



# Blazing the AI trail

Deloitte's 2026 CDAO Survey Report asked today's data and AI leaders about how their influence is changing amid the AI revolution. The survey found **Chief Data and Analytics officers are gaining influence and meeting AI challenges.**

## Revolutions take evolutions

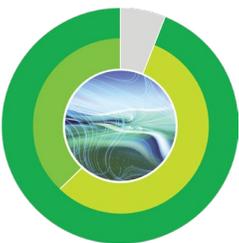
After Edison invented the light bulb, it took 80 years for electricity to become commonplace.<sup>1</sup> But it fundamentally changed the way we work, live, and play—and revolutionized the burgeoning industrial age.



History is repeating itself with AI. **Like Edison and the electricity pioneers who followed him, today's CDAOs are data and AI trailblazers, and they are actively evolving change.** Deloitte's 2026 CDAO survey shows how, asking about challenges these leaders face and what they think needs to be done to accelerate AI adoption and fully leverage the value of data and analytics.

## CDAO influence is rising

A position that didn't exist 25 years ago, **the CDAO is leading organizational shifts** needed to harness data and AI possibilities—and help maximize measurable value.



94%

Expect their influence to grow over the next 12 months

36% Grow significantly  
58% Grow somewhat

78%

63%

of CDAOs have more power as decision makers today because of AI

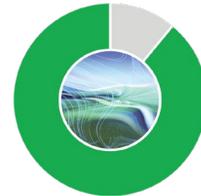
describe themselves as primary drivers of data and analytics decisions

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## 5 key survey takeaways

More influence, people, and projects: CDAOs are leading AI's revolution.

### 1 CDAOs are ascending as organizational trailblazers with a vision



89%

Actively evolve data and AI strategy with full executive support

11% Contribute to change but are not the final authority to lead major initiatives



CDAOs selected how AI has increased their leadership responsibilities

56%

managing more people involved with AI projects

51%

more power as decision maker for my entire organization

50%

more power as decision maker for my entire department

48%

the number of projects I'm leading has gone up

29%

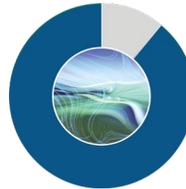
handling a larger budget

### 2 Back to business basics, focused on value



91%

Want their organization to do more to take advantage of AI



56%

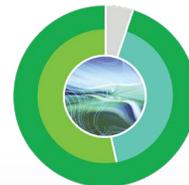
feel intense pressure to prove the business value and ROI of data and AI initiatives

### 3 Data is the engine

95%

Think that their organization isn't fully leveraging the value of data

53% are extremely concerned  
42% somewhat  
3% not at all



78%

of CDAOs say their organizations are implementing data modernization with AI

22% Have plans but no implementation yet

## 4 Where work needs to be done

CDAOs are facing 5 key challenges as AI adoptions evolve



SCALING AI



INVESTING in upskilling/training



DEVELOPING leadership skills



BUILDING/RETAINING high-performing teams



SECURING RESOURCES to hire/retain talent

How CDAOs describe privacy and security in their organization's AI initiatives

48%

have taken steps but some areas need improvement

27%

have implemented safeguards

19%

have policies and guardrails in place

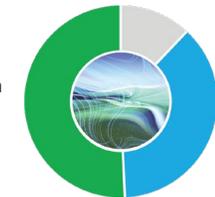
6%

currently lack any specific guardrails

## 5 A bright future for CDAOs

51%

of CDAOs surveyed have been with their organization for 10+ years



56%

expect to retire in their CDAO role

37% 6–10 years  
12% 5 years or less

## Riding the wave

As AI continues to evolve, CDAOs have opportunities to help ensure continued success for themselves and their organizations.



Create a CDAO position; include AI in the title



Focus on relationships and managing expectations



Track data and AI value via benchmarks and ROI



Prepare the workforce



Don't forget governance policies