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editorial

Are you ready for change?

VERYONE REMEMBERS Kodak; for many it was the brand behind their first camera. The iconic "Kodak Moment" campaign, launched in the 1980s, gained such traction that it became part of everyday language and was effectively synonymous with an unforgettably captured moment in time.

But as you know, nothing in this world is constant, and only those who can quickly adapt and re-adapt stand a chance at surviving for long! The fate of Kodak is a story told by business gurus in case studies many times over the last decade. A brand that was once the undisputed king went bankrupt in 2012. The reason was simple: overconfidence in its brand, failure to adapt to changing needs, and a refusal to confront new technological threats.

Once an undisputed leader a few decades ago, Kodak completely lost its way due to its failure to see change and implement a strategic overhaul for the digital age. Apple had a different tale, though. It was limping at the end of the '90s, losing hard as Microsoft gained the upper hand with its Windows-based personal computers.

Apple teetered on the edge of bankruptcy when competition heightened. It, however, bounced back when Steve Jobs returned to the company in 1997 and introduced products such as the iPod, iPhone, and iPad.

As we face even greater disruption—one of greater magnitude than the digital revolution—in today's AI and automation—driven era, the chances of failure have grown even higher if we do not adapt quickly and work on the skill sets and strategies that are critical to thriving in today's times.

During a candid conversation with a CIO friend of mine, he shared an insightful perspective: AI and automation won't replace people, but they will replace those who fail to leverage these technologies effectively to drive better results. The choice is yours: will you evolve with the times and lead the way like Apple, or will you be left behind like Kodak?.



As we confront even greater disruption triggered by AI— one more profound than the digital revolution—the risk of failure has risen significantly if we do not adapt swiftly and develop the skill sets and strategies essential for thriving in today's AI-driven world.

Jatinder Singh Executive Editor jatinder.singh@9dot9.in

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CIOs in the spotlight: Will You **Shine or Fade?**

As AI and digital transformation disrupt industries, CIOs face their greatest challenge yet: to adapt, lead innovation, drive strategy, and fuel organizational growth



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CIOmovements



Vivek Zakarde appointed Head of Data Operations at IndiaFirst Life

Previously Global Chief Data and Analytics Officer at IDBI Bank, **Vivek Zakarde** has joined IndiaFirst Life as Head of Data Operations. His past roles include positions at IndusInd Bank, IKS Health, IIFL, Reliance General Insurance, EXL, WNS Global Services, and IBM.



Mahindra Group appoints Bhuwan Lodha as CEO – Al Division

Mahindra Group has appointed **Bhuwan Lodha** as CEO of its AI Division. Previously Sr. VP and Chief Digital Officer for the Auto Sector at Mahindra, he has also worked at the World Economic Forum, McKinsey & Company, Nokia, and SAP Labs.



IndusInd Bank names Gururaj Hebbar as CTO – IT Infrastructure

IndusInd Bank has appointed **Gururaj Hebbar** as Chief Technology Officer – IT Infrastructure. He was previously Head of IT Infrastructure at IDFC FIRST Bank. Hebbar's career includes roles at Fullerton India, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Morgan Stanley, HP, DSP Merrill Lynch, HSBC, Castrol, TCS e–Serve, and The Indian Express.



Sandeep Kulkarni joins Ford Motor Company as Senior Vice President

Sandeep Kulkarni has joined Ford Motor Company as Senior Vice President. Formerly VP Engineering and Country Head at Medallia, his career includes leadership roles at Icertis, BMC Software, Symantec, JPMorgan Chase, Institute of Scientific Information, and Microland.



Dr. Devam R Shah joins Locus as CISO and DPO

Locus appoints **Dr. Devam R Shah** as Chief Information
Security Officer and Data
Protection Officer. Previously
CISO and Head of IT at
Techmint, he has held positions
at Kennesaw State University,
Great Learning, ER Tech Pros,
Meditab Software, TCS, iFour
Technolab, G Auto, and IBM.



Aramex appoints Amit Ghodekar as Global CISO

Aramex has appointed **Amit Ghodekar** as Global Chief
Information Security Officer.
Previously SVP1 – Information
Security at Axis Bank, he has
held leadership roles at CoverMore Group, Motilal Oswal
Financial Services, and Angel
Broking.



Brakes India appoints
Ramya Sampathkumar as
SVP & Chief Information and
Digital Officer

Brakes India has named Ramya Sampathkumar as Senior Vice President and Chief Information and Digital Officer. Formerly Chief Digital Officer and Advisor at GMMCO, she has also worked with Cognizant, Affinity Insurance Services, and NIIT.



Aditya Birla Money names Sangeet Sinha as CTO & Head of Digital

Aditya Birla Money has appointed **Sangeet Sinha** as Chief Technology Officer and Head of Digital. Formerly Head of Digital and SVP of Technology at ICICI Securities, his career includes roles at 3i Infotech and Aireff Detox, focusing on technology infrastructure and digital transformation.



NEXT100 Winner Balram Choudhary becomes SVP – IT & CISO at ASK Investment Managers

NEXT100 Winner Balram Choudhary has been promoted to Senior Vice President of IT and Chief Information Security Officer at ASK Investment Managers. Previously serving as CISO, he has also worked at BOB Financial Solutions, RBL Bank, Reliance Life Insurance, Mantech Computer Services, and IL&FS Technology.



STT GDC India appoints Bimal Khandelwal as CEO

STT GDC India has named **Bimal Khandelwal** as Chief Executive Officer. Previously CFO at ST Telemedia Global Data Centres India, he brings financial expertise from roles at Ballarpur Industries, Reliance Communications, Aircel, Birla Sun Life Insurance, Tata Teleservices, Idea Cellular, and Olympia Capital.



Bombay Stock Exchange appoints Ramesh Gurram as CISO

Bombay Stock Exchange has named Ramesh Gurram as Chief Information Security Officer. With over two decades in information security, he was previously CISO at Multi Commodity Exchange of India and held key positions at Bank of Baroda and State Bank of India.



Bima Sugam appoints Bharat Panchal as Chief Risk, Security, and Stakeholder Management Officer

Bharat Panchal has joined Bima Sugam India Federation as Chief Risk, Security, and Stakeholder Management Officer. Previously Chief Industry Relations & Regulatory Officer at Discover Financial Services, he has held key roles at FIS, NPCI, and Kotak Mahindra Bank.



NEXT100 Winner Dr. Sandeep Bhandari joins KYW Tech as VP & Business Head

NEXT100 Winner **Dr. Sandeep Bhandari** has been appointed
Vice President and Business
Head at KYW Tech. Formerly
Associate Director – IT &
Networks at NTT DATA, his
career includes leadership
roles at Coforge, Collabera,
Trimax IT Infrastructure, HCL
Technologies, and IBM.



NEXT100 Winner Vijoy Basu joins Firstsource as SVP & Global Head of Enterprise Data & Al

NEXT100 Winner **Vijoy Basu** has been appointed Senior Vice President and Global Head of Enterprise Data & AI at Firstsource. Formerly Sr. Director and Global Head of IT AI & Analytics at Cognizant, his career includes significant roles at GE Digital, GE Oil & Gas, and GE Power & Water.



Larsen & Toubro names Gopi Thangavel as Group CIO

Larsen & Toubro has appointed **Gopi Thangavel** as Group Chief Information
Officer. Formerly Senior Vice President
at Reliance Industries, he managed
enterprise infrastructure across sectors.
Gopi has also held leadership roles at Dr.
Reddy's Laboratories, Wipro, and Agility
GIL Shared Services.

news&views



Exceptional User Experience: Reality or Rhetoric?

As AI and digital transformation disrupt industries, CIOs face their greatest challenge yet: to adapt, lead innovation, drive strategy, and fuel organizational growth

By **Jatinder Singh** | jatinder.singh@9dot9.in

'VE often contemplated what truly defines an exceptional user experience—something many global firms claim to have mastered. While companies such as Apple, Amazon, Netflix, Google, Airbnb, and Microsoft may indeed have set the bar, many firms still struggle to consistently deliver a meaningful impact. To me, an exceptional user experience means that users—whether internal or external to the organization—have the tools and mechanisms to raise their concerns, and these are resolved in a timely manner without them having to run from pillar to post. However, how many firms are genuinely achieving this is a difficult question.

Recently, I had a disappointing experience with one of India's largest private-sector banks. It took hours of continuous follow-ups with so-called chatbots and automated systems just to reach customer care and share a genuine grievance regarding the reduction of my home loan EMI instead of the tenure after my prepayment, which they had incorrectly entered into the system. When I finally connected with the customer experience team, they flatly refused to address my concern, stating there was nothing they could do. Feeling dejected and out of options, I escalated the issue on social media and emailed the company's CEO directly, keeping all key stakeholders in CC. To my surprise, the issue that had seemed unsolvable just a day earlier was promptly prioritized and resolved within 24 hours. A dedicated manager was even assigned to check in and ensure I had no further issues needing assistance.

While I thanked the CEO for helping me resolve this issue, I couldn't help but wonder why it had to escalate to their level for a solution that could have easily been addressed by the customer experience team. Ironically, the bank has often claimed through its senior executives in the media that exceptional user experience is their bread and butter! Is this a strategy adopted by many companies and banks to cut costs by delaying access to an actual human representative, relying instead on automation for even minor customer issues?

In another instance, my colleague had to follow up repeatedly with the customer care team of an Indian real estate platform to get a refund for a service he paid for in advance but never received. Ironically, the company couldn't

Is this a strategy adopted by many companies and banks to cut costs by delaying access to an actual human representative, relying instead on automation for even minor customer issues?

even locate the payment. Here too, he had to escalate the matter to senior leadership and only received the refund a month later.

And just recently, we heard of a global consulting firm's tragic failure to address the situation of a young employee who reportedly passed away due to health issues caused by extreme work pressure. The matter surfaced only after the employee's mother's letter to the CEO was leaked to the media. Following that, many employees shared on LinkedIn the lack of a feedback mechanism in the organization—especially in India—for employees to voice their concerns and for the organization to take appropriate action. Yet this same company frequently promotes exceptional user experience in its hiring campaigns and is often regarded as one of the best places to work.

Of course, I can't paint all companies with the same brush. There are many organizations that take exceptional user experience seriously, as seen with some of the companies I mentioned at the beginning. Even Indian agritech startups like Otipy, telecom major Airtel and quick-commerce startup Zepto are quickly emerging as companies that focus extensively on exceptional user experience for both internal and external users. PSU Banks like Punjab National Banks are also leveraging tech for HR transformation. (See: Transforming HR with Tech: PNB's Winning Formula for Banking Excellence). However, it's the consistency that truly matters and sets you apart.

As an IT leader, how are you enhancing the experience for your users and consistently delivering exceptional service? I'd love to hear your story and your implementation journey. Let's connect!

You may reach out to me at jatinder. singh@9dot9.in. ■

IMC 2024: Reliance Jio Pushes for Localization of Data Centers

Jio plans to leverage generative AI to automate creative processes and personalize customer experiences.

By **CIO&Leader** | editor@cioandleader.com

eliance Jio, India's largest telecom company, asked India to take urgent steps to localize data centers during the opening day of the eighth edition of the Indian Mobile Congress (IMC) 2024. "Indian data should remain in Indian data centers. Therefore, Indian companies that are ready to set up AI and machine learning data centers should receive all necessary incentives, including those for power consumption," Akash Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Jio said in his address.

The four-day IMC tech event annually witnesses telecom majors, smartphone manufacturing giants, chip makers, and AI startups showcasing their latest tech innovations.

With India's infrastructure growing at a rapid pace, there has been an increasing call from industry leaders to address data sovereignty challenges by ensuring the localization of critical data and creating a secure AI ecosystem in the expanding digital economy.

Ambani added that the country must establish a robust AI foundation, and Jio is committed to developing an ecosystem that helps democratize AI and provides affordable services to India.

Earlier this year, Akash Ambani shared his thoughts on AI during the 25th Annual CIO&Leader Conference. "We recognize the potential of AI applications such as natural language processing, computer vision, and machine learning in the Indian landscape. Our (Jio's) focus on generative AI is about transforming the technology into practical, scalable applications. We plan to leverage generative AI to automate creative processes and personalize customer experiences, integrating these advancements into our Jio platforms," he said during a fireside chat with CIO&Leader.

"Reflecting on our journey, we have been leveraging AI at Jio for a few years and are now prepared to share our best practices and learnings with our enterprise customers. In summary, it is crucial to allocate resources based on the strategic importance of each project, embrace change, carefully evaluate the business value, consider expected ROI, and assess implementation complexity." he added.

Jio, which was initially soft-launched on December 27, 2015, for partners and employees, became publicly available on September 5, 2016. It has since proliferated to become India's biggest mobile network operator and the third-largest globally, with over 482 million subscribers (as of October 2024). ■

77% struggle with security and other risk-mitigating team alignment

Securing hybrid cloud environments and managing the complexity of operating multiple security solutions were also top concerns.

By **CIO&Leader** | editor@cioandleader.com

YNDRYL, THE world's largest IT infrastructure services provider, released findings from its global Cyber Gauge 2024: Navigating the complex cybersecurity landscape survey, conducted with Amazon Web Services. The results reveal a disconnect between perceived and actual cyber readiness among global enterprises. This underscores the critical need for more robust cyber resilience strategies that protect against threats and ensure business continuity.

Despite 94% of organizations feeling prepared to mitigate cyberattacks, 71% believe they are likely to experience a disruptive incident within the next year that will impact their financial performance. This disconnect highlights the need for improved awareness and enhanced measures to handle sophisticated cyber threats.

Key findings highlight the challenges of the cyber threat landscape that organizations face:

- Evolving threat landscape: 52% of IT leaders are grappling with operational challenges like preparing for emerging threats such as nation-states and generative artificial intelligence attacks. Securing hybrid cloud environments and managing the complexity of operating multiple security solutions were also top concerns.
- High frequency of attacks: Over the last year, 54% of large organizations reported experiencing a cyberattack that disrupted IT systems or data. Of those, 61% faced four or more attacks, with Germany, Canada, and India

as the top three most affected countries.

- Inadequate executive support: A significant 69% report a lack of support from business leaders for necessary security measures. Even greater, 73% indicated board-level disinterest in security readiness.
- Lack of alignment in regulatory preparedness: Despite 94% confidence in handling changing regulatory dynamics as regulatory pressures continue to increase on organizations to improve overall cyber resilience, 77% struggle with security and other risk-mitigating team alignment, and 72% lack clear business continuity roadmaps.
- **Organizational constraints:** 54% of organizations noted that remote work continues to strain their security teams, while cybersecurity budget restrictions and security skills shortages were also top challenges.
- Industry-specific challenges: Retail, manufacturing, and chemicals, oil, and gas sectors reported the highest incidence of cyberattacks. Government organizations experienced the highest frequency, with 74% reporting four or more attacks.

"The survey findings reveal a complex cyber threat landscape where businesses face persistent threats despite feeling prepared," said Kris Lovejoy, Global Security & Resiliency Practice Leader, Kyndryl. "It is imperative that businesses make cyber resilience a board-level priority."



Nvidia AI Summit 2024: Jio Aims to Democratize AI, Pushing for Low-Cost Solutions for All

At the Nvidia AI Summit 2024 conference, Reliance Jio announced a 1GW data center with AI infrastructure in Jamnagar, equipped with the latest Nvidia GPUs.

By **Jatinder Singh** | jatinder.singh@9dot9.in

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ELIANCE JIO has once again emphasized its commitment to democratizing artificial intelligence (AI) by working aggressively to lower its costs, ensuring that advanced AI technology becomes affordable for every citizen and enterprise in India.

At a fireside chat with Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, during the Nvidia AI Summit 2024, Reliance Industries Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh D. Ambani discussed the crucial role AI will play in transforming industries and solidifying India's position as a global leader in artificial intelligence (AI). Ambani reiterated that, just as Jio revolutionized India's highspeed broadband infrastructure by focusing on affordability, they aim to make AI similarly accessible and affordable for the common people.

At the Nvidia AI Summit 2024 conference, Reliance Jio announced a 1GW data center with AI infrastructure in Jamnagar, equipped with the latest Nvidia GPUs.

"As our Prime Minister said, this is a new, aspirational India. What we are witnessing today is unprecedented. We are the only country in the world with over 65% of population under 35," Ambani stated, illustrating India's unique demographic advantage in the AI race.

The need for robust digital infrastructure

Ambani went on to highlight how the nation's digital transformation is pivotal for future growth. "Under strong leadership, India is rapidly becoming a digital society. We are evolving into an innovation hub for the world, backed by a robust base of young engineers and world-class infrastructure," Ambani added.

India's digital infrastructure, with widespread 4G, 5G, and broadband connectivity, rivals that of leading global nations, including the U.S. and China. Jio, Ambani noted, played a key role in this revolution, helping India leapfrog from 158th

Once this AI-driven intelligence is fully integrated into the domestic market, Ambani envisions expanding its reach globally, delivering AI services that can create a more equitable and sustainable world.

in global data rankings to 1st in just eight years. "We started from scratch, but today, we are one of the largest data companies in the world, with volumes on par with giants like Verizon and AT&T," Ambani said enthusiastically. Earlier this year, Akash Ambani, Chairman of Reliance Jio Infocomm (RJIL) and son of Mukesh Ambani, shared similar sentiments in an exclusive conversation with CIO&Leader, where he elaborated on Jio's roadmap for AI success.

Affordability to drive intelligence

But beyond scale, Reliance Jio's success lies in making data accessible. One of the most notable achievements of the telecom giant is its ability to deliver data at a remarkably low cost — just 15 cents per GB, compared to the global average of \$3.5. "This encourages greater data usage among customers and helps bridge the digital divide across the country," Ambani explained.

The goal, however, is not just connectivity but harnessing intelligence. "Through AI and technology, we aim to bring prosperity and equality to all. India will soon be one of the largest markets for intelligence-driven solutions, fueled by our youth's immense potential," he said during the Nvidia AI Summit being organized in Mumbai by the world's second largest company.

Jio's ambition extends beyond national borders. Once this AI-driven intelligence is fully integrated into the domestic market, Ambani envisions expanding its reach globally, delivering AI services that can create a more equitable and sustainable world.

"But this is not a journey we can take alone," Ambani stressed. "Collaboration will be key in leveraging AI to build a better, more equal future for everyone."

Through its strategic partnerships and investments in AI, Reliance Jio is positioning itself to make AI accessible, affordable, and impactful — for India and the world.



As AI and digital transformation disrupt industries, CIOs face their greatest challenge yet: to adapt, lead innovation, drive strategy, and fuel organizational growth

By **Praneeta** | praneeta@9dot9.in

(with inputs from Jatinder Singh)



"WHEN I started my career as IT head, our main job was simply to keep systems running smoothly. But today, technical and operational excellence is just the baseline. For IT leaders to make a true impact, they must align IT with business strategy and drive continuous innovation. Without that focus, a CIO risks falling short of the organization's expectations and, like the dinosaurs, eventually fading into irrelevance," said a senior CIO from a private sector bank during an informal conversation at one of our recent meetings.

There's no doubt about it: tech plays a key role in making or breaking businesses today. This has put CIOs in the spotlight, with more people recognizing how they shape business results. CIOs and CTOs now do much more than just manage IT systems. They've become strategic leaders who create new business chances, make user experiences better, and find ways to strengthen revenue. We can see this change clearly.

Tech is shaking up old industries. Online shops like Amazon and Flipkart have changed how we buy things. Now, people in cities and villages can get what they need with a simple click. Companies like Reliance JioMart are helping small corner stores go digital so they can keep up with the changing market. In entertainment, streaming services are taking over from cable TV. Factories are getting smarter and more connected. Banks are also going digital, using AI to serve customers better, work more, and make smarter choices.

However, the challenge is: Many of today's CIOs come from traditional enterprise backgrounds, and when organizations expect them to spearhead initiatives that fall outside their core expertise, they often face significant



"Even seasoned CIOs struggle with effective change management skills. You can't learn them from Google or ChatGPT. It's something every CIO must master through practical experience and guidance."

-Dr Kamal Karnatak Group CIO, RJCorp

challenges. If they are unable to quickly adapt and deliver on these evolving demands, it can jeopardize their role and, in extreme cases, lead to their exit from the organization.

While some CIOs have embraced this change and now enjoy its benefits, others stick to old ways—hoping for a quick fix or fighting the need to adapt. In a time when

Strategic and
Business Acumen are
top traits required to
be a successful CIO
today, with 59.48% of
respondents ranking
it as their highest
priority and assigning
it a score of 5.16. This
underscores the
importance of aligning
IT strategy with
business goals and
driving enterprisewide innovation.

Source: CIO&Leader Survey

AI and robotics speed up progress, standing still is not an option. CIOs must grow or risk falling behind a new group of leaders who take up new tech and lead the push for digital change.

Will CIOs change, or will they become obsolete? The choice is theirs.

What's Changing?

Traditionally, the CIO was accountable for looking after internal IT systems: Responsible for IT infrastructure, hardware, software, and networking. However, in the last decade, the role of the CIO has expanded. CIOs must now manage operational activities and strategic direction as their core expectations grow; they are encouraged to drive innovation while heading and executing digital initiatives within business outcomes. The massive scale of AI deployment has undoubtedly catapulted this transformation forward, expecting the CIOs to lead smart transformations technology across tangible business outcomes.

In 2023, many CIOs and other C-suite leaders focused extensively on the infrastructure needed to drive AI implementations.

Cover Story

However, in 2024, they began to realize what can be realistically achieved through generative AI, as well as the resources required to do so, by analyzing various potential use cases and evaluating the ROI those use cases might offer.

Clearly, for CIOs, there is a lot on their plate now. With every organization now operating as a tech-driven enterprise, whether they explicitly acknowledge it or not, CIOs must not only be skilled data specialists to drive organizational decision-making and ensure internal IT systems are compliant and risk-free but they are also expected to focus on broader leadership capabilities.

For CIOs, adapting to this reality means expanding their skill sets and ensuring they are equipped to drive change, not just for today but for the future as well. "Organizations are becoming much more complex than they were earlier," believes Dheeraj Sinha, Executive Vice President and Global CIO at Sun Pharma, India's leading pharmaceutical company. "The size, scale, complexity of operations, and the continuous demand for new technology functionalities, analytics, data lakes, Generative AI—will continue to evolve."

Reflecting these changes, technology influence will continue to grow across almost all industries. This is just the beginning as AI and analytics continue to speed transformation in unprecedented ways, with companies and their CEOs expecting more focus from CIOs on revenue generation and business growth.

These trends indicate that technology is indeed moving people beyond industries and that this is only the beginning. AI and analytics are changing the pace of transformation at unprecedented speed, and companies and



"Organizations are becoming much more complex than they were earlier. The size, scale, complexity of operations, and the continuous demand for new technology—functionalities, analytics, data lakes, Generative Al—will continue to evolve."

-Dheeraj Sinha
Executive Vice President and Global CIO,

"You can't be a CIO without a basic attraction to the underlying technology that makes things run."

-Vinod Sivarama Krishnan CDIO, Essar



CEOs keep expecting more from their CIOs concerning revenue generation and business growth.

The CIO of the past was primarily a custodian of IT infrastructure.

Today, however, CIOs are strategic partners integral to the business's success. This transformation is emphasized by Vinod Sivarama Krishnan, Chief Digital and Information Officer at Essar, a multinational conglomerate.

"The pace of business cycles has gone exponentially up," he notes.

"You can't be a CIO without a basic attraction to the underlying technology that makes things run."

The Skills and Strategies needed to shine

Technology has moved so fast that

the skillset required of modern CIOs has expanded way beyond technical expertise. Today's CIOs need to be strategic and business-oriented to play their role effectively. An IBM study confirms this shift, saying CIOs are being asked to reinvent their organizations — not just in IT but across the whole enterprise.

A CIO readiness survey conducted by CIO&Leader among India's top IT leaders offers valuable insights into the diverse skills needed to be a successful CIO.

The survey reveals that Strategic and Business Acumen are the top traits required to be a successful CIO today, with 59.48% of respondents ranking it as their highest priority and assigning it a score of 5.16. This underscores the

importance of aligning IT strategy with business goals and driving enterprise-wide innovation.

Additionally, Technical & Change Management Expertise (3.25) and People Management & Communication Skills (3.58) are also crucial for executing and sustaining transformation initiatives, highlighting the need for CIOs to effectively manage teams and navigate rapid technological changes.

Other key skills include
Budgeting & Financial Management
Knowledge (3.37) and Negotiation
& Problem-Solving Skills (2.84)
which give CIOs the tools to make
good financial decisions and solve
complex problems. Collaboration
& Emotional Intelligence (2.81) is
a key enabler for teamwork and
building relationships across the
organization.

These findings show that a modern CIO's success is about having a rounded skillset where all the skills work together. Strategic leadership, technical expertise, and interpersonal skills collectively make a CIO a transformational leader in today's business.

Let's look at the strategies and approaches that help CIOs succeed in this multi-dimensional role.

Future Savvy: Think Beyond Operations

Embracing change does not mean that CIOs must abandon their operational responsibilities, but according to industry experts, their mindset must evolve. "A CIO can't just focus on daily operations anymore; they need to think beyond that—from a business perspective, from an ROI perspective. They must plan for the future, anticipate technology trends, and think about how technology will enable the business three years down the line," says Dr. Kamal Karnatak, CIO of RJCorp.

"A CIO must also be an evangelist, visualizing potential technologies like generative AI, even if nobody is asking about them today."

Understand IT-OT Convergence

As industries move toward full digitization, CIOs must be proficient in integrating operational technology (OT) with information technology (IT). This convergence is critical for optimizing efficiency, reducing errors, and ensuring seamless operations across systems. CIOs need to bridge these two areas effectively to create value for the business.

"Everyone is moving toward

digitalisation," says Chitti Babu, Group CIO at Aurobindo Pharma. "Every piece of equipment—from the pharmaceutical shop floor to the ERP suite and applications needs to be digitized and integrated."

In sectors like pharmaceuticals, the challenge is amplified by stringent regulations and the need for domain-specific expertise. Integrating OT with IT, known as IT-OT convergence, is essential for enhancing operations, but it comes with its own set of difficulties.

"We need to minimize human intervention in pharma," Babu explains. "Wherever human intervention is involved, mistakes

Gartner's Recommendations for CIOs

- Distributed Leadership: Assign tactical decisionmakers across the organization to maintain close contact with teams and address issues like fatigue.
- **Guidance for Teams:** Establish clear work protocols to promote shared accountability and ensure multidisciplinary teams focus on delivering
- business outcomes, not just project completion.
- Leadership Approach: To lead effective change, CIOs must balance strategic vision with on-the-ground leadership. This involves guiding teams through technological transitions while fostering a culture of innovation and resilience.



"CIOs of today need to know how to minimize human intervention. Wherever human intervention is involved, mistakes are inevitable, and those mistakes can be costly."

-Chitti Babu Group CIO, Aurobindo Pharma Technical & Change
Management
Expertise (3.25) and
People Management
& Communication
Skills (3.58) are also
crucial for executing
and sustaining
transformation
initiatives, highlighting
the need for CIOs to
effectively manage
teams and navigate
rapid technological
changes.

Source: CIO&Leader Survey

are inevitable, and those mistakes can be costly."

Practical Implementation of AI: Bridging the Theory-Practice Gap

CIO&Leader's CIO Readiness Survey, based on insights from 300 of India's top IT leaders and CIOs, provides a revealing snapshot of their self-assessed AI/ML knowledge. While 54.3% rate themselves as intermediate, a notable 33.3% still classify as beginners, exposing a gap in foundational expertise among senior technology leaders. Alarmingly, only 12.3% identify as advanced or expert, underscoring the limited high-level proficiency in this critical area. While many CIOs have a theoretical understanding of AI/ML, substantial room exists for growth in practical skills and strategic application.

This highlights the need for focused upskilling and leadership training to better equip CIOs to

drive AI/ML initiatives and lead innovation effectively.

Bridging this expertise gap requires more than just theoretical knowledge—it demands leadership, collaboration, and execution—focused strategies to translate AI ambitions into real business value. As Dr. Kamal Karnatak, CIO of RJCorp, aptly notes, "While everyone gels with the theory behind AI and digital transformation, few know how to apply it effectively in the real world."

Conversations often gravitate toward ideas, but leaders frequently struggle with identifying the first steps toward implementation. While tools like Google and ChatGPT can provide information, they lack the practical experience necessary to deliver tangible outcomes.

The Path to Practical Al Implementation:

To make AI initiatives successful, CIOs must align IT strategies with broader business objectives:

- Collaboration with C-suite executives: Co-create solutions that directly address organizational priorities and deliver measurable value across departments.
- Clear IT roadmaps: Present strategies linking technology investments to outcomes such as cost optimization, revenue



"Al is certainly a major focus, but in India, we face challenges with talent readiness. Only about 20% of organizations are truly prepared for Al adoption."

-Raineesh Garg

CIO, Senior Vice President, AllCargo Logistics

"You have to step into the shoes of the business, understand their requirements in detail. It's not about doing things for the sake of technology. You need to know how technology serves the business and adds value."

-Seema Gaur

Executive Director-IT Services, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO)



- growth, and improved customer experiences.
- Balanced Scorecards: Use these tools to measure the alignment between IT initiatives and business goals.

According to the experts, a key obstacle to AI adoption is poor data quality. Without clean, accurate, and structured data, AI systems cannot deliver the desired results. As Rajneesh Garg, CIO and Senior Vice President at AllCargo Logistics, points out, "AI is a key focus, but in India, talent readiness remains a significant hurdle. Only about 20% of organizations are truly prepared for AI adoption."

This data reinforces the need for Indian enterprises to address talent readiness, data management, and strategic alignment to ensure AI becomes a driver of transformative business outcomes. By closing the theory-practice gap, CIOs can lead their organizations into a future defined by AI-driven innovation.

Driving Change Management

The challenge for CIOs isn't purely technical—it's about leading people through uncertainty and resistance to change. When robotic process automation (RPA) emerged as a tool for business success, many CIOs struggled to convince teams of its benefits. Employees often perceived automation as a threat to their jobs, rather than as a productivity-enhancing tool.

This resistance stems from a limited understanding of how technology is applied effectively within business contexts. While technology can be efficient, its real value lies in its translation into enterprise solutions—a process that requires active involvement from stakeholders.

Experts emphasize the importance of aligning technology with refined processes. Applying

Key Steps for CIOs to Lead Effective Change Management

- **Vision and Strategy:** Define a clear vision and develop a detailed roadmap.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Secure leadership support and align with customer and department goals.
- Effective Communication:

 Maintain transparent

 messaging and open feedback

 channels.
- Change Champions: Empower advocates to drive adoption at all levels
- Workforce Readiness: Provide training and align changes with company culture.

- **Technology Enablement:**Leverage appropriate tools and analytics to monitor progress.
- **Risk Management:** Anticipate resistance and prepare contingency plans.
- Measure Success: Set KPIs and refine strategies based on results.
- Emotional Intelligence: Address employee concerns and celebrate achievements.
- Sustainability: Embed changes and encourage continuous learning for longterm success.

technology to inefficient workflows can yield poor outcomes. India's enterprises, eager to adopt AI, Industry 4.0, and automation, often face roadblocks. Many initiatives stall at the proof-of-concept stage due to a shortage of skilled professionals and a lack of clarity on business value.

Dr. Kamal Karnatak points out, "The use case must bring business value—ROI is essential. Creating a solid business case, addressing implementation challenges, and identifying the right use case are areas where CIOs often falter."

Beyond strategy, CIOs face the challenge of convincing boards and end-users of the value of technological initiatives. Without strong business cases, even seasoned CIOs struggle to secure buy-in. Dr. Karnatak adds, "Change management is a skill that cannot be learned from Google or ChatGPT. It's something every CIO must master."

Mastering Soft Skills

In today's fast-evolving business

environment, CIOs must excel not only in technical expertise but also in leadership and soft skills. These qualities have become just as crucial as their knowledge of IT infrastructure, as CIOs increasingly transition from technical roles to becoming key decision—makers in the boardroom. This shift has made soft skills—such as leadership, communication, and critical thinking—just as crucial as technical expertise.

"Beyond technical know-how, soft skills, and leadership abilities are becoming indispensable for CIOs and IT leaders stepping into executive roles," says Vijay. "As they transition from behind-the-desk roles to sitting in the boardroom, they need to become more communicative, engaging, and aligned with the broader business vision."

Seema Gaur, Executive Director-IT Services, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO), highlights the growing expectation for CIOs to understand

Cover Story

the business side of operations:
"You have to step into the shoes
of the business, understand their
requirements in detail. It's not
about doing things for the sake of
technology. You need to know how
technology serves the business and
adds value."

Vinod Sivarama Krishnan emphasizes the peer pressure CIOs face in adopting emerging technologies and the importance of a strategic approach: "Emerging technologies are at the top of the hype cycle. There is naturally peer pressure in terms of wanting to be the first to adopt these technologies. As a team, you need to help your board understand which areas are maturing and where we have an opportunity to implement technology that will make a real difference."

This shift in CIO responsibilities is evident in the findings of the 2024 State of the CIO survey, which reveals that CIOs often struggle to balance innovation with operations—a challenge that three-quarters of respondents find difficult. Without structured leadership development programs, many organizations are facing a leadership gap, leaving them without the expertise needed to manage this balance effectively.

This highlights the need for CIOs to not only focus on their technical acumen but also develop the soft skills necessary to guide their organizations through the complexities of digital transformation and into the future.

Develop Strong Financial Acumen

According to industry experts, in today's business climate, strong financial acumen is as key to a CIO as technical acumen. Core competencies must include ROI analysis, budgeting, and cost management knowledge to ensure



"You need to shed your CIO role and be equally inquisitive about all the new technologies. We put together a team—our innovation pool—that brings in ideas and technologies"

-Shijo Joseph Group CIO, East-West Seed

"Structured programs, like managing the first 100 days as a CIO, are invaluable. Such initiatives help bridge the gap between knowledge and handson experience, preparing leaders to align business goals with technological advancements effectively."

-Prosenjit Sengupta Group CDIO, ITC



that the IT investment delivers directly to the organization's bottom line. Collaboration with CFOs and their finance teams enables CIOs to align IT initiatives with financial priorities, build a shared framework for evaluating digital investments, and help bridge the financial and IT cultures.

However, research by Gartner reveals that only 30% of the relationships between CFOs and CIOs stand as strong digital partnerships, making them unable to outperform peers in best-in-class financial management practices tailored to digital transformation.

This calls for CIOs to define

metrics that would measure the cost savings, revenue growth, and operational efficiencies of technology solutions. Leveraging real-time financial tools and dashboards facilitates proactive decision-making, thus ensuring that technology strategies become cost-effective and results-driven. In addition, applying metrics beyond traditional financial measures—such as engagement or digital participation by users—can effectively showcase the indirect benefits of digital initiatives, which are otherwise difficult to quantify.

Such collaboration between CFO and CIO is crucial to achieve these. The organization is 29% more likely to involve finance early in the technology roadmapping, allowing shared expectations on how IT can advance enterprise strategies and impact financial outcomes.

However, with this alignment, a CIO would position IT as a strategic enabler of business success and drive digital innovation.

Mentor and Ready the Next-gen Talent

Mentor and ready the nextgen talent: While AI and other emerging technologies dominate the agenda, CIOs have a two-fold task - adopting these technologies and developing a talent pipeline that guarantees sustainable growth. The success of a leader depends on the integrity and the power of the team. Many seasoned CIOs with years of professional experience on traditional paths face a steep learning curve when they have to learn new skills. This fact emphasizes the need to hire people who not only match their competence but also offer new visions and superior skills.

Rajneesh Garg succinctly points to a major problem: "The talent's readiness (of the) in India is yet another bottleneck, as only 20% of the organizations are AI-adoptioncompliant, which assigns the task to CIOs of their employees to study these subjects, from scratch to new duties."

The so-much-talked-about availability of X—technical knowledge along with expertise in strategy is a herculean task for the CIO because one must choose between these two, and the trick is knowing where to get both of these skills. Vijay Sivaram, CEO, captures the soul of this challenge: "What you have done here will not take you there. The CIOs need to make themselves into an intelligent and exceeding chamber of skills/ abilities by constantly upgrading themselves, learning things, developing their faculties, and being connected."

While being a successful CIO today requires internship knowledge in software development, peer-reviewed advanced skills, and the ability to motivate the team will be scored. The role of the CIO has evolved beyond managing IT systems to driving organizational strategy.

"Being social and engaging isn't just about attending events; it's about fostering genuine collaboration and listening to your teams," Sivaram explains. This

"To succeed today, CIOs need to upskill themselves and their teams while also focusing on unlearning and learning. It's important to revisit what we did earlier, recognize what wasn't right or value-adding, and evaluate if our current approach is worth continuing."

-Saurabh Gupta Group CDIO of Gujarat Fluorochemicals shift requires CIOs to adopt a more inclusive, people-centric leadership style, where mentorship and empowerment take precedence.

Shijo Joseph, Group CIO, East-West Seed, emphasizes the importance of hands-on mentorship: "We link skill development to real-world assignments and clearly define expectations. By forming innovation teams, we foster an environment where ideas are challenged, explored, and implemented. This not only nurtures talent but also cultivates a culture of experimentation."

Succession Planning

A succession plan involves not just the replacement of an individual but an assurance of the endurance and the survival of the organization. A well-formulated strategy reduces the impact of uncertainties, integrates the new leadership style within teams, and nurtures transformational practices within a business culture. Still, however," says Sivaram, succession is understood as something that comes up last.

"If there are no deliberate development schemes in place, there is a danger of escaping the whole leadership in times of changes."

The success of today's CIOs lies in their ability to embrace the future of IT while overcoming resistance to change. The best CIOs combine a strong focus on technology with a thoughtful approach to developing their teams. Future-ready organizations will be led by CIOs who value both people and technology, build highperforming teams, listen well, and align IT strategies with business goals. This balance ensures technology drives progress while empowering the workforce to deliver lasting impact.



interview



Ripu BajwaDirector and General Manager of
Data Protection Solutions,
Dell Technologies India

Al models are vulnerable to prompt injection and result manipulation

In a conversation with CIO&Leader, **Ripu Bajwa** shares insights on key technology trends for 2024, the cybersecurity challenges businesses face in the AI era, and more.

By **Jatinder Singh** | jatinder.singh@9dot9.in

N A recent conversation with CIO&Leader, Ripu Bajwa, Director and General Manager of Data Protection Solutions at Dell Technologies India, shared insights on key technology trends for 2024, the cybersecurity challenges businesses face in the AI era, and how Dell's security approach stands apart from pure-play vendors.

As a member of the India Business Leadership Team at Dell Technologies, Bajwa is focused on helping customers protect and manage their data against emerging threats, ensuring security across all environments, and enabling innovation without compromise. Edited excerpts below: CIO&Leader: What do you see as the most impactful technology trends shaping 2024, particularly in sectors like finance, manufacturing, and retail?

RIPU BAJWA: First up is Zero Trust Security. More organizations are embracing this "never trust, always verify" mindset to protect data and systems. In finance, where the stakes are high, identity and access management controls are becoming essential. The convergence of AI and high-performance computing has led to advancements across various domains. For sectors such as healthcare, finance, manufacturing, energy, and scientific computing, these changes

could drive innovation and growth. In finance, institutions are adopting new technologies for high-frequency trading, risk analysis, fraud detection, and customer behavior modeling, where speed and precision are key.

There is also a focus on supply chain security. As businesses digitize their supply chains, the risk of cyber attacks rises. It's crucial for companies to ensure their third-party vendors follow security protocols to help mitigate vulnerabilities.

AI-powered tools are improving customer experience through personalized shopping, demand forecasting, and inventory management. With data analytics, retailers can better understand consumer behavior, optimize pricing strategies, and predict market trends, leading to more efficient supply chain operations. AI and security alignment is emerging as a key issue. As AI technologies evolve, they not only enhance security but also introduce new threats. Companies need proactive strategies to safeguard AI systems from attacks and maintain data integrity.

CIO&Leader: What are the key cybersecurity challenges currently facing enterprises in India, and how are they evolving? **RIPU BAJWA:** Enterprises in India are facing significant cybersecurity challenges, particularly driven by advancements in Generative AI. Malicious actors now use this technology to create realistic content, making it easier to mislead users through phishing attacks. Emails and communications can mimic real individuals, increasing the risk of users divulging credentials or taking harmful actions. Deepfakes can replicate voices and even video, pushing individuals to transfer funds or share confidential information. The AI models themselves are also vulnerable to risks like prompt injection and result manipulation, requiring protection strategies based on zero-trust principles.

The rise of Ransomware as a Service (RaaS) has lowered the entry barrier for cybercriminals, allowing even those with limited technical skills to execute sophisticated attacks. To combat these threats, organizations must reduce their attack surface through hardware-assisted security, maintain regular software updates, and implement incident recovery plans. Investing in data protection and fostering a culture

The AI models themselves are also vulnerable to risks like prompt injection and result manipulation, requiring protection strategies based on zero-trust principles.

of cybersecurity awareness through ongoing employee training is essential, as individuals remain the final line of defense.

As cyber threats evolve, businesses must adopt a prevention-first approach, modernizing and automating their recovery and business continuity strategies.

CIO&Leader: Dell isn't a traditional cybersecurity company, but it offers various managed security services. How does Dell differentiate itself from pureplay security vendors in areas like incident response, zerotrust strategy development, and vulnerability management?

RIPU BAJWA: Dell Technologies

India differentiates itself from pure-play security vendors through an integrated approach that embeds security into every aspect of IT infrastructure and operations. Our security framework encompasses hardware, software, and services, ensuring security is part of the entire technology ecosystem.

In incident response, we use automation and machine learning to streamline detection and response, minimizing the impact of breaches. Our Zero-Trust strategy focuses on identity verification and continuous monitoring, treating every access request as potentially untrusted, regardless of location. Additionally, our vulnerability management services are enhanced by partnerships with

cybersecurity firms, allowing us to provide assessments and proactive mitigation strategies across the technology stack.

Unlike pure-play vendors, we offer end-to-end solutions that combine hardware innovations with software-defined security, enabling a secure environment across on-premises, cloud, and hybrid infrastructures. Finally, we focus on aligning security solutions with business outcomes, recognizing that security is not just about technology but enabling organizations to operate securely and efficiently.

CIO&Leader: How are massive
Al workloads reshaping IT
security, and how do you help
organizations address challenges
like cybersecurity threats,
system integration, and data
management inefficiencies?

RIPU BAJWA: Massive AI workloads, or "elephant workloads," create new security challenges by generating large volumes of data and introducing risks like data poisoning, privacy breaches, and ransomware attacks. The scale and complexity of AI applications require businesses to rethink their cybersecurity and data protection strategies.

We address these challenges with our PowerProtect portfolio, which provides data protection and system integration across edge, core, and cloud environments. Features like immutability,



orchestrated recovery, and cyber recovery vaults protect AI training data, models, and configurations from evolving threats, including AI-driven cyberattacks. Machine learning-powered anomaly detection aids in identifying threats and recovering from incidents like ransomware.

Our solutions also tackle system integration and data management inefficiencies. AI-driven security improves real-time threat detection, while modular architecture enables seamless integration. Data management tools enhance governance and decision-making.

CIO&Leader: With Dell's focus on integrations and unified management, how do you ensure seamless collaboration with security providers like Zscaler, Okta, and CrowdStrike?
RIPU BAJWA: We ensure seamless collaboration with security providers like Zscaler, Okta,

and CrowdStrike by integrating

through APIs, unified management

consoles, and joint security frameworks. This approach centralizes monitoring and policy enforcement, aligns with Zero Trust and identity-centric security models, and enables faster threat detection and response.

Strategic partnerships further enhance compatibility across Dell's hardware, cloud platforms, and security solutions, ensuring a cohesive, secure environment.

CIO&Leader: How does the Dell Al Factory help companies define their Al journeys, and what key benefits have been obser

RIPU BAJWA: As AI transforms industries, organizations need a clear adoption path. The Dell AI Factory, developed with NVIDIA, offers a turnkey solution to simplify AI integration and accelerate deployment. It provides prevalidated, full-stack solutions for desktops, servers, and edge environments.

The Dell AI Factory helps companies define their AI strategy through assessment, prototyping, and implementation. By evaluating a company's needs and data landscape, it creates tailored AI strategies and enables rapid prototyping in a collaborative environment.

Companies also gain access to tools, guidance, and training to manage AI initiatives effectively. Key benefits include faster innovation, improved decision—making through data analytics, cost optimization, and scalable AI solutions. The Dell AI Factory enables organizations to leverage AI to enhance customer experiences and streamline operations.

CIO&Leader: With AI now central to Dell's strategy, how are Dell's professional services helping organizations with AI model creation, data preparation, and infrastructure design?

RIPU BAJWA: Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Generative AI (GenAI) are transforming business at an unprecedented pace, offering advantages that can give your business a competitive edge. AI can unlock insights from your data and enhance productivity, customer experience, and innovation. Our professional services assist organizations with AI model creation, data preparation, and infrastructure design by simplifying the AI journey through solutions like the Dell AI Factory and Helix Project.

We offer validated design blueprints combining our hardware and storage with NVIDIA's AI performance, facilitating quick AI implementation. Their services cover the entire AI lifecycle—from selecting use cases to deploying and scaling AI solutions—addressing data readiness and skill gaps. Our approach ensures AI infrastructure is secure, scalable, and cost-effective, tailored to business needs.



Saurabh Saxena Regional Vice President, OpenText

Enterprises are focusing on clear metrics to track AI ROI

In a recent conversation with CIO&Leader,
Saurabh Saxena, Regional Vice
President at OpenText, discussed the
company's technology focus and upcoming
expansion plans.

By **Jatinder Singh** | jatinder.singh@9dot9.in



PENTEXT, A global solution provider in enterprise information management (EIM), is making significant strides in AI and automation to help organizations re-imagine the future of work. The Indian arm of this Canadian IT solutions provider is making substantial investments in AI capabilities, with several key initiatives being developed and deployed locally in India..

Following its acquisition of Micro Focus in 2023, OpenText has expanded its portfolio to include next-generation tools in areas such as cybersecurity, IT operations management, application modernization, and AI & analytics. These additions have strengthened OpenText's offerings in digital operations, cybersecurity, and developer support. Recently,

OpenText secured a multi-million-dollar deal with a major telecom customer in India. Its successes also include strategic partnerships with L&T Technology Services, as well as collaborations with key government institutions and organizations such as ITC, GAIL, IOCL, and ONGC.

In a recent conversation with CIO&Leader, Saurabh Saxena, Regional Vice President, OpenText, outlined the company's strategic focus and plans. He discussed how OpenText's AI and automation solutions are enabling businesses to transform operations, streamline information retrieval, reduce information overload, and boost productivity by automating repetitive tasks. Saurabh is responsible for driving revenue, aligning regional business strategies, and delivering value to

customers by helping them leverage information for a competitive advantage. His work centers on empowering organizations with AI-driven innovation, automation, security, and connectivity. Excerpts from the interaction follow.

CIO&Leader: As OpenText moves toward 2025 with plans for expanded market share and profitability, how has the early completion of the Micro Focus integration positioned the company for accelerated growth? What strategies and operational efficiencies are driving this momentum?

SAURABH SAXENA: The integration of Micro Focus in early 2023 significantly expanded OpenText's global footprint, particularly in India, where

headcount nearly doubled. This acquisition allowed us to leverage Micro Focus' products and talent to better serve clients during their digital transformation journeys. By aligning Micro Focus' product roadmap with customer expectations, OpenText was able to accelerate its performance, scale operations, and expand its market reach.

This strategic positioning has helped us create a more robust portfolio that addresses the evolving needs of organizations seeking to digitize and improve operational efficiencies. Our alignment with high-value business sectors strengthens our potential for sustained growth.

Our strategy focuses on enhancing productivity and profitability through automation and streamlined processes. These initiatives optimize performance, conserve resources, and contribute to cost reduction and greater agility. The integration of Micro Focus is designed to accelerate cost synergies, improve service delivery, and solidify OpenText's competitive position in the market. To maintain momentum, we are expanding our cloud services and boosting customer engagement through combined integrated offerings.

CIO&Leader: The 2nd Annual CIO & Leader State of Enterprise Technology Survey reveals that Indian enterprises are ramping up AI and machine learning investments. How are they addressing challenges like security, culture, and ROI, and what role does OpenText play in this process?

SAURABH SAXENA: Indian enterprises are prioritizing AI and machine learning, but face challenges around security, cultural adoption, and ROI. To address

these, companies are implementing robust security frameworks, ensuring AI systems align with local cultures, and developing clear metrics to track ROI from AI investments.

We play a critical role in supporting these efforts by providing innovative AI solutions and leveraging local talent for digital transformation. We ensure robust security in our Private Cloud Aviator by leveraging Google Cloud Platform's (GCP) certifications and security infrastructure. Kev measures include encryption, network segmentation, access controls, and continuous monitoring to protect customer data. Importantly, data used for AI training remains private, reinforcing data integrity and privacy. These security protocols are crucial for businesses with stringent data protection requirements, ensuring compliance and safeguarding sensitive information.

Culturally, enterprises are developing AI systems that align with local languages and cultural nuances. This approach goes beyond mere translation, aiming for AI solutions that resonate with India's diverse landscape. Organizations are fostering a culture of collaboration between technology and human expertise to ensure successful adoption. Encouraging a mindset that embraces technological change is essential for maximizing AI's benefits and ensuring employee acceptance.

Measuring and improving ROI is a priority for Indian enterprises. Companies are adopting performance metrics and business success indicators to assess the value of AI initiatives, focusing on use cases that promise quick wins. OpenText Aviator, a family of trusted generative AI capabilities,

works seamlessly with our existing information management solutions to support these efforts.

We enable organizations to leverage their data, make informed decisions, and adapt with intelligent tools that continually learn. It elevates information automation, supporting businesses in a seamless transition to AI and helping them overcome both current and future challenges.

CIO&Leader: What measurable benefits have OpenText's AI solutions delivered to Indian enterprises?

SAURABH SAXENA: AI in business has introduced a new mindset an innovative way of thinking, a renewed appreciation for trust and data, and a fresh outlook on unlocking human potential. OpenText Aviator ushers in this new era with predictive AI-led analytics, AI-powered conversational search, and generative AI. Customers trust our information management solutions to manage private data sets—from B2B transactions to operational content, application code, and intellectual property. Now, without moving their data, customers can leverage our AI capabilities to extract maximum value from their information.

By consolidating data management tools, businesses can make more informed, strategic decisions. AI-driven analytics have helped Indian enterprises gain deeper insights into their operations, leading to better planning, execution, and overall performance.

Our AI solutions, particularly OpenText Aviator, have empowered Indian enterprises to unlock new business value. By automating tasks and optimizing data usage, organizations have reduced manual work and improved operational efficiency. Companies report Generative AI presents huge opportunities for industries by enhancing creativity, automating complex tasks, and improving personalization. However, it also raises challenges, such as data security, model accuracy, and ethical concerns.

enhanced workflows, faster decision-making, and a better understanding of their operations through AI-driven analytics.

Additionally, our AI tools help businesses boost customer engagement through personalized communication and faster response times. Predictive analytics aids in reducing downtime and improving proactive maintenance, ensuring smoother operations and better resource utilization. These measurable outcomes are driving faster, more agile digital transformation across industries in India.

CIO&Leader: How will OpenText's Al and automation capabilities in Business Clouds address key pain points and unmet needs?

SAURABH SAXENA: By leveraging generative AI, OpenText helps organizations streamline information retrieval, reduce information overload, and improve productivity by automating repetitive tasks. In Experience Management, AI tools personalize customer interactions and automate content generation, enhancing engagement and satisfaction while cutting down response times. For IT Operations Management, AI integration in ticket handling and selfservice support accelerates issue resolution, reducing operational friction and increasing efficiency for IT teams.

Our Aviator's integration into Business Clouds is revolutionizing how businesses manage content, experiences, and IT operations.

Our focus on scalability, security, and customization ensures that AI and automation tools address the unique needs of businesses while keeping data secure and enabling greater performance.

CIO&Leader: Could you elaborate on OpenText's roadmap for integrating Generative AI into your solutions? What challenges and opportunities does it present?

is deeply committed to driving innovation through generative AI. With the launch of opentext.ai in August 2023, we're integrating advanced AI capabilities—like predictive analytics and conversational search—into our information management solutions. Our vision is to help organizations transform customer engagement, optimize operations, and enhance decision—making using AI and Large Language Models (LLMs).

Generative AI presents huge opportunities for industries by enhancing creativity, automating complex tasks, and improving personalization. However, it also raises challenges, such as data security, model accuracy, and ethical concerns. We are dedicated to addressing these through responsible AI practices, ensuring

transparency, and maintaining high standards of data privacy.

CIO&Leader: You've announced plans to expand your workforce in India by 25% and open a new office in Hyderabad. What innovations are planned, and how does this expansion support OpenText's broader goals?

SAURABH SAXENA: India is central to OpenText's growth strategy. Our team here drives product development, AI innovations, and serves as a hub for cloud services, cybersecurity, and IT operations. The new Hyderabad facility will further support the development of OpenText's Business Clouds and AI capabilities, while also nurturing local talent through internships and graduate programs.

This expansion will accelerate our innovation and enhance the value we deliver to clients globally, particularly as we scale AI-driven solutions and strengthen our product offerings in the Indian market. With a robust local presence, we are well-positioned to forge deeper connections with customers and help them stay competitive in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

OpenText now employs over 6,000 people in India, part of a global workforce of more than 23,000, across Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Chennai. A significant portion of our work in India focuses on product development and professional services, spanning OpenText's AI, Content, Experience, Business Network, Cybersecurity, Developer, DevOps, and IT Operations clouds. Engineers at the Hyderabad development center lead critical product initiatives for OpenText's Business Clouds and play a key role in advancing the company's global AI innovations. ■

CIOtechtalks

In a recent discussion with CIO&Leader, leading CIOs from across the country shared insights on the key areas shaping the future of enterprise technology. Topics ranged from the transformative role of AI in business to evolving IT security strategies, advancements in data and analytics, and future-focused cloud and infrastructure strategies for 2025 and beyond. Here are some highlights from the conversation.



Al in Enterprise

Ashish Pandey, Global Chief Information Officer, Dabur India Limited

CIO&Leader: Which areas should organizations prioritize for the use of AI to achieve the highest business benefit?

ASHISH PANDEY: All areas should assume that AI can be implemented. I would rather keep a lens on where AI can't be implemented and why. As long as the financials make sense, all areas should benefit from AI.

CIO&Leader: As a CIO, how can you balance various organizational perspectives to ensure the successful implementation of an Al project?

ASHISH PANDEY: AI has been a huge buzzword for the last couple of years, but upon deep diving, there are very few success stories. First and foremost is setting up realistic expectations with the

organization. AI is not a silver bullet that can solve everything. There is a pretty time-consuming and effort-intensive period for any specific problem or business need. Setting these expectations at the start of the program will ensure that teams and management are aligned.

CIO&Leader: What should be the key parameters or metrics to evaluate the success of an AI project?

ASHISH PANDEY: Adoption and overall usage should be the key metrics; other value parameters could include the committed business ROI defined over time. If there is regular demand for numerous programs in the AI area, then I would say that the AI Program Office is functioning smoothly.



IT Security Strategy

Dr. Prashant Atreya,Executive Director (IT&C), NHPC Ltd.

CIO&Leader: People continue to be the weakest link in cybersecurity. What can we do to address these challenges more effectively?

DR. PRASHANT ATREYA: Awareness about cybersecurity among people is one of the most important measures. This is closely associated with human error, negligence, or a lack of awareness regarding digital exposure, which may be exploited by cybercriminals. An organization's cybersecurity resilience depends on its employees; thus, the right awareness and training is the first line of defense in protecting against cyber threats. People must be informed about the importance of multi-factor authentication and strong passwords.

More than 90% of all cyberattacks are through social engineering. Phishing is the most common type of social engineering attack, typically using spoofed email addresses and links to trick people into providing login credentials, credit card numbers, or other personal information. These issues can be addressed by implementing antispam solutions and raising awareness about phishing attacks.

CIO&Leader: What is the impact of AI on IT security? Will it be helpful in addressing the skill shortage and improving organizational security posture?

DR. PRASHANT ATREYA: Artificial Intelligence is a game-changing technology that has created a

buzz in today's market. This coin has two sides – a positive side and a negative side.

Negative Side of AI Use: AI has the potential to generate malware that could evade detection by current security filters, but only if it is trained on quality exploit data. There is a realistic possibility that highly capable states have repositories of malware large enough to effectively train an AI model for this purpose. Positive Side of AI Use: AI algorithms analyze security alerts, prioritize incidents, and trigger predefined response actions. This reduces response times and minimizes manual tasks. Integrating AI into Security Orchestration, Automation, and Response (SOAR) equips security teams to efficiently manage and respond to a high volume of security incidents. AI is designed to monitor behavior patterns, and by using these patterns as a basis, it can detect unusual behavior and restrict unauthorized access to the system.

AI is very much helpful in addressing the skill shortage while improving organizational security posture:

- With the help of AI, organizations may create different scenarios of cyberattacks for awareness and accordingly improve their security posture.
- Various tools have been developed based on AI pattern analysis for threat detection and alerts, assisting security personnel in identifying various types of cyberattacks. ■



Data & Analytics

Rajneesh Garg, Chief Information Officer | SVP, ECU Worldwide - AllCargo

CIO&Leader: Given the rampant growth in data and increasing compliance requirements, how should CIOs formulate their data storage and retention strategy?

RAJNEESH GARG: Apart from the geo-driven regulatory norms, responsible data retention should ideally be built around the nature of the industry and its related needs. A one-size-fits-all approach can't be deployed here. As a CxO, one should encourage participation from all internal and external stakeholders in building a robust retention policy, which should cover:

- Categorization of master data with key aspects like frequency of usage and the nature of data.
- A data mart in place for the organization's key data (a single source of truth).
- Retention also assists in understanding the patterns/behavior of the organization's key OPEX parameters.

CIO&Leader: What will be the impact of the DPDP law on the use of data and advanced analytics tools?

RAJNEESH GARG: Security and integrity, leading to trust, will need to be factored in with high security and advanced storage solutions, ensuring sensitive and personal information is protected for data privacy. With stringent laws around data sharing, tracking, and targeted

advertising—previously not considered intrusions into one's privacy or confidentiality—the analytics tools need to take cognizance of fundamental rights and local regulatory norms.

A responsible data-driven practice with in-depth cybersec analysis will be a win-win for analytics tools, building trust and leading to more innovation through this analysis.

CIO&Leader: Since analytical and predictive models depend on data, what can we do to improve data quality and reduce errors?

RAJNEESH GARG: Apart from using effective data management tools available out of the box (OOB), one needs to instill discipline to ensure data quality with the following pillars in mind:

- A dedicated data steward or owner to ensure comprehensive persona-driven data marts.
- Technical architects ensuring the form of data is uniform, especially for the flow among various systems, and making the format adaptable for elasticity.
- The source of the data should be revisited frequently in light of dynamic changes to maintain the above two measures/pillars.

Having good, consistent data quality helps companies in benchmarking competitors' performance, setting price points, marketing/sales methods, and social media outreach, etc.



Cloud & Infrastructure Strategy

Dr. Sandip Pradhan, Chief Information Officer, Exide Industries Limited

CIO&Leader: How can we reduce complexity and optimize cloud usage in multi-cloud environments?

DR. SANDIP PRADHAN: Reducing complexity and optimizing cloud usage in multi-cloud environments can be achieved through:

• Standardization and Automation: Standardization: Adopt unified processes and tools across cloud environments for provisioning, monitoring, and management.

Automation: Use tools for tasks like provisioning, scaling, and patch management to enhance efficiency, reduce errors, and ensure consistency.

- Unified Management Platforms: Leverage platforms that provide centralized monitoring, analytics, and control for resources across multiple providers. Integration with APIs ensures seamless interoperability.
- Effective Governance and Policies: Establish governance policies covering usage, security, and compliance. Implement role-

based access controls (RBAC) to minimize risks and ensure orderly management.

- Cost Management and Optimization: Use cost management tools to monitor expenditures, optimize resources by right-sizing, using spot instances, and eliminating wasteful allocations.
- Training and Skill Development: Upskill IT staff to manage multicloud environments effectively and foster continuous learning to adapt to evolving technologies.

CIO&Leader: How effective are cloud management tools? What improvements are needed?

DR. SANDIP PRADHAN:

EFFECTIVENESS OF CLOUD MANAGEMENT TOOLS:

- Centralized Management and Visibility: Cloud tools centralize resource management across environments, offering dashboards and real-time insights for compliance and decision-making.
- Automation and Orchestration:
 Tools streamline resource

deployment, scaling, and management, minimizing errors and enhancing efficiency.

- **Cost Optimization:** Cloud tools identify cost-saving opportunities through usage analysis, resizing recommendations, and detailed cost reports for budget planning.
- Security and Compliance: They support identity and access management, threat detection, and regulatory compliance monitoring to secure resources.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

- Integration with Legacy Systems: Better integration with on-premises and legacy systems would improve transitions and hybrid environment management.
- Enhanced User Experience: Simplifying complex interfaces and workflows would improve adoption and usability.
- Advanced Analytics and AI: Incorporating predictive analytics and AI insights can optimize performance, forecast resource needs, and enhance decisionmaking. ■

insight



How can we ensure that everyone benefits from the AI explosion?

Al literacy helps people gain a clear understanding of the capabilities of Al that are frequently lost in hype-driven news cycles about Al.

By **Reggie Townsend** | editor@cioandleader.com

HE RAPID proliferation of AI technologies is creating pers

technologies is creating personal, professional and community-based opportunities around the world. However, as with any ubiquitous innovation, there is a risk that large chunks of the global population will be left behind. Unfortunately, those usually affected are those people and regions that can least afford to miss out on the benefits.

This concern is at the heart of a recent partnership between SAS, the American data and AI provider where I head data ethics, and the Commonwealth AI Consortium (CAIC). CAIC and SAS are collaborating to build a more diverse, global AI workforce by bringing AI software and computing resources to Commonwealth countries. A donation of SAS software, computing capacity and training includes trustworthy AI capabilities and content that will not only help higher education students learn how to develop AI, but how to do so responsibly.

As the head of data ethics guiding the responsible innovation efforts at SAS, my team helps build the culture, processes and technologies to support trustworthy AI internally and externally. That leads to collaborations with like-minded organizations like CoRE-AI, a coalition that aims to harness the power of AI for positive impact and social good in India, which we recently joined.

India's national AI strategy



Reggie Townsend Vice President Data Ethics Practice, SAS

aligns with CoRE-AI and similar organizations globally with a focus on inclusivity, and a goal of ensuring that AI's benefits reach all corners of society. In my view, that must start with enabling an AI literate population.

AI literacy helps people gain a clear understanding of the capabilities of AI that are frequently lost in hype-driven news cycles about AI. Fundamental AI literacy will give people the confidence to engage policymakers, employers, even neighbors in their communities about how best to use AI to improve lives. Once we can rationalize risk and reward for ourselves, we can ensure that AI is something that is done for us, not to us.

Widespread availability of AI could empower societies in unprecedented fashion. Women, economically disadvantaged and minority populations have not historically participated in tech booms the way men with access to capital and people networks have. For example, popular generative AI services reduce the need for capital that small businesses may have needed even a few years ago. Taking advantage begins with AI literacy.

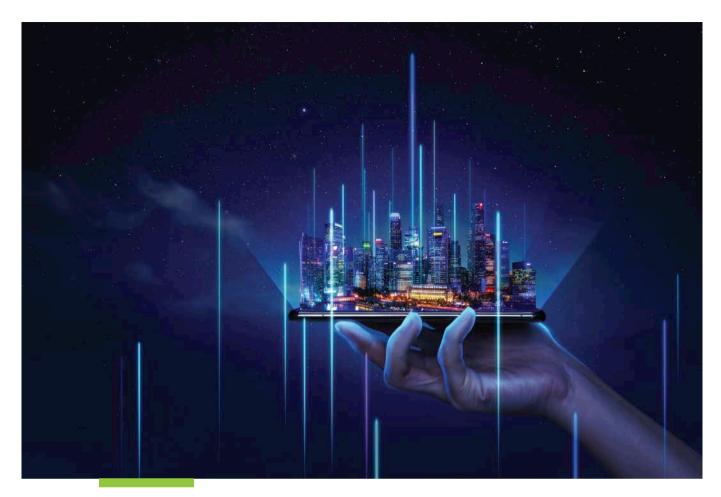
At a national level, widespread AI literacy could supercharge economic opportunities, the kind of which India is uniquely positioned with its increasing educational attainment and growth rate.

Despite the "brain drain" India has endured, it remains blessed with a large talent pool of young people with data skills.

Those people, and others, should seek to enhance their skills with the latest in AI technologies and seek out opportunities to work on real-world challenges with real data. Fortunately, many Indian universities are already on that path. For our part, the CAIC collaboration, the SAS global hackathon and SAS Viya for Learners, which is free to university students and educators, are some of the ways we support AI skill development.

In addition, SAS India has academic partnerships for course delivery and research at UG, PG and Doctorate levels with colleges and universities across India. Beyond the IIMs, we collaborate with institutes like the Ganpat University, Goa Institute of Management, Chandigarh University, Amity University, Doon Business School and Guru Nanak College amongst others.

We also work with government bodies like the Rajasthan Centre of Advanced Technology (R-CAT) for state-wide skilling of youth on the application of technologies like artificial intelligence and machine learning. Built on a base of AI literacy, India can foster a strong AI economy where homegrown talent stays, entrepreneurs and start-ups thrive, and where people from all parts of society can learn to use AI innovatively and responsibly. •



Engineering the Future: Essential Skills for the Modern Engineer

Rapid advancements in fields like artificial intelligence, automation, and blockchain require engineers to upgrade their skill sets consistently.

By **Lakshmi Mittra** | editor@cioandleader.com

AVING RECENTLY celebrated Engineer's Day on September 15th, it's crucial to reflect on the evolving role of engineers in today's fast-paced world. While the foundational knowledge of engineering remains critical, the future demands engineers who are not just technically adept but

also equipped with interdisciplinary skills that span emerging technologies, problem-solving, and adaptive thinking.

Engineering as a discipline has undergone significant evolution, shifting from primarily designing solutions to playing a more vital

role in addressing real-world challenges. Today, engineers aren't just creators of new solutions – they are problem solvers who address societal needs, from digital payments to global finance. This shift has redefined what it means to be an engineer and the skills they need to thrive in a rapidly evolving landscape.

Part 1: Core Engineering Skillsets

The foundation of any engineer remains technical expertise. Skills like coding, system architecture, and understanding complex algorithms have always been essential. But with the rise of platforms like low-code/no-code environments and languages like Python, these core skills are becoming more accessible. Even non-engineers can now leverage these tools to create solutions, allowing businesses to innovate at a rapid pace.

This shift in accessibility doesn't diminish the role of engineers—it enhances it. As these platforms handle more routine tasks, engineers can now focus on more meaningful and complex challenges. They can dedicate their expertise to solving intricate problems, designing innovative systems, and driving strategic advancements. This ability to prioritize higher-value tasks is where engineers truly distinguish themselves.

Part 2: Engineers as Real-World Problem Solvers

Where engineers truly stand out today is in their ability to solve practical, real-world problems. For instance, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in India, developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has

revolutionized the way people transact. By allowing instant, seamless transfers between bank accounts via mobile devices, UPI solves a critical problem of accessibility and convenience in a cash-dependent economy. It's a game-changer, not because of the technology itself, but because it addresses a real need—making digital payments available to everyone across the country, regardless of financial status.

Part 3: Democratizing Solutions for the Public

The final aspect of modern engineering is democratizing these solutions so that they benefit the public at large. One such example is the "Finternet", a ground-breaking approach to global finance.

It embodies three principles: user-centricity, unification, and universality. By putting users at the centre, creating a unified platform that cuts across various asset classes, and using tokenization technology to enable universal interoperability, Finternet is set to redefine global finance.



Lakshmi Mittra SVP and Head, Clover Academy

Like Finterent, engineers today are reimagining solutions for unprecedented challenges and solving them at scale for a global audience. Democratizing these innovations ensures that the benefits of technology are felt by society at large, not just a select few.

Engineering for a Better Future

As technology continues to evolve at an unprecedented pace, engineers must remain adaptable and committed to lifelong learning. Rapid advancements in fields like artificial intelligence, automation, and blockchain require engineers to upgrade their skill sets consistently. Organizations, in turn, have a responsibility to provide opportunities for continuous learning and skill development.

At Clover Academy, for example, we have introduced two unique formats—'AI Saturdays' and 'Techtron'—to empower our engineers and trainees with the latest knowledge. AI Saturdays is a 5-hour intensive training session focused on AI tools and learning platforms, with an emphasis on generative AI (GenAI) and adaptive AI technologies. Techtron, on the other hand, is an engaging internal event featuring games and quizzes on emerging technologies designed to enhance learning in a fun, interactive way. These initiatives highlight the importance of staying updated with technological advancements while cultivating a culture of curiosity and growth.

As we move further into a technology-driven era, the role of engineers will continue to evolve. Their expertise will no longer be limited to their technical abilities but will also extend to engineering, a better future for society at large.

CELEBRATING INDIA'S TOP CIOS

Celebrating 25 Years of CIO&Leader with CIO Legends

AS CIO&LEADER celebrates its 25th anniversary, we proudly launch CIO Legends, an initiative to honor and celebrate the industry's illustrious CIOs who have devoted 25 years or more to the IT profession. Just as our magazine has grown and evolved over the last quartercentury, these leaders have been trailblazers, transforming the IT landscape with their vision, expertise, and unwavering dedication.

The CIO Legends series is a tribute to the pioneers whose influence extends beyond their organizations, shaping the IT community at large. With more than 50 legends featured in this issue, this is just the beginning of the celebration. We will continue to honor these leaders in every edition through March 2025 through inspiring profiles and stories.

These CIOs represent excellence, resilience, and innovation, embodying the spirit of leadership that has driven the evolution of enterprise technology. Their achievements are a testament to the transformative power of IT and the critical role of visionary leadership in navigating its ever-changing dynamics.

As we look to the future, CIO Legends is not only a celebration of individual accomplishments but also a reflection of the collective progress of the IT industry. We are honored to share their journeys and legacies with you, our readers, as part of our 25th-anniversary celebrations.

Stay tuned for more legends in the coming months as we continue to highlight the exceptional leaders shaping the future of IT.

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ANIL ARORADeputy General Manager - IT **Raymond**

Anil Arora, based in Thane, Maharashtra, India, is a seasoned IT Professional in the field of Information Technology. With over 32 years of experience, primarily in the Manufacturing, Retail, Consumer Goods & Real Estate – Realty Business, he has made significant contributions throughout his tenure at Raymond Limited.

"The path from dreams to success does exist. May you have the vision to find it, the courage to get on to it, and the perseverance to follow it".

Kalpana Chawla



RAJKUMAR AYYELLA
Chief Information Officer
KEC International

Rajkumar Ayyella, the Chief Information Officer at KEC International Limited, is a strategic leader driving digital transformation within the organization. With a wealth of experience in information technology and business strategy, Rajkumar has been instrumental in reshaping KEC International's digital landscape. Under his guidance, the company has embraced innovative technologies to optimize operations, enhance efficiency, and foster collaboration across departments. Rajkumar's visionary leadership has facilitated the implementation of cutting-edge solutions, from enterprise resource planning systems to advanced data analytics platforms. His strategic insights have not only streamlined internal processes but have also empowered KEC International to deliver superior value to its customers in the infrastructure sector. Through his relentless pursuit of excellence and commitment to innovation, Rajkumar continues to position KEC International as a leader in leveraging technology to drive business growth and operational excellence.



CHITTI BABU
Group Chief Information
Officer
Aurobindo Pharma

Chitti Babu, popularly known as "Chitti" at Aurobindo Pharma in Hyderabad, India, is a seasoned IT leader with about 40 years of experience. Specializing in crafting effective IT strategies, he ensures seamless alignment with business objectives, particularly in Oracle E-Business Suite and Oracle Cloud Applications. With extensive ERP experience across diverse sectors like Life Sciences, Steel, Textile, and Retail, he prioritizes customer satisfaction and user group engagement. Chitti Babu holds certifications in Supply Chain Management and Blockchain technology. His tenure includes roles as Vice President at OSI Consulting Pvt Ltd and NCC Softech, as well as Principal Consultant at Lockheed Martin Information Technology. Notably, he spearheaded IT initiatives at Aurobindo Pharma and played pivotal roles in offshore development and business expansion. Chitti Babu is an alumnus of Andhra University, holding an MSc(Tech) in Electronics and Computer Science, and Kakatiya University, with a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics, Physics, and Chemistry and University Rank 1 in both Kakatiya University and Andhra University

Experienced and results-driven, Vijay Babu has a proven track record of leadership in driving digital transformation and delivering innovative IT solutions. He possesses over 19 years of experience in the technology industry, particularly within the realm of industrial automation and energy sectors. A strategic thinker with a strong business acumen and expertise in leveraging technology to optimize processes, enhance operational efficiency, and drive business growth. Demonstrated success in aligning IT strategies with organizational goals, leading large-scale IT initiatives, and building high-performing teams. Adept at collaborating with cross-functional stakeholders to implement cutting-edge IT solutions that drive competitive advantage and deliver tangible value to the organization.



VIJAY BABU
Chief Information Officer
ABB India



PADMABHUSHAN BAHADURE Chief Technology Officer IDBI Bank

Padmabhushan B. is an experienced IT professional with a focus on digital strategy, data center operations, technology vision, innovation, and IT operations. Currently serving as the Chief Technology Officer at IDBI Bank, he has held key positions at prominent organizations such as State Bank of India, Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys, and Mastek Ltd. With a diverse background encompassing roles in software development and senior management, Padmabhushan brings a wealth of expertise in driving digital transformation initiatives. He holds a Master's Degree in Executive Post Graduate Diploma in International Business from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, along with additional qualifications in supply chain management and software technology.

"The best leaders are those most interested in surrounding themselves with assistants and associates smarter than they are."

Mahatma Gandhi



DR. VINEET BANSALGroup Chief Information Officer
Surya Roshni

Dr. Vineet Bansal, currently serving as the Group Chief Information Officer at Surya Roshni Ltd., is a seasoned IT leader with a wealth of transformative leadership experience. With a strong background in diverse industries including Lighting, Steel, PVC, Plywood, MDF, and Pharmaceuticals, Vineet has successfully driven business evolution through technology. He is renowned for orchestrating successful digital transformations and implementing innovative technology solutions. With a focus on architecting robust IT frameworks, leading large-scale projects, and providing strategic guidance on digital transformation and Al integration, Vineet has demonstrated proficiency in steering dynamic management roles. His achievements include setting up new infrastructure, implementing SAP HANA, Microsoft CRM, and Office 365. Vineet holds a Doctorate in Computer Science and has won numerous awards for his contributions to the field.

Saugata Basu, as the Group Chief Digital & Information Officer at Kalpataru Group, is a transformative leader driving digital innovation across the organization. With extensive expertise in digital strategy and IT management, Saugata has been instrumental in spearheading Kalpataru Group's journey towards digital excellence. Leveraging emerging technologies, he has implemented innovative solutions to streamline processes, enhance operational efficiency, and elevate customer experiences. Saugata's visionary leadership has enabled Kalpataru Group to embrace digital transformation fully, from implementing robust cybersecurity measures to leveraging data analytics for informed decisionmaking. Under his guidance, Kalpataru Group has emerged as a trailblazer in the real estate and infrastructure sectors, setting new benchmarks for technological advancement and digital integration. Through his strategic vision and relentless pursuit of excellence, Saugata continues to drive Kalpataru Group towards greater agility, innovation, and competitiveness in the digital age.



SAUGATA BASU Group Chief Digital & Information Officer Kalpataru Group



RAJEEV BATRA
Chief Information Officer
Bennett, Coleman & Company

Rajeev Batra is a highly accomplished IT professional with over 32 years of global experience, currently the Chief Information Officer (CIO) at Bennett & Coleman (The Times of India) in Delhi NCR, India. His expertise spans various domains including IT strategy, innovation, business transformation, strategic outsourcing, and global solutions consulting. Rajeev has held key leadership roles in prominent organizations such as Sistema JSFC's telecom entity MTS India, Reliance Communications, Bharti Airtel and eVector Inc. USA (Inter-Reuters portfolio) where he played pivotal roles in driving strategic IT initiatives, market-facing product innovation and revenue-centric forays. Notably, at Bharti Airtel, he was responsible for the pathbreaking USD 3.2 Bn and ten-year strategic IT outsourcing deal with IBM, now a Harvard Business School case study. Rajeev's educational background includes a Bachelor's degree with a University rank in Electronics Engineering, a PG Diploma in Advance Computer Programming & Systems Analysis, and a General Management Programme for Executives at the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.



RAKESH BHARDWAJ
Chief Information Officer
Lupin

Rakesh Bhardwai is a distinguished global Digital and IT leader with a remarkable track record of driving transformation across various industries. As the Global Chief Information Officer at Lupin, he is leading the company's digital journey, emphasizing process automation, intelligence, and insights to reinforce Lupin's position as an industry leader. Previously, as the Group Chief Information Officer at Ola, he played a pivotal role in innovating the Automotive Direct-to-Consumer model, impacting India's electric vehicle sector significantly. With extensive experience in organizations like Cognizant, Microland Limited, and GE Healthcare, he specializes in strategy, operations, financial management, talent development, and client management. Rakesh holds a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science & Engineering and has pursued executive education in Business Administration and Management. He is recognized for his leadership, people development, and expertise in digital technologies, making him a sought-after mentor and award-winning professional in the IT industry.

"If you want to walk fast, walk alone. But if you want to walk far, walk together."

Ratan Naval Tata



VINOD BHAT
Chief Information Officer &
Chief Ethics Counsellor
Tata SIA Airlines (Vistara)

Vinod Bhat is the Chief Information Officer (CIO) & Chief Ethics Counsellor (CEC) at Vistara - TATA SIA Airlines Ltd. With 31 years of industry experience, he's recognized as a top global CXO, frequent industry speaker, author, and motivational leader. In his current role, Vinod oversees digital transformation initiatives and IT infrastructure advancements at Vistara, while also serving as the Chief Ethics Counsellor with board-level visibility. Previously, he held various leadership positions at Tata Consultancy Services, managing P&L, driving business growth, and heading operations across different regions. Vinod's specialties include digital innovation, global exposure, leadership, relationship management, team management, and operational excellence. He holds a Tata Group Strategic Leadership Seminar certification from Harvard Business School, a PMP certification from the Project Management Institute, and other qualifications in business management, technology, and quality assurance.



RAJENDRA S BISHT
Vice President - Technology & Digital
Bajaj Finance

Rajendra Bisht, currently serving as the Vice President & Head of Technology & Digital at Bajaj Finance Ltd. -Auto Finance in Pune, India, brings over 27 years of rich experience in fintech startups, digital transformation, and IT operations. He has earned recognition through multiple awards and has a track record of successfully implementing cutting-edge lending management and enterprise business systems. Rajendra's expertise extends to technology strategy execution, technical standards establishment, IT infrastructure optimization, and team management. Rajendra has hands-on experience of setting up captive Finance co. for a large Auto manufacturing conglomerate in India from scratch in very short span of time. At Bajaj Finance Ltd. - Auto finance he leads the execution of technology strategies and ensures adherence to information security frameworks mandated by various regulatory bodies. Prior to his current role, Rajendra held leadership positions at Electronica Finance Ltd., Tata Motors Finance Ltd., Tata Technologies Ltd. & Times Gauaranty Ltd., where he managed diverse IT initiatives contributing to operational efficiency and cost savings. His academic background includes BIT from IGNOU and an MBA in Information Technology from Sikkim Manipal University.



BIPIN CHAUDHARY
Chief Information
Officer
Fortis Healthcare

Bipin Kumar Chaudhary is an accomplished IT, cybersecurity, and digital transformation leader with over 24 years of experience across diverse sectors, including BFSI, entertainment, media, broadcasting, IT, and healthcare. Holding a B.Tech and MBA, along with executive certifications from Harvard, he has consistently driven business growth, operational efficiency, and secure digital ecosystems through innovative technology solutions. Throughout his career, Bipin has held prominent roles such as CIO at Fortis Healthcare, Sr. Vice President & Head of Technology at Pramerica Life Insurance, and Head of IT & Projection at Cinepolis India and GCC. He has successfully led large cross-functional teams across India and Asia, fostering a collaborative and high-performance culture. Among his many achievements, Bipin ensured nearly 100% uptime for critical IT systems and spearheaded several digital transformation initiatives, leveraging cuttingedge technologies like cloud computing, data analytics, and machine learning. His strategic vision, leadership, and ability to execute complex projects have made him a trusted figure in the IT industry, continuously driving value and innovation.



GAURAV CHAUDHRI
Chief Technology Officer &
Chief Information Officer
Reliance General Insurance

Gaurav Chaudhri currently holds the position of Chief Technology Officer / Chief Information Officer at Reliance General Insurance, based in Mumbai, Maharashtra. With nearly three decades of experience in leading technology for large banking and financial services companies, Gaurav has honed his skills in various areas such as large-scale program and project management, business process re-engineering, and client/partner relationship management. His expertise extends from heading client side technology to managing data centers, networks, infrastructure services, and international system rollouts. Prior to his current role, Gaurav served as the Chief Technology Officer at Reliance Money and has held leadership roles in Citi Financial and Standard Chartered Bank. His educational background includes an MBA in Systems from the Institute of Management Technology, Ghaziabad, along with executive programs in Information Technology and Strategic Thinking from the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, and the Indian School of Business, respectively. Throughout his career, Gaurav has demonstrated a strong commitment to driving technological innovation and business excellence within the organizations he has served, making significant contributions to their growth and success.

"The one who plants trees, knowing that he will never sit in their shade, has at least started to understand the meaning of life."

Rabindranath Tagore



ASHOK CHERIAN
Chief Information Officer
Astral

Ashok Cherian is a seasoned Chief Information Technology Officer (CIO/CTO) with over 26 years of experience, specializing in digital business transformation and IT leadership. He has a diverse background in FMCG, Consumer Goods, Manufacturing, and Retail sectors. Ashok excels in driving digital strategy, operations, infrastructure, security, and application management, having led complex projects at both country and global levels. His expertise extends to areas such as SAP, CRM, e-commerce, and digital supply chain. Ashok is known for optimizing IT costs while delivering value and differentiation to businesses, he has done multiple green field transformation of IT function. He has held leadership positions in prominent companies like Astral Limited, Page Industries Ltd, Emami Agrotech Limited, and J.K. Cement Limited. Ashok is also a sought-after speaker at premier technology and management schools.



APURVA DALAL
Chief Information Officer &
Acting CISO
Adani Green Energy

With over three decades of rich experience spanning various industries, Apurva currently serve as the Chief Information Officer at Adani Green Energy Ltd., India's premier renewable energy company. His role involves spearheading the IT strategy and transformation initiatives, ensuring the efficiency, effectiveness, and security of technology resources and solutions. Throughout his career, Apurva has successfully implemented numerous initiatives, including cloud migration, Robotic Process Automation, SAP on HANA, and cybersecurity SOC, driving operational performance, service delivery, and user satisfaction. As a certified PMP and C|CISO, he brings expertise in risk mitigation, project management, and information security. Apurva is passionate about leveraging technology to foster sustainable growth and innovation in the renewable energy sector.

Venkata Rao Damera is a seasoned Chief Information Officer renowned for his strategic leadership in driving technology initiatives across diverse industries such as FMCG, Agri, Chemical, Fertilizers, and IT services. Currently serving as the CIO at Adani Wilmar Limited, he has a proven track record of conceptualizing and delivering technology solutions tailored to organizational needs. With extensive experience in IT deployment, business strategy, and project management, Damera has pioneered significant initiatives that have brought tangible benefits to his organizations. He is adept at analyzing information system needs, evaluating user requirements, and designing customized solutions to enhance operational efficiency. Damera's expertise extends to interfacing with clients, stakeholders, and key decision-makers to drive solution strategy and product offerings. He holds an MCA from Osmania University and a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science from Andhra University.



VENKATA RAO DAMERA Chief Information Officer Adani Wilmar



GOUTAM DATTA
Chief Information &
Digital Officer
Bajaj Allianz Life
Insurance Company

Goutam Datta, Chief Information & Digital Officer at Bajaj Allianz Life in India, is a seasoned technology leader with over 20 years of experience. He is dedicated to leveraging technology and innovation to drive tangible business value and enhance customer experiences. Goutam excels in leading cross-functional teams and fostering a collaborative environment to achieve collective results. His expertise lies in spearheading large-scale technology operations and transitioning traditional business processes to customer-centric digital solutions. At Bajaj Allianz Life, he plays a pivotal role in shaping the organization's digital innovation roadmap, implementing Al-driven projects, and ensuring seamless customer experiences from onboarding to claims and renewals. Goutam's career journey includes notable roles at ICICI Lombard GIC LTD, Essel Group of Companies, TATA Infotech Ltd, and Adsoft. He holds a Master's in Computer Application from MDU and has received a Certificate in Organizational Leadership from Thunderbird School of Global Management.



ANAND DEODHAR
Group Chief Digital &
Information Officer
Force Motors

Anand Deodhar is a seasoned IT leader with over two decades of experience, currently serving as the Group Chief Digital & Information Officer at Force Motors in Pune, Maharashtra, India. With a background in digital transformation, SAP, IT security, infrastructure, and manufacturing processes, he excels in delivering highquality, cost-effective IT solutions. Anand has a proven track record of shaping technology vision, executing major initiatives, and driving organizational transformation. His expertise spans the entire spectrum of IT operations, from project management to business solutions architecture. Prior to joining Force Motors, Anand held various leadership positions at Tata Motors, where he spearheaded digital transformation, process digitization, and change management across multiple locations. He holds a Master's in Management Studies (MMS) from D. Y. Patil University School of Management and has a Bachelor of Engineering (BE) in Electrical and Electronics Engineering.

Ashish Desai is part of Aditya Birla Group's Leadership team of Textiles and Renewable Energy Business and creates competitive differentiators for both Indian and International Businesses using cutting-edge digital technologies. He handles the role of a Chief Information Officer. Ashish has been involved in aligning technologies and processes to enhance business growth, improve operational efficiency, sustainability, and profitability. He was involved in digital projects around AI/ML, Business Analytics, IoT Pilots, and brand.com for better customer experience. Ashish has been associated with Aditya Birla Group for the last 20+ years where he played different roles such as CIO for Chemical business for 7 years, setting up Centre of Excellence for SAP, and creating new LoB in Minacs. He has been part of various transformation initiatives in Mining, Trading, P&F, Birla Carbon, Vikram Ispat and Cement. Prior to this, Ashish was associated with Rallis India Limited (A TATA group of companies), where he drove technology-led initiatives in manufacturing and supply chain functions at 9 manufacturing sites.



ASHISH DESAI
Chief Information Officer Textiles
Grasim Industries



MANUJ DESAI
Global Chief Information Officer
Sterlte Technologies

Manuj Desai is the Chief Technology and Information officer at Alembic Group of companies with over 29 years of leadership experience spanning Board Presence, Technology & Digital Transformation, Artificial intelligent, P&L Management, Negotiation, & Customer Relationship Management. In his current role he is leading the charter for digital transformation with a strong emphasis on outcome-driven strategies across the group companies. Prior to this, he was Global Chief Information Officer at STL (Sterlite Technologies Limited) in Bengaluru, Karnataka, India, where he oversaw enterprise architecture, product development, process re-engineering, analytics, digitization, and more, driving digital transformation across multiple business units. Previously at AIG, he served as the India Head for Personal Insurance and Director of Integration Services and Innovation, focusing on process innovation, digitization, and data integration. Manuj has also held managerial positions at PayPal, the United States Department of Agriculture, Amedisys, and Sprint, contributing to various IT projects and operations. Manuj's thought leadership extends to authoring the books like "Clinch the Deal" & "Deep Emotional Learning Simplified," along with several publications on machine learning and negotiation strategies.



NAYAN DESAI Chief Information Officer WNS Global Services

Navan Desai is the Chief Information Officer(CIO) at WNS Global Services and has been at the helm of the Global Enterprise IT (EIT) group since October 2021. As CIO for WNS, Nayan Desai leads the company's EIT operations, including the infrastructure, services, and IT applications that enable WNS people to work anytime, anywhere to serve clients across the globe. In his role, he is defining and implements the IT strategy for the organization guided by WNS' business strategy. This includes designing, implementing, and managing the IT Infrastructure, Processes, and Systems to enable revenue growth, cost optimization, and innovation at the workplace. With more than 30 years of rich and successful experience, he has been a pillar of Enterprise IT at WNS since 1996. During his more than 27-year career with WNS, Nayan has held many leadership roles across our client and technology organizations. He has managed large transformation programs, in addition to support and alliances in the WNS eco-system. A results-driven and people-oriented leader, he inspires teams by providing them a platform to work on the latest technologies. With vision and foresight, Nayan has enabled WNS to adopt cutting-edge technologies and remain ahead of the technology curve, while ensuring a positive impact on revenue.



ASHISH DESHPANDE*
Group Chief Technology
Officer
Belrise Industries

Ashish Deshpande is a seasoned Group Chief Technology Officer (CTO) based in Pune, Maharashtra, India, with extensive expertise in software, hardware, and electrical engineering in the field of eMobility. With a career spanning 24 years, Ashish has demonstrated proficiency in developing electrification and Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) solutions from the ground up. Notably, he spearheaded the establishment of an Electric Vehicle (EV) team, growing it from 4 members to over 100 within 14 months at FEV Group, driving rapid business growth. His leadership roles include Vice President of R&D for EV & IoT at Murugappa Group and Head of eMobility at FEV Group. Ashish's multifaceted experience encompasses project management, budgeting, client interaction, and supplier assessment, along with technical domains like battery design, power electronics, and control system development. He holds an M.Tech in Electrical Engineering specializing in Drive Systems, a BE in Electronics and Power Systems, and is a Senior Member of IEEE.

"Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower."

Steve Jobs



VIRAJ DESHPANDE Chief Information Officer -Petrochemicals Reliance Industries Limited

Viraj Deshpande is a seasoned Senior Executive with 28 years of experience, prominently in digital technology consulting, strategy formulation, and execution across diverse industries such as refining, petrochemicals, packaging, cement, metals & mining, life sciences, and retail. Currently serving as the Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the Petrochemicals division of Reliance Industries Ltd., Deshpande leads data, digital, and platform initiatives. Reliance Industries, a Fortune 500 company and India's largest private sector corporation, operates globally across various sectors including hydrocarbon exploration & production, petroleum refining & marketing, petrochemicals, retail, media, and telecommunications. Deshpande's responsibilities entail formulating strategies, guiding transformations, and managing applications and infrastructure in collaboration with PetChem leadership and Enterprise IT. Notable achievements include leading digital platform initiatives, system implementations, and infrastructure management for pan-India and overseas operations, demonstrating his expertise in digital strategy, stakeholder management, and delivery management.



SARVESWARA RAO DEVANA General Manager & Head - IT Mobis India (Hyundai Motors)

Sarveswara Rao Devana is a highly experienced IT leader with over 29 years of expertise in the automotive, manufacturing, assembly & warehouse sectors. As the Head of IT at Mobis India (Hyundai Motors Group), he has demonstrated outstanding skills in IT strategy planning, execution, and support, overseeing ERP applications, IT infrastructure, MES production systems, various portal applications, IT planning, Security & Risk Management. Sarveswara has a strong track record of success in managing large-scale projects, including SAP implementations m, greenfield projects, and possesses in-depth knowledge across multiple SAP modules. With a Master's degree in Computers from the University Madras to University of Madras and extensive professional certifications, Sarveswara is dedicated to leveraging technology to drive business growth and innovation in the automotive industry.

"Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life; dream of it; think of it; live on that idea. Let the brain, the body, muscles, nerves, every part of your body be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success."

Swami Vivekananda



MANMEET DHODY
Chief Technology Officer
Paytm

Manmeet Dhody, currently serving as the Chief Technology Officer at Paytm, has a strong track record of enabling business and people through technology. With over 4 years in his current role, he oversees technology initiatives that drive Paytm's growth and innovation. Prior to joining Paytm, Manmeet held leadership positions at prominent tech companies like Amazon and Microsoft, where he led software development teams for several years. His experience includes serving as a Director at RIOT LABZ PRIVATE LIMITED and Quark. Manmeet holds a Bachelor of Engineering degree in Computer Engineering from Delhi College of Engineering, providing him with a solid foundation for his successful career in technology leadership.



PARVEEN DHINGRA
Chief Information &
Digital Officer
Vedanta

Parveen Dhingra, currently serving as the Chief Digital and Information Officer (CDIO) for "Enterprise Solutions & Digital Infra" at Vedanta Ltd, brings over 20 years of extensive experience in information technology strategy (Legacy and Transformation Cloud-based), Data Factory, Mobility, AI/ML (Machine Learning) based Predictive Analytics, Business Application, Information and Cyber Security. With a proven record of accomplishment in technology planning, deployment and IT & Digital strategy. His leadership skills have been instrumental in driving transformational IT and Digital projects, ensuring costeffective and aligned with organization KPI. Prior to joining Vedanta Ltd, Parveen held key positions at Cairn India Ltd and HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd, GMR, and Jubilant where he spearheaded IT projects enabling significant IT landscape transformations. Parveen holds a Bachelor's degree in IT, reflecting his commitment to continuous learning and professional development.

"The challenge of the leader is looking around the corner and making the change before it's too late to make the change."

Indra Nooyi

Sumit Duttagupta, a seasoned professional with over two decades of experience, currently serves as the Group CIO and Head of Information Systems, Synergy & Digital Transformation at Haldia Petrochemicals Ltd & MCPI. His expertise lies in digital strategy, IT strategy, and business transformation, with a strong focus on enterprise performance management and business system integration. Sumit has led numerous global business transformation programs within large manufacturing groups, covering diverse industries such as oil & gas, petrochemicals, chemicals, metals, power, and IT consultancy. His key achievements include spearheading digital transformation journeys, implementing predictive manufacturing platforms, and integrating plant and business data seamlessly. Sumit is known for his ability to drive operational efficiency, reduce risk, improve plant reliability, and bridge the gap between potential and realized margin.



SUMIT DUTTAGUPTA
Chief Information Officer &
Head - Synergy
Haldia Petrochemicals



BHAVESH GANDHI Senior Vice President, Chief Digital & Information Officer Aarti Industries

Bhavesh Gandhi is a seasoned business-focused technology leader with over 25 years of extensive global experience across various industries. He is passionate about driving value creation and business impact through digital transformation initiatives. Bhavesh has a proven track record of co-creating business transformations, integrating cultures during mergers and acquisitions, and supporting business operations. His expertise lies in driving organic and inorganic growth by simplifying systems, fostering innovation, and modernizing processes while ensuring compliance and information security. Bhavesh Gandhi's diverse experience, coupled with his strategic vision and technical expertise, makes him a valuable asset in driving digital transformation and business growth initiatives. His commitment to innovation and excellence continues to drive positive outcomes in the organization he serves.

"Pursue your goals even in the face of difficulties, and convert adversities into opportunities".

Dhirubhai Ambani



SEEMA GAURExecutive Director - IT

IFFCO

Seema Gaur is currently the Executive Director of IT Services at IFFCO, Delhi. Prior to it, she has been Senior Executive Director and Head IT at IFFCO Tokio General Insurance, Gurgaon, Haryana, boasting over three and a half decades of experience in the IT field. She has led the IT department, driving IT transformation processes to align with business objectives and foster growth. Seema has been leveraging advanced technologies such as AI, blockchain, and robotics to optimize services for the expanding customer base. Her tenure at IFFCO Tokio included roles as Executive Director (IT) and Executive Vice President & Head IT where she spearheaded the launch of customer and distribution apps to streamline operations. Previously, Seema served in various capacities at Indian Farmers Fertiliser Coop Ltd., where she played pivotal roles in IT management and program leadership. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from Delhi College of Engineering and a Master of Technology in Software Systems from Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani.



MANOJ GAUTAM Head - IT Maruti Suzuki India

Manoj Gautam is a seasoned business leader, who is currently the CIO and Head of IT at Maruti Suzuki India Limited. With 35+ years of rich experience in automotive domain, he specializes in devising and executing IT strategies for sustainable business growth. He holds a Bachelors degree in Engineering from IIT Roorkee. He has been instrumental in spearheading numerous key projects including setting up of IT Infrastructure & Applications at Greenfield Manesar Plant. In his role as CIO & Head of IT, he oversees 600+ Applications, Infrastructure, Architecture & Cybersecurity. Throughout his career, he has stood by his vision to drive technology excellence and innovation. His areas of interest include Digital Transformation, GenAl and Cybersecurity. His human-centric leadership style has helped him in nurturing a culture of innovation and thought leadership across the organization. He is loved and admired by his colleagues & partners for his jovial and energetic presence. His love for ghazals and Sufi music helps him to stay focused and rejuvenated amidst supercharged daily business affairs.

"To demand more of yourself than you do of others is the first on any ladder of success".

Major Dhaynchand



THOMAS GEORGE
Vice President - IT & Chief
Information Officer
Schneider Electric India

Thomas George is a seasoned professional with over 30 years of diverse experience in Information Technology, Finance, and Operations across various industrial sectors including energy management & automation, life sciences, beverages, food processing, and automotive. As the Vice President & CIO for Greater India at Schneider Electric, he demonstrates a strong track record of driving operational efficiency and profitability through strategic alignments and business restructuring. His expertise spans finance, accounting, business management, and IT, including managing ERP and software deployments. Thomas has also played key roles in setting up IT shared services and spearheading initiatives in Robotics and Artificial Intelligence platforms. He firmly believes in the value brought by in-house IT delivery centers amidst the current era of change and disruption. Thomas holds educational qualifications from prestigious institutes including The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India and the Institute of Company Secretaries of India.



SANJAY GHARDE
Group Chief Information Officer
Isgec Heavy Engineering

Sanjay Gharde is the Group Chief Information Officer at Isgec Heavy Engineering Ltd., renowned for his expertise across various industries, including cement, engineering, construction, hospitality, steel manufacturing, real estate, and paper manufacturing. With over 34 years of experience, Sanjay has been instrumental in spearheading Business Process Re-engineering, Digital Transformation, and IT Security projects. His approach to IT service management and disaster recovery is acclaimed, earning him several prestigious awards such as the "Magnificent CIOs of India" and "100 Most Innovative CIOs/CTOs of India." At Isgec, he has managed to seamlessly integrate innovative technologies like SAP S4 HANA, enhancing operational efficiencies and enabling substantial business growth. Sanjay's career also highlights his adeptness in team management, with a focus on nurturing young talent and driving change to maintain competitive advantage. His academic background includes a Bachelors of Engineering from Rani Durgavati Vishwavidyalaya.

"Leadership isn't about being in charge, it's about taking care of those in your charge".

Kapil Dev



PARNA GHOSH
Vice President - IT & Group
Chief Information Officer
Uno Minda

Parna Ghosh, currently serving as the Chief Information Officer in Delhi, India, brings over 3.5 decades of extensive experience in driving IT strategies aligned with business objectives. With specialties in leadership, IT strategy, IT security, and the promotion of ICT in the auto industry, Parna has held significant leadership positions at esteemed organizations such as Uno Minda, CNH Industrial, and Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India Pvt. Ltd. Notably, he has spearheaded digital transformation initiatives, supported M&A activities, and optimized organizational processes to drive growth and innovation. Parna's dedication to excellence is reflected in his numerous accolades, including hall of fame awards, multiple CIO 100 awards and the Transformers Award.



VIMAL GOEL Head - IT HPCL Mittal Energy

Vimal Goel is a seasoned professional with a remarkable track record of over 33 years in the field of Information Technology (IT) and contracts & procurement (C&P). He currently serves as the Head of Information Technology at HPCL-Mittal Energy Limited, where he drives digital transformation initiatives and enhances organizational value through innovative digital solutions like AI, AA, RPA and AR/VR. Vimal's extensive experience encompasses various leadership roles, including Head of IT and DGM of Contracts & Procurement, where he was instrumental in managing large-scale programs and projects, including large and complex outsourcing opportunities. He has a proven ability of devising IT strategies, to set up complex IT landscape from scratch and develop cost-effective operating models while leading transitional and transformational projects. Prior to his current role, Vimal held key positions at Adani Enterprises Ltd. and GST Network, where he contributed significantly to IT strategy formulation and execution. He holds a Master's degree in Computer Applications (MCA) from JNU, New Delhi, and Bachelor's degrees in Mathematics from Delhi University. Vimal's entrepreneurial spirit, coupled with his deep expertise in IT governance and strategic management, positions him as a valuable asset in driving organizational success through technology innovation and operational excellence.



VINOD GOPINATHAN
Chief Information Officer
Ashok Leyland

Vinod Gopinathan serves as the Chief Information Officer at Ashok Leyland, bringing over 28 years of extensive experience in automotive business operations and IT management. Renowned for his strategic acumen, Vinod is deeply passionate about harnessing technology to address complex business challenges. His visionary leadership and exceptional IT expertise have been pivotal in establishing a robust Digital architecture at Ashok Leyland. As the chief architect of the company's Digital Strategy, Vinod has spearheaded significant business transformation initiatives. He has effectively leveraged Centers of Excellence (COEs) in areas such as Industrial IoT, Connected Vehicles, Artificial Intelligence, and other emerging technologies. His efforts have not only cultivated enhanced productivity and cost efficiency but have also created new business models and revenue streams through digital innovation Vinod's outstanding contributions to technology and leadership have earned him numerous prestigious awards, underscoring his impact and influence in the field. His forward-thinking approach and commitment to excellence continue to drive Ashok Leyland's success in the digital era."



PAVAN GOYAL
Senior Vice President & Chief
Information Officer
Mphasis

Pavan Goval is CIO at Mphasis, specializing in driving innovative digital transformation programs to address complex business challenges through technology. With over 30 years of IT industry experience including the last 12 years at Mphasis, he has successfully played multiple roles including managing business portfolios, global infrastructure services service line and the current CIO role. He has extensive experience and expertise managing hybrid cloud-based IT environments and has executed numerous infrastructure, cybersecurity, and application transformation initiatives. Pavan is also a Gartner Peer Community Ambassador, sharing insights on IT strategy, innovation, and leadership. His strategic approach, customer-centric focus, and strong leadership skills have facilitated rapid innovation. Pavan's expertise includes executive leadership, emerging tech, complex project execution, innovative platform-based services delivery, enterprise SaaS deployments, IT cost optimization, cybersecurity, and operational efficiency. He holds an MBA from the Institute of Management Technology, and an Engineering degree in Electronics & Communication from Aligarh Muslim University.



YOGINDER GREWAL
Chief Technology Officer
Hindustan Coca-Cola
Beverages

Yoginder Grewal is a renowned Global Digital Business and Information Technology Leader celebrated for propelling business growth through innovative strategic design, robust technology deployment, and comprehensive digital transformation. With an impressive tenure spanning over 25 years as a CIO and Chief Technology Officer, Yoginder has adeptly led initiatives that significantly bolstered market share, escalated sales, and heightened operational efficiency in diverse global industries. His core competencies include leading digital transformation projects, leveraging data analytics, and ensuring strategic planning aligns with execution. These skills make him a pivotal business partner and a powerful influencer in shaping strategic directions. Yoginder Grewal's career is marked by a steadfast dedication to digital innovation and leveraging technology to drive transformative business outcomes. His leadership and strategic insight have consistently produced successful results and stimulated growth across multiple organizations.

"To succeed in life and achieve results, you must understand and master three mighty forces— desire, belief, and expectation".

A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

MANISH GROVER*
Executive Director - Strategic
IS & IS, Refineries
Indian Oil Corporation
Limited

Manish Grover currently serves as the Executive Director (Strategic IS & IS) at Indian Oil Corporation Limited, based in New Delhi, with a tenure of 2 years and 6 months starting from February 2022. Previously, he held the position of Chief General Manager (Info systems) at Indian Oil Corporation Limited, CBTC, Gurugram, overseeing electronic platforms for IOCL customers (ePIC) & CRM related activities. He was also coordinating IT initiatives for LPG functions with the Ministry of Petroleum on behalf of industry. With extensive experience in the oil and gas sector, Grover has held various managerial roles focusing on LPG sales, strategies, and gas marketing. He holds a Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management with specializations in Marketing and Finance from the Institute of Management Technology, Ghaziabad.

Dr. Vitthal G. Gund, currently serving as the Chief Technology Officer & President-R&D at Gujarat Fluorochemicals Limited in Vadodara, Gujarat, India, is a distinguished senior technical leader with over 30 years of experience. He specializes in process development of APIs, intermediates for Pharma & Agro, specialty chemicals, and CRAM molecules. With a proven track record in technology development & transfer, Dr. Gund has successfully led the development and commercialization of over 25 Pharma/Agro/CRAM products at various scales. He has filed 25 patents and published 6 papers in national and international journals. Dr. Gund's key competencies include leadership, strategic planning, project management, process optimization, risk mitigation, and talent development. He holds a Ph.D. in Medicinal and Pharmaceutical Chemistry from the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, and has completed a Post-Doctorate in the same field from the University of Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada.



DR. VITTHAL G. GUND
Chief Technology Officer &
President - R&D
Guiarat Fluorochemicals



SUBRAMANYAM GUPTA GV Vice President - IT & Chief Information Officer Welspun Flooring

Subramanyam Gupta GV, an accomplished IT leader with over 28 years of extensive experience, currently serves as the VP - IT & CIO of Advanced Textiles & Floorings at Welspun Group. Armed with a background in Computer Science, he embarked on a career dedicated to shaping the future of IT. His hunger of continuous learning of cutting-edge technologies through prestigious universities - MIT Solan School of Management, ISB, IIT-Guwahati. These executive programs have equipped him with the strategic insights and innovative mindset needed to drive successful digital transformation initiatives. Subramanyam strongly believes, emphasis on empowering the teams and fostering a culture of continuous learning has been instrumental in driving technology adoption and building digitally skilled workforces that are primed for success in the digital age and building sustainable ecosystems of growth. He has proven track record in diverse industries including textiles, automobiles, engineering, FMCG, and retail. He has rich knowledge in leveraging emerging technologies to drive overall business values using "Human Centric" technology solutions, Business Analytics, SAP, Oracle, SCM, HCM, CRM, Digital Twin & Generative Al solutions. His leadership style emphasizes collaboration, effective communication and relationship building, ensuring sustainable business technology vision and competitive advantages.

"As we look ahead into the next century, leaders will be those who empower others".

Bill Gates



JAYANT GUPTA
Executive Director Information Systems
Hindustan Petroleum
Corporation Limited

Jayant Gupta is a seasoned professional with a demonstrated history of working in the oil & energy industry. His expertise spans negotiation, procurement, strategic planning, Descriptive & Predictive Analytics, and Digital Technologies. With a strong background in management and systems, Jayant is recognized as a trained coach and inspiration leader across the oil industry, particularly in the fields of information technology and security. He currently spearheads software solutioning for Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited's (HPCL) internal needs as the Executive Director of Information Systems. Jayant Gupta's wealth of experience, coupled with his strong educational background and leadership skills, positions him as a key figure in driving IT innovation and strategic planning within the oil and energy sector.



MANISH GUPTA
Group Chief Information
Officer
Aditya Birla Group

Manish Gupta, as the Group Chief Information Officer at Aditya Birla Group, is recognized for his expertise in driving digital transformation initiatives in large, complex, and global organizations. With a background spanning automotive, manufacturing, and conglomerates, Gupta brings a unique perspective to conceptualizing solutions from both organizational and customer standpoints. His extensive experience includes leadership roles at prestigious companies such as Tata Motors and Schneider Electric, where he spearheaded IT and digital transformation efforts on a global scale. Gupta's specialties encompass digital strategy, IT management, CRM, IoT, Emerging Technologies and integration for mergers and acquisitions, making him a valuable asset in navigating complex technological landscapes. He holds a Master's degree in International Business from the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade and has completed a short program on Leading Change and Organization Renewal from Stanford University Graduate School of Business.



ANAND
HADGAONKAR*
Chief Information Officer
Whirlpool India

Anand Hadgaonkar - VP & CIO-Asia at Whirlpool Asia LLP, has been instrumental in driving digital transformation and enhancing regional business processes. He has successfully led IT initiatives across various geographical countries, focusing on aligning business strategies with technology, optimizing business operations through technology innovations, and managing large-scale ERP implementations. Anand's leadership extends across multiple facets of IT, including digital strategy, stakeholder management, and financial planning. His strategic efforts have significantly contributed to Whirlpool's aim to improve life at home through innovation. Anand's long standing career is also marked by his expertise in managing IT during mergers, acquisitions, & divestitures particularly in integrating IT systems to maximize business synergies and efficiency. Prior to Whirlpool he also has played leadership roles in MNC like Eaton Corporation and Cummins for over 25 years.

"The best investment you can make is an investment in yourself. The more you learn, the more you will earn".

Warren Buffett



VIOLET JEMIMAH HARIS Chief Digital & Information Officer Sterlite Copper (Sterlite Industries)

Violet Jemimah Haris iis the Head of IT & Digital at STL Digital Limited. With a specialization in SAP R/3 modules and extensive expertise in modules, she has been leading SAP and related applications. Recognized as a visionary leader passionate about quality, she has received numerous accolades, including awards from INSAAN, CCQC, Qualtech, and IMC RBNQA. Her commitment to digital transformation has earned her prestigious awards like the ASQ award at St. Louis, USA, and Digital Transformation Best Practices Awards 2020. Violet is also a NEXT100 2021 winner and has been recognized in CIO100 2021 and 2022 India lists, Women of Excellence award for the year 2024 from Indian Achievers Forum, With over two decades of experience, she has played key roles in IT project management, planning, and development across various verticals in Vedanta, the pioneer in metals and mining sector. Violet holds Post Graduation in Science and an MBA in Systems. With various certifications in Oracle & Digital manufacturing.



NILOY HAZRA
Vice President - IT & Chief
Information Officer
Jindal India

Niloy Hazra, is a distinguished professional boasting over three decades of extensive experience across diverse sectors including Education, Healthcare, Consumer Electronics, BFSI, Travel Technology, and Media. Currently serving as the Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer at Jindal (India) Limited, Niloy brings a wealth of expertise to his role. Niloy's profound understanding of IT management coupled with his strategic acumen enabled him to drive organizational excellence at Jindal (India) Limited. He leads the charge in implementing transformative IT initiatives, aimed at enhancing operational efficiency and fostering innovation across the company. As a visionary leader, Niloy leverages technology to streamline processes, enhance productivity, and deliver tangible value to stakeholders. His unwavering commitment to excellence mirrors Jindal (India) Limited's dedication to operational excellence and sustainable growth. Under Niloy's stewardship, the IT department plays a pivotal role in aligning with the company's strategic objectives and maintaining its competitive edge in the market. His strategic foresight and technical prowess position Jindal (India) Limited as an industry frontrunner, driving the company forward on its journey of digital transformation.

"In the fullness of time, when it is our turn to give, we must in turn plant gardens that we may never eat the fruit of, which will benefit the generations to come".

N. R. Narayan Murthy



KISHORE HIRANI
Chief Information Officer
Amara Raja Energy & Mobility

Kishore Hirani, a seasoned IT professional with over 25 years of experience, has demonstrated leadership in various sectors including Manufacturing, Oil & Gas, Utility, Infrastructure, and Ports. His expertise spans across digital transformation, ERP implementation, vendor management, and IT strategy. With a strong track record in driving revenue growth and expense reduction through IT solutions aligned with business strategy, Kishore has successfully led IT initiatives and business transformation programs. His extensive experience in IT leadership, project management, and global program management makes him a valuable asset in driving innovation and growth. Additionally, Kishore's involvement as an angel investor and startup mentor showcases his commitment to fostering innovation and supporting emerging businesses.



SURESH IVER*
Chief Information Officer
Blue Star

Suresh lyer, the Chief Information Officer (CIO) at Blue Star Limited in Mumbai, Maharashtra, India, is a digitally charged IT professional renowned for his expertise in digitalization and transformation projects. With a consultative approach, he effectively delivers solutions that impact business KPIs, including customer satisfaction, revenue, profitability, and productivity. At Blue Star Limited, he orchestrates transformational initiatives utilizing technologies such as IoT, Cloud, Mobility, and Analytics, driving end-to-end digitalization across the company's ecosystem. With a career spanning over 12 years as CIO of Blue Star, Iyer has implemented innovative solutions such as Industry 4.0-based Intelligent Factory, IoT-enabled Smart Products, IoT-based Remote Monitoring of Chillers and Analytics-driven Demand Forecasting. His leadership has garnered industry accolades, including recognition as a NextGen Digital Leader, Best Digital Transformation Leader, and Most Innovative CIO. Iyer holds a BE in Computer Technology from Mumbai University and has extensive experience in executive leadership, delivery and marketing roles.



ANURAG JAIN
Chief Information &
Technology Officer
Bajaj Housing Finance

Anurag Jain, currently serving as the Chief of Information Technology, Analytics, COE and PMO (CIO & CTO) at Bajaj Housing Finance Limited in Pune, India, has over 25 years of dynamic experience in managing business units with P&L ownership. Recognized for his problem-solving prowess and strategic acumen, Anurag has excelled in directing technology and analytics functions, including system software, cybersecurity, network and server infrastructure. His expertise lies in defining IT strategies, leading large IT transformation projects and fostering innovation through digital platforms and emerging technologies. Anurag's leadership has been instrumental in steering multi-million-dollar deals globally and earning accolades such as the Bajaj Finserv Group Leadership Award, BFSI Digital Innovation Award, India's Impactful CXO Award, etc. Prior to his tenure at Bajaj Finserv, Anurag held key positions at Infinite Computer Solutions, Infosys Limited, and Nucleus Software Exports Limited, contributing significantly to the BFSI sector. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering from Panjab University and has completed executive programs in Leadership & Management from Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta and Michigan Ross.



RAJEEV JORAPUR Senior Vice President - IT Bajaj Auto

Rajeev Jorapur, Head-MIS at Bajaj Auto Ltd in Pune, India, is a visionary leader passionate about exploring the nexus of technology, human behavior, and philosophy. With over 11 years at Bajaj Auto, Rajeev is currently spearheading the establishment of an Analytics Center of Excellence and leveraging Lean Six Sigma methodologies to automate processes, enable smarter decision-making and promote collaboration across the value chain. He believes in digital transformation as a means to deploy smart and intelligent business practices. Apart from his corporate endeavors, Rajeev is a Certified Self-Empowerment Life Coach, dedicated to unlocking the potential within individuals. He is also an avid marathoner and yoga practitioner, drawing parallels between them and professional life, emphasizing qualities like perseverance, resilience, teamwork, and alignment of body, heart, and mind towards common goals. Rajeev's diverse career spans leadership roles at Mercedes-Benz India Pvt. Ltd, Videocon Appliances Ltd., Anil Chemicals Pvt. Ltd, and Nimbkar Agricultural Research Institute. He holds a B.Tech in Chemical Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay.



SANDEEP KARAN
Head - IT Systems &
Processes
L&T Technology Services

Sandeep Karan is currently the Head of Cybersecurity, and in previous roles was Head of IT at L&T Technology Services Limited, where he has significantly contributed to the organization's digital transformation and cybersecurity initiatives since May 2015. With over 25 years of global IT experience, Sandeep has demonstrated expertise in leading business-centric IT strategies and implementing cutting-edge technology solutions to enhance operational efficiency and security across multiple regions. He has successfully managed the transition of a 24,000+ staff to a secure remote workforce and overseen the migration to cloud architectures, ensuring business continuity and scalability. His role involves spearheading expansive business transformation projects, optimizing processes, and enhancing user experiences through automations and Al operations technologies. Sandeep holds an MBA in Management Information Systems and Marketing from the Institute of Public Enterprise and has several certifications in cybersecurity, showcasing his commitment to maintaining robust information security standards.



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Deepak Agarwal former Executive Director - IS, IOCL



Dheeraj Sinha Executive VP & Global CIO, Sun **Pharmaceuticals** Industries



Hemant Verma Chief General Manager (IT), CIO& CTO, Punjab National Bank



Jayant Gupta Executive Director - IS, **HPCL**



Kirti Patil Chief Technology Officer & Joint President - IT, Kotak Mahindra Life Insurance Company



Prosenjit Sengupta Group Chief Digital and Information Officer, ITC Limited



Rajeev Jorapur Senior Vice President -IT, Bajaj Auto



Sanjay Mishra Group Chief Digital & Information Officer, Jindal Stainless



Seema Gaur Executive Director - IT Services, Indian Farmers Fertiliser Co-Operative



Sendil Kumar Venkatesan Chief Technology Officer, Shriram Capital



Vinod Gopinathan Chief Information Officer, Ashok Leyland

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