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IBM Study: Chief Data Officers Redefine Strategies as AI Ambitions Outpace Readiness

- *81% of Chief Data Officers surveyed prioritize investments that accelerate AI capabilities and initiatives.*
- *78% of surveyed leaders cite leveraging proprietary data is a top strategic objective to differentiate their organization in the market.*
- *Nearly half of respondents identify advanced data skills as a top challenge – rising from 32% in 2023.*

Lisbon, Portugal, November 13, 2025 – At Web Summit, the IBM (NYSE: IBM) Institute for Business Value unveiled a new study revealing enterprise data strategies are rapidly evolving as organizations race to scale AI across their business. The findings suggest that while Chief Data Officers (CDOs) are at the helm of this transformation, many say their data is still not ready to unlock AI's full potential.

Based on insights from 1,700 CDOs worldwide, the [study](#)* highlights a widening gap between AI ambition and readiness. Although 81% of surveyed CDOs report their organization's data strategy is integrated with its technology roadmap and infrastructure investments --compared to 52% in 2023 -- only 26% are confident their data can support new AI-enabled revenue streams. In addition, barriers such as data accessibility, completeness, integrity, accuracy, and consistency are preventing organizations from fully leveraging enterprise data for AI.

"Enterprise AI at scale is within reach, but success depends on organizations powering it with the right data. For CDOs, this means establishing a seamlessly integrated enterprise data architecture that fuels innovation and unlocks business value," said **Ed Lovely, VP and Chief Data Officer, IBM**. "Organizations that get this right won't just improve their AI, they'll transform how they operate, make faster decisions, adapt to change more quickly and gain a competitive edge."

Key findings include:

The CDO role is shifting from data custodian to business strategist as proving data's value remains a challenge

- The majority (92%) of CDOs surveyed say they must focus on business outcomes to succeed in their role.
- Yet, only one-third of respondents strongly agree they can clearly convey how data facilitates business results, and just 29% have clear measures to determine the value of data-driven business outcomes.
- Deploying data for competitive advantage is now the top priority for CDOs, ahead of governance and security as core responsibilities.
- 84% of CDOs surveyed say their unique data products have already provided significant competitive advantages, and 78% cite leveraging proprietary data as a top strategic objective to differentiate their organization in the market.

AI ambitions remain high amid AI-data gap

- 81% of CDOs surveyed prioritize investments that accelerate AI capabilities and initiatives.
- Yet, only 26% of CDOs surveyed are confident their organization can use unstructured data in a way that delivers business value.
- To help close this gap, 81% of CDOs surveyed say they bring AI to data rather than centralizing it.
- While 80% of surveyed leaders have started developing diverse datasets to train AI agents, 79% admit being early in the process of defining how to scale and govern them.
- Despite these challenges, 83% of respondents believe the potential benefits of deploying AI agents outweigh the risks, and 77% are comfortable with their organization relying on outcomes from AI agents.

A data-driven culture is viewed as essential, but talent gaps may slow progress

- 82% of CDOs surveyed say data is wasted if their organization isn't giving people access to it, and 80% say data democratization helps their organization move faster.
- While 74% of respondents actively promote a culture of data stewardship among employees, fostering a data-driven culture remains a top strategic challenge for those surveyed.
- At the same time, 47% of CDOs surveyed now say attracting, developing and retaining talent with advanced data skills is a top challenge – up from 32% in 2023.
- 77% of surveyed leaders are struggling to fill key data roles, and only 53% say recruiting and retention efforts deliver the skills and experience needed – down from 75% in 2024.

To view the full study, visit:

<https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/en-us/report/2025-cdo>

***Study Methodology**

The IBM Institute for Business Value, in cooperation with Oxford Economics, surveyed 1,700 senior data and analytics leaders holding titles such as Chief Data Officer, Chief Data and Analytics Officer, Chief Analytics Officer, Chief AI Officer and other senior roles. The survey was conducted across 27 geographies and 19 industries between July and September 2025 and September 2025. Survey topics included data strategy, data standards, quality, and integrity, data governance, data readiness for AI, talent, and organizational culture.

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