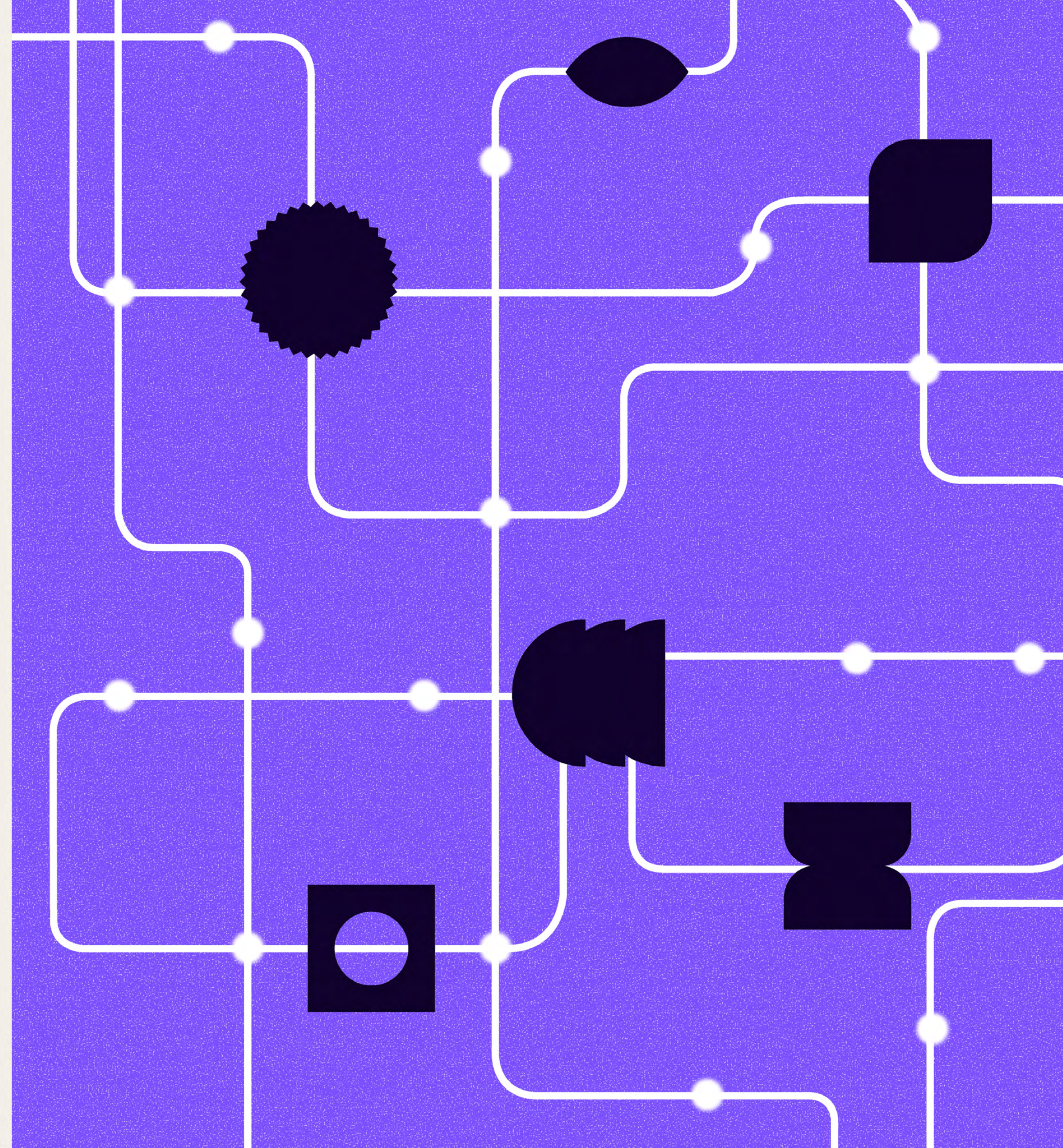


The CIO Playbook

12 CIOs on leading with Ai,
innovation, and agility



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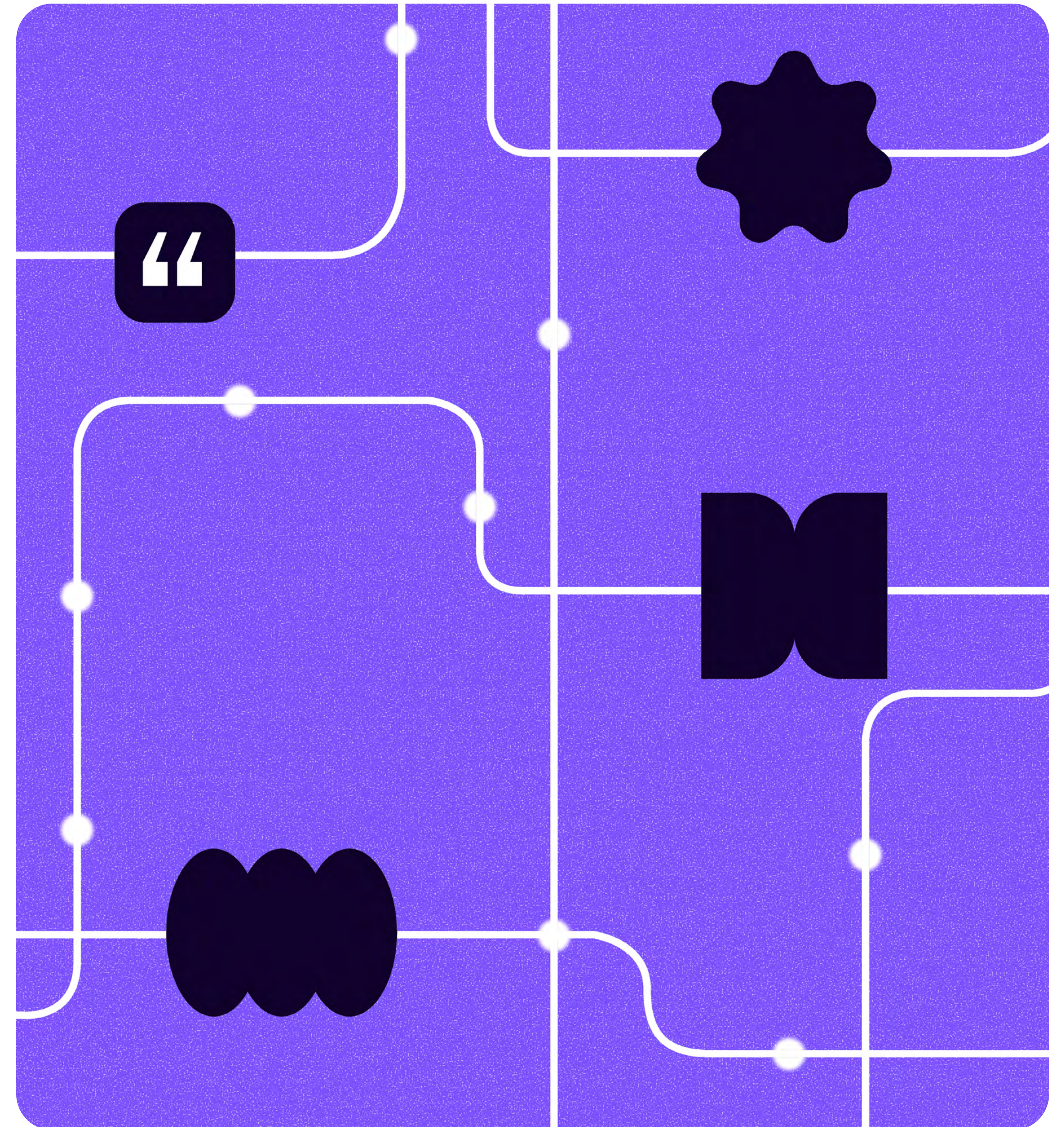
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Introduction

Chief Information Officers (CIOs) are adept at juggling many goals, tasks, and timelines—often, their input is crucial and immensely valuable when it comes to envisioning the future of an organization. That’s because they keep in balance what is necessary now—and also what will be necessary later.

That kind of strategic thinking comes with experience, which is why we spoke with 12 CIOs to learn about how they think, what they’re planning for, and what’s most important to them right now. These leaders span industries from the medical field, to law, to academia, to technology. Each works within different parameters with their own unique challenges and wisdom to share.

Read on to see how today’s top CIOs are building agile, collaborative environments and shaping the future of work.



01

Enabling higher education with a small but nimble team

— Amy Diehl, Ph.D. Wilson College

When you manage IT for a small liberal arts college, you don't always have resources to spare. Still, Amy Diehl, CIO at Wilson College, and her team are dedicated to providing a high-quality experience for everyone on campus, from students to faculty and staff.

The small team of nine, including Diehl, is in charge of the library and information technology for the college. Their oversight includes: instructional design, educational technology, academic and administrative support, data centers, server infrastructure, applications management, ERP systems, system administration including email and file servers, telecommunications, computer labs, help desk support, information security, as well as full library services (print and electronic collections, learning commons, information literacy, and research support).

It's a lot for a team of that size to handle, but it all comes down to the lens with which you approach the job. *"When you're small you can't do everything,"* says Diehl. *"But I like to think of underrated ways in which we improve the student and faculty experience—ways they don't necessarily even perceive."*

Here are three things Diehl and her nimble colleagues use to provide a world-class IT experience with a small staff.



Create your own networks

Information security has been a big focal point for Diehl since moving to Wilson College this year, because her team doesn't have enough staff to warrant a dedicated Chief Information Security Officer. *"Information security needs oversight,"* she says.

Luckily, Diehl's previous job at a larger state school came with a safety net of sister schools to lean on for security resources and information-sharing. At a private liberal arts college like Wilson, that network does not come built in—but you can always find one yourself.

"I was able to have the college join a consortium through its professional association," says Diehl. *"Now we're in a network of other small schools in Pennsylvania, where we have access to better resources to help us with security and to share information with each other."*

"Information security is not something you want to be competitive about," says Diehl.



It does not help us when any other college or organization is hacked or hit by ransomware. There's no reason to be anything but cooperative and share information."

Having a network to rely on gave Diehl and her colleagues space to work on other important aspects like cybersecurity training (where they achieved an incredible 100% compliance from full time permanent staff and faculty), and education like phish testing.

Engage third party vendors

There's a lot on the go at once for Diehl, so automation and outsourcing have been a key to her success.

When important everyday tasks are looked after, she's able to focus on personalized support for students, providing librarians with the resources they need, and enabling faculty to teach without obstacles.

That's why Wilson College works with a SIEM—a Security Information and Event Management tool—to monitor for anomalies.



We don't have time to sit and look at log files all day. A third-party vendor can help us with SIEM monitoring because they have experience doing this for other institutions."

By leaving these kinds of rote tasks to a third party, she's able to refocus time on the areas that improve campus experience, and even level up security capabilities with advanced techniques that no small team would have time for. *"They're able to put the human eyes on it and say 'this is what you need to take a look at.'"*

Keeping the IT environment simple by leveraging vendors strategically like this has enabled Diehl to provide all the same services and experience of a larger college, simply by making the right choices about what to handle internally, what to automate, and what to outsource.

"IT is a strategic partnership," says Diehl.

Diversify the team

It's no secret that the IT world is dominated by men— only [a quarter](#) of all computing roles are done by women—and it's something Diehl has noticed in her career. *"My interest in gender bias came as I was moving up that hierarchy as a leader,"* she says.

"I started a doctoral program and I thought, 'I'm just going to research and find out, through literature review, what gender barriers do women leaders experience?' What this work has done is helped me to understand what was happening in my own realm and has helped me to be a stronger leader."

It's been proven over and over that greater innovation comes from having a diverse team, and that's something Diehl strived to achieve. *"With a small team, everybody has to be highly effective,"* she says, *"but using strict applicant weeding tools doesn't necessarily enable equitable hiring practices."* For example, just widening the candidate pool to include people with different experiences and backgrounds is a cure for the symptom and not the cause if the methods of evaluating the candidates haven't evolved.



I've been proactive with my recruitment to come up with ways to be more equitable and to diversify the team. For example, I work to explore how we can do hiring skills assessments that keep in mind where people are coming from."

Thinking more diversely also means considering different ways of working that help small teams operate at their best and stay focused on the many tasks at hand. Hybrid work and flexibility are functions Diehl is proud to support as a manager, recognizing that these arrangements can be especially impactful for those who face greater barriers to workplace access and advancement.

"Remote work has a lot of potential, in particular for women, by cutting down on commuting, allowing more time to attend to caregiving and personal pursuits while also being fully engaged in the work," says Diehl. *"Being a good manager in any regard, you set goals for people and you work based on the goals, not based on the time they're sitting in their office chair."*

To successfully run an entire IT department with only a handful of staff, you have to make smart choices.

"Of course it's about information security, but it's also things like having reliable Wi-Fi, an Internet connection with sufficient bandwidth, and good working computers and labs, so that when a student, staff, or faculty member comes to campus and logs on, they're not even thinking about it," says Diehl.

More importantly, Diehl also exemplifies the power of leading with empathy—not only for staff, but also for everyone their work affects. There's so much that a CIO has to juggle. By creating harmony for her staff and also her higher ed community, Diehl has ensured a seamless operation that is focused on the technology as well as the humanity of everyone who creates and uses their systems.

02

Using technology to enable business excellence

— Sunil Madan, Birdeye

Sunil Madan doesn't just stay in his lane when it comes to his job—because he knows if he wants to make an impact and help the business in a meaningful way, he needs to be expansive. The CIO of experience marketing platform, Birdeye, is invested in helping every part of his organization advance to the next level.

“As a leader, you have to keep rotating within an organization to be able to make the impact that you can, otherwise you're just helping yourself, not the company,” he says. “One: you're not learning the business enough as no two businesses are the same. Two: you're not helping the business enough because your decision making process is based on only your past experiences.”

That mindset has helped Madan push not just his IT team, but also helped to inspire other departments to hit higher standards with a more holistic technology and business strategy. His previous experience as VP of Business Services at RingCentral gives him a unique perspective as a CIO, and an ability to step into the shoes of his sales and marketing colleagues to help determine their operational and scalability needs.

Here's what a CIO can help to accomplish within a business beyond the usual call of duty—especially while a company is growing and scaling very fast.



Building pipeline for sales

Unlike most CIOs, Madan currently spends **60 to 70%** of his time on the business side of things, and the other **30 to 40%** on revenue operations and technology. For a rapidly scaling company, this mix makes sense— think about how much operational infrastructure goes into something like outbound sales motion. Having a CIO with this mindset enables sales right away.

“I spend most of my time in pre-sales because that’s where I can make an impact right now,” he says. “In a year or two, I’ll be shifting my focus to the infrastructure, backoffice, technology landscape and enterprise readiness side of things. Leadership teams should always be ready to help in any area of the business when needed.”

For now, the center of Madan’s attention is building pipeline for sales. *“I have my own operations excellence model for pre-sales organization,”* he says. Once he has the top-down numbers of how much pipeline needs to be built, and the sales goals of each department, Madan uses his operations model to determine, for example, the outbound lead cost per representative.



I have a very healthy competition with marketing ... How much are you spending to bring in a lead and how much am I spending to do the same? It becomes a very interesting conversation and with that mindset, we are always challenging each other to optimize on both sides.”

This kind of impact can be applied, from a CIO’s vantage point, anywhere in the company. That’s why Madan sees technology as a great equalizer in the growth phase of a company. *“If we have a problem (people, process, or technology) in any of the business areas, I don’t mind getting involved and fixing them or getting it to a level where they’re repeatable in a scalable manner.”*

Informed training and enablement

A CIO’s experience can also be applied to training and enablement, since the role touches every part of the business. With Madan’s business experience, including on the buyer side, he’s able to do something else that’s unique: get into the weeds with sales representatives to give them effective strategies and tools.



I know who they are talking to on the other side and what type of questions a potential buyer will be asking, so I go through that objections-and-rebuttal process with our team.”

“You know, ‘I am the buyer and I’m going to ask you all these questions throughout the process, and tell me how you would answer.’ And that trains them really well.”

Straddling the worlds of sales and technology also makes Madan better able to teach business systems to the representatives who use them every day. *“We have a healthy tech stack of 50-plus business applications that my team runs, as well as the contact center,”* he says.

Each piece of this SaaS product tech-stack has to serve the needs of those who are using them to be productive every day. Madan’s unique point of view enables him to give employees what they need when—even before—they need it.

Directing the flow of information

Madan's holistic approach also helps him to decide when to say yes to a request, and when to point out the missing pieces. *"When you look at the business process, including the information structure, there's a flow of information that has to happen in a specific way. I'm making decisions in that order,"* he says.

Flow of information always impacts the customer journey, which is crucial during a company's growth period. Anything that validates a better customer experience is where Madan is putting his focus— including Ai.

"Ai has now become table stakes," he says. *"You have your business process architecture and then Ai is like the bottom layer supporting everything above."* Wherever Ai can help improve the flow of information, like within the context of a contact center's web chat or answer prompts, the better the experience will be for anyone interacting with the company. *"At the end of the day, it's all about our customer experience,"* he says. *"And I do believe Ai is an enabler that takes the customer experience to the next level."*

Madan's unconventional role exemplifies how a CIO that truly understands technology to be a scale- enabler has a chance to make an impact throughout the entire organization—and help it grow to new heights.



At the end of the day, it's all about our customer experience, and I do believe Ai is an enabler that takes the customer experience to the next level."

03

Managing the nation's largest women- owned law firm— 100% remotely

— Kim Verska, Culhane Meadows

Incorporating new technology in the legal realm can be tricky—it's a traditional field with many compliance and confidentiality requirements. Culhane Meadows, however, bucked that trend when it was formed in 2013 as an entirely cloud-based firm. It's now America's largest full-service national women-owned law firm, employing partner-level attorneys without the expensive trappings of Big Law.

Their CIO, Kim Verska, is a technology and data security lawyer who has been working in virtual-first law firms since 2005. Unlike a traditional CIO, she leaves the technology platforms to the CTO, and focuses mainly on the information side of the business because the legal field is so information-heavy.

But Culhane Meadows isn't just virtual-first—it's 100% virtual. Everyone works remotely. While being cloud-based makes the firm modern and nimble, it also adds a new layer of challenges surrounding file management and the human error that so often accompanies any kind of tech integration.

Here is what Verska keeps top of mind while overseeing the flow of information of a fully remote legal firm.



Data, data, data

Triple checking compliance is a must. This is true for any law firm, whether in-office or virtual, but the unique circumstances of a distributed workforce in this field make it even more important. For example, what happens to client and case information when an attorney leaves the firm?



A lot of my time these days is spent working on attorney entrances and exits, because the file transfers.”

Without a central server where data is securely stored, information has the potential to be literally anywhere— unless its movement is properly controlled. *“You’ve got these attorneys in their home offices who have laptops, and the challenge is making sure we have access to all the information,”* she says. Her expertise as both a privacy attorney and CIO comes into play here with a set of rules enforced throughout the entire distributed workforce.

Consistent file management is her plan of attack, but her long-range view ensures that compliance is never a one-step process, and that all the angles are covered. *“We can wipe someone’s laptop and take all that information away if we have to,”* she says, *“but the important thing is ensuring they’re complying along the way.”*

This goes for encryption on all devices, and is reiterated through education, training, and a remote help desk to answer questions.

The systems that a virtual law firm needs

Taking on and completing legal cases relies on a series of checks and balances, and in a fully-remote law firm, that requires a set of remote-friendly systems. Two very important aspects of legal work are billing and ensuring there is no conflict of interest with a client.

The company uses a separate integrated billing suite that meets all their complex needs, from partner-only billing, to different formulas based on the type of work being done. *“It was a big challenge to find a proper billing system,”* says Verska. Without a centralized office, the data needs to do a lot more heavy lifting to ensure hours and dollars are properly accounted for. *“The software does robust reporting so we can accurately account for and direct the money a client sends.”*

Similarly, conflicts of interest are important to avoid at all costs. In order to achieve this, law firms need to be able to check that work efficiently and accurately. *“Back in 2005, of course, we had a spreadsheet and someone who would check it row by row—that is not going to work over time,”* says Verska. *“Now, not only do we have a master client database, but we also check people’s billing entries to confirm that there aren’t any conflicts.”* All of these systems ensure ethical obligations are being met, and they don’t require hours of scrolling.

Finally, cyber liability insurance is a consideration for every major law firm. But in a virtual-first environment, it’s an even greater one. *“Your clients want you to have it and you need to have a good carrier,”* says Verska.

If you’re thinking of moving your legal practice to a cloud-based environment, that’s an investment you need to make.

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A more hands-on process—at a distance

Working in a distributed office, the role of a CIO requires a lot more people management. *“You can make the best technology process,” says Verska, “but a lot of the job has to do with choices employees are going to make in their own environments.”*

In other words, it’s less about the technology and more about the people using it. *“With regards to something like securing a home router, you can’t do that from afar,” she says. “You need to make available someone who can get on an employee’s system remotely and help them in case they don’t know how to do it.”*

Human error is the variable in a remote legal firm that you can’t control for entirely, so Verska and her team lean on training—like recurring phishing reports and tests—and reliable systems to protect the very sensitive information that makes up the bulk of their business. *“There’s a million great technologies, but it’s the human element that’ll get you if you’re not careful,” says Verska. “It takes a lot of managerial work. In terms of security, unfortunately, I trust technology to consistently do the right thing more than I trust busy, distracted people.”*

Despite the expected obstacles that come along with being a disruptor in a traditional space, recent years have proven that high-level remote legal work can be done effectively with the right approach and processes in place. For Verska, juggling the information management needs of a legal business, along with the realities of a remote workforce means engaging from all angles, knowing that the technology serves the higher goals of the firm.



You need to know what’s critical from the legal perspective, and the ethical perspective—then you can focus on technology.”

04

Modernizing legal aid to better serve Ontarians

— Karl Martineau, Legal Aid Ontario

Being the CIO of Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) means ensuring that technology empowers staff and social justice advocates to deliver timely, effective legal services to those who need them most. LAO provides assistance in family law, refugee law, and criminal law for eligible Ontarians, handling approximately 800,000 legal matters each year.

With multiple service channels—including phone support, community legal clinics, and a self-service online portal—Martineau's team places user-centered design at the core of its technology strategy.

The goal: to make legal aid easier to access while maintaining the highest standards for security, compliance, and accessibility.



Driving agility across the organization

The legal field can move slowly sometimes, so being in a sector where legal processes can move slowly, speed matters. Martineau's team has focused on building flexibility into LAO's systems so they can quickly respond to evolving client needs. This includes launching a mobile app for eligibility self-assessment, enhancing the client portal, and integrating secure digital signature capabilities.



Creating a more responsive organization through our cloud strategy and agile development approach allows us to deliver solutions faster—without increasing risk.”

By aligning technology with executive support, LAO ensures that innovation is embraced at the highest levels. Martineau works closely with leadership to address governance, privacy, and compliance concerns so that strategic tech initiatives can move forward confidently.

Leveraging vendors for strategic impact

Strong internal capabilities are essential, but Martineau recognizes that external vendors play a key role in accelerating initiatives and keeping operations running smoothly. As a public agency, LAO follows strict procurement processes to ensure every investment is aligned with client outcomes.

Cloud-based platforms and ongoing vendor partnerships have made it possible for LAO to maintain continuity of service regardless of location, ensuring staff and clients can securely connect anytime, anywhere.

Innovating in a traditional sector

The legal sector is not known for rapid change, but Martineau and his team are proving that with the right strategy, innovation can thrive—even in highly regulated environments. *“IT is fully integrated into LAO’s business strategy, ensuring that every technology decision directly supports client needs.”*

By adopting new technologies, including advanced Oracle tools, LAO has been able to securely expand its services, respond to client needs in real time, and lay the groundwork for future digital transformation.



Every technology decision we make is measured against our mission: making legal aid more accessible, secure, and responsive to the people of Ontario.”

05

Creating compassionate tech for higher education

— Elaine Montilla, City University of New York (CUNY)

The City University of New York is the largest urban university system in the United States, and as such it has diverse technological needs. Elaine Montilla is the Assistant Vice President for Information Technology and CIO of the Graduate Center, one of over 25 institutions under the CUNY umbrella. In her role, Montilla oversees its IT department, and the eight unit managers who work with her.

After working in tech for over 20 years, Montilla, who identifies as queer and Latinx, is able to apply different lenses to the systems she's facilitating in order to create tech environments that truly serve the communities she's working with.

Here are three areas in the overlap between higher education and technology where she's placing her focus.



Students and faculty with a voice

A big part of what makes Montilla successful is that she understands the importance of listening to multiple perspectives. Much of her week is spent taking meetings with the decision-makers and users that ultimately benefit from the IT decisions she makes. Aligning with the goals of the institution is always top of mind, and these fact-finding missions keep her one step ahead.

“I have direct input from the provost and the president of the university—we meet weekly,” she says. “I’m able to hear what’s going on overall and make decisions not only on what’s happening around that table, but what’s happening with the university and how else can we help them.”

On top of meeting with higher-ups, Montilla applies that same rigor across the board with the departments she serves. *“I call it ‘IT Assessments’ where we meet with every head of department,” she says. “I gather a lot of feedback—one department might be using a system the other two don’t know they have access to—so it helps inform those conversations.”*

But what makes her unique is that she ensures she listens up and down the ladder—the student voice is just as important as the president’s. *“I don’t think every department does this, but I make sure that my leadership, all of my directors, meet with the student government and we bring them updates,”* says Montilla.

That two-way communication means that everyone’s needs are met and that those with large stakes in the way technology is implemented at the school feel heard. Montilla maintains an open door policy for this reason, and makes sure to keep up with ever-changing team members to establish consistency.



I think that as a CIO and as leaders in IT we need to do a better job at listening.”

Hybrid learning: Leveraging technology for the long term

As higher education embraced virtual-first and hybrid environments, institutions accelerated their innovation to keep students connected and learning effectively. Montilla’s focus today is on ensuring that all the planning and infrastructure from that rapid shift continues to deliver value—whether classes are hybrid, fully in-person, or online. Her goal is to keep what works and evolve it further.



We’ve built the tools and habits to teach and connect from anywhere, now it’s about using them strategically for the best learning experience.”

The expectations for seamless connection are high, and meeting them requires careful planning and the right resources. *“We’ve been imagining this digital transformation for years,”* Montilla explains. *“When it became reality, the pace and expectations accelerated overnight. How fast people want results can sometimes impact the delivery itself.”*

Shaping the future of higher education means thinking creatively about how to blend in-person and remote options. *“There’s still a place for face-to-face learning, but we can also use technology to expand opportunities and flexibility,”* she says. *“It doesn’t have to be one or the other.”*

Applying both short- and long-range planning helps her team make the most effective use of resources. Clear communication about institutional goals allows her to direct those resources where they have the most impact. One priority is increasing the number of high-flex classrooms—spaces equipped with portable video conferencing units that can be deployed as needed. This setup allows for hybrid and distance learning without permanently altering the classroom, creating an engaging, high-quality experience for all students.

Championing diversity in the IT space

Montilla is persistent about adding value to the institution with everything she and her team do. One significant way she does this is by advocating for more minority representation in the field of IT.



Every time I would go to a conference, women would come up to me and say, ‘You are a CIO? I can’t believe it. And you’re Latina and you’re gay? Where did you come from?’ I would notice that even when I was asked to speak at panels, I was usually the only woman.”

So she made it her mission to get more women in tech. She founded 5xMinority, a brand dedicated to empowering women and minorities in tech. The momentum only grew. *“It wasn’t until I delivered my TEDx talk a few years ago that everything actually changed and people started contacting me asking me to speak,”* she says. *“I decided that I needed to use my voice and make sure that I can advocate for people that sometimes seem invisible.”*

That kind of dedication to diversifying the tech space only results in more thoughtful innovation, and exemplifies Montilla’s human-centered approach to IT.

“Real leadership is rooted in compassion,” she says. *“That’s the kind I want to be part of.”*

06

Using technology to provide the best patient-centered care

— TJ Anderson, Metropolitan Pediatrics

TJ Anderson is a doctor for Metropolitan Pediatrics, a medical practice in the Portland area specializing in pediatrics, behavioral health, and lactation support. He's also their Chief Medical Information Officer, which means he brings a doctor's lens to the role of CIO— using technology to improve patient experience and health outcomes.

He splits his week between providing medical care and ensuring fellow doctors and clinics have the technology and systems they need to put their patients first. *"I've tried to marry the two together,"* says Anderson. *"What brought me to Metropolitan Pediatrics are the committed pediatricians and many opportunities to use new technology to improve the patient experience and health outcomes."*

Using the technology himself during appointments gives Anderson a unique advantage when choosing tools that help Metropolitan Pediatrics lead with empathy and provide the best possible care for all of their patients. Here are some of the tools and systems he's chosen to help put patient care first.



Using Ai to deliver a better patient experience

Doctors have a lot on their hands during any given appointment, and Ai can play a role in helping them focus their attention where it matters. Metropolitan Pediatrics uses Dialpad as a tool to review calls with patients and ensure that doctors have an accurate account so they can make the best plan moving forward.

“With six clinics and five managers, they all hear things from staff, like ‘The patient said this, or the patient said that,’ so it’s nice to go back and look at those transcripts,” says Anderson. “It really sheds some light on those conversations.”

Being able to capture feedback for analysis is another way for Anderson and his team to remain patient-centric and continually improve from a customer service perspective. *“When patients happen to submit a constructive piece of feedback, we’ll reach out to them and tell them that we heard them and see if we can do better next time,”* says Anderson.



One of the benefits of Dialpad’s Ai Recaps is we’ve been able to go back and listen to calls and read what our agents said or how they said it and fully investigate where we can continuously improve or do things better.”

Being able to use that information and give feedback to agents improves future interactions in real time, which means the patient experience is always getting better.

Securing patient data in the cloud

As healthcare organizations have embraced more flexible work models, secure cloud solutions have become essential for protecting sensitive patient information and enabling teams to work from anywhere. For Anderson and his team, moving key systems to the cloud has made it easier to manage access, monitor usage, and keep information secure—no matter where staff are working.

“Phones having a web interface has been amazing for our remote workers, because they can just log in and use our cloud-based applications, which has been great,” he says. Of course, ensuring the security of patient information is top of mind for any CIO in the medical industry, and as such, it requires a multi-pronged approach.

“Security is probably the biggest challenge with new systems,” he says. *“Obviously we don’t want people logging in on their aunt’s and uncle’s WiFi and downloading information.”* With more and more people working from anywhere, Anderson shifted to moving all of Metropolitan’s physical server storage over to the cloud.

Anderson also employs tools like multi-factor authentication for his cloud-based systems to enforce security compliance.



Having good, secure encrypted systems is definitely important for communications, having solid BAAs in place, and using trusted storage systems—the big players—for your cloud services is really important.”

Analytics to better serve patients

Because Metropolitan Pediatrics is a group of clinics, now with remote doctors from all over the Portland region, they receive a lot of calls throughout the week. When the calls are properly tracked, they contain data that can make business more efficient. Having that data localized under one dashboard across the business has made this process all the better.

Using Dialpad, Anderson and his team analyze that data and use it to make business decisions.



We work with our analysts to make sure that their questions are answered and we're finding all the business information we need. For me that means looking at call volume patterns, dropped or lost calls in Dialpad, and trying to see if there are trends that we can use to plan operations."

After analyzing recent data, the Metropolitan Pediatrics team found supporting evidence that the organization consistently received the most calls on Mondays and Fridays. Because they could identify this trend, that meant they could more appropriately staff for those high-volume days, and ensure that patient needs were met more quickly and efficiently.

"It helps me understand what it's like as a patient to be able to use technology and it certainly influences the decisions that we make as an organization," he says. "It has to be easy, intuitive, and friendly because for people—especially parents with young ones—time is precious."

Looking towards the future, Anderson is excited about the potential that technology has in the medical field. Ai used for tasks like automated documentation for more accurate medical notes already exists, and we're not far from more widespread automated predictive models that can learn to predict health outcomes based on data and then take action on those predictions.

"Looking at technology through the lens of a doctor and a father helps me understand the patient perspective," says Anderson. "It really impacts what we focus on."

07

Creating a people-first approach in higher education that lifts everyone up

— Carol L. Smith, DePauw University

Carol Smith has been working with DePauw University, a small private liberal arts college in Indiana, since 1994. She started out in the instructional technology program, getting faculty up to speed on the technology they needed to teach their classes. This foundation is the perfect example of the type of environment she's created at DePauw now as CIO.

"We call ourselves Information Services rather than IT, because I think IT is about 'the stuff' and information services is about the people," says Smith.

Her team of 24 covers all the basics to support over 1,900 undergraduate students, as well as faculty and staff: everything from infrastructure, network, user services, help desk and support, and instructional technology to administrative systems and helping with admissions and recruiting through data analysis.

That people-centric approach means that Smith is always thinking of the big picture about connecting people with the technology they need to help them achieve their goals. *"I find the people who thrive in higher education and in technology are those who are drawn in through their curiosity,"* she says. *"And being able to connect with others and see that big picture of how it all fits together."*

Here are some of the tenets she follows to keep the school's information flowing, and making sure everyone has what they need.



Create trust with students

Students come first in higher education, and this generation of students' techno-fluency is incredibly high. For Smith, listening to their needs is one way to ensure her team provides what students are looking for.

"They press us because they come in with the expectations from their perspective and that keeps all of us on our toes," she says. "Because we're student-centric, it enables us to think differently and continue to evolve in ways that maybe some organizations outside of higher education without quite that impetus do not."

Having a knowledgeable audience, like young students, also means that backend issues like the importance of security is even more top of mind for Smith.



It's not about the data, it's about the people. People trust a higher education institution. There's a lot of information we manage and we want to be certain it's protected. We don't want to lose that trust."

Much like any other organization, in order to create a culture of trust in higher education, it's essential that all faculty and staff have both a similar knowledge base and the ability to get support when they need it. *"It's about developing the campus workforce to have more technology fluency—finding a way to level everybody up so that they've got this foundational skill set with the technology they need,"* says Smith. *"Maybe some people wouldn't think about the technology department doing that, but I think it's a critical part of providing a much better experience for our students."*

Organized data makes for better policy

As the information services department, Smith and her team have access to all the data that can help the institution run more smoothly—a responsibility she takes seriously. *"The data network obviously is the sort of underpinning of it all,"* says Smith. *"That's one of those areas where no one notices it's there, unless there's a problem."*

Managing the data so that others can access and use it is another way Smith puts people first in her CIO decision-making process. *"It's our role to connect the data together: what's the system of record, where's the mothership for every piece of data that we should have, and then making sure that we're synchronizing that correctly with the other systems,"* she says.

When a student logs into a portal to register for classes or check a schedule, that information should be there—and it should be accurate. The registrar should have all the same information as the faculty teaching that class. It's all connected, and it impacts the day-to-day experience on campus for students, staff, or faculty members.



We're all thinking a lot about the fabric of the data that we have at our institution and constantly making our best effort to create a consistent set of data that the institution and offices can use for analytics, analysis, and making decisions."

It's a mindset with a long-term and holistic view—after all, in higher education, an IT organization provides informational services to students from the day they apply to the institution, throughout their years on campus to graduation, and beyond as lifelong alumni. The information that Smith's team helps to organize and protect in that time can make all the difference in ensuring a great experience.

Collaborate with others

With such a collaborative approach, it's no surprise that Smith finds value in connecting with other IT leaders to collaborate on solutions for her campus. She also serves on the board of the nonprofit association EDUCAUSE, a community of technology, academic, industry, and campus leaders advancing higher education through the use of IT.



It's such an honor, and it's also such a great opportunity to be able to engage with colleagues from all sectors of higher education ... people are very collaborative across schools."

Being able to share issues, learn about how schools of all sizes are handling common problems, or even collaborate across institutions through consortia can bring big ideas to even the smallest of teams.

"When I came to DePauw, I was struck by how much collaboration and communication happens between technology teams at other schools. And I realized pretty quickly that we couldn't do it alone," says Smith.
"Collaboration is instrumental for us to be able to do our jobs well and serve our institutions."

Smith and her team are proof that IT teams at universities and colleges can focus on the experience of the people using the technology too, while still building effective and efficient systems for an institution. A lot of that comes from a place of teaching and being willing to learn. *"How do you run an institution? How do you create a space where employees are thriving and are enabled to do their best work?"* asks Smith.

"All of that ultimately enables us to have a strong workforce that's talented and that can build the best experience for our students."

08

Using technology to improve patient care

— Curt Kwak, Proliance Surgeons

Seattle-based CIO Curt Kwak oversees the Enterprise IT operations and management of one of the largest surgical practices in the country.

Proliance Surgeons specializes in orthopedics, ear nose and throat, ophthalmology, general surgery, and reconstructive surgery. Not only does he maintain the long-term IT roadmap of technology initiatives, he also works to meet the business requirements of over 80 care centers.

An important distinction when it comes to technology in the medical field is that clinical innovation—ways to enhance patient experience—must always come first, and the technology is there to support. *“Human- to-human service and a patient’s health always trumps technology innovation,”* says Kwak. The field isn’t always the quickest to innovate, but when they do, it’s intentional, and focused on making a positive difference for patients.

The work Kwak and his team do also carries a lot of risk. *“If a bank process fails, they may lose money. But if a healthcare organization’s process fails, somebody could get seriously injured, or worse.”*

Here are the areas where Kwak and his IT team place their focus to ensure that patient care is always at the center of their IT work.



Improve collaboration by streamlining communication

While communication between doctors and patients is vital, Kwak discovered that a lot of work goes on behind the scenes between physicians. *“Some of our physicians were treating other people’s patients, and providing moral support and engaging in collaboration together,”* he says. The information that needs to be shared when transferring patients between doctors, or when doctors are in need of a consultation should be easy to find, share, and look up later.

That’s why Kwak prefers the dexterity of a single tool rather than using one tool for video meetings, another for secure messaging, and another for a phone system. It makes this kind of collaboration even easier, especially when time is of the essence. Proliance uses [Dialpad](#) for its communications needs and is always on the lookout for innovative and versatile tools that allow physicians (and the teams that support them) to be more nimble—something that isn’t always possible in the field of healthcare.



One of the benefits of being a private standalone practice is we do have a level of agility that a hospital system might not have.”

Provide a consistent experience across 80 care centers

Because Proliance relies on individual care centers throughout communities, there wasn’t always a consistent experience, and not every care center was taking advantage of the kind of technology that would save them time and effort. Getting everyone to use the same tools was one way Kwak and his team ensured consistent service delivery across the business.

“We’re quickly finding out how critical and efficient contact center technology is for us. Before Dialpad, we had a variety of technologies, some implemented without any consultation, so we didn’t even know what some care centers were working with because they had the autonomy to implement whatever they wanted,” says Kwak.

“When we got our first care center on Dialpad, it opened up so many doors. Even simple things like being able to access voicemails remotely or the voicemail transcription services. The nurses were saying, ‘Oh my goodness, do you know how much time you saved us?’”

For now, rather than having a centralized contact center, each care center remains a separate unit because it enables them to focus on their local communities to provide more personalized care. But having this technology in place creates a cohesive and consistent experience without losing the personal touch that goes a long way in medicine.

Experiment and innovate

Proliance's agility enables them to continually test and refine new approaches, ensuring each innovation aligns with both clinical goals and patient outcomes. In recent years, they've expanded their digital care toolkit—building on early telemedicine efforts to determine where virtual visits add value and where in-person care remains essential. For specialties like orthopedics and sports medicine, this meant developing hybrid care pathways that use digital tools for pre- and post-visit engagement while preserving hands-on assessments where accuracy is critical. This balanced approach allows Proliance to innovate without compromising quality of care.

Enabling and securing physician innovation is another place where clinical and technological innovation collide. *“A lot of our board-certified surgeons have many patents, whether it's pain management, or enhanced surgical procedures only they can do,”* says Kwak. *“Our technology enables that clinical innovation.”*

And because Kwak and his team are working with documents like patents and the sensitive information that supports them, the technology underpins clinical work once more. *“They know that the confidential data that they're generating is secure and protected from things like ransomware. And if we have a disaster, they know that data is available so their work will be uninterrupted.”*

Ai also fits into their patient-centered model because it can work as another layer of certainty in clinical care. *“If we have data from Ai backing up our assumptions, then we're more confident to tell the patient, ‘We've got some data that tells us you're going to be okay. We're going to prescribe some activities for you, some medication, and come back in a month.’”*

Because technological innovation and clinical innovation work in tandem here, Curt Kwak and his team have created efficient and effective systems by combining their tools, encouraging collaboration, and providing a safe and secure environment for the information their clients can trust.



Our technology enables that clinical innovation.”

09

Steering a very large ship into the technological future

— Steven Elliott Jr., United Service Workers Union

The International Union of Journeymen and Allied Trades Union (IUJAT) is a national labor organization that represents workers across the country.

Established on April 27, 1874, it is the second oldest labor union in America, with its heritage dating back to Samuel Gompers, the founder of America's union movement. Pre-dating the American Federation of Labor (today AFL-CIO) by 13 years, the IUJAT is the oldest union in the United States retaining its original charter, not only surviving, but thriving for nearly 150 years.

The international union serves industry professionals, from tech workers to delivery drivers, automotive technicians, electricians, HVAC workers, home health care professionals and so many more—and that explains its very impressive membership.

Steven Elliott Jr. is the union's Chief Information Officer (CIO) and he and his team provide technical support for the IUJAT, its four national affiliates—the United Service Workers Union, National Organization of Industrial Trade Unions, the United Public Service Employees Union and the Home Healthcare Workers of America—along with more than 40 affiliates. As a team, they service over 100,000 members. *"It's an awful lot of important data," Elliott says.*

As the needs of their workforce evolved, the union began transitioning from primarily on-premises technology to the cloud. Like steering a large ship, modernizing a sizable organization takes time—but Elliott and his team have been steadily implementing changes to help the union operate more efficiently and stay connected in today's digital workplace...



Keeping over 100,0000 members connected

Because the union handles everything from member communications, to billing, to retirement, to health insurance—all the bureaucratic elements that often require some support—Elliott and his team need ways to remain reliably connected to their many members.



One of the most important things is making sure the membership can reliably reach out to us, making sure that when they call or when they contact us, they get a live person on the phone and get their issue resolved. Being available for them 24/7 is the biggest challenge because they're working all day, they're out doing their jobs, but when they need help, they need to get to us right away."

Because the membership is so sizable and diverse, Elliott decided on a centralized platform to direct everyone to a single source of information when they needed help. *"We have developed our own application, which we encourage members to download and use as the best and easiest way to be connected to their union,"* he says. *"Just having a reliable way for them to contact us is huge."*

Getting anywhere from hundreds to thousands of calls per day means using systems that help direct client needs automatically. *"Before we moved to Dialpad it was hard to make it all work seamlessly, while everyone needed to work remotely,"* says Elliott. *"Now, between Dialpad and our own app, it's so much easier to keep an eye on communications and help the membership and local union teams be most effective."*

From legacy systems to a cloud-ready future

When Elliott took over as CIO of IUJAT, he initiated a long-term, much-needed project to modernize the union's legacy systems. *"Previously an AS/400-based mainframe system was running everything and we had to basically rebuild our approach from the ground up,"* he says. *"Moving forward from that point took years of strategy and planning, but we built a state-of-the-art system to increase productivity and facilitate ample growth and expansion."*

That foundational work set the stage for significant technological advancements. *"Now we had a base system with solid data, best practices in place, and everything built by a team with a shared vision,"* Elliott explains. *"It allowed us to expand into mobile and web apps more quickly."*

Shifting from mainframe-based systems to a mobile-friendly, digitally enabled environment proved to be a turning point. Business meetings and negotiations that once required face-to-face interaction now happen with ease online, enabling the union to operate more efficiently and adapt to changing needs. This transition became the springboard for a full upgrade to a cloud-based system.

"We always had our essential data and programming hosted on internal servers," says Elliott. *"Now, more and more, we're moving into the cloud to ensure we're prepared for any situation—whether it's a major regional power outage, severe weather event, or another unexpected disruption."*



The world has changed in how business is conducted. By decentralizing and modernizing our technology, we can keep serving over 100,000 members—anywhere, under any circumstances."

Upgrading security for the modern age

Since making the move to decentralized tech, security has been on Elliott's mind. Workers on laptops signing in from anywhere can pose an issue, especially when it comes to handling sensitive personal information, such as health benefits or documents that could relate to an individual workplace dispute.

"One thing I enforced was that security protocols, such as dual-factor authentication or stronger measures, were set up on team members' devices," says Elliott. Hardware availability challenges also meant that some employees were logging on with personal devices—another hurdle to overcome. "People using their own equipment had to install device management security protocols so we could secure and lock down information, ensuring organizational data stayed protected."

The system modernization also meant email security procedures were tightened, specifically around certain criteria, like Private Health Information (PHI). *"Any email that has potential PHI in it gets automatically encrypted. Of course, new remote work policies also must be administered to protect privileged data. Beyond that, we are also completing a SOC 2 for our applications,"* he says.

A lot of these changes and upgrades came down to getting everyone on the same page with training and education. *"First rate training is, I think, the most important thing,"* says Elliott. *"We do mandatory training sessions and phishing testing, and it's been getting better with each iteration."*

Working with so many employees across the nation, and working to keep over 100,000 union members and, by extension, their families happy and effectively working within your member service protocols, requires a vision to follow organizational leadership's path. Elliott and his team have made major changes to legacy technology systems and that's how they're able to provide more, and better, services to members, as well as the more than 40 union locals and employers working with the IUJAT.

"Everything comes down to preparedness and organization, giving your employees and members the resources that they require to create the most productive work environment possible."



Everything comes down to preparedness and organization, giving your employees and members the resources that they require to create the most productive work environment possible.”

10

Building systems for a rapidly scaling business

— Liz Tluchowski, World Insurance

Liz Tluchowski has been a CIO for over 35 years, specializing in insurance. She's currently the CIO and CSO of World Insurance Associates, and has seen the company through rapid expansion in the last four years.

The company, which deals in both the wholesale and retail sides of insurance, is always integrating new acquisitions and keeping her on her toes. In fact, she began her role at a time when the startup was acquiring several agencies a month. *"I had said I do not want to be bored. So be careful what you wish for,"* she jokes.

Having created a solid tech foundation for a growing business, here are three areas she's taken under the purview that have helped make World Insurance the thriving company it is today.



Rapid—but sustainable—scaling

Tluchowski started at World Insurance as employee 51 but the company has since expanded to 1,700 people and counting—not to mention the companies and technologies they’ve acquired in that time that needed to be integrated. A big part of how it all came together so seamlessly was because she worked to build the right systems from the ground up.



One of the things I’m most proud of is just building the IT department and infrastructure to support the aggressive growth of the company. It’s important to remember that one size doesn’t always fit all— sometimes you have to be able to zig or zag to do what’s best for the organization.”

Taking an individualized approach to acquisitions has enabled Tluchowski and her team to stay on top of an ambitious integration tempo that has served the organization well. *“Our cadence is a 90-day integration model where we take all the technology that we’ve acquired from the acquisition and we integrate it into World’s technology,”* she says.

“The business decision there was to have a central point of information, data, client information, one network, one security program.” Compliance also plays a role in their speedy work, as many of the companies they acquire don’t have cyber programs, so integration is a race against the clock.

That environment of quick work and decision making also means that Tluchowski isn’t afraid to cut the fat when necessary. *“I ask myself, will this make sense for the entire organization? If it does, we will enlist it. If it does not, we will eliminate it.”*

Security that’s everyone’s responsibility

With years of experience behind her, Tluchowski knew better than to wait until the company had scaled to put a solid security plan in place. *“One thing that is on my mind 24/7 is that everyone’s a target. It doesn’t matter what size the company is,”* she says.

Her security ethos is that because security affects everyone, the job of maintaining security belongs to everyone. *“Without a doubt that’s everyone’s job. It’s not just an IT function,”* she says. *“This is one of the things that I try so desperately to train people on— everybody has a responsibility in the game.”*

Education has therefore become an integral part of her method, and as both CISO and CIO, she takes that component seriously, and provides failsafe measures to mitigate error.



From a security perspective, I really try to help teams understand that it’s a function for everyone within the organization.”

Part of integrating many new companies and team members into the World Insurance family means making sure everyone gets up to speed on how things are done—and especially how they can contribute to cyber security. *“Not everyone’s taken a security course before. Some folks had access to Gmail and they could go on Facebook, so that was a huge change for them when we brought them on.”*

The potential of Ai in insurance

Since establishing a well-oiled machine, Tluchowski has had time to think to the future about the kinds of technologies that will help her insurance business continue to grow and thrive. Taking into account the duties of a CIO and CISO, she sees multiple potential uses for Ai-enabled software.



From a transactional perspective, but also on the security side, how can we identify situations before they happen? Ai definitely will take us to another level.”

Working in insurance, there are a fair amount of repetitive tasks required for every business transaction, and Tluchowski sees Ai as a way to automate those processes so salespeople can better focus their time and attention. *“You look at some of the things people identify in their workflow and you say to yourself, ‘Wow, this has taken up too much time. We really need to focus more on getting the client in and servicing them better.’”*

Where some fear Ai will make human jobs redundant, Tluchowski is more focused on the potential it has to make people more effective and productive in their work. *“We know no one ever wants to eliminate people, but the elimination may be in some of the backend processes to allow the front end folks to sell more business, bring in more clients, surface the clients that we have better because they’re not bogged down with minutia. I think that’s exciting to just think about what that would look like.”*

That kind of vision—one that’s human-centered, but rooted in business growth—is what makes Tluchowski stand out in her field. *“I’ve been doing this for over 35 years and just to see how this has all evolved, it has just been incredible,” she says. “It’s all about the ease of doing business. That’s where you want to drive your business, to make life easier for people.”*

She uses technology and systems to make things easier for her colleagues, and their clients, because she knows the importance of the role of technology. *“IT goes beyond just getting systems up and running and fully functional. Here, every vision, every goal that everybody has, will always be supported by technology.”*

11

Creating a digital strategy aligned with an institutional vision

— Sandeep Sidhu, Emily Carr University

Aligning the Information Technology Services (IT) department with the rest of an institution requires creating a digital strategy that supports an organization's strategic goals. That's exactly what Sandeep Sidhu aims to do as Chief Information Officer (CIO) of Emily Carr University in Vancouver, Canada.

By focusing her time not just on the technology but on building important relationships, she's able to ensure that the technology plan for the school directly impacts and supports the business strategy of the institution.

"I take pride in fostering close connections with the executive leadership team and partnering with them to solve business problems, which involves business process transformation and not just technology enhancement," she says. "And I think that's the right focus to have."

Here's what Sidhu is keeping in mind—and who she's collaborating with—while building out the university's long-term digital strategy.



A range of stakeholders

In order to make a digital plan that's viable and meets the expectations of all stakeholders, Sidhu knows that as CIO she must understand the varied audiences she's serving. *"Starting with students, instructors, and staff—these are the three lenses,"* she says.

Being able to categorize the audiences creates a clear pathway to understanding their needs. Then comes the listening portion.



We meet with lots of these groups to understand their needs and how our work contributes to their success. We also continually evaluate the work we've done to understand what's working, what's not working."

Being a university campus, students are a top priority, and this audience is complex, with varied expectations. *"I've been collaborating with Student Services and Academic Affairs to implement initiatives for removing barriers in student success across student lifecycle from prospective to alum,"* says Sidhu.

These collaborations result in improved and unified student experience at the university level rather than within one department.

The power of data

Following on the theme of an overarching view of digital strategy is Sidhu's perspective on the power of data—specifically, the ethical use of data in higher education. "We have the responsibility to ensure appropriate controls are in place for managing privacy and security in today's very complex digital ecosystem," she says.

"Data is the life blood of our enterprise systems and can be powerful with appropriate access and analytics to help students, instructors and staff make informed decisions," says Sidhu.



Collecting data is easy—helping students understand its privacy and security implications is where the real work begins."

"It's my belief that this learning will help them better learn about the choices they can make in the ethical use of data," adds Sidhu. The role of a CIO has evolved over the years and requires a level of care and attention in developing more progressive digital policy—not only in terms of the technology chosen and the strategy that upholds it, but in the ethical implications of how it's used.

In her role, Sidhu is also in charge of the Institutional Research and planning portfolio, which puts the IT Services team in a very good position to look at data and technology together. *"Our team is developing a campus dashboard for various audiences that assists with informed decision making."*

This is another area of big-picture overlap that ensures Sidhu can create a strategy that relies on all the possible data to best serve the institutional goals.

Creating a dedicated council for digital transformation

Over the last two decades, technology has moved from a utility to a strategic asset that helps move an institution successfully through business process transformation. That’s why Sidhu established a Digital Transformation Council (DTC) at Emily Carr University, which includes student representation, Faculty Deans, Financial Services, Student Services, the IT leadership team, and the privacy team.

This council is tasked to understand the changing digital landscape, university goals, and community expectations, and recommend a prioritized list of initiatives to the President’s Executive Committee. These initiatives include a wide range of projects from business process transformation to risk mitigation and operational excellence.

“Having worked in various sectors, including at a large research university in my previous role, those experiences have been very valuable, and are a big reason why I spent my first year at Emily Carr U learning, listening, and understanding the university culture, stakeholder needs and expectations. Context is everything,” she says.

By creating a space that actively involves stakeholders from both inside and outside the IT team, Sidhu is exemplifying how a CIO can build a holistic digital plan to help a university grow, collaboratively and sustainably, over the long term.



We strongly believe that governance is not just about control— it’s more about value optimization. IT Services has an Enterprise Project Management Office to lead these initiatives. Each initiative is evaluated using three lenses: strategic alignment, feasibility, and risk.”

Today, the council that Sidhu spearheaded is a popular community that comes together every month.

Not only is this an excellent way to ensure that her digital plan aligns with the institution’s wider strategy, it’s also a way to tangibly show how a digital strategy goes beyond a single department—it’s a collaborative project that involves multiple university teams working together productively.

12

Reimagining the technological ecosystem

— Sabina Sitaru, Aquiline Drones

In still-emerging technology fields, there's often a high level of exciting experimentation and discovery. For Sabina Sitaru, CIO of Aquiline Drones, it's been a fast-paced adventure. The startup, founded by a 747 pilot, is not just a sales or manufacturing company—but an entire drone ecosystem. From selling the machinery and software, to training pilots and helping them start their own businesses, it's a full-service company.

Sitaru and her team are supporting the technology that enables a lot more than just joyriding. Their pilots fly drones that inspect the safety of bridges and mines, water crops at scale, and much more. To them, the future is constantly being reimagined—from significantly faster organ transportation to patients in need, to a newfound ability to deliver supplies to remote locations.

In order to get there, Sitaru keeps a few things top of mind when it comes to developing this future-forward technology.



Ai and the cloud

On top of drone technology, Aquiline also developed an entire cloud architecture that processes the data from its machines. This is where pilots can log on to see their flight patterns, or check on the weather. *“We built that whole infrastructure,”* says Sitaru.

It also applies Ai in a wide variety of ways, which extends the scope of the technology to very specific use cases. For example, if one of its drone pilots specializes in monitoring an orchard’s fruit trees, Aquiline’s Ai runs algorithms around fruit counting.



If there are images that have a particular fruit on them, Ai will do a count that allows a farmer to assess their crop yield ... If there are certain pieces of fruit on the ground, it can help them figure out what they have lost. We’ve trained our Ai to do that.”

The technology is applicable in many areas, both commercial and not. *“There will be a smart firefighting Ai as well,”* says Sitaru. *“Based on sensors, the drone is able to sense where the hotspots are and where the efforts should be concentrated.”*

Scaling with smart solutions and advanced manufacturing

In a rapidly evolving drone industry, Sitaru’s role has shifted from market entry to market leadership—helping Aquiline build standout offerings that scale. Today’s drones aren’t just cloud-connected—they’re part of a smart ecosystem powered by Ai, edge computing, and real-time control. This connectivity gives pilots more precision and access, enabling safe, efficient, and innovative applications—from infrastructure inspection to autonomous asset monitoring.

Wireless connection to the drone, paired with their proprietary cloud architecture, means more control for their pilots—and more access to some of the types of remote work their drone makes possible.

The ultimate goal, however, is to become the first-in- market LTE-connected drone, which Aquiline Drones’ currently in a race to accomplish while competing against a major telecom company. *“We’re pretty proud that our company, which is a very small company, is working on the same tech as a larger competitor,”* she says.

That kind of tech goal is the kind of milestone that will elevate every aspect of Aquiline Drones’ offering—which Sitaru looks forward to.



By combining Ai, cloud infrastructure, and real-time control, we’re transforming drones into intelligent, scalable tools—built in America and designed for real-world impact.”

Data that connects the dots

Before joining Aquiline Drones, Sitaru was CIO for the City of Hartford, which gives her a unique perspective on how data can connect together to make a product—and even an entire city—work smarter. “I was tasked with moving Hartford towards becoming a smart city,” she says. *“That’s why here at Aquiline Drones, one of my roles is to inform our management team about smart cities and the procurement process.”*

So what’s a smart city? It’s a city that uses technology and data to *“help connect the dots,”* as Sitaru explains it. *“You may have cameras all around in the city, but how do all of those things talk to each other and help you make informed decisions from a city perspective?”*

With access to more data than ever before, one of the biggest challenges today is how we interpret and sort through all this data. If all you’re doing is collecting data but not linking different data points to each other, you’ll never get the full picture. *“If you don’t have those sensors connected, then data is all over the place,”* adds Sitaru. *“It’s about using information to, well, inform. It’s not just about getting data—how are we using it?”*

That kind of mindset—of applying the data and the technology to solve problems—is what Sitaru loves about her work as a CIO. *“To hear all of these different applications, especially the ones where drones are helping to improve safety, doing jobs that would be otherwise dangerous or impossible for humans to do,”* says Sitaru, *“that’s exciting—and probably one of the most interesting parts of the job!”*



It’s not just about getting data, how are we using it?”

Epilogue

There's a lot we can learn from these CIOs when it comes to creating efficient, secure, and future-proof workplaces. From looking inward and building diverse teams, to looking forward and choosing the right tools that will scale with their teams, they've shown us different ways to approach and direct an organization's entire technological timeline.

As we've seen, institutional adaptability plays a huge role in enabling these leaders to choose the best solutions for their enterprise—and even in more traditional fields like medicine or academia, the right tools can serve as agile entryways.

For example, choosing robust, versatile platforms can reduce the time and resources needed to manage and administer unnecessarily large tech stacks. Combine that with implementing thoughtful and streamlined processes, and this approach can give CIOs and their departments the time to focus on true difference-makers: strategy, system organization, and future-planning.

