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Scottish Government IT chief Anne Moises wants to bring emotional IQ into the CIO role

The listener

By Graham Jarvis | Published: 14:55 GMT, 26 May 10 | CIO UK

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While avoiding any sweeping generalisations, Scottish Government CIO Anne Moises believes some men overly focus on the nuts and bolts of technology, forgetting the 'people' aspect of IT. Many also make the mistake of using jargon rather than plain English, thus bewildering rather than impressing those who work outside of IT and she admits that as a young programmer she didn't grasp the importance of communicating her messages. Understand your subject, she advises, but there's no point in blinding your audience with technical babble; instead, communicate with your non-IT related audience in a way that develops empathy.

CIOs have to get the people aspect of IT right if their projects are going to satisfy all stakeholders and this requires an ability to listen to those that use the systems on a daily basis. By listening it becomes possible to work out what departments, teams and individuals need to solve their operational issues -- including what they will accept as a solution. The CIO can then implement the applications and systems to imporve their effectiveness.

Moises' thinking was inspired by her predecessor, Maureen McGinn, who worked at what was known as the Scottish Office before devolution.

"She became a role model for me, demonstrating that you could and should bring emotional intelligence as well as technical know-how into the provision and support of IT," Moises recalls. "You can have the best designed system in the world, but if users don't like it, don't understand it or won't use it, then it becomes a waste of time."

McGinn taught her that understanding people is as vital as understanding technology so one of the tasks of her current role is to take a technical idea and translate it into business terms for the Scottish Government's user community. She believes that "it is an art that some people in IT find very difficult to master".

A rare female CIO in one the most recently added government CIO positions, the decline in the number of women entering IT is an issue that is close to Moises' heart. "IT is an incredibly varied

career," she says, citing the opportunity to get involved in everything from systems design to the development of applications, user interfaces and "the deeply technical stuff".

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