
BUSINESS PAPER



Aruba's Guide to Successful C-Suite Network Connections



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INTRODUCTION

When mass digital transformation swept the world in the wake of COVID-19, the enterprise network found itself in a new starring role within the organization.

Gone were its days as an uncredited supporting player. Suddenly, it was center stage – facilitating communication and collaboration (both internally and externally), shaping the employee experience, defining company culture, and enabling business continuity.

Its importance since the pandemic has only grown, as organizations face new priorities and challenges – such as hybrid working, sustainability, tighter budgets, and the Great Resignation – that can only be addressed with the help of technology.

With the network's newly elevated status, it's simply not possible for CIOs to manage it alone. And nor should you have to – not when the network has such a huge impact on every single department within the organization.

It's time for the network to become a joint responsibility for the C-suite – something that every member cares about, understands, and invests in.

But convincing your fellow C-suite members of this is no easy task. After all, you are dealing with colleagues who have historically had very little to do with networking.

So how can you help them see the tangible benefits that the network can offer their department? The pain points it could help solve? Or the business outcomes it could facilitate?

This report explores the relationship between the enterprise network and four different C-suite members: the Chief Real Estate Officer (CREO), Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO), Chief Financial Officer (CFO), and of course, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

By providing insight into each executive's particular pain points and priorities, it identifies everything you need to know to engage your colleagues in the collective drive towards a smarter, better, faster, and more secure enterprise network that delivers business outcomes.



C-SUITE NETWORK CONNECTIONS: THE ENTERPRISE NETWORK AND THE CHIEF REAL ESTATE OFFICER

When COVID-19 created the need for remote working and social distancing, companies everywhere were forced to rethink their physical workplaces. How many people could they fit into the building? How could they better utilize the space to ensure the safety of those who used it?

To answer these questions, companies – and specifically their real estate departments – turned to technology. Or more accurately, to data-collecting IoT sensors and devices.

But while this data was originally collected to solve an acute problem, companies are now finding that it has opened the door to so many new possibilities, particularly around employee experience, cost-reduction and – increasingly – the critical issue of sustainability.

As they try to unlock these possibilities, now is the time for the Chief Real Estate Officer (CREO) to rethink their relationship with the enterprise network. Where once it was just an IT concern, it should now be considered an asset of strategic importance to the real estate department – and therefore, a CREO's best friend.

But how can you suggest they begin developing this relationship? As always, the best place to start is with their business priorities.

1. Building a more sustainable and climate resilient workplace

Today, climate change sits firmly at the top of the agenda for companies everywhere. And the crossover with the CREO is clear – there are significant sustainability benefits associated with creating a safer, more flexible, and efficient workplace.

Firstly, using sensors and devices to automate facility systems based on occupancy rates has clear advantages for real estate. Think of the energy that can be saved by turning off lights when there's no one in the building or reducing the air conditioning when there are fewer bodies in the room.

But these devices cannot deliver such benefits without a solid, insights-driven implementation plan. This then creates a necessity for the CREO to work directly with you (and your IT team) on feeding all the occupancy and IoT data into platforms that can provide actionable information on everything from building energy usage, CO2 emission rates, and physical resource usage – all on one dashboard. This level of increased insight is a gamechanger when it comes to a CREO's ability to define and redefine their sustainability strategy.

Of course, addressing climate change in companies is no longer just about limiting damage and protecting the earth.

As the recent heatwaves across the world have highlighted, companies now also face the challenge of providing safe, healthy, comfortable, and productive conditions for employees, despite increasingly extreme environments.

Technology and the network play a role here, too. With the right IoT devices integrated into the existing infrastructure, CREOs will be able to see real-time data on environmental conditions, such as temperature, humidity, carbon dioxide levels, and even air quality.

And more importantly, they can set up systems to either alert building management teams if levels exceed acceptable thresholds, or to automatically regulate conditions based on pre-set parameters.

Responding to climate change in this way is only going to become a bigger part of providing a high-quality employee environment – bringing us to the next priority.

2. Creating an employee environment fit for the future of work

While it differs by industry, a quick look at nearly any company's occupancy data shows that hybrid working is here to stay.

So what can CREOs do with their spaces, armed with concrete evidence that a huge percentage of the workforce will not return to the workplace full-time?

The obvious answer is to simply reduce real estate costs.

The more interesting answer is to create a more flexible, dynamic, and efficient workplace that's better suited for today's hybrid working world.

Because the data also shows that when employees return to the workplace, they want a different environment than what they have at home. Goodbye desks and cubicles. Employees want spaces to meet colleagues and clients, areas to collaborate in larger groups, a place to re-energize or to soak up company culture, or even just a change of scenery.

All this has led to the 'hotelification' of the workplace to entice employees back through its doors.



For CREOs, redesigning existing office spaces to meet this new demand is the first step. This again is where you come in – working with the CREO to set up the network infrastructure to facilitate it, such as room booking systems, automated climate control systems, dynamic security systems capable of differentiating guest from employee, and more.

But how does this remain financially sustainable?

3. Demonstrating return on investment

While creating a more sustainable, future-ready workplace is certainly an investment, for the CREO – and those he or she reports into – there is a clear ROI in the form of a company's ability to hit sustainability targets. But providing it relies fundamentally on the network to provide CREOs with the data to demonstrate tangible returns.

We've already touched on how automated systems and reviewing physical space needs impact a company's bottom line.

However, having the right infrastructure can help CREOs drill down even further. With IoT devices tracking efficiencies, they could calculate the amount of energy, physical resources (such as copper), and hours of labor that have been saved – and continue to be saved – throughout a system's entire life cycle. And of course, all these savings come with significant cost reductions to the company.

Direct costs aside, having the right network connecting all your organization's devices through a central platform reduces complexity (and the need to power additional gateway devices) and security risks.

The beginning of a beautiful friendship

It's important to remind your CREO that not everything has to be done at once.

A lot of the data and systems already exist. By working closely with you and your IT team on business priorities like the ones above, CREOs can develop a plan based on leveraging what's already available and acquiring only what's needed to achieve specific goals.

Critically, you should ensure that these plans fit with your existing network infrastructure and meet stringent sustainability and security requirements. How do they fit within your company's current digital transformation journey? Are external partners and suppliers compatible with the network ecosystem? Are the devices themselves eco-friendly? How is everything secured to ensure there are no third-party data leaks?

This will help your CREO avoid investing in incompatible devices that, at best, simply don't function and are unable to deliver any useful insights, and, at worst, pose an active threat to the business.

As you can see, the CREO's expanding role has the potential to be an incredibly rich and rewarding one. But it can't flourish without you.

By providing the necessary knowledge, support, and encouragement, you can help CREOs feel empowered to embrace their evolved role and drive the development of a network that delivers concrete results for everyone.



C-SUITE NETWORK CONNECTIONS: THE ENTERPRISE NETWORK AND THE CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER

It would be easy to make the mistake of thinking that the relationship between the enterprise network and Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) is a new one.

Connecting a remote workforce, delivering digital user experiences, offering a hybrid working environment – surely these were all concerns created by the pandemic?

While it's true that COVID-19 helped propel connectivity to the forefront, the CHRO has needed to work with the network for as long as employees have been using computers.

But you can see why the relationship has escalated in recent years.

Technology is no longer just a functional tool for employees. It now shapes every aspect of an employee's work experience – from how and where they work, to how productive they can be, and how safe they are doing it.

All of which means that the CHRO should already be just as invested in the network as you are, especially if they want to weather the ongoing Great Resignation and win the escalating war on talent. The key word there being should – as this isn't always the case.

As they look to their future role, the matter is not how the CHRO can develop a relationship with the network. It is now how they can take control of this relationship and empower themselves, so that they can drive the network instead of simply being reliant on it.

Below, we focus on three steps that you can work with your CHRO on to achieve this.

1. Create systems that facilitate BYOD

Technology has become so integral to both our work and home lives, particularly during the pandemic – which means that, naturally, everyone has an opinion about it.

Imagine being a Gen Z employee who has grown up with Apple devices, only to be handed a Windows laptop on the first day of work. Or a mature employee who has spent 15 years using PCs and has just been issued a MacBook in their new job.

Increasingly the choice of devices, tools, and systems has a huge impact on an employee's experience, performance, and productivity. And companies will find it impossible to attract and retain talent unless they are willing to provide the flexibility for employees to work how they like.

But how do you and the CHRO manage this? Because it's not a simple question of device selection.

Firstly, how do you ensure that all devices can connect seamlessly, both remotely and in the workplace? Keep in mind that after almost two years of working exclusively in their own environment, where they have full control of the setup, employees now have much higher expectations of and less tolerance for IT issues in the workplace.

Next, how do you secure everything, with new devices being added and removed each day?

The answer is with a network that is built for BYOD and supports the remote workplace (or microbranch) as well as the office. This means a flexible infrastructure that supports plug-and-play remote access points and is secured through an automated Zero Trust Security model that provides role- and device-based network access control.

2. Build an infrastructure that's ready for the workplace of the future

The workplace of the future is more than a space that can facilitate hybrid work. It needs to be set up to deliver what employees value most – both now and in the future.

Hybrid work is a good place to start though. Yes, your network needs to be able to support people working from home and coming into work and bringing their own devices.

But it also needs to support the new, more collaborative and social ways of using the office. This means having easily bookable meeting spaces, where employees can work together with both in-person and remote colleagues. And it means automated security solutions to manage the increased number of clients and guests who visit the office, for either meetings or demos.

Providing the workplace of the future also involves crafting an enhanced, differentiated experience that encourages employees to choose to work from the office – or your company to begin with. It might simply be providing collaborative meeting spaces. Or it could also be having a smart, hyper-connected, and automated building that creates a perfect working environment that can't be achieved at home.



Increasingly, today's more environmentally conscious employees also demand that their workplaces are sustainable. With so many employees choosing to work only for companies that align with their values, this is not something that CHROs can ignore.

The network can help by allowing the business to track and reduce energy utilization, carbon emissions, and physical resource usage.

3. Get creative about how the HR department can leverage digital solutions

Alongside IT, HR is one of the departments that has been thrust into the spotlight over the past couple of years. While once a back-end function, HR now needs to be more present and visible than ever.

To start, mental health and well-being has become a greater priority, for both employees and their companies. While hybrid working clearly has many benefits, it has created a new challenge around inclusivity. Namely, how do we ensure that employees who cannot or will not return to the offices still feel included, supported, and integrated into the company culture?

While these are all complex issues, CHROs should feel reassured that there is a whole host of new digital solutions that can help, from communication apps that help boost team bonding to new digital platforms that support wellbeing initiatives – all of which, however, rely on a strong network.

By working closely with you, CHROs can gain a better understanding of what innovative solutions are viable from a network infrastructure, security, and data privacy standpoint, and then work to implement them for the benefit of their HR teams and the wider company.

A more empowering relationship

For far too long, CHROs may have felt limited by or at the mercy of their company's network infrastructure. Now is the perfect time for CIOs to help change that.

By working together on the goals above, you can help the CHRO take more ownership of the network and see the relationship for what it can be: supportive, fulfilling, and truly empowering.



C-SUITE NETWORK CONNECTIONS: THE ENTERPRISE NETWORK AND THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Unlike the CREO or the CHRO, the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) has historically always been well-acquainted with the enterprise network.

This should come as no surprise to CIOs. After all, you've probably spent plenty of time with your CFO discussing the network, how it operates, its associated costs and savings, and its impact on the business, in order to get final sign off on your proposed budgets.

But today, the relationship is changing. And it's changing in a way that will be attractive to CFOs.

Why? Because new developments mean that network investment is becoming much more reliable, predictable, and profitable than ever before.

Here's how.

1. The business case is clearer than ever

Discussions around investing in the network have moved well beyond providing proof of ROI.

Even if they are not making an explicit bid for network investment, the reality of today's digital world is that the majority of the proposed solutions, experiences, and tools are tech-enabled and require a network infrastructure that can support them.

Therefore, network investment is no longer about added business value, but about business continuation.

It's about ensuring that your business has the infrastructure it needs to continue fulfilling customer, employee, and client demands to stay competitive. To provide the workplace of the future – one that is smart, agile, sustainable, efficient, and supports hybrid working. To deliver an employee experience that attracts and retains employees in an increasingly difficult job market. To ensure business resilience, in case of another crisis like the pandemic.

And finally, to meet growing society, industry, and investor expectations around climate action.

2. When it comes to sustainability reporting, the network is the CFO's best ally

With sustainability now having a direct impact on a company's bottom line, CFOs are finding themselves more and more accountable for a matter traditionally beyond their role.

Fortunately, the network can help CFOs make and measure progress towards sustainability goals.

By supporting you and the CREO in creating a more connected hybrid workplace, with all the necessary devices and sensors, CFOs can accurately calculate the company's exact reduction in carbon emissions, energy and resource usage, and of course, costs.

It's the only way to achieve the gold standard in green accounting.

3. It's becoming an increasingly financially sound decision

Beyond being a strategically sound decision, new developments in network infrastructure have helped make investing easier financially and logistically for CFOs.

For example, flexible financing models like those delivered by HPE GreenLake for Aruba, as part of its network-as-a-service (NaaS) offering, enable businesses to lower the total cost of network technology ownership, and to move infrastructure expenses from CapEx investments into OpEx costs.

Instead of one big, upfront cost, the business can make recurring, predictable, usage-based payments that are aligned to whatever the financial situation may be at any given moment.

And, importantly, these payments are backed up by established Service Level Agreements (SLAs) – further minimizing the risk of investment.

Most of the time, SLAs also dictate when technology gets refreshed. Given how quickly technologies develop today, this is critical to ensuring that companies can remain technologically up to date in a cost-effective way.

As an added bonus, at Aruba we often re-deploy decommissioned hardware at other companies or in other regions, allowing companies to contribute to the circular economy and boost their sustainability goals.

To facilitate these financing options, some CFOs may need to change their governance and investment models. But as you can help them see, the benefits are undeniable.

4. Not investing in the network is a security risk

Who remembers the days when financial data was largely kept offline for security reasons? When employees physically needed to go into the office to access sensitive information?

Companies had already been moving away from this method of working for the past decade, and then of course, the pandemic made it impossible.



There is no choice today but for financial departments to be fully connected. This is particularly true if they want to use technology and data to facilitate their digital transformation, in order to unlock benefits like better business data collection and analytics, more sophisticated financial engineering capabilities, and optimized financial processes.

But the ever-increasing amount of data, users, devices and access points has made security a much more complex issue than ever before.

Add to this the regulations and compliance issues that financial departments have always had to navigate – but are made even trickier by our rapidly evolving society.

And to complicate matters even further, there is a growing need for companies to be more transparent with their information, and for financial data to be leveraged by multiple departments across the company.

So how can you work with your CFO to ensure security?

First, automation is non-negotiable. Then, you should consider innovative security solutions that can easily deliver device visibility and critically, role- and device-based network access control – meaning that the network security is both fully flexible and reliably watertight.

Embracing this evolving relationship

As previously stated, the CFO is no stranger to the enterprise network. But it's no longer something to simply sign off on. Instead, it can be a much more mutually beneficial relationship.

Which is great news for CIOs.

Because the network today is such an integral part of any business and has such a huge impact on business results, it now arguably sits squarely within the CFO's area of responsibility.

This means that if you can communicate the above points to your CFO, you can expect an ally that doesn't just understand, but also shares your excitement for the network.

Your CFO gets a network that enables them to achieve all their financial goals, while you get an invaluable advocate for network investment.

That sounds like a win-win situation.



C-SUITE NETWORK CONNECTIONS: THE ENTERPRISE NETWORK AND THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

It's impossible for CEOs to be involved in every single business decision, which is why they are supported by a strong C-suite, with each member responsible for ensuring that their area of the business runs smoothly.

So does that mean that a CEO can get away without having a relationship with IT and the network?

The short answer is no. Not given the pace of digitization, when technology now powers and enables so much of your business.

The long answer is that when it comes to the network, CEOs all have varying degrees of understanding and input. But the stronger the relationship between the CEO and the network, the bigger the impact on IT, the business functions it supports, and the business at large.

To prove this, we've identified three key points of interest to emphasize with your CEO.

1. Investing in the network means investing in all business units and goals

Is there any department that wouldn't benefit from the ability to work better, faster, easier, smarter, cheaper, and more secure? Or any strategic priority that wouldn't be advanced?

The pandemic has already demonstrated why digital transformation is now fundamental to business survival. Having the latest technologies means your organization can help client- and customer-facing departments provide higher quality and more competitive products and services, and keep up with evolving demands. It means empowering back-end functions to provide better support to the rest of the business. And it means that employees – regardless of which department they belong to or where they choose to work – can have the best experience possible, without any technical roadblocks and complications to stop them from delivering their best work. Indeed, many employees actually experienced very good connectivity while working from home during the pandemic – and now demand that same easy and seamless experience coming back into the workplace.

Your organization could also automate its systems, which would not only streamline operations, eliminate human error, and overcome human limitations, but free up your employees to focus on projects that drive real value.

Speaking of real value, with the right technology, the deluge of data that your company has been accumulating could finally be turned into actionable insights.

Enterprise data has the potential to deliver significant cost savings, improve operational efficiency, and even unlock new business opportunities and revenue streams. But first, it needs to be stored, secured, sorted, and analyzed – all of which a great enterprise network can help with.

This is only the tip of the iceberg in terms of what the network can do. To unlock its full potential, CEOs need to work closely with you and other department heads to understand the exact impact that the network can have on every area of the business.

2. The network is key to all sustainability goals

Sustainability isn't just a strategic priority for CEOs. For most companies around the world, sustainability has become the CEO priority, being driven both from the top down (by company boards, investors, and governments) and from the bottom up (by employees and the general public).

The network plays an integral role in allowing companies to become more sustainable, to measure and prove their sustainability, and to build more sustainable products and services. And for this reason alone, investing in the right network infrastructure should be the top priority for any CEO.

3. It's not just about keeping up, but staying ahead

Given the rate of change and disruption, any CEO simply using the network to keep operations moving and functioning with the latest technology has already lost the game.

It used to be that if the network were down, employees could do other manual work while waiting for a fix. Today, however, if there are issues with the network, everything stops. The network has become fundamental to keeping businesses running.

But the network has so much more potential than this. It can help the business continually stay ahead of and be differentiated from the competition.

This is predominantly because investing in an agile network creates the foundation for every area of the business to innovate, from IT teams themselves to the company's R&D department.

With an agile network, the infrastructure is always ready to integrate, support, secure, and fund any new technological developments that might help the business move the needle on its goals.



Today, things move quickly. It's up to the CEO to ensure that their business can move just as fast.

Creating strong C-suite connections

While we've been focusing on why the relationship between the CEO and the network must be a strong one, the real relationship is, of course, between the CEO and the CIO.

An open, trusting, and collaborative relationship between you and your company's top executive is the only way to ensure that the enterprise network receives the attention and the investment it deserves.

The advice for CIOs is simple: recognize that the network has never been more important and, therefore, you have never been in a better position.

As long as you know your network, understand your organization's priorities, and have the right networking partner ready to support you, you should have everything you need to confidently work with your CEO to deliver a network that enables the business to achieve its biggest goals, both now and in the future.



CONCLUSION

In the introduction, we spoke about how this new era of digital transformation has catapulted the enterprise into the spotlight.

Well, the same thing can also be said for the person ultimately responsible for it: you, the CIO.

We hope that this guide has equipped you with everything you need to tackle this new evolution of your role, and to work more closely and productively with your fellow C-suite members towards a network that enables everyone to achieve both their individual departmental and collective organizational goals.

After all, the business drives the network. But it is the C-suite, including you, that drives the business.