the role of chief integration officer.



Advanced Analytics for the Masses

Amplified intelligence augments human capabilities through the use of technology, putting analytics in the hands of individuals at the point of business impact. Mark Shilling, a principal with Deloitte Consulting LLP, explains why it's important to understand the context behind these advances in analytics and how organizations can apply them in the field to improve decision-making and operations.

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Yes He Can: Ball Corp. CIO on Tech-Enabling Business

With nearly 10 years under his belt as CIO at Broomfield, Colorado-based Ball Corp., Leroy Williams' tenure is already three times longer than the average CIO. Williams, who has spent his entire career working in the Centennial State, attributes his staying power at Ball to an emphasis on results-based leadership coupled with a clear understanding of the technology capabilities that contribute to economic value add, the metric the executive team cares about most. His achievements at Ball have allowed him to stay close to the world-class downhill skiing he so enjoys in his spare time.

Mitigating 4 Common IT Risks During Divestitures

Poorly negotiated transition services agreements, inexperienced buyers with unrealistic expectations, and intellectual property losses are among the common risks companies often overlook when undertaking divestitures. By collaborating early on with stakeholders on both sides of transactions, CIOs can help mitigate these and other risks and keep hard-won deals on track.

Maintaining Data Integrity in the Analytics 'Wild West'

When end users download increasingly powerful desktop analytics tools without involving IT, data quality quickly erodes and IT environments fragment. CIOs are rising to this challenge by collaborating with business leaders and end users to create interconnected analytics ecosystems that support data integrity while meeting the needs of both the business side and IT.

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shift to the world of pull, and supercharge their careers by building stronger personal networks and influencing higher-level business decisions.

Inspire passion. The traditional business world tends to deride the notion of passion, because it can be a distraction. Yet passion is a critical element in building a pull organization. In the world of pull, you need people who are not dismayed by challenge but, in fact, embrace it. These individuals are highly curious, love to learn, and are bored without a problem to solve. They also have a connecting disposition and are much more likely to reach out to others to explore solutions together. Inspiring and developing passion also requires leaving time and space for new opportunities to materialize. Says Hagel: "I often ask executives, how tightly scheduled is your day? If you have a day from breakfast meetings out to dinner meetings tightly scheduled back to back, what's the opportunity for serendipity in that day?"

Influence by asking questions. Traditionally, people succeeded in business by coming up with better answers to problems. In the world of pull, influence comes from raising new questions—ones that shape business agendas and people's actions. Instead of having all the answers, successful people have important questions and rally others to collaborate and find answers. In this model of influence, it's important to express vulnerability, says Hagel: "You need to say, there's something I don't know."

Foster mesh networks. In the pull world, mesh networks are highly valued. Rather than having one individual at the hub, a rich set of connections emerges among all network participants. Mesh networks increase the likelihood of unexpected encounters that can result in sustained collaboration and continuous learning. "If you're really serious about accelerating learning, achieving that highest level of pull, you need to connect with smart people outside your organization," Hagel says. As one example, Hagel describes a friend who founded a company to build open-source drone aircraft. He was having troubles finding a CTO in his familiar circles. The friend ended up connecting with a stranger in an online forum who was an expert on drone aircraft and wound up hiring him—even though the expert was a high school dropout. Without expanding his network and frame of reference, the entrepreneur may never have found the right individual to help launch his business.

Framing questions provide focus. It's important to periodically examine the business with both a big and small lens. By zooming out five or 10 years, executives can be proactive, rather than reactive, and adapt to coming changes in the marketplace. At the same time, taking a closer view of the business gives leverage to solve pain points that are occurring right now. Leading companies are improving performance by systematically investigating key problems—analyzing financial and operational processes and metrics and then engaging employees on the front lines to resolve issues.

Start the ball rolling, says Hagel, by first asking yourself who are the passionate people in your organization and how can you connect with them to drive learning and improve performance? Secondly, determine what are the two or three questions most central to the business that, if answered, could substantially move the lever on results?

Related Content: ["The Power of Pull: How Small Moves, Smartly Made, Can Set Big Things in Motion"](#), [TedTalks on YouTube: John Hagel, "From Push to Passion"](#)

To compete, companies can no longer sit back and monitor customer and market trends to predict and fulfill demand. IT and business leaders need to ask new questions and rely on larger networks to get ahead; it's a shift from "push to pull" that is defining individual and business success today.

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