

CIOs – from tactical tech to strategic transformation

ADAPTABILITY STARTS WITH HOW YOU LEAD CHANGE – NOT JUST HOW YOU DELIVER IT

CIOs are at the heart of transformation, but our research shows a tension between strategic ambition and tactical execution. While 38% of CIOs define transformation as continuous improvement at scale, nearly half still see business transformation as a tactical investment. The result? CIOs are driving change, but often without the alignment, capacity or workforce readiness to make it stick.

WHAT THE TRANSFORMATION INDEX REVEALS ABOUT CIOs

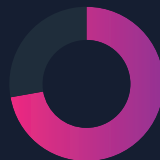
- **CIOs are more tactical than strategic.** 44% view transformation as tactical, compared to just 31% who see it as strategic - a contrast to CEOs, COOs and CSOs who lean more toward long-term investment.
- **AI is accelerating change - but not yet embedded strategically.** 52% say AI has changed their transformation agenda, but only 27% see it as a strategic enabler.
- **Workforce readiness is a top concern.** 40% cite strategic workforce planning as a key challenge, and 85% expect AI to disrupt jobs - yet critical skills such as empathy, multilingualism and service orientation are largely missing.
- **Transformation success is hard-won.** Just 33% say their organisation meets transformation goals smoothly.

CIOs report high levels of fatigue and friction



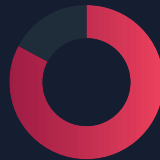
69%

say employees are fatigued by continual change



73%

cite competing demands on time



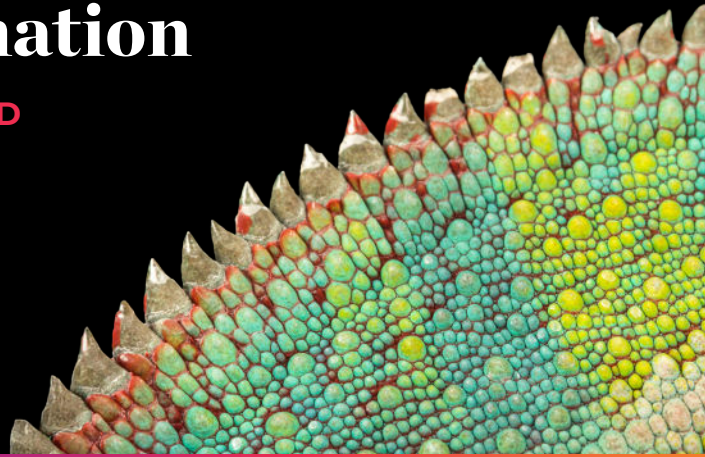
83%

struggle to regain direction when momentum fades



75%

say shifting behaviours while maintaining psychological safety is a major challenge



TOP PRIORITIES FOR CIOs IN 2025/26

33%

Transitioning to a product approach

27%

Improving employee experience

27%

Workforce transformation

25%

Reducing operational costs

25%

Skills development

CIOs see most of these as long-term priorities, especially employee experience (**77%**), workforce transformation (**69%**) and skills development (**58%**).

WHAT CIOs MUST DO NEXT

Successful organisations are doing three things differently:



Championing their data

They use data to guide decisions, personalise experiences and scale AI responsibly.



Protecting their spark

They prioritise what matters, stop what doesn't, and protect teams from burnout.



Finding their value compass

They align every initiative to outcomes that matter – for customers, employees and the business.

These behaviours are powered by two organisational engines: **systems** and **people**. When both are aligned, transformation sticks.

To lead through change, CIOs must:

- Reframe AI as a strategic enabler, not just a tool for automation
- Lead workforce transformation, with a focus on reskilling, psychological safety and behavioural change
- Champion employee experience as a core transformation lever — not a side initiative
- Align tech investment to business outcomes, not just operational efficiency
- Build adaptable systems and operating models that support product-led delivery and cross-functional collaboration
- Use data to guide decisions and track impact, especially around engagement, fatigue and capacity

READY TO LEAD WITH ADAPTABILITY? LET'S TALK.

We help CIOs turn transformation ambition into lasting impact. Whether it's embedding AI responsibly, designing future-fit operating models, or aligning tech strategy with workforce capability - we bring the humanity, pace and momentum to make transformation stick.

Gate One is the global business and digital transformation consultancy, dedicated to helping clients thrive. With a uniquely collaborative approach, we guide clients through high-impact business and digital transformation projects, with teams in the UK, Ireland, the US, France and India.

TALK TO US



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