

CIO UK&I

10TH FEBRUARY 2026 | LONDON | LANGHAM HOTEL

POST EVENT REPORT



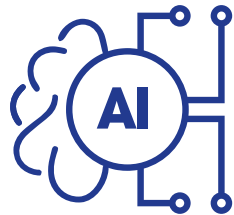
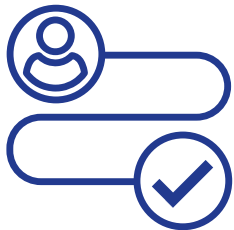
EVENT SUMMARY



The industry-led event brought together a diverse group of IT professionals from various industries including government, retail, manufacturing, construction, entertainment, healthcare, and transportation across the UK&I.

Designed to provide a unique forum for senior IT leaders to engage in peer-to-peer learning and networking, share best practices, and gain valuable insights to drive innovation and growth within their organisations. Featuring keynote speakers, panel discussions, and networking opportunities, the event enabled attendees to gain valuable connections and stay informed about the latest industry developments. With a packed agenda covering the pressing topics within the UK ranging from Building The Customer Engagement Business, Data Security: The Missing Context, The Architecture of Trust: Managing Complexity in the Age of AI, and Navigating ROI and Digital Transformation.

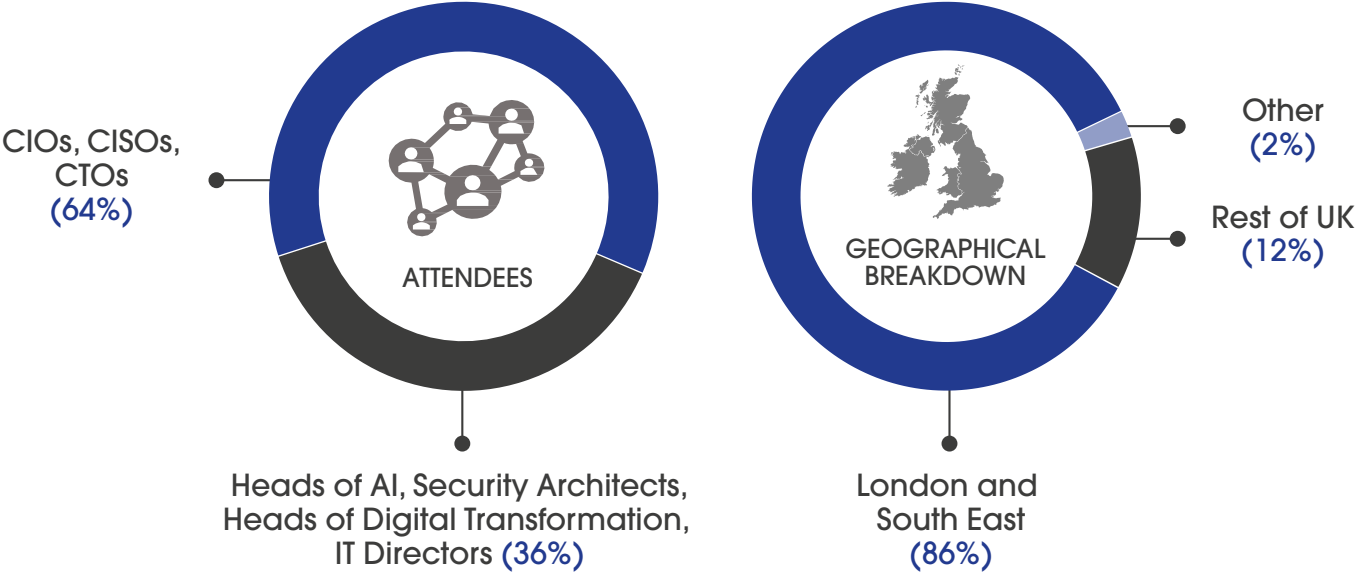
As part of this year's event, we hosted three Citrus Circuits, each running concurrently for one hour in the Grand Ballroom prior to the networking lunch. These sessions helped facilitate peer-to-peer discussions and networking among senior IT leaders from a range of industries. Details to be found further in the post event report.



ATTENDANCE



CIO UK&I attracted a diverse and engaged group of IT professionals from various industries and sectors across predominantly London and the South East. In total, the event hosted over 130 attendees, including CIOs, CTOs, IT Directors, Heads of Digital Transformation, Heads of AI, Security Architects, and Software Developers. The majority of attendees represented key verticals from manufacturing, education, retail, and financial services, with additional representation from other sectors including government, healthcare, travel and transportation & construction.



2026 SPEAKERS 1/2



 Concentric AI - Lane Sullivan - Chief Information Security and Strategy Officer

 Knatchbull - Sherry Fazal - Director Of Technology & Innovation

 Medik8 - Manou Campbell - Head of Data & Information Systems

 SSP Grp - Asheeka Hyde - Technology Director: Data, Analytics & AI

 Liferay - Michael MacAuley - Commercial Director

 Salesforce - Matthew O'Neill - Field CTO

 Nedbank - Natasha Davydova - Non-Executive Director

 Lloyds Banking Group - Clare Schramm Fergus - MD, Banking Technology Platforms

 Dual Group - Louise Leavey - Transformation Director

 TC Group - Ian Golding - Chief Digital Information & AI Officer

 British Film Institute (BFI) - Jia Fu - CISO

 Outsystems - Ben Bisley - Regional Sales Director

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2026 SPEAKERS 2/2



-  outsystems - Paul de Abreu - Head of Solution Architecture
-  Anderson Quigley - Grace Tattersall - Partner
-  Airia - Tom Hallett - Solutions Engineer
-  LSE - Divya Menon - Director of Technology Operations
-  UCL - Ben Hine - CIO
-  University of Bristol - Emma Smith - CDIO
-  University of London - Richard Michel - CIO
-  University of Northampton - Alexandra Vujcich - Director of IT
-  NatWest Rooster Money - Kevin Murphy - COO
-  Nissan - Richard van der Meer - Region Vice President and CIO
-  Diageo - Shane O'Rourke - Head of Data, Analytics & Insights
-  The Compleat Food Group - Ines Ashton - Digital and AI Strategy Director (CIO)
-  Weir Group - Walid Hadid - Group Head of Digital & Automation



FEEDBACK & TESTIMONIALS 1/2



“Delighted to be part of an excellent conference. Thank you for the opportunity to share NatWest Rooster Money story. Fantastic event. Cross industry insight, terrific networking and superbly organised. Well done.”

COO - NatWest Rooster

“Thank you Citrus Events for hosting such a high quality IT event!”

CISO - British Film Institute

“What an inspiring day at the CIO event. I left feeling energised, challenged, and incredibly grateful to have shared the panel with such talented and insightful leaders. The conversations were thoughtful, forward-looking, and genuinely reflective of where our industry is heading.”

Director of Tech & Innovation - Knatchbull

“Thanks to Citrus Events for another fantastic event. Was great to be a part of it and take plenty of learnings away!”

Head of Data and Information Systems - Medik8

“Citrus Events, thank you. It was an honour to be part of the fantastic panel and a great event!”

CIO - Centrica



FEEDBACK & TESTIMONIALS 2/2



“Honored to have been included in this discussion and grateful to Citrus Events for the opportunity and for hosting such a well-run event. The dialogue was thoughtful, candid, and forward-looking. A sincere thank you to everyone who attended and openly shared the challenges facing their organizations today, and the pressures shaping technology teams tomorrow.”

SVP Chief Information Security & Strategy Officer - Concentric AI

“Really enjoyed being part of the Education Panel at the CIO UK&I event. Thank you fellow panelists for the engaging discussions.”

Technology & Digital Strategy Leader - LSE

“It was my pleasure to speak at the CIO UK & I event for a second year. Getting to spend some time with peers from across the education sector and sharing insight with other industries is always an interesting and enlightening experience.”

CIO - UCL

“Great to see such a strong focus on data, AI and security in manufacturing, critical foundations for sustainable competitiveness and operational resilience. Industry 4.0 is as much about capability, culture and trust in data-driven decisions as it is about technology. Thanks to Citrus Events for hosting an excellent event.”

Group Head of Digital & Automation - Weir Group

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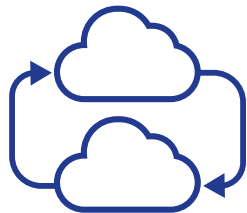
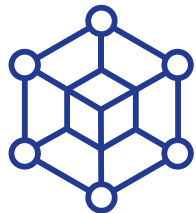
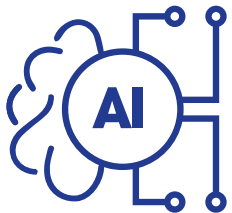
EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



CIO UK&I covered a variety of topics that were discussed by industry-leading IT thought leaders across multiple sectors. Keynote presentations and industry led panels featured thought-provoking discussions such as:

- A Seat at the Table: The Growing Role of IT within Financial Services
- Enrolling in the Future: Developing AI & Cloud Solutions Whilst Overcoming Legacy Infrastructure
- Blueprints for the Fourth Industrial Revolution: Building Cost-Effective Innovation
- Faster, Smarter, Cheaper: Navigating ROI and Digital Transformation

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CITRUS CIRCUIT 1 1/4



Where's the ROI? Real returns or just hype?

Return from AI exists, though it rarely shows up as instant financial gain. Several leaders shared that AI is already used across customer journeys. Service quality and satisfaction scores have gone up where AI support is well placed. That gives a signal of value, even where direct financial return still trails investment. A repeated theme was simple. Spend is easy to see. Return takes longer to measure.

Many organisations expected near-term payback. What they see instead is operational optimisation. Faster handling. Better responses. Less friction. That still counts, though it requires patience and better measurement.

Saved effort came up often. AI reduces manual work and shortens task effort. Yet saved hours alone do not equal value. If teams keep the same workload and just move faster, no real gain lands. Leaders must decide how freed capacity gets used. More output, better quality, or new value work must follow.

Public sector voices added another angle. Return may show up as service improvement rather than financial gain. That makes the case harder to prove, though no less real.

Small and focused wins gained strong support in the room. Short use cases with tight scope give faster proof. They also reduce risk and build internal trust. Large scale rollouts without clear use case discipline often disappoint.

Another clear message: not every use case needs AI. Some problems still suit standard automation or process redesign. Choosing AI when it is not required reduces return and raises risk.



CITRUS CIRCUIT 1 2/4



Value expectation also shifts over adoption. Early optimism often gives way to more measured benefit. AI drives steady, small improvements across many areas. Think micro-transformation rather than one large leap. Risk sits on the value side as well. Legal exposure, compliance gaps, and misuse can create a negative impact. That risk must be counted when judging return.

Modernise or bust - can legacy support AI ambitions?

Strong agreement formed around one point. Legacy does not block AI by default.

Older platforms can still support AI when optimised well. Agent-style AI aims to mimic how people work inside systems. That allows support on top of existing tools without full replacement.

Software sensors and connectors also play a role. They allow AI services to observe and interact with legacy solutions. That extends useful life and delays forced replacement.

Full rebuild is not always the right first move. Optimisation and selective upgrade often give better value than wholesale change.

Data came up again and again. Data quality matters more than system age. Poor structure and weak data discipline limit AI performance, even on new platforms. Strong data design and a defined AI data strategy sit near the top of the priority list.

Mixed estates already operate in practice. Universities were cited as a good example where legacy and AI tools work side by side. Progress does not require perfect uniform platforms.



CITRUS CIRCUIT 1 3/4



Cost to move remains a central decision point. Migration spend must be judged against expected value. Technical neatness alone is not enough reason to move. That said, leaders accepted that system sunset will still arrive for some platforms. Planning that path early reduces future risk and shock.

A balanced approach gained support. Start small. Optimise first. Extend capability. Replace where value justifies the move. Not every legacy use case needs AI layered onto it either. Some should stay simple.

Leading the shift - how should CIOs make AI work on their roadmap?

AI belongs at business strategy level, not only inside technology plans.

CIOs must link AI work directly to value goals. Each initiative needs a clear reason tied to return, service gain, or risk control. Activity without purpose wastes funding and leadership attention.

Cross-organisation effort is essential. AI touches legal, compliance, operations, HR, and product. Delivery cannot sit inside IT alone. Collaboration across functions improves adoption and control.

The group pushed back on trend chasing. Many warned against hunting the latest tool as a cure-all. "Magic pill" thinking leads to scattered pilots and thin value. Better results come from naming the key business problems first, then selecting tools that help solve them.

Questions around a Chief AI Officer role produced mixed views. A dedicated role can give focus and direction. It can also create a silo if poorly placed. Structure should support shared ownership and integration across teams.



CITRUS CIRCUIT 1 4/4



Risk appetite needs open board discussion. Some organisations move with caution. Others push faster. Neither stance works without clarity and governance.

Workforce readiness stood out as a practical constraint. AI adoption needs training and support. Skill sets must grow across data handling, AI use, and oversight. Human intelligence remains central to good AI outcomes.

Retraining fatigue was mentioned as a real barrier. Too many parallel change efforts reduce uptake. Roadmaps must account for people capacity, not just tech rollout.

Delivery cadence matters as well. Short rollout cycles help teams learn and adjust. Long delivery paths reduce feedback and delay value.

Roadmaps should stay flexible. Review points, learning loops, and value checks keep direction aligned with results.

The strongest message from the roundtable was simple and consistent. Focus on value. Start small. Use data well. Support people. Optimise before replacing. Tie AI work to real problems and real outcomes.

That approach gives AI a fair test and a fair return.



CITRUS CIRCUIT 2 1/3



Culture or Comp Package: What Drives Long-Term Commitment?

Retention is driven by a blend of motivation, culture, trust, and leadership - not just pay. While compensation matters, employees stay where they feel engaged, valued, and supported.

- **Motivation & Purpose:** People stay when they enjoy their work and feel connected to it. Private sector environments often drive higher motivation due to pace and incentives.
- **Culture & Trust:** A strong, inclusive culture and mutual trust between employer and employee are essential.
- **Leadership Impact:** Good leaders significantly influence retention - employees will often stay despite lower pay if leadership is supportive and inspiring.
- **Growth & Development:** Access to modern technology, continuous training (especially in AI), and clear development opportunities are key.
- **Career Visibility:** Employees want transparency around progression and succession planning.
- **Engagement:** Involving staff in initiatives (e.g. RFPs, innovation, agile practices) increases buy-in and energy.
- **Workforce Dynamics:** Younger employees tend to move more frequently (18-24 months), requiring early engagement; longer-tenured staff need re-energising.



CITRUS CIRCUIT 2 2/3



Keeping the Energy Flowing: Retention & Motivation in 2026

A mix of financial reward, recognition, development, and balance is proving most effective

- **Compensation Still Matters:** Pay remains a primary motivator, alongside fair and transparent structures.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Increasingly critical, especially for younger employees prioritising life outside work.
- **Learning & Development:** Ongoing technical and professional training is expected, not optional.
- **Recognition & Reward:** Regular, visible recognition (formal or informal) boosts morale - creative, non-taxable rewards can be especially effective.
- **Career Progression:** High performers leave quickly if they see no clear path forward.
- **Manager Engagement:** Regular 1-2-1s, appraisals, and proactive communication prevent disengagement.
- **Market Competition:** Employees will move for growth and exposure, even without increased pay.
- **Fairness & Inclusion:** Pay equity (including gender pay gaps) and fair treatment are critical to morale.
- **Mentorship:** Well-structured mentor/mentee programmes support development and retention.



CITRUS CIRCUIT 2 3/3



Future Talent & Leadership: Building Resilient IT Teams

Future-ready organisations require emotionally intelligent, adaptable, and technically aware leaders.

- Emotional Intelligence: Leaders must understand, motivate, and support individuals effectively.
- Flexibility & Empathy: Balancing business needs with employee wellbeing is essential, especially in high-pressure situations.
- Accessibility & Communication: Leaders should be approachable and present - not overly removed.
- Continuous Leadership Development: Leaders must keep evolving alongside technology and ways of working.
- Adaptive Leadership Styles: A balance of transformational and transactional leadership is key.
- No-Blame Culture: Strong leaders handle failure constructively and make confident decisions.
- Technical Awareness: Leaders don't need all the answers but must stay informed and open to learning.
- Collaboration & Inclusion: Consensus-building and team involvement strengthen outcomes.
- Innovation Focus: Encouraging experimentation (e.g. AI prototypes) keeps teams engaged.
- Commercial Acumen: Leaders must understand both technology and business context.



CITRUS CIRCUIT 3 1/2



Where's the Bottleneck?

The discussion highlighted that innovation challenges are less about the age of technology and more about what sits behind it. Fragmented legacy systems, poor integration, and inconsistent data continue to create the biggest barriers.

Rigid, tightly coupled architectures make even minor changes complex, slow, and high-risk, while limited internal skills and continued reliance on outdated processes further restrict progress. Collectively, these factors reduce an organisation's ability to adapt and innovate at pace.

How do CIOs clearly demonstrate the ROI of addressing technical debt?

There was strong agreement that clearing technical debt must be positioned in terms of business value, not IT cost.

Leaders are increasingly linking investment to tangible outcomes such as faster delivery, improved customer experience, reduced operational risk, and lower long-term costs. The narrative is shifting from 'fixing IT' to 'unlocking value' - including productivity gains, scalability, and avoidance of future failure or compliance issues.

Breaking down large programmes into smaller, outcome-led initiatives was seen as critical to demonstrating early value, building confidence, and securing ongoing investment.



CITRUS CIRCUIT 3 2/2



What Strategies keep IT estates flexible, resilient, and ready for whats next?

Future-proofing requires a move towards more modular, flexible architectures, including APIs, microservices, and cloud-native approaches. These enable incremental change and reduce the need for large-scale transformation programmes. However, technology alone is not enough.

Sustained agility depends on a strong data strategy, continuous investment in skills, and governance frameworks that balance innovation with control. Organisations that successfully combine these elements are better positioned to respond to change, scale effectively, and remain resilient in an increasingly dynamic environment.



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We look forward to seeing you back at The Langham Hotel in February 2027!

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