

The CIO's Role in Building an AI-Ready Workforce

EVENT REPORT

A Roundtable organized and hosted by

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As artificial intelligence continues to reshape industries and redefine how organizations operate, leaders face both unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges. This roundtable brought together experts from across sectors to discuss the realities of AI adoption, from organizational readiness and workforce transformation to data governance, security, and cultural change. Participants explored how companies can align AI initiatives with business strategy, manage expectations, and measure success while addressing concerns about job displacement and evolving roles. The conversation also highlighted best practices for upskilling, engaging leadership, and fostering inclusive change. Together, these insights provide a roadmap for navigating AI's disruptive potential and building resilient, future-ready organizations.

On September 23, 2025, in Las Vegas, Nevada, the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) and Zones brought esteemed leaders together to share insights and experiences:

- ◆ **Dr. Justin Collier**, MD - Healthcare CTO for North America, **Lenovo**
- ◆ **Damilola Jaiyeoba**, PMP, CGFM, CISA - Vice President, Head of Procurement Technology and Operations, **Cushman & Wakefield**
- ◆ **Gina Tomlinson** - CEO, **T5 Solutions Technology Services**
- ◆ **Drew Geyer** - Head of IT and Cybersecurity, **JetZero**
- ◆ **Henry E Caamano** - CIO, **Kellwood**
- ◆ **Dr. Demetrius Glover** - Chief Operations Officer, **Patriot Services**
- ◆ **Saad Ayub** - SVP, Chief Digital Information Officer, **Zones**

The discussion revealed that CIOs view AI as both a transformative opportunity and a source of significant risk. While it promises innovation and productivity gains, concerns persist around job displacement, data privacy, and ethical use. Secure data governance, vendor transparency, and controlled experimentation are critical to mitigating cybersecurity threats. Overcoming cultural resistance requires inclusive change management and continuous upskilling. As organizations shift from consuming to creating AI solutions, they must also address infrastructure challenges, including rising energy demands and deployment strategies.

Insights

- ◆ **AI excitement vs. fear:** While AI promises productivity gains and innovation, concerns around job displacement, data privacy, and ethical use remain top of mind.
- ◆ **Cybersecurity and shadow AI:** Leaders warned of risks from unsecured AI experimentation and lack of vendor transparency. Data governance and secure environments are critical.
- ◆ **Culture and change management:** Resistance to AI adoption, especially among senior staff, was a recurring theme. Upskilling, transparency, and inclusive training are essential to overcome fear and foster engagement.
- ◆ **Consumer vs. producer mindset:** Organizations are shifting from consuming AI tools to producing proprietary AI solutions, enabling differentiation and deeper control over data and infrastructure.
- ◆ **Infrastructure strain:** Rapid AI adoption is driving up energy and cooling costs. CIOs are evaluating cloud vs. on-prem strategies and exploring alternative energy sources.

Viewpoints:

Gina Tomlinson

CEO

T5 Solutions Technology Services

"I think as technologists, we should be excited about it. (AI) Now we do the work to ensure that it's packaged and embedded into society, into your corporation, into your goals and missions to ensure it's safely and productively inserted into your day-to-day."

Dr. Justin Collier

MD - Healthcare CTO for North America

Lenovo

"AI won't destroy all jobs—it will create industries we haven't imagined yet."

Damilola Jaiyeoba

PMP, CGFM, CISA - Vice President - Head of Procurement Technology & Operations

Cushman & Wakefield

"We're pragmatically excited. (About AI) Our job as leaders is to be excited on the outside—but thoughtful and cautious on the inside."

Participants agreed that to translate these insights into meaningful progress, organizations must adopt targeted strategies that address both the technical and human dimensions of AI adoption. They proposed some practical strategies and action items, from workforce development to governance and infrastructure planning, that can accelerate AI readiness and ensure long-term success.

Strategies

- ◆ Quarterly “AI Days” for teams to upskill and share learnings
- ◆ Internal competitions to crowdsource AI use cases across departments
- ◆ Executive education and budget planning for AI initiatives
- ◆ Ontology development to guide AI outputs and maintain guardrails

Action Items

- ◆ Conduct AI health checks: data loss prevention, governance, and infrastructure readiness
- ◆ Align AI initiatives with business strategy and cultural values
- ◆ Engage partners who understand your industry’s mission, not just the tech
- ◆ Track success through ROI, productivity, and story-based impact metrics

The meeting underscored for everyone that successful AI adoption is not just a technology challenge, it’s an organizational transformation. It requires thoughtful leadership, a clear strategic vision, and a commitment to continuous learning. As AI reshapes industries and redefines roles, companies that proactively address cultural resistance, invest in skills, and prioritize governance will be best positioned to harness its full potential. By turning insights into action and building a foundation of trust and adaptability, organizations can navigate change confidently and create lasting competitive advantage in the AI era.

Drew Geyer

Head of IT and Cybersecurity

JetZero

“We measure AI success by whether it changes the dynamics of our business — whether it makes us faster, safer, and smarter. There’s your company now and your competitor with AI in their product roadmap. That’s how you measure success.”

Saad Ayub

SVP, Chief Digital Information Officer

Zones

“AI is not just another system — it’s the second wave of transformation. It changes how your entire organization operates.”

Zones

Zones is a global provider of end-to-end IT solutions with an unmatched supply chain. Positioned to be the IT partner you need, Zones, a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) in business for over 35 years, specializes in Digital Workplace, Cloud & Data Center, Networking, Security, and Managed/Professional/Staffing services. Operating in more than 120 countries, leveraging a robust portfolio, and utilizing the highest certification levels from key partners, including Microsoft, Apple, Cisco, Lenovo, Adobe, and more, Zones has mastered the science of building digital infrastructures that change the way modern organizations do business.

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