

1Q25

The CIO Report

Gartner answers to top
CIO questions

Top 5 questions from your CIO peers

1.

How do I scale AI projects from early exploration to delivering measurable value?

2.

How do I build a scalable, integrated data-driven foundation to support high-impact decisions?

3.

How do I optimize the cybersecurity program to protect my organization?

4.

How can I negotiate costs, maintain control and manage supplier risk?

5.

How do I ensure my organization has the right skills and expertise to respond to emerging technologies?

Scale AI beyond the pilot phase

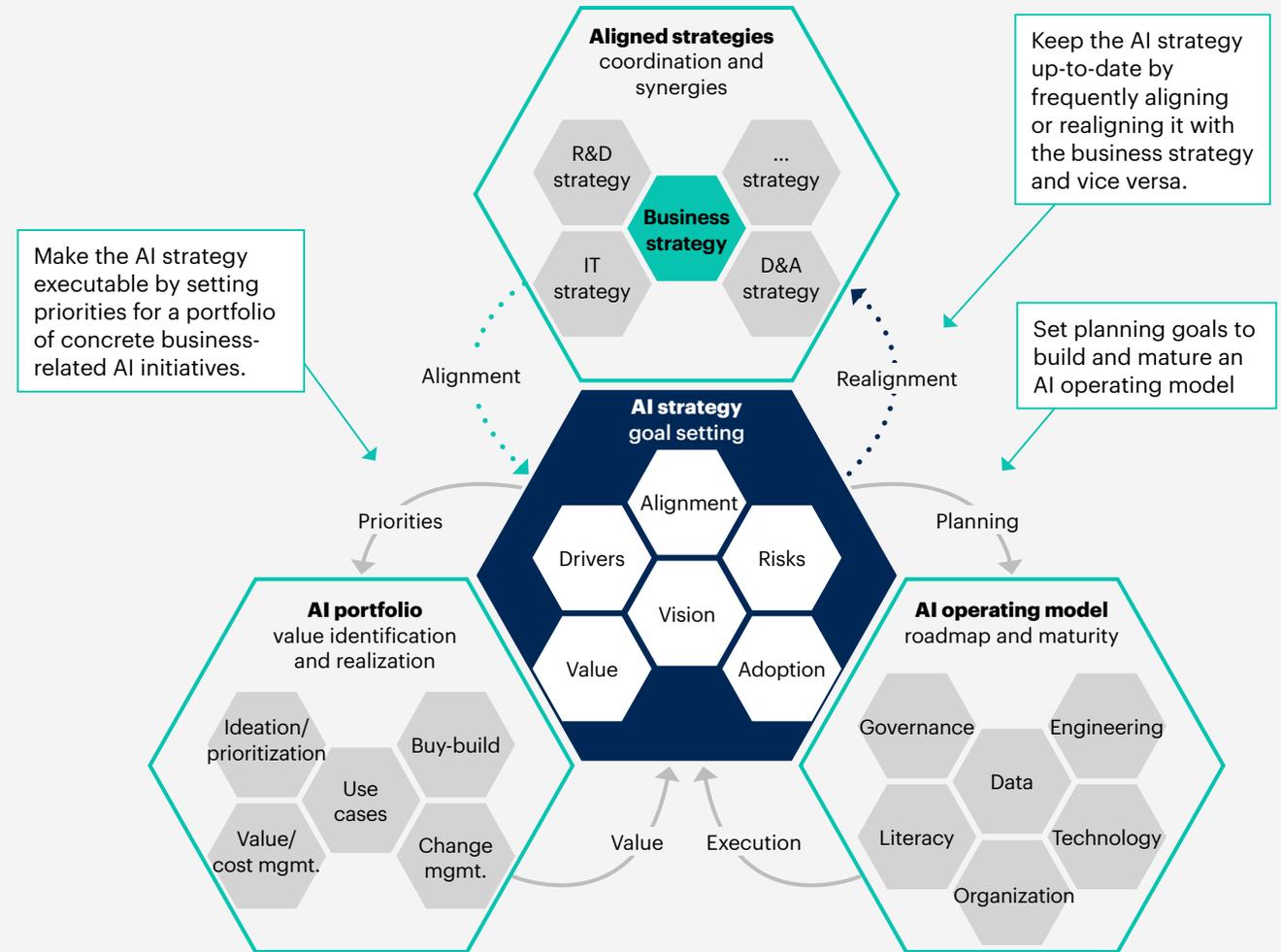
Today's CIOs are under enormous pressure to deliver on AI hype and prove the value of investments in the technology. At the same time, high failure rates, runaway costs, poor-quality data and an ill-equipped talent pool are putting CIOs in a difficult position.

Still, most executive leaders are looking to IT for AI support, creating an opportunity for CIOs to cement their role as strategic leaders in the organization.

CIOs need to be providing strategic guidance across the broader organization for effective technical implementation but also creating a cultural understanding of reasonable expectations for AI. Focus on developing AI skill sets across the talent workforce and ensure they're ready to evolve alongside emerging technologies and cybersecurity threats.

Many organizations struggle to scale AI, but a well-planned strategy executed across the organization in partnership with other executive roles is a step in the right direction.

The AI strategy in context



Source: Gartner



How do I scale AI projects from early exploration to delivering measurable value?



74% of CEOs say that **AI is the technology that will most impact** their industry.



More than 80% of independent software vendors will have **embedded GenAI capabilities in their enterprise applications** by 2026.



20% of CIOs say they include focus on **mitigation of potential negative consequences of AI on employee well-being.**



Why CIOs need the answer now:

1. CIOs are encountering unexpected costs within AI projects that make it difficult to demonstrate ROI.
2. The pressure is on to meet executive AI hype and deliver on planned business strategies.
3. Rushed AI projects and the pressure to deliver can lead to poor decision making, risking corporate reputation and exposure.

“

I believe there is inherent value in the AI productivity use cases we've deployed, but it's hard to measure. My CFO doesn't care if I've saved someone time. I'm trying to figure out how to demonstrate value when productivity savings are immeasurable.

— CIO, Telecommunications

”

Source: Gartner



Sample action plan: Develop and execute an AI strategy

Steps	1 Create an AI strategy	2 Identify use cases and business value	3 Design organization to support AI
Expected outcome	Define AI vision and measure AI maturity	Prioritize AI use cases and roadmap	Enterprise-ready AI
Actions	<p>Develop AI enterprise vision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss AI vision and strategy best practices with a Gartner expert. • Define the AI vision and validate with business stakeholders. • Create an AI strategy to include risks and decision rights. <p>Assess AI maturity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Run a baseline assessment to identify gaps between current and target state. • Conduct Executive Partner-led working session to baseline AI importance and maturity. <p>Gain stakeholder support + board approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Socialize AI strategy with business partners and present to the board for approval and funding. 	<p>Prioritize AI use cases</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize the top AI use cases in terms of business value and feasibility. Resource: For AI Value, Focus on Your Use Cases <p>Understand ROI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define value for your prioritized use cases. • Review AI tech stack with a Gartner analyst to determine whether to build or buy. Resource: Scaling AI: Strategies for AI-Steady and AI-Accelerated Organizations <p>Create AI roadmap</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create AI adoption goals for AI roadmap and conduct AI pilots utilizing The CIO's Guide to Building an AI Roadmap That Drives Value. • Executive Partner-facilitated peer connection to accelerate AI initiatives. 	<p>Define AI governance to mitigate risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess and address gaps with AI policy. Resource: AI Ethics: Enable AI Innovation With Governance Platforms <p>Uplift AI skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up an AI community of practice and uplift AI literacy. <p>Establish an AI operating model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess current operating model to fulfill the AI strategy. • Conduct an Executive Partner-led workshop to identify new operating model design. <p>Sustainable change management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a review of change management plan and receive feedback from a Gartner expert. • Create an AI change management plan.



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CIOs are accountable for operationalizing AI to deliver on the hype, but success requires a team effort



CIO responsibilities

Rationalization: Creates AI tech stack that can accept AI and data coming from everywhere

Build a coherent AI platform: Balances the need to capture opportunity with the need to reduce duplicative efforts and technology

Manage executive expectations: Briefs boards and tempers hype, demonstrating the time frame to benefit with slow or unquantifiable ROI



IT partners

Chief data and analytics officer (CDAO): Responsible for building the AI-ready data required to realize value from investments

Chief information security officer (CISO): Ensures that tech and AI decisions are secure; analyzes threat vectors and emerging risks to determine if AI outputs are safe

Software engineering leader (SWEL): Improves productivity internally and creates monetizable AI products externally

Chief technology officer (CTO) and infrastructure and IT operations (I&O): Create a stable environment for AI across the organization



Business partners

Chief executive officer (CEO): Determines where AI can transform the business; expects the CIO to realize AI value

Chief financial officer (CFO): Evaluates meaningful returns from AI investments

Chief experience officer (CXO) + functional leaders: Provide CIO with domain knowledge to guide AI strategy and implementation

Chief human resources officer (CHRO): Collaborates with CIO to help employees adopt AI through change management



How do I build a scalable, integrated data-driven foundation to support high-impact decisions?

 **89%** of CIOs say **effective data and analytics (D&A) governance is essential** for enabling business and technology innovation.



 **46%** of CIOs report having **strategic value-oriented KPIs associated with governance policy, practices and procedures.**



 **70%** of GenAI pilots fail to move into production due to **inadequate data, lack of governance, high risk or inability to justify the business value.**



Why CIOs need the answer now:

1. CIOs are facing higher costs and lower accuracy of AI- and GenAI-based applications.
2. Ineffective D&A strategy can create career-limiting corporate brand and personal reputation damage.
3. A poorly executed D&A strategy can result in material data breaches, misinformation and compliance fees.

“
In the business context, understanding and leveraging data and governance to achieve success with AI is crucial. The board wants to know our strategy on AI, how we’re proceeding, and what the costs and value will be. It’s crucial to explain the foundational investments needed to the board so that we have a plan and strategy in place.
— CIO, Financial Services
”

Source: Gartner



Sample action plan: Establish data foundations to accelerate AI

Steps	1 Assess data and analytics (D&A) capabilities	2 Establish D&A foundations to support AI	3 Accelerate and scale D&A to support AI
Expected outcome	Baseline of D&A maturity	Establishment of key D&A foundational elements	Be a high-performing D&A organization to support AI ambitions
Actions	<p>Assess D&A maturity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess organization’s maturity of the D&A program (with Executive Partner and Client Service role [CSx] support) by running the Gartner IT Score for Data and Analytics. <p>Conduct D&A strategy review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct D&A strategy review with an analyst or commit time with Executive Partner to putting together your D&A strategy. Resource: Key Success Factors in Any Data and Analytics Strategy <p>Assess D&A operating model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Executive Partner–led working sessions on How to Create an Optimal Organizational Model for Data and Analytics to improve business outcomes. Tool: Data and Analytics Maturity Score 	<p>Establish D&A/AI governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct Analyst Inquiry on Data & Analytics Governance best practices to ensure proper organizational governance. <p>Conduct AI ambition workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Partner–led workshop with IT and business to establish organization’s AI Ambition. Resource: Get AI Ready — What IT Leaders Need to Know and Do <p>Establish data and AI literacy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct analyst review session on D&A board presentation with focus on data literacy. <p>Establish data and analytics KPIs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Partner–led session on establishing 5 Data and Analytics KPIs Every Executive Should Track. 	<p>Accelerate D&A and AI initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Partner–facilitated peer connection on accelerating D&A/AI initiatives at Gartner IT Symposium/Xpo™ conference, CIO Leadership Forum or virtually. <p>Scaling D&A and AI initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct analyst inquiry to review results from Accelerator for AI-Ready Data. <p>Maturing and enhancing D&A and AI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct analyst inquiry on best practices for maturing the D&A culture. <p>Equip your team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and develop what’s required of your team — from skills to architecture — to deliver on analytics and AI initiatives. Resource: AI Planning Guide for D&A Architects



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CIOs are often accountable for AI value realization, but developing successful data foundations requires a team effort



CIO responsibilities

AI data foundations for success: Delivers value from AI investments but requires collaboration for AI-ready data foundations and practices

Data, analytics and AI solutions delivery: Collaborates with IT partners to deliver the trusted data, analytics and AI products, solutions and applications

AI business transformation to realize value: Collaborates with business partners to ensure work and business transformation to realize expected value



IT partners

CDAO: Collaborates to implement AI-ready data foundations, modern data management and governance, high-quality D&A products and intelligent apps

SWEL: Collaborates across technology teams to embed, democratize and operationalize data, analytics and AI in apps and business, decision and agentic workflows

CISO: Collaborates to ensure data and intelligent application security and data security governance



Business partners

Business unit leader: Partnership needed to ensure alignment to business outcomes and value realization

CHRO: Partnership needed to successfully implement change management strategies as ways of working evolve

Head of legal/compliance: Partnership needed to ensure adherence to compliance, governance and risk regulations



How do I optimize the cybersecurity program to protect my organization?



67% of CEOs and senior business executives expressed a desire to have **more technology work done directly within business functions.**



By 2027, 75% of employees will **acquire, modify or create technology outside of IT's visibility** — up 41% from 2022.



69% of CIOs say their **top focus during personal working time in the next 12 months is managing cybersecurity and technology risks.**



Why CIOs need the answer now:

1. Today's organizations face increased security vulnerabilities, higher risk of potential breach and loss of competitive advantage.
2. CIOs with ineffective cybersecurity programs risk fines, operational disruptions, reputational damage, eroded customer trust and vulnerability exploitation.
3. CIOs face potential loss of cybersecurity funding, eroded stakeholder confidence, potential incidents and loss of credibility.



With the rapid evolution of technology ownership, our approach to cybersecurity governance must be equally dynamic. We must anticipate the next frontier of digital threats and ensure our defenses evolve in tandem with the technologies we embrace.

— CIO, Retail Organization



Source: Gartner

Sample action plan: Build an evolved cybersecurity strategy

Steps	1 Evolve cybersecurity governance	2 Understand exposure to third-party risks	3 Guide where to invest
Expected outcome	Improve alignment between cybersecurity initiatives and business objectives	Strengthen organization’s security posture	Enterprise protection-level agreements to deliver a target protection level for a planned cybersecurity investment
Actions	<p>Maximize cybersecurity’s impact</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify groups capable of performing more security activities autonomously with Case Study: Framework to Enable Business Ownership of Cybersecurity Activities. Tool: Cybersecurity Controls Assessment <p>Optimize cybersecurity organization structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clarify roles and responsibilities and ensure alignment to strategic objectives with Tool: Sample Cybersecurity Organization Charts. Resource: 2025 Strategic Roadmap for Cybersecurity Leadership <p>Identify critical talent gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline the recruitment and performance evaluation process with Cybersecurity Job Description Library. Resource: Address Talent Shortage by Fostering Emerging Talent 	<p>Improve risk visibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore and assess third party against the potential cyber risk that vendors present to your organization with Third-Party Cybersecurity Insights Tool <p>Promote accountability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide scalable, resilience-oriented support to manage third-party cybersecurity risks effectively with 4 Ways to Boost Third-Party Cybersecurity Risk Management Effectiveness <p>Maximize funding allocation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure investments are effective, defensible and scalable with Take a Life Cycle Approach to Managing Third-Party Cyber Risk. Resource: Presenting Cybersecurity to the Board of Directors 	<p>Identify and implement outcome-driven metrics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get started by defining outcome-driven metrics for your organization with Four Steps to Develop Outcome-Driven Metrics for Cybersecurity. Resource: Drive Cybersecurity Investment With Outcome-Driven Metrics and Benchmarks <p>Benchmark current cybersecurity business value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate your current performance against peers with the Cybersecurity Business Value Benchmark <p>Educate stakeholders and guide cybersecurity investments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transform cybersecurity investment discussions with The Accelerator for Cybersecurity Performance Metrics.

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CIOs are accountable for aligning digital and cybersecurity strategies, but evolving the operating model requires a team effort

CIO responsibilities

Align technology strategy with cybersecurity strategy and communicate strategy and objectives across the organization

Identify new technologies that can enhance business outcomes and support enterprise digital transformation

Align with senior stakeholders on acceptable risk within the organization and partner to define a plan to manage this risk

IT partners

CISO: Aligns cybersecurity strategy and program to business objectives and risk appetite; directs cybersecurity initiatives to evolve the operating model and communicates the cybersecurity strategy across the organization

SWEL: Ensures software development practices align with the organization's cybersecurity strategy, while consistently driving secure behaviors across the software development team

Business partners

Business technologist: Partners cross-functionally with IT and the business and aligns technological solutions with business strategies to drive growth and efficiency

CEO and CFO: Key members of a broader group of senior stakeholders who validate acceptable levels of risk within the organization and align funding to achieve cybersecurity objectives



How can I negotiate costs, maintain control and manage supplier risk?



30% annual increases are expected from software vendors as they embed AI into SaaS and other solutions.



35% of the entire annual budget could be consumed by GenAI budgets due to cost overruns.



5x-10x cost estimates for AI can be off by 500% to 1,000%.



Why CIOs need the answer now:

1. Ungoverned vendor engagement will increase technical complexity and enterprise IT costs.
2. CIOs will experience loss of control as CxOs purchase GenAI solutions.
3. IT will experience rising pressure on the entire budget as GenAI license and support costs rise.



One issue we're grappling with is that there's not really new money to invest in technology. And technology keeps getting more expensive.

— CIO, Government Agency



Source: Gartner



Sample action plan: AI technology sourcing

Steps	1 Diagnose current AI sourcing approach	2 Develop AI sourcing plan	3 Source the right solution
Expected outcome	Baseline of AI sourcing maturity	Sourcing strategy	Negotiated solutions
Actions	<p>Assess AI vendor management capabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baseline the team’s ability to manage vendor relationships using the IT score for Vendor Management tool. Review results with a Gartner expert. <p>Evaluate governance structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare the executive leadership to manage risks and harvest opportunities AI vendors bring, using this best practice playbook. <p>Elevate knowledge of AI vendors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build the tech leadership team’s ability to make critical decisions on vendors, using Market Guides, Magic Quadrants and discussions with Gartner experts. 	<p>Align IT and business stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agree on key priorities and expected business value to position IT as a proactive business enabler focused on strategic outcomes, using frameworks and Executive Partner guidance. Guide creation of IT investment business cases with this Initiative Accelerator. <p>Evaluate tech options</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline technology decisions using the Gartner BuySmart™ tool to structure the evaluation fueled by Gartner insight. <p>Model costs and returns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan and estimate AI total cost of ownership (TCO) using this AI cost calculator. Guide teams to effectively calculate business outcomes of AI investments. 	<p>Develop proposal and negotiation strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shortlist vendors using Market Guides and Gartner Magic Quadrant™ research; build requirements with BuySmart’s evaluation checklists and vendor questionnaires. Resource: Gartner tools Select your vendor based on team scores in BuySmart to remove bias from decisions. Speak with Gartner experts about factors that might impact the deal, identify negotiation leverage points, and refine requirements based on costs/risks. <p>Conduct proposal review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review proposals with a Gartner expert to identify ways to reduce risks and total cost for new and renewing proposals. Review final proposal with a Gartner expert to ensure you secure the right deal for your org.

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CIOs must lead tech purchasing; others are spending on AI but not realizing value and look to CIOs for answers



CIO responsibilities

Lead execution: Implements AI initiatives without direct control of spend or clarity on expected outcomes

Manage costs: Understands cost drivers, optimizes costs and negotiates terms for new and renewing tech

Set the investment roadmap: Determines how and when to invest to align technology to strategic goals at the right cost



IT partners

Head of apps: Responsible for 46% of the IT budget — the largest technical category

CDAO: New data platform costs can exceed 87% of the total AI budget

IT procurement: Responsible for securing an efficient price, but not always whether that spend is aligned with the organization's strategic goals



Business partners

CFO: Expects CIOs to coordinate all tech spend to ensure it is cost-efficient and drives value, even if technically not in the CIO's budget

CxO/business line leaders: Leaders plan their own spend on technology; for example, CHROs plan to spend 7.1% of their own budget on AI



How do I ensure my organization has the right skills and expertise to respond to emerging technologies?



16% of CIOs **prioritize building a technology workforce enterprisewide in 2025.**



81% of CIOs cite **AI skills gaps as having a moderate to severe negative impact** on their ability to meet 2025 objectives.



48% of CIOs say their **top barrier to skills-based talent management is the lack of HR capacity and capability to support it.**



Why CIOs need the answer now:

1. CIOs cannot deliver business results without the right workforce or skills.
2. Without the correct in-house talent, CIOs will need to hire contingent workers or consultants.
3. Businesses that fail to leverage innovative technology and invest in their workforce will struggle to attract top talent.

“

Most organizations start with recruiting to make sure they have the skills needed for emerging technology. But it's equally crucial to develop our talent and upskill our workforce — you can't hire or buy your way out of skill gaps.

— CIO, Financial Services

”

Source: Gartner

Sample action plan: Develop technology talent

Steps	1 Establish strategic workforce planning	2 Assess your talent gap and sourcing strategy	3 Implement talent management
Expected outcome	Talent strategy linked to corporate objectives	Long-term plan for strategy-aligned talent gaps and modernization	Modernized skills and expertise to respond to emerging technologies and deliver business results
Actions	<p>Build a winning talent strategy for the new talent landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an IT talent strategy leveraging 5 Principles for an Adaptive IT Talent Strategy. <p>Align strategic workforce plan with business and IT strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Partner-led working sessions to align and develop an IT strategic workforce plan. <p>Assess your current talent landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how to initiate a talent assessment with a Gartner expert. 	<p>Create your job architecture and career framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss how to design an IT job architecture and career paths with a Gartner expert. <p>Assess your IT compensation model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage Gartner benchmarks to manage compensation and compete for IT talent. <p>Create your talent sourcing strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Partner-led working sessions build a competitive talent sourcing strategy. • Set up a document review for Gartner expert to provide feedback on talent sourcing strategy. 	<p>Implement talent management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss best practices on adopting a skills-based approach for talent management with a Gartner expert. <p>Modernize your sourcing strategy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Partner-led working sessions to use AI sourcing to address talent shortages and cut hiring costs. <p>Align talent to digital operating model</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive Partner-led workshop with IT and business leaders on structuring IT into a value-optimized organization. • Executive Partner-facilitated peer connection on aligning talent to your digital operating model.

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CIOs depend on business and HR Executive Partnership to develop tech talent and drive business outcomes



CIO responsibilities

IT vision: Builds an IT strategy, including operating model, talent strategy and IT org structure

Increase enterprise digital capabilities:

Partners with IT and business leaders to manage tech talent across the business

Identify emerging technology: Stays on top of tech trends and understands what skills are required to pursue them



IT partners

IT functional leaders: Identify talent needs and skill gaps within their teams to prepare, develop and deploy emerging technologies aligned to the IT strategy

HR business partner for IT: Collaborates to fill roles and supports learning and development, resource management and upskilling/reskilling



Business partners

CEO: Defines business goals and investments that guide talent requirements

Business leaders: Set functional ambitions with tech talent implications

CHRO: Ensures the CIO is set up to attract, retain and reward top talent by establishing talent strategies, processes and capabilities

CFO: Determines the budget for internal labor and external partners

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- Role-exclusive content sharing between CIO and seatholder (CISO, CDAO, etc.)

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