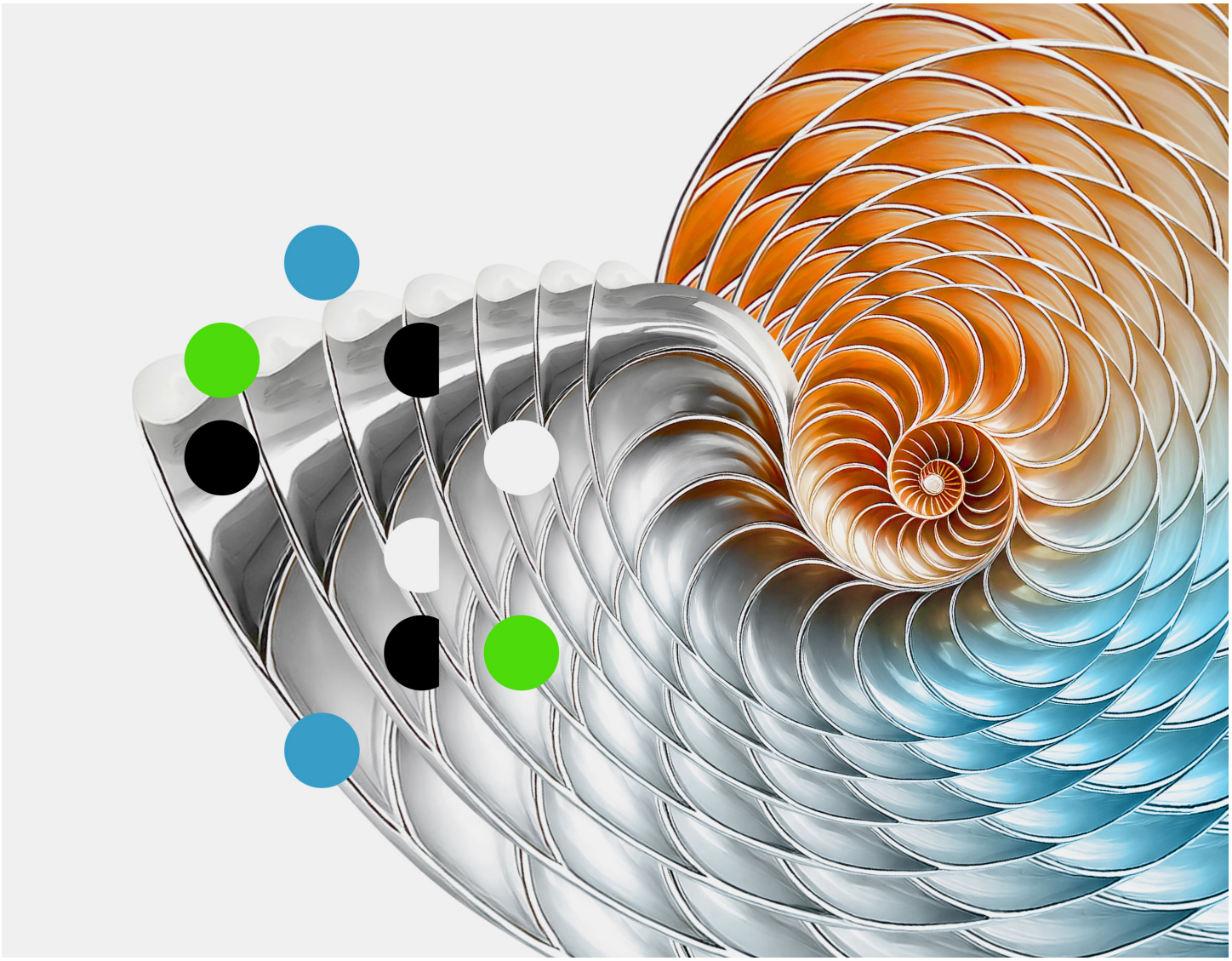
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Global Tech Trends 2026 | Deloitte Insights

UK perspective: Architecting an AI-native tech organisation

AI isn't an add on; it's foundational. Organisations – and technology teams – need to rethink their structure, talent and delivery models to take advantage.

It's quite the promotion: in just a few years, AI has gone from an assistant to an autonomous agent workforce. As a result, tech is accelerating its transcendence from the back office to become a strategic business partner.

For CIOs, the challenge is twofold. AI is reshaping the technology organisation through new architectures, skills, governance models and ways of working. At the same time, it is also reshaping how leadership teams collaborate, make investment decisions and drive value across the enterprise.

Scaling AI is therefore not just a technology challenge; it is an organisational one. Our latest tech leaders research backs this: nearly three-quarters of technology leaders said their operating model would need to change in the next 12 to 18 months to realise the benefits of AI.

Technology leaders are taking on a dual role to guide the transformation

Tech leaders now need to set the conditions for AI to scale safely and productively across the enterprise, while also helping the business translate AI ambition into measurable value.

CIOs should focus on:

- **AI enablement and foundations:** Create the architecture, governance, data readiness, change management, risk and control foundations required for responsible AI adoption – including productivity tools such as CoPilot.
- **Being a strategic advisor and integrator:** Connect business needs and priorities, respond rapidly to changing demands, deliver actionable insights, support growth and drive transformation.

Scaling AI for the business requires integrated leadership: closer collaboration across data, cyber, risk, engineering and business functions, with clear coordination around priorities, investment and accountability. This gives tech leaders an opportunity to elevate their role – strengthening relationships across the C-suite, guiding investment decisions and helping the organisation turn AI ambition into measurable value.

AI has exposed a skills gap

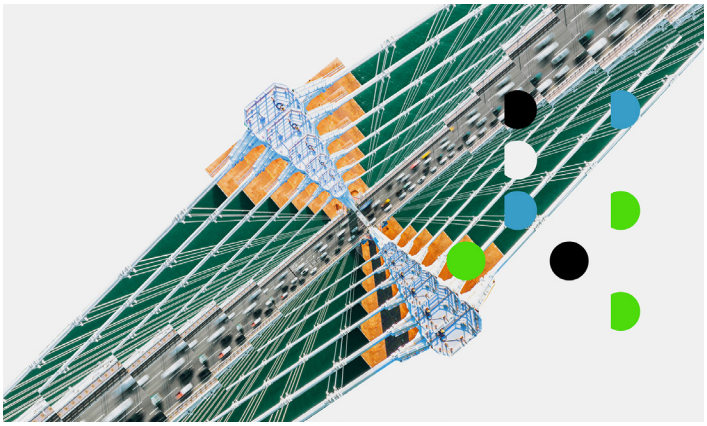
By 2030, all tech work will involve AI, according to a Gartner survey of more than 700 CIOs. While 75% will be carried out by humans augmented by the tech, the remaining 25% will be completed by AI alone. At the same time, IT is battling a skills shortage.

New operating models will require new skillsets, including in AI integration, MLOps and AI governance and ethics. Early talent development, upskilling and reskilling IT professionals will be essential. As AI becomes embedded across the business, the skills agenda needs to cover both technical expertise and the human capabilities needed to use AI well.

Intentional architecture will be critical. Whilst AI offers significant opportunity, a proliferating web of task-focused agents could create a mesh of unprecedented complexity – and a new type of legacy for our successors to unpick. Winning will be in the orchestration, control and visibility of this.

There are further points to consider:

1. **Redesign workflows, not just roles:** Tech leaders need to debunk the myth that AI replaces humans end-to-end. Instead, it's about understanding the routing of work and where to wrap AI around people, while humans retain creative and strategic roles.
2. **Build blended skills:** We're seeing more AI fluency, but there's a need for individuals who combine tech know-how and softer skills and understand how, and where, you can create value. This convergence is where real success lies.
3. **Invest in foundational expertise:** Demand for skills in data, cyber, architecture, AI governance, infrastructure and computing will continue to grow as organisations scale AI.



Focus on the now and the future

With the landscape moving so rapidly, you cannot set your strategy in stone.

Operating models have always had to evolve or pivot, but AI requires continuous reprioritisation, learning and unlearning. Leaders need to balance immediate action with a future-focused view and regularly reassess priorities as technology, regulation and workforce expectations change.

There is also an opportunity to unlock more value from existing tech investments, platforms, data and cloud capabilities, not only invest in new AI solutions. However, organisations cannot ignore the basics. Our recent tech value research found that legacy systems and technical debt remain the most cited barriers to digital ambition, identified by 50% of respondents. To balance AI ambition with long-term value creation, leaders should focus on six priorities:

1. **Strategic ambition and alignment:** Unify leadership around a vision for the future.
2. **Organisation and cultural change:** Encourage, educate and empower at all levels.
3. **Governance and value realisation:** Implement clear metrics, centralised governance and consistent policies.
4. **Data availability and quality:** Ensure high-quality data, consistent inputs and democratised insights that everybody understands.
5. **Investment and cost considerations:** Treat AI as a strategic asset requiring careful capital allocation. As organisations scale AI, funding models may need to evolve from traditional project-based approaches towards product- and portfolio-based investment, with ongoing accountability for value delivery.
6. **Leadership integration:** Create mechanisms for leaders across the organisation to make joined up decisions.

Choices must be anchored in data, value and strategy.

‘One-size-fits-all’ isn’t the answer

Organisations are in different places when it comes to adoption. Some are going AI-first on everything; others are more cautious or face obstacles owing to their archetype, maturity or budget.

Investment decisions must cover:

1. **AI tools and platforms:** Software, infrastructure and token economics.
2. **People and change management:** New hires, upskilling and managing organisational shifts.
3. **Foundational capabilities:** Data management, regulatory compliance, pilots and integration. If you need to fix your foundations, do it while experimenting. Don’t wait to innovate; there isn’t time.

Where CIOs should prioritise

Companies that fail to invest in AI will be outpaced by those that do. But those that invest only in tech risk missing the bigger opportunity. AI is not simply a new toolset; it is a catalyst for reimagining how the enterprise works.

For CIOs, this means leading on two fronts:

1. **Transform the tech organisation:** Modernise the technology organisation through skills, platforms, data, governance, cyber and operating model change.
2. **Shape enterprise response:** Help lead the enterprise response by aligning the C-suite, shaping investment choices, evolving funding models, governing risk and measuring value.

These priorities are closely connected. CIOs cannot transform the technology organisation in isolation, nor can they drive enterprise-wide change without the right foundations. Success depends on capabilities that enable both:

1. Lean into continuous change and adaptability.
2. Invest in talent at all levels.
3. Build a strong foundation in architecture, data, governance and culture.
4. Select your alliances and tech partners strategically.
5. Focus on value creation – don’t adopt technology for the sake of it.
6. Centre humans in your transition – they bring the skills, creativity and judgement.

Crucially, don’t jump straight to ‘how’. Start with ‘why’ AI matters, ‘where’ it can create value, and ‘who’ needs to be involved in shaping, governing, and scaling it. The rest will then follow.

Learn more

This UK perspective explores one of the key trends featured in our Global Tech Trends report: *The great rebuild: Architecting an AI-native tech organisation.* Read the full trend here.

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