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European CIOs Expand Role To Enable Businesses to Thrive to New Digital Economy

New research from Adobe reveals CIOs taking on new responsibilities and forming closer relationships with CMOs to improve customer and employee experiences

LONDON, UK — 22 April 2021 — New research from Adobe has shown that European CIOs sit at the center of virtually every major business initiative in today's digital economy, with 76% saying they feel pressure to digitally transform their business. The research, which surveyed more than 150 CIOs from across Europe, found at least three-quarters say that within the last twelve months, their role has expanded, their responsibilities have increased, and that they have greater influence on leadership decisions in their organisation.

"Despite the enormous weight on our shoulders, CIOs are stepping up to the challenge," says Cynthia Stoddard, CIO at Adobe. "Along with other business leaders, we have accepted our new responsibilities and increasing amount of influence and work more closely with our peers to thrive in the digital-first reality we are all living in."

Enablers of the digital-first economy

The research also revealed that European CIOs have become the enablers of their company's customer experience, with an impressive 67% saying managing customer experiences is now a primary priority of their job, despite all the other responsibilities on their shoulders.

"Digital customer experiences have improved significantly in the past year, but they have also become more complex," continued Stoddard. "CIOs need to support these services with the technologies teams need to capture customer data, convert that data into valuable insight, and use that insight to shape increasingly personalised experiences."

Data and connectivity are the lifeblood of a modern business, and as the gatekeepers of data-driven decision-making, CIOs are the beating heart behind so many of the digital initiative's brands are adopting today. Among the many priorities CIOs must juggle today, data security and privacy rank high. According to the survey, 36% of European CIOs singled out security and privacy as an area for increased investment in 2021.

CIOs and CMOs form 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.

Of these relationships, the strongest is now with the CMO. According to the research, an overwhelming majority of European CIOs (90%) strongly agree that partnering with the CMO improves their organisation's customer experience. Similarly, 86% say that working closely with CMOs promotes innovation. As a result, nearly two thirds (64%) of CIOs now meet with their CMO counterpart on a daily or weekly basis.

Drivers of employee experience

While the 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. In partnership with the CMO, CIOs are learning to leverage external customer journey management practices and apply the same principles internally to enhance their own employees’ experiences.

In fact, 83% of European CIOs see themselves as change agents who play a role in improving the culture of their organisation, while three quarters said they feel the pressure is on them to digitally transform their business. At least 2 in 5 CIOs foresee a hybrid working approach, with their organisation focusing more on productivity than time measures, allowing employees to have flexible work hours to handle personal needs.

“Given the proven correlation between happy employees, satisfied customers and overall business success – it’s more critical than ever that CIOs prioritise any systems or business processes that improve collaboration and overall employee experience,” Stoddard concluded.

Methodology

Research was conducted by Advanis. The European sample is part of a global study of 506 CIOs from the US, UK, France, Germany, India, Australia and Singapore who completed the survey online. To qualify, the participant had to be the CIO of a company with at least 100 employees. Research was conducted between February 18th to March 4th 2021.

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