

Navigating the Crossroads of AI and Human Readiness in IT

6 take-aways from the Gartner IT Symposium/Xpo™ conference opening keynote to help unlock real value from AI

As organizations race to modernize with AI, CIOs stand at a pivotal crossroads. IT leaders must partner with AI experts and prepare their people by balancing technology and workforce readiness.

1 Avoid the extremes of AI disbelief and hype.

Boards see AI as the investment area promising the most value gains for shareholders, but most have yet to see clear returns. For example, CFOs report 95% of GenAI initiatives are failing, and only one in five AI projects achieves measurable ROI.

CIOs should be aware of the extremes of disbelief and hype. The transformative impact of AI is clear, but overindexing on vendor claims or capability hype can quickly erode value.

2 You need a dedicated AI leader.

A standalone AI leader is key to an organization's AI maturity and success — a trend clearly demonstrated in our 2024 AI Mandates for the Enterprise Survey.

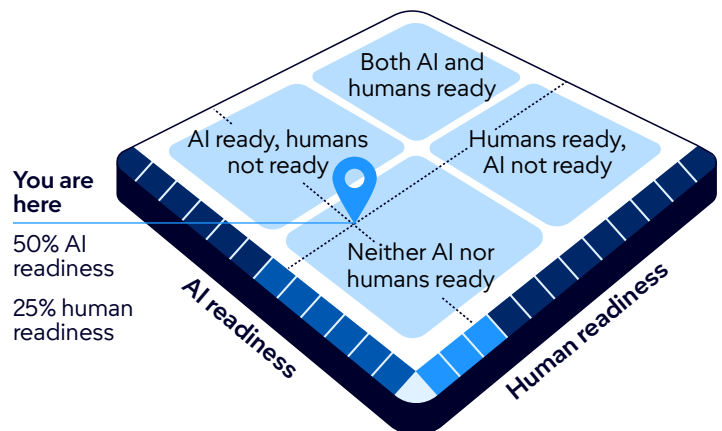
Only 37% of low-maturity organizations have dedicated AI leaders. Meanwhile, 91% of high-maturity organizations have already filled this role, which is paying stronger dividends in the long term in the form of more sustainable AI projects, stronger trust in AI and a higher likelihood of meeting key performance outcomes.

3 AI value won't come from productivity alone. It requires AI and human readiness.

While 74% of CFOs report productivity gains from AI in the form of time saved, only 11% say their organizations have seen clear ROI from AI initiatives. This highlights a critical disconnect: AI readiness is advancing faster than human readiness, impeding value realization.

By 2030, 75% of IT work will be performed by humans augmented with AI — underscoring the need for organizations to invest in upskilling, change management and strategic alignment. Sustainable value emerges when technology and people are prepared to collaborate, innovate and adapt to an AI-first future.

4 Use the Gartner Positioning System to align use cases to readiness and chart your path to value.



Source: Gartner

CIOs should evaluate AI readiness in terms of cost, technological capabilities and vendors. To capture and sustain value, they should improve human readiness in terms of the workforce and organization.

The Gartner Positioning System (GPS) helps you pinpoint your readiness for every AI use case you pursue. It provides a guide for navigating common barriers and gauging whether your technology and human talent can support your AI ambitions.

5 Calculate hidden costs and prepare for digital nation-states.

74% of CIOs report that the cost of AI currently equals or exceeds the value realized. For every AI tool purchased, anticipate 10 hidden costs. Analyze and decide which costs you'll fund to avoid owning a negative ROI business case.

AI vendors are beginning to resemble digital nation-states, spending more on AI infrastructure per quarter than the annual GDP of more than 47% of the world's countries. Every vendor is a sovereignty decision when AI touches all parts of your organization. Choose an AI vendor that matches your use cases and desired AI outcomes.

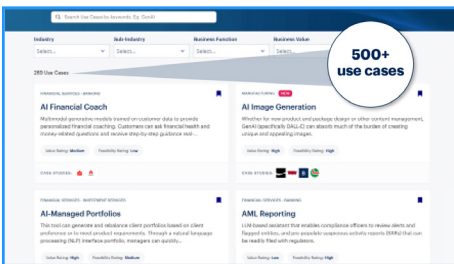
6 Capture AI value by building human readiness, developing critical skills and managing behavioral byproducts.

AI is changing the skills we need, stealing skills we can't afford to lose. Very few CIOs are scanning for potential behavioral byproducts of AI use, like skills atrophy or change fatigue.

By 2036, AI solutions introduced to augment or autonomously deliver tasks, activities or jobs will create over 500 million net new human jobs. CIOs must go beyond training on new skills, build AI literacy programs with experiential learning and hire for a context engineering discipline.

From vision to action

Inform your 18-month IT strategy with the full suite of downloadable insights from IT Symposium/Xpo™ 2025 conference.



Now that you've seen the key takeaways from our opening keynote session, use the [Gartner AI Use Case Insights Tool](#) to discover, evaluate and prioritize over 500 proven AI use cases designed to accelerate IT transformation and deliver measurable technology outcomes.



The 2026 CIO Agenda sets the vision for how CIOs can lead change and deliver value in an AI-driven world by reimagining the workforce, navigating vendor complexity and redefining organizational identity.



The 2026 Top 10 Strategic Technology Trends equip CIOs and IT leaders with the technologies and foresight to act. They'll help you make smart decisions on AI, data, cybersecurity, cloud and cost optimization.

How Gartner helps CIOs and their teams navigate AI and human readiness



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