



Healthcare IT Leaders Take the Helm

How the role is evolving from technology enabler
to strategic and clinical partner.

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Findings from a survey of CHIME members

Executive Summary

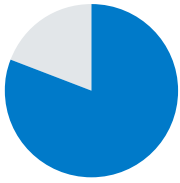
In late 2025, Harmony Healthcare IT partnered with CHIME to survey 21 hospital IT leaders to learn more about the rapidly evolving nature of their role.

The findings? Hospital IT leadership is indeed in the midst of a significant transformation, marked by expanding responsibilities and surging influence across multiple strategic areas.

But the survey also revealed critical blind spots: Many IT leaders report limited collaboration with CFOs and minimal involvement in M&A decision-making. As hospitals face mounting financial pressures, regulatory changes, and ongoing industry consolidation, these gaps in IT leader involvement could be costly. Read on to discover where IT influence is gaining ground — and where it's lagging.

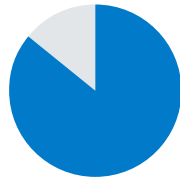
Key Findings

Role Expansions



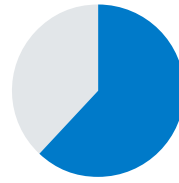
81%

report they are becoming more involved in strategic business decisions.



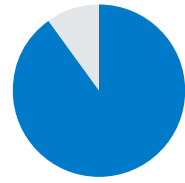
86%

say clinical teams increasingly see them as a strategic partner in ensuring optimal patient care.



62%

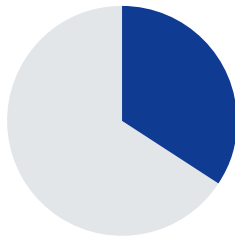
say their responsibilities are expanding beyond traditional IT functions.



90%

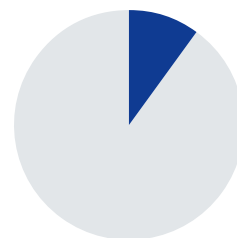
say their decision making related to health data management plays a significant role in ensuring optimal patient care.

Room for Growth



Only 33%

report they are becoming more involved in strategic business decisions.



Only 10%

report they are becoming more involved in M&A activities.

Methodology

The survey of 21 CHIME members took place in October and November 2025. Respondents included CIOs, CTOs, CISOs, and other IT leaders from academic medical centers, integrated delivery networks, community hospitals, and health systems ranging from under \$500M to over \$10B in annual net patient revenue.

Takeaway #1: A Larger Voice at the C-suite Table

The data confirms what many have observed anecdotally: Hospital IT leadership is changing and expanding — with a significant shift in role occurring in the past three years alone.

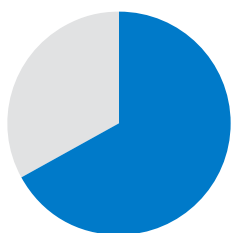
When asked how their role has evolved over the past three years, 8 in 10 reported greater involvement in strategic business decisions and nearly 7 in 10 reported greater emphasis on innovation and transformation. More than half said their responsibilities have expanded beyond traditional IT functions.

How has your role evolved over the past 3 years?



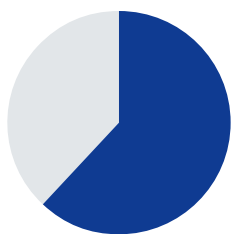
81%

Greater involvement in strategic business decisions



67%

Greater emphasis on innovation and transformation leadership



62%

Expanded responsibility beyond traditional IT functions

What's driving these shifts? Several forces are at play, including growing demand for sophisticated analytics, the maturation of healthcare data as a strategic asset, and the understanding that competitive advantage increasingly flows from digital capabilities. As a result, organizations are increasingly bringing IT leadership to the table for strategic decisions that have become too consequential to make without their input.

Advice from Peers

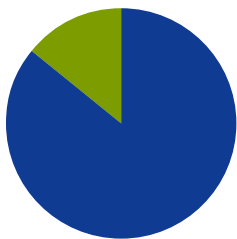
While this expanded influence brings new opportunities to hospital IT leaders, it also creates new pressures. As one survey respondent noted when asked to share their top advice for peers: **"Ensure your voice is heard!"**

In the year ahead, hospital IT leaders should continue to focus on actively asserting their perspective and advocating for IT's central role in organizational success.

Takeaway #2: Clinical Impact Takes Center Stage

One of the most striking survey findings relates to the perceived connection between IT leadership and patient care. Nearly 90% of survey respondents say C-suite executives and clinical teams within their organizations are increasingly recognizing their impact on patient care.

Do C-suite leaders at your organization increasingly recognize the role of IT in clinical outcomes?

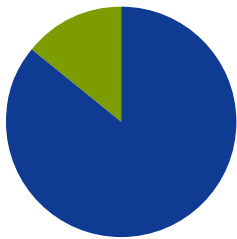


86%: Yes
14%: No

These findings indicate that IT is now seen as integral to care delivery itself, with decisions directly shaping clinical workflows, patient safety protocols, and care quality metrics.

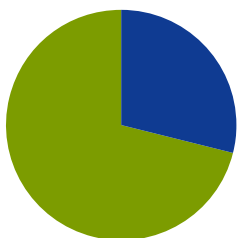
For hospital IT leaders, this means C-suite executives may be more willing to fund innovation and support digital transformation, while clinical teams may be more likely to involve IT leaders early in quality improvement initiatives.

Do clinical teams at your organization increasingly see IT as a strategic partner in ensuring optimal patient care?



86%: Yes
14%: No

Can quality improvement initiatives succeed without direct CIO involvement and leadership?



29%: Yes
71%: No

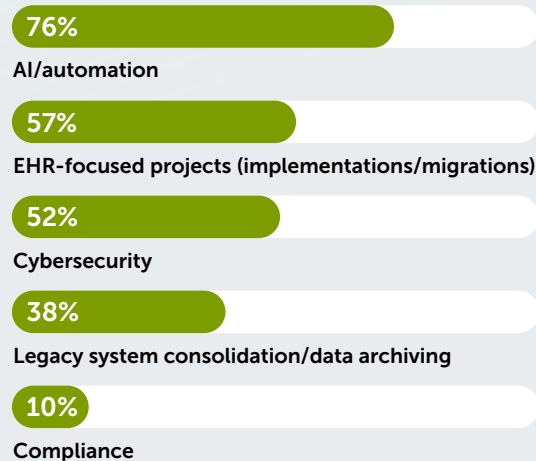
Advice from Peers

When asked to share their top advice for other health IT leaders, many survey respondents emphasized deliberate relationship-building. One respondent stated simply, "**Collaborate with clinical,**" while another emphasized, "**Partnership is key.**"

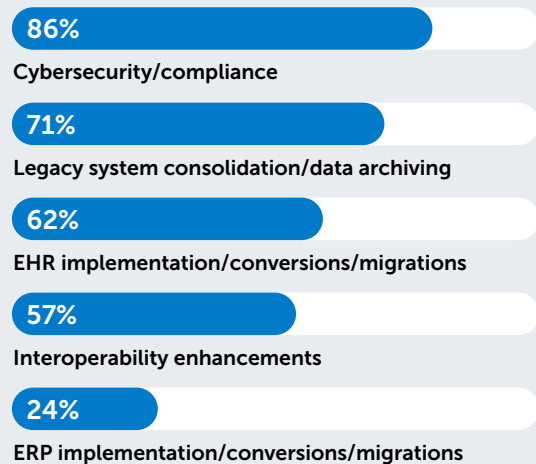
Top 2026 Investment and Budget Priorities

As hospital IT leaders experience expanded influence, where are they directing resources? The survey reveals spending priorities that align with industry changes: investments in AI and automation, cybersecurity protection, and data management initiatives that support clinical care and operational efficiency.

In which of the following areas do you anticipate your organization will increase IT spend in 2026? (respondents could select all that apply)



What are your top data management priorities for 2026? (respondents could select their top 3)



How has your IT budget for health data management initiatives (i.e., data consolidation, migration, and/or archiving projects) changed over the past 3 years?

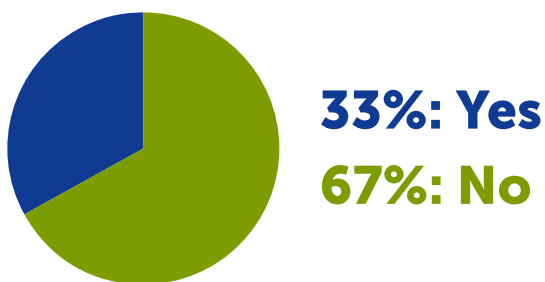


Note: Responses may not add up to 100% due to rounding

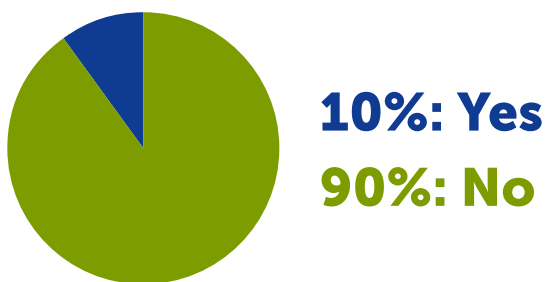
Takeaway #3: IT Influence Lags in Two Key Areas

Two survey findings stand out for their troubling implications: Hospital IT leaders report little momentum over the past three years when it comes to CFO collaboration and M&A input.

In the past three years, have you experienced more collaboration with your CFO?



In the past three years, have you experienced more involvement in M&A activities?



Given IT's critical role in revenue generation, cost optimization, and cybersecurity, the finding that only one-third of IT leaders report greater CFO collaboration represents a notable gap. Organizations with low collaboration might benefit from intentional relationship-building through regular joint planning sessions and shared KPIs.

Perhaps more significant is the finding that only 10% report greater M&A involvement. While this may reflect limited M&A activity among respondents' organizations, the low percentage suggests a broader pattern. If M&A activity picks up in 2026, organizations that don't involve IT early could face significant challenges with EHR migrations, legacy system decommissioning, and data archiving.

Advice from Peers

Survey respondents emphasized the need for stronger C-suite partnerships and clearer communication of IT's value. One counseled: **"Partner with the CISO/CFO and executive team to educate them on the risk associated with not investing in IT and cybersecurity."** Another advised: **"Help the organization embrace technology changes that actually have real ROI, and help key leaders take ownership in the outcomes."**

The Path Forward

The 2026 Hospital IT Pulse Report captures a profession undergoing significant evolution. The hospital IT role has evolved from technology enabler to strategic and clinical partner. The next step for many hospital IT leaders will be addressing key gaps, particularly when it comes to CFO collaboration and M&A activity involvement. Hospital IT leaders who strengthen these partnerships will be better positioned to drive both clinical excellence and operational performance within their organizations.

About Harmony Healthcare IT

Harmony Healthcare IT is a data management firm that transforms critical data into secure, compliant, and accessible assets — whether that is converting data to a new platform or securing it in an archive. Since 2006, we have worked with over 700 healthcare software platforms across clinical, financial, and administrative systems. Our commitment to reliability and innovation empowers healthcare organizations to manage their data with confidence.

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