



CIO PULSE REPORT

CIOs' plans for 2022

Your priorities and interests



in association with



Introduction

The last two years have seen unprecedented operational changes within organisations large and small. One factor that impacted the majority of IT leaders was the speed with which we had to react to the initial, drastic change in working patterns. This forced many to make decisions without the usual amount of planning and consideration.

So during November 2021, Freeform Dynamics partnered with the CIO WaterCooler to research how you, the members of its community, were affected by these changes, and how you expect to focus - or re-focus - your attention during the coming year. This report takes a look at your responses.

Still in a state of flux

At the start of the pandemic, the way we worked and where we worked changed dramatically, almost overnight. As a result, people in all parts of business, and indeed in society at large, had to be far more reactive than normal. As CIOs and IT leaders, you were no exception - for much of the past two years, most of you will have had to be very reactive simply to keep things running. But things are now changing, according to the 52 IT leaders taking part in our survey, with a more proactive approach returning to the fore (Figure 1).

How much do you expect to be active with the following in the first half of 2022?

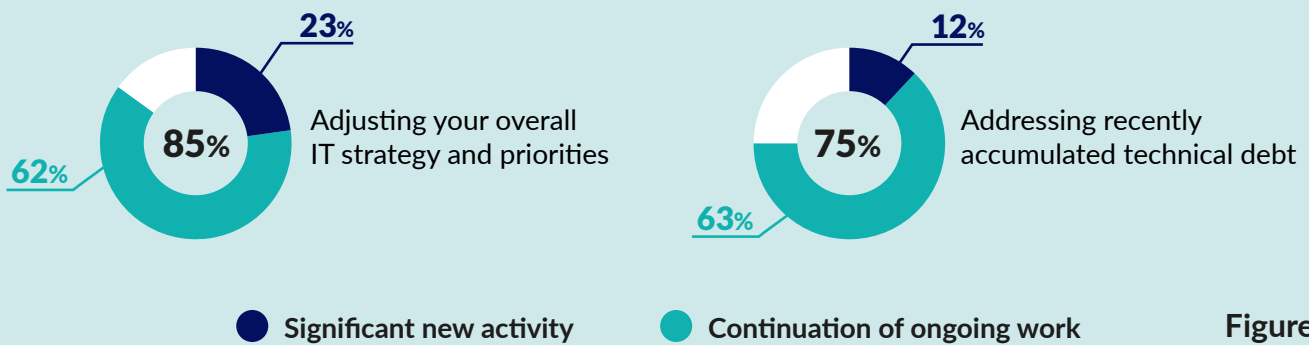


Figure 1

IT leaders are always ready to adjust strategy and core priorities, but 2022 is shaping up to be a year where more focus is on planned, long term, changes than on simply responding to whatever business life throws up as a challenge. And part of this will be the community addressing solutions that were put in place to handle the emergency situation presented by the pandemic, checking to see if they are fit for purpose in the medium term.

This raises our next question: which areas will IT leaders address first?

Refocusing on strategic value delivery

As mentioned above, those who took part in the study indicated that their 2022 activity will focus much more on the future than the past. Indeed, four out of five of your peers expect to be engaged in

strategic projects with a long term horizon, and over half of these will be doing so as a new activity, not simply an extension of existing initiatives (Figure 2).

How much do you expect to be active with the following in the first half of 2022?

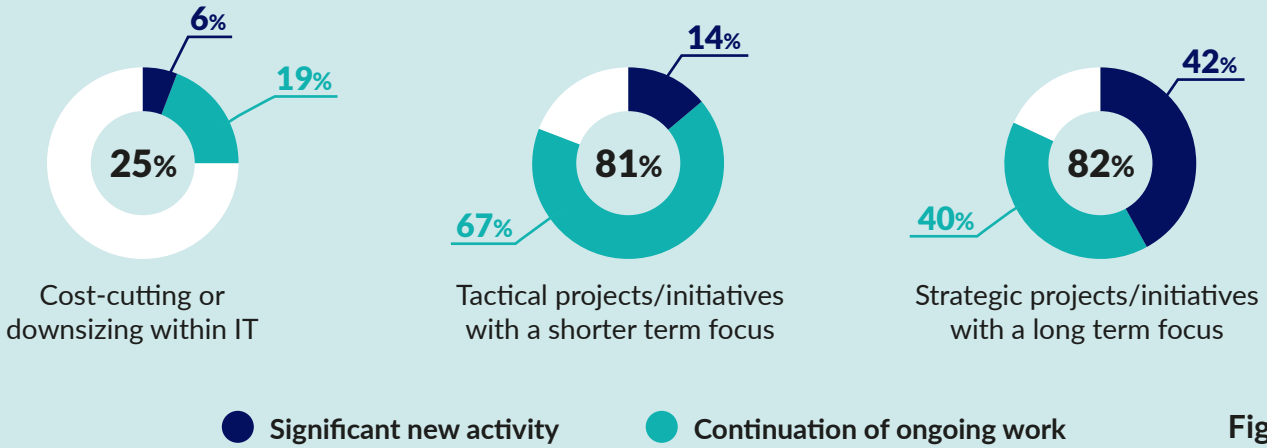


Figure 2

The results also show that many expect these new activities to run in parallel with normal 'business as usual' tactical initiatives. It is also encouraging to see that only 6% of IT leaders have new cost-cutting or downsizing issues to tackle in the new year.

Ensuring IT team readiness

Of course, IT leaders have much more than just technology to manage. Figure 3 shows some of the other areas where our respondents expect to be busy in 2022.

How much do you expect to be active with the following in the first half of 2022?

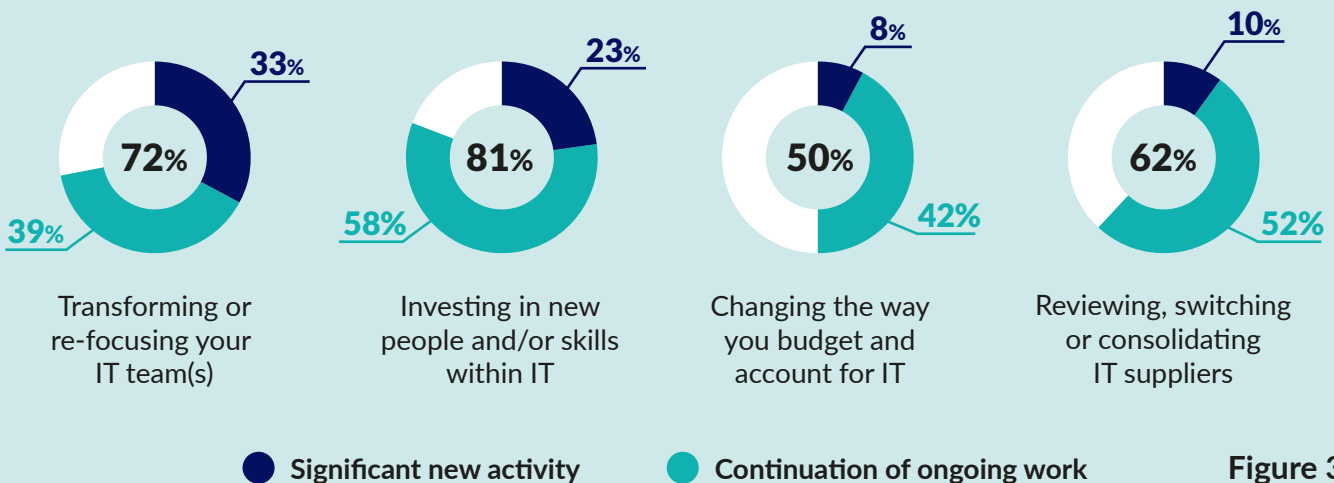


Figure 3

The fact that over 80 percent of respondents plan investments in people and skills shows the importance that IT professionals continue to have, even as automation tools and AI/ML solutions rapidly develop and mature. The attention on staff is reinforced by the fact that almost three-quarters of those taking part highlighted activities in transforming and re-focusing their IT teams.

It is also clear that many of you and your peers are modifying the ways in which you budget for IT and report its activities, especially in terms of the business value delivered. This is an area where we expect to see many different models tried in the next few years as organisations seek more effective ways to pay for IT, particularly as more and more services are consumed from SaaS and cloud service providers.

Technology topics to prioritise

As IT leaders like yourself push these strategic initiatives forward, you want to ensure that you do so with as much information as possible to hand. The survey therefore asked which technology topics you would like to see covered by the CIO WaterCooler (Figure 4).

Which of the following topics would you like to see prioritised on the CIO WaterCooler as we go into 2022?

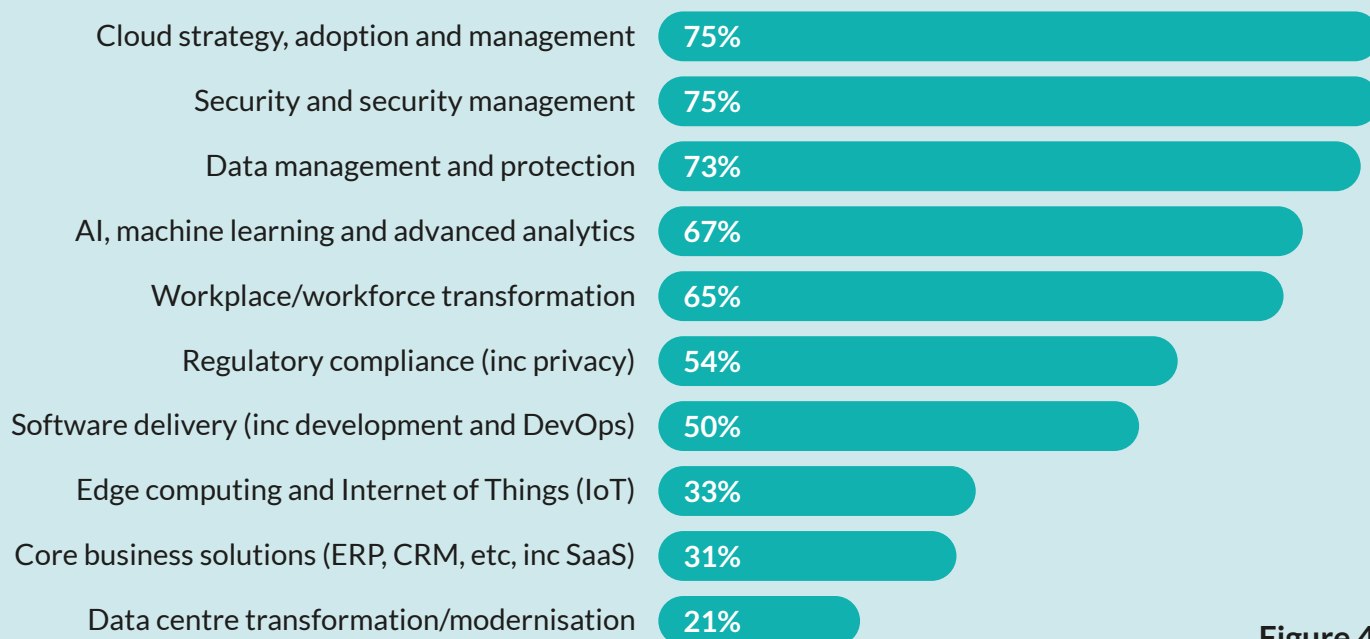


Figure 4

The top responses - cloud, security, compliance and data management - will shock no one, as all are high-visibility areas that are continuously developing. The same can be said for the emerging or rapidly evolving areas such as AI/ML, software delivery and edge computing. The high interest in workplace/workforce transformation again reflects that activity in this area is still ongoing.

It is also important to note that while areas such as data centre transformation and core business solutions had relatively lower interest levels, this could reflect the fact that these are often ongoing matters, where investment is associated with dedicated tactical projects.

Frustrations and hurdles

So with IT leaders and CIOs like yourself looking to focus on strategic projects during 2022, what are the challenges you may need to address as you move forwards? The survey highlighted several issues that could be holding back you or some of your peers (Figure 5).

Do any of the following frequently or often stand in the way of progress?

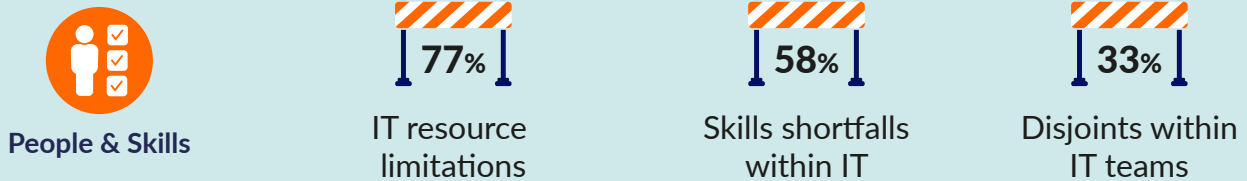


Figure 5

Unsurprisingly, given both the rapid growth of IT usage in recent years and the attention highlighted in the previous section, skills and general resource limitations within IT present significant hurdles. For some organisations, disjoints and disconnects between different teams within IT may also cause frustrations that must be addressed. In addition, our survey respondents highlighted that there may be hurdles inside the business itself that complicate IT projects and strategies (Figure 6).

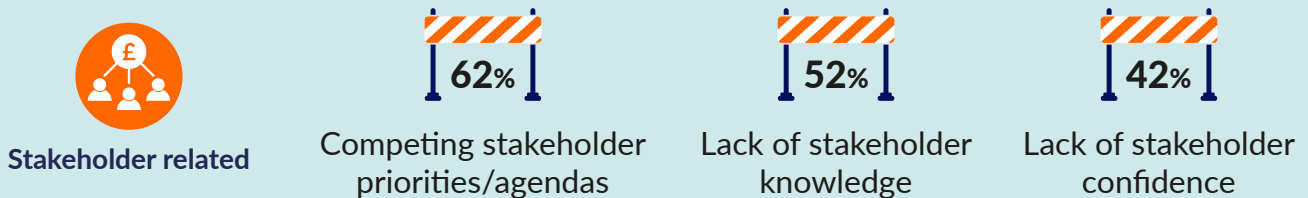


Figure 6

These hurdles are not new, however, and neither is the solution: improving general communications with and within the business. Something easily said, but harder to do, of course. The final collection of hurdles (Figure 7) will also have a very familiar look and feel.

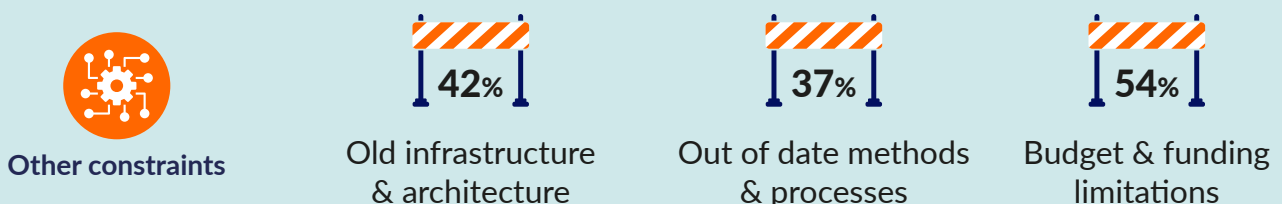


Figure 7

The first two of these are simply matters of everyday IT life. IT Infrastructure, whether in house or external, does age. This inevitably requires that at least some IT components, services and operational processes need to be refreshed periodically. The big difference is that instead of being something to address every few years, the rapid pace of IT developments means this will most likely have to be kept under more regular review.

As for the budget and funding issue, better communications between senior IT leaders, CIOs and business execs should help considerably. Over time, this could improve the willingness of the latter to invest more rapidly in IT projects where the benefits are clearly explained and they can see how well IT is delivering and facilitating critical services.

Other topics to prioritise

The survey concluded by asking what leadership and management topics IT leaders like yourself want prioritised in the coming year. Predictably enough, the three areas that received most responses align extremely well with the frustrations and hurdles discussed in the previous section (Figure 8).

Which of the following topics would you like to see prioritised on the CIO WaterCooler as we go into 2022?

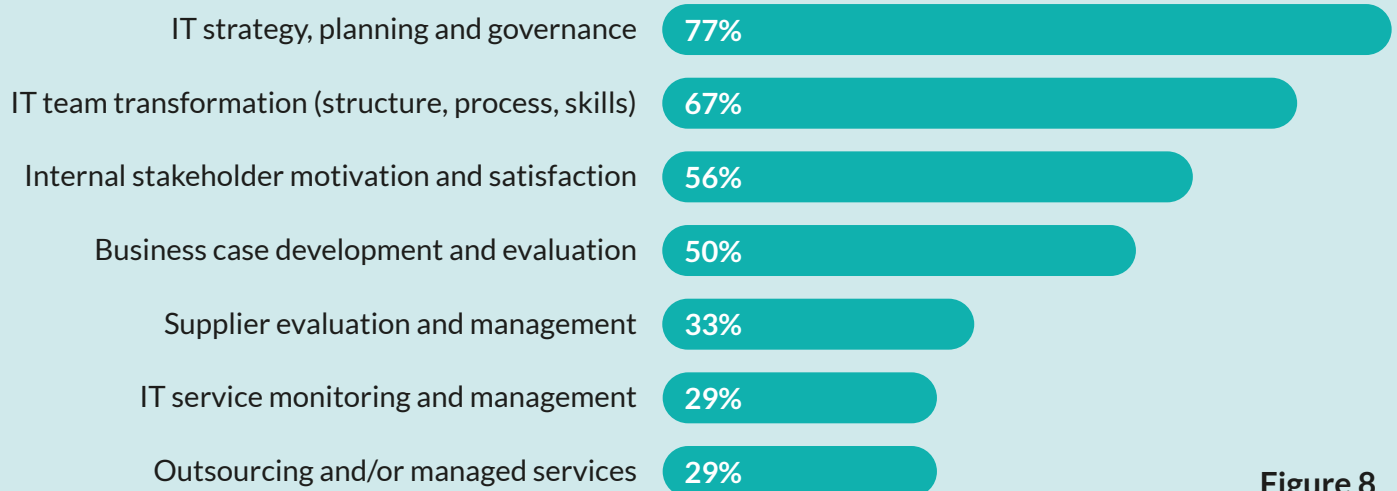


Figure 8

The remaining areas indicate that while the importance of some topics may rise, some core issues remain important. Indeed, the final four have always needed attention, and always will. There are some things where IT leaders simply cannot take their eyes off the ball.

In summary

The survey of members of the CIO WaterCooler community at the end of 2021 gives very clear indications that many organisations are turning the corner. After two very challenging years, and a lot of time spent in reactive mode, 2022 is set to be when proactive initiatives once again come to the fore. But to get there, many CIOs and IT leaders still have some traditional hurdles to overcome, especially with regards to communications between IT teams and business peers.

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The CIO WaterCooler is a free, open and supportive community that supports its users in sharing their knowledge and experience with their peers around the world. We help our members raise their profile, share their news and views and allow to keep up to date with the developments fast pace of change and technology.

For more information, visit www.ciowatercooler.co.uk

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