



CTO-On-Demand

The IT industry has developed at a geometric pace since its initial days in the early 90's. But in spite of all the existing services, there is a void when it comes to addressing the market or rather the small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This need has given rise to the CTO-On-Demand concept, which has been introduced and is currently being practiced by very few niche players.

The 'CTO-On-Demand' is an already existing concept – a term coined to address the IT consulting needs of SMEs (small and medium

enterprises) and Start-ups. A CTO-On-Demand is an IT consultant, who has experience in both the business and technology worlds and guides the businesses tactically and strategically. He can zero-in on issues, provides strategic recommendations and also oversee implementations.

This concept is in vogue, as, in spite of the numerous companies (both small and large) in the market, who offer requirement based IT consulting in different forms; there is still a gap when it comes to aligning these services to business objectives. Most of the existing services are aimed at requirements of large companies with large missions, whose IT teams are matured. When it comes to Start-ups and SMEs, their offerings will definitely be expensive and the customer's internal IT teams do not have the capability or maturity to review or question the strategy or solution. As most of the internal IT teams of SMEs might not be equipped to handle larger OEM ecosystem, their bargaining capability is limited. Even if SMEs engage a large SI (system integrator), as it is not a high paying account, focus on the customer may be limited and the consultant deployed may not be matured enough to understand the business ecosystem and the output might just be another standard template.

Also, most of the technologists who have seen the business, process and technology worlds are interested in evolving their own ideas and become successful. Few of the consultants may be interested in only large projects for obvious reasons and

might not prefer to stick to small and medium engagements. Ultimately, there is no ownership at any level and consequently, the business suffers. The void is very much visible and it created the demand for CTO-On-Demand; an ownership based and responsible IT consulting engagement in SME segment.

On Demand CTOs are scarce in the market. Very few companies like N-Axis Software defined and offering the CTO-On-Demand concept and are dedicated to its objective and integrity. The objective is simple – define IT strategy and budget at least for a period of three years based on business vision, provide optimized and cost-effective OEM neutral IT Solutions aligning the business vision of the company, own the budget and solution, and remove person-centric dependencies.

Also the CTO-On-Demand ecosystem spans across different IT disciplines as indicated in the Diagram 1 below and the need for each customer may be a subset

Challenges are common in every new concept and so are for CTO-On-



Demand. It is difficult for the practitioner to be unbiased towards partners when IT Corporates are offering this service, but, at the same time partner ecosystem helps in terms of price advantages and specialized service. It can be countered only with Integrity of the consultant. The service depends mostly on remote communication (E-Mail, Telephone, Chat, Project Management Tools and Video Conferencing) with customer stakeholders which might create some communication gaps. Customer teams may not cooperate much unless IT implementation is a top-down approach. Change Management initiatives may not be effective unless the internal driver is efficient and dedicated. Solution ownership may be an issue if the engagement is short term. Process maturity of the customer is a key factor for the success of the engagement. Scalability can be considered as one of the deterrents for the model but it can be addressed using tools and more team members in the practice.

ADVANTAGES OF A CTO-ON-DEMAND

1. There is no need to invest in a costly and permanent resource
2. Works closely with senior management and creates IT Vision, Strategy and Budget
3. Makes IT systems based decision making easier
4. Ensures strategic alignment of technology roadmap with the business vision
5. Brings high level and more matured IT knowledge and advise on table
6. Provides a trusted value driven turn-key IT capability
7. Addresses on Security and Compliance Issues
8. Easily manage attrition based challenges
9. Gets the best out of vendors in terms of price & quality and makes vendor coordination easier.
10. Project Management and Implementations will be transparent and more efficient
11. Works with Customer team on-site to make sure that the implementations and support are taken care of effectively
12. Bridge On Demand Staff Augmentation
13. Brings measurable results in terms cost and productivity

Overall it delivers the value in much required areas and is a great advantage to whoever applies it. Especially, the SMEs need not think much in taking the decision of appointing a CTO-On-Demand, based on the qualifications and experience of the consultant. Let us hope to see this concept grow like compliance bound practices like On Demand Chartered Accountants and Company Secretaries. 🙏

WHY CTO-ON-DEMAND CONCEPT IS USEFUL?

1. Start-Ups having business vision and limited technical capabilities, required to finish the business plan with IT vision and budgets
2. Businesses going for funding and does not require a permanent CTO
3. SME businesses with limited IT capabilities and limited budgets to recruit a viable CTO or IT Manager.
4. Existing IT setups (even large) requiring third-party due diligence and supplement their technical capabilities with more knowledge.
5. Businesses involved in key decision making scenarios like large procurements, technology platforms, architectures, re-engineering and selection of technology partner.