

# Top Skills for IT's Future: Cloud, Analytics, Mobility and Security

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With cloud and analytics looming large as the major technologies to embrace and exploit, it's critical for IT professionals to identify and act on top technical and effectiveness skills gaps now — or risk impeding your organization's strategic goals. This research will help close those gaps.

## Key Findings

- IT professionals are overwhelmingly engaged in digital transformation, but most believe their organization is unprepared for what those changes will bring about.
- Cloud stands tall as the single technology that will most influence IT professionals' jobs and careers in the next year.
- The biggest talent gaps identified by IT professionals include both technical and effectiveness skills, with cloud, data and analytics and critical thinking/problem solving leading the way.
- Emerging technologies such as cloud, mobility, and data and analytics are very active in the plan, assess, design and select project phases, and are permeating nearly every aspect of the IT landscape.
- Technology investment priorities differ significantly by industry, and preparedness for emerging technologies is in question.

## Recommendations

- Learn aggressively about the mechanics and deployment considerations for cloud and data and analytics through formal training programs and/or self-study and experimentation. Internalize the implications of these technologies on your area of expertise and develop a plan to act.
- Diversify and expand your skill set to incorporate these new insights into everything you do. Demand whole-skills development to develop more breadth and depth, understanding it's a mix of specific technical skills and soft human skills.

- Immerse yourself in your company's digital strategy and future, don't just acknowledge from a distance. Dig in and understand the business drivers of this strategy, as well as the technical implications, and how those technical implications will impact you now or in the near term.
- Identify clearly which project phase your primary technical responsibility is in, and develop a work plan and training plan that reflects the current phase and anticipates what should come next. Expect change as technologies ebb and flow over time.

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## Analysis

Many organizations are planning and executing on a business strategy that embraces the promises of digital business. Whether it's enabling new business models and/or striving for superior process efficiency while containing costs, technology is the integral component to power this transformation. But are IT professionals — architects, tech pros, and their management — ready for the challenge brought about by these business strategies enabled by digital technologies?

We surveyed nearly 950 IT professionals from many technical disciplines, a variety of roles and from varied geographies to better understand their organization's digital business efforts as well as identify areas for skills improvement to support those efforts. What we uncovered was eye-opening, and our analysis of the survey results gives a fairly frank assessment on where IT professionals succeed and where they struggle to keep pace with many rapid changes. Fortunately, those who responded to the survey are on board with their firm's digital reinvention efforts. That's a good thing, as many of their business and IT leadership is marching to that beat. But some IT professionals also worry about whether the IT organization as a whole is ready for what lies ahead of them. They want to know what they can do to succeed and lead in a digital world.

Gartner's evaluation of the survey results lead us to conclude that:

- IT professionals must identify individual and organization skills gaps now, and those gaps will be both technical and nontechnical in nature.
- In concert with management, tech professionals should develop a concrete plan of attack to close those gaps quickly in order to accelerate their organization's shift to digital business.
- A balanced approach must be put in place to enable how these skills are acquired, including a combination of classroom training, self-study, partnering with experienced staff and/or consultants, and hands-on experimentation.

By identifying areas of demonstrated strength as well as those where there are skills deficits, IT professionals and their leadership can focus their improvement efforts and skills development with more accuracy and timeliness.

## The 2016 IT Professional Survey

We surveyed 949 IT professionals — all Gartner for Technical Professionals (GTP) clients — in 1Q16 to gauge their opinions, perceptions and beliefs about the following:

- Their roles in these digital transformation efforts, and how prepared they and their teams are for the digital road ahead.
- Where they saw gaps between top-down strategy directives and actual execution.

We also asked several questions to identify IT professionals' technology priorities, preparedness for those technologies and any skills deficits they perceive as being important to close in 2016. The questions we asked included:

- Which one technology area do you believe will most strongly influence your own job and/or your career during the next year?
- Where does your organization have talent gaps?
- What are new/discretionary technology investments by category in 2016, and how prepared is your organization for these investments?
- What project phase (plan/assess/design/select) are you in by technology area?

Demographics of the survey participants, including geography, industries, role and job functions, appear in Note 1.

## A Large Gap Exists Between Tech Professional Digital Business Engagement and Perceived Preparedness

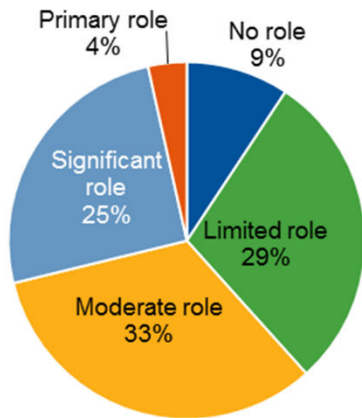
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There's no doubt that IT professionals see a role for themselves in digital transformation — engagement is high among tech professionals, but perceived preparedness is low. Ninety-one percent of respondents indicate they have a role for themselves in their organization's digital innovation over the next two years, with 29% saying it will be a significant role or their primary role. But that engagement is tempered with a dose of reality — only 41% indicate their organization is well-positioned for a digital business future (see Figure 1). The 59% who indicate their organization is either not ready or who aren't sure whether they're ready highlights a real concern that cannot be ignored — it points to a perceived lack of readiness for the changes ahead. And as we will see, that uneasiness about how well they're prepared is rooted in skills deficits in both technology and nontechnology areas.

Figure 1. Digital Business Engagement vs. Preparedness

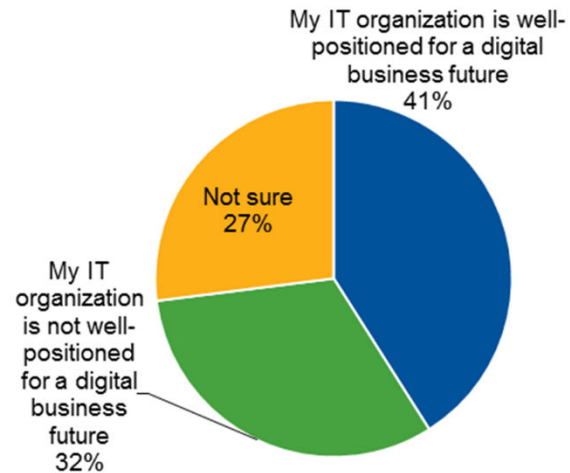
How would you describe your personal role in leading digital innovation and change for your organization over the next two years?

n = 913, Base: Those that responded that digital innovation is a focus



Is your IT organization well positioned for a digital business future?

n = 948



Source: Gartner (June 2016)

Why is there such a large gap between engagement and preparedness? The 91% engagement response indicates that IT professionals understand what is being asked of them and recognize they have a role to play. But their hesitancy regarding preparedness is reinforced in recent Gartner client inquiry calls and face-to-face meetings at Gartner and other conferences:

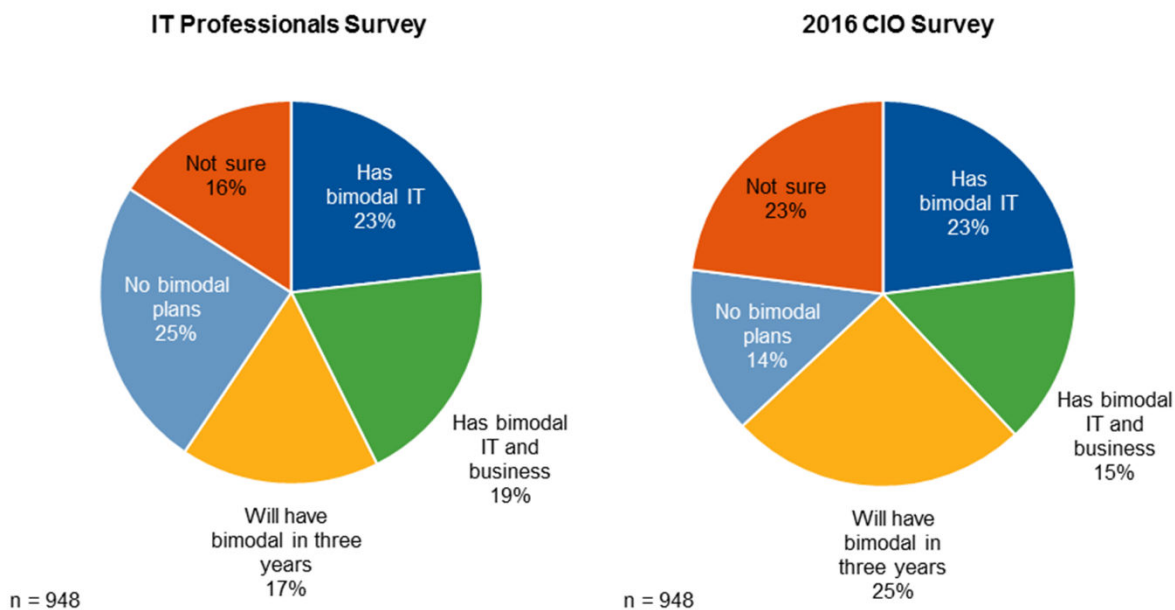
- Clients repeatedly indicate that so much of their technology world is in flux — be it investment priorities, infrastructure changes, skills development and business-IT interaction — that they are unsure *how* the organization will make it through any digital transformation. One client said, "We can see a light at the end of the tunnel, but have no idea how far we are from the end." His tone indicated that he really wasn't sure what they would have when they finally made it through.
- "Change" is a big theme in these conversations. For some, it's coming too fast. For others, it's not fast enough. They know they need to change, to think and act differently. But they struggle with these shifts while many must also keep the organization up and running, and find it hard to balance today's demands with tomorrow's must haves.
- What essential skills must be developed? Ideally, IT professionals want a prescriptive plan of what they should be improving. Yet, it's not always that clear-cut. They realize this is evolving, and those that can be the most versatile will be the ones who will benefit during this time of change.

Some firms have taken a "divide and conquer" approach. They are employing bimodal styles to accelerate key activities using agile Mode 2 techniques while other initiatives are following solid,

defendable and well-proven methodologies (Mode 1). See the Gartner special report for bimodal IT "Deliver on the Promise of Bimodal" for more information about a bimodal approach.

Forty-two percent of IT professionals indicate they are already operating bimodally today. It's encouraging that IT professionals and IT leadership see the split between Mode 1 and Mode 2 activities the same way and expect the progression over the next few years will follow a similar path (see Figure 2). It's also especially interesting that 15% of IT leaders and 19% of IT professionals see both business and IT operating bimodally. Both groups indicated a significant amount of their IT budget (between 25% and 28%) was now aligned to agile Mode 2 projects.

Figure 2. Bimodal Penetration — IT Professionals vs IT Leadership



Source: Gartner (June 2016)

The majority of respondents (58%) indicated that they are not yet bimodal or are not sure. We asked survey participants what barriers prevented them from pursuing/expanding bimodal adoption. Their responses point to some expected barriers (such as culture, resistance to change and organizational barriers) but also some we didn't anticipate (such as management leadership, skills and budget). With management leadership and budget largely out of the hands of IT professionals, that leaves skills development as the crucial area where tech professionals can begin to drive behavior and methodology change into the IT operating model.

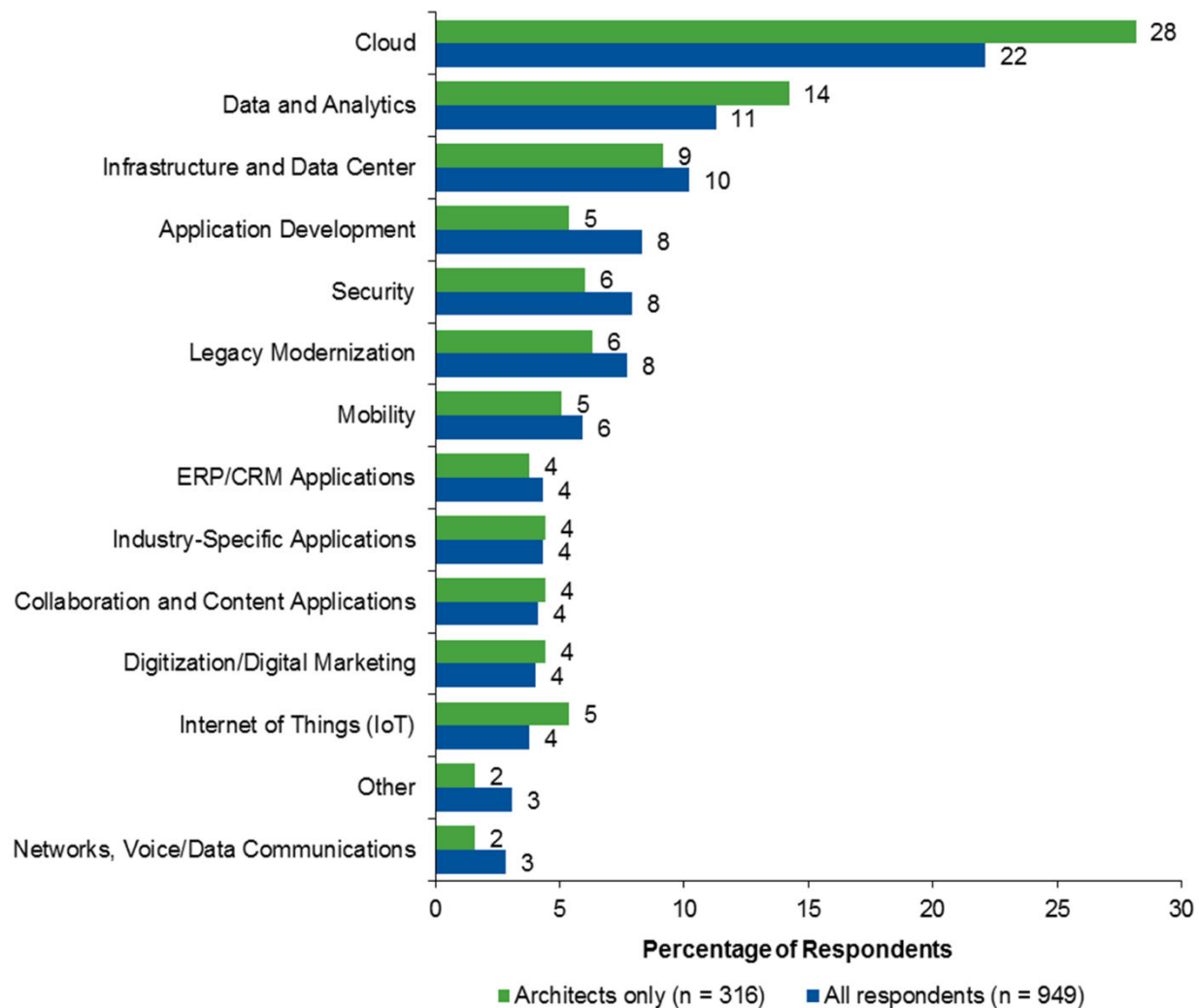
### Cloud Looms Large as the Big Technology to Know and Embrace

IT professionals identified "cloud" as the single biggest technology impact on their career in 2016, with 22% of all respondents selecting this option (see Figure 3). Cloud was identified at twice the rate of the next technology influencer — data and analytics — at 11%.

We were also able to analyze responses by different IT roles, and those that identified themselves as "architects" (33% of the total survey group) were even more likely to select cloud as the biggest technology impact, at 28%. Data and analytics was again second in priority, at 14%. Cloud, and data and analytics, along with Internet of Things (IoT), at 5%, were the only technologies selected more frequently by architects than IT professionals as a whole, indicating their importance as core components of the digital business programs at their organizations.

Geographically, all respondents regardless of job role selected cloud more frequently in EMEA (26%) and Asia/Pacific (30%) than those based in North America (18%). When analyzing the results by industry, cloud was the unanimous selection across all sectors.

Figure 3. What Single Technology Will Influence Your Role and Career in the Next Year?



Bars of the same value may vary in length due to rounding.

Source: Gartner (June 2016)

While cloud is pervasive, it's not a strategy unto itself. It's important to understand that it's not cloud for cloud sake, but how cloud impacts all other areas of IT and business operations. We hear this daily in our client interactions. For example:

- Cloud's impact on data and analytics
- Cloud and how security is architected and implemented
- Cloud's overwhelming presence in IoT deployments
- What cloud means for infrastructure and operations teams
- Cloud as an execution platform for any service
- Packaged SaaS products to address specific business needs

Acquiring cloud skills quickly is essential for IT professionals to reimagine and remake their firm's IT infrastructure to better enable digital business strategies. However, it's not only cloud; it's a collection of technologies and effectiveness skills that tech professionals identify need work now.

### The Top Talent Gaps Are a Mix of Technology and Professional Effectiveness Skills

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Survey participants were asked to indicate up to three talent gaps (as in, lack of skills) related to information, technology or digital business that their organizations were trying to fill. Again, cloud and data and analytics lead the list (see Figure 4). There is a tremendous opportunity for individuals to improve their knowledge and expertise in one or both of these areas to position themselves for future success within the IT group and the business as a whole.

IT professionals also point to general technical skills (indicating broad technology acumen), security, legacy modernization, mobility and IoT as gap areas. Yet, it's not just about technology. Note that three of the top 10 responses to the skills gap assessment were professional effectiveness skills (critical thinking/problem solving, business acumen/knowledge, and communication skills). Gartner has always advocated that tech professionals need to round out their technical skills with a healthy dose of practical experience that improves overall performance through better understanding of business scenario(s), to critically think through problem resolution, and be able to articulate their points of view in the language of their audience. See "2016 Planning Guide for Professional Effectiveness" for more information on this important topic.



Figure 4. Top Skills Gaps Identified by IT Professionals



Bars of the same value may vary in length due to rounding.

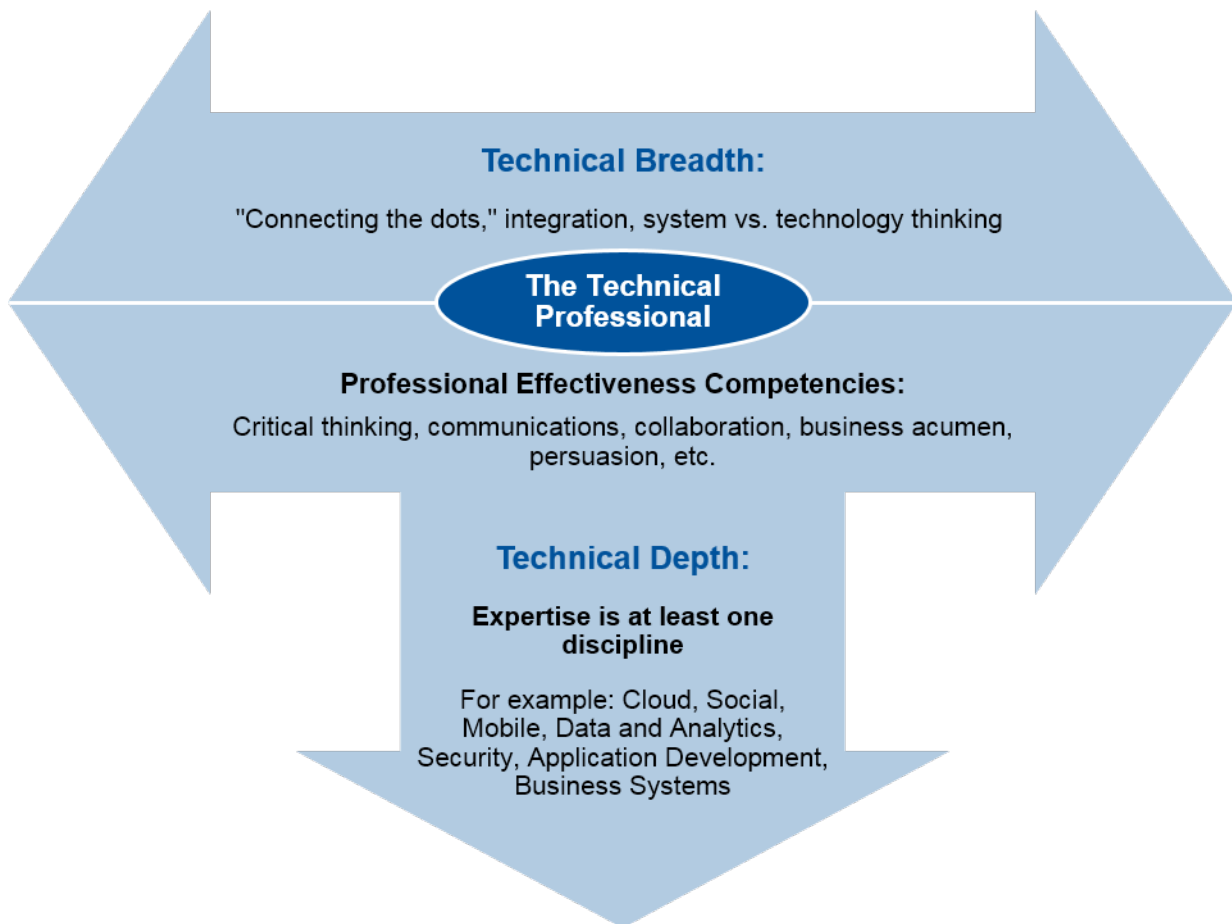
Source: Gartner (June 2016)

There was some difference between IT leadership's perspective and the IT professional view. The 2016 Gartner CIO Survey results indicated that data and analytics ranked first in skills gap with 40% of respondents, followed by security (17%) and business acumen/knowledge (15%). Why is this important to understand? Top-down-planned training may emphasize what leaders see as the challenges; IT professionals must voice their point of view to make sure any training regimen reflects the needs of the "student," not just the teacher.

### Plan for More Breadth, Not Just Depth

The multidisciplinary nature of digital business will demand a new breed of IT professional. Connections between previously disparate technology disciplines are driving a new, holistic view of how the parts can work together without losing specialization in one or more areas of technology. The desired skills profile is that of a "T-shaped" professional, an idea popularized in the 1990s by Ideo CEO Tim Brown. The T shape is a metaphor for the depth and breadth of an individual's skills. The vertical stem of the T represents the depth of skills and expertise in a specific field, while the top bar represents a thinner but broader layer of skills, knowledge and collaboration across other disciplines and skills areas. Increasingly, technical professionals will require broad knowledge of the overall architecture (the top of the T) and deep knowledge in one or more specific areas (the leg of the T) — emphasizing both breadth and depth (see Figure 5).

Figure 5. T-Shaped Skills — Depth and Breadth



Source: Gartner (June 2016)

Gaining the broader knowledge and expertise required will not just involve acquiring a wider range of technical skills. It will also mean enhancing the business effectiveness skills that make the IT professional a better communicator, a better listener and a more persuasive advocate *and* facilitator

for change — in essence, a more engaged worker — within IT, across the business and up the management chain.

When asked whether they agree that their organization's IT team has the right skills and capabilities in place to meet upcoming challenges, survey respondents were more positive than negative with an average response rating above the midpoint on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is "strongly disagree" and 7 is "strongly agree." When compared to the survey results for 2015, we see some improvement.

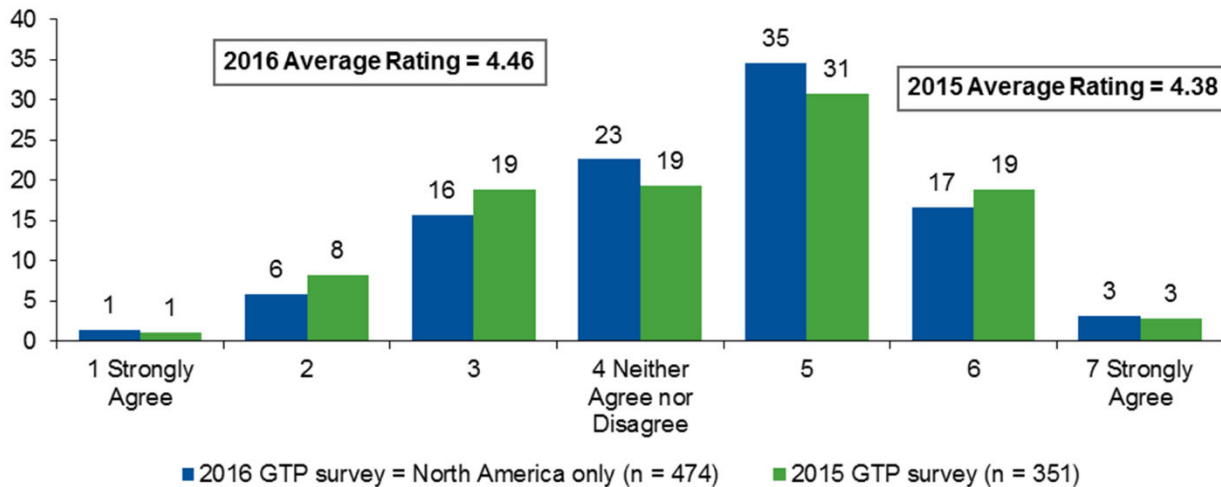
Fortunately, IT professionals appear to have confidence that their teams' skill sets are improving over time (see Figure 6). Note that we compared North American responses only from the 2016 dataset, as the 2015 survey only included North American tech professionals. Responses for EMEA and Asia/Pacific are generally in line with North American responses.

Figure 6. IT Skills Assessment Overall, 2016 vs. 2015, North America Only

To what extent do you agree that your organization's IT organization has the right skills and capabilities in place to meet upcoming challenges?

n = 948

Percentage of Respondents



Bars of the same value may vary in height due to rounding.

Source: Gartner (June 2016)

On a lighter note, survey responses also reflect a bit of human nature as well. In an "I'm OK, but others aren't" assessment, participants responded that they were personally more skilled to be successful; their rating rose significantly to a 5.2 average score, which is also in line with 2015 results.

## IT Project Phase Analysis Highlights Maturity of Tech Discipline

IT organizations are in different phases of activity at various points in project and technology life cycles. Like the ebb and flow of the ocean tide, emphasis changes over time, and projects move in and out of phases, based on business priorities and/or technical upgrade plans. GTP has identified four distinct phases for IT projects. They are:

- **Plan:** Understand trends; frame the "big picture"; analyze a business case/initiative
- **Assess:** Assess a technology; compare technology/solution options
- **Design:** Choose a technical architecture; blueprint your specific architecture
- **Select:** Prioritize product requirements; score and compare products; implement selected product(s); develop capabilities

We were interested in knowing what the predominant key phase respondents would be during 2016, by technical discipline. We also gave respondents the option to indicate that they were in "maintenance mode" for a technology discipline, or that there would be "no investment" in that area in 2016.

You see wide variations between the phases of each technology discipline (see Figure 7, and Tables 1 and 2). This analysis aligns fairly well with the other priorities noted earlier in this research. For example:

- Cloud is the most active in the four key phases as organizations plan, discover, architect and deploy cloud capabilities across their organizations (see Table 1). Data and analytics — noted as a skills gap earlier — is also among the top five of being active in the four key phases.
- IoT has a very high percentage of companies with no plans in 2016 (40%), but those that are report they are in early stages of technical analysis, spending more time on planning and assessing their firm's IoT approaches. In fact, IoT is the leading technology by percentage in both the plan and assess phases (see Table 2).
- Data and analytics is much more active in the design and select phases, indicating it is now being integrated into the fabric of the enterprise — especially as it is the top CIO investment priority in 2016 (and has been at or near the top of that prioritization for several years).
- Some mature technologies are primarily in "maintenance mode," including storage/networking (58%), virtualization (56%) and data center (55%). While IT budget is obviously being spent in these areas, the majority of survey respondents indicate that these areas are in "status quo" mode for 2016.

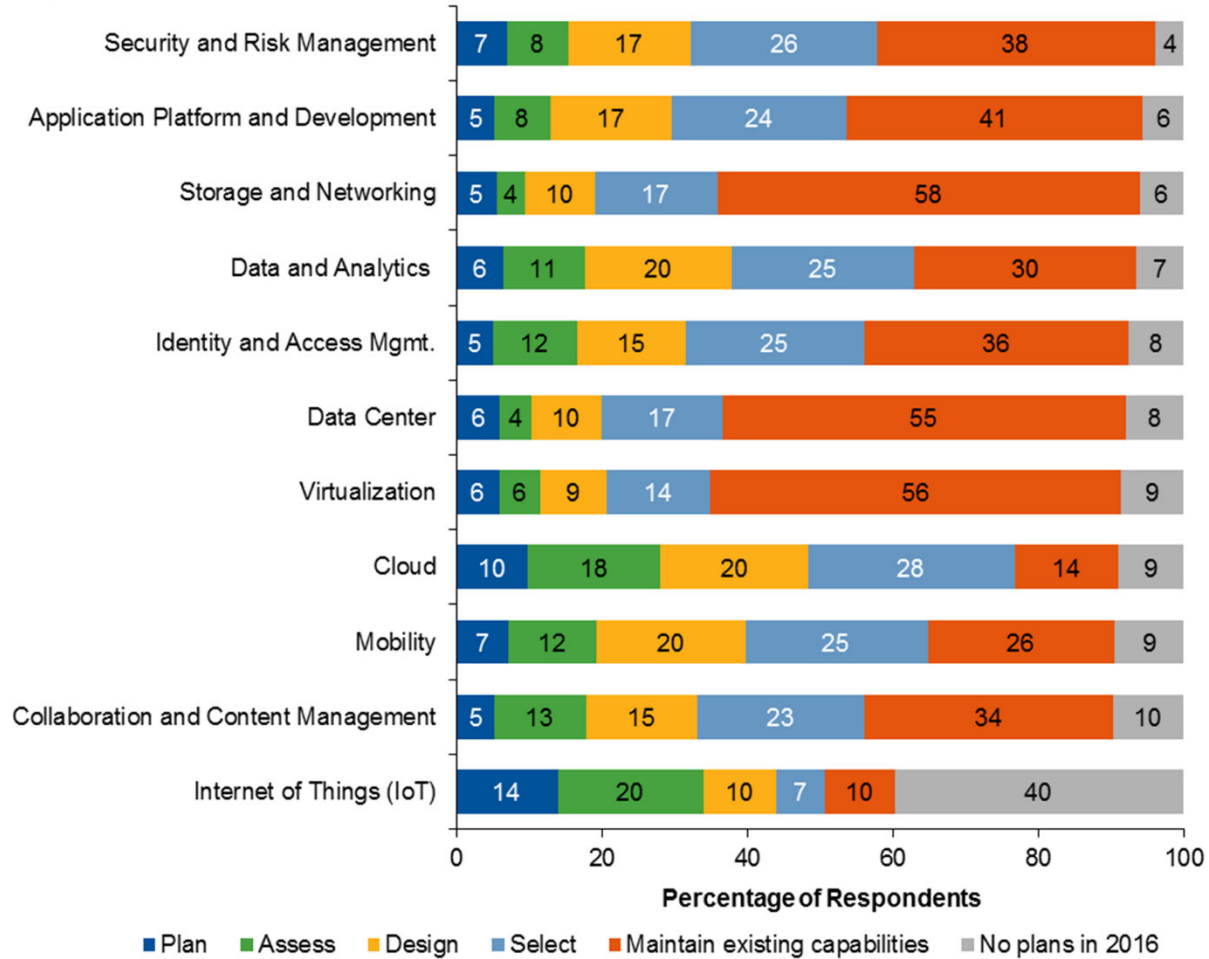
We included this analysis here so you can compare your organization's status to the survey group's average as a whole, so that you can see where there are similarities and where there are differences.

Bottom line: Understand the phase(s) that your firm is in — it may be different than others in your industry or other peers. Use your own company phase assessment to help you better prioritize work efforts based on your phase. GTP research is organized along this model.

Figure 7. IT Project Phase Deployment by Technology Discipline

In which phase do you expect your organization will be during 2016, by technical discipline?

n = 948



Numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Source: Gartner (June 2016)

Table 1. Top Five Technology Areas Active in Plan/Assess/Design/Select Phases

Rank	Technology Discipline	Total Percentage Across Four Phases
1	Cloud	77%
2	Mobility	65%
3	Data and Analytics	63%
4	Security and Risk	56%
5	Identity and Access Management	56%

Source: Gartner (June 2016)

Table 2. Top Five Technology Areas in Each Project Phase

Plan	Assess	Design	Select
IoT (14%)	IoT (20%)	Cloud (20%)	Cloud (28%)
Cloud (10%)	Cloud (18%)	Data and Analytics (20%)	Security and Risk (26%)
Security and Risk (7%)	Collaboration and Content Mgmt. (13%)	Mobility (20%)	Data and Analytics (25%)
Mobility (7%)	Mobility (12%)	Security and Risk (17%)	Identity and Access Management (25%)
Data and Analytics (6%)	Identity and Access Management (12%)	Application Development (17%)	Mobility (25%)

Source: Gartner (June 2016)

## Investment Priorities Differ by Industry and From IT Professional "Importance" Ranking

Earlier in this research, we identified that IT professionals selected cloud and data and analytics as "important" technologies for their future (see Figure 3). When we asked them to identify what they understand the top three areas of new and/or discretionary investment for 2016 to be (a very different question), the overall results changed dramatically. Survey respondents indicated that infrastructure and data center was the highest priority, followed by cloud and application development (see Figure 7). Data and analytics slipped to sixth place overall.

We had expected there would be close alignment on these perspectives, but Gartner believes that it can be largely explained by the job roles of the survey respondents, as in, where they sit in the organization influences what they choose. There is some symmetry between the top three job functions of the survey participants and spending priorities. Top job functions of participants were:

- IT operations and infrastructure — 22%
- Applications — 22%
- Enterprise architects — 21%

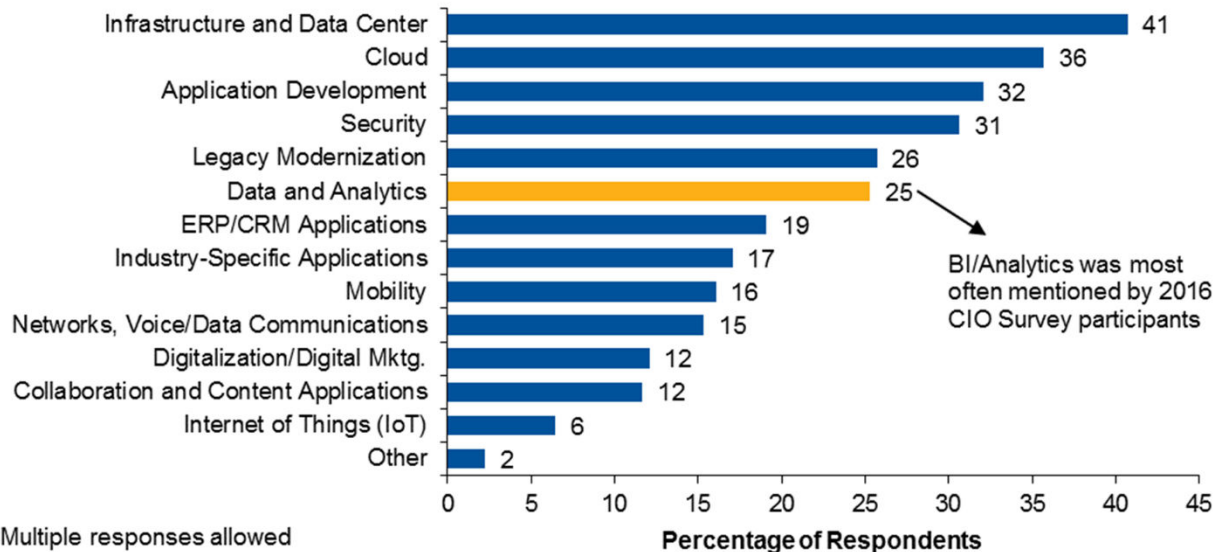
Even when looking at the responses for those who identified as any type of architect (one-third of all respondents), cloud popped to the No. 1 investment priority, followed closely by infrastructure and data center. But data and analytics still was further down the list.

To reflect the leadership point of view, the 2016 CIO survey identified that BI/analytics (a proxy for data and analytics) was the No. 1 planned investment (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. IT Professionals Identified Their Top Three Investment Priorities for 2016

Please indicate the top three technology areas where your organization will be spending the highest amount of new/discretionary funding in 2016.

n = 933, Base: DK excluded



Bars of the same value may vary in length due to rounding.

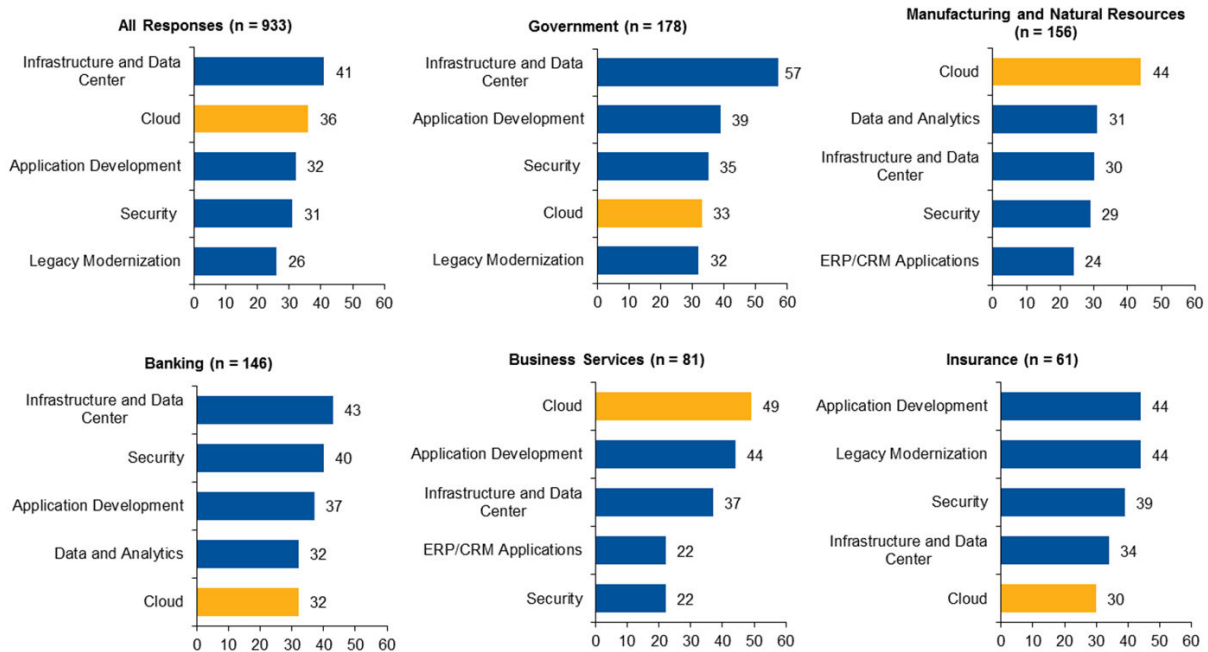
Source: Gartner (June 2016)

There are specific differences in priority by industry, which is to be expected. Each sector faces different challenges at different times, so investment priorities will nearly always differ. We collected data on 13 different sectors (see industry breakdown in the Note A section below). In Figure 9, we highlight the top five priorities for the five industry sectors with the most respondents to the survey — government, manufacturing and natural resources, banking, business services, and insurance. This gives you a glimpse into investment profiles in each sector. For example:

- Cloud is top priority in manufacturing and natural resources and business services, but fifth in insurance. This reflects the interconnectedness of value chains in those sectors and that cloud is a unifying technology to accomplish that business model goal.
- Security is much more prominent in banking than in manufacturing and natural resources and business services. While all organizations are vulnerable to security breaches from external as well as internal sources, it has been a prominent concern in banking sectors for the past few years.
- Data and analytics makes the top five in only two sectors — manufacturing and natural resources and banking. These industries are especially data-intensive, and are often on the forefront on adoption of data and analytics technology.
- IoT, which garnered a relatively low investment priority overall, at 6% and did not make the top five in any industry surveyed, has a much higher profile in two specific industries — manufacturing and natural resources (17%) and communications (16%) (see Figure 8). IoT use cases abound in these sectors, where machine-to-machine communication is the hallmark of the emerging industrial internet.

The sector that most closely aligns "importance" with "investment" is manufacturing and natural resources (see Figures 3 and 9). While not a perfect match, the top two priorities are the same in both lists, and manufacturing is rapidly becoming an industry built on massive amounts of data (from IoT and process automation) and cloud for newly invigorated and interconnected business models.

Figure 9. Top Five Investment Priorities, All Industries and Top Five Responding Industries



Source: Gartner (June 2016)

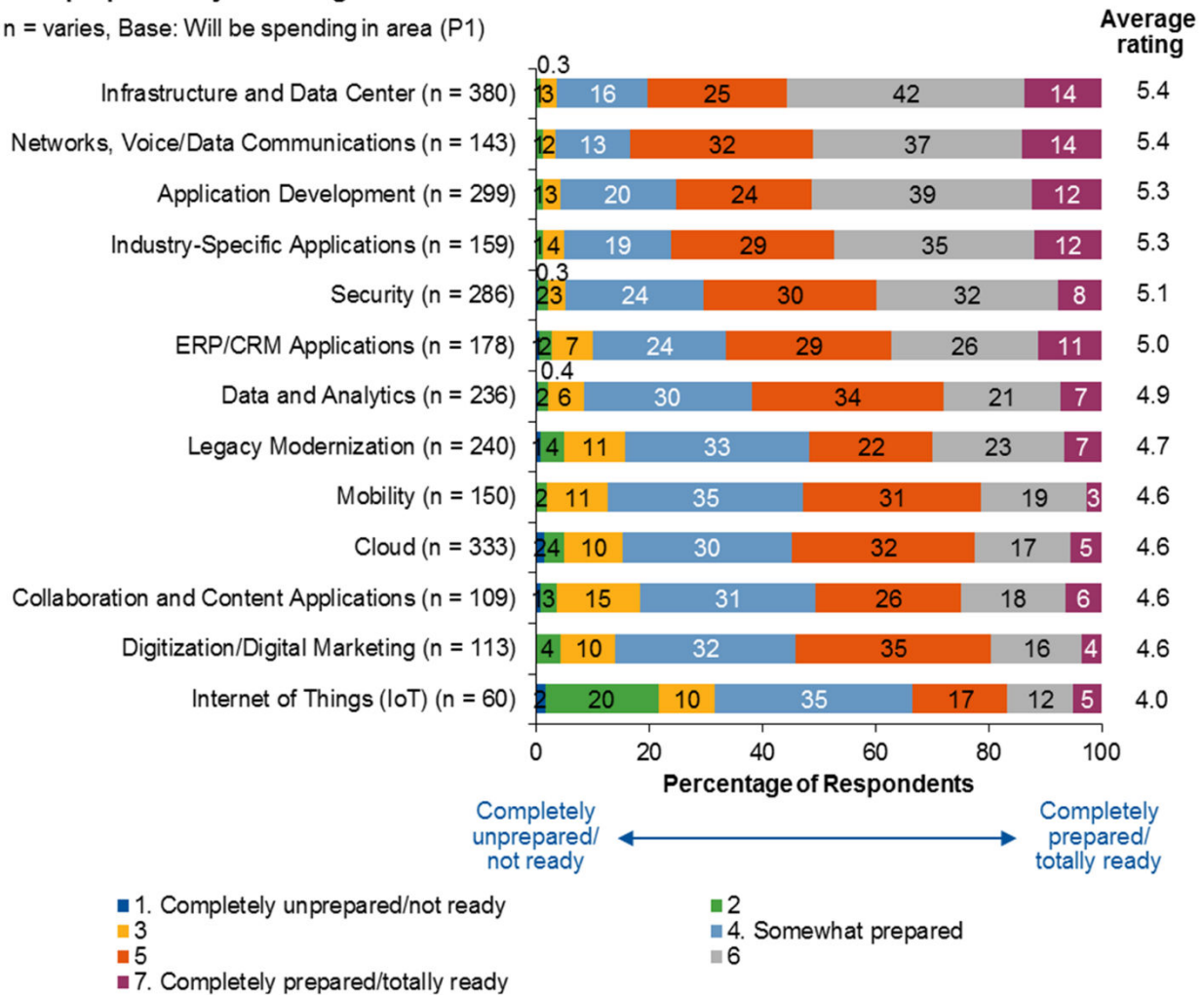


When you review the list of investment priorities from a different angle — by how prepared IT professionals perceive they are — you see something quite different (see Figure 10). Respondents were asked "how prepared their organization is" for the technologies they selected as spending priorities. They rated organization preparedness on a scale on 1 to 7, where 1 is "completely unprepared" and 7 is "totally ready."

Figure 10. Preparedness for Tech Investments

**How prepared is your IT organization for these investments?**

n = varies, Base: Will be spending in area (P1)



Numbers may not equal 100% due to rounding.

Source: Gartner (June 2016)

The top investment priority overall — infrastructure and data center — is very mature and has the highest preparedness rating. Cloud, the No. 2 investment priority, is much further down the list in tenth place, and falls in the "somewhat prepared" realm. Earlier, we saw cloud as the primary area

of skills deficit followed by data and analytics (see Figure 6). This analysis reinforces those findings as well.

## Recommendations

IT professionals:

- Aggressively learn about the mechanics and deployment considerations for cloud and data and analytics through formal training programs and/or self-study and experimentation. Internalize the implications of these technologies on your area of expertise. Indicate that these will drive immense change and innovation in the way functionality is, and will be, delivered to users within and outside the enterprise. Every IT discipline can make use of cloud computing and analytics. This will make you a more valuable IT professional.
- Diversify and expand your skill set, incorporating these new insights into everything you do. Demand whole-skills development to develop more breadth and depth, also known as T-shaped skills. Understand that there is a mix of technology and professional effectiveness skills needed to enhance your role in the enterprise. Take every opportunity you can to practice these skills so they become a natural part of the way you think, act and work.
- Immerse yourself in your company's digital strategy and future, don't just acknowledge from a distance. Dig in and understand the business drivers of this strategy, as well as the technical implications of this approach, and how those technical implications will impact you now or in the near term. Connect the dots between tech architectures and business outcomes using enhanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Work across IT and business teams to prioritize activities that contribute most to business outcomes. Thinking and acting both horizontally (across silos) and vertically (within your discipline) will drive more innovative approaches to achieving desired business outcomes.
- Clearly identify which project phase your primary technical responsibility is in, and develop a work plan and training plan that reflects the current phase and anticipates what should come next. Always keep an eye out for change — in fact, expect change — as technologies ebb and flow over time. Keep your head up and eyes open so you can anticipate what might come, as it's always better to get out in front of shifts rather than respond to them after they've happened.

## Conclusion

A business strategy that requires digital transformation has taken root in many organizations. IT professionals clearly recognize their role in this effort, but believe they have work to do to be more fully prepared for the changes. Cloud and data and analytics are the two technologies that play very prominent roles in transformation, but every technical discipline has a place in this shift. Identify and plan for any skills development — be they technical or effectiveness-based — that are looming, and embark on a training regimen as quickly as possible. In using the information contained in this research, you can understand where others are to help identify focus-specific areas and priorities.

Improving knowledge and expertise in any of these areas better positions IT professionals for future success.

## Gartner Recommended Reading

*Some documents may not be available as part of your current Gartner subscription.*

"2016 Planning Guide for Cloud Computing and Virtualization"

"2016 Planning Guide for Data Management and Analytics"

"2016 Planning Guide for Professional Effectiveness"

"An Emerging IT Role: The Cloud Architect"

"Adopting Bimodal or Other Modes of Operation Primer for 2016"

### Evidence

This research is based on a survey of 948 IT professionals across many job categories, technology disciplines and 30 countries. The survey was conducted in January and February, 2016. All respondents are Gartner clients.

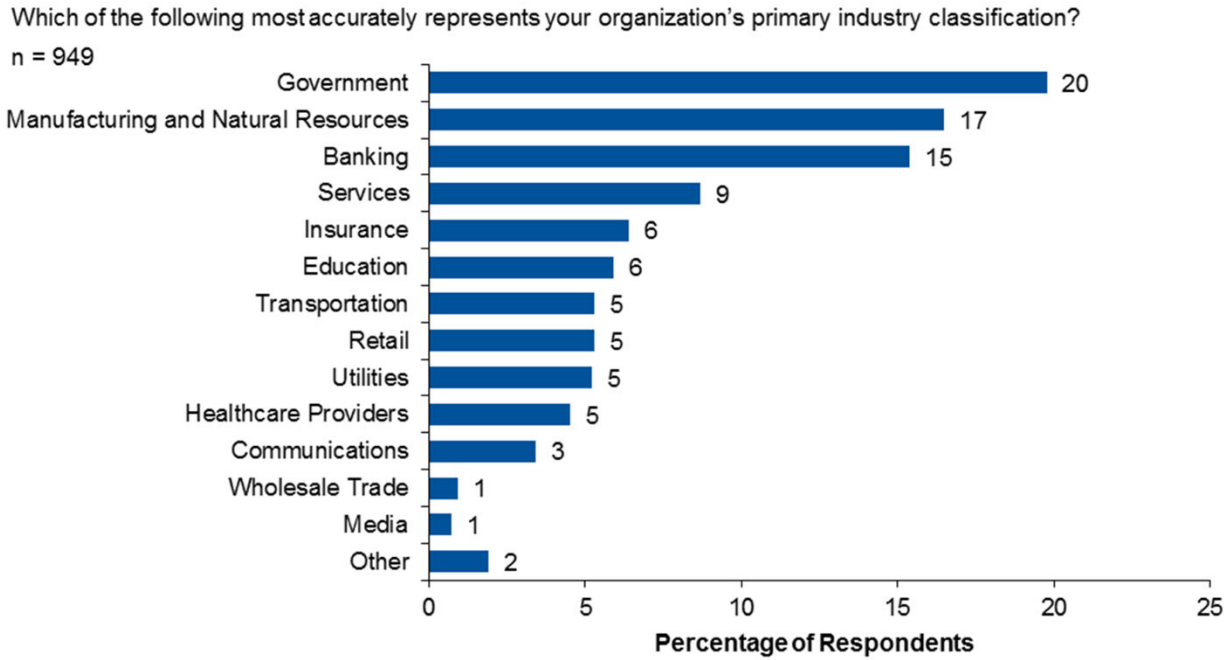
### Note 1 Survey Objectives and Demographics

The purpose of this study is to explore whether (or not) architects and technical professionals are embracing the challenges and changes needed to move to a digital business, how mature they are in adopting these new architectures, and what skills they will need to make this transition without impeding the organization's business strategy.

Gartner invited more than 22,000 of its Gartner for Technical Professionals subscribers to participate in a survey about digital transformation readiness. Nearly 950 individuals responded — a response rate of over 4%. Figures 11 through 14 identify the background of the respondents.

Figure 11 shows the industries of our survey respondents.

Figure 11. Industry Breakdown of Survey Respondents

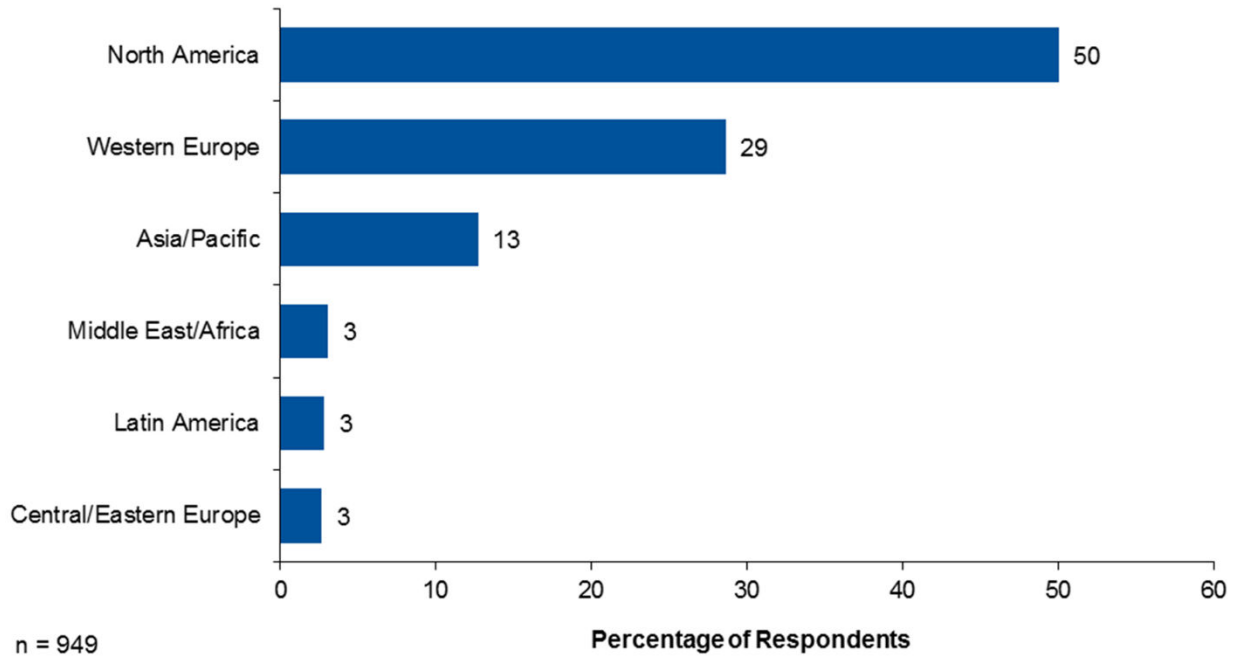


Bars of the same value may vary in length due to rounding.

Source: Gartner (June 2016)

Figure 12 shows the geographic region survey respondents come from.

Figure 12. Geographic Distribution of Survey Respondents

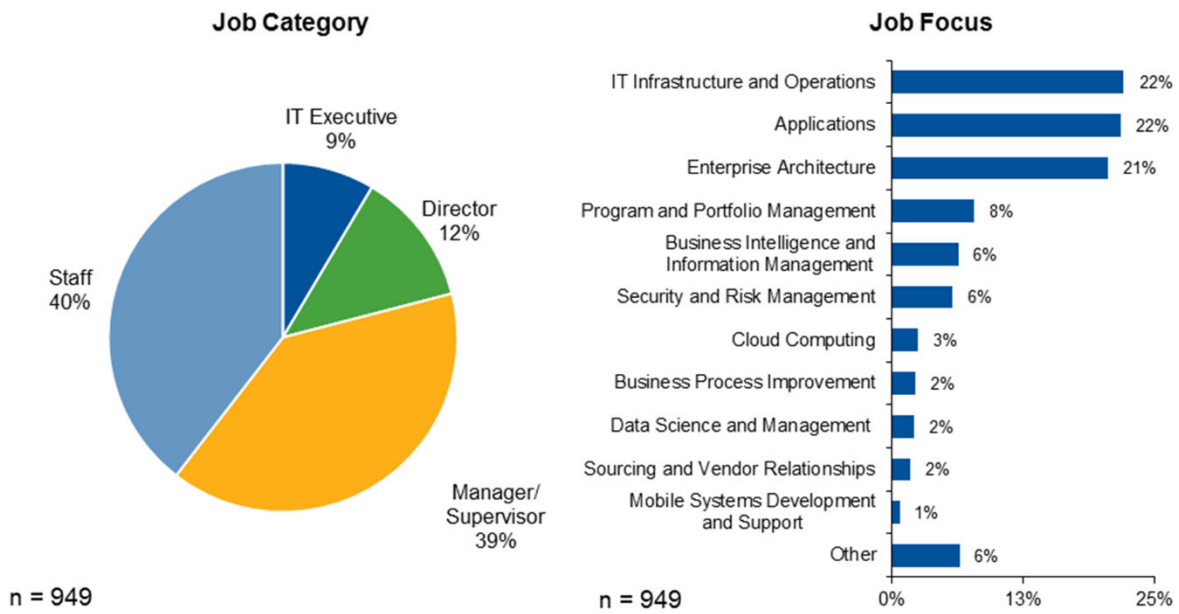


Bars of the same value may vary in length due to rounding.

Source: Gartner (June 2016)

Survey respondents' job categories (by level) and job focus are seen in Figure 13.

Figure 13. Job Category and Job Focus of Survey Respondents

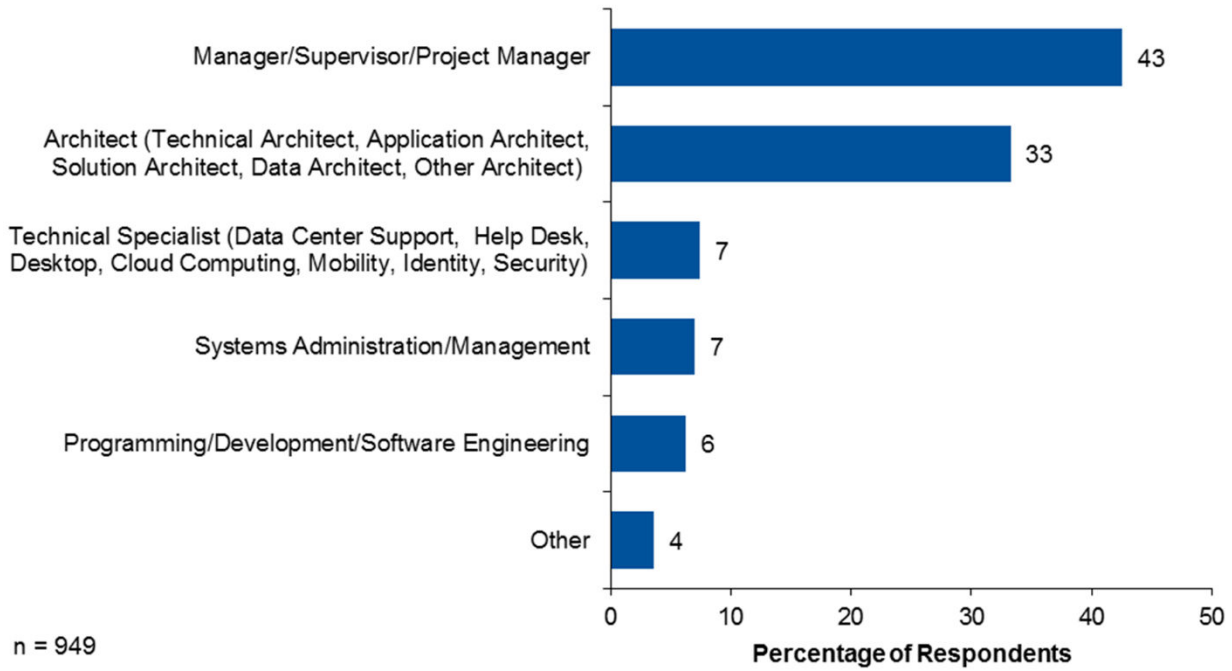


Bars of the same value may vary in length due to rounding.

Source: Gartner (June 2016)

Finally, Figure 14 depicts the survey respondents' roles within job focus.

Figure 14. Role Within Focus Areas



Bars of the same value may vary in length due to rounding.

Source: Gartner (June 2016)

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