EVENT INSIGHTS

OCTOBER 2026

Crossing Borders

CIO ROUNDTABLE

Responsible innovation.
Measurable value.
Trusted partnerships.

aws PARTNER Advanced Tier Services

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The Panel

Dr. Willie Oosthuysen
Seacom

Jacques Vermeulen
Dugson Consulting

Vaughn Young
Dugson Consulting

Pragashani Reddy
DSG

Rynhardt Cloete
Monkey & River

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Daniel Ntini
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Ronald van Scheltema
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Dion Surujparsad
Liquid Intelligent Technologies

Comment From The facilitator



The IP Dimension CIO roundtable explored how technology leaders are navigating cloud, artificial intelligence and growing competitive pressure. Discussions highlighted the CIO's expanding responsibility for business growth, financial accountability, governance and resilience. Participants emphasised that organisations need trusted partners who provide practical guidance, demonstrate measurable value and remain accountable beyond implementation.

Cloud and AI create opportunities to innovate and scale, but adoption requires careful consideration. Exchange-rate volatility, supplier dependency, data sovereignty and the costs of training and change influence technology decisions. Participants stressed that faster innovation must be balanced with disciplined testing, customer understanding and solutions that address genuine business problems. Successful AI adoption depends on clear objectives, trusted data, strong governance and measurable returns.

Across the discussions, five priorities emerged: control before adoption, business value, data readiness, trusted relationships and strategic flexibility. The central message was clear: technology should support responsible innovation and deliver meaningful outcomes for the business and its customers.

Riaan Lombard

THE EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVE

Innovation with control

The roundtable explored what it takes to compete across borders while retaining control of costs, data and outcomes. Today's CIO balances business growth, financial accountability, risk, digital transformation, AI adoption, cyber resilience and skills development.

The question is no longer simply which technology to buy. It is how to innovate responsibly.

Organisations are looking for trusted partners who reduce risk, demonstrate value and remain accountable beyond implementation.





5 priorities emerged

Governance before adoption.
Measurable business value.
Trusted data.
Enduring partnerships.
Flexibility to adapt.

01 / LEADERSHIP

The expanded CIO mandate

From technology ownership to business leadership
The traditional CIO role has broadened. Leadership teams expect technology decisions to support growth while strengthening financial accountability, governance, resilience and skills.

Innovation needs boundaries
The discussion highlighted data ring-fencing as a priority: organisations need policies, access controls and data protection when connecting AI solutions to sensitive information.

Today's CIO is no longer responsible only for technology delivery. CIOs are increasingly expected to balance:

- Business growth objectives
- Financial accountability
- Risk and governance
- Digital transformation
- AI adoption
- Cyber resilience
- Skills development

The challenge is no longer deciding which technology to buy, but deciding how to innovate while maintaining control. The dominant theme emerging from CIO discussions was clear:

Organisations are not looking for more technology vendors, they are looking for trusted partners who can reduce risk, provide guidance, demonstrate measurable value, and remain accountable beyond implementation.



DR WILLIE OOSTHUYSEN
SEACOM

The challenge is no longer deciding which technology to buy, but deciding how to innovate while maintaining control.

Roundtable insight



Ring fencing data has become imperative to guard against data leaks. Bedrock allows for ring fencing using organisation-specific policies and governance when building AI solutions.

Creating a complete ecosystem with links to several AI and LLM platforms opens a new world of possibilities, safely.

Additionally, access controls, and data protection forms part of the pillars upon which Amazon Bedrock is built ensuring continuity and safer interaction with your sensitive data.

Amazon Bedrock addresses several of the responsibilities now inherent in the CIO landscape.

Bedrock enables businesses to build generative AI applications using foundation models without managing AI infrastructure.

Organisations can create AI-powered chatbots, virtual assistants, automated content generation, and intelligent customer support that is available 24/7, providing immediate responses and highly personalised interactions.

Amazon Bedrock

02 / MARKET ENTRY

Lower barriers, harder choices

Low-cost entry does not guarantee useful innovation
Concerns included solutions arriving before a real problem had been defined, gaps in foundational education, and creativity being weakened by a rush to launch AI-enabled products.

Cloud budgets remain exposed
Exchange-rate volatility creates uncertainty for CIOs and finance leaders. It can constrain decisions to scale cloud infrastructure and encourage tighter control of current expenditure.

This sentiment was not shared by all in attendance. With an average score of 2.6 out of 5, CIOs leaned towards low barriers of entry not being a challenge.

However, those in agreement state that AI may have led to the premature creation of solutions to problems that do not exist. There is a general lack of education at foundation level. The inherent problem is that creativity and innovation is suffering as a result of "quick to market" AI solutions.



Adding to the problem is the low cost of infrastructure inception with services such as Amazon EC2 simplifying scalability while controlling cost. It opens new opportunities for new entrants in the market that were previously hindered by high CAPEX.

"We are relying too heavily on AI. If AI was so great, it would solve food hunger"

Fluctuation in the exchange rate dramatically affects CIO decisions to scale their cloud infrastructure. Volatility in the rate of exchange creates uncertainty in budgeting which is a matter of concern for shareholders and heads of finance, often leading to less investment in an attempt to control current expenses. Industries have become reliant on AI to solve problems. With a focus from upstream providers on integrating AI with their cloud solutions, it is alarming how powerful people with minimal technical or software development skills have become. CIOs heed that organisations need to implement clear governance.

VAUGHN YOUNG, VP OF SALES,
DUGSON CONSULTING

03 / PLATFORM CHOICES

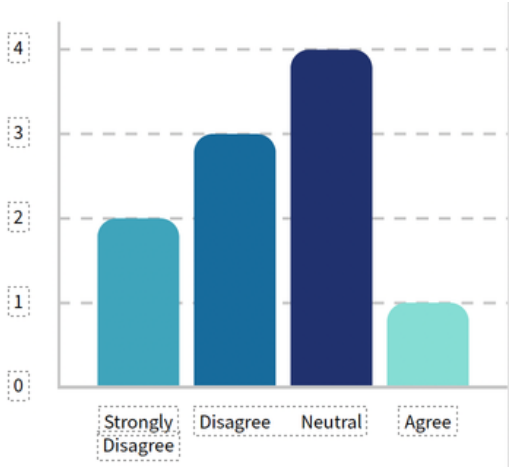
Decisions that retain flexibility

A framework before a product conversation
CIOs want objective guidance and measurable outcomes before committing to transformation. The discussion favoured structured decision frameworks that make value, dependency and the ability to change direction explicit.

Many CIOs described a growing concern around making major technology decisions in an increasingly complex environment.

Questions being asked include:
Are we choosing the right platform?
Will the investment deliver value?
What happens if we need to reverse course?

Organisations want structured decision frameworks rather than product-led conversations. CIOs are looking for objective guidance and measurable outcomes before committing to transformation initiatives.





RYNHARDT CLOETE
MONKEY & RIVER

Marketplace was discussed as a way to discover and acquire solutions, and as a route for businesses to sell into the B2B market. Participants linked its value to solutions built around business problems, measurable outcomes and opportunities for partners to address gaps.

Are we choosing the right platform? Will the investment deliver value? What happens if we need to reverse course?

Questions asked in the Roundtable



AWS Marketplace addresses this need by providing multiple tried and tested solutions on Marketplace.

Many of these solutions were built around solving problems within business rather than simply designing with the aim of selling a product.

Measurable outcomes are thus easier to produce allowing for informed decision-making.

AWS Marketplace significantly increased not only the ability to acquire new products, but also allowed to sell their solutions in the B2B space. Marketplace drives innovation by identifying gaps to be filled by partners

awsmarketplace

04 / CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

The true cost of switching

People and trust change the calculation
A lower technology price is only part of a switching decision. Staff onboarding, training, customer engagement and confidence in the supplier all influence whether a move delivers value.

Optimise the experience first
The discussion questioned whether moving to cloud is always the answer. Redesigning service delivery on existing infrastructure may also produce a faster, more relevant customer experience.

JACQUES VERMEULEN
DUGSON CONSULTING



DANIEL NTINI
ULWEMBU



Customers expect faster service, personalised experiences and always-on digital engagement. Switching costs have become very low.

It is important to determine whether customers will engage with your product or solution. Simply switching from one provider to another is not merely a cost exercise. Training cost involving onboarding of your staff to new provider systems need to form a large part of the decision to switch.

Also, customers are skeptical of moving to a different provider merely based on cost. The question begs what services or product are subpar to existing offerings that lead to reduced costs?

Trust in the supplier and their products comes into play, and it is important as a supplier to establish and nurture that trust. With the move towards zero trust, many people are disengaging from digital platforms which can also be interpreted as "switching".

"The IT industry needs to focus on 4 P's: People, Processes, Platforms and Partnerships." - Daniel Ntini

Switching to cloud may not be the answer. Business owners need to ask whether they can deliver the same customer experience by using the same infrastructure, but redesigning and optimising their service offerings to provide a faster user experience tailored to their customer demography.



Additionally, switching between suppliers across borders brings with it some inherent challenges. Data sovereignty, country specific data regulations, and even unwritten rules of engagement are a few of these challenges.

It can therefore be deduced that switching costs are low when only considering technology costs. The flip side is user training and geopolitical costs that are often overlooked.

Leadership implication: Evaluate the total change required across all four Ps before committing to a new provider.

CROSSING BORDERS ADDS COMPLEXITY

Data sovereignty, country-specific regulations and local rules of engagement create additional challenges when changing suppliers across borders. These costs can be overlooked when comparisons focus only on technology.

05/ INNOVATION

Speed with discipline

Learn faster. Deliver value sooner.
Experiment, test internally, learn from failure and refine solutions before taking them to customers. Technology should reduce cost, improve productivity, remove friction or make the customer journey simpler.

Speed of innovation matters — but speed without discipline is dangerous.

Being first to market means little if the customer experience is broken.



Businesses need to experiment quickly, test internally, learn from failure and refine solutions before taking them to customers.

The organisations that win will not necessarily be those that innovate fastest, but those that learn, adapt and deliver value faster than their competitors.

The same principle applies to AI.

Don't ask, "Where can we use AI?" Ask, "What problem can AI solve?"

Ultimately, customers don't care how sophisticated the technology behind the experience is. They care whether it makes their journey simpler, faster and better. Ease of use is absolutely key in driving customer engagement and ultimately, customer growth.

Technology should deliver measurable value — whether that means reducing costs, improving productivity, removing friction or creating a better customer experience.

PRAGASHANI REDDY
DSG

70% of executives agreed that speed of innovation is important.

Questions asked in the Roundtable



“Speed alone is not innovation. True innovation is the ability to move quickly, test intelligently, listen to your customers, and build solutions that genuinely make their lives better.”

Amazon Connect creates a better customer experience. Build custom templates to be used by digital AI assistants, and integrate call center scripts to ensure the right answer, every time.

Amazon Connect

06 / AI ADOPTION

From experiments to outcomes

Data governance is the most important focus before introducing AI into theorganisation
AI remains a board-level priority. Moving beyond experimentation is harder when business outcomes are unclear, data quality is poor, governance is weak and ROI or adoption is difficult to measure.

There is a new kid on the block: The Chief AI Officer

AI remains a board-level priority, but many organisations struggle to move beyond experimentation.

Common concerns include unclear business outcomes, poor data quality, lack of governance, difficulty measuring ROI and user adoption challenges

"If a customer approaches you with an indication of what they want their ROI to be when using AI, they already have a better understanding of the impact of AI on their business than merely using LLMs to answer business questions" - Dennis Kriel

CIOs consistently emphasised that successful AI projects start with a clearly defined business problem, trusted data, and strong governance rather than technology alone.



DENNIS KRIEL
VERATE WORKS





RONALD VAN SCHELTEMA
KELLER WILLIAMS

The Shift Toward Controlled AI

A recurring theme was that successful AI adoption depends less on selecting the latest model and more on establishing the right foundations.

Interesting observations from the discussions revealed that there are six areas requiring attention:

- Business problem definition
- Value measurement
- Data readiness
- Governance
- Pilot execution
- Scalable operational models

Of these six areas, governance of data is identified as the most important focus area before introducing AI into the organisation.

70% of executives agreed that speed of innovation is important.

Questions asked in the Roundtable



Amazon Q is an AI-powered assistant designed to help employees across an organisation work smarter and faster.

It provides specialised support for developers, analysts, contact centre teams, supply chain professionals, and AWS users.

It also helps organisations analyse data, automate tasks, streamline processes, and improve overall productivity.

Amazon Q

07/SHARED PRIORITIES

A shared leadership agenda

Control before adoption
Support investment with governance, security and accountability.

Measurable business value
Judge success by outcomes, not implementation completion.

Data readiness
Build on trusted, accessible and governed data.

Trust beyond features
Prioritise accountability and long-term strategic alignment.

Flexibility as a strategic asset
Retain the ability to adapt, move workloads and control costs.
ol of current expenditure.

"For me it is fundamental that we align and collaborate around these topics. We need to become responsible AI users "
Dion Surujparsad



DION SURUJPARSAD
LIQUID INTELLIGENT TECHNOLOGIES

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