

AI Is Forcing CIOs to Finally Explain What IT Actually Delivers

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AI is making IT spending more visible, more variable, and harder to justify without measurable business outcomes.



AI is forcing IT to speak the language of outcomes.

For years, many CIOs have struggled with the same problem:

The business sees IT as a cost centre.

Not because technology lacks value.

But because the connection between technology spending and business outcomes is often poorly articulated.

Now AI is making that problem impossible to ignore.

Because unlike traditional infrastructure spend, AI costs are becoming highly visible, highly variable, and increasingly difficult to justify without measurable operational impact.

Which is exactly why [Technology Business Management \(TBM\)](#) is becoming relevant again.

The AI Era Changes the Conversation

Historically, large parts of IT spending were relatively predictable:

- servers
- networking
- licensing
- ERP support
- infrastructure refresh cycles

AI changes the economic model entirely.

Now organisations must think about:

- token consumption
- inference costs
- GPU utilisation
- API usage
- agent orchestration
- runtime compute
- model efficiency
- cost per interaction

In many organisations, AI spending no longer scales linearly.

It compounds.

And suddenly CFOs are asking much harder questions.

What TBM Actually Solves

At its core, TBM is not about reducing IT spend.

It is about translating technology consumption into business language.

That distinction matters.

Because most business leaders do not care about:

- cloud utilisation percentages
- Kubernetes efficiency
- API throughput
- storage optimisation

They care about:

- productivity
- operational speed
- customer outcomes
- resilience
- risk reduction
- revenue enablement

TBM attempts to create that translation layer.

And in the AI era, that becomes strategically important.

Why CIOs Are Under Pressure

Boards are approving significant AI budgets right now.

But many organisations are still in experimental mode.

Which creates tension.

The business hears:

“AI will transform operations.”

Then asks:

“Where is the measurable return?”

That’s where many CIOs are now stuck.

Not because AI lacks capability.

But because many organisations still struggle to connect:

AI consumption → operational value → financial outcome

The Real Problem Isn’t Cost

The real problem is uncontrolled consumption without governance.

We are already seeing organisations discover that:

- AI budgets disappear faster than expected
- token usage scales unpredictably
- poorly designed prompts create waste
- duplicated agents increase costs
- cloud-style “sprawl” is reappearing in AI

This is where TBM, FinOps, and governance begin to merge.

The Risk Nobody Wants to Discuss

Many organisations are still measuring AI success using activity metrics:

- number of agents
- prompts processed
- pilot programmes launched
- internal adoption statistics

Those are not business outcomes.

They are consumption indicators.

The difficult question is:

Did operational performance actually improve?

That is a much harder conversation.

The Pragmatic CIO View

TBM becomes valuable when it helps answer questions like:

- Which AI initiatives create measurable value?
- Which workloads are becoming financially inefficient?
- Which business units consume the most AI resources?
- Where are we scaling capability versus scaling cost?
- What is the actual operational return?

Without that visibility, AI spending risks becoming another opaque technology layer the business funds but does not fully understand.

And history suggests that rarely ends well.

The Uncomfortable Truth About AI and IT Spend

AI is not reducing financial pressure on IT.

In many organisations, it is increasing it.

At the same time, CIOs are still expected to:

- modernise infrastructure
- improve cybersecurity
- support transformation
- reduce operational risk
- optimise cost
- accelerate delivery

Now with an AI layer on top.

That means the old “trust us, IT is important” model no longer works.

Technology leaders increasingly need to demonstrate:

- cost clarity
- operational impact
- measurable outcomes
- governance discipline

Not just innovation.

Final Thought

The organisations that succeed with AI will probably not be the ones spending the most.

They will be the ones that best understand:

- where value is created
- where waste emerges
- how technology consumption connects to business outcomes

That is ultimately what TBM is trying to solve.

And why it matters more now than it did five years ago.

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