CIO & IT Leaders Summit SPECIAL REPORT

L-R: Mahesh Koli, Vice President of Cloud Transformation, Sogeti; Michael McCarthy, Director of Cloud Infrastructure Ireland, IBEC; Charissa Jaganath, Head of Responsible Business, Logicalis and Brian Roche, Founder and Director, BDR Management Consulting

Henry Franks, CTO, Climate Policy Radar

L-R: Greg Casey, Sales Director , Digital Realty; Mahesh Koli, VP Cloud Transformation, Sogeti Ireland; Fintan Murphy, CEO and Founder, Damson Cloud; Mairead Malone, Ireland Sales Director, Logicalis UK&I; Stanislav Ivanov, CIO, Perform IT; Beata Dagiel, Business Development Manager, Software Interactive and Pedro Guimaraes, Ireland Country Manager, ABP Consultancy
Pictures Maura Hickey

Lex Coors, Chief Datacenter Technology and Engineering Officer, Digital Realty, and Board member of European Data Centre Association, a founding member of Climate Neutral Data Centre Pact (EU)

L-R: Chris Donnelly, Chief Information Officer, BWG Foods UC; Fintan Murphy, CEO and Founder, Damson Cloud; Mark Benson, Solutions Director, Logicalis UK&I and Thomas O'Leary, Chief Information Officer, ICON Plc
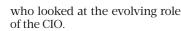
Augmenting the future needs of businesses

With the cyber attack on the HSE fresh in the memory, roles of CIOs and CISOs have evolved, with much more now resting on their shoulders

BY QUINTON O'REILLY

What was a role for managing IT services is now a key component in every organisation's sustainability and business goals. The role of CIOs (chief information officers) and CISOs (chief information security officers) has significantly evolved, with much resting on their shoulders.

Just how comprehensive these roles have become was the theme at this year's CIO and IT Leaders Summit, which took place in Croke Park on Wednesday, June 7 2023.

Opening the summit to a busy and lively room, Jonathan Healy, broadcaster and summit chair, set the scene by saying: "The world we all live in has become interconnected. The angles of attacks have increased dramatically, making sure that it is harder than ever to protect your staff and your data."

Reminding that the HSE attack was only two years ago, it got straight into business with the first major panel session of the day. Looking at the winners and losers of CIO budgets, the panel featured Chris Donnelly, CIO of BWG Foods UC, Fintan Murphy, chief executive and founder of Damson Cloud, Mark Benson, solutions director of Logicalis UK&I, and Thomas O'Leary, CIO of ICON Plc.

Murphy mentioned that with costs increasing, much of the focus has been on consolidation, keeping everything on the one platform, which wasn't considered a few years ago.

Benson highlighted the longevity of devices now, where previously there was a focus on replacing every three or four years, saying there's a changing mentality with organisations recognising that most devices are good enough to last for seven or eight years.

Following that was a series of keynote talks. The first one was from John Ward, technology consulting partner and head of health technology at EY Ireland,

who looked at the evolving role of the CIO.

Breaking it down into two broad roles – those who worked on the ground and those who were visionary – he highlighted that it's now a transformative CIO role where they must be both these things and more and must adopt key habits to ensure they secure their place at the boardroom table and drive business value.

Following that was the international case study delivered by Henry Franks, CTO of Climate Policy Radar. With the early morning topics focusing on ESG issues, Franks looked at how AI can help humans while highlighting the drawbacks.

The key takeaway was that such tools can be used to augment actions and that while good data can lead to good or bad decisions, bad or no data leads to bad decisions.

"AI can do wondrous things, but it can suffer, misinterpret, fabricate, and be naive," he said. "But the ways in which humans struggle, AI shines, and where AI struggles is where humanity shines.

"We join them together and we get the best of both worlds with augmented intelligence."

Following that was a spotlight on IT and its responsibility to the earth. Lex Coors, chief data centre technology and engineering officer at Digital Realty, and board member of European Data Centre Association, a founding member of Climate Neutral Data Centre Pact, looked at how legislation and other measures are helping shape data centre decisions.

What used to be a case of going for the lowest cost or best technology is now determined by future regulation and understanding what's coming forward, like how water usage will be legislated for, and the circular economy bringing both recycling and reusing devices and materials into sharp focus.

Before the coffee break, the next panel continued the theme of sustainability with Brian Roche, founder and director of BDR Management Consulting, Charissa Jaganath, head of responsible busi-

L-R: Ian Pepper, Director Technology Innovation, Novartis; Louise Callanan, eHealth Director and CIO, Assistant National Director, HSE; Jonathan Healy, Broadcaster; Kevin Quinlan, Data Governance and Quality Lead, ESB; Nessa Kavanagh, Executive Architect - Head of IT Architecture, FBD Insurance and Brian McKeon, Head of Technology and Data Analytics, National Ambulance Service

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ness at Logicalis, Mahesh Koli, VP of cloud transformation at Sogeti, and Michael McCarthy, director of cloud infrastructure Ireland at IBEC, taking part.

When asked about needing the skillsets to bring sustainability into an organisation, Jaganath mentioned that expertise within is important and highlighted how ESG is here to stay.

"There's a deliberate shift of the CIO role from procurement to enabling ESG within an organisation," she said. "They have to think about their own ESG journey, the internal sustainability of the vendors they're purchasing from, and the sustainability of the products they're buying.

"By building that into their long-term thinking, you're positioning your business to ride out whatever's coming."

Driving value and insights

Once the morning networking break was done and dusted, it was on to the next panel session looking at diversifying the workforce.

This included Jean O'Donnell, deputy chair of Women in Technology & Science (WITS), Mark O'Connor, head of public sector at ABP Consulting, Mary Cleary, secretary general of the Irish Computer Society, and Scot Stevens, CIO

and VP at UPMC Hillman Cancer Center and UPMC International.

When asked how it brought up its percentage of women in the workforce from 15% to 35% year-on-year, O'Connor mentioned how it came back to how it was attracting people and looking beyond university. Even with that, it still needed to make significant efforts to bring more women in.

"When we ran the first programme, only 10% were women," he mentioned. "The second time around, we used the women in the course as role models to attract people to apply, and used the partnerships we had, and the last course we ran, 40% were women."

Next up was the discussion on Full-Stack Observability featuring James Harvey, CTO at Cisco AppDynamics and Karl Brenner, chief executive at Perform IT.

Speaking about how the benefits of it include better visibility, insights, and actions, Brenner mentioned the decision-making it amplifies by having this real-time data. By having it readily available and joining it up with other systems, it allows for faster and more efficient decision making.

Following was the next panel discussion on the convergence of the CISO and CIO role featuring Barry Lowry, Irish government CIO at the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, Dr Anila Mjeda, lecturer from the department of computer science at Munster Technical University, and Jane Corr, CISO of Europe at Canada Life Group Services.

Mentioning the different skillsets between a CIO and CISO, Corr said that you have to be perceptive and have a good overview of

the landscape, knowing that if in-depth information is needed, you can call on your team.

"Every board wants to know how they are fixed [with IT and security]", she explained. "Imagine you don't have a CISO, it'd be like the wild west where you'll be explaining why you got hit.

"I found that CISOs advocate for things like good metrics, good asset management, and more automation."

Next up was the case study from Fergus Healy, head of digital services at Fingal County Council and Theresa Cloonan, head of information systems at Dun Laoghaire–Rathdown County Council, who covered how it scaled online services and digital solutions through its built to share programme.

The presentation touched upon multiple different elements like sustainability, innovation and sharing best practices, demonstrating that the scaling up and sharing of solutions across the local authorities, ensured affordability for smaller councils who are now able to avail of these digital services.

Before the lunch break, there was time for one more panel session focusing on driving value through technology, AI, and data.

It was a packed panel including Brian McKeon, head of technology and data analytics at National Ambulance Service, Ian Pepper, director of technology innovation at Novartis, Kevin Quinlan, data governance and quality lead at ESB, Louise Callanan, eHealth director and CIO, Assistant National Director at the HSE, and Nessa Kavanagh, executive architect and head of IT architecture at FBD Insurance.

With great innovations happening within the different public and private services, the panel echoed an earlier point; this technology augments what's happening with humans, not replacing them. Quinlan mentioned the importance of having a human at both the start and end of an AI decision.

Ethics and risks

After the lunch break, there was time for two more panel sessions,

with the first concerning data ethics. This included Bronagh Riordan, head of data and analytics at Primark, Dr Martin Cunneen, lecturer in data analytics and risk governance at the University of Limerick, Pat O'Sullivan, head of data enablement, Aer Lingus, and Paul Morrin, assistant director general.

When asked about tying in ESG, Riordan stressed how important it was for businesses to take responsibility for themselves and who they partner with.

"Customer trust is increasingly based on data regulation. You must show and communicate internally and externally that you have that focus on sustainability," she said.

Before the summit broke up into roundtable discussions, there was a fireside chat led by John Stone, senior consultant at Digital Realty, who chatted to John O'Connor, senior partner of technology at William Fry Solicitors.

Highlighting the many regulations that are coming down the line on an EU level, O'Connor said that it's finding a way to deal with those issues more holistically with legal drivers increasing alongside the technical and commercial considerations.

The summit concluded with four roundtable discussions, each giving a deep dive into a particular topic.

The first was on good data governance led by both Denise Manton, executive officer of the Empower Programme at Maynooth University, and Markus Helfert, Professor at Maynooth University, director of the Innovation Value Institute and director of the EMPOWER Data Governance Research programme.

The second was on unlocking business growth and scalability through digital infrastructure, run by Michael Galvin, enterprise director at Equinix, and Peter Lantry, managing director Ireland at Equinix.

The third was on getting the right talent for AI and automation, led by O'Connor while the fourth roundtable focused on the role of full-stack observability in a successful cloud migration strategy, chaired by Stanislav Ivanov, CIO of Perform IT.

Before those roundtables commenced, Healy gave his closing remarks for the summit, saying for everyone to keep up the good fight and would watch what the next 12 months bring.

Karl Brenner, CEO, Perform IT and James Harvey, CTO, Cisco AppDynamics

Jean O'Donnell, Deputy Chair, Women in Technology & Science (WITS); Mark O'Connor, Head of Public Sector, ABP Consulting; Mary Cleary, Secretary General, Irish Computer Society and Scot Stevens, CIO and Vice President, UPMC Hillman Cancer Center and UPMC International (on the screen)

John Ward, Technology Consulting Partner and Head of Health Technology, EY Ireland

John O'Connor, Senior Partner, Technology at William Fry Solicitors and John Stone, Senior Consultant at Digital Realty