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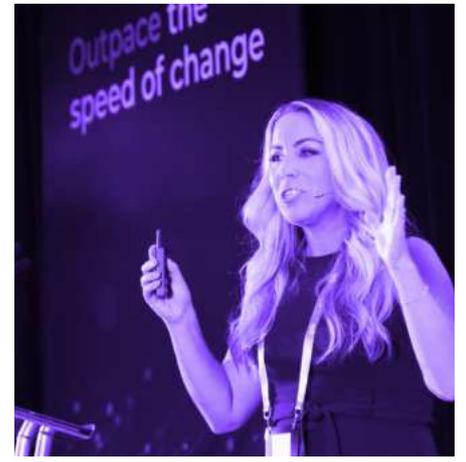
CIO Insight Summit

Boston, 17 - 18 March 2025

Insight Report From The Main Stage

Contents.

CIO Insights 2025

Innovating at Scale for a Smarter Tomorrow.

This year's CIO Insight Summit in Boston brought together senior IT leaders from across the spectrum of industries to tackle the most pressing challenges facing organizations today.

We heard insightful discussions, bold strategies, and industry-shaping ideas on everything from crafting impactful AI strategies to lessons on leadership that sparked real conversations.

If you missed out, or maybe just wanted a refresher, here is a wrap up of all the key takeaways from the main stage.

Crafting an AI Strategy That Delivers Real Impact

Speaker

Rajeev Sinha
Chief IT Enterprise Architect, Pacific Gas and Electric Company

Summary

Rajeev Sinha opened the show with his explosive session on moving beyond the hype of AI and developing practical strategies that offer genuine business impact. Sinha emphasized learning from past AI developments and highlighted the necessity of aligning AI strategy with business values and underpinning it all with a strong data foundation.

Key Takeaways

AI is Here
AI is mainstream, the focus should be on when and how to deploy it effectively.

Immense Potential Needs Finesse
Leaders are struggling to realize AI's value, there needs to be a greater emphasis on strategy and execution.

Success Means Direction
A successful AI strategy requires a grounded roadmap that integrates values, culture, and technological capabilities.

Data is the Backbone
Data is chronically underinvested in! AI can't deliver impact without a strong data foundation.

> **If you don't have a vision, guess what, guys? You don't have a direction.**

Rajeev Sinha
Chief IT Enterprise Architect, Pacific Gas and Electric Company

What is your biggest challenge with AI and Machine Learning implementation in your organization?

Data quality and availability

40%

Integration with existing systems

23%

Regulatory and ethical concerns

17%

High implementation costs

10%

Lack of skilled talent

10%

Leadership Lessons from Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

Speaker

Sean D. Mack
Author, Public Speaker, Fractional CIO, CISO, and CTO

Summary

For our dinner keynote, Sean D. Mack, public speaker and fractional CIO, took to the stage to draw some insightful parallels between the principles of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and effective leadership. As a senior IT leader as well as a Jiu-Jitsu enthusiast, Mack argued that these seemingly disparate disciplines share more than you think when it comes to the fundamental principles for growth and success.

Key Takeaways

Know Thyself
Self-awareness and understanding your strengths and weaknesses are the foundation of effective leadership.

Never Settle
Continuous practice and dedication are essential for improvement in both BJJ and leadership. Greatness doesn't come naturally.

Accept Your Failings
Failure is an inevitable part of growth and should be embraced as an opportunity to learn and adapt.

Keep Moving Forward
Perseverance in the face of challenges and a focus on "the next right thing" is crucial for achieving your goals.

> **"**
> **Leadership is about knowing yourself. It's about understanding your strengths and your weaknesses and putting those to work for you.**
>
> **Sean D. Mack**
> Author, Public Speaker, Fractional CIO, CISO, and CTO

From Pilot to Profit

Connecting Strategy & Architecture for Successful
AI Projects in Marketing

Speaker

Michael Arulfo
Founding Member,
AI Circle

Summary

In his masterclass, Michael Arulfo from AI Circle laid out the journey from AI pilot projects to generating profit. He homed in on the critical connection between strategy and architecture, shared frameworks for filtering the noise around AI, and provided the steps to forging a clear path forward. If Arulfo was keen to emphasize anything, it was that AI success hinges more around the business than it does technology.

Key Takeaways

From Pilot to Profit
Profitability with AI requires a clear strategic vision and a well-defined technical architecture.

Frameworks and Foundations
Use frameworks to navigate the complex AI landscape by focusing on specific scenarios, platforms, or governance.

Architecture is Vital
AI has immense potential, but it requires modernizing your underlying architectures.

Align the Business
Successful AI projects need unshakeable alignment with business stakeholders and a clear focus on achieving measurable outcomes.

"

The technology is an enabler, not the solution.

Michael Arulfo
Founding Member, AI Circle

TIPPSS for Secure Data-Enabled Innovation

Speaker

Florence Hudson
Executive Director, Northeast Big Data Innovation Hub, Columbia University

Summary

Florence Hudson, Executive Director of Columbia University's Northeast Big Data Innovation Hub, joined us in a masterclass where she introduced the audience to the TIPPSS framework. Trust, Identity, Privacy, Protection, Safety, and Security. Hudson highlighted the increasing vulnerabilities of connected devices and presented TIPPSS as an end-to-end approach for security, trust, and data-enabled innovation.

Key Takeaways

The TIPPSS Framework
Using TIPPSS leaders can create a comprehensive approach to addressing the multifaceted security challenges of innovation.

Beware the Risks
Connected devices represent a growing concern for security. When innovating, do so with the risks in mind.

Security at Every Level
Ensure end-to-end trust and security in interconnected systems with careful consideration of identity verification and other safety measures.

Use Available Resources
There are valuable resources available online to upskill your business on data literacy and security best practices.

> **Trust, privacy, security issues— these are all over the place and it's only going to get worse. We need to protect these people, these devices, the data and the institutions.**

Florence Hudson
Executive Director, Northeast Big Data Innovation Hub, Columbia University

Scaling AI from Experiment to Enterprise

Hard Learned Lessons and Winning Strategies

Speaker

Murtaza Cherawala
IT Strategist and Data & AI Leader

Key Takeaways

Get Onboard Now
The potential of AI has significantly accelerated business interest. Now is the time to make a move into AI adoption.

Partnerships are Key
AI scaling requires strong collaborative partnerships between IT, business units, and system integrators.

Old Rules Don't Apply
Traditional IT development lifecycles don't work for AI. You need to be flexible and take a more iterative approach.

Find Practical Value
Focus on the business problems that can be automated or made easier, rather than solely pursuing "AI transformation".

Summary

In this session, our community heard from Murtaza Cherawala as he shared his experiences with scaling AI initiatives from proofs of concept to enterprise-level deployment. Cherawala spoke on the necessity of strong partnerships between the business and its technologists, stressing the value of taking a business-led approach to AI development.

"

This is for the business, by the business, and it has to be used within the business. It needs to integrate with the business today.

Murtaza Cherawala
IT Strategist and Data & AI Leader

What is your biggest challenge managing executive and board expectations around AI investments, especially in setting realistic timelines for returns?

36%
Aligning AI investment expectations with long-term value realization.

32%
Educating leadership on AI's strategic potential beyond immediate ROI.

20%
Overcoming pressure to deliver quick wins despite AI's complexity.

12%
Communicating AI risks and limitations without stalling adoption.

The CIO Evolution

Transforming IT Leadership for the Future of Business

Speaker

Cheri Esposito
CIO, Hytrol Conveyor Co.

Summary

In this fireside chat our host was joined by Cheri Esposito, CIO at Hytrol Conveyor Co. to discuss the evolving role of the CIO. Focusing on the shift towards strategic business partnership as opposed to solely focusing on technology delivery, Esposito highlighted the importance of authentic and empathetic leadership. For Esposito, CIO success is measured by team satisfaction, operational stability, and driving business value.

Key Takeaways

You Need to Evolve
Modern CIOs must embrace their transition into being strategic business enablers, not just technology leaders.

Transform Your Leadership
Authentic and empathetic leadership is essential for building trust, managing resistance to change, and fostering collaboration.

Master Communication
Clear and consistent communication is vital for ensuring stakeholder alignment and buy-in for IT initiatives.

Redefine Success
Success for an IT leader is not just about technology. Success needs to include team well-being and the demonstrable delivery of value to the business.

> ❝ I've gone to the board and I've had to lobby that we are not just IT. We need to partner at the highest level early and often in order for us to get those solutions out the door.

Cheri Esposito
CIO, Hytrol Conveyor Co.

Seizing on AI and Being Smart About It

Speakers

Daniel Zikovitz
Global Director of Digital Innovation & AI, GE Healthcare

Josh Angotti
VP of Product Development, Windstream

Key Takeaways

Finding True Value
AI's value often lies in seamless integration into existing workflows, becoming an invisible yet powerful tool.

Data, Data, Data
A robust data architecture and a culture of experimentation are foundational pillars for successful AI adoption and integration.

Don't Neglect Training
Educating the wider organization on the capabilities and value of AI is essential for driving adoption and identifying relevant use cases.

Don't Fall for the Hype
Focus on solving concrete business problems with practical and realistic solutions.

Summary

In their popular panel, Daniel Zikovitz, Global Director of Digital Innovation & AI at GE Healthcare, and Josh Angotti, VP of Product Development at Windstream, discussed how IT leaders can discern genuine AI opportunities from hype and effectively implement AI in their organizations. Between "seamless AI" and the evolution of AI adoption models, our panelists challenged the audience to think about AI, not as it right now, but as it might be tomorrow.

> **"**
> It's not a bunch of fluff. It's not interesting information that's not applicable. It's solving the problem. The faster you can make that, the quicker the adoption is going to be.

Josh Angotti
VP of Product Development, Windstream

Uniting Technology Innovation & Business Strategy

Speakers

Suzanne LaLena
SVP of Automation Engineering, BNY Mellon

Neeraj Mathur
CIO, SickKids Foundation

Ben Wallace
Manager of Architecture & Security, MentorMate

Key Takeaways

Align Behind Your North Star
A clearly defined business objective is crucial for aligning technology innovation efforts.

Break Down Silos
Cross-functional collaboration and learning across the business is vital for impactful innovation.

Balance Innovation & Delivery
The pursuit of technology innovation needs to be balanced with the need for operational excellence.

Culture is Key
A culture of curiosity and providing a secure environment for experimentation is key to driving meaningful technological innovation.

Summary

This panel discussion featuring Suzanne LaLena from BNY Mellon, Neeraj Mathur from SickKids Foundation, and Ben Wallace from MentorMate centered on the all-important alignment of technology innovation with business strategy. The panelists spoke on everything from the significance of having a clear "North Star" to guide technology initiatives, to the challenges and solutions for siloed decision-making within organizations.

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As IT, you are setting the stage and you are setting up the band, but the monkey is the business.

Neeraj Mathur
CIO, SickKids Foundation

Empowering Leadership Prioritizing Self-Care and Team Well-Being

Speaker

Jean Olive
Chief Information Officer, John Hancock

Key Takeaways

Self-Care is Essential
For effective leadership and preventing burnout, self-care is not selfish, it's essential.

Trust Drives Performance
Creating an environment of connection and trust directly contributes to creating high-performing teams.

Lead From the Front
Drive team engagement and well-being through simple, consistent actions that demonstrate desired values.

Bring People Together
Maintaining connection and engagement in hybrid work environments requires a considered approach.

Summary

Closing out the show we heard from Jean Olive, the CIO at John Hancock, as she explored the importance of empowered leadership for self-care. Drawing from her experiences and observations, Olive offered practical approaches to self-care and highlighted the importance of building trusted and connected teams. In short, leaders who prioritized self-care would foster teams that are resilient and high performing.

> **What do we focus a lot on? What can we control and what can we not control? What decisions are we going to make and how are we going to manage our time?**

Jean Olive
Chief Information Officer, John Hancock

As a leader, how well do you prioritize your own self-care and well-being?

38%

I prioritize it well
I regularly engage in self-care practices, but there's room for improvement.

27%

I prioritize it somewhat
I occasionally make time for self-care, but often it falls by the wayside.

16%

I prioritize it exceptionally well
I consistently make time for self-care and ensure it's a central part of my routine.

14%

I struggle to prioritize it
I rarely engage in self-care due to other commitments.

2%

I do not prioritize it at all
Self-care is not currently a focus in my leadership practice.

The CIO Insight Summit highlighted the priorities for the year ahead and, surprise surprise, AI is the star.

Our community explored the promise of AI, stressing the need for a bold yet grounded vision rooted in strategy, not hype. But AI success can't happen in a vacuum. The key takeaway? Tomorrow's IT leaders must pair technical expertise with business insight, lead with authenticity, and foster a culture of collaboration and continuous learning.

Throughout the summit, one message was clear: success depends on clear, consistent communication that builds trust and alignment across the organization.

These insights don't end here—stay tuned for more blogs, interviews, footage from the summit, and be sure to check out our calendar of upcoming events.

Our next CIO Insight Summit is only around the corner! To join the conversations shaping the future of your industry, make sure you secure your place by registering your interest today.

Register your interest here

See you next time!