Topic Statement
Technology, Transformation, and Collaborative Leadership
February 17, 2010

As we all emerge from the downturn, we face a changed set of circumstances. These include a simultaneous need for innovation yet continued cost-cutting; a need for flexibility during a prolonged period of uncertainty; and greater complexity with likely increased government involvement in the marketplace. Our discussion will center on the needed changes within corporations to deal with these circumstances, and particularly the role of the information technology organization in enabling corporate change.

Given the evolution of new information technologies, especially the emergence of the cloud, and the central role technology plays in most processes, what is the opportunity for CIOs to play a major role in changing how corporations work? The chief demands of the current environment are arguably ones we are good at enabling: collaboration, cost-cutting/efficiency, process streamlining, innovation, etc. We have practice managing dichotomies, which also seems to be demanded today: speed vs. security, strategic vs. tactical, outsourced vs. insourced. We have an opportunity to lead significant initiatives to both reduce costs and drive growth through innovation. For example, leveraging the cloud to reduce costs and exploiting collaborative and social networking tools to help the organization find knowledge and expertise within the firm. Specific questions we will wrestle with are:

1. What are the implications of the trends toward virtualization of all flavors? How are companies concretely using the emergence of the cloud as an opportunity?

2. How important is it for corporations to develop and leverage global platforms and services? What does this type of commonality yield? Is it "merely" cost-savings? Also efficiency? Even effectiveness?

3. What role does the process-orientation/transformation that many companies embarked on a few years back now play? Is that still a key way to gain increased efficiencies and cost-savings? Can it be married together with some of the emerging technological capabilities or are they more "free-form" and actually drive in the opposite direction?

4. How do we enable the appropriate amount of collaboration, both internally and externally, to take advantage of its potential for increased innovation? How do we address the needs of a new generation of employees and customers, and yet appropriately protect a corporation's information assets and IP?

5. What specific possibilities do the emerging set of social networking tools offer to corporations? Where are they proving most useful? Are corporations adapting use of generally available tools or buying/creating more tailored ones?

6. How can we bring all this to bear to drive significant change in our enterprises while reducing operating costs? Who owns driving such change? Can IT be a key leader in transforming cost structures and operating models throughout the enterprise?

7. How does IT continue to strive to be more effective in meeting or driving larger corporate goals?

8. Where does the opportunity lie in the mix of uncertainty, dichotomy, social change and technological advancement that currently characterize our times?