The State of Enterprise IT Leadership 2026

Insights from TechTalks Summits Executive Survey

Q1 Impact Survey.
118+ C-Level Respondents

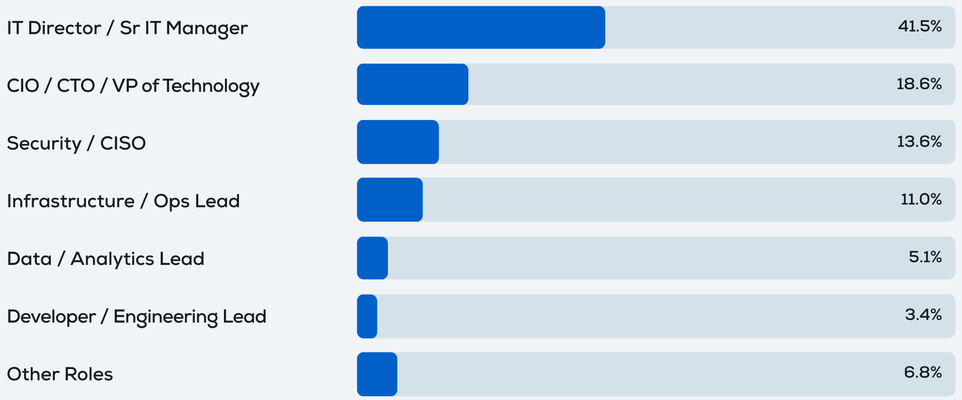
This report is not about technology trends. It is about leadership readiness.

Overview

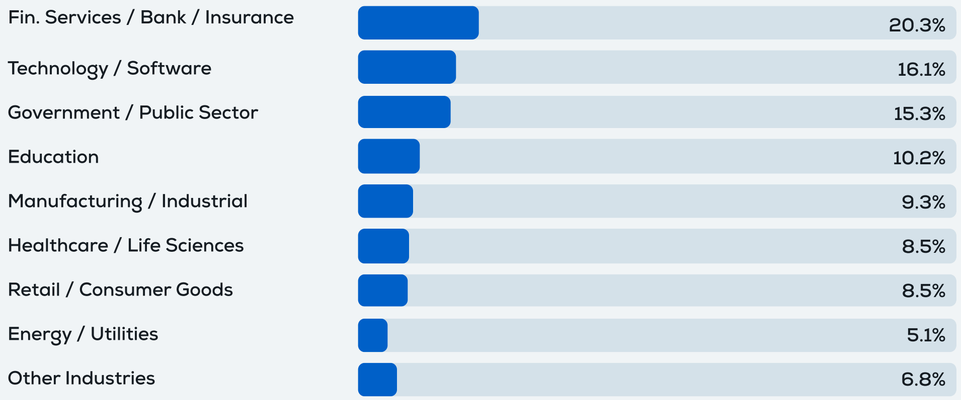
Who responded

118+ enterprise IT and technology leaders across industries,
representing a cross-section of roles with real purchasing power and strategic influence.

Role distribution (% of total respondents)



Industry distribution (% of total respondents)



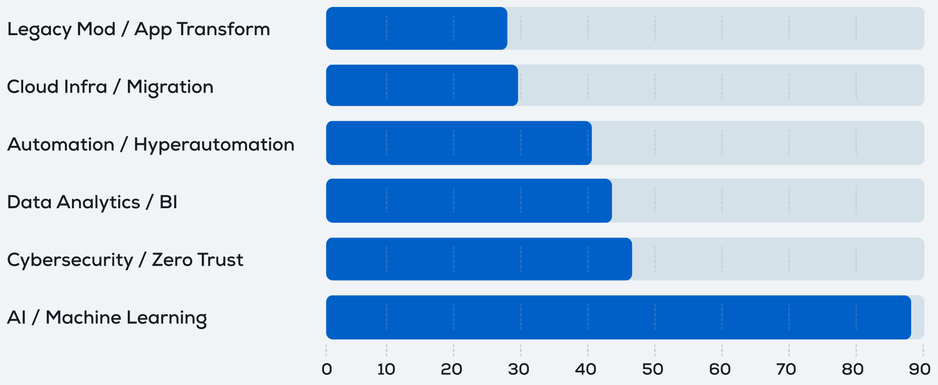
Finding 01

Top technology focus areas

What enterprise IT leaders are prioritizing for content, sessions, and strategic investment heading into 2026.

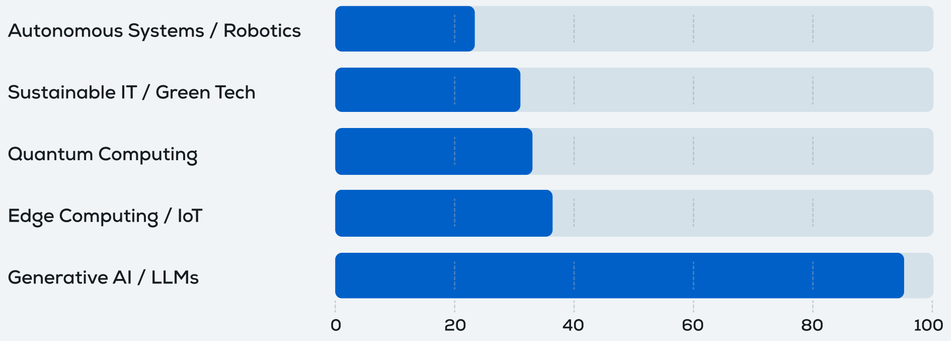
AI / Machine Learning dominates at 74.5% selection rate – nearly 3x the next closest topic. Cybersecurity and Data Analytics round out the top three, reflecting the operational priorities of a security-conscious, data-driven leadership cohort.

Top technology focus areas (Top technology focus areas)



Emerging technology curiosity

(Number of selections (multi-select))



Focus areas – ranked

#	Focus Area	Selections	% Resp.
1	AI / Machine Learning	88	74.5%
2	Cybersecurity / Zero Trust	46	39.0%
3	Data Analytics / Business Intelligence	43	36.4%
4	Automation / Hyperautomation	40	33.9%
5	Cloud Infrastructure / Migration	29	24.6%
6	Legacy Modernization / App Transformation	27	22.9%

Emerging tech curiosity – ranked

#	Technology	Interest	% Resp.
1	Generative AI / Large Language Models	95	80.5%
2	Edge Computing / IoT	36	30.5%
3	Quantum Computing	33	28.0%
4	Sustainable IT / Green Technology	31	26.3%
5	Autonomous Systems / Robotics	23	19.5%

Finding 02

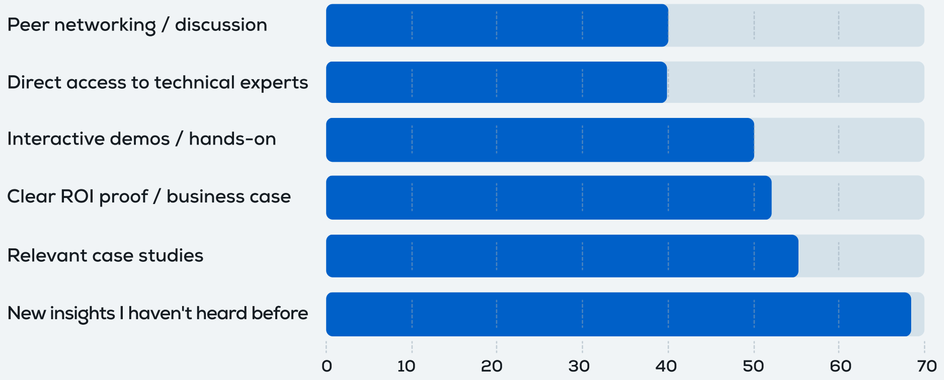
Session value & format preferences

What makes enterprise IT leaders show up, engage, and walk away with value – by content type and presentation format.

Leaders want new insights they haven't heard before (18.4%) and real-world case studies (14.3%) above all else. Live demos and interactive workshops dominate preferred formats – passive presentations rank last.

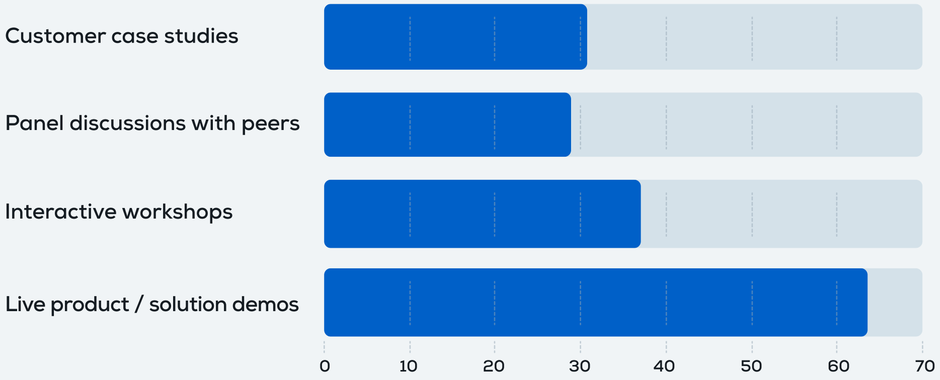
What makes TechTalk sessions valuable

(Content type preferences – selections)



Preferred presentation formats

(Format preferences – selections)



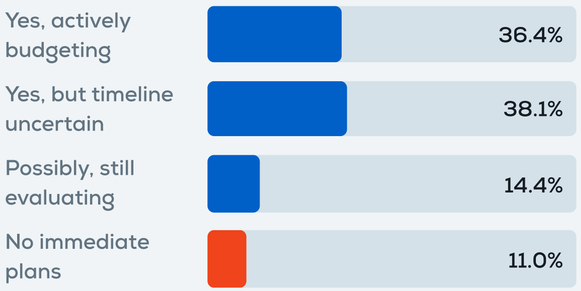
Finding 03

Investment & AI readiness at a glance

Aggregate signals across all respondents on spend intent, deployment maturity, and the barriers slowing AI adoption.

Investment plans – next 12 months

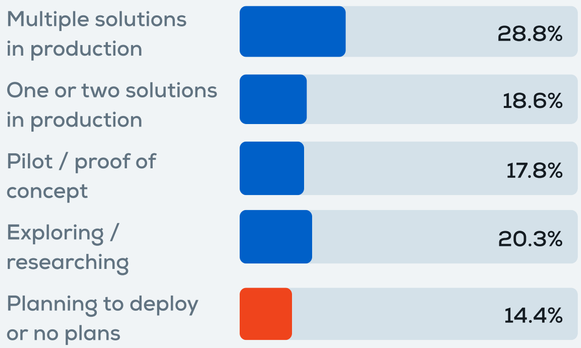
(All respondents · n=118)



74.5% are planning to invest – actively budgeting or timeline uncertain.

AI deployment status – all respondents

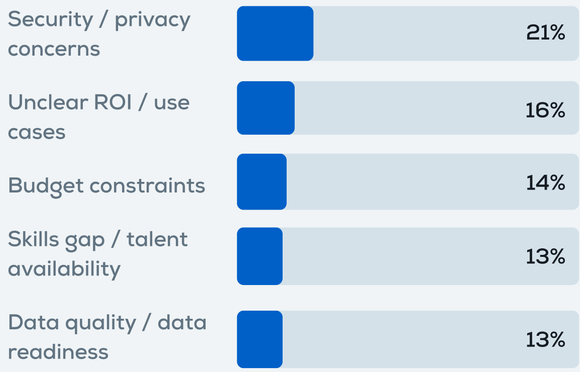
(All respondents · n=118)



65% have AI in production or pilot – past exploration and into active deployment.

Top AI adoption barriers

(% of respondents citing each barrier)



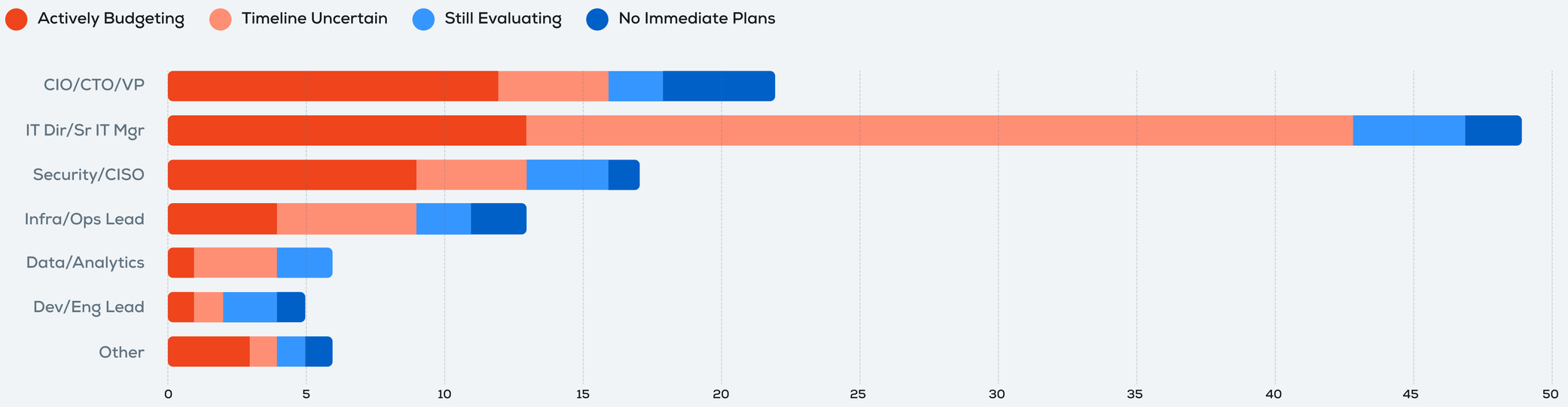
Finding 04

Investment plans by role

Where budget decisions are being made – and where uncertainty still dominates the conversation.

55% of IT Directors report "timeline uncertain," making them the largest group of fence-sitters. CIOs/CTOs lead active budgeting at 55% of their cohort – the clearest signal of near-term spend.

Investment plans by CXO role (Number of respondents per category)



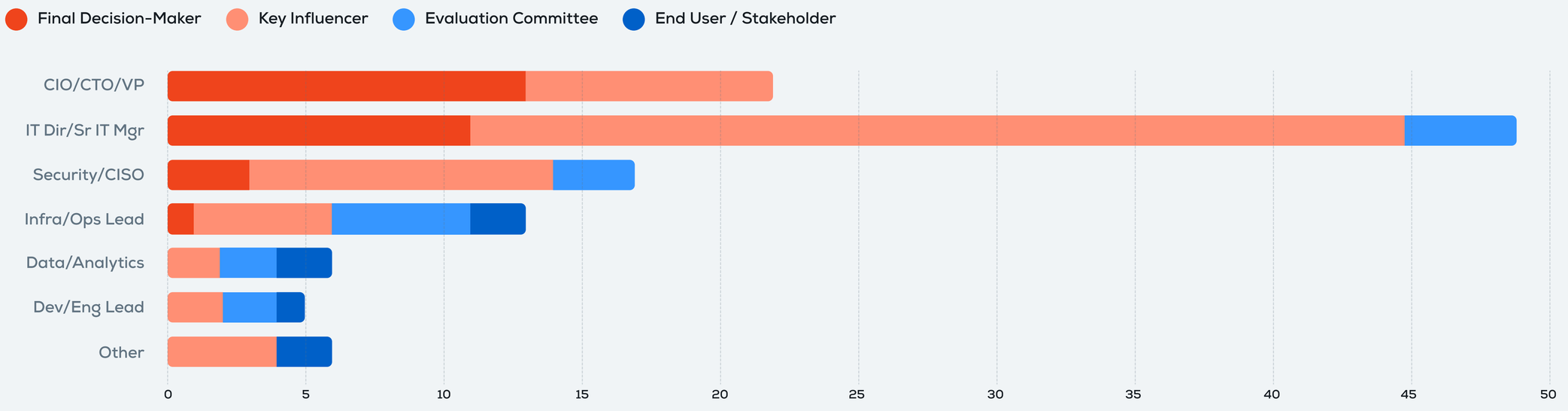
Finding 05

Purchasing authority by role

Who signs off and who shapes the decision – a map of influence across the enterprise IT org chart.

CIOs/CTOs are overwhelmingly final decision-makers (59%), while IT Directors skew heavily toward key influencer status (69%). Security leaders are split across influencer and evaluation committee roles.

Purchasing authority by CXO role (Number of respondents per category)



Finding 06

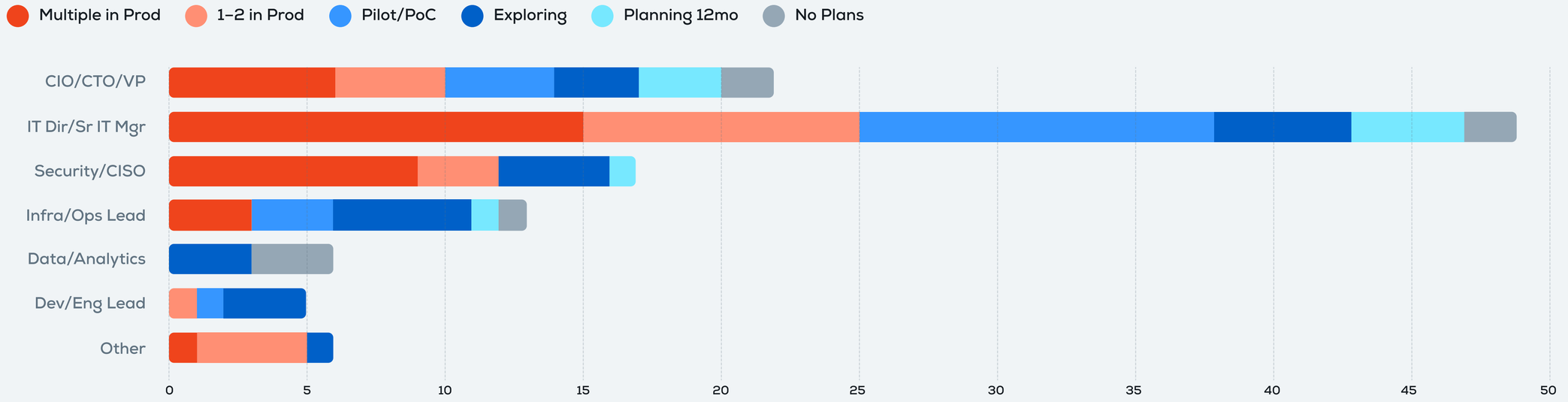
AI/ML deployment maturity by role

How far along enterprises are in putting AI into production – from exploration to multiple live deployments.

IT Directors are the most active AI deployers – 31% have multiple systems in production. Security leaders show surprisingly strong deployment rates, with 9 of 17 running multiple AI/ML systems in production.

AI/ML deployment status by CXO role

(Number of respondents per deployment stage)



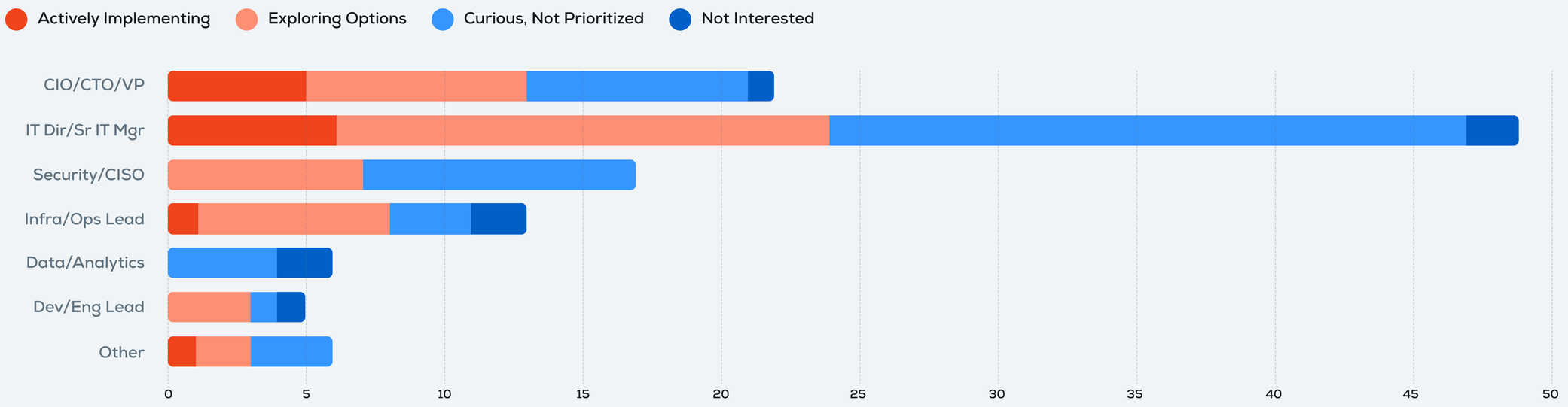
Finding 07

AIOps interest and adoption

Gauging the appetite for AI-driven operations management across IT leadership segments.

AIOps remains in the "curious but not committed" stage for most. IT Directors show the highest curiosity (47%) yet only 12% are actively implementing – a significant conversion opportunity.

AIOps interest by CXO role (Number of respondents per interest level)



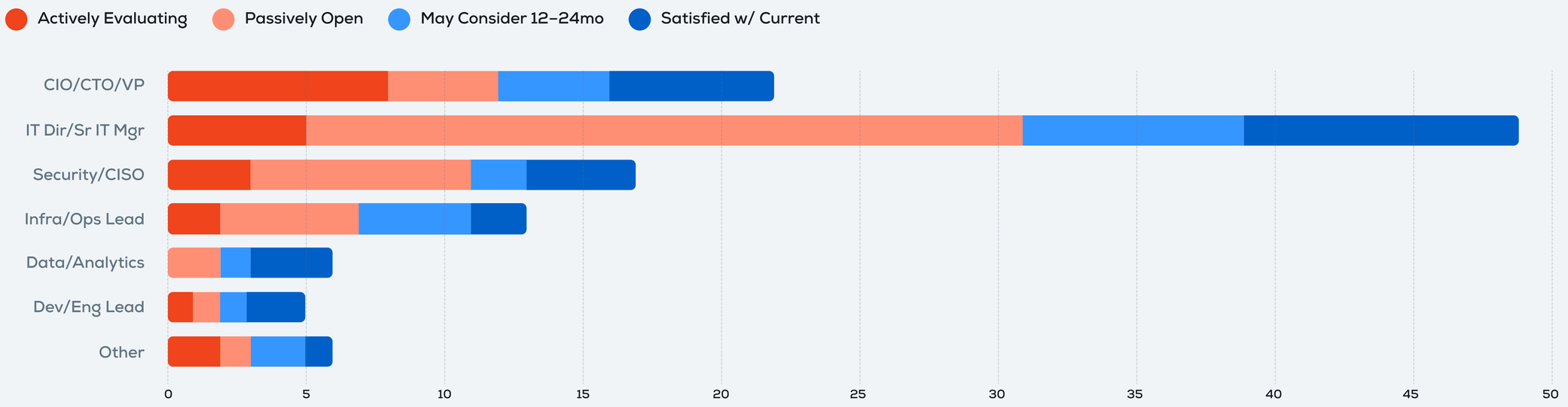
Finding 08

Partner evaluation intent by role

How open enterprise IT leaders are to new vendor and partner relationships in the near term.

IT Directors are passively open (53%) – reachable but not actively looking. CIOs/CTOs show the most balanced spread, with 36% actively evaluating new partners. Only 20% of all respondents are fully satisfied with their current partners.

Partner evaluation intent by CXO role (Number of respondents per evaluation status)



Role Profiles

What each audience needs from thought leadership

Role-specific insights drawn from survey responses – helping content and session strategy speak directly to each segment's priorities, challenges, and switching motivators.

IT Directors / Senior IT Managers

49 respondents – 42%

Primary Focus

AI/ML, Cybersecurity, Cloud Migration, Automation

Thought Leadership Needs

Industry-specific case studies, ROI proof, new insights from practitioners. Prefer live demos and peer panels.

Key Challenges

Budget constraints, legacy systems, talent gaps. Biggest obstacle is funding competing priorities.

Partner Switching Drivers

Better pricing, superior technology/innovation, stronger industry expertise, faster time to value.

CIOs / CTOs / VPs of Technology

22 respondents – 19%

Primary Focus

AI/ML, Cybersecurity, Automation, Data Analytics. Many already have multiple AI solutions in production.

Thought Leadership Needs

Strategic vision content, peer networking, actionable frameworks. Want to hear what other leaders are doing – not sales pitches.

Key Challenges

Scaling AI, data quality, organizational alignment. Want proven ROI and strategic roadmaps.

Partner Switching Drivers

Innovation track record, cost competitiveness, cultural fit, global delivery capabilities.

Security / CISO / Security Leads

16 respondents – 14%

Primary Focus

Cybersecurity/Zero Trust (primary), AI/ML, Cloud Infrastructure. Most are scaling or in production.

Thought Leadership Needs

Compliance and security-focused content, vulnerability management case studies, AI governance frameworks.

Key Challenges

Security/privacy concerns as top AI barrier, compliance requirements, integration with existing systems.

Partner Switching Drivers

Stronger industry expertise, proven ROI/case studies, comprehensive service offerings.

Infrastructure / Operations Leads

13 respondents – 11%

Primary Focus

Cloud Infrastructure, AI/ML, Automation. Interested in operational efficiency and scaling.

Thought Leadership Needs

Global best practices, interactive demos, hands-on workshops. Value practical over theoretical content.

Key Challenges

Supporting outdated equipment, budget constraints, cybersecurity requirements while modernizing.

Partner Switching Drivers

Better pricing, superior technology, faster implementation, global delivery capabilities.

Data / Analytics Leads

6 respondents – 5%

Primary Focus

Data Analytics/BI, AI/ML, Automation. Mix of early-stage and scaling maturity.

Thought Leadership Needs

ROI proof, actionable frameworks, access to technical experts. Want practical data strategy content.

Key Challenges

Data quality/readiness, unclear ROI, personnel constraints. Need help building the business case.

Partner Switching Drivers

Superior technology, comprehensive service offerings, cultural fit, innovation.

Strategic Takeaways

Six actions for leadership teams

Data-driven recommendations drawn directly from what 118+ enterprise IT leaders told us they need, value, and will act on.

01. Lead with AI/GenAI content

AI is the #1 focus area.
Create role-specific AI thought leadership: security implications for CISOs, operational AI for infrastructure leads, and strategic AI roadmaps for CIOs.

02. Prove ROI with industry-specific case studies

Top demand is for new insights (18%), industry case studies (15%), and ROI proof (14%). Budget constraints are the #1 obstacle – help leaders justify investments to boards and CFOs.

03. Favor interactive, hands-on formats

Live demos (30% preference) and interactive workshops (17%) far outpace static presentations. Demos that directly address current challenges drive post-event action.

04. Create peer-to-peer connection opportunities

Peer networks are the #1 way respondents stay informed (75 selections). Panel discussions and networking were highly valued. Facilitate connections between leaders facing similar challenges.

05. Address the security/privacy narrative

Security is both a top focus area (39%) and the #1 barrier to AI adoption (21%). Thought leadership that bridges AI innovation with security and compliance frameworks will resonate across all roles.

06. Target the actively evaluating audience

The top switching motivators are better pricing (20%), superior innovation (20%), industry expertise (11%), and faster implementation (11%). Speak directly to these triggers in outreach and sessions.

Thank you for watching

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