Adobe Survey: 98 Percent of CIOs in India Report Expanded Responsibilities During COVID-19

New Delhi, India — June 1, 2021 – New research from Adobe has revealed that CIOs sit at the center of virtually every major business initiative in today's digital-first economy, with businesses tapping CIOs to digitally transform their organizations and help shape their return-to-work plans.

In order to better understand how the CIO's role has evolved owing to impact of the pandemic, Adobe surveyed more than 500 CIOs across the U.S. (200), EMEA (150) and APAC (156) regions. It found that 98% of Indian CIOs (compared to 92% in U.S., 83% in EMEA and 94% in APAC) reported an increase in their responsibilities.

"In just a year, we went from a world with digital capabilities to a digital-first economy, which placed immense pressure on many leaders, including CIOs—many of whom were tasked with taking on a range of new responsibilities," says **Nitin Singhal, Managing Director, Digital Experience, Adobe India**. "Besides the pressure to accelerate their organization's digital transformation at record pace, they had to embrace their expanded role and influence as an opportunity to drive progressive digital-first programs and further collaborate with other business leaders to succeed in today's new digital-first reality."

Enablers of a digital-first economy

Today, IT leaders sit at the nexus of their company's transformation and innovation efforts – providing a unique horizontal view and influence across the organization. 96% of Indian CIOs have more influence on leadership decisions (compared to 83% in U.S., 85% in EMEA, 94% in APAC) while an even greater number (98%) share that their organizational structures have been reimagined to meet the changing needs brought on by a transition to a digital-first economy.

Among the many priorities CIOs must now manage, customer experience is ranked the highest by Indian CIOs (92%, compared to 38% in U.S., 67% in EMEA, 74% in APAC). According to the survey, up to 50% of Indian CIOs singled out hybrid and public cloud as the most likely area for increased investment in 2021.

"Over the past year, CIOs have been able to further improve digital customer experiences, but these experiences have also become more complex," says Singhal. "Moving forward, CIOs need to think about the integrated technology tools and infrastructure frameworks necessary to help their organizations effectively and securely capture customer data, convert that data into valuable insights, and utilize those insights to shape a personalized and enhanced customer experience."

C-Suite Power Duos

With more teams directly involved in shaping the customer experience, CIOs regularly partner with their peers to take their digital experiences from concept to reality. Indeed, IT leaders regularly collaborate with two or more C-level colleagues on customer experience management (CXM) initiatives.

In India, CIOs most regularly partner with their organization's CTO followed by the CMO. Globally, an overwhelming majority of CIOs (95%) strongly agree that partnering with the CMO improves their organization's customer experience. Similarly, 93% say that working closely with CMOs promotes innovation.

As an example of this partnership in action, consider MG Motor India. The company's CIO, Manish Patel, and Head of Marketing, Udit Malhotra, are committed to breaking down siloes between their teams and aligning

their customer experience priorities at the leadership level. Together, both leaders combine their skillsets and leadership experience to unify and strengthen their customer experience each day.

Nearly 60% of CIOs now meet with their CMO counterpart on a daily or weekly basis, forming a true power duo.

"It's no secret that close alignment between CXOs leads to more personalized customer as well as employee experiences, but the COVID-19 impact has made this level of partnership indispensable," adds Singhal.

Drivers of employee experience
While customer experience is a top focus for CIOs, the new "work from anywhere" environment has evolved CIO's priorities to be first and foremost, employees and then customers. Today CIOs are leveraging external customer journey management practices and applying those same principles internally to enhance their own employees' experiences.

In fact, eighty-nine percent (89%) of CIOs see themselves as change agents who play a role in improving the culture of their organization. 80% of Indian CIOs foresee their organization focusing more on productivity than time measures (compared to 36% for U.S., 41% for EMEA, 57% for APAC), while a significantly high 71% are willing to hire from anywhere in the country and world (compared to 29% for U.S., 37% for EMEA, 44% for APAC). Additionally, 63% of Indian CIOs are ready to implement a shorter workweek for their employees as compared to 7% for the U.S., 27% in EMEA, and 41% across APAC.

"Given the proven association between happy employees, satisfied customers and overall business success – it's more critical than ever that CIOs become changemakers within their organizations and prioritize any systems or business processes that improve collaboration, productivity and overall employee experience," Singhal says.

Conducted in association with Advanis between February 18 and March 4, 2021 – the research captures insights from CIOs from India, U.S., UK, France, Germany, Australia and Singapore, based in firms from various industries and with atleast 100 employees. Find the full report here.

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