

IT Modernization Maturity Assessment 2026 Prepares Enterprises for AI-Fueled Business Success



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Defining IT modernization

In today's business environment, organizations in all industries are racing to harness AI to improve operational efficiency, productivity, and agility. Business success depends heavily on the organization's ability to access and analyze critical data, automate vital processes, scale infrastructure, and ensure that security, performance, and cost controls are consistently applied across the organization's entire IT landscape.

Keeping the current business running on track while simultaneously building out the infrastructure and operational capabilities needed for an AI-infused future can be difficult. IT modernization strategies provide enterprise leaders with road maps for improving the organization's business outcomes, governing IT investment priorities, standardizing operational policies, and ensuring that the organization fully realizes the expected ROI on IT and business investments, including AI.

Across every dimension IDC examined, the defining characteristic of IT Modernization Experts is a sustained, budgeted commitment to modernization rather than an occasional project-based one, and that commitment is what converts modernization plans into executed capability.



In 2026, AI readiness is not a separate initiative that can be bolted onto an aging IT estate. It is the cumulative result of modernization decisions made across infrastructure, application development, data management, cybersecurity, and IT operating models. Organizations that have done that work effectively are moving generative and agentic AI workloads into production quickly and safely. Organizations that have not proactively invested in IT modernization increasingly find that older systems, processes, and policies are slowing down AI initiatives and hampering the move from proof of concept (POC) sandboxes to large-scale production deployments.

About this study

This paper summarizes key findings from IDC's *2026 IT Modernization Maturity Study*, sponsored by Rocket Software. The study polled 821 IT modernization decision-makers worldwide in June 2026 to assess how investments in IT modernization are shaping year-over-year improvements in top-priority business outcomes and how those investments are preparing organizations to scale AI across the enterprise. Demographic information is provided in Appendix A: Methodology.

Six dimensions of IT modernization

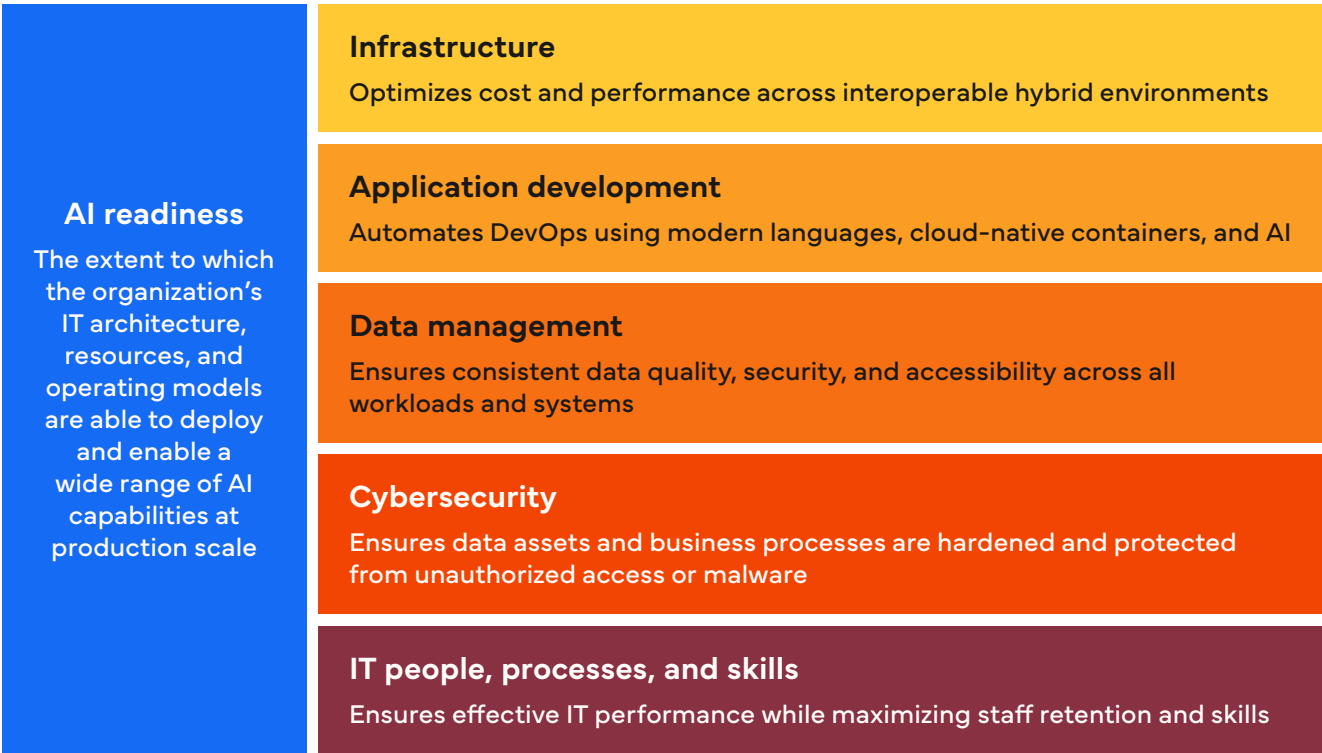
IDC's research shows the most impactful IT modernization efforts take a comprehensive approach that coordinates technology spending and strategies across a wide range of interrelated domains to create full-stack digital business and technology road maps that together drive the organization forward.

IDC's *2026 IT Modernization Maturity Study*, sponsored by Rocket Software, identifies six critical dimensions of IT modernization that individually improve business outcomes in the near term and collectively determine whether an organization is ready to take full advantage of AI-enabled, automated business innovation at scale.

Five of these dimensions (IT infrastructure, application development, data management, cybersecurity, and IT people and processes) describe the technology and operating foundations of the enterprise. The sixth dimension, AI readiness, spans all five. It is not an independent workstream; it is enabled by, and constrained by, the maturity an organization has achieved everywhere else. IDC’s IT Modernization Maturity Index is built on all six dimensions (**Figure 1, below**).

Organizations with the highest levels of maturity across each of these six dimensions can expect to experience higher levels of year-over-year business outcome improvement and are best positioned to take advantage of future AI-enabled innovation.

Figure 1
Six dimensions of IT modernization maturity



Source: IDC, 2026

The six dimensions of IT modernization maturity

IT modernization represents the strategies used by organizations to maintain support for existing mission-critical systems, workloads, and data while simultaneously driving innovation enabled by emerging digital technologies such as artificial intelligence.

The six key dimensions of IT modernization are:



AI readiness represents the extent to which the organization's IT architecture, resources, and operating models are able to deploy and enable a wide range of AI capabilities at production scale to transform business processes and create business value. AI readiness needs to support a wide range of AI models and capabilities, including predictive AI, generative AI, and agentic AI. It is a top consideration shaping priorities for all other IT modernization dimensions, since AI performance, security, and costs are heavily impacted by the organization's infrastructure, application development, data management, cybersecurity, and IT people and processes. Assessing AI readiness as its own dimension forces attention to look across the full IT modernization stack and to assess how to best optimize end-to-end requirements and interdependencies.



IT infrastructure includes public cloud computing and storage services as well as servers, mainframes, storage, and networking systems deployed in datacenters, colocation facilities, and edge sites. Most enterprises rely on a hybrid mix of infrastructure assets, often spanning several generations of computing and storage ranging from mainframes to distributed servers to cloud. AI workloads add a new layer of requirements, including accelerated computing, high-performance flash storage, and low-latency networking.



Application development includes the tools and processes used to write new cloud-native application code, update and extend existing client/server and mainframe applications, document and test code, automate CI/CD pipelines, and integrate in-house applications with third-party SaaS. AI is now reshaping every stage of this life cycle, from code generation and testing through to agentic and natural language user interfaces.



Data management addresses capabilities related to management and compliance for data quality, security, accessibility, and overall data stewardship. Data management systems maintain data privacy, compliance, and security across the data life cycle and enable business and IT analysts to track and validate data sources and trustworthiness, the foundation on which trusted AI models and agents depend.



Cybersecurity focuses on ensuring the organization's IT systems, data assets, and business processes are hardened and protected from unauthorized access, malware, or corruption. The increasing digitization of business, the distribution of computing across edge and mobile endpoints, and the arrival of autonomous AI agents require organizations to move beyond perimeter-based security to zero trust strategies that enforce broad-based access control, compliance, and validation. It also addressed post-quantum security preparedness and strategies to prevent rogue AI agent attacks.



IT people, processes, and skills are critical to designing, implementing, and operating effective IT environments. Staff retention and skills development can be difficult when technology innovation moves quickly and teams are tasked with keeping older systems running while also mastering new capabilities, processes, and tools. AI is simultaneously raising the skills bar and changing the shape of IT roles.

IT modernization must be a core priority for IT organizations that need to maintain existing mission-critical systems, workloads, and data while simultaneously allowing the organization to harness emerging digital technologies and fully exploit the promise of AI.

Agentic AI and IT modernization

The advent of agentic AI is pushing many organizations into a new wave of IT modernization initiatives to ensure that all relevant company and third-party data is valid, governed, and securely accessible by AI models and agents so they can deliver timely and accurate results and safe business process automation.

IDC examined a range of potential areas of business improvement associated with an organization's IT modernization strategies and spending. Across all organizations and industries, the areas of business outcome improvement most associated with IT modernization maturity and AI readiness in 2026 are:



Increase operational efficiency.



Improve employee productivity.



Increase business agility.

By correlating levels of business outcome improvement with current and planned IT modernization activities, IDC identified four IT modernization maturity brackets. The top tier, IT Modernization Experts, leads the way in terms of business outcome improvement and implementation of comprehensive modernization programs. The other three groups, Leaders, Pioneers, and Explorers, experience lower levels of business outcome improvement when compared with Experts.

Specifically:



IT Modernization Experts report the highest levels of year-over-year business improvement, often twice as high as that reported by less mature organizations. They have typically prioritized and coordinated modernization programs across infrastructure, application development, data management, cybersecurity, and IT operating models. They represent the top 10% of organizations, with the most comprehensive IT modernization strategies and the highest overall levels of business outcome improvement linked to IT modernization investments.



IT Modernization Leaders experience healthy levels of annual business outcome improvement and have typically taken a number of steps to modernize their IT environments. Often, however, they have not fully coordinated efforts across dimensions, with some areas overdue for investment. They represent 30% of all organizations.



IT Modernization Pioneers have begun to make initial steps toward creating a strategic IT modernization approach but are still working to fully fund programs and deliver results. As a result, their level of business outcome improvement lags noticeably behind that of the Leaders and Experts. They represent 30% of all organizations.



IT Modernization Explorers are in the earliest stages of their IT modernization journey, often tackling modernization requirements on a tactical, project-specific basis with little or no framework for a bigger, more coordinated set of investments. They may lack the internal metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs) needed to prioritize investments and struggle to document the business value and longer-term ROI related to their efforts. These organizations typically lag far behind the Experts when it comes to delivering significant levels of business outcome improvement. They represent the 30% of organizations with the lowest levels of maturity.

Key findings

IT modernization maturity is required to achieve the highest levels of business outcome improvement

Considering how an organization's business outcome ambitions and results correlate with its level of IT modernization maturity uncovers striking evidence of just how important modern IT is to enabling high-priority business objectives. IT provides the core platforms needed to access and share business data, leverage AI, connect employees and customers, identify areas ripe for automation, and enable employees to work faster and smarter.

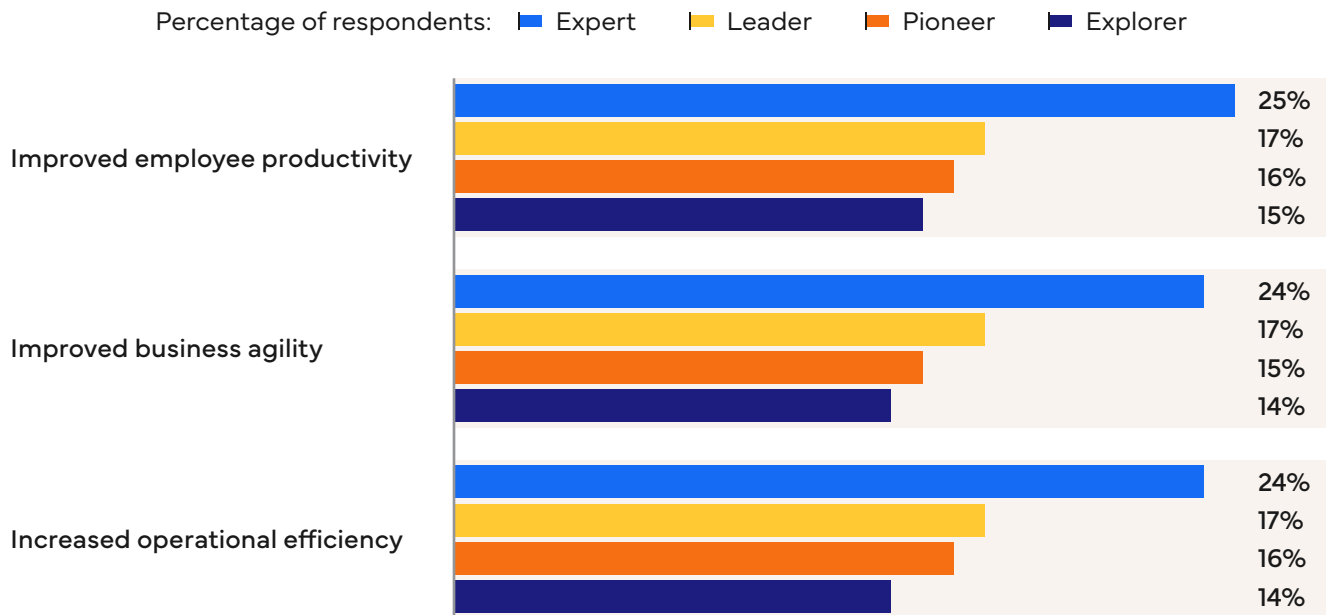
As noted previously, in 2026, organizations of all kinds are focused on improving efficiency, productivity, and agility, but IT Modernization Experts are far more likely than Explorers to realize significant improvements in these business outcomes (**Figure 2, next page**). Specifically, Experts saw a 25% improvement in employee productivity and 24% improvements in business agility and operational efficiency, while Explorers rates of improvement were measurably lower.

Figure 2

Impact of IT modernization maturity on annualized rates of business outcomes improvement, 2026

What annual percentage change in the past 12 months did your organization experience in each of the following as a result of investments in IT modernization?

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).



n = 821; Source: IDC's *IT Modernization Survey*, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026

Expert organizations generally see outsized levels of improvement because they take a comprehensive view of modernization that considers the interrelationship of infrastructure, data, development, security, operating models, and AI, and they use that view to create multistep road maps to support the transformation of complete business processes in ways that comprehensively improve top-priority business outcomes. Less mature organizations typically take more tactical, project-based, or piecemeal approaches to IT modernization and so fail to achieve the maximum potential value. This creates particular risks with regard to AI, which depends on sufficient AI readiness across all IT dimensions to fully deliver value.

A similar analysis of the level of improvement that IT modernization contributes to business KPIs shows that the most mature Experts see KPI improvements advancing at close to twice the rate experienced by the least mature Explorers. The pattern holds across service levels, speed of delivery, data quality, and sustainability (**Figure 3, next page**).

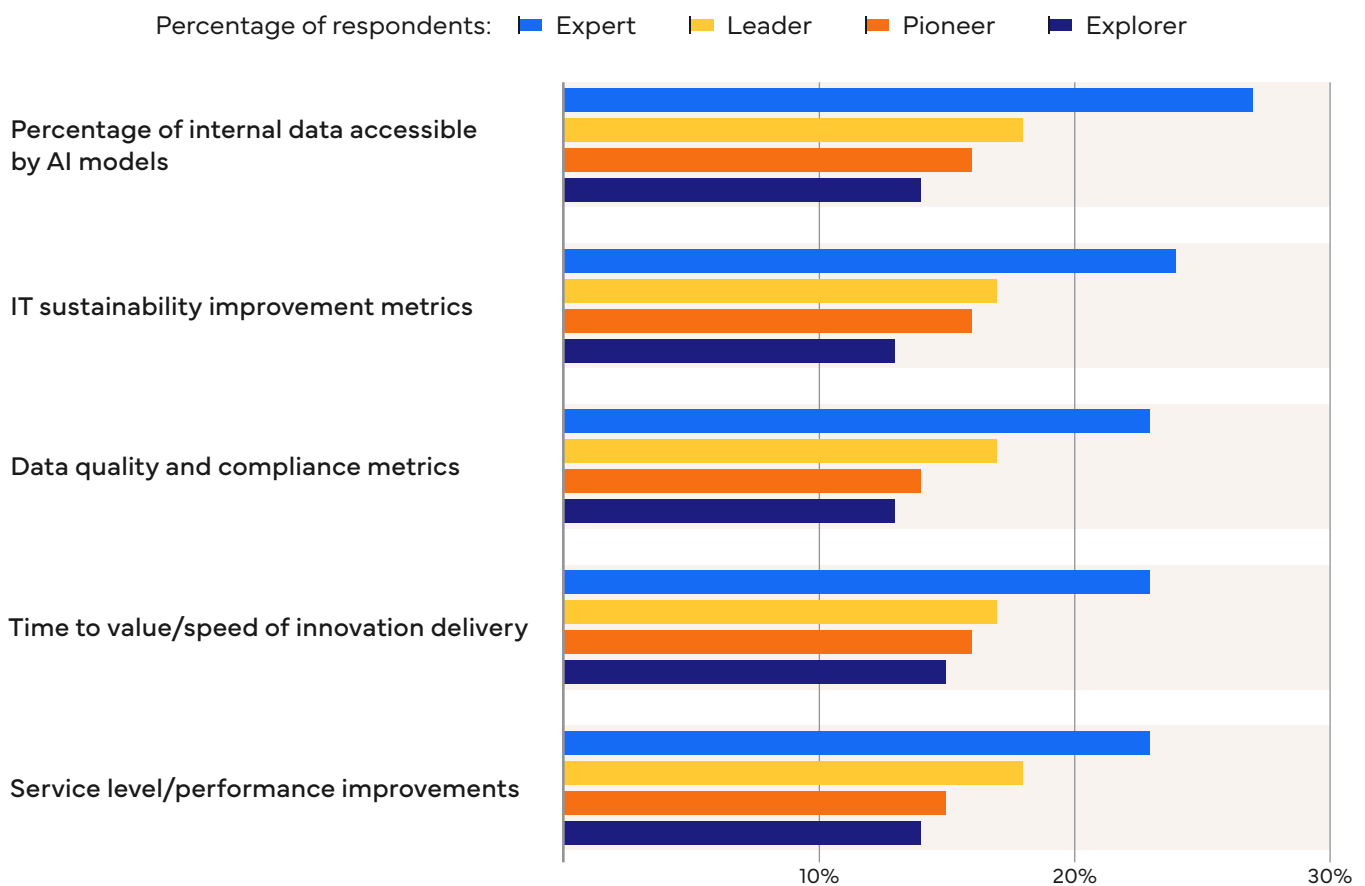
As an example, Experts report an annual improvement of 23% in data quality and compliance metrics, well ahead of the 13% reported by Explorers. The widest gap of all appears in the measure most directly tied to AI readiness: Experts report a 27% annual increase in the share of internal data accessible by AI models, nearly double the 14% reported by Explorers. Experts also lead in service-level and performance improvement (23% versus 14%) and in time to value and speed of innovation delivery (23% versus 15%). Because AI models and agents inherit the quality, accessibility, and governance of the data and systems beneath them, differences of this magnitude compound quickly.

Figure 3

Impact of IT modernization maturity on annualized rates of KPI improvement, 2026

What annual percentage change, in the past 12 months, did your organization experience in each of the following IT modernization metrics?

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).



n = 821; Source: IDC's IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026

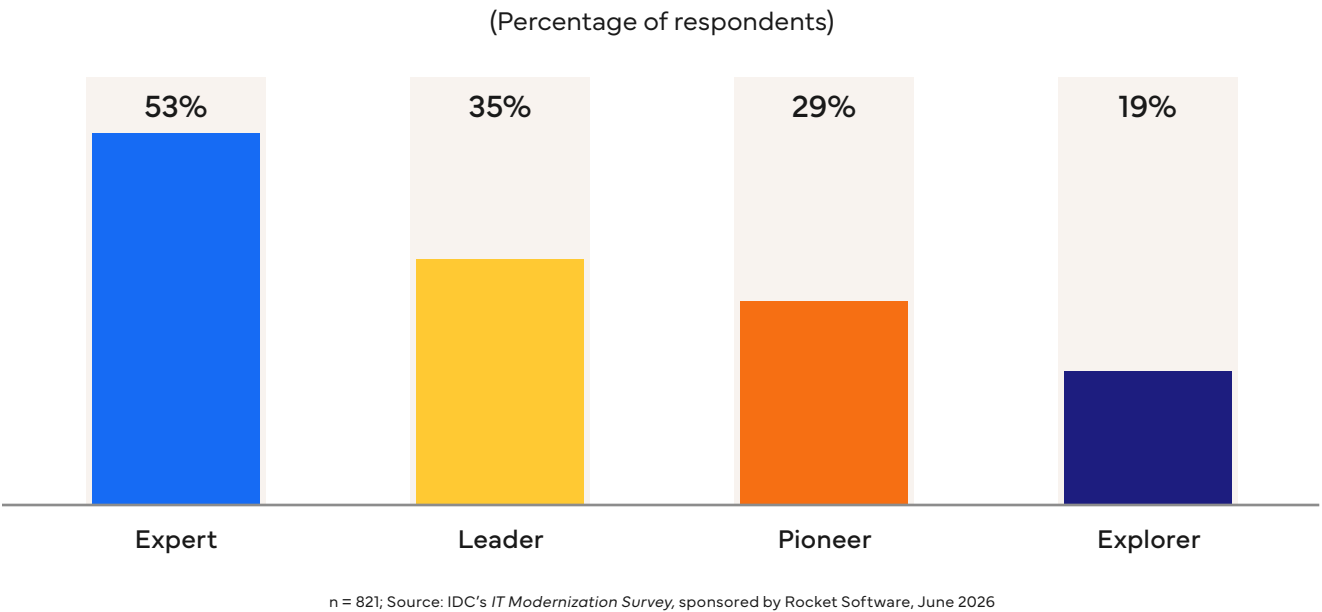
IT modernization spending commitments anchor AI readiness across all dimensions

Strategy and intent are not what separate the most mature organizations from the rest. Funding is. Across every dimension IDC examined, the defining characteristic of IT Modernization Experts is a sustained, budgeted commitment to modernization rather than an occasional project-based one, and that commitment is what converts modernization plans into executed capability.

Over the next two years, IT Modernization Experts expect to allocate an average of 53% of their overall IT budgets to modernization activities. Explorers will allocate just 19%. Unlike the business outcome data, this measure rises steadily across the maturity curve, 29% for Pioneers and 35% for Leaders, which makes budget share one of the more reliable single indicators of where an organization actually sits **(Figure 4, below)**.

Figure 4
Impact of IT modernization maturity on IT modernization funding over the next two years, 2026

What percentage of your overall IT budget will be allocated to IT modernization activities over the next two years?



Budget differences have a compounding effect. The Expert closes the gap between current capabilities and modern requirements each year, while the Explorer devotes the bulk of its budget to keeping existing systems running and falls further behind. Over a three- to five-year horizon, the Explorer's accumulated technical debt becomes a binding constraint on its AI readiness.

Funding commitments at this level require executive sponsorship, and Experts have it. They report markedly higher levels of C-suite engagement with IT modernization strategy, and they are significantly more likely to rate AI as a major factor shaping their investment decisions across every technology area IDC examined. In these organizations, modernization is governed as a business program with executive owners, funding lines, and KPIs, not as an IT maintenance activity.



The practical implication for less mature organizations is that IT modernization, particularly for AI readiness, cannot be funded as a line item. It is an outcome of how the whole IT budget is allocated. Organizations that want Expert-level results need to move modernization funding into the annual base budget across all six dimensions and give the C-suite direct visibility into the returns.

Experts treat infrastructure modernization as a continuous path to AI readiness

IT infrastructure is a critical dimension of any IT modernization program. Infrastructure provides the computational horsepower and network connectivity required to connect people, processes, and data across the organization. A poorly architected infrastructure environment creates silos that make it difficult to share data, automate processes, or respond to customer concerns in a timely manner. Decisions get delayed, critical information becomes hard to find, productivity falls due to downtime and operational inefficiency, and the cost of maintaining the environment becomes difficult to support.

For AI, infrastructure is the first hard constraint. Distributed inference, retrieval, and agentic workloads are demanding in ways that traditional enterprise applications are not, requiring accelerated computing, high-throughput flash storage, low-latency networking, and far more elastic capacity management. Experts recognize that meeting those requirements is an evolutionary process rather than a replacement cycle: Existing mission-critical workloads must continue to be supported and often continue to be invested in, even as new capabilities such as graphics processing units (GPUs) and modern flash storage are introduced alongside them.

Experts prioritize infrastructure modernization funding, devoting an average of **53%** of infrastructure spending to modernization versus just **20%** allocated by Explorers.

Asked to name their most important infrastructure modernization goals for the next two years, Experts put two AI-driven priorities at the top:

- Preparing infrastructure for AI adoption
- Increasing the level of automated and AI-enabled IT infrastructure operations

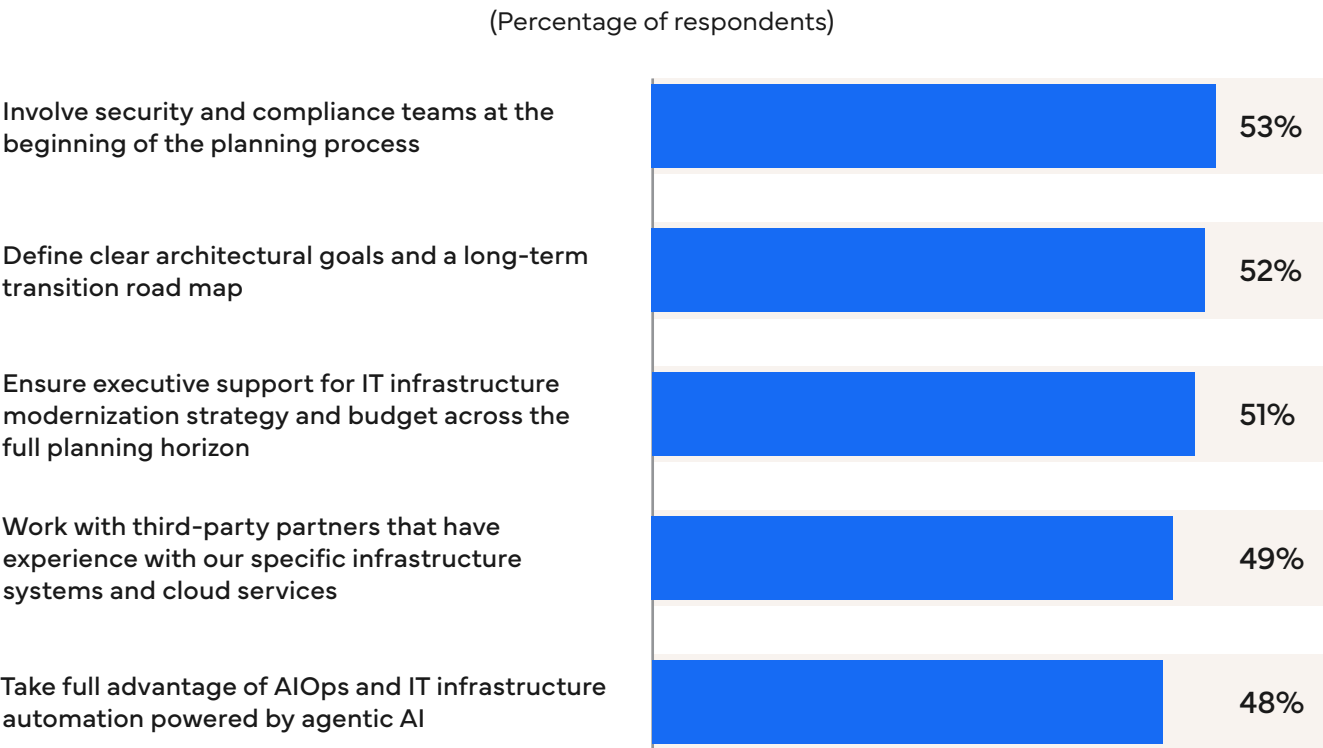
Experts understand that a more heterogeneous, more distributed, and more heavily utilized estate cannot be operated with existing architectures and operating models. Experts flag built-in security, strategic architectural road maps, and solid executive commitments as the most critical steps their organization takes to ensure the success of infrastructure modernization efforts (**Figure 5, next page**).

Less mature organizations tend to undertake infrastructure modernization on a piecemeal basis, project by project, without aligning around a long-term vision supported across the organization. Each individual decision may be defensible, but the cumulative result is an estate that is harder to automate, harder to secure, and considerably harder to make ready for AI.

Figure 5

Most important steps Experts take to ensure the success of infrastructure modernization efforts, 2026

What are the most important steps your organization takes to ensure the success of infrastructure modernization efforts?



n = 83 (IT Modernization Experts); Source: IDC's IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026.

Experts use AI to transform end-to-end application development

Application development is the dimension where AI is changing the day-to-day work of IT most visibly. AI-infused development tooling is disrupting and reshaping the entire life cycle (requirements, code generation, testing, documentation, deployment, and maintenance) while giving organizations a fast path to implementing innovative AI-enabled application capabilities of their own. Both effects are in play simultaneously, and Experts are managing them as a single transformation rather than as separate tooling and product decisions.

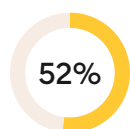
Experts identify two top application development priorities for the next two years:

- Increasing in-house AI development skills and expertise
- Introducing AI-based natural language and agentic user interfaces across their application portfolios

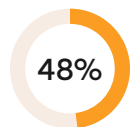


of Experts prioritize using AI to drive faster, more automated software code development, testing, and deployment, compared with just one-third of Explorers.

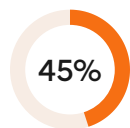
Experts also prioritize investments that enable AI-assisted development at roughly double the rate reported by Explorers:



plan to use AI to reduce application errors and improve code documentation.



plan to use AI to clean up code libraries and accelerate replatforming.

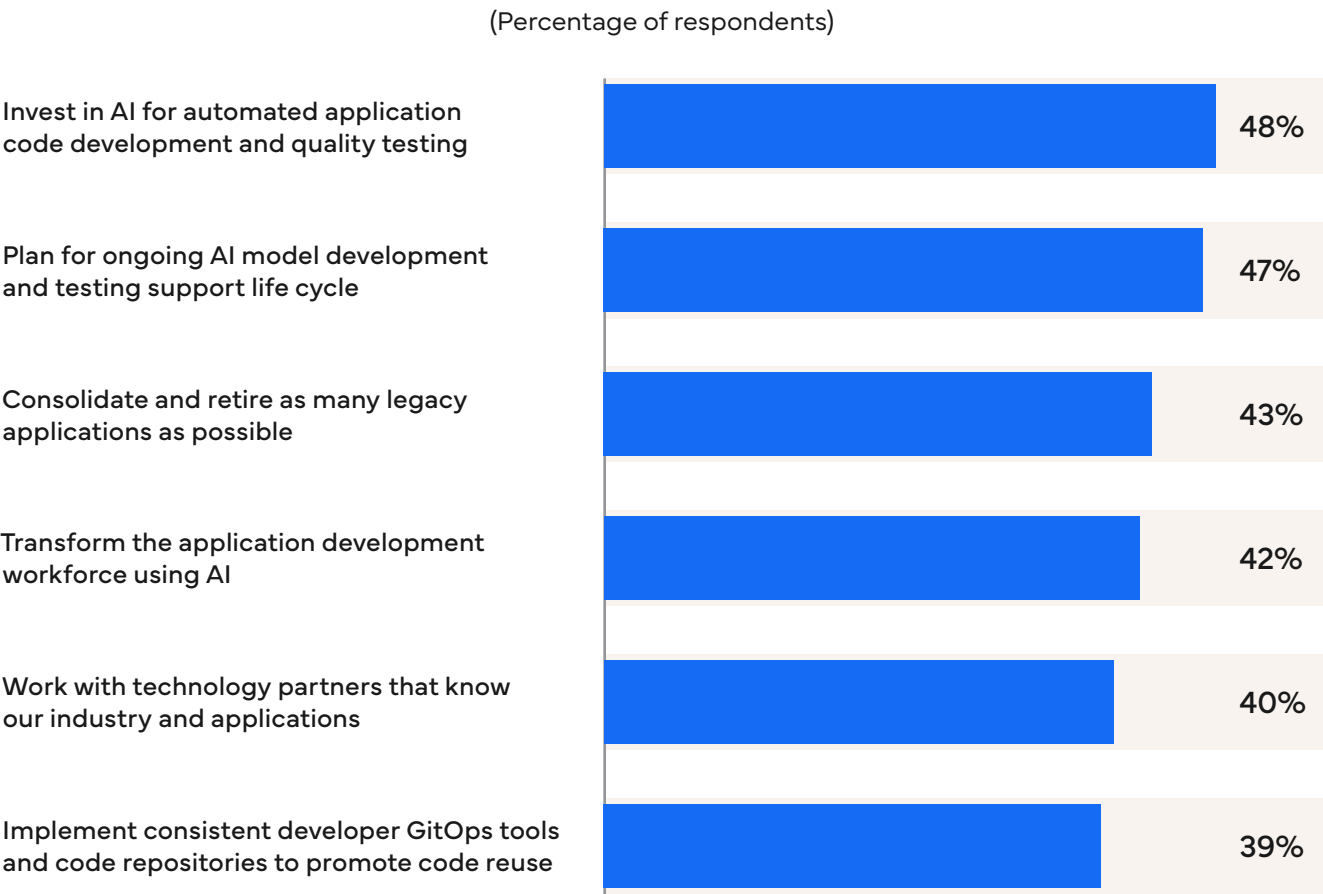


are building new developer skills, including deeper knowledge of data pipelines and automation.

The introduction of AI agents into development and operations workflows creates real potential for business disruption when changes to critical applications happen faster than governance can keep up. The steps Experts identify as most important to application development modernization success reflect these concerns (**Figure 6, next page**).

Figure 6
Most important steps Experts take to ensure the success of application development modernization efforts, 2026

What are the most important steps your organization takes to ensure the success of application development modernization efforts?



n = 83 (IT Modernization Experts); Source: IDC's IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026.

Investing in AI for automated code development and quality testing is a top Expert priority. This is followed by defining specific plans for ongoing AI model development, testing, and support life cycles. By comparison, fewer than a quarter of the least mature Explorer organizations are proactively planning to use AI to transform and modernize application development. Most remain focused on maintaining existing in-house code and ISV software, which means the productivity gap between them and the Experts is likely to widen sharply over the next two years.

Experts address AI demands for trusted data management at scale

AI is driving data volumes up and raising the bar on data quality at the same time. Models and agents depend on consistent, reliable access to trusted, high-quality data held in secure systems, with confidentiality protected and compliance and auditability demonstrable. None of that is new as a discipline. What is new is how unforgiving it has become: An AI agent acting on stale, duplicated, or ungoverned data produces confident wrong answers at machine speed.

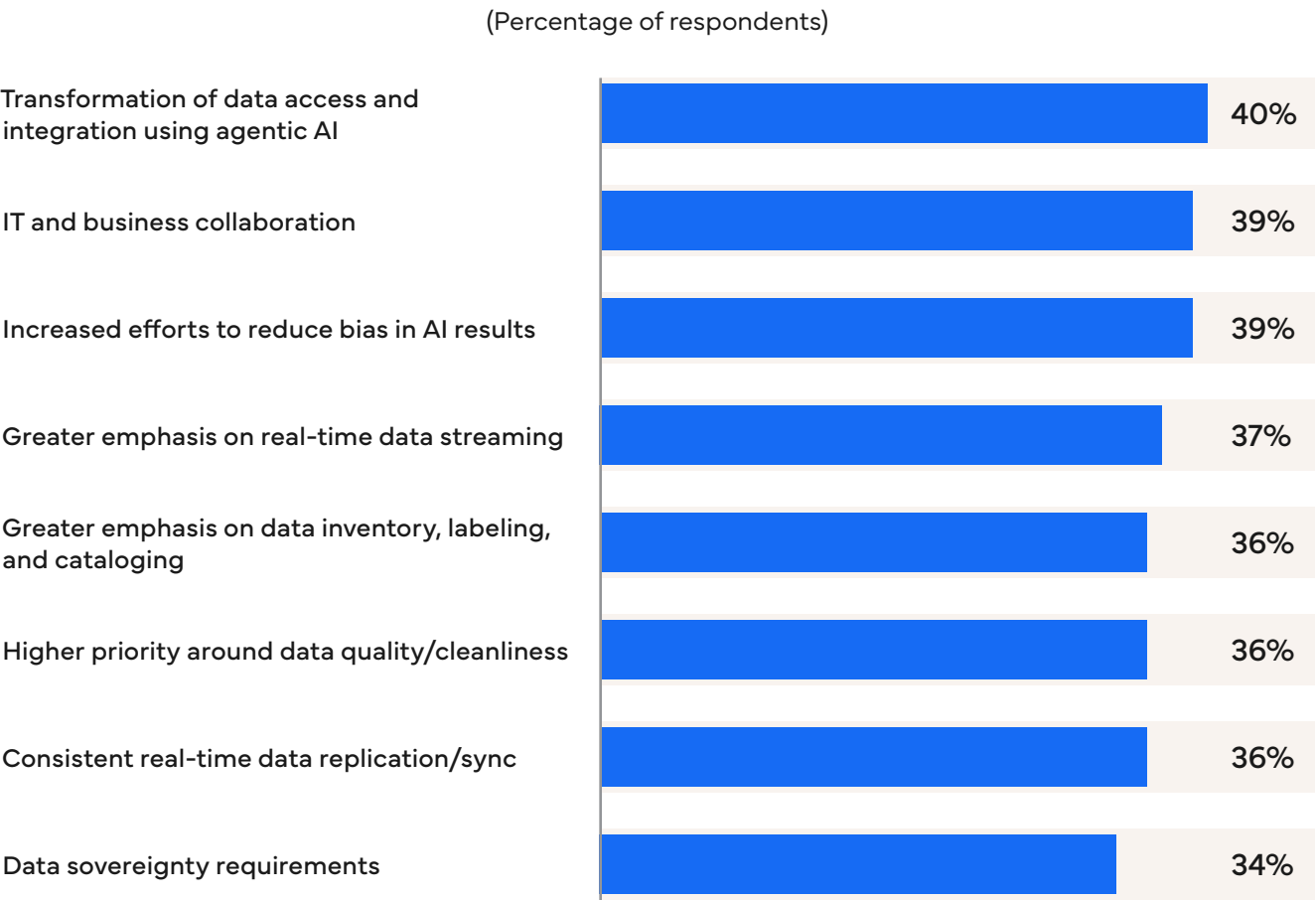
Mature organizations have been prioritizing data quality, security, and trust for several years, and those investments are now widening the gap rather than merely maintaining parity. As AI demands ever wider and deeper access to data and digital content, including the unstructured content that most enterprises have never fully cataloged, organizations with mature data foundations can extend access safely, while those without solid foundations face a choice between restricting AI or accepting unmanaged risk.

On average, Experts report they extract **59%** of the potential business value from the data and digital content stored or created across their organization, compared with just **22%** reported by Explorers.

Experts allocate 55% of their data management budgets to modernization and prioritize continuing investment in data security and data quality, including the use of AI to improve data pipelines, integration, and quality itself. As a result, transforming data access and integration using agentic AI leads is the top Expert priority for data management modernization, followed by increased efforts to reduce bias in AI results and to strengthen IT and business collaboration. Experts recognize they need to address a range of related challenges as well, including improving real-time data streaming and replication to support the needs of large-scale AI workloads and agentic implementations (**Figure 7, next page**).

Figure 7
Top AI challenges Experts believe will impact data management modernization efforts, 2026

Considering your organization’s planned use of AI over the next two years, which potential challenges will have the most impact on your data management modernization approach and budgets?



n = 83 (IT Modernization Experts); Source: IDC’s IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026.

By comparison, the least mature Explorer organizations are half as likely to be clearly identifying these types of data management challenges and are less likely to be putting specific programs and investments in place to tackle them. Data management is the dimension where the maturity gap is most likely to become structural because trusted data cannot be acquired quickly once AI demand arrives.

Experts extend cybersecurity modernization to cover agentic AI risk

Cybersecurity modernization has always been about keeping pace with attackers. AI has changed the threat. It is creating new categories of risk tied to AI-assisted discovery and exploitation of software vulnerabilities, far more convincing phishing and deepfake social engineering, model and prompt manipulation, and the exposure of confidential data through model access. Experts are proactively building strategies that address these challenges and seek to leverage AI to protect the organization.

Experts spend more than twice as much of their cybersecurity budget on modernization as the least mature Explorers.

Over the last two years, Experts have led the way in investing in the processes and tools needed to support more consistent data governance and compliance and stronger data protection across the organization. They are now leading again when it comes to developing governance and security programs for agentic AI.

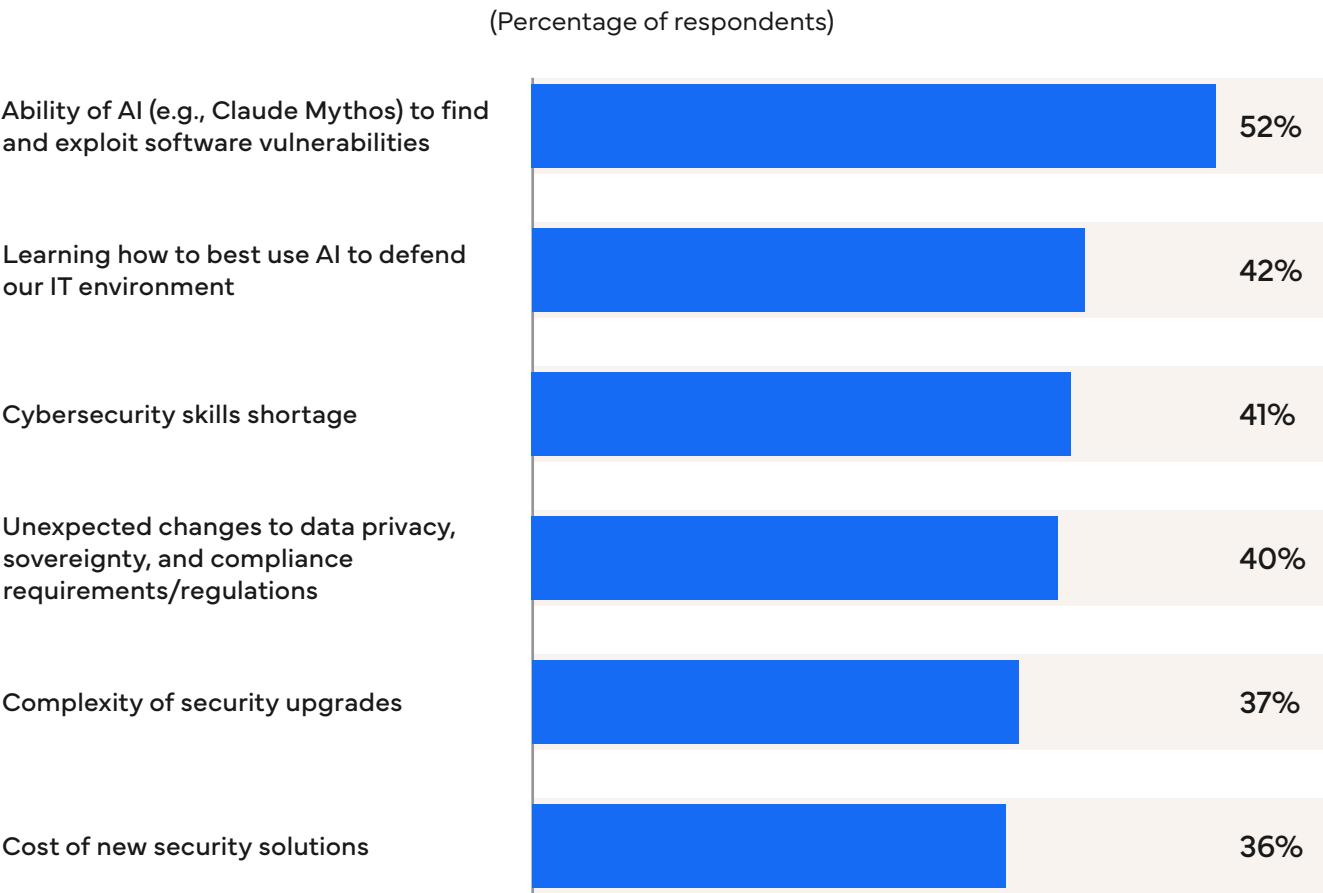
Securing agentic AI is different from securing applications because an agent takes actions rather than simply returning results. The controls Experts are putting in place reflect that. Agents are given scoped, revocable identities and least-privilege access under zero trust rather than inheriting broad human credentials. Their actions are logged to immutable audit trails so that any decision can be reconstructed after the fact. And guardrails and approval gates on high-impact actions, spending and rate limits, blast-radius containment, and kill switches are codified and automated so they hold as agent use scales beyond what humans can review individually.

Experts are two to three times more likely than Explorers to recognize this range of new AI-enabled threats and take steps to address them. One challenge stands clearly above all others in their responses: The ability of AI models to find and exploit software vulnerabilities is cited by 52% of Experts (**Figure 8, next page**). Learning how best to use AI to defend their own IT environment follows, and the cybersecurity skills shortages are also top concerns.

By comparison, the least mature Explorer organizations are most concerned about protecting older existing systems and applications and are not yet prioritizing mastery of AI as part of their cybersecurity strategy. That is an understandable allocation of scarce attention, but it leaves them defending yesterday's perimeter against a category of attack that is already scaling.

Figure 8
Top challenges Experts believe will impact their cybersecurity modernization approach, 2026

Which challenges do you believe will have the greatest impact on your cybersecurity modernization approach over the next two years?



n = 83 (IT Modernization Experts); Source: IDC's IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026.

Experts rebuild IT skills and processes around AI

AI is transforming IT processes and roles at least as fast as it is transforming technology. Work that was manual becomes supervisory. Specialists are asked to operate across a wider surface. Generalists are asked to support systems that used to require specialists. Experts are treating this as a workforce transformation with its own budget and road map, not as a training footnote to their technology programs.

Over the next two years, Experts plan to spend three times more on skills recruitment, retention, and training investments to support IT modernization activities when compared with less mature Explorers.

The top IT people and skills investments Experts plan over the next two years cluster in three areas:

- Developing agentic coding skills across IT operations teams as well as developers
- Building the expertise needed to optimize AI infrastructure configuration and operations
- Continuing to prioritize cybersecurity and resiliency skills, process improvement, and training

Approaches to staff recruiting, development, and retention can vary widely depending on organizational maturity. Experts are extending agentic coding capability to operations staff as well as development teams. Experts also prioritize hiring experienced staff into critical roles and then expect those hires to share knowledge across the organization, treating recruitment as a way to import capability the organization does not yet have **(Figure 9, next page)**.

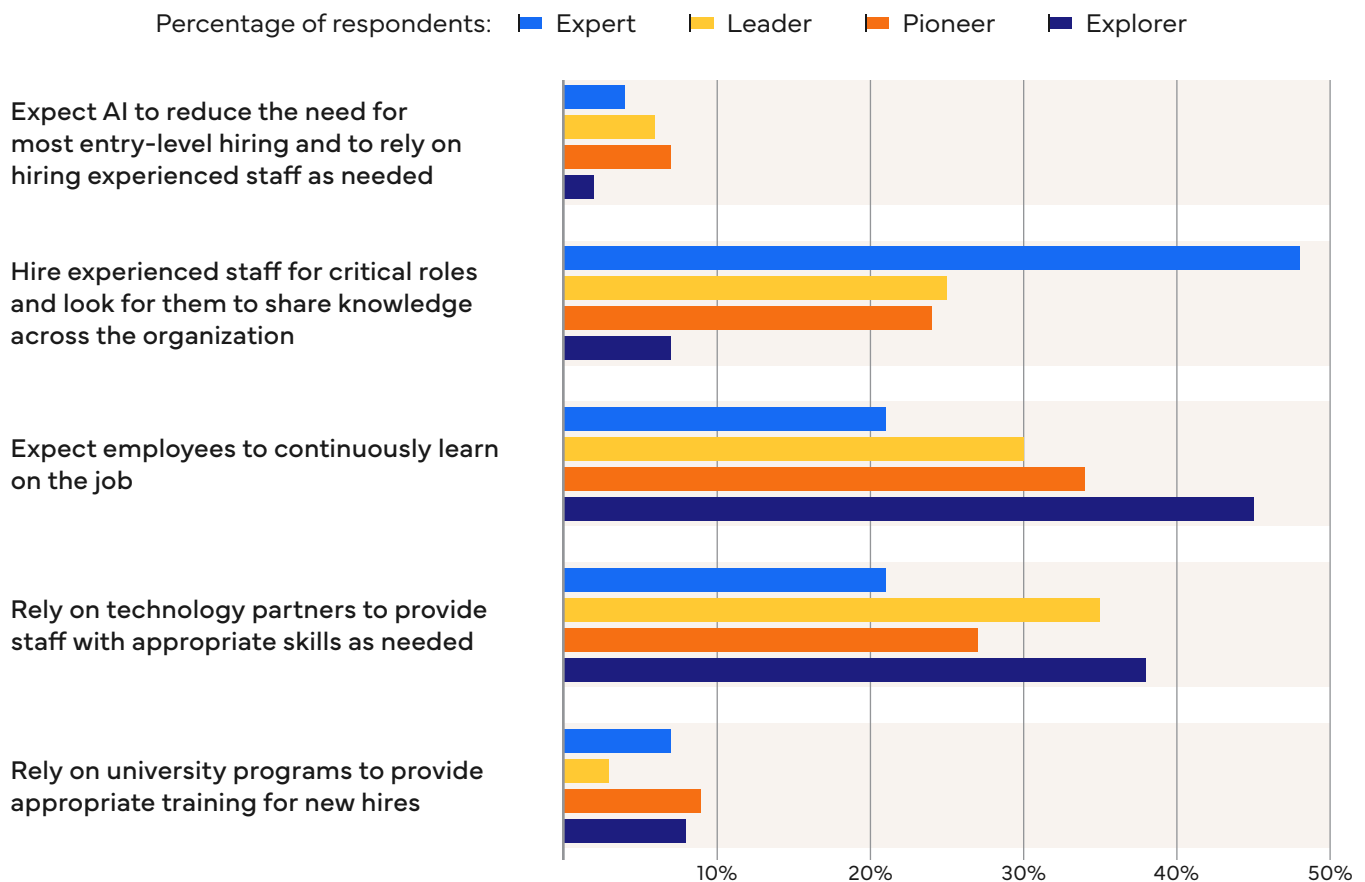
Less mature organizations primarily expect employees to learn continuously on the job and to rely on third-party technology partners to fill skills gaps as they arise. The Expert approach builds durable internal capability; the second keeps the organization dependent on external help for every new wave of technology.

Figure 9

Strategies for IT staff development segmented by maturity, 2026

Which statement best describes your organization's primary approach to recruiting, training, and retaining next-generation IT operations and app development staff?

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).



n = 821; Source: IDC's IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026

AI readiness depends on comprehensive, coordinated IT modernization

AI readiness represents an organization's ability to develop, support, secure, and scale workloads that take advantage of emerging innovations in predictive, generative, and agentic AI. As AI workloads move out of developer sandboxes and into production, and the value is delivered via inference and agentic workflows, the business value AI unlocks will depend on the performance of distributed AI infrastructure; the ability to

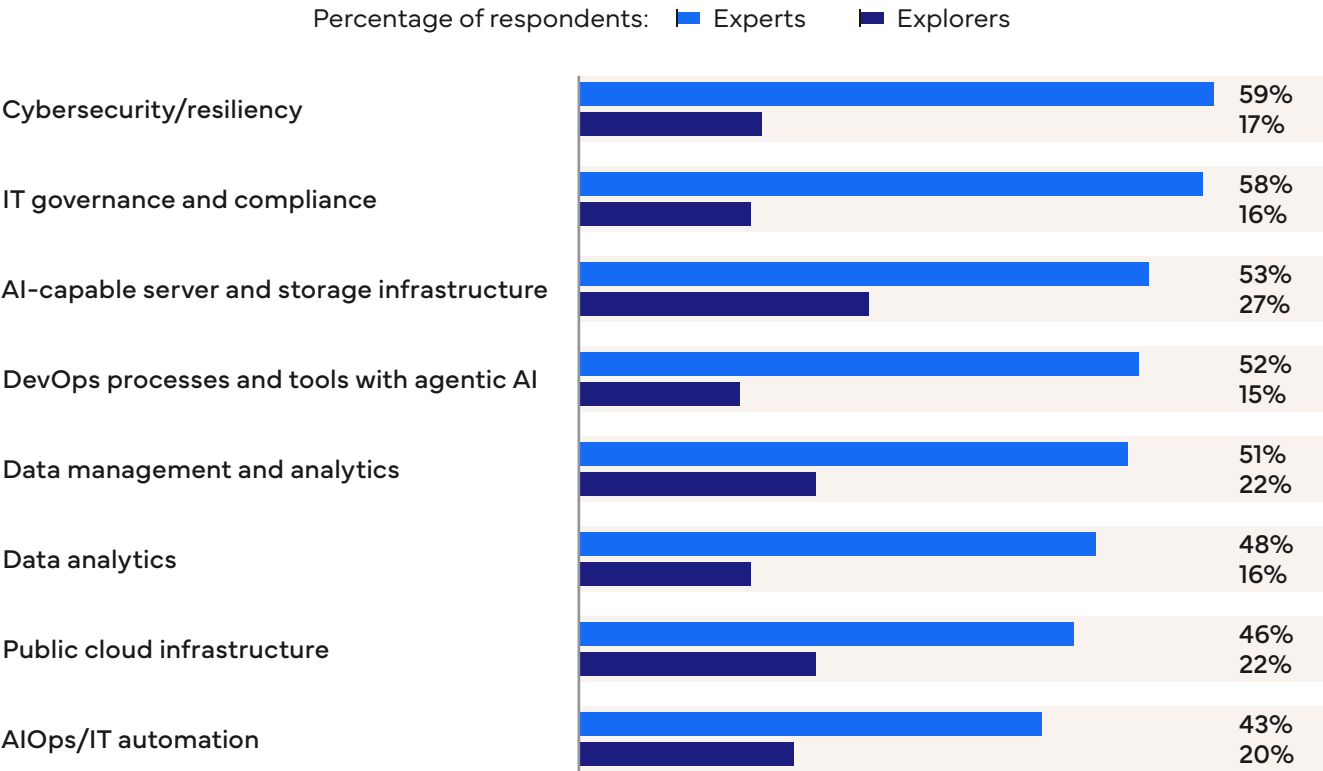
continuously create, validate, and deploy new applications; and the assurance that models and data pipelines have access to up-to-date, high-quality, trusted data.

Cybersecurity practices and technologies have to anticipate and protect against AI-aided attacks while using AI to improve fraud detection and to protect access to proprietary data and digital content. Governance and guardrails for AI agents need to be codified and automated at scale. And IT staff need to take full advantage of AI to streamline operations, so that IT generalists can support complex, AI-optimized systems and workloads.

The technology investments Experts are prioritizing for IT modernization over the next two years are designed in a coordinated manner. Experts are more than twice as likely as Explorers to prioritize modernization in every area directly tied to AI readiness (Figure 10, below).

Figure 10
Top technology areas prioritized for IT modernization: Experts versus Explorers, 2026
Which of the following technology areas are being prioritized for IT modernization over the next two years?

See the figure data in an [accessible table format](#).



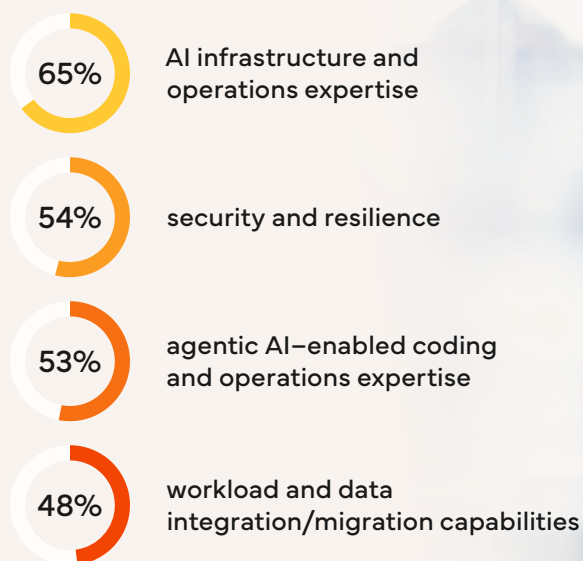
n = 83 (IT Modernization Experts), n = 245 (IT Modernization Explorers); Source: IDC's IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026.

Across the board, Experts are setting clear, high-priority goals for IT modernization and AI readiness at much higher levels than the Explorers.

Role of technology partners

Whether an organization is highly mature or still progressing, the choice of technology partners has a significant impact on the organization's ability to modernize software and systems. Experts working with technology partners seek out providers of technology that can specifically address top priority modernization initiatives, with an emphasis on AI and security.

When third-party partners are called in to assist,
Experts prioritize partners who can provide:



For organizations in the early stages of building an AI-readiness road map, advanced technology providers can provide immediate access to products, best practices, and technical know-how to help accelerate AI time to value, provided the organization is also building the internal capability to deploy, operate, and continually evolve to solutions the partner delivers.



Essential guidance

IDC's *2026 IT Modernization Maturity Study* offers a structured approach for evaluating the strengths and weaknesses that all organizations should consider when determining how best to modernize IT environments, both to execute today's business priorities and to gain competitive advantage from AI in the coming years.

An effective IT modernization strategy starts with a clear understanding of top-priority business goals and the impact AI readiness will have on the ability to meet those objectives. It also requires an understanding of the dependencies those goals have on current and planned infrastructure, application development, data management, cybersecurity, and staffing. The most effective organizations create and maintain a road map that drives coordinated initiatives across multiple dimensions, sequencing and prioritizing each project so it contributes to the overall goal with the least possible disruption. Critically, successful organizations fund IT modernization as part of the ongoing annual IT budget process rather than as a series of exceptions.

IDC recommends organizations conduct regular enterprisewide IT modernization and AI-readiness assessments to coordinate individual project plans and budgets and to evaluate the needs of the full organization.

Priorities to ensure AI readiness need to address the full range of IT modernization efforts with a coordinated, long-term strategy that includes:

→ **Continue AI model development and validation to keep up with rapid technology changes and business requirements.**

Agentic AI increases the pace and complexity of AI workloads and the processes needed to validate and secure them.

→ **Invest in people at the same rate as technology.**

Extending agentic coding and AI operations skills to operations teams, not just to developers, will make a more complex, AI-enabled estate supportable.

→ **Secure C-suite ownership and keep IT modernization as a top C-suite priority.**

Assessments should be championed by C-suite and senior IT leaders and used to set project priorities, KPIs, and change management initiatives, which leaders can then cascade to individual technology teams by aligning team-level goals with enterprise priorities.

→ **Choose partners to fill capability gaps and speed up time to success.**

Where knowledge and skills gaps exist, leaders should engage partners who can share industry and technology expertise and best practices across the organization.

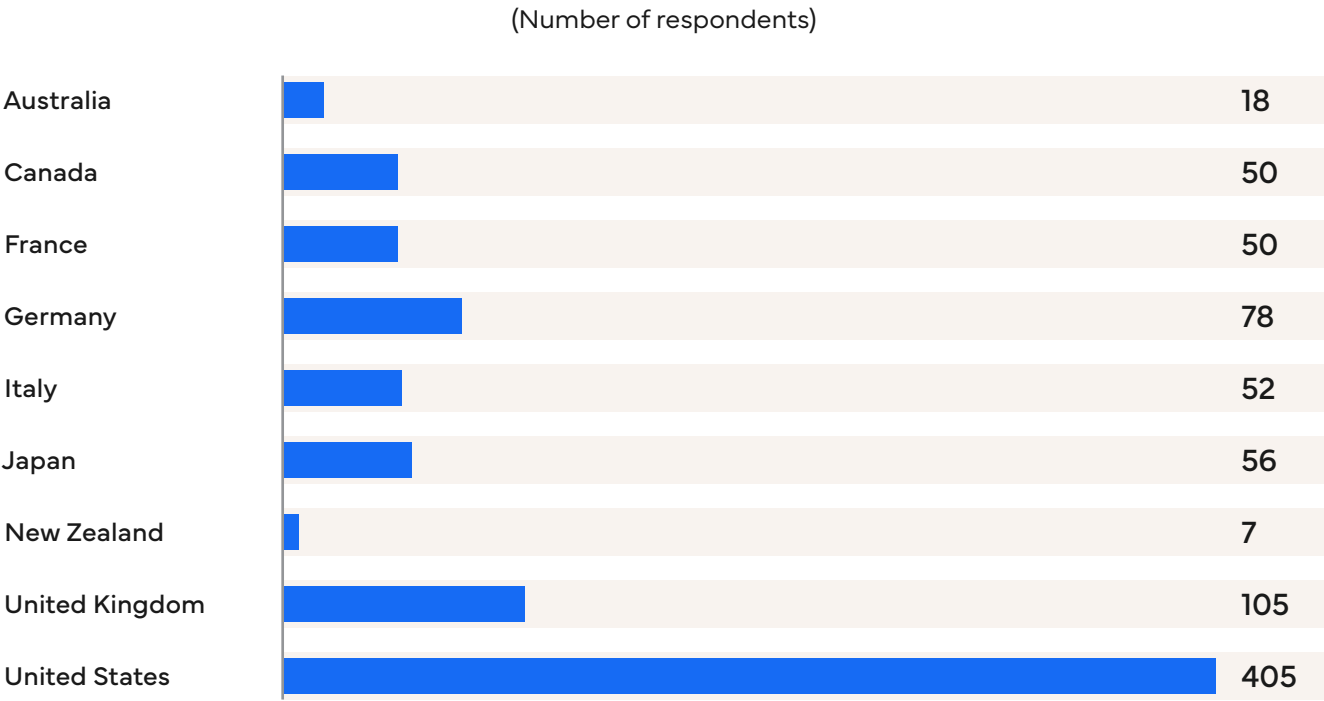
Developing a strategic, AI-ready IT modernization road map is critical, but so is keeping all the individual supporting projects on track. Organizations that build comprehensive, coordinated road maps and investment plans across all six dimensions will be best prepared to take full advantage of emerging, data-intensive workloads, automation, and AI, capturing new markets, improving productivity, and experiencing the highest possible levels of business outcome improvement as AI moves from experiment to production. ●

Appendix A: Methodology

Data for this survey and the IT Modernization Maturity assessment was collected via worldwide web surveys completed in June 2026. All 821 participants were responsible for making decisions about their organization’s IT modernization efforts. Participants represented a range of industries, geographies, and company sizes, as shown below (Figures 11–13).

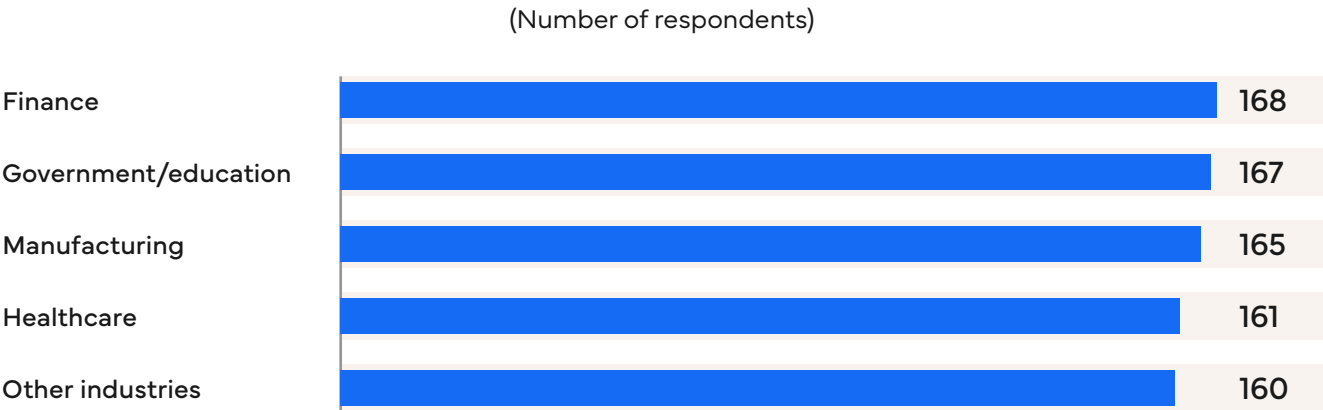
The IT Modernization Maturity Index is calculated across all six dimensions of IT modernization; IT Modernization Experts represent the top 10% of respondents (n = 83) and IT Modernization Explorers the bottom 30% (n = 245).

Figure 11
In which country do you primarily work?



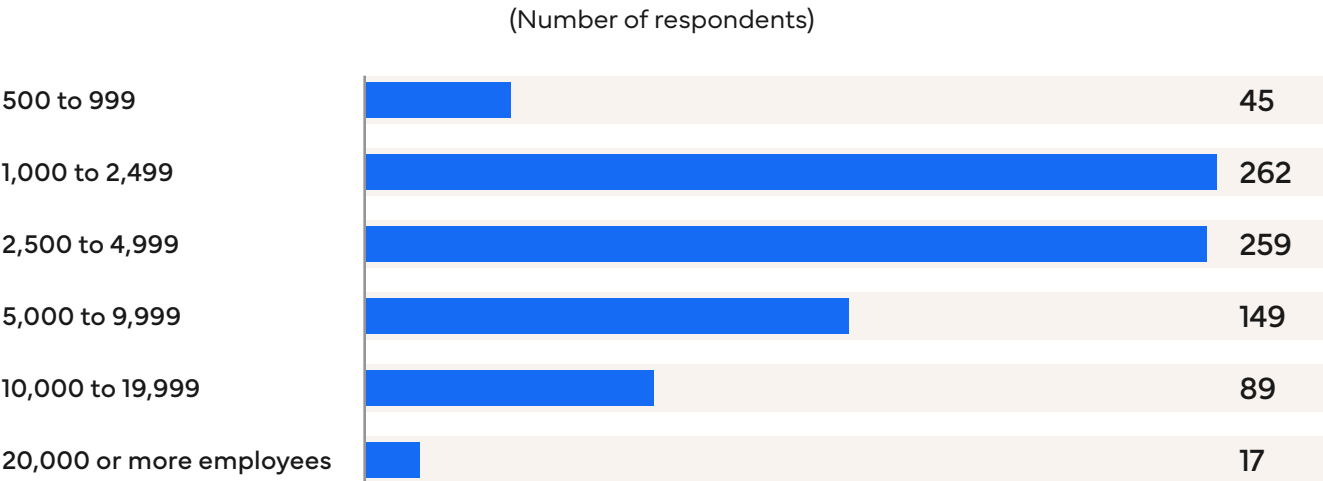
n = 821; Source: IDC's *IT Modernization Survey*, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026

Figure 12
Which of the following industry classifications best represents the principal business activity of your organization?



n = 821; Source: IDC's *IT Modernization Survey*, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026

Figure 13
How many people are employed by your organization in all locations worldwide?



n = 821; Source: IDC's *IT Modernization Survey*, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026

Appendix B: Accessible data tables

This appendix provides an accessible version of the data for any complex figures in this document.
Click "Return to figure" to get back to the original figure.

Figure 2 accessible data
Impact of IT modernization maturity on annualized rates of business outcomes improvement, 2026

Impact	Expert	Leader	Pioneer	Explorer
Improved employee productivity	25%	17%	16%	15%
Improved business agility	24%	17%	15%	14%
Increased operational efficiency	24%	17%	16%	14%

n = 821; Source: IDC's IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026

[Return to figure](#)

Figure 3 accessible data
Impact of IT modernization maturity on annualized rates of KPI improvement, 2026

Impact	Expert	Leader	Pioneer	Explorer
Percentage of internal data accessible by AI models	27%	18%	16%	14%
IT sustainability improvement metrics	24%	17%	16%	13%
Data quality and compliance metrics	23%	17%	14%	13%
Time to value/speed of innovation delivery	23%	17%	16%	15%
Service level/performance improvements	23%	18%	15%	14%

n = 821; Source: IDC's IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026

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Appendix B: Accessible data tables (continued)

Figure 9 accessible data

Strategies for IT staff development segmented by maturity, 2026

Impact	Expert	Leader	Pioneer	Explorer
Expect AI to reduce the need for most entry-level hiring and to rely on hiring experienced staff as needed	4%	6%	6%	2%
Hire experienced staff for critical roles and look for them to share knowledge across the organization	48%	25%	23%	7%
Expect employees to continuously learn on the job	20%	30%	34%	45%
Rely on technology partners to provide staff with appropriate skills as needed	20%	35%	27%	38%
Rely on university programs to provide appropriate training for new hires	7%	3%	9%	8%

n = 821; Source: IDC's IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026

[Return to figure](#)

Figure 10 accessible data

Top technology areas prioritized for IT modernization: Experts versus Explorers, 2026

Technology areas	Experts	Explorers
Cybersecurity/resiliency	59%	17%
IT governance and compliance	58%	16%
AI-capable server and storage infrastructure	53%	27%
DevOps processes and tools with agentic AI	52%	15%
Data management and analytics	51%	22%
Data analytics	48%	16%
Public cloud infrastructure	46%	22%
AIOps/IT automation	43%	20%

n = 83 (IT Modernization Experts), n = 245 (IT Modernization Explorers); Source: IDC's IT Modernization Survey, sponsored by Rocket Software, June 2026.

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About the IDC analysts



Mary Johnston Turner

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Mary Johnston Turner is a research vice president in IDC's Enterprise Infrastructure global research domain, part of the AI and Enterprise Workloads subdomain. She oversees IDC's AI Infrastructure Strategies research program, which takes a technology buyer-centric view of enterprise AI infrastructure markets and adoption. Turner collaborates closely with computing, storage, networking, cloud services, datacenter, and infrastructure services teams to produce a comprehensive view of the dynamics, competitive positions, and market opportunities created by various IT and non-IT technologies influencing AI infrastructure deployment strategies, operating models, and business outcome impacts.

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Chris Drake is a senior research director within IDC's Enterprise Infrastructure global research domain and part of the Computing Systems Platforms and Technologies subdomain. Drake covers key trends in the markets for computing systems and technologies, with a focus on high-end, accelerated, in-memory, and heterogeneous computing platforms. Drake's research coverage also includes servers with discrete and embedded accelerators (e.g., GPUs, FPGAs, and ASICs) and extends to mission-critical compute platforms, mainframes, and RISC-based systems, as well as their associated operating environments (e.g., Linux, z/OS, and UNIX). Drake's coverage of service provider infrastructure extends to global and regional service provider buy-side adoption trends and strategies, complementing IDC's research on service provider infrastructure supply chain and ODM Direct, as well as OEM vendor strategies.

[More about Chris Drake →](#)

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