

# Maverick\* Insights Reveal Agility as the Prime Source of Power: A Gartner Trend Insight Report

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“Agile” is now a familiar work style, but agility is also becoming a source of real power. We explore the associated power struggles that will transform human-machine relations, and workforce changes that will create new opportunities. (Maverick research exposes unconventional thinking and advice.)

## Opportunities and Challenges

- Today, we treat “agile” as a way of working that enables us to conduct better projects, but agility is also emerging as a surprisingly robust form of power in the digital era.
- The EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and other privacy regulations are, in effect, real-time experiments in what people will do when they have control over their data. These experiments will either yield a valuable regulatory framework for future generations or amount to an economic noose around the EU’s neck.
- New digital leadership models are emerging. Executive management will need to add emotional intelligence as a digital business competency as the workforce goes virtual.

## What You Need to Know

- In a world of shifting power structures, it’s often difficult to know what to do. Gartner publishes [Maverick\\*](#) research with the aim of identifying unconventional possibilities for CIOs and other IT leaders to consider as they make their daily planning, investment and operational decisions.
- “Agility as power” is the overarching theme of this year’s [Maverick\\*](#) expositions about an emerging environment in which:
  - Existing power structures are being challenged, traditional contract conventions of commercial relationships overturned, and old supply chain “rules of thumb” rewritten by digital transformation.

- Power comes from having the agility and speed to optimize business opportunities. The opportunities for large aggregators of financial and physical capital are declining; their political and social power will wane as agility at speed and scale replaces capital as the prime source of power.

## \*Maverick Research

*The “Maverick” research program is Gartner’s incubator for unconventional, disruptive research and insights. Unconstrained by Gartner’s typical process of consensus formation, analysts can take minority positions, introduce new topics, pioneer new research designs, and explore longer time horizons. These lines of research help you get ahead of the mainstream and take advantage of trends and insights that could impact your strategy and your organization (see Note 1).*

## Insight From the Analysts

### Agility Becomes the Strongest Form of Power in the Digital Era



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Conventional wisdom holds that power comes from the control or possession of financial capital, physical assets, contractual control of distribution channels, human relationships and decision-making authority.

Conventional wisdom holds that power comes from the possession or control of things that provide leverage in business and social interactions. But what if the core source of power were to change? What if power were to arise from a new conception of agility? What if customer acquisition was determined solely by the speed at which you can present customized offerings?

This year’s [Maverick\\*](#) Special Report challenges notions of conventional power. Agility, redefined for digital business, emerges as a surprisingly strong form of power.

Visions of a completely unfettered digital business environment are at odds with the efforts of national, state, local, and other tax and regulatory authorities to protect their financial stability and ability to ensure public health and safety. The need for enterprise agility is directly linked to the bubbling environment for regulatory reform. Debates are starting about the latest swing of the technology regulation pendulum between centralization and decentralization.

To complicate matters further, digital giants are playing dominant roles in the digitalization of society and establishing dominant footprints in economic supply chains — perhaps permanently.

There will be epic battles as supply chains, industry standards and points of sustainable competitive advantage will be up for grabs as the economy is redesigned and rebuilt digitally, inside and out.

New digital leadership models are emerging and will need to keep developing as the workforce becomes virtual. For CIOs, we intend this [Maverick\\*](#) Special Report to serve as a starting point for rethinking the role of the IT department and the CIO's place within it. What will be the CIO's digital focus?

We have divided this Special Report into three sections to help you plan for how digital developments will disrupt work — and life — as we know it:

- The Great Power Struggles
- People and Technology: Changing Relationships
- Everything You Thought You Knew About IT Is Wrong

Kind regards,

Jamie Popkin and Frank Buytendijk

## Executive Overview

### Definition

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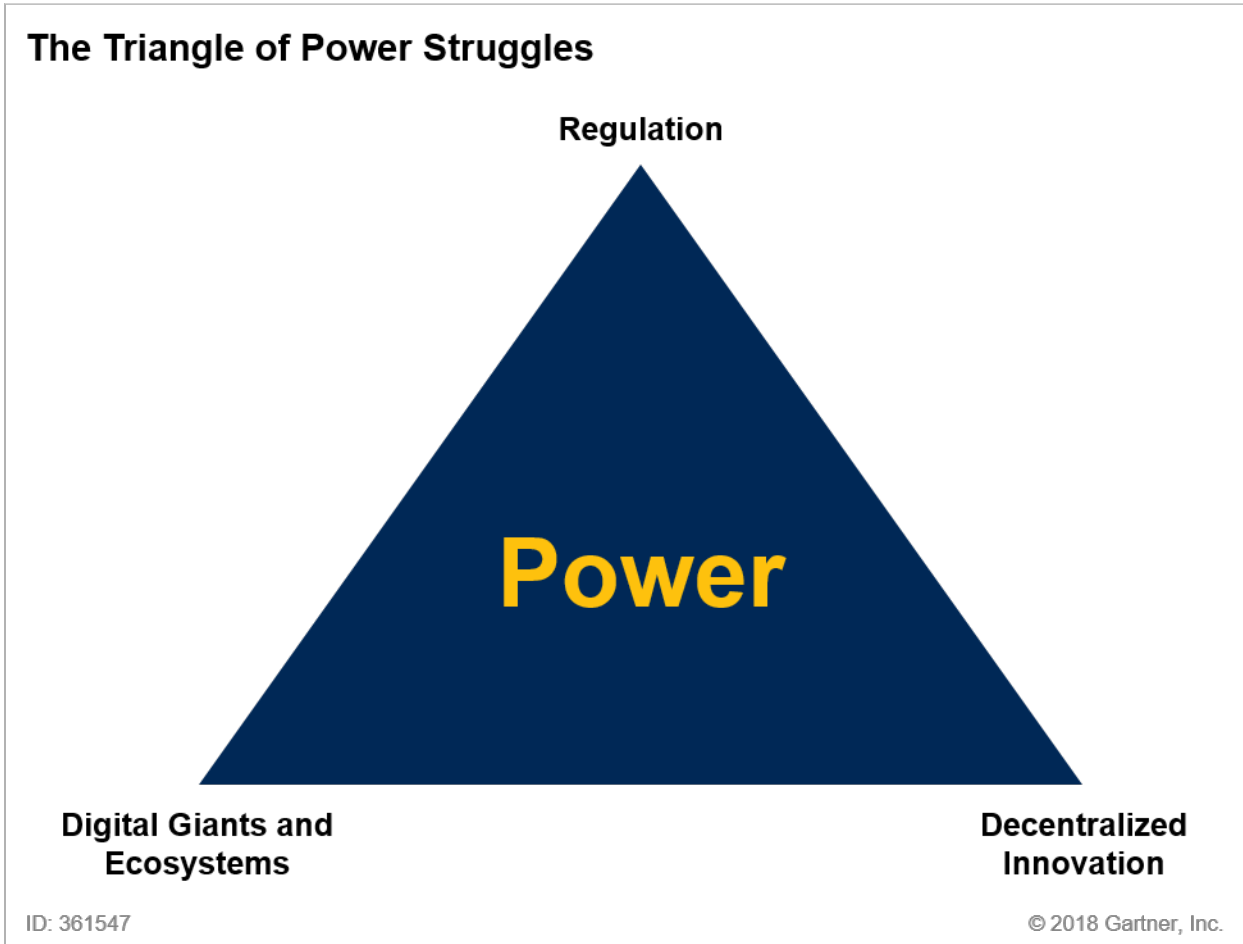
As people make decisions about how to live in a digital society, businesses, institutions and individuals will naturally position themselves to protect their own interests. Power struggles will result, to which there will be three main dimensions: digital giants and ecosystems, decentralized innovation, and regulation (see Figure 1).

Who claims and exercises digital leadership will depend on the outcomes of these decisions and struggles. CIOs will need new options in an environment in which speed and agility become essential capabilities.

The great power struggles of the 21st century will revolve around rapid changes in humanity's relationship with technology.

Digital transformation is all about the agility that comes from accelerating business operations and decision-making capabilities. Together, the [Maverick\\*](#) publications referenced below are intended to widen the boundaries of options that CIOs can consider as they strive to retain enterprise leadership.

Figure 1. The Triangle of Power Struggles



Source: Gartner (October 2018)

## Research Highlights

### The Great Power Struggles

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Where will new power centers emerge in the digital economy? We can already see that digital giants have dramatically redefined the rules of, and routes to, market, and driven the world toward frictionless digital transactions. The move to digital undermines many of the business models, institutional mechanisms, trade relationships, and government support and regulation of the analog age. It may cause them to collapse.

Consider the source of your enterprise's competitive power. How will you protect and extend it in the digital business era?

The main technology that comes to mind when thinking of power shifts is blockchain. But does blockchain eliminate central power, or only introduce a new power? Homan Farahmand, David Furlonger and Rajesh Kandaswamy argue that it will create a “World Wide Ledger.” Fabio Chesini and Monica Zlotogorski argue the opposite — that blockchain doesn't eliminate central power, but just introduces a new power.

### Related Research

“Maverick\* Research: Crypto-Politics and ‘World Wide Ledger’ Will Rock Your Business Competition” by Homan Farahmand, David Furlonger and Rajesh Kandaswamy observes that blockchain and related technologies change the traditional way in which enterprises become more efficient and create decentralized systems. But the future holds the promise of something more radically different. The rise of the “World Wide Ledger” will cause many traditional economic, national and societal constructs to collapse and usher in a new wave of progress.

“Maverick\* Research: Blockchain and the Illusion of Exterminating Central Power” by Fabio Chesini and Monica Zlotogorski argues that, however much we push the boundaries of decentralization, centralized business models will always prevail. Public blockchains will follow a pattern similar that of the internet, with a “man in middle” to fulfill basic human needs.

“Maverick\* Research: How Billionaires Use Technology as a Weapon and How Your 1% Most Valuable Customers Will Too” by Ed Thompson, Don Scheibenreif and Jenny Sussin observes that it's a commonly held belief that technology is a great equalizer, one that enables people of all social statuses to compete. Unfortunately, the truth is very different. Billionaires use technology to keep and increase their wealth. CIOs must understand how to engage with the top 1%.

“Maverick\* Research: Autonomous Mobile Structures Will Fuel the Sharing Economy” by Roger Williams and Jonathan Davenport asserts that autonomobility — the ability to relocate a structure autonomously — will transform the delivery of services. To remain relevant, enterprises must develop the capabilities required for service delivery in any mobility scenario, explore possibilities already enabled by mobility, and experiment to identify the new services that customers want and that new technologies will enable. In particular, healthcare organizations and related regulatory bodies, along with service organizations that experience highly variable demand, should immediately plan for action.

“Maverick\* Research: Geography Is Destiny — The Rise of Digital Micronations Will Redefine Digital Ecosystems” by Katell Thielemann and Rick Howard argues that, to build platforms capable of bridging the digital and physical divide, CIOs should observe user-centric and technical design principles that reflect how people actually live. By adhering to these principles, such platforms will shape and be shaped by dynamic ecosystems that support fluidity across formal boundaries.

## People and Technology: Changing Relationships

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Power relationships exist on many levels. That between people and their machines has certainly shifted. As a class of technology, computers have progressed from being tools requiring a high level of skill to use to being enablers embedded in a wide range of consumer entertainment, communications and commerce equipment.

As consumers and, increasingly, producers of products and services both digital and physical, most enterprises need to recognize the deep gaming-related trends that will affect the future workforce. Future employees will have a very different relationship to their personal technology than current ones. AI is one area that is already starting the journey to being a general-purpose technology. It's likely to generate many societal tensions. But there need not be a damaging power struggle, if CIOs recognize the value of the trends discussed in the following [Maverick\\*](#) documents.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is more than just a new technology to optimize business decisions. It fundamentally challenges the traditional relationship between people and technology. Magnus Revang, Helen Poitevin and Jan-Martin Løwendahl argue that AI provides an opportunity for humans to learn. Svetlana Sicular and Gareth Herschel argue, very differently, that human thinking may actually be underrated.

### Related Research

“Maverick\* Research: Artificial Intelligence Will Make Us Dumber Unless We Can Teach It to Teach Us Back” by Magnus Revang, Helen Poitevin and Jan-Martin Løwendahl observes that AI has fundamental differences from previous automation technologies. For CIOs, the opaque nature of AI creates a unique set of challenges with radical implications for enterprises.

“Maverick\* Research: What Is the Opposite of Artificial Intelligence?” by Svetlana Sicular and Gareth Herschel claims that AI’s opposites contain great ideas for how to succeed with (and without) AI. They provide concepts for expanding options for AI usage and for differentiating ideas that would otherwise be hard to identify. They point to what is and isn’t acceptable in particular environments, given that technology is just part of the equation — there’s also the matter of whether people are willing and ready to adopt AI.

“Maverick\* Research: Throw Out Your Keyboards, Close Your Physical Workplace and Come to Your Senses” by Marty Resnick, John Girard and Nick Ingelbrecht asserts that IT leaders must get past the idea that shared workspaces increase productivity and create a successful culture. In the immersive enterprise of the future, employees will be bound by shared visions, rather than shared offices.

“Maverick\* Research: Return on Happiness Is the AI-Enabled Metric You Need for Digital Business” by Tracy Tsai argues that AI and other cutting-edge technologies are exciting, but ultimately less important to success than the happiness of employees. CIOs are in the best position to use metrics to measure “return on happiness.” Those that start doing so now will give their organizations a competitive edge.

“Maverick\* Research: Use Simulations to Give Machines Imagination” by Anthony Mullen and Magnus Revang observes that imagination is one of the key survival advantages of the human species. Simulation technology promises to deliver competitive advantage in the form of digital imagination. Only by embracing simulation platforms now can CIOs ensure their enterprises seize the opportunity.

“Maverick\* Research: Traditional Chinese Medicine ‘Systems Thinking’ Cures Organizational Digital Dysfunction” by Gavin Tay and Elizabeth Golluscio argues that aspects of the practice of traditional Chinese medicine can be applied to remedy the “digital dysfunction” of individuals and organizations. Digital dysfunction must be remedied as an organizational or societal whole, following a root cause analysis, with a comprehensive cure that restores balance to the entire “organism.”

## Everything You Thought You Knew About IT Is Wrong

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The cultural and societal changes that we all experience in our personal lives are affecting the role of the CIO. The nature of the CIO’s role and responsibilities of the IT department are being challenged and altered.

There are internal power struggles going on that will affect the future of IT and how it’s delivered in your enterprise. The [Maverick\\*](#) positions of documents in this section are meant to provoke you to think differently about how you approach your role.

The IT function will come under more pressure as advanced digital technologies become pervasive. How should the IT

department move forward? Achint Aggarwal and Aashish Gupta see opportunities for CIOs and advise them to focus on the liberal arts. Eric Knipp is less optimistic, providing IT specialists with an exit plan.

### Related Research

“Maverick\* Research: Engineers Beware! Liberal Arts Graduates Will Lead Next-Generation Application Development” by Aashish Gupta and Achint Aggarwal observes that the science of application development is changing from a science into an art. Application development leaders must change their hiring strategy by looking to liberal arts graduates, as they will be at the forefront of future application development.

“Maverick\* Research: Quit IT Now: The Birth of Digital Business Is the Death of Your Enterprise IT Career” by Erick Knipp predicts that the digital business revolution will have an unintended effect. Anyone planning a long career in IT will need a new plan, because the need for IT skills will lessen as digitalization spreads. It’s not too early for IT workers to prepare for this paradigm shift.

“Maverick\* Research: Best Practices Are for Losers” by Jack Santos and Carol Rozwell notes that, for IT leaders seeking competitive advantage, traditional benchmarking leaves much to be desired. Fortunately, there are better approaches for them to use. Embracing innovation, talking to those with opposing views and understanding your weaknesses will put IT leaders on the path to success.

“Maverick\* Research: The End of Brand Marketing” by Nicole Sturgill and Andrew Frank argues that the rise of virtual personal assistants (VPAs) will eliminate the need for companies to establish emotional connections between their brands and their customers. Instead, they will have to use product design to catch the attention of the VPAs making purchasing decisions for individuals and organizations.

“Maverick\* Research: Digital Business Transformation Will Kill Midsize Enterprises” by Federica Troni, Annette Jump, Nadine LeBlanc and Bianca Granetto observes that the standard advice given to businesses of all sizes is to make the leap to digital optimization as their first move toward digital transformation. But for midsize enterprises that could prove a fatal mistake. A better approach is to evaluate your business and industry with a view to employing technology in a targeted way.

“Maverick\* Research: Wait! Don’t Customize Your Workplace for Generation Z” by Achint Aggarwal, Naveen Mishra and Aashish Gupta argues that organizations will find it difficult to employ Generation Z effectively and keep pace with its members’ changing expectations. CIOs and other organization leaders will have to rethink their approach in order to design workplaces suited to this generation.

## Related Priorities

Table 1. Related Priorities

Priority	Focus
<a href="#">Customer Relationship Management and Customer Experience</a>	CRM and customer experience are business strategies that optimize profitability, operational efficiency, customer satisfaction and loyalty through the implementation of customer-centric processes.
<a href="#">Analytics and BI Strategies</a>	The analytics and BI strategies initiative focuses on the strategies, practices, technologies and products needed to support a variety of users across different types of business problems.
<a href="#">Internet of Things</a>	Internet of Things (IoT) enables business value creation by reducing operational costs, better managing risk or developing new revenue streams via digital business models and advancing technologies.

Source: Gartner

## Gartner Analysts Supporting This Trend



Achint Aggarwal



Svetlana Sicular



Gavin Tay



Ed Thompson



Federica Troni

## Related Resources

We plan to publish other [Maverick\\*](#) documents on themes related to this Special Report in the coming months. These documents may include the following (titles and authors are subject to change):

- “Maverick\* Research: DNA Sequencing and the Future of Personal Data Security” by Molly Beams
- “Maverick\* Research: Leave Your Customers Alone!” by Erick Brethenoux
- “Maverick\* Research: Why GDPR and Other Privacy Initiatives Will Fail” by Henrique Cecci
- “Maverick\* Research: Digital Me, Moving the Virtual Experience From Gaming to the Enterprise” by Peter Liu, Jamie Popkin and Sylvain Fabre
- “Maverick\* Research: Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence Will Lead to Few, but Bigger Disasters” by John McArthur

### Gartner Webinars

- [“State of Blockchain”](#)
- [“GDPR Mythbusters: How to Really Manage Privacy”](#)
- [“The Power of AI: Real AI Use Cases”](#)

### Other Gartner Publications

- [“CIOs Can Accelerate Digital Business Decision Making by Building Enterprise Emotional Intelligence”](#)
- [“The CIO’s Guide to Blockchain”](#)
- [“How Legal Stays Ahead of Data Privacy Risk”](#)
- [“How to Get Artificial Intelligence ‘Right’”](#)

### Maverick Research Sessions at Gartner Symposium/ITxpo 2018

Table 1 summarizes Research Sessions at Gartner Symposium/ITxpo 2018.

Table 1. Maverick Research Sessions at Gartner Symposium/ITxpo 2018

Session Title	Location
Maverick: AI Will Make Us Dumber Unless We Teach AI to Teach Us	Cape Town, South Africa
Maverick: How Billionaires Use Technology as a Weapon and How Your 1% Most Valuable Customers Will Too	Cape Town, South Africa Orlando, Florida, USA
Maverick: The Wealthiest 1% Strike Back — The Internet Is Their Weapon	Barcelona, Spain
Maverick: The Illusion of Blockchain Disintermediation	Cape Town, South Africa
Maverick: The Illusion of Exterminating Central Power With Blockchain	Orlando, Florida, U.S. São Paulo, Brazil Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia Barcelona, Spain
Maverick: Crypto-Politics and World Wide Ledger Will Rock Your Business Competition	Orlando, Florida, U.S.
Maverick: What Is the Opposite of Artificial Intelligence?	Orlando, Florida, U.S. São Paulo, Brazil Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia Barcelona, Spain
Maverick: Throw Out Your Keyboards, Close Your Physical Workplace, Come to Your Senses	Orlando, Florida, U.S.
Maverick: Digital Business Will Kill Midsize Enterprises	Orlando, Florida, U.S. Barcelona, Spain
Maverick: Reasons Why GDPR and Privacy Initiatives Will Fail	São Paulo, Brazil
Maverick: How to Manage a “Selfie-Centered” Workforce	Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia

Source: Gartner (October 2018)

### Note 1 Roots of the Word "Maverick"

Derived from the name of Texas rancher Samuel Maverick and his steadfast refusal to brand his cattle, "maverick" connotes someone who willfully takes an independent — and frequently disruptive or unorthodox — stand against prevailing modes of thought and action.

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