

Towards the C-Suite 2035

Boardroom Navigator



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The Decade Ahead: Challenges, Change and the New C-Suite Mandate

Robert Half explores the surveyed 10-year challenges facing C-Suite leaders and private equity investors across Europe – and how they can prepare.

Executive leaders today face a complex and rapidly evolving set of challenges; shaped by technological disruption, global instability, workforce dynamics and increasing stakeholder expectations.

The pace of technological change means leaders must drive digital transformation while managing older systems and reskilling their workforce. Unpredictable inflation, supply chain disruption, and global conflicts are also creating volatile economic conditions. Leaders also must make decisions alongside evolving regulations.

Competition for top talent will continue to be top of their agenda. Executive leaders will have to contend with generational shifts in expectations about work-life balance, purpose and inclusion; leading through change and uncertainty means clear communication and alignment across increasingly global and inclusive teams.

Resilient and adaptable leadership will also help to navigate complex social and political issues while maintaining credibility and trust.

**C-SUITE BLIND SPOT:
UNDERESTIMATING WORK-
FORCE TRANSFORMATION
AMID DIGITAL CHANGE
RISKS FALLING BEHIND.**

These mega trends are visible in **Towards the C-Suite 2035**. Technology change, innovation and digital skills are front of mind for C-Suite leaders and investors, as they consider what their world will look like in 10 years' time. Geopolitics is on their agenda, alongside economic conditions in flux, inflation and supply chain disruptions. Regulation is also a top 10 challenge, alongside climate and sustainability, as governments address net zero concerns.



2035 Challenges: The Confluence of Technology and Skills

The long-term impact of technology on leadership, skills and operations, is a core conversation for executive leaders and investors. The influence and speed of digital business, combined with the search for leadership skills, illustrates the biggest challenges they expect to face in 10 years' time.

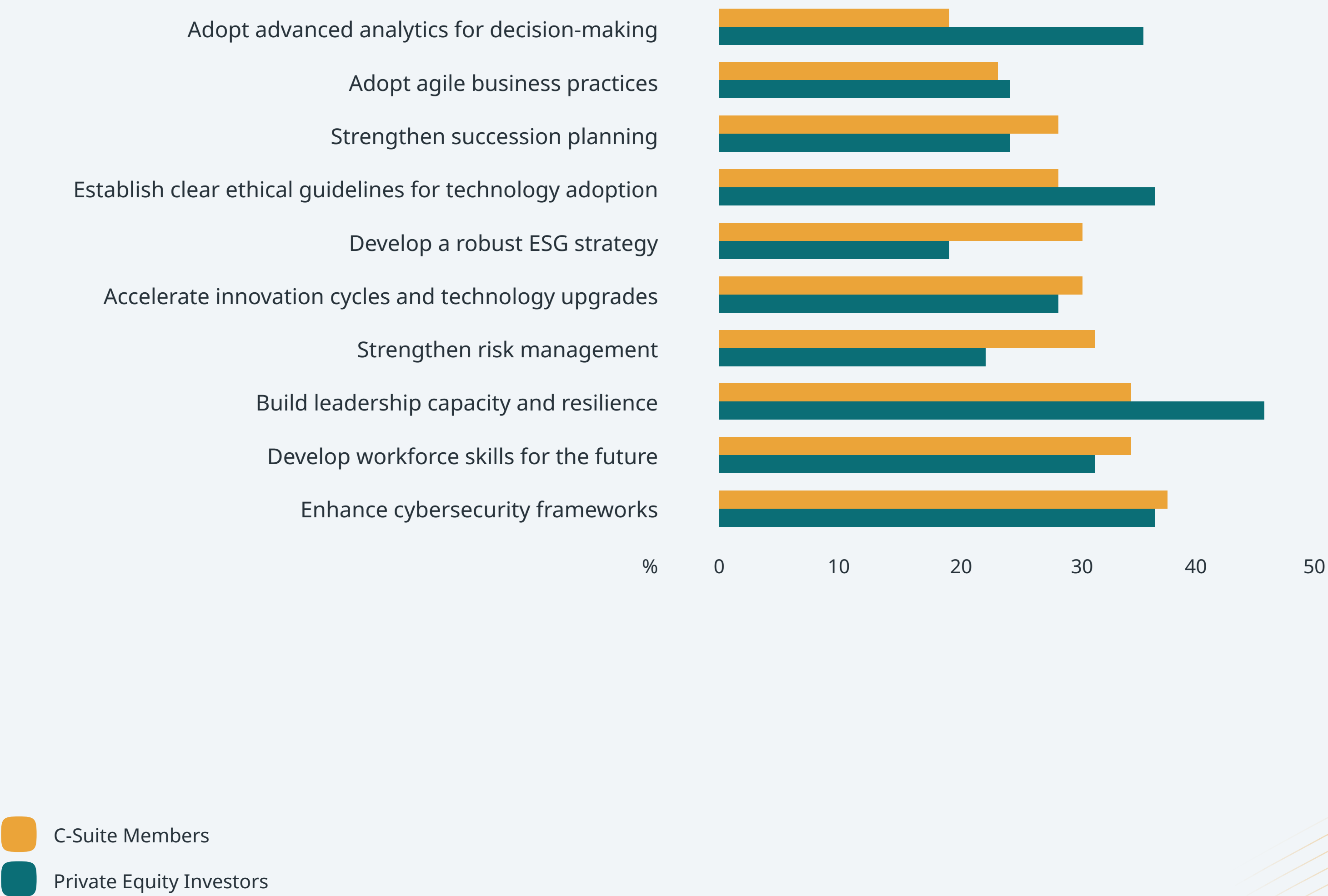
What C-Suite Executives See as Their Biggest Challenges by 2035 *



* Results reflect the Top 3 rankings of C-Suite Members and Private Equity Investors, based on their prior selection of all applicable options for their organisation(s).



Actions C-Suite and Top Management Executives
Take to Prepare for the 2035 Challenges *



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The Digital Transformation Challenge

In 2035, C-Suite leaders believe their existing operations and legacy IT infrastructure will be unable to meet performance expectations as well as 'born digital' competitors. This is their number one concern. It's also a top five challenge for private equity investors looking at their portfolio companies.

**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
WILL DICTATE COMMERCIAL
SUCCESS IN 2035.**

Large businesses with operating models that pre-date the digital revolution are becoming clearer about digital transformation. Many have developed modern finance, marketing and production tools, for example. But the process is far easier for new and SME businesses. 'Born digital' operations are built from the ground up.

Even when sourcing and selling physical products, they can take advantage of technology tools to manage every aspect of the commercial process. As one business adapts its legacy infrastructure, the other starts from a blank canvas or a smaller footprint.

This matters for two reasons: first, new and emerging technology enables disruptive innovation to occur across markets. This means businesses which can maintain the pace of innovation and stay competitive are more likely to survive. Second, customers can change their behaviour when new and innovative products and services become available. This means that commercial opportunity favours businesses able to offer those products and services. In 2035, businesses which have embraced this journey will be better placed to compete and to survive.

Top Challenges Among C-Suite Leaders

- › Maintaining pace of innovation to stay competitive
- › Speed of disruption by emerging technologies
- › IT infrastructure to meet performance expectations
- › Adapting business to workforce transformation



The Leadership and Digital Skills Challenge

In 2035, C-Suite leaders and private equity investors believe that attracting, developing and retaining top talent will be a key challenge. It is the top challenge for private equity investors, and the second highest for C-Suite leaders. Both are concerned about finding solutions for a shortage of digital skills; both are clear about the importance of data privacy and cybersecurity. They are also mindful that digital transformation will require workforce transformation. Technology change is only as good as the people who lead it and deliver it.

**SUCCESSION PLANNING
WILL HELP RESPOND
TO THE PACE OF CHANGE.**

Building a vision for the C-Suite in 2035 will acknowledge the close relationship between technology and leadership skills. It will walk a fine line between digital transformation and the human capacity to build a business. Too far one way, and the technology tail will wag the business dog; but, too far the other, and leadership teams will fall short when it comes to innovation and competition.

There is a clear desire among C-Suite leaders and private equity investors to build leadership capacity and resilience and develop workforce skills for the future. In these two statements, they acknowledge the need to enhance executive leadership skills and build on current workforce strengths and capacities. But they also acknowledge the impact of economic shocks, geopolitical instability, and the pace of innovation. Resilience can be an overused word in business. But the ability to bounce back – and have the skills and tools to do it – matters more than ever.

C-Suite leaders and private equity investors are developing capacity, resilience and skills by accelerating innovation cycles and technology upgrades; adopting agile business practices; and strengthening succession planning. They can see the writing on the wall. Competing against ‘born digital’ companies in 2035 will require speed, agility and experience. By addressing all three now, they are putting the foundations in place to succeed. A leadership team which understands how to innovate, alongside a workforce which can deliver new ideas, will be strengthened by the strategic development of future talent. Seeds planted now will stand tall in 2035.



The Impact of New Technology on the C-Suite

As executive leadership teams look ahead, it's clear they will need to evolve alongside emerging technology. Tools including artificial intelligence, blockchain and advanced analytics are reshaping their operations. Breakthroughs in energy innovation and vehicle batteries, quantum computing, and even crypto currency, are reshaping industries. While artificial intelligence dominates the headlines, myriad technology developments will call on executive leaders to develop a new kind of intelligence – one which combines foresight, adaptability and digital fluency.

DEVELOPING DIGITAL LEADERSHIP SKILLS IS A PRIORITY.

But leadership teams face a technology readiness gap. While there is often enthusiasm about innovation, most businesses lack digital competence in the C-Suite. Bridging this gap requires the development of new skills and strategic plans. Continuous learning, cross-department education, and mentoring can help to build capability in AI ethics, systems thinking, and data governance, for example, alongside cybersecurity

resilience in the event of an attack. This will help to build a digital-first leadership team that understands how these systems work, how to protect them, and how to deploy them in a responsible and fair way.

A culture of curiosity and experimentation is equally important. Forward-thinking businesses are already encouraging their executives to lead experimental projects, create innovation labs and partnerships, and explore emerging technology applications. A mindset that sees technology as a driver of strategic opportunity, can embed a technology-friendly culture from the top down.

Future-Ready Leadership: Top 5 on How C-Suite Executives Are Responding to Emerging Technologies

- 1 Invest in cyber and network security
- 2 Focus on upskilling of employees
- 3 Develop a strategy plan (to modernise technology infrastructure)
- 4 Invest in continuous learning and digital literacy
- 5 Encouragement cross-department collaboration

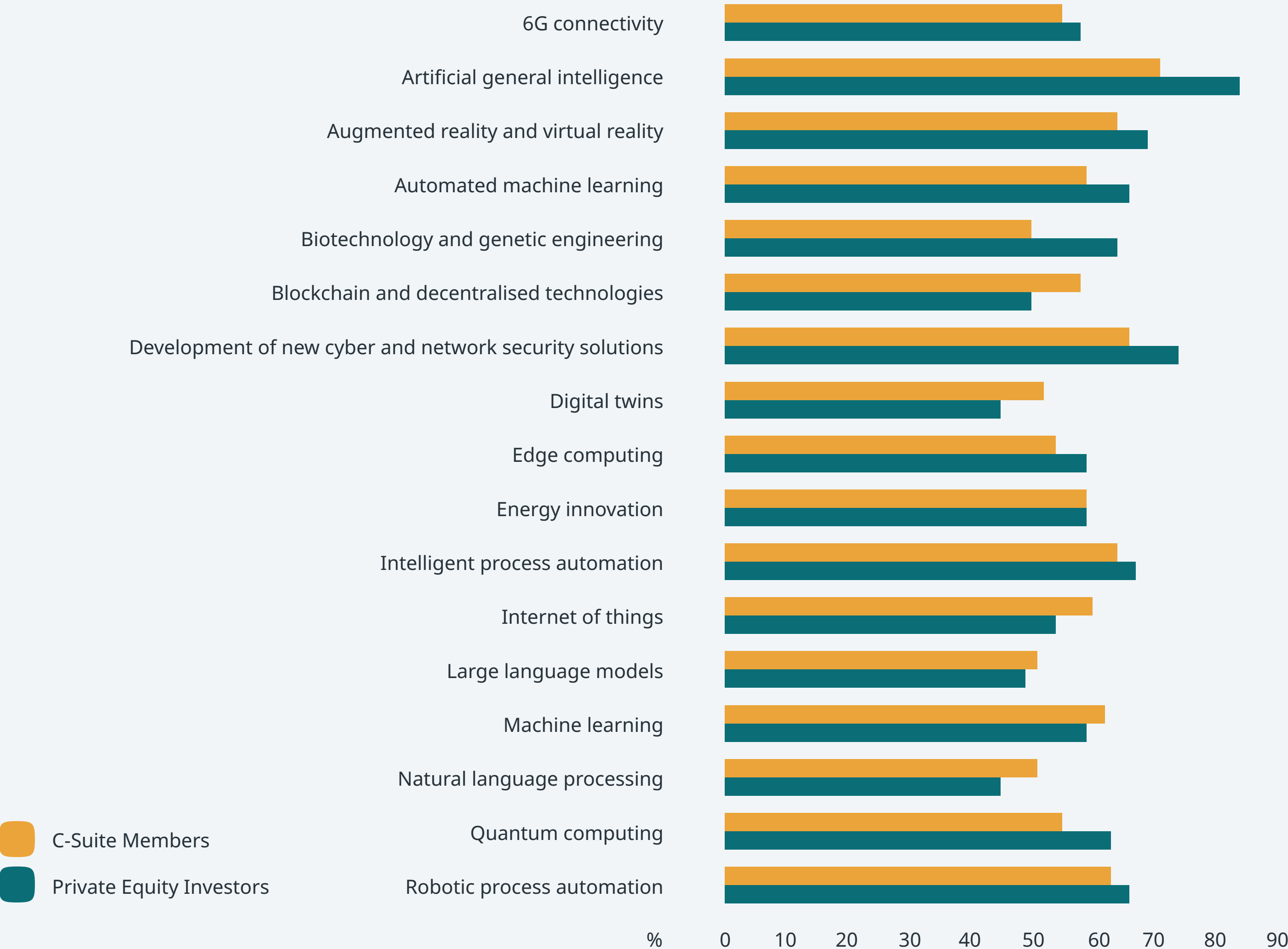
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Emerging Tech Is Already Reshaping the C-Suite

The countdown has begun. Over the next decade, technologies like AI and automation won't just support leadership – they will transform it. From redefining executive roles to shifting the skills agenda, C-Suite leaders must act now to stay ahead. These charts reveal where the impact will hit first – and where businesses risk falling behind.

Emerging Technologies C-Suite Leaders Expect to Shape Executive Leadership by 2035 *



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Redefining Leadership Roles:
Top 5 Where AI Will Lend a Hand – or Take the Lead by 2035 *

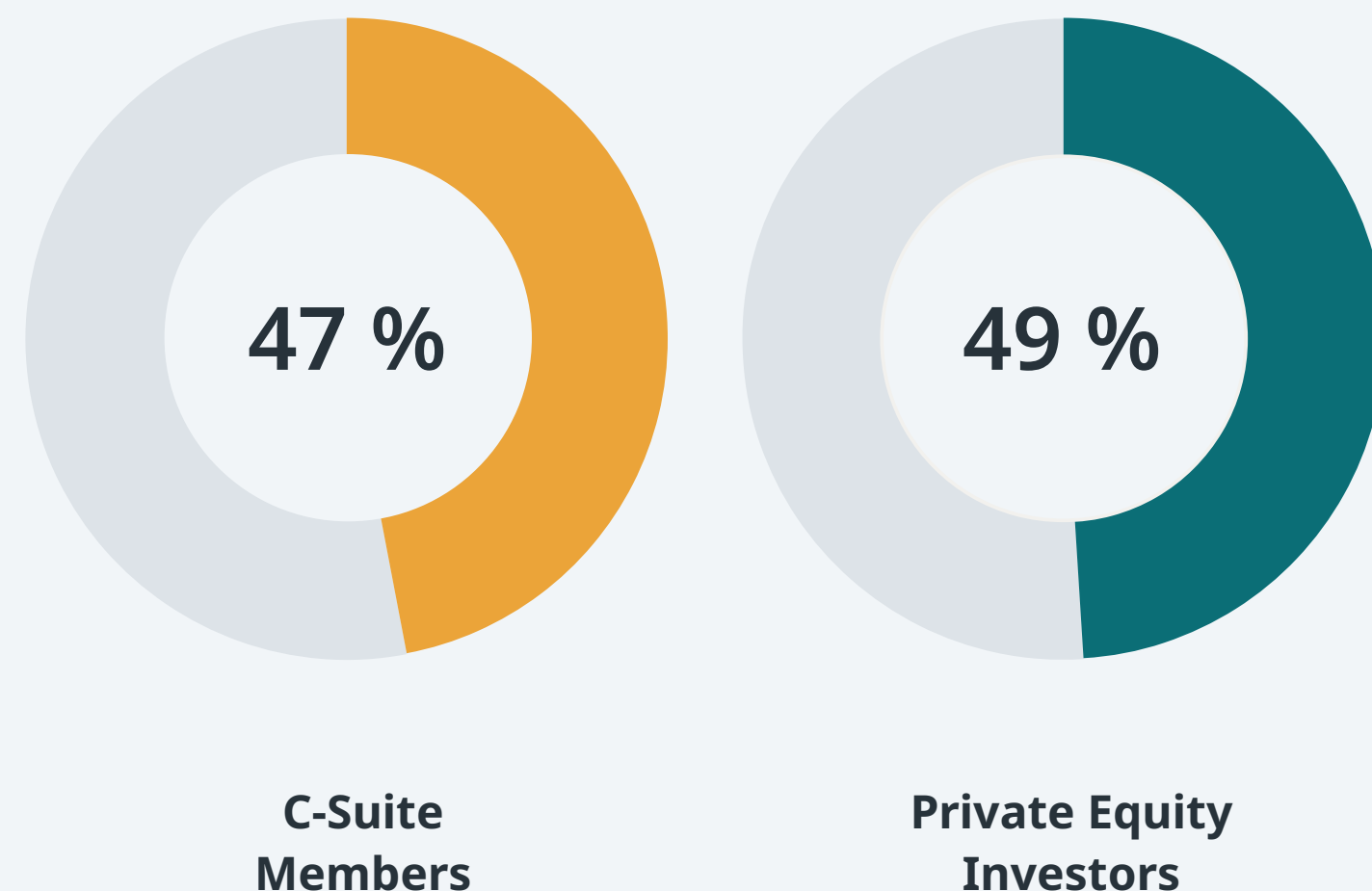
SMEs	Large Businesses
AI Will Completely Take Over	
Financial management, forecasting and reporting	Scenario planning and simulation
Innovation and product development	Innovation and product development
Customer insights and personalisation	Risk management, regulation and compliance
Talent acquisition and workforce planning	Financial management, forecasting and reporting
Performance measurement and reporting	Strategic decision-making
AI Will Support the Task	
Employee engagement and retention strategies	Supply chain and operation optimisation
Performance measurement and reporting	Workforce development, reskilling and upskilling
Workforce development, reskilling and upskilling	Performance measurement and reporting
Leading and managing workforce utilisation and productivity	Leading and managing workforce utilisation and productivity
Supply chain and operation optimisation	Customer insights and personalisation

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The Future of C-Suite Decision-Making: Where Human Intuition Meets Data-Driven Precision

NEARLY HALF OF EXECUTIVES ENVISION A HARMONISED APPROACH WHERE TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN JUDGMENT WORK HAND IN HAND.



The Impact of Technology on Decision-Making

The balance between human-led and machine-led decision-making is already punctuating executive leadership. Data-driven insights are common, and many tools can shed new light on employee wellbeing, financial performance and customer behaviour, among other areas. But with the rapid development of artificial intelligence, executive leaders are considering the balance of their decisions.

THE FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP LIES IN MASTERING THE BALANCE: HUMAN JUDGEMENT SUPPORTED BY AI, NOT REPLACED BY IT.

In 2035, most C-Suite leaders and private equity investors believe that decision-making will include a combination of human intuition and data-driven insight. They broadly expect technology tools to support their decision-making but not take over completely. Private equity investors suggest that executive decision-making will be more influenced by data, especially for SMEs. But C-Suite leaders lean towards human intuition. When making strategic decisions about their businesses, both C-Suite leaders and private equity investors believe that AI and automation will support the task. Only one in 10 believe AI will take over executive decision-making completely.



What the Executive Leadership Team Will Look Like in 2035

This chapter has highlighted the challenges which C-Suite leaders and private equity investors expect to face in 2035, and how they plan to respond to those challenges. It has shown the importance of digital transformation and competing with 'born digital' peers. It shows the creeping influence of technology on executive skills and decision-making. It has prepared the ground for the C-Suite in 2035.

In 10 years' time, executive leadership will be data-centric and AI-powered, using the technology tools to influence, but not dominate, decision-making. It will be smarter and more efficient, as executive leaders must further deepen digital fluency and extend data-driven decision-making. It will be collaborative and cross-disciplinary, as knowledge from one department closely influences others. It will be full of digital first, emotionally-intelligent leaders; those who strike a balance between a human-led, and a technology-led, business.

Key Recommendations

› **Appoint an Innovation and Change Manager or a Digital Transformation Leader**

This individual would work with the executive team to understand what it takes to accelerate innovation cycles and upgrade legacy platforms. They can report to the Head of Transformation, or to the Chief Technology Officer and the Chief Executive Officer. They would identify opportunities for innovation and transformation across the business, and lead on these projects. But crucially, they would start by building relationships and capability with department leaders. They would also act as a mentor for C-Suite leaders looking to develop their digital fluency.

› **Appoint a Succession Planning Lead**

This individual would work with the Head of Talent or Chief HR Officer to develop a pipeline of future leaders. They would help to develop a succession plan which supports the wider business strategy, identifying critical roles and the potential of existing colleagues to fill them. Those with high potential would be supported through leadership development. More broadly, a Succession Planning Lead can help to promote a culture that supports internal progression and transparency.

› **Encourage C-Suite Leaders to Develop Their Digital Fluency**

Executive education programmes focused on digital transformation, AI, and data analytics would enable leaders to understand the foundations of new technology without a technical background. Executive sponsorship of innovation projects would expose leaders to new projects. Industry events focused on digital technology would enable leaders to meet others and learn best practice.





The Changing Nature of Leadership

What will the 2035 C-Suite look like? Robert Half presents the skills, experience and leadership styles that executive leaders will need to develop over the next 10 years to ensure they are well prepared to manage the challenges of tomorrow – and a matrix of the key roles.

A group of executive leaders convene in a hybrid strategy hub – some joining via virtual platforms, others seated in a boardroom. A dynamic screen displays real-time data: customer sentiment trends, ESG metrics, and predictive workforce analytics. AI-powered systems help the business accelerate product cycles, personalise engagement, and optimise decision-making at scale.

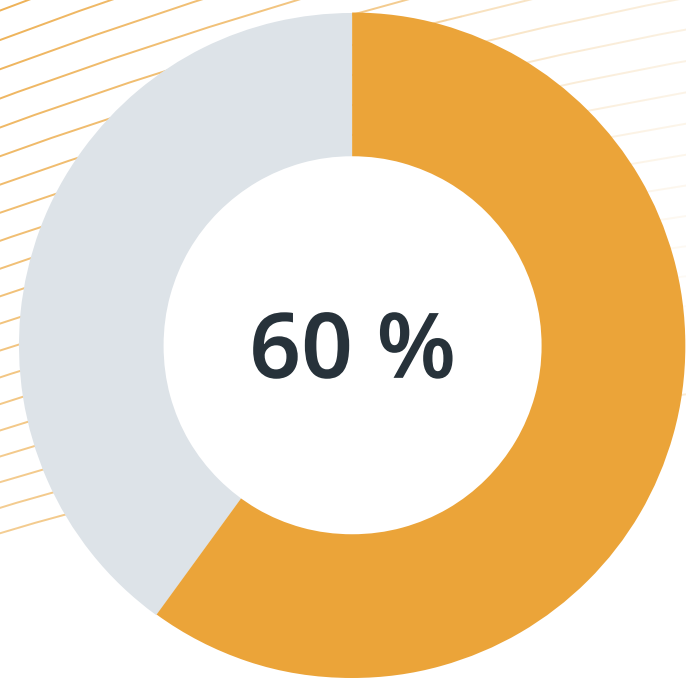
The Chief Marketing Officer knows which campaigns are translating into sales and profitable revenue. The Chief Financial Officer scrutinises the numbers with greater certainty. The Chief HR Officer understands the nuances of performance on a digital dashboard. Next to the list, two letters are circled: 'AI'. Alongside existing projects, the executive team has started exploring the future of the business, and the potential impact of artificial intelligence. They have read media coverage and product rollouts from OpenAI, Microsoft and Google. Their teams are already experimenting; innovation labs explore the scope of new tools. The Chief Technology Officer, in collaboration with the Chief Strategy Officer and the Chief Information Officer, is considering which parts of the business to transform next – and which new leadership roles might be needed.

New and Emerging C-Suite Roles

The C-Suite roles that will become more important in the next 10 years are closely related to technology, data and innovation. According to C-Suite leaders from both SMEs and large businesses, these include the Chief Technology Officer, Chief Innovation Officer, Chief Strategy Officer, Chief Information Officer, and the Chief Risk Officer. And the most important emerging C-Suite roles? The Chief AI Officer, followed by the Chief Technology Transformation Officer and the Chief Data Officer. All this points to a digital and data-driven world in 2035. But at the beginning of the Fifth Industrial Revolution, and the waves of expected digital transformation, it is important to remember one thing: businesses change and transform because of people. Their skills and experience will evolve, of course, but the application and understanding will come from human minds and teamwork. People leading people, working together towards a common goal.

**ESSENTIAL TODAY –
UNSTOPPABLE BY 2035:
THE RISE OF THE CHIEF
TRANSFORMATION OFFICER**





... OF LEADERS SAY WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION EXPERIENCE WILL BE ESSENTIAL BY 2035.

That means existing roles, including the Chief Communications Officer, the Chief HR Officer, and the Chief Operations Officer will gain further importance. All three harness the connections between individuals and emphasise the relationships between executive leaders and employees. During the far-reaching processes of change that businesses face today – and the close correlation between digital and workforce transformation – strategic communication is the differentiator between success and failure. It helps all stakeholders to understand the goals and milestones of projects and allows teams to respond, report back, and be guided through the process. The Chief HR Officer will be critical to workforce transformation and succession planning; the Chief Operations Officer will ensure the business runs smoothly during these periods.

As one business adapts its legacy infrastructure, another starts from a blank canvas or a smaller footprint.

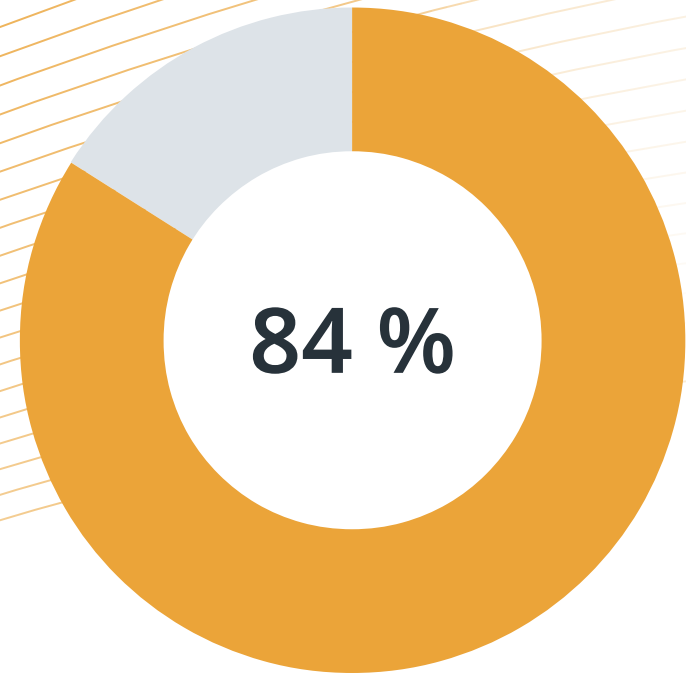
These roles will be complemented by another important position in the C-Suite: the Chief Transformation Officer. This is someone who already works closely with the Chief Human Resources Officer, the Chief Technology Officer and the Chief Information Officer, serving as the strategic glue between digital innovation

and people leadership, building workforce capability and technology adoption. Small and medium-sized enterprises and large businesses highlight technology transformation as a key emerging role; fewer identified talent transformation. But both are important – and closely related – working together under one banner.

What Kind of Experience Will Matter?

For C-Suite leaders in SME and large businesses, digital transformation needs to be on their CVs; it is the experience all executive leaders want. For SME businesses, digital transformation is complemented by regulation and compliance, crisis management, commercial and customer experience, and managing inflation. For larger businesses, workforce transformation punctuates the top five. On their own, none of these are a surprise; taken together they paint a picture of what commercial life was in the past five years. Digital transformation has been part of the business toolkit through Covid-19 and will remain at the top of the agenda as AI takes hold. Crisis management is pivotal in a global economy, which is sensitive to all kinds of national protectionism, such as tariffs, border policy and export regulations. Ongoing geopolitical disputes have played havoc with supply chains and inflation. They will do so again.





**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
KNOWLEDGE WILL BE
THE KEY SKILL TO GATHER
FOR TOP LEADERS BY 2035**

**DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
MEANS NOTHING
WITHOUT WORKFORCE
TRANSFORMATION –
IT’S THE KEY TO UNLOCKING
RESILIENCE, AGILITY, AND
FUTURE-READY LEADERSHIP**

Workforce transformation is important because digital transformation can’t really happen without it; the process of reshaping roles and skills is a natural result of adopting new technology and processes. It is the method through which businesses can

adapt their structure, culture, skills and employment models. The aim is to improve productivity, resilience and agility. That is why those in charge of people and technology transformation will play a significant role in executive leadership.

Which Skills Will Matter?

The skills profile of future C-Suite leaders leans towards innovation and strategic thinking. In SMEs, communication and emotional intelligence play a key role; for larger businesses, creativity and resilience are important. The truth is that they will need a suite of skills, some of which are interpersonal and people-focussed; some of which address the bigger picture. As C-Suite leaders become more focussed on digital skills, it will be important that they also enhance their people skills.

This twin approach to leadership development will help to create a new generation of leaders who can deal with regulation and compliance, artificial intelligence and geopolitical risk; but who can do so alongside telling stories, presenting to others, developing cultural literacy and dealing with public affairs. These skills will come to the fore during digital transformation and workforce transformation.



EVERY C-SUITE ROLE WILL NEED SPECIALIST COMMUNICATION SKILLS

They will help to deliver change through communication, both inside and outside of the business. Public affairs skills will help leaders shape education and economic policy at a time when demand for new skills is rising – through aligning curricula with future workforce needs or by influencing labour and migration policy to address skilled worker shortages. A unique blend of soft and technical skills will deliver the leadership required in the next 10 years.

Which Leadership Styles Will Become Most Important?

There are three styles of leadership that are expected to become more important: transformational leadership, data-driven leadership and agile leadership. Each of these builds on the skills and experience in this chapter and the profile of C-Suite leaders already taking shape.

› Transformational Leadership ...

... inspires innovation, trust and positive change. It is designed to focus teams on a compelling vision, which is essential during periods of transformation. Motivation is key, personal development is encouraged. Teams are empowered to exceed expectations. It's also a leadership style which fosters adaptability, which is useful for large businesses navigating complex projects and SMEs seeking to grow with limited resources. It encourages creativity, employee engagement and should also build resilient cultures. As technology reshapes the commercial world, transformational leaders can inspire change.

› Data-Driven Leadership ...

... helps businesses to make informed and objective decisions. In the digital economy, where data is widely available, data analytics and insights can help leadership teams to respond quickly and accurately to customer behaviour and market trends. For large businesses, it can simplify complex operations and processes, helping to boost productivity and uncover growth opportunities; for SMEs, it can target limited resources into the most important areas. Data-driven leaders aim for a culture of accountability and continuous improvement. The ability to translate data into action gives them a competitive edge.

› Agile Leadership ...

... emphasises flexibility, collaboration, and adaptation, key traits of modern business. It is rooted in responsiveness and continuous learning. Agile leaders empower teams to make quick, informed decisions and change what they are doing when necessary. Large businesses benefit from faster innovation cycles and reduced bureaucracy; SMEs can be nimble. Agile leadership delivers transparency, customer focus, and resilience. It helps build dynamic cultures which can seize opportunities and sustain long-term growth.



The Top 5 Essentials for Future C-Suite Leadership by 2035 *

SMEs	Large Businesses
Wealth of Experience	
Digital transformation	Digital transformation
Regulations/compliance issues management	Crisis management
Crisis management	Workforce transformation
Commercial/customer experience	Regulations/compliance issues management
High inflation rate environment management	Commercial/customer experience
Technical Skills	
Artificial intelligence knowledge	Artificial intelligence knowledge
Risk management	Risk management
Geopolitical knowledge	Regulations/compliance issues management
CSR/ESG knowledge	Change management
Macroeconomic interpretation capacity	Geopolitical knowledge
Soft Skills	
Innovative capacity	Innovative capacity
Communication skills	Strategic thinking
Emotional intelligence	Creativity
Strategic thinking	Resilience
Critical thinking	Critical thinking
Leadership Style	
Transformational leadership (inspire to innovate)	Transformational leadership (inspire to innovate)
Network leadership (engage people around a shared purpose)	Data-driven leadership (using data to help make decisions)
Data-driven leadership (using data to help make decisions)	Charismatic leadership (engage others)
Agile leadership (adaptable and trusting)	Agile leadership (adaptable and trusting)
Situational leadership (adapt style to circumstances)	Network leadership (engage people around a shared purpose)

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2035 C-Suite Competency Matrix

This table explores the key C-Suite roles that will dominate executive leadership in 2035. It's a long list. Some of these roles will be relevant for all businesses, others for specific sectors and large businesses. But they represent the core strengths of executive leadership, and the skillsets we have talked about in this chapter. The C-Suite competency matrix looks at each role, alongside the recommended skills, experience, and leadership style for each one. It also outlines how emerging technology will influence each position.

Selected Detailed C-Suite Profiles and Career Paths

- › [Chief Transformation Officer](#)
- › [Chief Technology Officer](#)
- › [Chief Communications Officer](#)
- › [Chief Marketing Officer](#)
- › [Chief Human Resources Officer](#)

C-Suite Positions	Chief AI & Data Officer (CAIDO)	Chief Communications Officer (CCO)	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Wealth of Experience Needed In This Role	To scale data capabilities with funding, align with regulation, defend legal exposure, and position data as a public asset. › Series funding › Regulation/compliance issues › Litigation › Digital transformation › Public/Corporate affairs	To shape reputation, manage messaging in social and workforce shifts and navigate organisational communication in change. › Public/Corporate affairs › Socio-political activism › Crisis management › Digital transformation › Workforce transformation	To lead through crises, respond to public pressure, drive transformation, manage reputations, and restore performance. › Crisis management › Socio-political activism › Turnaround management › Digital transformation › Public/Corporate affairs
Technical Skills: Most Important to the Role	To scale AI responsibly, ensure ethical data use, to align with governance standards, mitigate model risk, and explain complex AI topics clearly. › Artificial intelligence knowledge › Regulation and compliance › Corporate governance › Risk management › Public speaking and presentation	To shape narratives, represent the brand, manage public perception and ensure communications comply with regulatory standards. › Public affairs › Public speaking and presentation › Storytelling skills › Regulation and compliance	To influence through narrative, anticipate geopolitical impacts, to align with sustainability goals, to manage public expectations, and ensure strong governance. › Storytelling › Geopolitical knowledge › CSR/ESG knowledge › Public affairs › Corporate governance
Soft Skills: Most Important to the Role	To interpret complex data, explain insights simply, and align data strategy to business goals. › Critical thinking › Communication skills › Strategic thinking	To support beyond traditional messaging into navigating geopolitical and business transformation complexity, stakeholder, ESG narratives, and real-time crisis management. › Strategic thinking › Agility › Conflict management	To lead with long-term vision, empathise with stakeholders, and endure high-pressure environments. › Strategic thinking › Emotional intelligence › Resilience
Mix of Leadership Styles Required	To unlock data-driven potential, to adapt to fast-evolving AI trends and to embed AI across business units. › Transformational leadership › Agile leadership › Shared leadership	To build internal and external engagement, to respond quickly to reputational shifts and to communicate across varied audiences. › Charismatic leadership › Agile leadership › Situational leadership	To inspire innovation and company-wide change, to energise and unite the organisation and to adapt across department and crises. › Transformational leadership › Charismatic leadership › Situational leadership
Mix of Emerging Technology Likely Impacting This Role	To orchestrate enterprise-wide use of AI, leveraging automated learning, LLMs, and NLP to scale insights and services. › Large language models › Automated machine learning › Natural language processing	To harness NLP and LLMs for reputation monitoring, content creation, and AR/VR to enhance engagement through immersive storytelling. › Natural language processing › Large language models › Augmented reality and virtual reality	To anticipate transformative shifts in capability, decision-making intelligence, and competitive advantage driven by AGI, LLMs, and quantum computing's potential to disrupt industries. › Artificial general intelligence › Large language models › Quantum computing

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2035 C-Suite Competency Matrix



C-Suite Positions	Chief Financial Officer (CFO)	Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)	Chief Information Officer (CIO)	Chief Innovation Officer (CINO)
Wealth of Experience Needed In This Role	To manage complex transactions, global finance regulations, investor relationships, and sensitive market pressures › Sanctions management › Shareholder activism management › Buyout / Carve-out/Spin-off › Regulation/compliance issues	To lead in redefining work, respond to external pressures, manage crises, and design future-ready organisations. › Workforce transformation › Succession planning › Crisis management › Socio-political activism › Digital transformation	To lead secure digital reinvention, ensure compliance, and support workforce enablement through technology. › Digital transformation › Crisis management › Regulation/compliance issues › Cybersecurity incidents › Workforce transformation	To drive open innovation, scale ideas through funding, and reshape teams to deliver future-ready ideas. › Series funding › Market entries › Workforce transformation › Open innovation ecosystems
Technical Skills: Most Important to the Role	Need deep understanding of macroeconomic trends, financial markets, capital raising, compliance, and enterprise risk to secure financial sustainability. › Macroeconomic interpretation capacity › Capital markets/investor relations › Investment banking/raising capital › Regulation and compliance › Risk management	To lead transformation, drive ESG alignment in culture, and communicate vision internally and externally with influence. › Change management › CSR/ESG knowledge › Public speaking and presentation skills › Storytelling skills	To guide intelligent tech adoption, deliver stable IT programmes, protect infrastructure, and comply with data and privacy laws. › Artificial intelligence knowledge › Project management › Risk management › Regulation and compliance	To innovate within ethical frameworks, adopt AI disruptively, lead cultural change, and champion innovation narratives. › Artificial intelligence knowledge › CSR/ESG knowledge › Change management › Storytelling skills
Soft Skills: Most Important to the Role	Require analytical precision, clarity in reporting to stakeholders, and a strong sense of accountability. › Critical thinking › Communication skills › Taking responsibility	To support people through transformation, listen deeply, and maintain balance in evolving workforces. › Emotional intelligence › Active listening › Resilience	To align IT with evolving business needs, communicate across departments, and resolve systems-level challenges. › Agility › Communication skills › Solution oriented	To thrive on novel thinking, fast iteration, and building innovation cultures that respond to uncertainty. › Creativity › Innovative capacity › Agility
Mix of Leadership Styles Required	To drive the adoption of financial strategies to changing markets, to lead high-stakes or regulatory environments and to develop strong financial teams. › Situational leadership › Autocratic leadership › Coaching leadership	To lead and foster employee well-being and culture, to develop leadership at all levels and to empower and enable the workforce. › Compassionate leadership › Coaching leadership › Servant leadership	To lead digital and systems agility across infrastructure systems and to enable departments through IT. › Agile leadership › Situational leadership › Servant leadership	To drive the innovation agenda, testing and iterating bold ideas and cross-functional ideation and collaboration. › Transformational leadership › Agile leadership › Shared leadership
Mix of Emerging Technology Likely Impacting This Role	To use automation to streamline finance, blockchain to secure transactions and audits, and quantum computing to improve forecasting and risk modelling. › Intelligent process automation › Blockchain and decentralised technologies › Quantum computing	To deploy LLMs and NLP for personalised training, communication, and talent analytics, and use AR/VR for immersive learning experiences. › Natural language processing › Large language models › Augmented reality and virtual reality	To ensure performance and resilience by embracing distributed data processing, next-gen security, and scalable AI. › Edge computing › Development of new cyber and network security solutions › Automated machine learning	To drive innovation in sustainable energy, disruptive intelligence, and bio-driven solutions across sectors. › Biotechnology and genetic engineering › Artificial general intelligence › Energy innovation

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2035 C-Suite Competency Matrix



C-Suite Positions	Chief Legal Officer (CLO)	Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)	Chief Operating Officer (COO)	Chief Risk Officer (CRO)
Wealth of Experience Needed In This Role	To handle legal risks in crises, global policy impacts, and complex corporate responsibilities. › Litigation › Sanctions management › Regulation/compliance issues › Public/Corporate affairs › Crisis management	To grow markets, preserve customer value under economic pressure, and adapt commercial models digitally. › Commercial/customer experience › High inflation rate environment › Market entries › Digital transformation	To maintain operations in crises, scale globally, and adapt workforces and logistics to changing environments. › Supply chain disruptions › High inflation rate environment management › Settlement of branches/plants/etc. › Crisis management › Workforce transformation	To anticipate global risks, model disruption, respond in crisis, and ensure organisational risk resilience. › Sanctions management › Crisis management › Regulation/compliance issues › Scenario planning › Cybersecurity incidents
Technical Skills: Most Important to the Role	To safeguard legal standing through regulatory fluency, geopolitical awareness, board-level governance, and external legal diplomacy. › Regulation and compliance › Geopolitical knowledge › Corporate governance › Public affairs	To must adapt strategies to macro shifts, manage commercial change, and align revenue strategies with investor priorities. › Macroeconomic interpretation capacity › Change management › Capital markets/investor relations	To require excellence in execution, planning for efficiency, managing change, and mitigating operational risk in complex global environments. › Project management › Planning and organisation › Change management › Risk management	To anticipate systemic threats, manage compliance across borders, and model global risks effectively. › Risk management › Geopolitical knowledge › Regulation and compliance › Macroeconomic interpretation capacity
Soft Skills: Most Important to the Role	To assess risk clearly, advise with emotional insight, and align legal guidance with strategic direction. › Critical thinking › Emotional intelligence › Strategic thinking	To secure value-driven deals, persist under pressure, and align commercial growth to strategy. › Negotiation skills › Resilience › Strategic thinking	To adapt quickly, resolve operational challenges, and mediate cross-functional tensions effectively. › Agility › Solution oriented › Conflict management	To apply sharp judgment under pressure, bounce back from crises, and focus on forward-looking solutions. › Critical thinking › Resilience › Solution oriented
Mix of Leadership Styles Required	To ensure compliance and risk management, to adjust litigation vs. advisory roles and to develop legal expertise within the team. › Autocratic leadership › Situational leadership › Coaching leadership	To lead market and growth strategies, to drive customer-facing energy and to navigate shifting customer needs and competition. › Transformational leadership › Charismatic leadership › Agile leadership	To manage complexity and change, to shift styles for inclusive operational contexts and optimise team performance. › Agile leadership › Situational leadership › Coaching leadership	To adapt to different types of risk, manage crises or high-risk situations, and build a proactive risk culture. › Situational leadership › Autocratic leadership › Coaching leadership
Mix of Emerging Technology Likely Impacting This Role	To confront regulatory and ethical implications of decentralised systems and AGI's legal accountability challenges. › Blockchain and decentralised technologies › Artificial general intelligence	To use ML to personalise offerings, AR/VR for customer experience innovation, and IoT for real-time product usage insights. › Machine learning › Augmented reality and virtual reality › Internet of things	To benefit from real-time analytics (IoT + edge), and automation to optimise operations, logistics, and infrastructure responsiveness. › Intelligent process automation › Edge computing › Internet of things	To anticipate risks from quantum threats, secure systems via blockchain, and defend against advanced cyber-attacks. › Development of new cyber and network security solutions › Blockchain and decentralised technologies › Quantum computing

* Results reflect the Top 3 rankings of C-Suite Members and Private Equity Investors, based on their prior selection of all applicable options for their organisation(s).



2035 C-Suite Competency Matrix

C-Suite Positions	Chief Strategy Officer (CSO)	Chief Technology Officer (CTO)	Chief Transformation Officer (CTRO)
Wealth of Experience Needed In This Role	To orchestrate long-term value creation through growth, redesign, and global market entry, fueled by digital foresight. › Restructuring › M&A › Market entries › Scenario planning › Digital transformation	To lead enterprise-wide change, manage risk during crises, and ensure secure, agile tech infrastructure globally. › Digital transformation › Settlement of branches/plants/etc. › Crisis management › Cybersecurity incidents › Workforce transformation	To execute change programmes, realign strategy and people, and restore performance under disruption. › Turnaround management › Restructuring › Workforce transformation › Digital transformation › Crisis management
Technical Skills: Most Important to the Role	To plan the long game by interpreting global forces, maintaining strategic governance, and mitigating business-wide risks. › Macroeconomic interpretation capacity › Geopolitical knowledge › Corporate governance › Risk management › Planning and organisation	To integrate AI effectively, deliver transformation programmes, manage change across systems, and reduce tech risk exposure. › Artificial intelligence knowledge › Project management › Change management › Risk management	To lead complex change, coordinate large-scale programmes, embed ESG thinking, and inspire transformation through storytelling. › Change management › Project management › CSR/ESG knowledge › Storytelling skills
Soft Skills: Most Important to the Role	To build flexible, insight-driven plans that respond to dynamic external and internal shifts. › Strategic thinking › Critical thinking › Agility	To lead tech-forward thinking, pivot technologies quickly, and bridge business-technical communication. › Innovative capacity › Agility › Communication skills	To guide transformation with purpose, maintain momentum under stress, and navigate resistance constructively. › Strategic thinking › Resilience › Conflict management
Mix of Leadership Styles Required	To plan with vision and lead bold change, align tactics with evolving contexts, and drive cross-functional collaboration. › Transformational leadership › Situational leadership › Shared leadership	To manage fast-paced tech innovation, drive tech-enabled disruption and to build engineering talent. › Agile leadership › Transformational leadership › Coaching leadership	To guide systemic change, to enable flexibility during transformation and to support teams through change. › Transformational leadership › Agile leadership › Coaching leadership
Mix of Emerging Technology Likely Impacting This Role	To use advanced technologies to reshape markets, simulate scenarios, and evaluate long-term strategic futures. › Artificial general intelligence › Quantum computing › Large language models	To lead early adoption of high-bandwidth, distributed, and quantum-enabled systems for enterprise platforms and architecture. › Quantum computing › 6G connectivity › Edge computing	To scale enterprise transformation using automation, simulations, and AI-driven adaptability. › Intelligent process automation › Machine learning › Digital twins

* Results reflect the Top 3 rankings of C-Suite Members and Private Equity Investors, based on their prior selection of all applicable options for their organisation(s).





Hiring and Succession Planning for the Next Generation of Leaders

Robert Half reveals the steps that businesses should make now to nurture and support future leaders – and create the C-Suite of 2035.

The executive leadership team sits around the boardroom table. In front of them is a business strategy for the next five years. It includes a raft of digital transformation projects that all require specialist skills; key roles that need creating and filling to kick off these projects, and an expected budget for doing so. Their strategy will require a combination of external hiring and internal promotion: the skills they need can be found elsewhere, but they also recognise the wealth of talent in the business.

The first step is to develop a hiring strategy: one which allows the executive team to build a second layer of leadership and address immediate skills gaps. They are planning to recruit and develop a series of Vice Presidents and Directors to boost digital and workforce transformation capability, alongside AI and data skills. This will allow them to push forward with their innovation plans, maintain their competitive edge, and create a foundation on which to build.

The second step is to build a succession plan to bridge the gap between the skills in the business today and those needed tomorrow. This will complement the hiring strategy and give the executive team long-term visibility of the future. It will put in place a series of steps to identify the skills needed to execute the strategy; high-potential candidates for executive leadership; and a leadership development programme to deliver those candidates to the C-Suite.

These are powerful steps: one to address immediate skills gaps, the other to secure the future; a two-pronged approach that will make the business more competitive and more agile. Everyone around is bought in; they know this matters. As they start talking, a plan begins to emerge.

To Stay Future-Ready ...

... businesses must act now to build tomorrow’s leaders – whether from within, outside, or both. Leadership development takes time, and the future won’t wait!

Preparing for 2035: How Companies Approach Succession Planning Today:

Succession Planning	Private-owned	Publicly-listed
Internal only	33 %	35 %
External only	22 %	14 %
A combination of both	40 %	47 %
We don’t know yet	6 %	5 %

Finding and Developing the C-Suite of 2035 – ‘The Hiring Strategy’

Building the C-Suite of tomorrow will require an effective second layer of leadership to be built now. A series of Vice Presidents and Directors with skills that will give current executive leaders confidence in the future; emerging leaders who understand the trends driving business in 2025, and those expected to drive it in the next 10 years.

HIRE NOW FOR AGILITY AND FLEXIBILITY

As such, they will be agile and change-focused, with experience of workforce and digital transformation. Technical skills around AI and data will be complemented by strong people and leadership experience. Problem-solving, conflict resolution and crisis management will be matched by a transformative, transparent and emotionally-intelligent approach to leadership.

Driving the Engine of Change: The Operational Next-Gen Leaders Behind Tomorrow’s C-Suite

- **A Vice President for Technology Transformation**

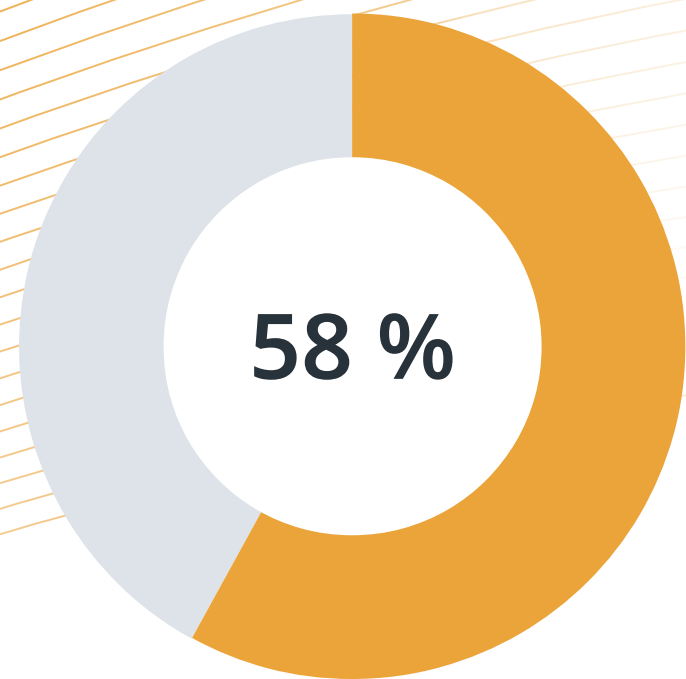
will lead immediate digital transformation projects. They will play a key role in supporting the Chief Operations Officer and the Chief Strategy Officer. A blend of technology-related skills would also be matched by communication, critical thinking and strategic thinking; with a transformational, agile and coaching leadership style.
- **A Vice President for Talent Transformation**

will have an immediate impact. They will play a key role in delivering workforce transformation alongside digital transformation, supporting the Chief HR Officer. They will blend people skills with growing technological fluency, solving problems and conflicts, and looking for solutions. A transformational leader, grounded in coaching and compassion.
- **A Vice President for AI & Data**

will help the current Chief Technology Officer, Chief Information Officer or Chief Operations Officer to assess in which direction the business will go. They will bring direct knowledge of building AI systems and implementing third party platforms; alongside an awareness of regulation and compliance issues in key sectors. They will be innovative, and solutions-focused.
- **In Addition, a Digital Transformation Leader and Leadership Development Manager**

will help to create operational momentum for technology and people projects, working closely with the executive leadership to understand the linkages between digital transformation and workforce transformation. Their professional backgrounds might be different. They might come from different sectors. But they will form the operational backbone of the developing business, paving the way for others to learn from – and charting a potential course to the C-Suite.





**... OF BUSINESS LEADERS
ARE CONCERNED ABOUT
FINDING SUITABLE LEADERS
FOR THEIR BUSINESS
IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS**

These leaders can be recruited to fill immediate gaps, helping to kick start projects, and helping others to learn new skills.

RECRUITING FOR KEY ROLES NOW WILL BOOST IMMEDIATE TRANSFORMATION PLANS

Not all the roles created now will evolve into C-Suite positions in 2035. But they can be part of an immediate hiring plan. As skillsets develop and AI becomes commonplace, for example, AI and data specialisms may become part of the Chief Technology Officer's role. But at the same time, it's possible a Vice President for AI & Data could become Chief AI & Data Officer or even succeed the current Chief Technology Officer. Likewise, dedicated talent transformation and technology transformation roles may

merge in the C-Suite – to become the Chief Transformation Officer. But in some cases, businesses are already recruiting for this role. What matters is putting the right skills in place now to be agile, and to respond as the market and business further evolves.

Finding and Developing the C-Suite of 2035 – 'The Succession Plan'

C-Suite leaders want to nurture their own talent and recruit in the external market when they need to; they want to create a culture in which it is common to be promoted and for new skills to be developed. But when asked what steps they will take to develop their leadership pipelines, private businesses want to promote a culture of learning, rotate high-potential candidates through different roles and align leadership development with business strategy. Creating a succession plan is lower down their list. Publicly-listed businesses recognise the value of investing in leadership development, using technology to assess capability and promoting a culture of continuous learning. But creating a succession plan is their lowest priority. In both cases, it should be much more important.

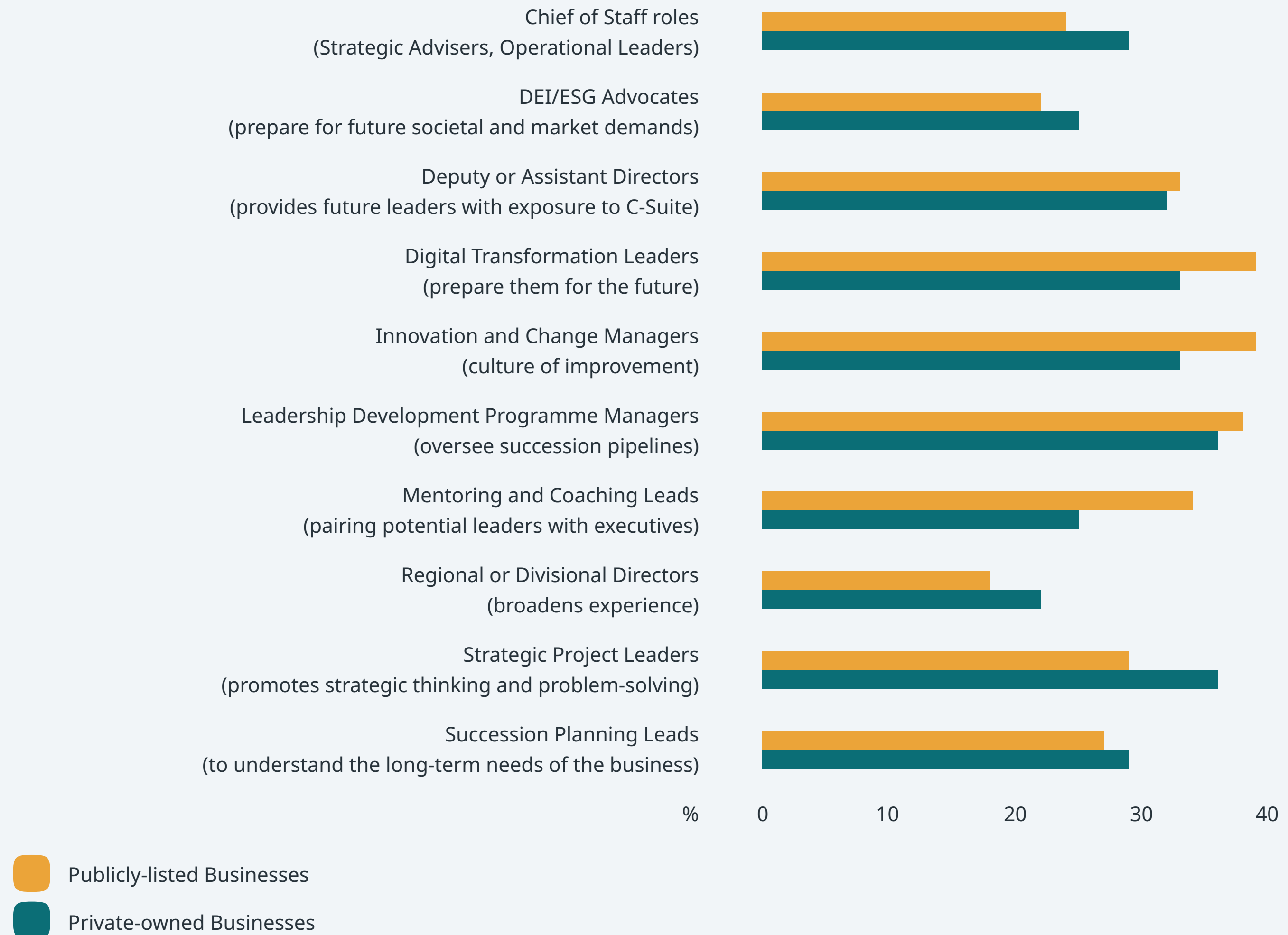
What would help? A Succession Planning Lead role designed to provide a link between the strategy of the business and the people executing it. This person could be appointed on an interim basis. They may take on the responsibility from within the current HR team. In some cases, the Succession Planning Lead could also become a full-time role. It will depend on the needs of the business. But, in any case, they will work closely with the Chief HR Officer, and the Chief Executive, to develop a strategic approach that stays true to the commercial aims of the wider operation. They would develop and own a business-wide succession planning framework.



The Roles That Ready Leaders for the Top

To build a strong and future-ready leadership pipeline, companies are creating targeted roles below the executive level. These positions give high-potential talent the exposure, experience, and strategic perspective they need to eventually step into top leadership. The following roles are at the forefront of succession strategies designed to prepare the next generation of C-Suite leaders.

Next in Line: Strategic Roles C-Suites Are Creating to Support Succession *



* Results reflect the Top 3 rankings of C-Suite Members and Private Equity Investors, based on their prior selection of all applicable options for their organisation(s).



SUCCESSION-FOCUSED ROLES WILL HELP TO PLAN FOR THE LONG TERM

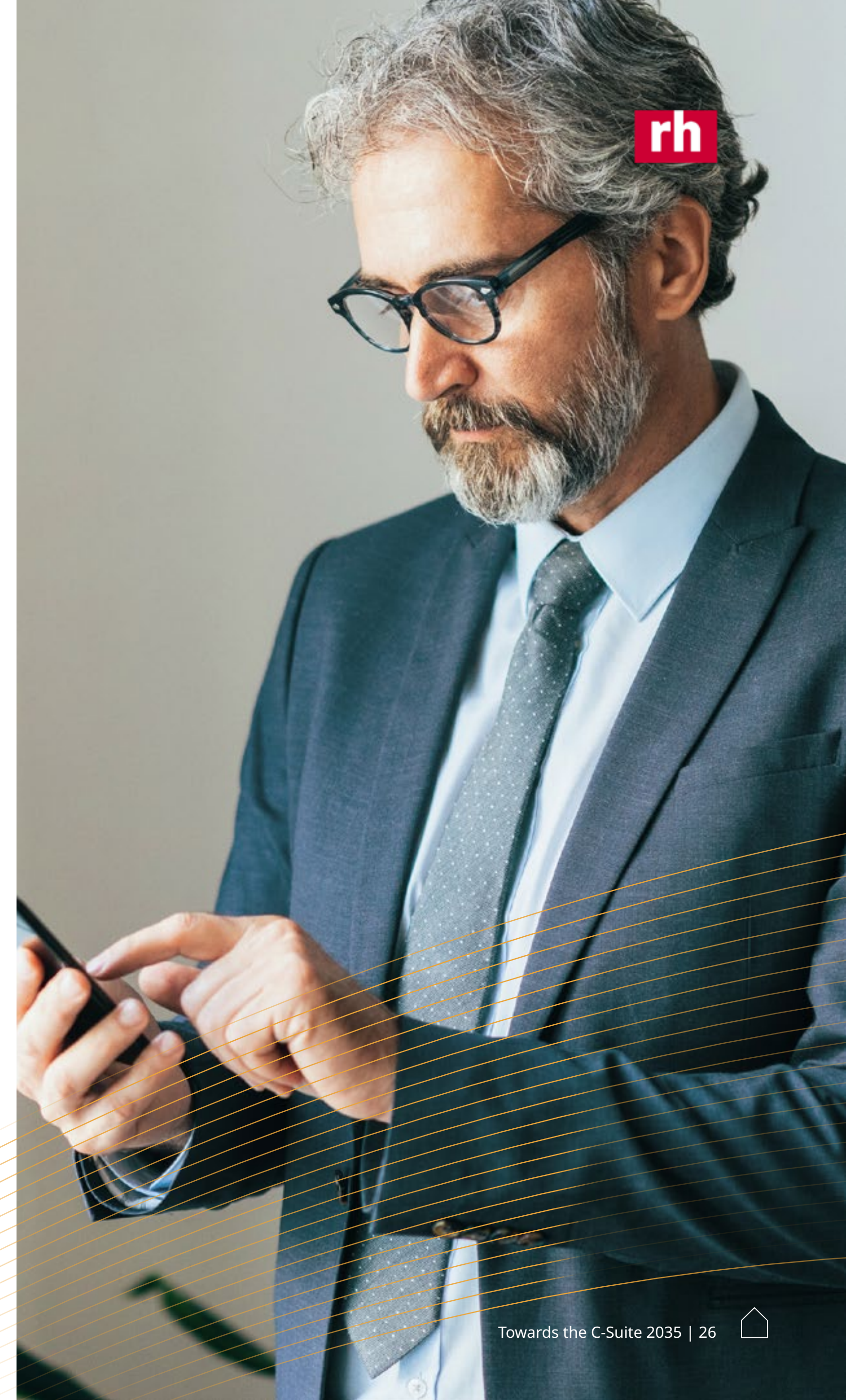
As part of this framework, they would identify high-potential talent and critical roles, implementing and overseeing assessment methods and tools. They would collaborate with learning and development colleagues to design career paths and programmes, taking care to monitor progress and to assess people's readiness for succession. The role would also include scenario and workforce planning to understand where succession risks lie; what would happen if key people left, for example, and when a pipeline of external recruitment would be supportive.

All of this will be measured, recorded and presented to the C-Suite on a regular basis. The Succession Planning Lead will be a trusted advisor, the point of contact for understanding succession and talent risks. In turn, this would help to promote a culture of internal development and career progression.

Managing the Generational Shift

The demographic shift of executive leadership, from Baby Boomers and Generation X, towards Millennials and Generation Z, will be carefully curated. The leaders of today carry vast amounts of institutional knowledge and experience; they have dealt with numerous recessions, periods of high inflation and market challenges. The leaders of tomorrow may bring different values, expectations and ways of working; but they are well versed in the 'born digital' approach, and the culture and ethics of modern business. Together, these generations are a powerful force.

C-Suite executives acknowledge the challenge of losing older leaders. They are using technology to capture institutional knowledge; retaining retired employees as consultants and advisors; and creating opportunities for each generation to collaborate. Many are also establishing mentoring and reverse mentoring to bring the generations closer. But it will also be important for them to develop cultural and organisational storytelling; an essential tool for transformation because it helps employees to connect with the future. Stories will help everyone to understand how a business has evolved and where it is going. In addition, transition plans for those exiting the business are important to them move on with grace and integrity after their careers.



Mentoring the Next Generation: Passing the Torch Before It's Too Late

To future-proof leadership, businesses must establish mentoring and reverse mentoring programmes that equip Gen Y and Z for top roles – while capturing critical experience before Baby Boomers and Gen X retire.

Mind the Gap:

How Companies Are Safeguarding Critical Knowledge from Baby Boomers and Gen X*



* Results reflect the Top 3 rankings of C-Suite Members and Private Equity Investors, based on their prior selection of all applicable options for their organisation(s).



How Businesses Plan Develop Gen Y and Z for Top Roles *



* Results reflect the Top 3 rankings of C-Suite Members and Private Equity Investors, based on their prior selection of all applicable options for their organisation(s).



C-Suite leaders also want to encourage younger employees to consider executive roles when they may be reluctant to do so. They understand the job market has changed, and that employees are moving roles and businesses more often; but they want to create thoughtful opportunities to progress for those who are interested. Both public and private businesses offer flexible and hybrid leadership training; leadership paths that prioritise diversity and inclusion; and real-world learning opportunities.

THE GENERATIONAL SHIFT IN EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP NEEDS CAREFUL CONSIDERATION

These can be complemented by peer-to-peer learning opportunities, a rich source of inspiration and encouragement. Simulation and game-based leadership training is also an engaging way to spark imagination and create new ways of thinking. Finally, providing opportunities to undertake leadership roles in different parts of the business will help to broaden skill sets and experience.

Overall, passing the baton of executive leadership will require a blended approach. It will draw on the skills and experience discussed in this whitepaper and the technology trends shaping the future.

As businesses move towards the C-Suite of 2035, they have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity: to preserve and respect what has taken them this far, and to encourage and develop those who follow. It is a story of people and technology, where new skills complement – and sometimes replace – old ones. But at the heart of it all, it is about people working together and learning from each other.

Finally, readiness courses and shadow partnerships will help aspiring leaders to gain a real perspective on executive leadership; helping them to make an educated decision, based on the reality of a C-Suite role. Transition plans will then support them to step up.



Practice the Unpredictable before It's Real: Consider Game-Based Learning for Real-World Leadership

To prepare leaders for the unpredictable, businesses should invest in simulation and game-based training – because situations like cybercrime issues, litigation, business transformation, stakeholder activism, or geo- and socio-political shocks may be rare, but when they strike, leaders must be ready to deliver their A-game.

Learning to Lead: The Skills and Training Future Executives Will Need *



* Results reflect the Top 3 rankings of C-Suite Members and Private Equity Investors, based on their prior selection of all applicable options for their organisation(s).



Securing Tomorrow's C-Suite: Steps Businesses Are Taking Today *

Adjust approaches to leadership development to keep up-to-date

Align leadership development with business strategy

Create a formal succession planning framework

Develop emotional intelligence and soft skills

Developing an external network of potential candidates

Focus on mentoring and coaching

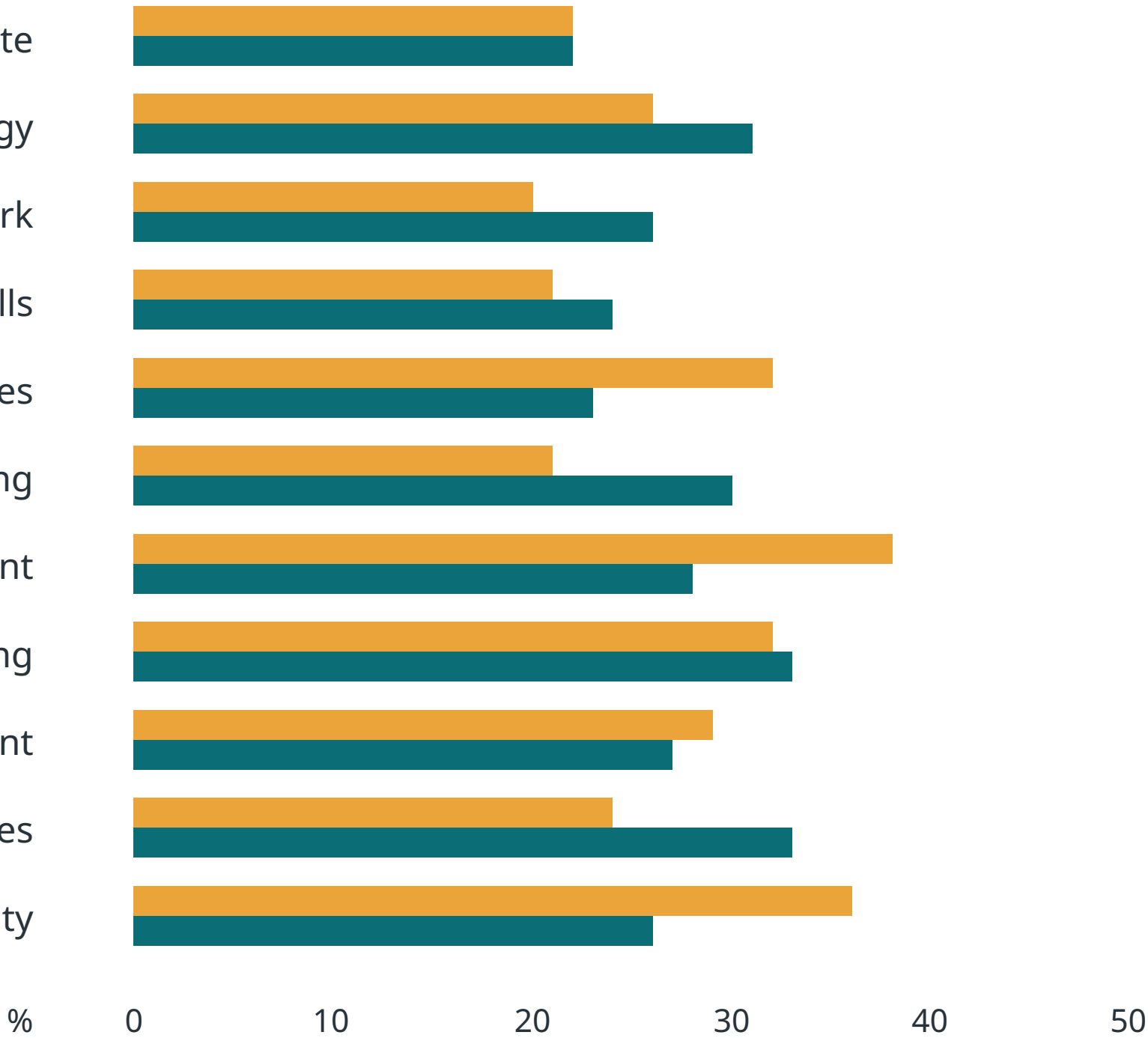
Invest more in leadership development

Promote a culture of continuous learning

Promote diversity and inclusion in leadership development

Rotate those with high potential through different roles

Use technology to assess leadership capability



- Publicly-listed Businesses
- Private-owned Businesses

* Results reflect the Top 3 rankings of C-Suite Members and Private Equity Investors, based on their prior selection of all applicable options for their organisation(s).



Additional Resources

- › Selected Detailed C-Suite Profiles and Career Paths
- › C-Suite Hiring and Succession Planning Checklist





Chief Transformation Officer (CTRO)

Imagine the Digital Transformation Manager, or the Innovation and Change Manager, appointed in the first chapter. In the next five years, their experience of running projects will build; they'll build relationships and capability, and an understanding of how departments work. But in time, they will outgrow this role and aim for something new, something that will be very important in 2035.

The CTRO will lead change programmes, realign business strategy and people, and aid performance during periods of disruption. Strategic skills will include turnaround management, restructuring, workforce and digital transformation, and crisis management. This is a unique set of skills. It requires a unique experience. What's happening now will help to build the CTROs of the future.

We expect this role to report to the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Strategy Officer or the Chief Operations Officer. A close relationship with the Chief Executive Officer will signal a mandate for change when it comes to large-scale, business-wide transformation projects. Reporting to the Chief Strategy Officer would work when transformation aligns to long-term strategic goals; but there could be a risk if they lack operational influence. In cultures of continuous transformation, where operations are central to the story, reporting to the Chief Operations Officer is a natural fit.

Because the Chief Transformation Officer covers technology and talent, should it be one role or two? There are cases for both. If the transformation sweeps across the entire business, or it's temporary, then one transformation leader will work well. It also makes sense in SMEs, where resources are more limited, to simplify governance and reporting.

**LEADS TRANSFORMATION
AT SCALE – ALIGNING PEOPLE,
STRATEGY, AND OPERATIONS
TO DRIVE ENTERPRISE CHANGE.**

But for deep-rooted projects: implementing enterprise-level artificial intelligence platforms, alongside reskilling a large workforce, for example, then it will be better to employ a chief technology transformation officer, alongside a chief talent transformation officer. In large businesses, these two disciplines are complex enough to warrant dedicated roles; they also operate on different time horizons with leadership styles. The technology transformation role may also work with the chief information officer or the chief technology officer, the talent transformation role with the chief HR officer.

There is also an option to appoint two senior leaders on vice president or director level focussed on technology transformation and talent transformation, reporting into the Chief Strategy Officer or Chief Operations Officer.

One of the two could potentially succeed the Chief Strategy Officer or – depending on the size and complexity of the business – become a dedicated C-Suite position as Chief Transformation Officer. This approach helps to keep the two roles aligned with the business, but ensures the depth needed in each discipline.





CHIEF TRANSFORMATION OFFICER (CTRO)

Scenario	Recommended Setup
SME, single transformation programme	Chief Transformation Officer
Large business, dual transformation (tech + talent)	Split roles: Chief Technology Transformation Officer and Chief Talent Transformation Officer
Enterprise-wide change with need for oversight and specialisation	Hybrid model: Chief Transformation Officer + specialised VPs/Directors

› [Back to C-Suite Competency Matrix](#)



Positions	VP/Director Talent Transformation	VP/Director Technology Transformation
Wealth of Experience Needed In This Role	To builds credibility for leading complex people agendas and systemic talent redesign initiatives. › Workforce transformation › Succession planning › Crisis management › Digital transformation › Regulation/compliance issues	To equip leaders to modernise core functions while navigating risk and enterprise-scale implementation. › Digital transformation › Restructuring › Supply chain disruption › Crisis management › Technology modernization
Technical Skills: Most Important to the Role	To supports digital integration, employee advocacy, and inclusion-driven talent strategies. › Artificial intelligence knowledge › Change management › Public speaking and presentation skills › CSR/ESG knowledge	To drive structured, scalable system upgrades while managing complexity and change resistance. › Project management › Risk management › Change management › Artificial intelligence knowledge › Planning and organisation
Soft Skills: Most Important to the Role	To enable balanced and visionary leadership throughout emotionally-charged and high-stakes workforce change. › Strategic thinking › Emotional intelligence › Resilience › Conflict management › Solution oriented	To enable fast, clear decision-making and responsive transformation delivery across multiple business units. › Critical thinking › Solution oriented › Agility › Strategic thinking › Communication skills
Mix of Leadership Styles Required	To lead cultural shifts and reimagine talent development, empower individuals and foster growth, support employees through change with empathy, and co-create future workforce models across functions. › Transformational leadership › Coaching leadership › Compassionate leadership › Shared leadership	To adapt leadership to team maturity and project demands, deliver tech innovation iteratively, support and grow teams through transformation, and drive vision-led, enterprise-wide digital change. › Situational leadership › Agile leadership › Coaching leadership › Transformational leadership
Mix of Emerging Technology Likely Impacting This Role	To transform learning, HR insights, and employee experience through scalable digital platforms. › Large language models › Natural language processing › Augmented reality and virtual reality › Intelligent process automation	To accelerate distributed, high-performance systems and predictive operational environments. › Edge computing › Quantum computing › Intelligent process automation › 6G connectivity, Digital twins



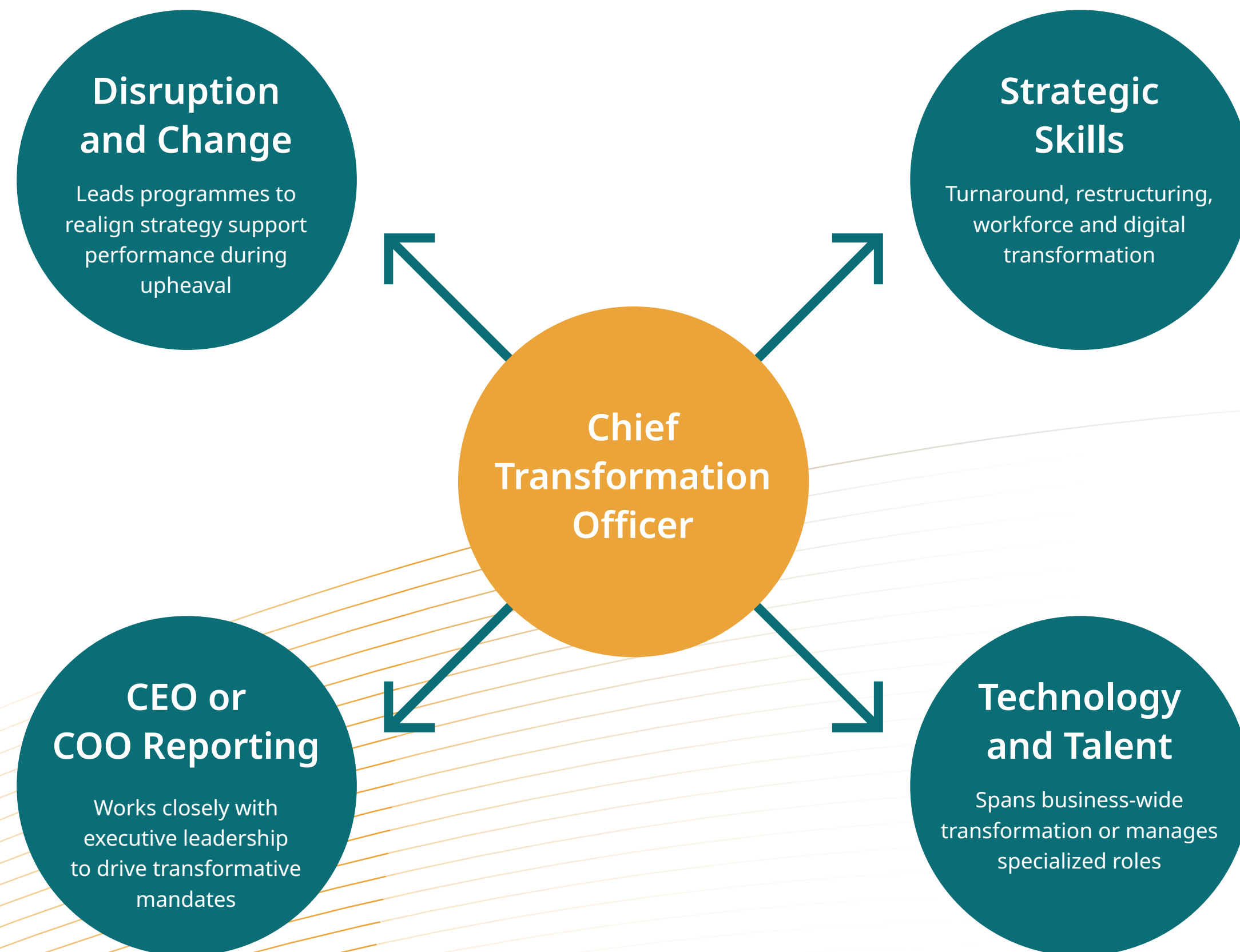


CHIEF TRANSFORMATION OFFICER (CTRO)

› [Back to C-Suite Competency Matrix](#)



The CTRO at the Centre of Enterprise-Wide Transformation



Creating CTROs: Developing the Leaders Behind Business Reinvention

- › **Career Path:** Strategy Consultant; Project Manager; Head of Transformation/Innovation; VP Transformation; Chief Transformation Officer.
- › **Skills and Experience Milestones:** Delivering change programmes; coordinating digital and workforce transformation; developing agile models.
- › **Internal and External:** Often recruited externally for objectivity and transformation expertise. Internal candidates will succeed with strong experience across the business.
- › **Public versus Private:** Publicly-listed Chief Transformation Officers focus on managing large-scale operational shifts in a way that is transparent for investors; private firms may give Chief Transformation Officers more freedom to experiment and rapidly change things.
- › **Leadership Development Programme:** Rotations in strategy, HR and technology; agile and systems leadership training; stakeholder management and governance modules. This programme could be implemented by setting up enterprise transformation labs for high-potential candidates to lead, assigning live projects to future leaders, and linking performance indicators to agility, not just cost.
- › **Action:** Develop a Digital Transformation Manager or Innovation and Change Manager into a VP for Transformation, before appointing to the C-Suite in five years' time.



Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

The Chief Technology Officer of the future is a strategic and innovative leader. In 2025, they typically oversee the products, platforms and infrastructure developed for customers. By 2035, their role will expand even further. Over the next five to 10 years, the Chief Technology Officer will become a central leadership function – driving competitiveness, operational agility and workforce empowerment. Technology will no longer merely support the business – it will be the business.

As digital and workforce transformation accelerate, the Chief Technology Officer will address a dual mandate: spearheading innovation to fuel growth and enhancing operational effectiveness to navigate resource constraints and increasing complexity. This includes deploying artificial intelligence, automation and machine learning not only to modernise systems, but to optimise the performance of a shrinking or overstretched workforce. They will also be responsible for improving usability and customer experience by making digital tools more intuitive and intelligent – maximising impact with minimal friction for both employees and customers.

The Chief Technology Officer will also play a pivotal role in bridging the digital skills gap. With talent shortages in high-demand technology disciplines, they must create environments where cross-functional teams can thrive; invest in digital upskilling programmes in partnership with Chief Human Resources Officers; and determine when to augment internal talent with external vendors or AI solutions. This will require a strong understanding of organisational design, learning ecosystems, and the human side of digital adoption.

Over the next decade, the Chief Technology Officer may absorb or overtake aspects of the Chief Operations Officer or Chief Information Officer roles – particularly in technology-led businesses where products, platforms and operations converge. In such cases, the Chief Technology Officer becomes not only the architect of the digital enterprise, but also a steward of end-to-end operational delivery. However, in highly regulated industries such as healthcare, financial services, and the public sector, the Chief Information Officer may retain distinct responsibilities focused on governance, compliance, cybersecurity and regulatory oversight. In some organisations, these roles will collaborate; in others, they may consolidate under one strategic leader.

**DRIVES INNOVATION AND
AUTOMATION – TURNING
TECHNOLOGY INTO A CORE
BUSINESS ADVANTAGE**



CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER (CTO)

➤ The CTO as COO

In sectors where digital infrastructure forms the operational backbone – such as logistics, fintech or advanced manufacturing – the Chief Technology Officer may evolve into a hybrid Chief Operations Officer role. They would lead enterprise-wide technology strategy while overseeing automation of workflows, supply chains and service systems, second only to the Chief Executive Officer.

➤ The CTO as CIO

As technology drives business value, the relationship between the Chief Technology Officer and Chief Information Officer is converging. In agile, product-focused organisations, the Chief Technology Officer may take full responsibility for innovation and enterprise architecture, while the Chief Information Officer shifts toward compliance, cybersecurity and governance – or is merged. In regulated sectors, the roles may remain distinct but interdependent, balancing innovation with risk oversight.

➤ Rise of Fragmented Tech Leadership

As technology grows more complex & business-critical, the Chief Technology Officer role is fragmenting into specialised C-Suite functions. In large or regulated organisations, responsibilities may be distributed across roles such as Chief AI & Data Officer, Chief Digital Experience Officer, Chief Information Security Officer or Chief Data

Officer. Among these, the Chief AI and Data Officer manages AI and data as levers of value, governance and risk – bridging machine learning systems and executive decision-making. While the Chief Technology Officer remains a strategic integrator, this model boosts agility and helps manage complexity with focus.

➤ CTO and Ethical Leadership

As AI adoption accelerates, businesses are asking more about digital responsibility. Chief Technology Officers will be expected to lead on ethics – covering inclusive design, data rights, AI governance and sustainability – working with legal, HR and public affairs leaders. This role is especially vital in education, healthcare, finance and the public sector, where trust and transparency are essential.

➤ Succession and Future Leadership Pathways

The growing importance of technology leadership opens new succession pathways. Organisations may appoint Vice Presidents or Directors of AI and Data as deputies or successors to the Chief Technology Officer – building next-generation capabilities while ensuring leadership continuity. By 2035, the Chief Technology Officer will be a business-critical leader of innovation, transformation and productivity – empowering people and technology alike to shape the next chapter of enterprise growth. As a result, Chief Technology Officers are increasingly stepping into CEO roles – not only in technology services, but likely also in a growing number of other sectors.

➤ [Back to C-Suite Competency Matrix](#)



Position	VP/Director AI & Data
Wealth of Experience Needed In This Role	Brings experience in scaling AI solutions while mitigating legal and societal risks. ➤ Series funding ➤ Regulation/compliance issues ➤ Litigation ➤ Digital transformation ➤ Public/Corporate affairs
Technical Skills: Most Important to the Role	Enables enterprise AI adoption while ensuring trustworthy, explainable, and secure implementation. ➤ Artificial intelligence knowledge ➤ Regulation and compliance ➤ Storytelling skills ➤ Risk management ➤ Corporate governance
Soft Skills: Most Important to the Role	Supports responsible AI leadership through clear insight translation and ethical innovation. ➤ Strategic thinking ➤ Critical thinking ➤ Communication skills ➤ Innovative capacity ➤ Taking responsibility
Mix of Leadership Styles Required	To drive cross-functional collaboration and embed data thinking across the business; to lead innovation and cultural change around AI and data; to tailor approaches to stakeholder needs, project scope, and regulation; and to align AI initiatives with long-term goals while managing risk and compliance. ➤ Shared leadership ➤ Transformational leadership ➤ Situational leadership ➤ Strategic leadership
Mix of Emerging Technology Likely Impacting This Role	Delivers next-gen intelligence and security, enabling robust, scalable insight pipelines. ➤ Large language models ➤ Automated machine learning ➤ Natural language processing ➤ Blockchain and decentralised technologies ➤ Quantum computing



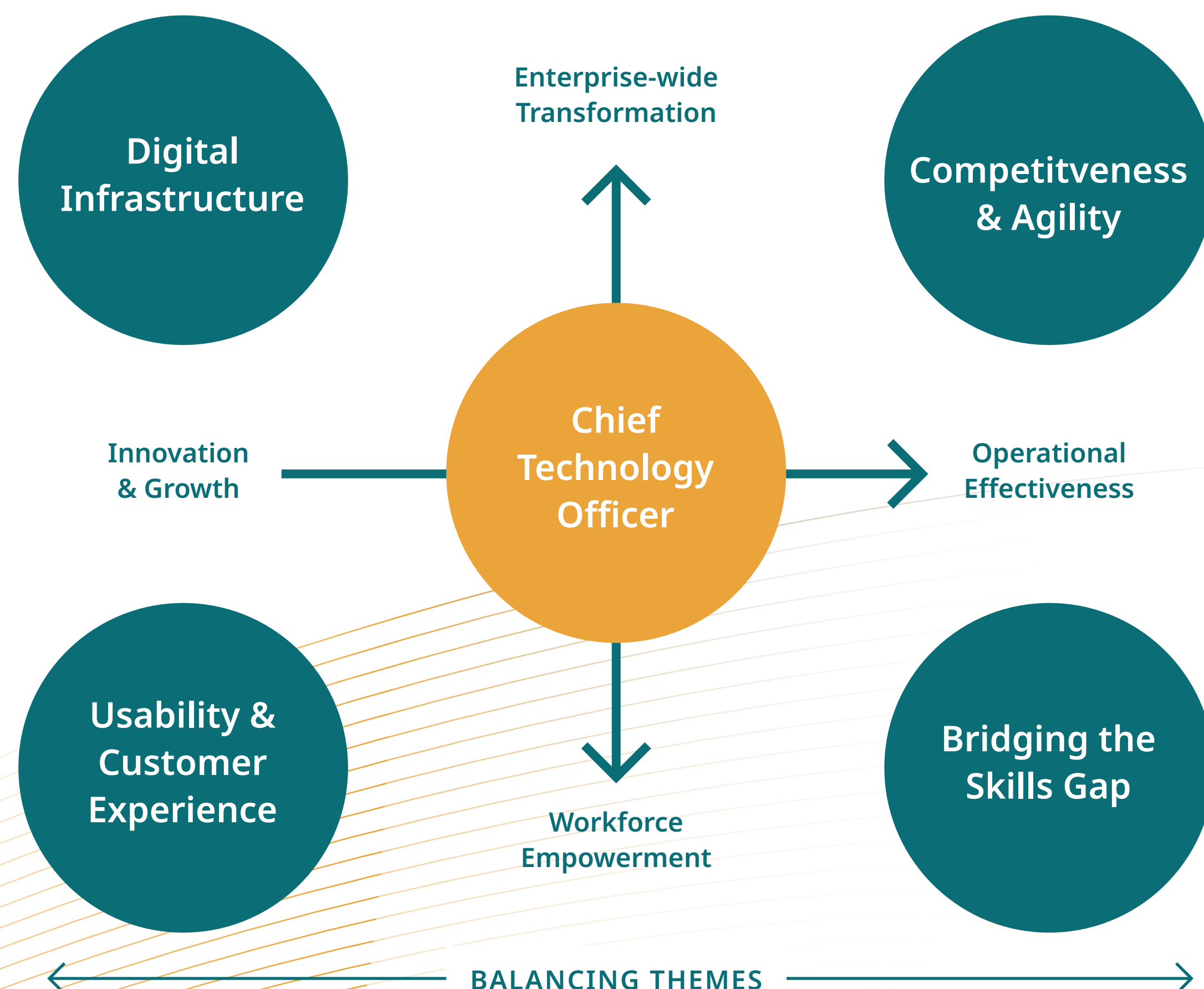


CHIEF
TECHNOLOGY
OFFICER (CTO)

› [Back to C-Suite Competency Matrix](#)



The Evolving Role of the CTO



Next-Gen CTOs: The Strategic Tech Leaders Businesses Need

- › **Career Path:** Lead Engineer/Architect; Head of Engineering/IT; VP of Technology; Chief Technology Officer.
- › **Skills and Experience Milestones:** Leading business-wide digital transformation; scaling technology in high-growth or regulated environments; building AI/data governance frameworks; cybersecurity simulation, resilience and readiness programmes.
- › **Internal and External:** Increasingly recruited externally for fresh perspectives and specialist skills in AI, cloud and cybersecurity; although internal promotion is rising.
- › **Public versus Private:** Publicly-listed Chief Technology Officers often balance innovation with investor relations and compliance; private businesses may prioritise speed, experimentation and product-market fit.
- › **Leadership Development Programme:** Innovation bootcamps and technology foresight sessions; P&L and product ownership immersion; AI ethics and cybersecurity leadership courses. This programme could be implemented by establishing a Chief Technology Officer shadow board for high-potential candidates, assigning leadership roles on pilot digital transformation projects and partnering with startups or universities for applied research opportunities.
- › **Action:** Consider the skills sets of the existing Chief Technology Officer and how they are supported by their current teams. If the role is expected to fragment into AI and data, or remain similar, who is best placed to be promoted? Several specialist VP roles could help prepare the business for the next chapter.





Chief Communications Officer (CCO)

Communication will be a critical pillar of executive leadership over the next decade. The Chief Communications Officer will play a pivotal role at the intersection of business strategy, transformation and stakeholder engagement. As companies navigate digital and workforce transformation – and increasing operational complexity – the Chief Communications Officer will shape narratives that align employees, reassure investors, inform regulators and connect with customers. AI-powered sentiment analysis will become indispensable, providing real-time insight into the concerns and expectations of priority stakeholder groups. In this environment, communications is no longer a support function – it is a strategic enabler of change, preserving reputation and driving business performance.

The Chief Communications Officer will be an architect of storytelling, bringing the Chief Executive Officer's vision and transformation agenda to life. Striking the right balance between executive visibility, employee trust and public credibility requires alignment with the business and its culture. Multinational organisations demand Chief Communications Officers who are adept at tailoring messaging to global and local audiences while navigating complex socio-political climates and shareholder activism. At the same time, the changing nature of customer experience – driven by digital channels, transparency and purpose-driven consumption – means communications must become real-time, data-informed and emotionally intelligent. Effective stakeholder management through periods of organisational change – whether triggered by market headwinds, M&A activity or

large-scale technology roll-outs – will hinge on an integrated communications framework that ensures every audience understands the “why”, “what” and “how” of transformation.

**SHAPES NARRATIVES THAT
CONNECT VISION, PEOPLE,
AND PURPOSE ACROSS
STAKEHOLDERS**

To meet these demands, Chief Communications Officers will lead increasingly interdisciplinary teams, blending storytelling with analytics, media intelligence and technological fluency. The rise of AI, predictive analytics and immersive communication formats (e.g. AR/VR) are reshaping how messages are crafted, delivered and measured. AI tools will also be deployed to monitor social media activity, detect deepfakes, flag disinformation and mitigate impersonation risks before they escalate into full-blown crises. Communications departments will therefore evolve into agile, insight-driven functions, capable of supporting both proactive initiatives and rapid crisis response. Regular crisis simulation exercises – involving the entire communications team and key business partners – will ensure that everyone is equipped to manage issues the moment they arise.



**CHIEF
COMMUNICATIONS
OFFICER (CCO)**

The Chief Communications Officer will work closely with the Chief Executive Officer, Chief HR Officer, Chief Legal Officer, Chief Operations Officer and, potentially, the Chief Transformation Officer – especially during times of organisational change, ESG scrutiny or reputational risk. Collaboration with the Chief Risk Officer, Chief Sustainability Officer and public affairs functions becomes critical in regulated sectors or those receiving heightened public attention. In SMEs, where a full-time Chief Communications Officer may not be in place, senior communications leaders will often report to the Chief Executive Officer or Chief Operations Officer, but will still possess the strategic foresight and stakeholder acumen to operate at board level. The importance of communications as a driver of trust, resilience and transformation will only grow.

**Key Stakeholders
and Reporting Lines**

Stakeholder	Relationship Setup
Chief Executive Officer	Primary advisor on reputation and public relations narrative
Chief HR Officer	Partner in workforce transformation and employee engagement
Chief Legal Officer	Collaborates on regulatory messaging, risk and crisis management
Chief Sustainability Officer	Co-leads ESG and social-political activism communications
Chief Marketing Officer	Coordinates on brand voice and customer messaging

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CHIEF COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER (CCO)

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The Evolving Role of the CCO: From Storytelling to Strategic Impact



Communications in Command: Elevating the Role to the C-Suite

- › **Career Path:** PR Manager; Head of Corporate Comms; VP of Communications/ Public Affairs; Chief Communications Officer.
- › **Skills and Experience Milestones:** Managing socio-political and reputational crises; leading ESG or culture campaigns; aligning communications with employee experience and brand.
- › **Internal and External:** A combination; internal promotions bring continuity, while external hires offer a fresh strategy.
- › **Public versus Private:** Publicly-listed Chief Communications Officers have to navigate investor messaging, regulatory disclosure and ESG communications; private firms focus more on brand awareness, customer advocacy, and internal messaging.
- › **Leadership Development Programme:** Media training and strategic narrative workshops; scenario-based crisis simulations; ESG and public affairs strategy development. This programme could be implemented by creating a crisis response task force for internal talent, inviting future leaders to contribute to executive speeches and policy decisions, and allowing them to lead ESG and inclusion task forces.
- › **Action:** Consider developing or appointing a VP for Communications. This would help to elevate communications has a key role during transformation, especially if the Chief Communications Officer role doesn't yet exist.





Chief Marketing Officer (CMO)

C-Suite marketing leaders are evolving into strategic, data-driven executives at the core of commercial success. Today's Chief Marketing Officers will integrate customer intelligence, product innovation and business development across an increasingly fragmented customer funnel. Customer journeys span multiple channels – digital and physical, owned and paid, short-term and loyalty-based – for example. That means Chief Marketing Officers are expected to develop personalised experiences that enhance brand equity, drive demand and fuel sustainable growth. This requires fluency in marketing technology stacks, advanced analytics, automation – and a firm grasp of customer data governance and regulatory compliance.

Many Chief Marketing Officers are shifting towards the role of Chief Commercial Officer as marketing becomes increasingly predictive, automated and performance-oriented. They are overseeing brand strategy and demand generation, but also sales enablement, pricing models, customer success and retention. This shift reflects the growing need for integrated strategies that align marketing, sales and customer experience to create value at every stage. In traditional large businesses, the roles of Chief Marketing Officer and Chief Commercial Officer may remain distinct but highly collaborative.

In high-growth, platform-driven or 'born digital' businesses, the distinction is rapidly disappearing.

The Chief Marketing Officer or Chief Commercial Officer will work hand-in-hand with the Chief Technology Officer and the Chief Digital Officer to harness AI, predictive modelling and data science to refine audience segmentation, personalise outreach and optimise customer journeys. At the same time, they will navigate increasingly complex consumer protection regulations, privacy laws and ethical marketing standards to maintain trust and credibility.

**TRANSFORMS DATA AND
CREATIVITY INTO GROWTH
– DRIVING VALUE FROM
BRAND TO REVENUE**

By 2035, Robert Half expects the Chief Marketing Officer – whether in title or scope – to be a key driver of commercial growth, acting as a steward of both brand and revenue. Success will depend on their ability to blend creativity with commercial acumen, data with empathy and innovation with compliance – ultimately becoming indispensable partners in shaping future-ready, customer-first organisations.





CHIEF
MARKETING
OFFICER (CMO)

Scenario	Role Structure	Notes
SMEs	Chief Marketing Officer often combines with sales, product, or customer roles	May evolve into a hybrid ‘Commercial Director’
Large Enterprises	Chief Marketing Officer and Chief Commercial Officer often split with close collaboration	Clear distinction but shared KPIs on growth and experience
Tech-Driven Startups	Single commercial/marketing lead	Emphasis on rapid customer acquisition and agile ‘go to market’ strategies
Consumer Brands	Strong Chief Marketing Officer role with sales oversight	Chief Marketing Officer may evolve into Chief Customer Experience or Growth Officer

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Position	VP/Director Customer Experience
Wealth of Experience Needed In This Role	Combines hands-on CX design with social sensitivity and organisational change in public-facing settings. › Commercial/customer experience › Socio-political activism › Digital transformation › Public/Corporate affairs
Technical Skills: Most Important to the Role	Supports ethical brand positioning, impactful communication, and structured experience redesign efforts. › CSR/ESG knowledge › Storytelling › Change management › Project management
Soft Skills: Most Important to the Role	Crucial for understanding customer needs, creating engaging experiences, and guiding cross-functional alignment. › Emotional intelligence › Creativity › Active listening › Strategic thinking › Communication skills
Mix of Leadership Styles Required	To quickly adapt to evolving customer needs and feedback; to inspire teams and build strong emotional connections with customers; to prioritise customer satisfaction and empower frontline employees; and to strengthen capabilities and service performance through feedback and support. › Agile leadership › Charismatic leadership › Servant leadership › Coaching leadership
Mix of Emerging Technology Likely Impacting This Role	Drives next-gen personalisation, feedback loops, and immersive brand engagement at scale. › Augmented reality and virtual reality › Machine learning › Internet of things › Natural language processing



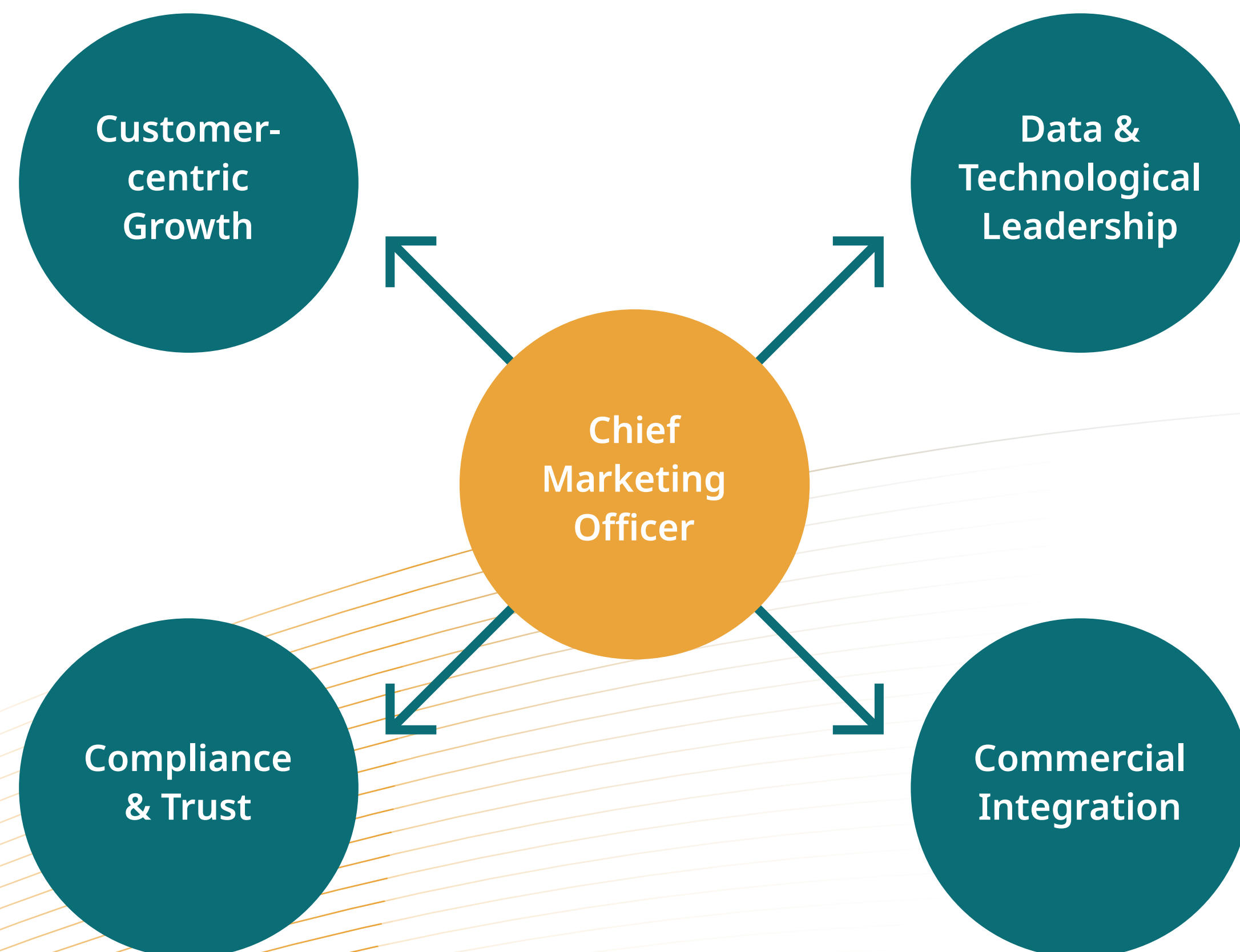


CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER (CMO)

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The Future CMO: Driving Growth at the Intersection of Data, Trust, and Experience



From Brand Builder to Growth Leader: The Path to CMO

- › **Career Path:** Brand or Product Manager; Head of Marketing; VP of Growth/Marketing; Chief Marketing Officer.
- › **Skills and Experience Milestones:** Leading commercial strategy or launching global campaigns; scaling marketing automation and personalisation; overseeing customer lifecycles and their impact on revenue.
- › **Internal and External:** Often a balance; internal leaders understand brand and customer history, while external hires may be more disruptive.
- › **Public versus Private:** Publicly-listed Chief Marketing Officers need to manage investor expectations of growth and the brand; private businesses typically require greater levels of entrepreneurship in the role.
- › **Leadership Development Programme:** Customer journey and brand storytelling intensives; training in digital sales and e-commerce; commercial growth labs and innovation sprints. This programme could be implemented by introducing Chief Marketing Officer candidates to commercial P&L ownership, allowing them to lead innovation groups for new campaigns, run reverse mentoring with digital teams to build capability.
- › **Action:** Consider the skills of the current Chief Marketing Officer and how they match to the commercial/data trend. This can inform the hiring or promotion strategy for the Head of Marketing, and VP of Growth/Marketing, over the next five years.





Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO)

The Chief HR Officer is at the heart of business transformation. They will champion the human dimension of strategy execution in a time defined by accelerated change, talent scarcity and demographic disruption. But the remit now extends far beyond “people”. Data-rich technologies – analytics, AI and automation – have become the engine of modern HR, so the Chief HR Officer must possess deep technology fluency. They will drive end-to-end digital transformation of HR, building future-proof talent-management systems underpinned by robust data architecture and strict compliance with GDPR and other regulations governing personally identifiable information (PII).

As businesses adapt to digital innovation, geopolitical uncertainty and evolving customer expectations, the Chief HR Officer will align workforce strategy with enterprise goals – ensuring the right capabilities are in place to sustain operations and enable growth, innovation and resilience. Their business acumen must be fully recognised at C-level, enabling HR to influence profitability, risk, and investment decisions on an equal footing with other strategic functions. Workforce orchestration at scale will combine permanent hiring with agile models – project-based, temporary, freelance and interim – to close critical skills gaps and boost organisational agility.

They will anticipate and navigate demographic shifts – an ageing workforce, changing employee expectations and a tightening labour market – through proactive workforce planning and data-driven talent acquisition, best positioning the business to stay competitive in the war for talent brought on

by demographic change. Close collaboration with the Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Officer and Chief Strategy Officer will align hiring, inclusion goals and business transformation.

**ALIGNS TALENT AND
CULTURE WITH STRATEGY
– POWERING BUSINESS
TRANSFORMATION
THROUGH PEOPLE**

At the same time, the Chief HR Officer will spearhead far-reaching upskilling and reskilling programmes. These initiatives will equip employees and leaders with the digital, data-literacy and AI-readiness skills required for tomorrow’s operating models. Learning and development will evolve into a strategic asset, supported by predictive analytics that identify emerging skill needs early and guide targeted interventions, underpinned by the ongoing capturing and analysis of internal workforce data to refine decisions in real time.

In organisations with a Chief Transformation Officer, the Chief HR Officer will act as a critical partner – ensuring that





CHIEF HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER (CHRO)

talent transformation, data governance and AI deployment advance in lockstep with wider digital and operational shifts. Data-privacy stewardship will be central: safeguarding employee information while harnessing analytics to inform strategic decisions.

Moreover, as culture and purpose become key differentiators, the Chief HR Officer will safeguard cultural cohesion and organisational values. They will work closely with the Chief Technology Officer to embed human-centric principles and privacy-by-design into digital initiatives, and with the Chief Communications Officer to foster transparency, engagement and trust during change.

By 2035, the Chief HR Officer will have solidified their role as strategic architect of workforce and data transformation – placing people at the centre of digital evolution while ensuring businesses have the insight, skills and governance to thrive in an unpredictable world. Those who blend talent strategy with advanced technology, rigorous data management and an eye on the skills of tomorrow will define the next decade of organisational success.

CHRO – Core Partnerships

Stakeholder	Relationship Setup
Chief AI & Data Officer	Integrates ethical AI into HR systems; uses workforce analytics for decision-making
Chief Communications Officer	Partners on internal culture communication, crisis response, and change messaging
Chief Executive Officer	Aligns talent with business vision and long-term strategy
Chief Financial Officer	Aligns workforce investment with strategic cost planning and productivity goals
Chief Operating Officer	Coordinates on operational workforce deployment, efficiency, and service delivery during transformation
Chief Sustainability Officer	Aligns workforce strategy with ESG and social responsibility objectives
Chief Technology Officer	Co-leads digital transformation and automation readiness for the workforce

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CHIEF HUMAN
RESOURCES OFFICER
(CHRO)

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CHRO: Architect of Workforce Transformation



At the Heart of Transformation: Building the Strategic CHRO

- › **Career Path:** HR Business Partner; Head of Talent/People; VP of HR or Organisational Development; Chief HR Officer.
- › **Skills and Experience Milestones:** Leading major transformation (digital skills, culture change, for example); managing through crises; building succession frameworks.
- › **Internal or External:** Often promoted internally due to a deeper understanding of company culture and the workforce.
- › **Public versus Private:** When it comes to workforce strategy, publicly-listed businesses often need Chief HR Officers to prioritise governance and investor relations; private businesses often focus on culture, scale and agility.
- › **Leadership Development Programme:** Rotational leadership roles across the business; coaching in executive presence and board communication; future of work, inclusion strategy, and tech/AI working groups. This programme could be implemented by pairing high-potential candidates with Chief HR Officer mentors, working on projects including the design of new inclusion frameworks, for example, and using experiential and simulated learning on culture and workforce transformation.
- › **Action:** The Succession Planning Lead is well placed to develop into a VP of HR, before joining the C-Suite in five years' time.



Hiring and Succession Planning Checklist (2025 – 2035)

Future-Proof Your Leadership Team: A 10-Step Checklist for Hiring and Succession Planning

Building a resilient executive pipeline takes foresight, structure, and strategic intent. This checklist outlines 10 essential steps to help businesses identify, attract, and prepare the next generation of C-Suite leaders – ensuring continuity, capability, and competitiveness in a fast-changing world.

Task	
1 Align Succession Planning with Business Strategy › What is your business strategy for the next three to five years? › Which industries, countries or product areas are you expanding into? › How will your strategy evolve with technological innovation, generational shifts and geopolitical risk?	☐
2 Analyse Strengths and Weaknesses › What are the leadership skills and experience in your business today? › How do these match the skills and experience you need to execute your five-year strategy? › Do you have the skills and experience you need to kick start digital and workforce transformation projects?	☐
3 Define Critical Roles › Which executive leadership roles should be represented now? › Which roles should be hired or developed today to support succession in the future? › Are there any emerging C-Suite roles that you should anticipate now?	☐
4 Balance External Hiring and Internal Development › Which areas of the business require immediate expertise due to gaps in knowledge or experience? › Which internal leaders show strong potential for executive leadership succession and therefore leadership development? › Are there any hybrid roles that could pair external recruits with internal ones to help with knowledge transfer?	☐
5 Develop Leadership Capability › How does your leadership development programme support your business strategy? › What methods are you using to ensure the right blend of technical and soft leadership skills? › How are you going to help succession candidates to develop these skills and their leadership experience?	☐



Task

6 Build Inclusive Leadership ☐

- › Are you creating clear pathways for the next generation of leaders?
- › How inclusive is your current leadership team and how could that be improved?
- › Are you mentoring and supporting underrepresented talent for future leadership positions?

7 Use Data and Scenario Planning ☐

- › What does your workforce data tell you about retirement risks, skill gaps and current strengths?
- › Have you conducted scenario planning to stress-test your succession strategy?
- › How do you use data to evaluate whether candidates are ready to step up, and to measure the effectiveness of your leadership development programme?

8 Communicate Your Plans ☐

- › Is there a clear narrative around leadership development and succession planning in your organisation?
- › Do your values and culture shape how you select and develop future leaders?
- › How transparent are you with potential successors about their potential career paths and expectations?

9 Support New Candidates ☐

- › How will you support newly-appointed leaders when they start?
- › What mechanisms do you have to make sure they have the resources and ongoing development in place to succeed?
- › If you have recruited a Director or Vice President with specialist skills, what steps will you take now to prepare them for a future C-Suite position?

10 Consider Succession as a Continuous Cycle ☐

- › How do you know your succession and hiring plans are working?
- › How will you make sure succession becomes a core topic in the boardroom?
- › How will your succession and hiring plans evolve?



Methodology

Robert Half commissioned UK-based Rigour Research Ltd to carry out an online survey in the first quarter of 2025 across the European Union and the United Kingdom. The survey gathered responses from 400 C-Suite and executive leadership professionals, drawn from a broad range of commercial sectors. Respondents were evenly split between SMEs and large enterprises, as well as between publicly listed and privately owned companies. In addition, 100 private equity investors based across Europe and the United States were surveyed. The majority (88 %) focus on growth and scale-up stage investments, while 34 % also invest in distressed assets.

The survey was conducted using prompted questions. Participants were initially asked to select all answer options applicable to their organisation. In a second step, they were asked to rank their top three choices from the options previously selected. To ensure representative results, the data were weighted in line with the distribution of the overall population. Please note that due to rounding, some totals may not add up to exactly 100 %.

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