



The role of CIO in a world where experience rules.

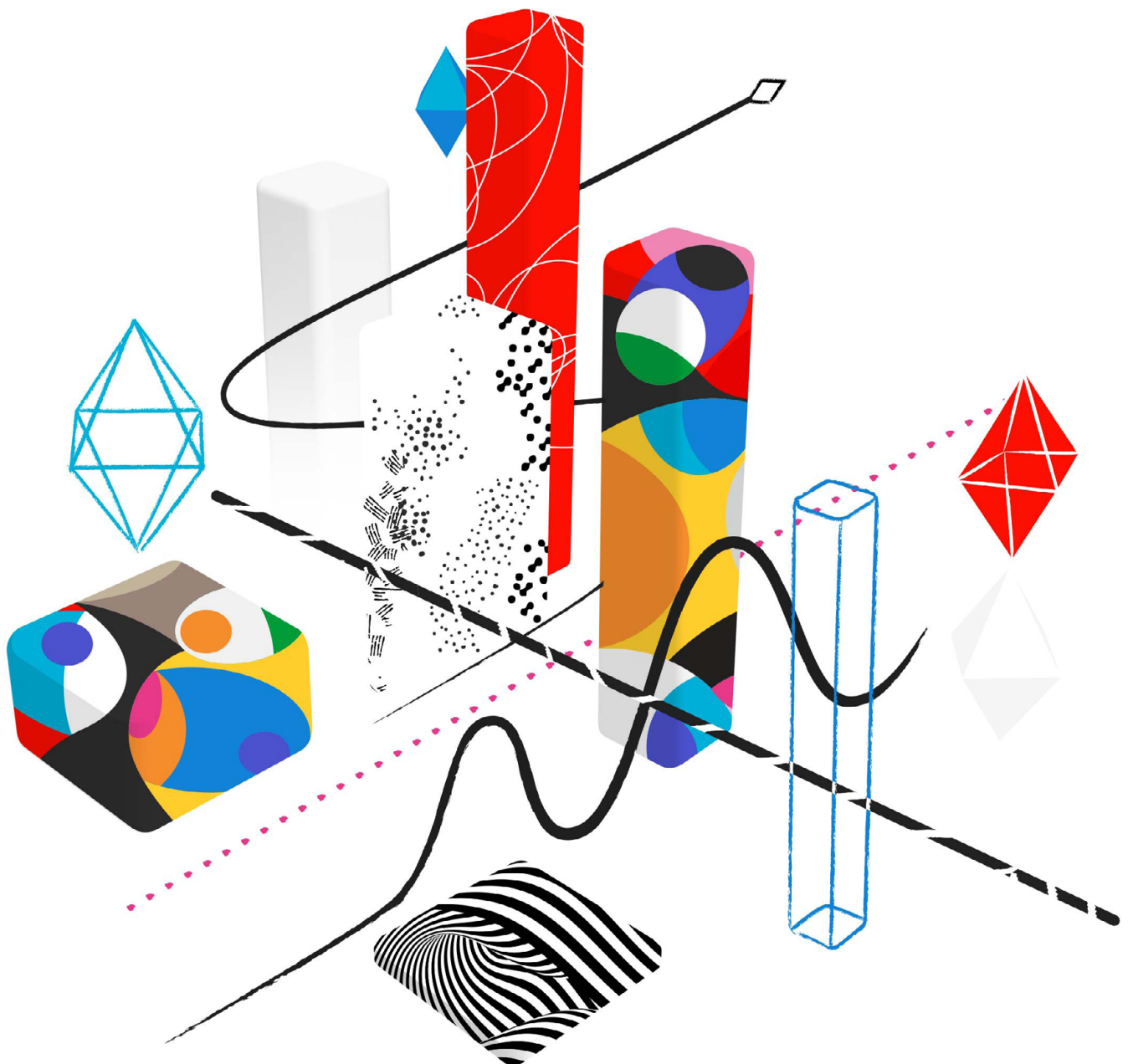
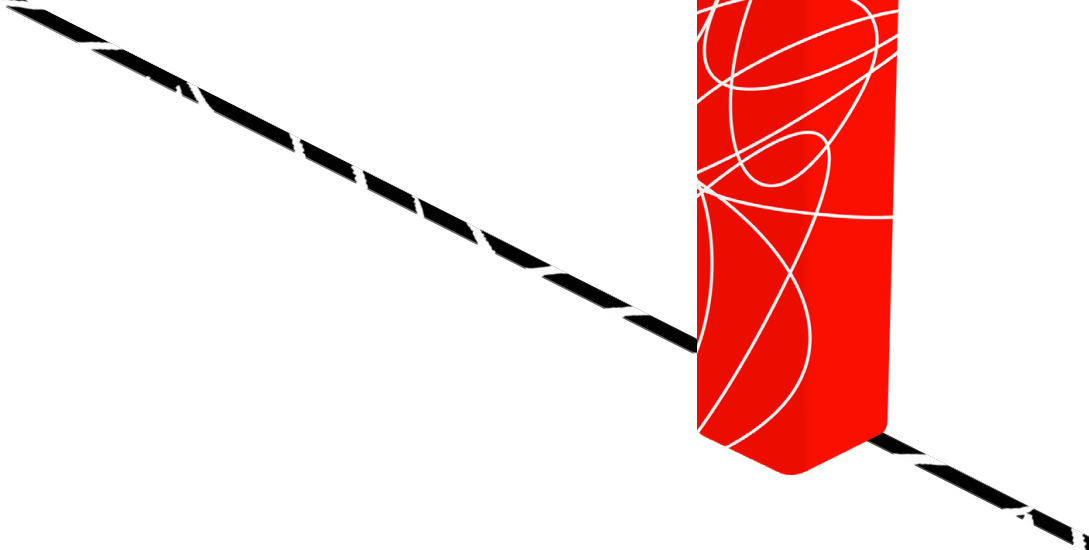


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Experience rules.

In recent years, the role of CIO has evolved to meet a wider set of responsibilities and aspirations. The pandemic has played its part with the acceleration of digital transformation projects. But it's the shift in expectations of user experiences that's really driving this change—and that has been simmering for a while.

CIOs are now charged with the responsibility to support genuinely unique experiences for both their employees and customers.

In this report, we explore the complexities of being a CIO in a world where experience rules. We outline how to succeed in a role that not only involves juggling various moving parts but continues to grow in scope.

So, like today's CIO, we've got quite a job on our hands. Let's get started.



The changing role of CIOs.

Hold the press. Digital tech is as important as ever.

No CIO—or CSO, CDO, CTO, or anyone working in IT for that matter—needs to be told how vital technology is in the modern workplace, from collaboration to continuity, from SaaS to security. Digital transformation has been the name of the game for years now. Planning, implementing, and maintaining digital technology has increasingly becoming central to how work *works*.

Removing paper processes, moving legacy systems to the cloud, providing devices for mobile working—this stuff doesn't just happen. There's no tooth fairy completing cloud migrations while the business sleeps at night, leaving integrated artificial intelligence (AI), analytics, and IoT solutions under your pillow.

IT departments have long been overburdened, facilitating the ambitions of boardrooms and line of business leaders. And then the pandemic turned the heat up, not just a couple of notches but close to a boiling point as organizations rolled out remote working en masse.

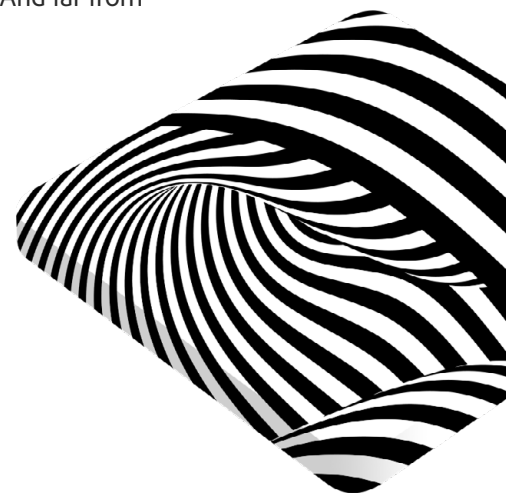
It's worth exploring what this new normal means for CIOs. How do you adapt to meet these demands and ensure the business grows in revenue and profitability?

Outside your zone.

Today's CIO must support the technology estate and streamline business practices and processes. They must overcome the short-term shock of a global pandemic, as well as push on with long-term transformation objectives.

Most significant of all, today's CIO must manage an evolving tech stack that balances the needs of many different stakeholders—sometimes with competing goals. Essentially much of the task at hand is a balancing act—where the soft skills needed for nurturing culture and building relationships are as important as hard, technical expertise. Leadership, communication, and collaboration are now as crucial as code.

This is because today's CIO must lead change at a cultural, structural, process, and technology level if they want to bring everyone on board. No easy feat. And far from the traditional idea of what a CIO was responsible for.



A new way of seeing.

Today's CIO must come to grips with what the business does in a way that wasn't required before. They need to know how the business makes money and understand why customers opt for their products and services. They must immerse themselves in the values of the organization and manage competing priorities of stakeholders across the business.

A lot of this is going to be new for an experienced CIO, which is why CIOs need to step outside their comfort zone and into the wider business. We have outlined three key aspects that we'll discuss in turn:



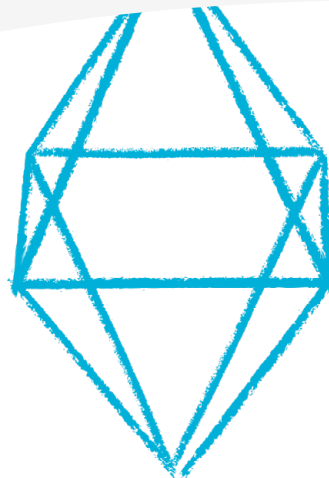
CIO as
experience
leader

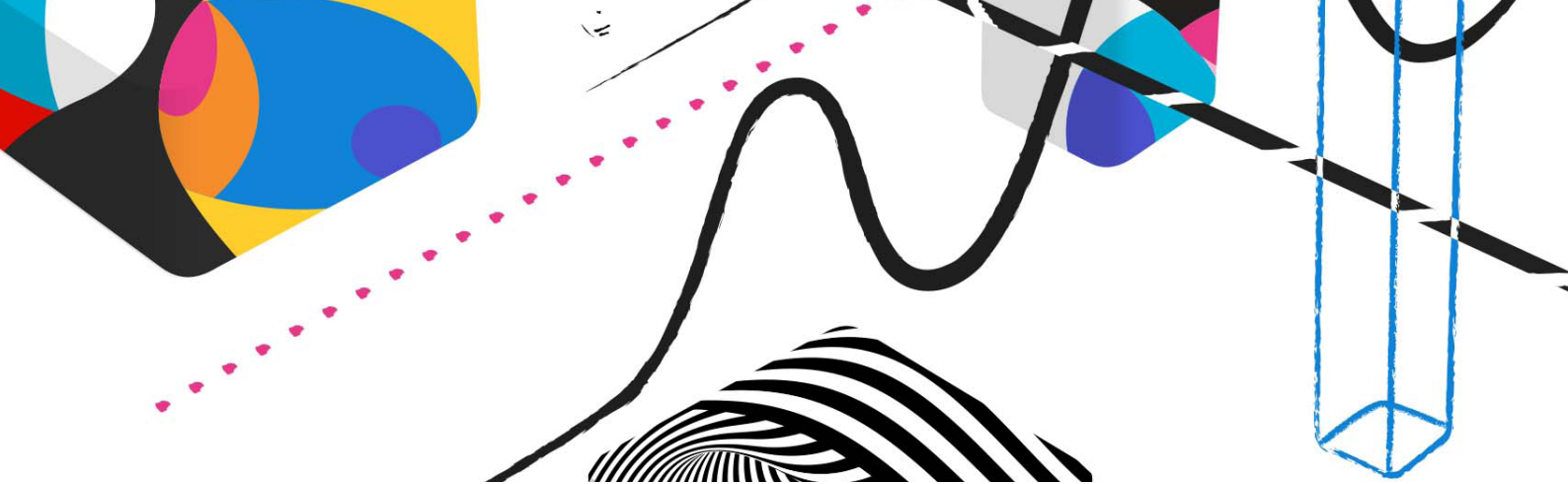


CIO as
guardian
of trust



CIO as
innovator





CIO as experience leader.

Many CIOs are taking up the title of chief experience officer (CXO) as a kind of *nom de guerre*—some proudly, others jokingly. Either way it highlights a change to the role because taking ownership of experiences has become a central responsibility.

Meeting customer expectations.

Customer experience (CX) has become a crucial differentiator for businesses. Customers expect seamless experiences across all touchpoints with an organization.

Businesses primarily interact with customers via technology—whether it's through an app, website, social channel, or another interactive user interface (UI). Therefore, managing the infrastructure for experiences falls on the CIO. Organizations in search of a vital competitive advantage are investing in new technologies to power better experiences for customers.

And of course, it's important to balance ambitions for customer experience with a wide range of issues including privacy, trust, security, and business continuity.

It all starts at home.

In many ways, everything begins with employee experience (EX). According to the publication CIO, businesses with great EX are [21% more profitable than rivals](#). And employee experience improves talent attraction, retention, and productivity. This shouldn't be news to anyone, but what is worth acknowledging is just how important employee experience is for CX.

On the one hand, customers expect to interact with innovative digital services that enhance and support the value they get from a company's products. On the other, employees need tools to efficiently respond and adapt to changing customer requirements and provide the best customer experiences possible. So, the two go hand in hand.

Yet, for customer experience to be turned into a competitive advantage it must happen within a coherent, data-driven ecosystem.

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Everything is personal.

Personalization is at the heart of customer expectations. Customers expect experiences to be tailored to their likes, dislikes, behaviors, user activity, and so on. Sometimes referred to as “deep personalization,” this is not personalization as set dressing but as contextual, intuitive interactions at all touchpoints—and, importantly, interactions that add real value.

Because businesses connect with customers across multiple channels, the CIO needs to bring everything together in a consistent and coherent way. When you strip back the customer experience challenge, you realize it’s critically dependent on data. Experiences start with the infrastructure, services, and systems that allow businesses to collect, manage, and understand customer data.

Then they need to be able to turn that into a greater understanding of each customer, so that each customer is provided with personalized experiences. For the organization, this includes:

- Recognizing a returning user
- Hyper-contextualized recommendations based on past activity and behavior
- Engaging marketing and targeted email campaigns that respect customer preferences
- Streamlined processes like logging in so speed to value is accelerated
- Scaling insights from one customer segment to activating other segments in real time
- Access for customer service staff to the right info at the right time to provide context to customer interactions, so issues are solved faster

Reorganizing the business

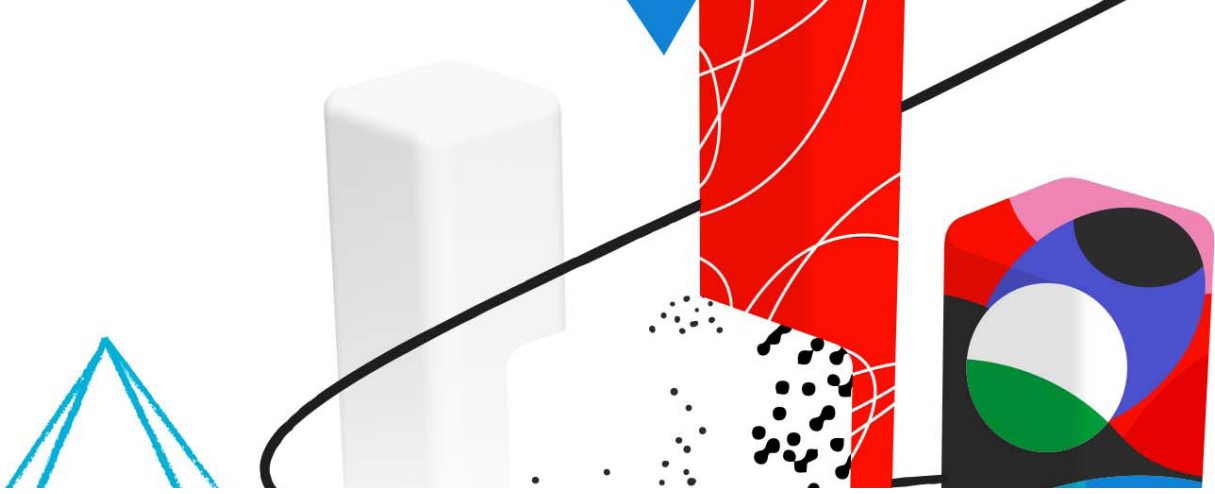
“People today want more than just products and services. They want experiences,” says Cynthia Stoddard, senior vice president and CIO at Adobe. “That’s why so many organizations, regardless of whatever industry they’re in, are really reorganizing and strategizing around the customer experience mandate, how that looks, and how they can make it better.”

But creating personalized experiences is easier said than done. There are several challenges that arise when customer data is in play—privacy and safety concerns, for instance, two areas crucial for building and maintaining customer trust.



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Cynthia Stoddard
Senior Vice President and CIO,
Adobe



CIO as guardian of trust.

Building customer trust is another new responsibility for the CIO, albeit one that must be shared with senior stakeholders across the company. Businesses need to find the right balance between personalized experiences and privacy.

On top of this, security is paramount. CIOs must ensure that security measures protect the systems and processes around customer data. [Research](#) from Ping Identity found that 81% of customers would stop engaging with organizations after security breaches.

It's paradox time.

At the center of the customer experience challenge is a paradox. On the one hand, customer expectations for personalized experiences continue to grow. What's more, these experiences require organizations to collect customer data—and to use it in creative ways. All the while, customers demand more control and privacy over this data.

But this isn't the only challenge. Data privacy regulations are being introduced all around the world. How organizations handle customer data is different on a country-by-country basis. For organizations with millions of customer interactions a day, this means a lot of complexity. The CIO must make this as simple as possible for all stakeholders while maintaining high standards of security so that customer trust is not breached.



Personalization, privacy, and security.

CIOs must approach personalization with privacy in mind from the outset. There's a lot at stake here. The cost of getting this wrong is both financial and reputational through a loss of customer trust and fines from regulators.

In the Ponemon Institute's 2020 "[Cost of a Data Breach Report](#)," the largest contributing factor to costs associated with data breaches was the loss of business due to reputational damage. The report also found that when customer data is compromised it costs on average \$150 per individual record. Of course, privacy concerns are not limited to fears around data breaches—but this illustrates how costly mishandling data can be and how a loss of customer trust is a deep hole to fall into.



There are three avenues to pursue here. One is privacy—making sure privacy is built into all digital experiences, either by updating legacy systems and processes or using new solutions. The other is culture—educating stakeholders and building a culture where the importance of privacy and customer trust is understood and how this is fundamental to customer experience. The third is security—building robust measures so that the processes and systems around data security are maintained at all times.

Build trust by offering choice and control of how, when, and where data is used. A customer wants and expects to know this, and so it needs to be built into the experiences.

The CIO and the CMO relationship.

To succeed in building customer trust, CIOs need to make new friends. It's time to put those soft skills to use. Traditionally, IT would have worked closely with executive management and probably finance too. But now one of the core relationships that CIOs must embrace is the relationship with the CMO. It's a requirement for delivering great digital customer experiences—for both parties.

Most customer interactions funnel through marketing. Their goal is to make sure every prospect or customer touchpoint is as effective as possible. To achieve this, they intend to use customer data in a variety of creative ways. But it's the CIO who manages the technology that collects the data, governs and secures the data, makes it accessible, and sets the limits around compliance.

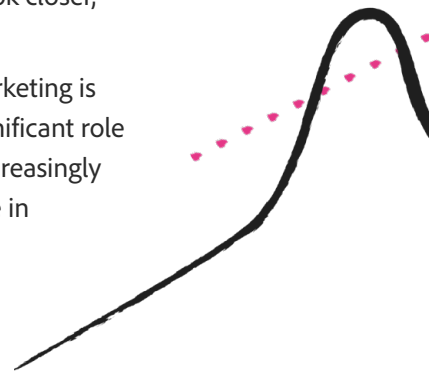
It's a joint effort to find the balance between these two sides. Because if we look closer, it's clear these are two sides of the same coin.

In recent years, the ambitions of marketing and IT have started to overlap. Marketing is now data-oriented—advanced analytics and marketing automation play a significant role in any marketing success. And as we have outlined in this report, the CIO is increasingly responsible for the customer experience. As the famous Humphrey Bogart line in *Casablanca* goes, "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

Trust makes for better experiences.

Customers want to interact with organizations that are transparent around data. Communicating what your organization is doing to gain customer trust is key. It's a challenge that CMOs should embrace—they are the ones with the skills to make it happen. You need to help customers understand how your organization handles their data, what you do with it, and why.

You also need consent. Not just for regulatory compliance (although that is incredibly important), but because, ultimately, transparency around data is the experience the customer wants to have. And remember, that's the game we're in: the game of the customer experience for both the CIO and the CMO.





Customers want consent and choice. And they are far more likely to share data when they know that they will receive better, more tailored experiences because of it. In fact, according to [research from Accenture](#), not only are 91% of consumers more likely to turn to businesses that offer personalization, but 83% of consumers are happy to share personal data in order to receive personalized experiences.



The customer journey mostly takes place in the digital realm, via customer-facing apps and websites. The CIO and CMO must work together to improve these sites and deploy new apps.

What happens next.

Actions speak louder than words. You can't just talk about privacy—there's only so much marketing can do on its own. The CIO must make sure the technology walks the walk, so to speak.

The customer journey mostly takes place in the digital realm, via customer-facing apps and websites. The CIO and CMO must work together to improve these sites and deploy new apps. The CIO can cover the technical side, allowing marketing teams to focus on innovation.

The resilience and reliability of this technology is crucial. Modern marketing solutions generate lots of data, from basic customer info like name, email, and job title, to data around customer interactions like content downloads, shares, and demo requests. This needs to be organized, stored, and analyzed for marketing teams to activate high-impact experiences that convert to achieve their goals.

It also needs to be secure. All the hard work will come to nothing, and customer trust will take a substantial hit if data breaches occur. Securing the systems and processes around customer data is a priority. But if privacy and security are prioritized from the outset, CIOs and CMOs can build new digital systems that build customer trust at the same time as driving personalized experiences.



CIO as innovator.

Ultimately, in the quest for exceptional customer experiences, the CIO must lead the charge.

Driving digital change.

CIOs are looking to AI and analytics to improve both EX and CX. Research shows that [80% of CIOs](#) are investing in new technologies to enable better customer experiences. At the same time, CIOs are investing in technology to enhance the business agility, stability, and speed to market.

Whether it's regulatory change, security scares, or a global pandemic, CIOs are under pressure to ensure that—whatever happens—the business is prepared to cope. CIOs must balance the ambitions for customer experiences and innovation with the need for the business to continue, survive, and thrive.

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Culture is capital.

CIOs can't drive digital change alone. Much of the burden falls on IT, but it is crucial for ideas to come from every area of the business. No one knows how to improve customer experience in sales better than the sales team, for instance. Therefore, CIOs are learning and looking to nurture a culture of innovation—one where customer experience is a joint effort and at the heart of every decision the business makes.

The CIO is uniquely positioned to bring everyone together because, when it comes to customer experience, technology is the enabler. And as we have seen, data is at the heart of everything. CIOs can create a culture where customer experience flourishes by ensuring the smooth flow of curated and relevant data across the organization.

So as CIO, you need to be asking the following questions:

- Do we have the right data?
- Does that data lead to actionable insights?
- Are data sources, systems, and legacy systems all connected in a manner that is coherent and easy to access?
- Can we view the data in real time?
- Do we have a single view of each customer?

The concept of unified data.

There are many challenges to making use of data to create personalized customer experiences. For starters, real-time understanding of customer data and interactions is critical. Without this, personalization is limited—these experiences won't deliver the value that customers are expecting.

Of course, there are many different sources of data. We are talking about broad and deep personalized experiences. Data is gathered at touchpoints across the entire customer journey.

This might include personal data collected during sales, customer interactions with support teams, user behavior and activity on the organization's websites and apps, as well as data from second- and third-party sources.

For customer experiences to meet expectations, this data needs to be put together and be accessible fast. For global organizations, there's also the need to adhere to different data regulations in different countries.

A single holistic view of each customer, rather than a jumbled mass, is the only way to achieve this. Customer experience can then be truly personalized in real time and at scale.

A good example of where this adds value is content and commerce, like for driving quality personalized content for customers across multiple channels, as well as integrating with commerce to help boost revenue. It can be easy for the various data sources to overwhelm anyone who isn't a data analyst if they're not managed in a unified system. For initiatives like this to be successful, teams across the organization need the data to work for them—meaning that insights around customer data should be as easy as possible to access, understand, and use.





The simplicity gained through a single view enables the kind of culture where everyone can make data-driven choices when engaging with customers. This way, you can bring all the benefits of data and analytics to every corner of the organization.

The art of simplicity.

Part of the beauty of a single unified view of the customer is simplicity for everyone. Business intelligence shouldn't just be for IT. The simplicity gained through a single view enables the kind of culture where everyone can make data-driven choices when engaging with customers and reap the benefits.

There are many demands and responsibilities for the CIO today—and these continue to evolve and grow in scope. In most scenarios the answer to these challenges is scalable, streamlined solutions.

The quest for total experience.

As we have seen, the role of the CIO is growing in complexity. With a priority for enabling the organization to turn customer experiences into a competitive advantage, CIOs must balance competing objectives, departments, and interests.

In many ways the biggest challenge is achieving the culture change necessary to make this possible. Because it's only through an approach that takes in all aspects of the modern organization that the quest for total experience can succeed. So where should you start?

First, use those soft skills. And then, the fun part—explore the technology solutions out there.

Adobe is a customer experience leader.

Adobe is leading the field with customer experience solutions. Great experiences have the power to inspire, transform, and move the world forward. And every great experience starts with creativity. Adobe's game-changing innovations are redefining the possibilities of digital experiences for employees and customers. We connect content, commerce, omnichannel delivery, and data and introduce new technologies that democratize creativity, shape the next generation of storytelling, and inspire entirely new categories of business.

Learn how Adobe helps CIOs like you succeed in our experience-driven world.

[Get details](#)

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