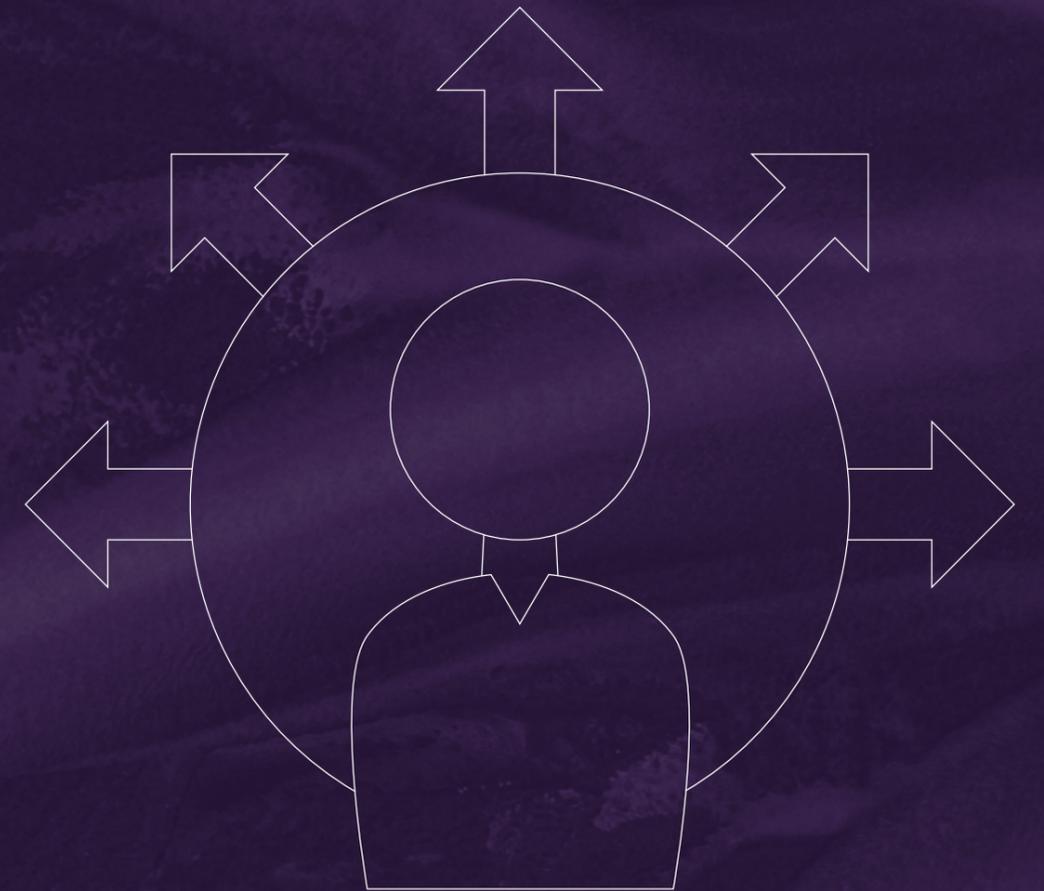




# Next Gen Leaders:

The evolving C-suite



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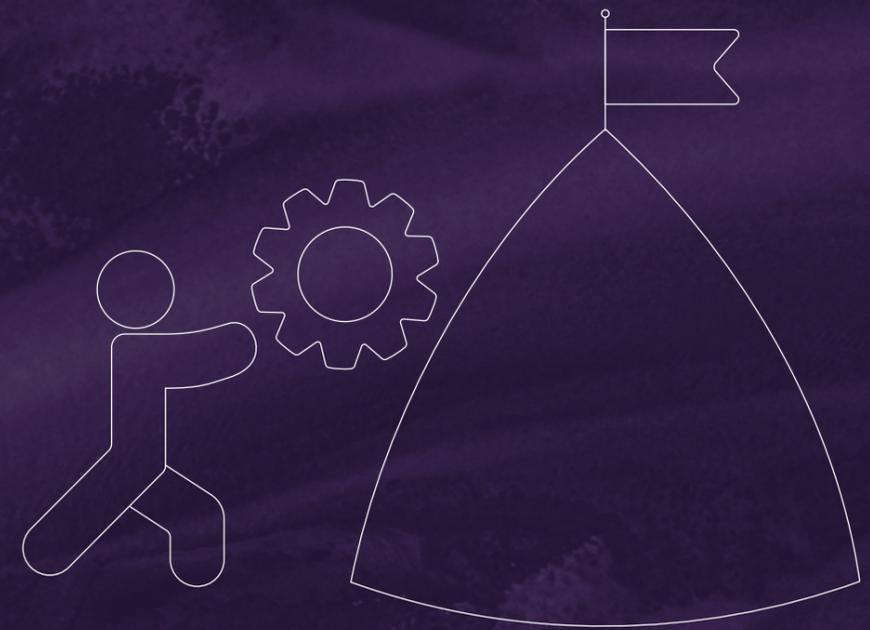
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# Introduction

In today's fast-paced business environment, integrating technology and artificial intelligence (AI) is essential for fostering innovation and driving sustainable growth.

However, the deployment of these emerging technologies raises challenges related to people, processes, and existing infrastructure. This report outlines strategies for effectively leveraging AI, fostering a culture of innovation, aligning processes, and ensuring organisations and their people can adapt and thrive amid change.



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# Executive Summary



**Dom Boshier**  
Associate Director,  
La Fosse

Technology leadership is more critical than ever, shaped by rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, increasing demand for cybersecurity, and the growing need for sustainable and equitable innovation. Technology leaders, including CIOs, CTOs, and Chief Digital Officers, are at the forefront of driving organisational resilience, fostering innovation, and managing complex digital ecosystems.

At this year's Next-gen leaders event, we welcomed some of the world's foremost C-suite leaders to explore challenges and strategic imperatives from a people and technology standpoint, and to discuss what it takes for the future generations to step up into these critical roles.

I hope you enjoy the read and would love to welcome you to 2025's event - our third in the series.

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# ➤ Pivotal moments on the way up

## CIO vs CTO

While both the Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief Technology Officer (CTO) roles are rooted in technology, the core distinction lies in their focus. The CIO typically involves a deeper emphasis on human interaction, managing both technology and people to meet organisational needs. The CTO, on the other hand, is more technology-focused, often centred on innovation and technology architecture. According to a Deloitte 2023 Global CIO Survey, 78% of CIOs report that their role now includes a stronger emphasis on people and culture than it did five years ago.

For individuals on their way to the C-suite, the decision between these two paths often comes down to whether they are more inclined towards people leadership or technology leadership.

## Evolving the role

At times, individuals may not initially envision a career path leading to the CIO or CTO role. However, self-reflection on future leadership opportunities may open up new possibilities.

Rather than viewing these roles as rigid job descriptions, successful leaders view them as evolving positions that allow them to shape the organisation's future. Instead of adhering to the prescribed duties, the next-gen leader must be ready to challenge assumptions and innovate. According to a McKinsey report, 68% of executives are expected to redefine their roles to stay ahead of emerging technologies and future business trends.

## Drawing on experience

As individuals move towards C-suite roles, past experiences, both positive and negative, provide valuable insights and help build confidence. Having a wealth of knowledge allows leaders to handle complex boardroom discussions with greater ownership. Gartner highlights that 80% of senior leaders believe that experiential learning is crucial to the success of C-suite executives. Being able to reflect on previous challenges, mistakes, and successes helps leaders navigate difficult decisions, particularly those involving people and technology.

## Development through mentorship

Leadership development in the C-suite is heavily influenced by mentors who guide emerging leaders on their journey. Fundamental leadership principles include treating others with respect, fostering psychological safety, and creating an inclusive environment where diversity thrives. Key lessons such as empathy, integrity, and transparency become foundational for those who will ultimately lead the organisation. According to McKinsey's 2024 Global Leadership Study, leaders who provide mentorship and invest in their teams outperform their peers by 25% in overall productivity and employee engagement.

The ability to motivate people, connect with them, and understand their needs are all critical elements as leaders ascend to the C-suite.

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# ↗ The art of storytelling

## The power of “why”

Drawing from Simon Sinek’s “Start with Why,” the most effective leaders begin with purpose. When introducing new initiatives or technologies, leaders should focus less on the technical details and more on the story behind the innovation. Why is it important for the business? How does it contribute to the broader vision? Clear, authentic storytelling that explains not just the “how” but the “why” can be a game changer in securing support from boards, investors, and employees. McKinsey’s 2023 Digital Transformation Report found that companies with a clear purpose in their digital transformation are 1.5 times more likely to succeed than those that do not clearly communicate the purpose behind their initiatives.

## Connecting purpose to people

For leaders, connecting business purpose to individual roles is essential. Leaders must understand what excites their teams, align those passions with the company’s goals, and inspire buy-in from stakeholders. Building relationships with peers in the C-suite and understanding their

motivations is key to driving success and implementing organisational change. A Deloitte 2023 report reveals that 84% of leaders say that strong internal relationships are crucial for successful organisational change.

## Authentic communication

To truly connect with an audience, leaders must be authentic. Share personal insights, admit concerns, and allow transparency to guide conversations. In an era marked by rapid innovation, the ability to tell a compelling, relatable story is as important as the technology itself. A Gartner study found that leaders who embrace vulnerability and demonstrate transparency are 37% more likely to have engaged teams and achieve organisational goals.

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# ➤ Adapting skillsets for the future

## Emotional and social intelligence

The future of leadership is increasingly defined by emotional intelligence. Self-awareness, humility, and empathy are expected to take centre stage as leaders navigate increasingly complex human challenges. As organisations focus more on mental health, work-life balance, and psychological safety, the ability to create a sense of belonging and to demonstrate vulnerability will be vital. According to Deloitte's 2023 Global Human Capital Trends Report, 77% of organisations identified emotional intelligence as a core competency that leaders must develop to effectively manage evolving employee expectations.

As organisations embrace greater diversity, the ability to work cross-functionally and manage complex interpersonal dynamics will be a critical skill for the next-gen C-suite.

## T-shaped leadership

Tomorrow's leaders must be versatile and have a broad understanding of the business, not just one specialised area. T-shaped leadership, which involves expertise in a core area (like technology or people management) coupled

with an understanding of other business functions, will be increasingly important. McKinsey's 2024 Leadership Survey found that 75% of successful C-suite leaders are now expected to have a broad understanding of the business and its interdependencies. Strong relationships with the board, peers, and other key stakeholders will be essential for implementing change and driving cross-functional success.

## Strategic alignment

Technology can no longer remain in the background. CTOs, CIOs, and other C-suite leaders must deeply understand the business strategy and be actively involved in driving it forward. As tech becomes increasingly pervasive, leaders must align it with business goals and maintain continuous communication with their teams to ensure effective integration. Gartner notes that 90% of CEOs are actively prioritising technology as a critical enabler for strategic business transformation.

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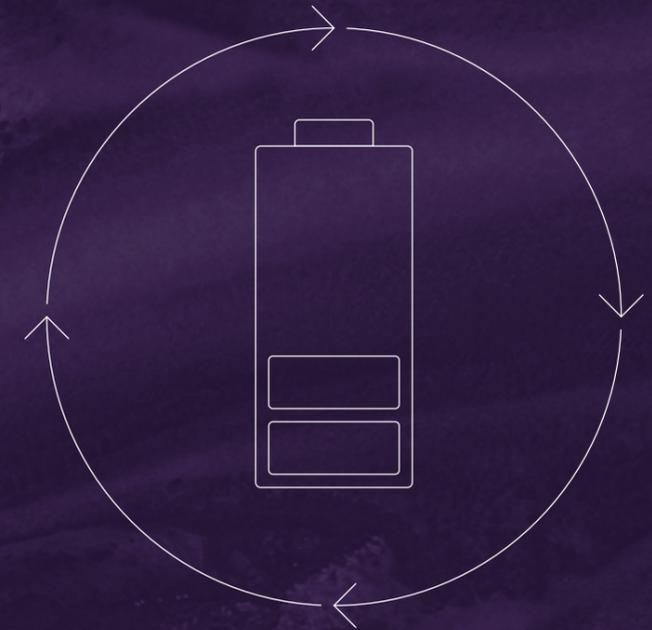
# ➤ Overcoming change fatigue

## Building resilience

Leaders must help teams understand how their roles contribute to the organisation's broader vision, especially during times of change. Transparency and inclusion are key strategies for alleviating change fatigue. By involving people in the decision-making process and fostering open communication, leaders can create an environment where individuals feel part of the change, not just subjected to it. According to McKinsey's 2023 Change Management Survey, 66% of employees report that clear communication and active participation in decision-making significantly reduce feelings of change fatigue.

## A marathon, not a sprint

Change is an ongoing process, and leaders must communicate that it's about continuous improvement rather than a one-time shift. Leaders need to ensure they provide space for rest to prevent burnout and fatigue. Deloitte's Global Leadership Survey found that 78% of leaders believe sustained change requires consistent investment in employee well-being and mental health support.



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# ➤ Expectations and evolution

## Business strategy meets tech

At the C-suite level, tech is not just about innovation for innovation's sake; it's about translating business strategy into actionable tech solutions.

Understanding the motivations and challenges of key stakeholders - whether it's the board, investors, or customers - will be central to making informed decisions. McKinsey's 2023 Digital Strategy Report emphasises that 77% of executives are now demanding a closer alignment between IT and business strategy to achieve long-term growth and digital transformation.

## Beyond technical expertise

As technology leaders advance, their role will shift from being a technical expert to an enterprise leader. This requires a broad understanding of various business domains (finance, HR, operations) and the ability to make strategic decisions that benefit the entire organisation. Gartner reports that 56% of CIOs believe their role is now more focused on enterprise leadership than pure IT leadership.



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# ↗ Commercialism and risk

## The financial imperative

In the C-suite, it's no longer enough to be an expert in technology. Leaders must understand the financials - including how to communicate the ROI of tech investments and align technology with business outcomes. Without financial acumen, leaders risk being left behind as they are unable to communicate the true value of their initiatives in ways that resonate with the board. According to McKinsey, 73% of CEOs report that their technology leaders must demonstrate financial literacy and strategic foresight to contribute meaningfully to business growth.

## The power of networks

High-stakes decisions, especially regarding technology, require careful assessment of risk and strategy. Building strong professional networks, seeking advice from trusted experts, and learning from past experiences are all critical components of effective decision-making. Gartner highlights that 66% of CIOs leverage external networks and consultants to make more informed, strategic technology decisions.

## Fostering experimentation

Innovation is essential, but it must be balanced with risk management. Leaders must encourage experimentation but within a controlled environment, especially when dealing with technologies like AI and data analytics. Experimentation should be strategic, aimed at solving specific problems, not just for the sake of trying something new. Deloitte's 2023 Innovation Report found that 62% of organisations consider risk mitigation an essential component of any innovation strategy.

## Incremental change

Change management often involves dealing with legacy systems; leaders should prioritise optimisation and small, manageable changes rather than attempting to overhaul everything at once. Embrace the legacy - while it may not be glamorous, legacy systems often contain valuable institutional knowledge that can guide future innovation. According to Gartner, 45% of CIOs say that modernising legacy systems is one of their top priorities, but most are opting for incremental upgrades rather than full system overhauls.

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# Conclusion

The next generation of C-suite leaders will need to blend technical expertise with people skills, balancing innovation with financial competency, and driving change in a highly collaborative, transparent, and inclusive environment.

As organisations continue to transform, the leaders of tomorrow must be equipped with the right mix of emotional intelligence, strategic vision, and business acumen to lead effectively and navigate the complexities of the modern business world.

The content of this report was gathered during La Fosse's exclusive panel event, **Next-gen leaders: The evolving C-suite**. Special thanks to our event panellists:

**For more information,  
please contact:**

marketing@lafosse.com  
+442079321630

**lafosse.com**

## People panel



Facilitated by:  
**Ollie Whiting**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
La Fosse



**Liz Hughes**  
Global CIO, Advisory,  
Endava



**Tracey McDermott**  
Chief Technology  
Officer, Pinsent Masons



**Edel McGrath**  
Partner, Chief  
Information Officer,  
Knight Frank



**Oke Eleazu**  
Founder, Elevate Colour  
& Ex-CEO, ManyPets

## Tech panel



Facilitated by:  
**Glyn Blaize**  
Chief Operating Officer,  
La Fosse



**Stephen Jolley**  
NED/EVP, Adrosonic UK  
Ltd. Strategic Advisor,  
OneGlobal Banking



**Nadine Thomson**  
President, Product  
Deployment  
& Operations,  
Choreograph



**Jasper McIntosh**  
Chief Information  
Officer, FORA, The  
Office Group



**Jamie Ovenden**  
Chief Technology  
Officer, Schroders