



5 Reasons Why You Should Hire a Chief AI Officer – and 5 Reasons Why You Shouldn't

Insights

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Is it the hottest job in corporate America – or is it a passing fad that will fade away in a matter of months? Either way, 2024 will be the year of the Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer (CAIO). This Insight will briefly discuss the exponential growth of CAIO roles over the past year and provide you with five reasons you should immediately run out and hire one – and five reasons why you shouldn't.

What Does a Chief AI Officer Do?

A Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer helps align an organization's strategic goals with AI – an especially tricky proposition given how rapidly the field is evolving – and ensures your AI initiatives are legally, ethically, and morally sound. Depending on the organization, a CAIO might take on the following:

- **Develop Your Strategy:** You can have them craft and execute a comprehensive AI strategy that helps fulfill your long-term objectives. Put simply, they can identify opportunities where AI can add value.
- **Oversee Compliance and Ethics:** They can set up and enforce legal and ethical guidelines for your AI use. Any time you deploy an AI solution, they will be in charge of making sure it satisfies your privacy, fairness, and transparency goals.
- **Stay Ahead of the Curve:** Have them keep up with AI advancements that seem to be popping up on a daily basis. They will be on the forefront when it comes to exploring new AI technologies and methodologies that can benefit your organization.

The Explosion of the CAIO Role

You won't be alone if you decide to hire a CAIO in 2024:

- Glassdoor reported that only 19 CAIOs (or VPs of AI) participated in their community forums in 2022. But by the end of 2023, that number jumped to 122 – an increase of over 540%. We expect this exponential growth to continue in 2024.
- Just in the past few months, organizations such as SAP, Mayo Clinic (Arizona), Equifax, Ashley Furniture, and Accenture each brought aboard CAIOs.

- The NY Times might have pushed things over the top about a month ago when they declared CAIO as the “hottest job in corporate America.”
- And the federal government is getting in on the act. Thanks to the White House’s Executive Order released in October, all federal agencies – over 400 offices – will be hiring a CAIO. The Department of Justice became the highest-profile agency to announce a new CAIO last week.

5 Reasons to Hire a CAIO

1. **They will make sure your AI efforts aren’t siloed.** One of the biggest problems with a decentralized approach to AI efforts is the potential for inefficiencies. A CAIO will ensure collaboration between IT, operations, legal, marketing, and other key functions to integrate AI solutions in a holistic manner throughout your organization.
2. **You can move quickly.** If you rely on an AI committee or other collection of leaders to handle your AI approach, you could get bogged down in process. This is especially problematic in a field like AI – where the developments evolve quickly and being first-to-market can be of critical importance.
3. **You will look good.** Let’s face it – one of the benefits of being an adopter of AI technology is that you can sell yourself as being a cutting-edge organization. Your new CAIO announcement will not go unnoticed to members of the public, your consumers, potential investors, and applicants.
4. **They will open doors for you.** Besides having a shiny new title you can promote to the world, a CAIO will ensure your organization has access to specialized networks and knowledge bases that might otherwise not be available to you. You will suddenly have connections with AI startups, academic institutions, and research labs – and could develop strategic partnerships that are invaluable when it comes to innovation.
5. **You can combine technical and business expertise.** The executives who are right for these roles will blend technical expertise and strategic vision, which will put you at a competitive advantage when it comes to virtually all aspects of your business.

5 Reasons Not to Hire a CAIO

1. **You might not be able to find a unicorn.** It’s great to envision this perfect leader who blends technical and business expertise – but how many of them are out there? You might find it too challenging to find just one person with all of the skills you’re looking for – and one who has C-Suite gravitas to boot.
2. **Would you hire a Chief Internet Officer?** It seems silly to think that you’d hire someone to head up your “internet” efforts – one person ensuring that everyone uses online capabilities to help advance their departmental goals. While the notion might have sounded prescient in 1994, organizations began to incorporate these functions into the broader roles of Chief Information Officers and Chief Technology Officers by the late 1990s and early 2000s. The same could hold true for a CAIO role. The pace of AI evolution means that your CAIO could soon feel irrelevant.

What is now a novel concept could quickly become integrated into your existing technology infrastructure and in every function in your organization anyway, with every leader making AI a priority.


3. **It's better to develop AI project teams.** Many organizations are taking a team-oriented approach to AI projects in their organization, matching leaders together to advance the ball and carry out strategic initiatives. While you might have a larger group get together to brainstorm about the kinds of tasks you want to take on, a series of teams might be the best way to execute them.
4. **You can always retain a “fractional” CAIO.** Rather than create a new C-Suite role, perhaps you might want to find an existing leader and assign them the part-time responsibility of heading up your AI efforts. Or even search the market for a part-time executive who might be handling AI for several different organizations at once. This will allow you to maintain flexibility and stay nimble without committing to an organizational restructure during this period of fluidity and uncertainty.
5. **It comes at a cost – financial and organizational.** Finally, hiring a C-Suite executive who is worth their salt is not a cheap proposition – especially with this role being in such demand right now. You'll need to invest more than six figures into this effort, which may not be feasible for every organization. And even if you do splash the cash, could you face resistance from other execs and departments who feel like this new leader is encroaching on their territory? This attempted solution might actually infringe on your goal for cross-collaboration.

Conclusion

Whether or not you ultimately hire a CAIO, the decision-making process will help you assess your needs and develop a game plan as you face the AI revolution. If you have questions, contact your Fisher Phillips attorney, the authors of this Insight, or any attorney in our [Artificial Intelligence Practice Group](#). Make sure you subscribe to [Fisher Phillips' Insight System](#) to gather the most up-to-date information on AI and the workplace.

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