

Gartner®

The 2021 CIO Agenda:

Seize This Opportunity for Digital Business Acceleration

The world's most influential CIO survey

Each year, Gartner conducts the world's most influential CIO survey to track how CIOs and other senior IT leaders around the globe are balancing their strategic business, technical and management priorities.

With these findings we generate the annual Gartner CIO Agenda Report, which presents survey results and case studies, plus expert analysis and insight — enabling CIOs to compare priorities and actions with global peers, and glimpse what the future may hold.

This year's survey by the numbers:

1,877 CIOs
across 74 countries

\$4.7 trillion
in revenue/public-sector budgets

\$85 billion
in IT spending

14th year of
conducting the Gartner CIO Survey

The CIO's relationship with the business is stronger than ever

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic:



66%
increased
strength of
CIO-CEO
relationship



70%
CIOs **assuming**
leadership of
high-impact
initiatives



80%
CIOs **educating**
CEO and other
senior stakeholders
on the value of IT

Are you ready to leverage this influence? Don't let your advantage fade.

CIOs have the opportunity to play a leading role in digital business acceleration

During the COVID-19 lockdown, many CIOs helped save their enterprises. They now have the attention of the CEO in a way they hadn't before. The enterprise's path to the future runs through IT, and boards and CEOs know it.

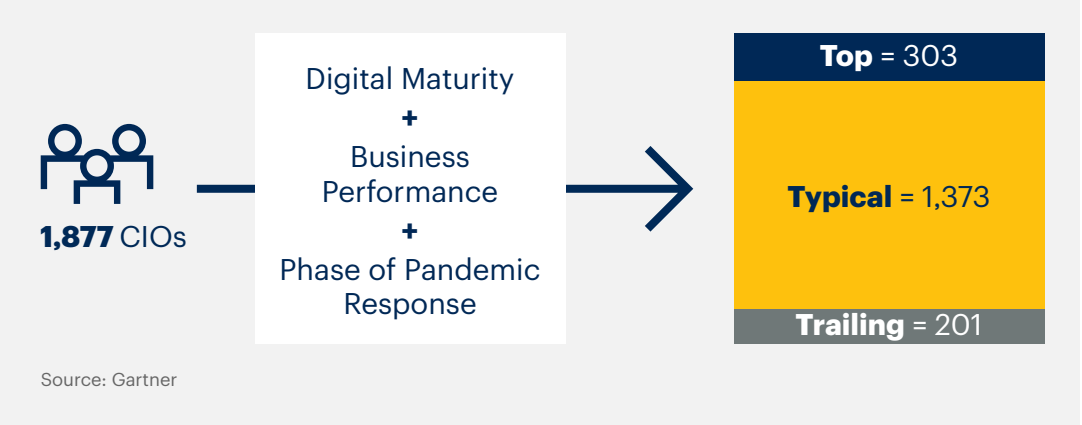
These stronger relationships give CIOs leverage they'll need for their next big challenge — digital business acceleration.

CIOs have been trying for years to convince senior business leaders to modernize and take full advantage of technology. Now, many roadblocks have been removed, and the majority of boards are prioritizing these initiatives.

69% of boards report accelerating digital business initiatives in response to COVID-19.

This guide compiles four key activities from the 2021 Gartner CIO Agenda Report that distinguish top organizations from typical and trailing counterparts when it comes to digital business acceleration and long-term agility to help you:

- Compare your views of the future with more than 1,800 peers
- Learn from top-performing organizations
- Refine your strategy for 2021 and beyond



01

Redirect resources

Direct more investment and people toward new business priorities

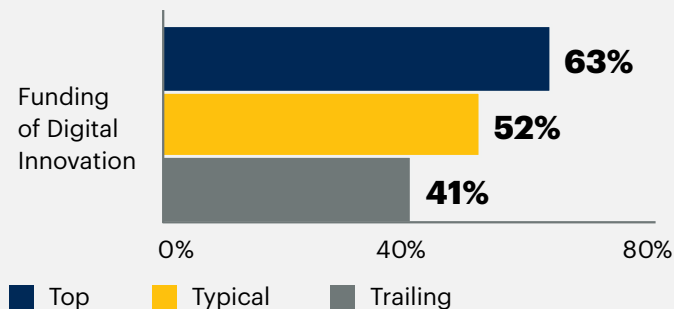
Top-performing enterprises know that disruption isn't the exception to the rule, it is the rule. As they plan their postpandemic strategies, focus remains on the things necessary to shift modes when future disruptions occur. This year has reinforced that funding innovation pays dividends. Thus, boards of directors are ready to put real resources behind digital acceleration.

2% average increase is expected in IT budgets globally in 2021.

Spending will increase across the board for most IT organizations in 2021. But top performers got a jump on it in 2020, and will, therefore, increase their lead over competitors. Organizations that have already increased their funding of digital innovation are 2.7 times more likely to be top performers than trailing performers.

Shifts in Funding Due to COVID-19

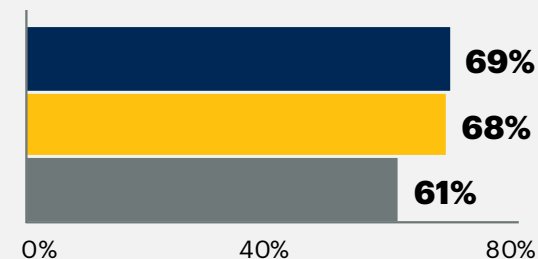
Percentage of Respondents Reporting an Increase



n = ~294 (Top); ~1,339 (Typical); ~195 (Trailing); Excludes "Not sure/Not applicable"
 n = ~302 (Top); ~1,366 (Typical); ~199 (Trailing); Excludes "Not sure"
 Source: 2021 Gartner CIO Agenda Survey

Expected Change in 2021

Percentage of Respondents Expecting an Increase



How should CIOs respond?

- Reevaluate recent business cases to optimize investments
- Reallocate funding to digital innovation

Related resources

- [CIO Roadmap for Strategic Cost Optimization](#)
- [Rethink the IT Strategic Plan](#)

Remodel operations

Revamp business operations to increase efficiency and supply chain resilience

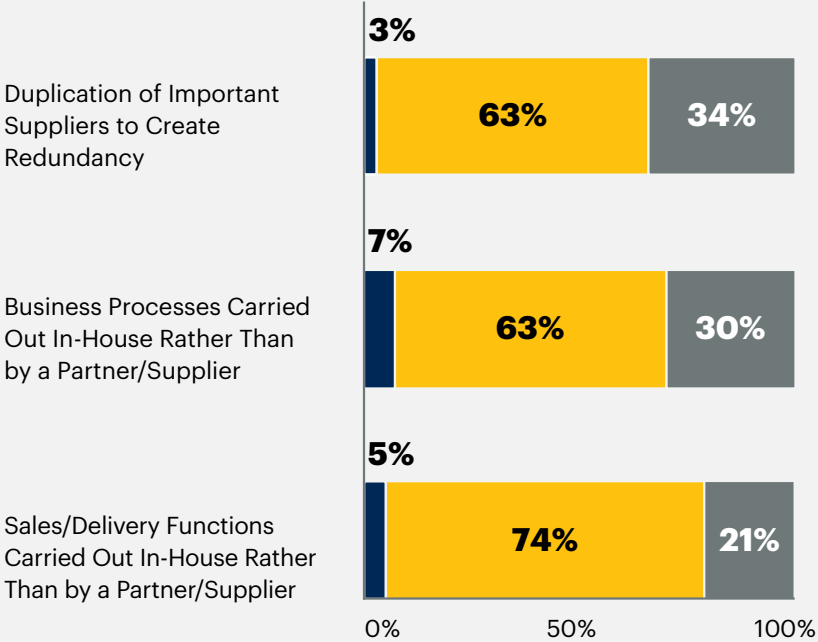
COVID-19 demonstrated the fragility of supply chains. Many enterprises suffered severe disruptions during the initial lockdown, which are still slowly being resolved.

The big change came in supply chain delivery speed to the organization. More than half of CIOs reported a decrease in delivery speeds for basic IT equipment such as PCs and servers, compared with only 21% who reported a speed increase. CIOs expect the situation to reverse in 2021, with 51% foreseeing an increase in speed versus only 7% foreseeing a decrease.

51% of CIOs reported a decline in speed of supply, and 18% reported a decline in supplier reliability as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

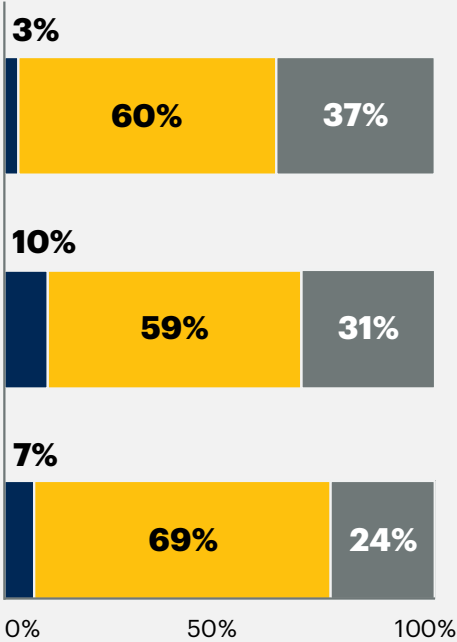
Shifts in Supply Due to COVID-19

Percentage of Respondents



Expected Change in 2021

Percentage of Respondents



■ Decrease ■ No Change ■ Increase

n = -1,752
Source: 2021 Gartner CIO Agenda Survey

Top performers have already begun spending money and effort to increase supply chain resilience by duplicating key suppliers and bringing more business processes, sales and delivery in-house. These activities reduce risk, but require significant shifts within the enterprise.



How should CIOs respond?

- Look for ways to use digital technology to increase supply chain resilience
- Use crowdsourcing to expand the horizons of supply chain decision makers

Related resources

- [Driving Digital Business Transformation for Industry Leadership](#)
- [Guide to Aligning Digital Business and the Digital Supply Chain](#)

03

Win differently

Go where customers are

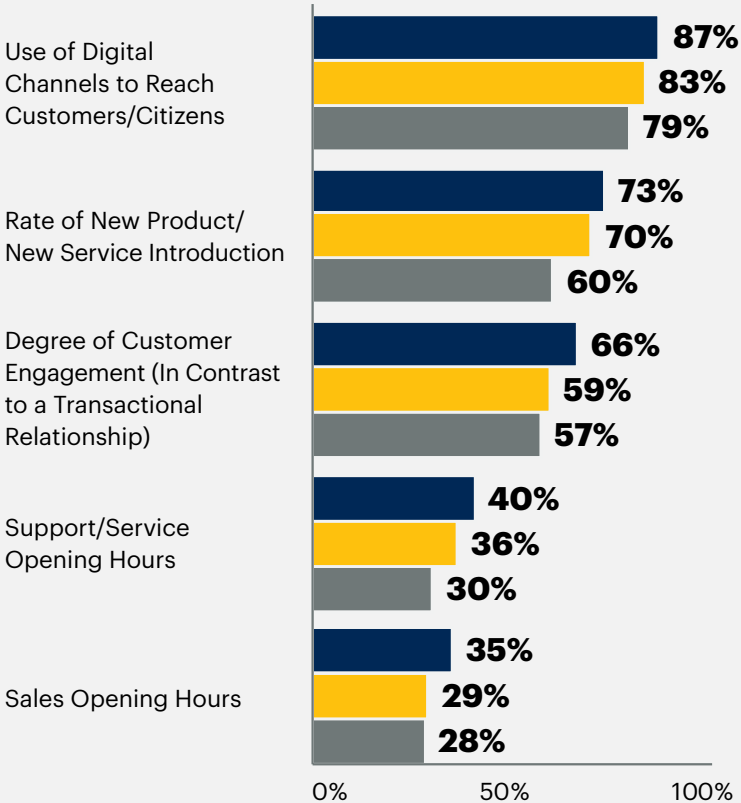
Many changes made in response to COVID-19 will continue to accelerate because they make business sense. For example, customers and citizens shifted their activity online during the lockdown, increasing demand for new digital products and services, as well as self-service use. This shift will increase in 2021.

76% of CIOs report increased demand for new digital products or services during the pandemic, and 83% expect this demand to increase further in 2021.

Top performers have gone all-in, developing the capabilities to use digital to create deeper relationships with customers, and it's paying off. Organizations that have increased their use of digital channels to reach customers or citizens are 3.5 times more likely to be top performers than trailing performers.

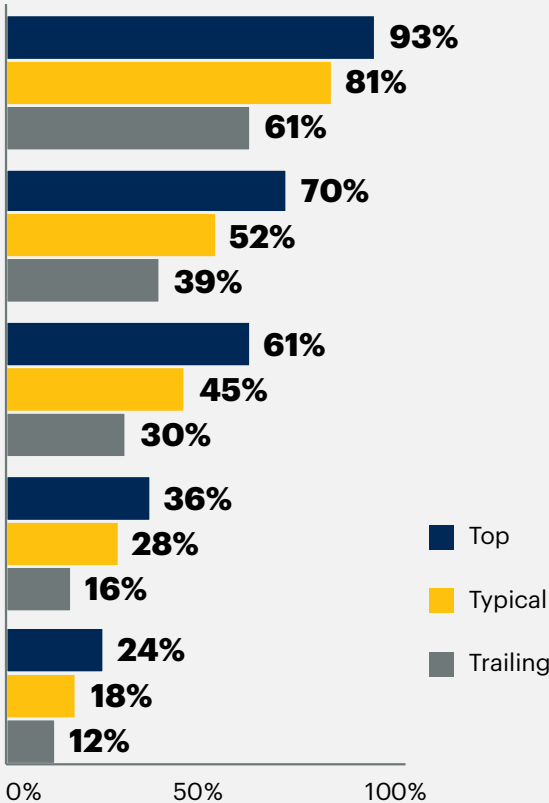
Response to Digitalizing Customers

Percentage of Respondents Reporting an Increase



Expected Increase in 2021

Percentage of Respondents Expecting an Increase



n = -298 (Top); -1,348 (Typical); -186 (Trailing). Numbers may not add to totals shown because of rounding.
Source: 2021 Gartner CIO Agenda Survey



How should CIOs respond?

- Invest in customer-facing technologies
- Play a role in environmental and social sustainability

Related resources

- [2020-2022 Emerging Technologies for Enterprises](#)
- [Benchmarking/IT Score](#)

04

Refocus IT leadership

Center on digital business acceleration

The COVID-19 response may look like a classic IT project on the surface, but a profound shift has occurred. Many CIOs used this crisis as an opportunity to increase IT tools and applications and modernize the legacy application and infrastructure portfolio. Some were able to do things that are normally difficult, such as conducting training, increasing the IT workforce and changing the IT reporting lines to roll up to a more senior executive.

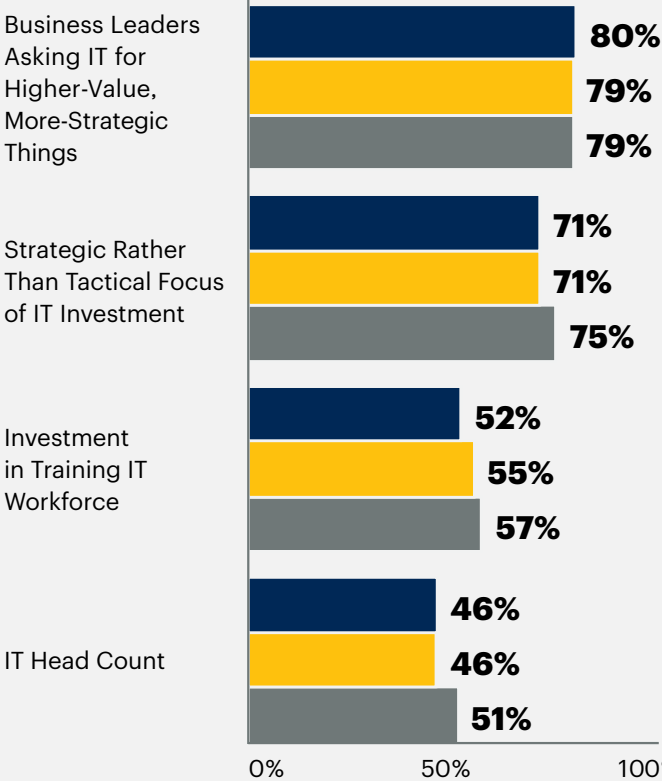
70% of CIOs deepened their knowledge of specific business processes to advise the business.

The impact of these moves is clear: The better CIOs perform for the business, the more the business asks of them. The majority say the business is making higher-value, more strategic requests, and expect trends like these to continue in 2021.



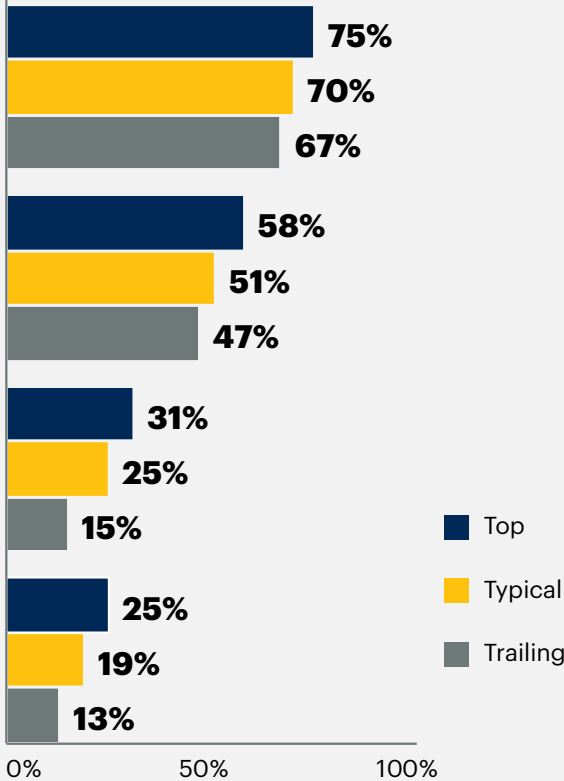
Changes in IT Due to COVID-19

Percentage of Respondents Reporting an Increase



Changes in IT Expected in 2021

Percentage of Respondents Expecting an Increase



n = -302 (Top); -1,364 (Typical); -199 (Trailing). Numbers may not add to totals shown because of rounding.
Source: 2021 Gartner CIO Survey



How should CIOs respond?

- Harness gains in culture within the IT organization to sustain momentum

Related resources

- [The IT Roadmap for Digital Business Transformation](#)
- [Future-Proof the IT Workforce](#)

Want to learn more?

To get additional information about the 2021 CIO Agenda, including regional and industry-specific insights, visit: gartner.com/cioagenda

Download additional resources

[CIO Roadmap for Strategic Cost Optimization](#)

[Rethink the IT Strategic Plan](#)

[Driving Digital Business Transformation for Industry Leadership](#)

[Guide to Aligning Digital Business and the Digital Supply Chain](#)

[2020-2022 Emerging Technologies for Enterprises](#)

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[The IT Roadmap for Digital Business Transformation](#)

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