

Zentient Technology Officer (ZTO)

Overview

Local organisations such as yours face unique challenges when it comes to embracing technology. Budget constraints make it difficult to fund projects that demand large upfront payments, and hiring tech talent during a global shortage seems both daunting and expensive.

Having listened to what local organisations have been saying, we developed the concept of a ZTO. A hybrid between employee and consultant, a ZTO is a Zentient representative placed within your organisation to solve your skills shortage.

The ZTO will be a member of your team in every sense. Under your direction, they can attend meetings, lead a team you have, or even attend social events. In fact, some people may never even know that this person is from Zentient.

The fact they are from Zentient is a hidden strength until the time comes for you to draft up a complex project requiring more time or staff than you currently have available. At this point, your ZTO takes on the additional responsibility of overseeing a project to be delivered by Zentient. With the knowledge they have gained from within your organisation, they are ideally placed to ensure that the project is delivered successfully and to your needs.

What can a ZTO do?

So a ZTO combines the best of a consultant and an employee, but you now may be left wondering what things a ZTO can actually do for your organisation. Here are some examples to get you thinking about what engaging a ZTO may look like.

System administration

If you are like most organisations, you're probably using either Google or Microsoft to handle email, documentation and collaboration amongst your staff members. Having a ZTO look after your system administration needs can simplify the process of managing staff accounts.

IT support

Inevitably, there will be technical difficulties. People will find that they can't access a certain area of a shared drive, forget their passwords, or struggle to set up emails on a device. As issues begin to get more technical, it may be worth having a systems expert in the form of a ZTO so that you don't waste hours looking for a solution.

Website hosting & domain management

Hosting a website and managing the domain that accompanies it can be quite technical. It's easy to become lost in a world of DNS records when you don't understand what they mean.

Having a ZTO on board means you can be sure that everything works as expected and that changes to your internet infrastructure don't cause any unintended consequences.

Software implementation recommendations and setup

With the ever-increasing knowledge of your organisation, a ZTO will be able to provide helpful suggestions about what software could be implemented to significantly improve your efficiency. If you agree with the recommendations, they can even lead the charge to install and integrate it and communicate the change to your other team members.

Automation of processes

Always on the lookout for ways to improve the processes within your organisation, your ZTO can help you automate repetitive tasks. Integrations and custom code can be developed to increase efficiency and free up your time to pursue more important tasks.

Website design & development

There is always more that can be added to a website, but sometimes it can be scary to change things when you are worried that you might do something wrong and cause damage. Your ZTO will be alongside you to make sure that any ideas you have for the website can be made.

App development

If you've got a brilliant idea for an app that your organisation needs, look no further than your very own ZTO. Working with you, they can help scope out the project's requirements and timeline. If the project will be more demanding than they can handle alone, they can step into a project manager role and oversee the completion of it by additional Zentient team members.

Data analysis

Insights around customer or stakeholder engagement can be critical in understanding how you can improve your offering. Unfortunately, dashboards provided by services such as Google Analytics can often be more intimidating than informative, especially to those who haven't got much experience. Your ZTO can help guide you, converting information into insight.

An example

Earlier this year we were approached by a not-for-profit organization that was struggling to fill a vacancy in a CTO role. They had felt first-hand the shortage of tech talent available, and given their lack of technology leadership internally, were not placed to train someone up. What made their lives even harder was the fact that – due to budget constraints – they could only afford to employ this CTO for 1-day per week.

For anyone else, this would be a nightmare situation. Having your previous CTO leave and not finding a replacement leaves all of the organisations open to crippling failures with no one there to respond. As such, it's no wonder that they were scared.

Fortunately, they approached Zentient. We spoke to them, appreciating the valuable work they do for the community, and telling them how we can help. We proposed our ZTO (Zentient Technology Officer) service in which a Zentient representative fills a vacancy in another organisation's chart and acts as a hybrid between consultant and employee.

In just a week later, a ZTO – James – had started working for them. The onboarding process was the same as if they had found a CTO from elsewhere, and James was fully embraced as a part of the team. Far from the concept of “outsourcing” or “consulting”, James was instead an active team member, taking direction from the CEO, meeting with other executives, and delegating tasks to the teams below him. Many people within the organisation didn't even know that he was a double agent.

The difference between ZTO and CTO was only fully realised a month later when there had been discussions of undertaking a major redevelopment of the organisation's CRM. Previously, they would rely on either their small volunteer tech team or get a quote from an outsider. In this case, the project was far beyond what the tech team was capable of, so handling it internally wasn't going to be an option. The second option – getting a quote from a different company – was viable but costly. Technology projects are already expensive, so the last thing this organisation needed was to find out that the first \$1,000 of the project proposal was to cover the time the outsider spent understanding the organisation's needs.

Fortunately, the way things played out was very different, because they already had a ZTO in place. A ZTO is a lot of things – a technology expert, a great communicator, and an excellent project manager – so it's easy to forget that the true power they have lies in them standing on the shoulders of Zentient. In the case of the CRM, the ZTO had been involved in meetings from the beginning and had contributed to the direction of the project.

Together with the organisation's CEO and C-suite executives, the ZTO had drafted up a full project proposal ready to go. Next, if the ZTO doesn't think that the organisation's tech team can handle the project, he can propose delegating it to Zentient. Continuing to serve as the primary point of contact, but now also the leader of a project team within Zentient, he manages several Zengineers who, together, develop the new CRM system.

The ZTO builds a project team of Zengineers, using his intimate understanding of the project. He chooses from Zentient's pool of talented tech experts, selecting the perfect team based on skills and relevant experience. The project runs smoothly, with a ZTO placed ideally to look over it, much the same way a CTO would. Much like a building inspector, he watches as the Zentient team goes about developing the CRM, making sure that everything is to specification. He wants to make sure that the organisation is getting the best possible CRM.

Once the project is wrapped up, the Zengineers will move on to their next reassignment but the ZTO will, of course, remain. The organisation had previously engaged third parties to do projects and had been left completely to their own devices after project sign-off. It's refreshing to have a ZTO who has been there through it all – before, during and after the project – and therefore is ideally placed to maintain and build upon what was delivered.

To this day, the ZTO continues to work within the organisation, advising on how they can better leverage technology to drive success, and where projects may be a good idea. The hybrid model provides sustained support and direction, without sacrificing the ability to undertake advanced deliverable technology projects.

How does it compare to...

Now that you've heard an overview and example of what a ZTO arrangement might look like, let's consider how it addresses the problems with some other approaches.

Hiring someone

The problems

- The high demand for those in the technology industry means that you can expect to pay close to \$80k per year, even for a recent graduate.
- The competition for tech professionals also means that they often demand that their work be reliable and full-time.
- Managing a tech professional is difficult when you don't come from a tech background yourself.

How a ZTO differs

- Unlike enlisting an employee that demands high-salary and full-time work, a ZTO can work flexibly and for as many hours as you require.
- Engaging a ZTO requires much less legal preparation than hiring a staff member.
- You do not need to worry about your ZTO being inexperienced or directionless, as Zentient coaches, mentors and manages the ZTO.

Recruiting a student part-time or as a volunteer

The problems

- A student likely has little experience of how things in technology outside of an academic setting, so they are ill-equipped to act in a CTO-like position.
- Managing a tech professional is difficult when you don't come from a tech background yourself, so you may find yourself giving up control to someone without experience.
- Students can be very busy, with a frequently changing schedule, so they may be difficult to rely on to deliver a project on time or maintain critical infrastructure.
- Students may leave the role very quickly, as a result of high university courseload or get a different part-time job; all the knowledge of your systems disappearing with them.

How a ZTO differs

- Our ZTOs have worked in many organisations, similar and different from your own, so bring real-world experience in the best practices.
- All of our ZTOs are backed by the entire Zentient team, so you can rely on them to get the job done on time and maintain critical infrastructure.
- Our ZTOs are committed to the engagements that they take on, and we aim to keep them working with you for as long as possible. When there is turnover in staff, we

manage the handover internally, so that your new ZTO is properly educated on your organisation.

Engaging an agency or consultant to deliver a project

The problems

- Since they are outsiders, a significant portion of the project initiation process will involve explaining your business to them, all of which you will be charged for.
- Consulting firms can be very expensive.
- After the project has been completed, you will be left with no one inside the organisation who understands the technology.

How a ZTO differs

- By working as an integrated part of your team, our ZTO gains an intimate understanding of your organisation, simplifying and saving you money on projects you choose to undertake with Zentient.
- Engaging a ZTO means that you can avoid paying a large lump sum to a consulting firm or agency for a project unless that is desired.
- If Zentient delivers a project for your organisation, you will always have someone on the inside who understands the solution and can provide assistance.

Outsourcing your technology division

The problem

- Especially if you outsource overseas, communication between your organisation and the technology provider can be difficult.
- The technology provider representative will always be an outsider and not someone who physically shows up to work for meetings and important organisational events.
- The technology provider representative doesn't act as an employee within your organisation, and will therefore delegate work overseas instead of to members of your team.

How a ZTO differs

- Having a ZTO working within your organisation means that communication channels are open and accessible.
- A ZTO is someone who functions as if they are just another member of your team, and can therefore show up to work for meetings or organisational events.
- A ZTO acts as an employee, and can therefore collaborate on work with other staff and teams within your organisation.

How much does it cost to hire a ZTO?

Our flexible model means that you can engage a ZTO at a skill level you require, and for as many hours as you need. We understand that an organisation that has only been operating for a year or so may have substantially different needs to an established company that has been in business for many decades.

Zentient allows you to choose both the level of the ZTO you require and how many hours per month you would like them for. As a guide, a level 1 ZTO might be someone who has accrued some experience in the tech industry since graduating from university. On the other side of things, a level 5 ZTO has decades of CTO experience in large companies across the globe.

To calculate your expected payments, you can use our calculator available [here](#). If you are an eligible not-for-profit, you can see how a 25% discount affects the cost.

Additionally, here are some scenarios that may help you evaluate your options.

Use case 1

A local not-for-profit organisation is well established but has a few apps and a website that requires maintenance that it currently isn't receiving.

Recommended engagement: 8 hours per month from a Level 1 ZTO

Cost: \$472 per month (includes the 25% not-for-profit discount)

Use case 2

A newly opened business has only 5 team members with no significant systems in place and needs help setting up things like Microsoft 365 and other basic infrastructure.

Recommended engagement: 32 hours per month from a Level 2 ZTO

Cost: \$3,417 per month (not eligible for the 25% discount)

Use case 3

A large not-for-profit organisation has a full-time CTO role that has been vacant for a long period and desperately needs filling. They want someone who has previously accrued years of experience sitting on boards and working in international companies.

Recommended engagement: 160 hours per month from a Level 5 ZTO

Cost: \$17,992 per month (includes the 25% not-for-profit discount)