



# A TRANSFORMATIONAL ROLE IN TRANSPORTATION

**How Network Rail's Catherine Doran is pursuing an agenda for change through her dual responsibilities of CIO and director of corporate development**

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## CASE STUDY

What characteristics and attributes does the CIO need to demonstrate at the executive level before the CEO will ask the CIO to take on more business responsibility? That is a question Catherine Doran, CIO and director of corporate development at the UK's Network Rail, has been mulling over lately.

"The conclusion I've reached is that business leaders want to see in a CIO a high degree of motivation and a genuine interest in and deep understanding of the business," she says.

And for good reason, she adds. "Given that IT is such an integral part of modern business, organisations would barely be able to function without it. So the executive is looking to the CIO for IT insight and to be able to deliver on that insight. But CEOs also expect the CIO to contribute to matters that have nothing to do with the subject matter of technology."

She believes successful CIOs are just as capable of understanding the issues of marketing or the details of finance as they are of handling any technology theme.

Doran's views are the result of first-hand experience. She has developed a broad portfolio of responsibility in the organisation which owns and operates Britain's rail infrastructure. As well as holding responsibility for all aspects of IT and a 650-strong team, she is a member of the Network Rail Executive Management team, is leading the organisation's five-year business-wide transformation programme – tasked with delivering £4.1 billion (\$6.2bn) in savings – and is responsible for managing its vast archive of technical specifications.

That base ensures alignment. "I channel the business context back to the IT group. It's vital that technology decisions are not made within the confines of IT, but are made in the context of the business and its commercial priorities." She explains: "To meet the commitments made by the business on performance, capacity targets, punctuality,

safety and efficiency we need to step up to the next level. The transformation programme that runs right across the business will get us to that next level."

Doran talks candidly about the size of the challenge. "If I were in sole charge of both the transformation programme

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and of IT, I would do neither well! So one of the things I have done is to appoint a new director of information management." That new role has gone to Susan Cooklin, previously head of IT delivery at the organisation. Together, the two executives provide the combination of leadership and IT insight that the business needs to best determine how the latest information technologies can help drive the business transformation strategy forward.

"There are two projects that come to mind that are part of the transformation programme, and both are game-changing. One is to do with high-quality video inspection, using cameras on high-speed trains to allow for continuous inspection of track. The second is intelligent infrastructure, which incorporates automated sensing and monitoring devices into various assets for preventative maintenance. They are great examples of how we are working to combine the company's core engineering expertise with the latest in information technology. The aim is to make incremental and sometimes radical improvements to the business. That's absolutely what the role is about." ●