

October 18, 2011 10:46 am

[Share](#) [Clip](#) [Reprints](#) [Print](#) [Email](#)

# Mike Mordas of Mercer Outsourcing: 'I see myself as a strategy person'

By Stephen Pritchard

Mercer, a human resources consulting company, employs 18,000 people in 40 countries.

It advises businesses on HR strategy and provides outsourced services, such as pensions, benefits and healthcare administration.

These services rely heavily on IT, and Mercer spends 14 per cent of its turnover on technology.

Mike Mordas, the chief information officer, started his career at Accenture, the consultancy.

But after moving from there to the CIO post at a financial services company and then setting up and selling his own systems integration business at the turn of the millennium, Mr Mordas moved away from technology into training and change management.

It was from there that Mercer hired him as CIO.

A large part of his job is to use technology to develop the business. But, he says, 10 years away from IT almost means starting from scratch. "I would not say I'm a technologist at all," he maintains.

"The board interviewing me asked me why I wanted to do this job, as I'm not a techie guy.

CONTINUE READING ON NEXT PAGE

“But the lines are becoming blurred. In a company such as Mercer, we need to be at the forefront of understanding how technology is affecting our clients, changing the competitive landscape, and disrupting some traditional markets.

“I see myself as a strategy or business person looking for opportunities to leverage what we do, to enter markets, or to offer levels of service that we have not offered before.”

This, he believes, is a significant change from his previous stint as a CIO. “CIOs are now equal members of the executive suite,” he says.

“We don’t just talk about machines, wires or software. We are talking about the way the business is developing.”

But this does not mean there are no technical challenges.

Mercer, for example, has to exchange ever greater quantities of data with its clients, and has just completed a project with Cordys, a software vendor, to improve performance.

In that respect, he says, the CIO’s role is to turn vendor-customer relationships into partnerships, as well as to understand how technology developments might affect Mercer’s clients’ business.

What has not changed is the importance of solid IT operations. A fine grasp of strategy is of little use, if the CIO cannot execute, Mr Mordas warns.

“The foundation of all this is the CIO’s ability to deliver,” he says. “If you cannot deliver, the board won’t believe what you say in your business role.”

Copyright The Financial Times Limited 2011. You may share using our article tools. Please don't cut articles from FT.com and redistribute by email or post to the web.

[Click here to see how Cordys improves Mercer’s business operations](#)