

CTO Craft 100

Celebrating 100 influential leaders
shaping the future of technology

 **CTO** Craft

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The Architects of Tomorrow

It is a privilege to introduce this list of 100 influential senior technologists, a group of leaders who are not just managing technology and technology teams but are actively shaping the future. In a world where the pace of change is accelerating faster than ever, the role of the technology leader has become incredibly complex and demanding. We are no longer just building products; we are navigating a landscape of strategic decisions, people management, and constant innovation.

Today, a CTO's concerns go far beyond code. We are the ones tasked with building an AI strategy from the ground up, figuring out how to integrate powerful, yet often unpredictable, tools into our business models. The pressure is immense, especially when reports show a decline in C-suite confidence regarding AI strategy. We are also in a relentless battle for talent, trying to hire and retain the very best development teams in a market where skilled engineers are more sought after than ever, and working capital can be hard to come by. This requires us to create not just a competitive workplace, but a truly supportive culture where our teams can thrive and find a sense of purpose.

This is where the power of community becomes so vital. I founded CTO Craft because I believe that no one can succeed in this role alone. The weight of these responsibilities can be isolating, and the challenges are too great to face in solitude. Our community provides a space for leaders to connect, share their struggles, and celebrate their wins with peers who truly understand.

This is a place where we find collective wisdom and the emotional resilience needed to lead through uncertainty, and this list is a testament to that shared journey and to the strength we find in supporting one another.

A core tenet of CTO Craft is our commitment to giving a platform to diverse voices. We know that the technology industry still has a long way to go in achieving true representation, particularly in senior leadership. While progress is being made, there are still too many brilliant minds from underrepresented backgrounds who don't get the recognition they deserve. Our community actively seeks to highlight these leaders, because we understand that diversity is not just a buzzword, it is a fundamental driver of innovation. A broad range of perspectives leads to better problem-solving and a more robust industry for everyone. By celebrating the successes of leaders from all walks of life, this list becomes a powerful statement about the inclusive future we are building together.

For me, leadership has always been about visibility. It's about shining a light on the people who do the hard work and celebrating their achievements publicly. This list is our way of doing exactly that. It is a moment to pause and recognise the incredible contributions of these 100 individuals, to understand the journeys that led to their successes, and to be inspired by their dedication. They are the architects of tomorrow, and their influence will be felt for years to come. I hope this list inspires you as much as these leaders have inspired me.



Andy Skipper
Founder, CTO Craft

You don't have to lead alone.

Be part of a trusted peer community of technology leaders. Share experiences, learn from others, and access resources designed to help you thrive.

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The CTO Craft 100

Key Country currently based in Connect on LinkedIn CTO Craft Community member**Adam Horner**Fractional CTO & CTO Coach
Synova Technology**Ashutosh Saxena**India Head of Engineering
Edenred**Cal Henderson**Co-Founder & CTO
Slack**Alex Ischenko**Senior VP of Engineering
Rebrandly**Aylin Orial**Chief Technology Officer
Padgea**Carlos Pérez Fernández**Co-Founder
CoverManager**Andrew Jordan**Chief Product and Technology
Officer
Travelport**Bex Hay**Co-Founder & CTO
Organise**Catherine Zhao**Co-Founder & CTO
Delly**Anna McDougall**Director of Engineering
Operations
Blinkist**Bohdan Zabawskyj**Founder
TrueNorthCTO**Charity Majors**Co-Founder & CTO
honeycomb.io**Apollon Oikonomopoulos**Chief Information Officer
Skrouz S.A.**Bruce Ramsay**Chief Scientific Officer
Cyacomb**Christine Weber**Chief Technology Officer
Twitch



Claire Knight
Chief Technology Officer
Sailhouse



Dominik Hurnaus
Chief Technology Officer
Tractive



Gus Fune
Chief Technology Officer
BÆRSkin Tactical Supply Co.



Claus Höfele
Head of Engineering
On



Dwayne Forde
Co-Founder & CTO
Mantle



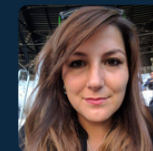
Heidi Williams
Chief Technology Officer
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Daniel Jones
Partner
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Elaine Zhou
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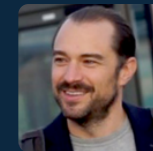
Ioana Chiorean
Senior Engineering Manager
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Dave Millican
Co-Founder & CTO
Skiller Whale



Elizabeth Stone
Chief Technology Officer
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Jackson Hull
CTO / COO
Elliptic



Dawid Moczadło
Co-Founder
Vidoc Security Lab



Fiona Tan
Chief Technology Officer
Wayfair



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Dmitry Kharchenko
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Jane Gilmour

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HSBC



Julie Hollek

Head of Engineering
Humane Intelligence



Lee Edwards

Chief Information Officer
Conexus MedStaff



Jo Carter

Head of Engineering



Kanta Vekaria

Chief Product and Technology
Officer
Seldon



Lee Provoost

Chief Technology Officer
Flagstone



Joe Thompson

Chief Technology Officer
hedgehog lab



Kwesi Fynn

Chief Technology Officer
SecondSTAX



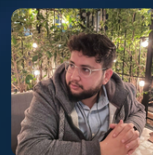
Lee-Jon Ball

Portfolio CTO
Lee-Jon Ltd



Joel Chippindale

CTO Coach
Monkey's Thumb Ltd.



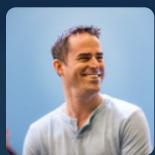
Lalit Verma

Co-CTO
Zomato



Loïc Houssier

Chief Technology Officer
Superhuman



Joel Cumming

Chief Technology Officer
SkyWatch



Laura Tacho

Chief Technology Officer
DX



Ludi Akue

Chief Technology Officer -
Digital
Bpifrance



**Marc Fletcher**

Chief Technology Officer
Pivotal Future

**May Wang**

Chief Technology Officer
Palo Alto Networks

**Michael Lopp**

Founder, CTO
Rands in Repose

**Mark Watson**

Chief Technology Officer
ComplyAdvantage

**Melinda Seckington**

Founder
Learn Build Share

**Michelle McDaid**

Founder
The Leading Place

**Martijn Hazelaar**

Group Chief Technology
Officer
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**Melissa Proxenos**

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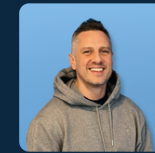
Co-Founder & CTO
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**Mike Jones**

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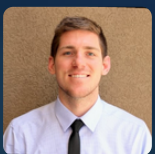
Chief Technology Officer
Acquired.com

**Meri Williams**

Chief Technology Officer
Pleo

**Mohamed Ait Si Brahim**

Group Chief Technology
Officer
Hargreaves Lansdown

**Matthew Preece**

Co-Founder
Skriber

**Michael Bürkle**

Head of Engineering &
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**Natasha Sayce-Zelem**

Director of Digital & Business
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Niall Paterson
Chief Technology Officer
Butternut Box



Oleks Maistrenko
Chief Technology Officer
MISTO



Piotr Gospodarczyk
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EVERYANGLE



Nic Granger
Chief Information and
Financial Officer
North Sea Transition Authority



Dr. Oleksandr Kondratiuk
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Pratik Bijam
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Nick Solly
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MOHARA



Olya Sanakoev
Chief Information Officer
123Dentist



Ravneet Shah
Chief Technology Officer
Allica Bank



Niha Mathur
Vice President, Engineering
LinkedIn



Pasha Jam
Chief Technology Officer
Bumper



Rebecca Murphey
Field CTO
Swarmia



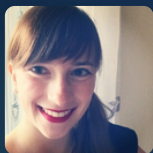
Oge Opara-Nadi
VP of Engineering
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Robin Sutara
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Databricks



Sophie Davies-Patrick
Chief Technology Officer
MPB Group



Willem Delbare
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Aikido Security



Sahaj Garg
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Stephen Wilcock
Chief Technology Officer
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Sally Lait
Fractional Technology Leader
& Advisor
Self Employed



Tamara Miner
Chief Technology Officer
Climate Policy Radar



Sam Boswell
Chief Technology Officer
terralayr



Tim Joslyn
Chief Technology Officer
Paymentology



Sebastian Schleicher
Chief Technology Officer
Blinkist



Tom Hibbert
VP of Engineering
Moonfare



Shobie Ramakrishnan
Chief Digital and Technology
Officer
GSK



Will Larson
Chief Technology Officer
Imprint



Are you a member of the CTO Craft community?

The CTO Craft Community brings together senior technology leaders from start-ups, scale-ups, enterprises, non-profits, and those aspiring to step into leadership roles.

By joining, you'll access:

- Learning – events, workshops, mentoring, and our Campus learning hub
- Network – connect with peers in our exclusive Slack community
- Guidance – gain insights from experienced CTOs and industry leaders
- Collaboration – share challenges and ideas in a safe, inclusive space

[Join the CTO Craft Community](#)

The Interviews

This inaugural CTO Craft 100 report is a huge moment for us and our mission to support tech leaders. We wanted to look past job titles and find leaders who are not just managing their teams through change but are shaping the future of the industry. Our goal was to create a go-to resource that captures what it's really like to be a tech leader today and offer shared wisdom for CTOs, aspiring leaders, and engineers.

For the CTO Craft community, this report is so much more than just a list. It validates the daily challenges and opportunities you face, while offering practical advice directly from the interviews we conducted. By highlighting different approaches, we hope to spark new ideas and reinforce that even though technology moves fast, the core principles of good leadership remain the same.

In our search for these exceptional leaders, we looked for more than just technical brilliance. We sought out people who showed grit and perseverance, understanding that "technology is still a human business." We looked for those who could lead through big changes and, most importantly, were preparing their teams for the future. The one thing that tied everyone together was a deep commitment to people—a belief that "don't forget the people," as Claire Knight put it, is the most important rule for any CTO.

We know this list isn't definitive, and we encourage you to add your own name or (even better) to nominate others for future reports. We're proud that so many names came from peer recommendations and strong words of support. We're also thrilled that the list reflects the diversity we strive for, including leaders in roles that support the tech industry, many of whom were in leadership positions before their current roles.

From the insights that arose during our interviews, several common themes emerged. Unsurprisingly, AI was a big one, with leaders seeing it not as a threat but as an "accelerant" or a "power tool" that requires new skills like systems thinking and a deep understanding of governance. There was also a strong focus on the human element; leaders stressed the importance of psychological safety and building strong, authentic cultures. Another key theme was the growing importance of community and networking to cut through the "hype."

The message is clear: the CTO of the future isn't one single role.

This report begins to explore the full spectrum of what being a leader in this field looks like today, and what it might look like tomorrow.

Interviews

Lee Provoost

Chief Technology Officer, Flagstone



Redefining the CTO's Role: The Impact of Economic Shifts and AI

After two and a half years of hectic growth and rebuilding the platform at Flagstone, Lee Provoost is now focused on stability and improving developer experience and productivity. Having put the inevitable era of dealing with scaling and migration issues behind him, the aspiration is to invest in foundational elements that foster a healthy and happy engineering organisation for the future. Things like enhancing deployment pipelines, improving products, and exploring new tools.

Lee feels two fundamental shifts will redefine the Chief Technology Officer's role in the next few years. The first is the end of "easy free money" for many tech companies. With a new focus on profitability, leaders can no longer simply add more engineers to solve problems but must instead prioritise efficiency and sustainable growth.

The second is the unprecedented pace of change driven by AI. Unlike previous technological disruptions, the rapid acceleration of AI is challenging companies and society to adapt.

"It will have a big impact on the workforce. I'm very worried about the new generation of grads coming into the workplace already battling with a challenging time when it comes to the economy and opportunities for young people.

AI is going to make that more challenging, both from an opportunity point of view, but AI also has the potential risk of shaping the mindsets of young people so that they may become less critical (thinkers)".

AI also has the potential risk of shaping the mindsets of young people so that they may become less critical (thinkers).

Perseverance and Connection

"Technology is still a human business", built on relationships, communication, and emotional intelligence. In an increasingly remote-first world, this art of human interaction is at risk of being forgotten.

Lee holds a strong belief that perseverance and grit are what truly make people successful. "You know, the people who are the most brilliant in organisations that make the biggest impact, for me, aren't the most brilliant gifted coders or scientists or technologists, they need to have people who can push through when things are a little bit hard, and, you know, the people who accept that, buckle up, strap in our seatbelts, and push through, it's a bit of a rocky road, but we'll come through and come through at the other end ... those two (are the) things that I've learned the hard way, from my mentors and managers, and those are the things I try to pass on to the next generation of leaders and engineers in the industry."

Interviews

Sophie Davies-Patrick

Chief Technology Officer, MPB



Guiding Through Change

Sophie Davies-Patrick, CTO at [MPB](#), believes that a key role of the Chief Technology Officer is to lead their teams through periods of significant change. While acknowledging that AI is the current nexus of this change, she reinforced that this core function has always been and will continue to be fundamental to the role, much like past shifts driven by agile methodologies or other emerging technologies.

The Innovation and Governance Balancing Act

Successful innovation requires balancing rapid technological adoption with crucial governance responsibilities, “the really interesting challenge that AI definitely is subject to ... is how you innovate and go fast enough, but how you also take your responsibilities on the governance side of CTOs seriously. So, for example, what is the risk tolerance of the company you're at for speed versus quality, and what is non-negotiable? So data security, cyber security, call it what you will, of course, is paramount.”

To achieve this balance, Sophie has focused on empowering her team by providing them with dedicated time for professional development, removing financial barriers to experimentation with new tools, and securing executive buy-in for a culture of risk-taking. She emphasised that her CEO's understanding that some experiments will fail is critical to fostering a safe environment for innovation.

The Evolving Role of Engineers

Looking to the future, Sophie argues that while AI will change the tools engineers use and automate certain tasks, the essential skills of problem-solving and understanding a business's commercial context will become even more important. CTOs will continue to be the custodians of how technology drives business value.

“We put in place a dedicated continuous professional development time. So L&D time, which is fairly modest. It's a few hours every Friday afternoon, but it's enough time that it's a habit for the team. Those who want to experiment and don't have the time have that time. And those who are nervous to experiment can't use the fact that they don't have the time.”

What is the risk tolerance of the company you're at for speed versus quality, and what is non-negotiable?

With a broader horizon, Sophie sees that while the tools and technologies will continue to evolve, the fundamental purpose of a CTO will remain the same. Their primary job is to act as the custodian of how technology delivers value to the business. She argues that the core of an engineer's role—problem-solving, building, and automating—will not change. Instead, engineers will spend more time on understanding the business problem and the commercial context.

A Philosophy of Collaboration and Autonomy

Sophie's personal leadership philosophy is deeply influenced by the principles of the open-source movement, which she sees as a model for a culture of transparency and collaboration. “So when I started my career in the 90s, the open source movement was kind of really gaining momentum. And I chose technology as a career because I wanted to solve difficult problems in an interesting way.” She applies this by encouraging a system of “aligned autonomy,” where teams are empowered to solve problems within strategic guardrails. This approach, she believes, promotes a sense of shared ownership and empowers engineers to make decisions, removing perceived barriers to progress. “When I first came across open source, the concept that the community working together to solve problems we all have was so influential for me. I think we all take it for granted now that that is the philosophy of our community. You kind of forget, ... but that kind of underpinning of, if we all succeed together, is so fundamental to our industry.”

Interviews

Anna McDougall

Director of Engineering Operations, Blinkist



Anna McDougall is very recent to her new role as Director of Engineering Operations at [Blinkist](#) and offers a forward-thinking perspective on the evolving role of the technology leader.

As will be familiar to many new into a leadership role, she is currently focused on scaling and empowering the engineering team, supporting the career development and growth of the remote working engineers who have an office base in Berlin.

Security: An Overlooked Imperative

Anna identifies security as a crucial consideration for technology over the next 5 years. Something that many are either overlooking or don't fully appreciate the significance of. "I think that security is still to this day, one of the things that is most often overlooked. I think people are underestimating the capacity that we're going to need there ... I don't think it's quite clicked with everyone yet, just how much an average software engineer will need to be onboarded into cybersecurity."

As attacks become more automated and frequent, she believes the role of security will have to be integrated into the work of every software engineer, requiring a significant cultural and skill shift within teams. Anna also highlights the increasing importance of compliance and user privacy as global regulations and user awareness continue to grow.

I think people are underestimating the capacity that we're going to need there.



On the subject of AI, Anna provides a nuanced view. She explains, "The difficult part of software engineering for me is rarely ... about the actual writing of the code, when you think about the role of a software engineer, that's not actually the hardest part of their job." She continues, "The hardest part of their job is working out where to write the function, what the function should do, and how it connects to other systems. And that doesn't work with AI. Not yet. It doesn't have the capacity to bring that in." Therefore, McDougall predicts, "we might see in the next five years less of a focus on programming skills and more of a focus on system design, system thinking, DevOps, these kinds of things that impact the bigger code base because the actual generation of code will become less important for an individual."

Focus and Agility

Anna's leadership philosophy is built on two core principles. The first is to maintain an agile, low-ego leadership style, recognising that solutions from one company may not work in another. The second is an emphasis on focus: "Focus is the currency of an engineering department. It's not money. It's not even time. It's focus. If your engineering team does not have the ability to focus on specific tasks... it's never going to work." To answer that, Anna is a keen advocate for building processes around protecting engineers' time and concentration, and that that every interruption costs the business in both time and money.

Interviews

Claire Knight

Chief Technology Officer, Sailhouse



Hands-On Leadership Over Ivory Towers

Claire Knight, CTO of [Sailhouse](#), champions a hands-on approach to AI adoption. Emphasising the empowerment of engineers to explore new tools, fostering a culture where they "can empower themselves and grow." This experimental mindset, rather than a rigid "18-month roadmap," allows for agility and a focus. As Claire states, "What I'm looking at is, what does it bring us now, and is there an ROI there?" She cautions against placing unreasonable and restrictive demands on the point at which AI adoption and day-to-day work demands meet, "We're going back to ... silly metrics again that we know don't work." This prevents chasing fleeting trends and ensures that AI solutions genuinely contribute to reliability and business goals.

Cutting Through the Hype

A critical aspect of Claire Knight's strategy is cutting through the pervasive "hype" surrounding AI. She is using her experience to discern practical applications from overblown claims, educating her team that "just because somebody can knock out a demo in three seconds doesn't mean that they are production-ready systems." Claire acknowledges that many leaders are looking for easy answers, but she believes that "there is no playbook. It's still so new. You've got to get in there. And what's right now probably isn't what was right six months ago."

Don't Forget the People

Looking forward, Claire underscores that "don't forget the people" is the paramount directive for CTOs. She believes that "in every high-performing team that I've been in or had under my report, people feel safe and empowered." The fear of AI replacing jobs, she notes, is antithetical to this environment. The human element, including the changing structures of engineering organisations and career ladders, remains a central challenge and opportunity. "Wrangling people matters as much as wrangling the tech here," highlighting the ongoing need for empathetic leadership.

In every high-performing team that I've been in or had under my report, people feel safe and empowered.



The Power of Honest Communication

Claire's leadership beliefs are rooted in honesty. She champions direct and authentic communication, even during difficult times. "I always tell my reports that I want to see them succeed, whether it's here or somewhere else... I'd rather we were honest with each other... I want to see you have a career, not just a job here," she openly tells her reports, building trust and fostering long-term career growth. This contrasts sharply with "toxic positivity," which she believes "doesn't help anybody." For Claire, "What you say and how you say it matters," and genuine honesty, even when certain things cannot be fully disclosed, is crucial for maintaining integrity and a resilient team culture.

Interviews

Michael Lopp

Founder, Rands in Repose



A Leader's Role in a Revolution

Author, Engineering Leader and Founder of the Rands Leadership Slack, Michael Lopp's primary focus right now is on understanding the AI revolution that has descended on us. "I've been through several similar revolutions in the last few decades, such as the arrival of the Internet and then the rise of Social. Both of these revolutions were ignited by technology, but have had repercussions far beyond the introduction of innovative new technology. A leader's role is two-fold: understand the implications and forecast the consequences."

Michael notes that we are still in the midst of understanding the implications of the AI revolution but that, from a personal perspective, he finds great value in using AI tools for prototyping, building ideas, and conducting research. While the inherent value is clear, however, a core question remains: what is the concrete value and how will humans adapt?

"As with all revolutions, the excitement is, well, noisy. A leader's job is to find that signal and communicate it as clearly as possible. As with all revolutions, the enthusiasm is often loud and misguided. Humans worry about the future by making stuff up and telling their friends. While it's noisy, their fear is actually a signal. It's the first signal about potential consequences."

One Million Eager Interns

Speaking to the future of the CTO role, Michael Lopp believes the biggest change in the next five years will be the integration of AI, which he likens to "one million eager interns." The tools, while powerful, are inexperienced and require clear direction to be effective. "Interns are enthusiastic, but inexperienced. Interns represent the future of your workforce, but when they arrive, they slow you down because you have to teach them how to work."

"The robots are devious because they have so much information, but they are interns. If you don't point them in a direction, they'll just sit there. Smiling ignorantly. They won't do a thing unless you tell them."

"A leader's role, relative to the organisation, is to determine how to successfully graft one million eager interns into the organisation. The path of least resistance strategy is to assume the robots will replace more junior employees. Incorrect. The robots will replace the junior employees who have not figured out how to work adeptly with these tools." "I see these tools as an accelerant, and it's the leadership's job to prepare the organisation to embrace the accelerant."

Human-Centric Leadership

Michael's core leadership strategy remains a very human one however, "hire talented humans, put hard problems right in front of them, and support them in solving the hard problems."



Interviews

Dwayne Forde

Co-Founder & CTO, Mantle



The AI Revolution: More Than Just a Tool

Dwayne Forde is focused on Mantle's larger vision to become the "Bloomberg for the private markets," a goal that hinges on tackling vast amounts of previously unstructured data. The rise of AI has added a new layer of complexity to this challenge. It's no longer just about building technology; it's about discerning how and where to apply AI effectively without over-investing.

Accurately scoping a project has become a balancing act. AI can drastically cut down development time, but misjudging its capabilities can throw an entire project off schedule. It's an ongoing, daily effort to sort through the hype and identify which tools and models offer true value.

Rethinking the Engineering Team

Looking ahead five years, Dwayne believes AI will fundamentally redefine the CTO's priorities and reshape the engineering organisation. He argues that many of the roles "farther away from the core codebase," such as release management and specific testing functions, will be increasingly automated by AI agents. This presents a massive opportunity.

CTOs should actively push the boundaries of automation in these areas. The goal is to bring these teams and their expertise closer to the core development efforts, accelerating feature delivery and increasing value to customers.

The CTO's New Essential Skill: Networking

Unlike five to eight years ago when technology playbooks were more standardised, being an effective CTO today requires constant connection with peers. As he puts it, "Community is almost a necessity. You're not getting the best out of yourself as a CTO, or you're not doing your org justice unless you're out there talking to other CTOs that are experimenting, playing around with different tools, experimenting with different models."

For Dwayne, who self-identifies as an introvert, networking has become a learned and crucial skill. He participates in tight-knit groups with other notable CTOs, often via platforms like WhatsApp, to share learnings and compare notes. He notes that these leaders are "hungry to figure out what other people are doing constantly because they know they need to take those learnings and bring it into the group." He actively brings these outside learnings back to his team.

I feel like the best CTOs I've ever met, the best mentors I had, they're constantly talking to other CTOs, talking about tools of their trade and everything else.

Ultimately, Dwayne's message is clear: the CTO of the future must be a strategic leader who understands how to harness AI, restructure teams for maximum efficiency, and, above all, remain deeply connected to the broader technology community. "I feel like the best CTOs I've ever met, the best mentors ever had, they're constantly talking to other CTOs, talking about tools of their trade and everything else."

Interviews

Claus Höfele

Head of Engineering, On



The CTO as a Master Facilitator

Claus Höfele believes that the role of a CTO is increasingly becoming that of a "facilitator or a moderator". A shift that he sees as particularly critical in the post-COVID era, where remote and hybrid work models have become the norm, and where individual work preferences have grown, making genuine collaboration more challenging.

"Work becomes very individualised," Claus notes, creating a need for leaders to "plan and structure these collaborations much more purposefully or much more specifically to make them work." For him, software development is inherently a team sport, "too complex for one person to do it by themselves." The modern CTO, therefore, must ensure that, despite geographical or timezone differences, teams can still coalesce around a shared vision and purpose. This involves ensuring every voice contributes to product priorities and understanding the "why" behind their efforts.

The role of a CTO is increasingly becoming that of a facilitator or a moderator.

The Power of Adaptable Leadership

When discussing what underpins his leadership style, Claus champions adaptability. Referencing [Daniel Goleman's research](#) on leadership styles, he says "there is not one particular style that works all the time." Effective leaders are those who can fluidly shift their approach based on the context and specific challenges at hand.

For Claus, the key is for leaders to "figure out your own style... then find a good match with the company." A sentiment that has been articulated by many of the leaders we've talked to who have highlighted the importance of aligning your leadership approach with the business's lifecycle stage and specific demands.



Interviews

Joel Cumming

Chief Technology Officer, SkyWatch



AI as a "Power Tool"

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Joel Cumming's immediate focus at SkyWatch revolves around integrating AI into the development lifecycle. He firmly believes in leveraging AI as a "power tool" to augment human capabilities, not to replace them. "The analogy I used is like, instead of shoveling your driveway full of snow, use a snowblower."

However, he acknowledges the external pressure on tech orgs from investors and CEOs who eye AI as a means to simultaneously reduce cost and increase productivity, and rapidly! This shift, he notes, is pushing "revenue per engineer" to become a closely watched metric, presenting a significant challenge for engineering leaders to navigate.

The Dawn of "Zero-Cost" Software

Joel envisions a radical transformation in software economics, driven by AI. He draws on another analogy to the content creation revolution brought about by YouTube and Instagram: "If you wanted to do content curation before YouTube or before Instagram, how would you do it? It's very hard... And now, YouTube has come along and here's a medium where anybody can create their own content... I believe that the marginal cost of building software will (at some point) be zero."

This paradigm shift, he argues, will lead to an "explosion in software that can fill more niches," empowering companies to build custom solutions rather than relying solely on off-the-shelf products. The focus for smart people will shift from writing commoditised code to discerning market opportunities and applying human judgment.

Empathetic Leadership in an Age of Automation

Amidst technological disruption, Joel champions a timeless leadership philosophy: servant leadership. His approach prioritises empowering his team by removing roadblocks and fostering an environment where they can thrive.

He draws a parallel to his experience coaching youth sports, noting that even professional athletes benefit from overwhelmingly positive feedback. "I think Nick Nurse, was the coach of the Toronto Raptors, said, even in the NBA, he gives about five or six pieces of positive feedback before he gives one piece of constructive feedback. And these guys are pros, right?" Joel actively challenges the notion that wild success requires a "jerk" persona, striving to demonstrate that leaders can be both highly effective and deeply supportive of their teams, especially as machines take on more of the technical work.

I believe that the marginal cost of building software will (at some point) be zero.



Interviews

Sally Lait

Fractional Technology Leader & Advisor,
Self Employed



A Sociotechnical Challenge

While artificial intelligence naturally dominates discussions about the future of technology leadership, Sally Lait emphasises a crucial, often overlooked, aspect: the "sociotechnical stuff." She believes that while CTOs must grapple with the "blurring... of roles from traditional software engineering management and leadership paths, and more ML-specific leadership roles," the human element remains paramount. The challenge lies in leading organisations through constant change, with a focus on upskilling strategies, and stances on issues like remote working and return-to-office policies. Tech strategy and people decisions are inextricably linked and if you "can't get the right people," the two things won't come together.

Prioritising Stability Amidst Swirl

For Sally, preparing for this shift means anchoring teams with stability. "With any kind of paradigm shift you're living through whether that's a big change like AI or companies restructuring or any other kind of unknowns, I think it's always important to help people cling on to the bits that are constant and don't change," she explains. This involves building a strong culture, fostering psychological safety, and enabling continuous learning – foundational pieces that "are going to continue to be just as important if not more so."



The Remote Work Dilemma and Diversity

The discussion also touched upon the persistent debate around remote work. Sally, living in a small village, advocates for flexibility, noting its importance for her own life and particularly as a parent. She believes that while some companies thrive with strong office stances, the ultimate decision "has got to be what's right for the business," considering local talent, employer brand, and diversity. Sally also underscores the importance of creating supportive and flexible environments meaning "the wider the people you'll be able to attract hopefully."

Authenticity and Integrity in Leadership

Sally's leadership revolves around authenticity and integrity. Having learned from diverse leadership styles, and with the confidence that comes with experience, she champions openness. Through initiatives like weekly updates that share both professional and personal challenges, she aims to provide exposure to senior leadership and demonstrate that "you can succeed as a leader, but you know, you might have challenges." This approach builds trust and relationships, allowing individuals "to really feel that they are seen and that they can bring their strengths," ultimately fostering inclusive environments.

Interviews

Melissa Proxenos

Principal Solutions Director, Brightbeam



Buzzword to Business Solution

Melissa's current focus at [Brightbeam](#) is on bridging the gap between recognising AI's importance and actually implementing it effectively. Many technology leaders are "so stuck with their day-to-day issues that they don't know where to go". Melissa's solution involves structured workshops that guide companies to define clear problem statements, ensuring that AI is adopted as a strategic tool rather than merely a checkbox to be ticked. Melissa explains, "What's the use case? What are you trying to solve?"

The Expanding Universe of the CTO

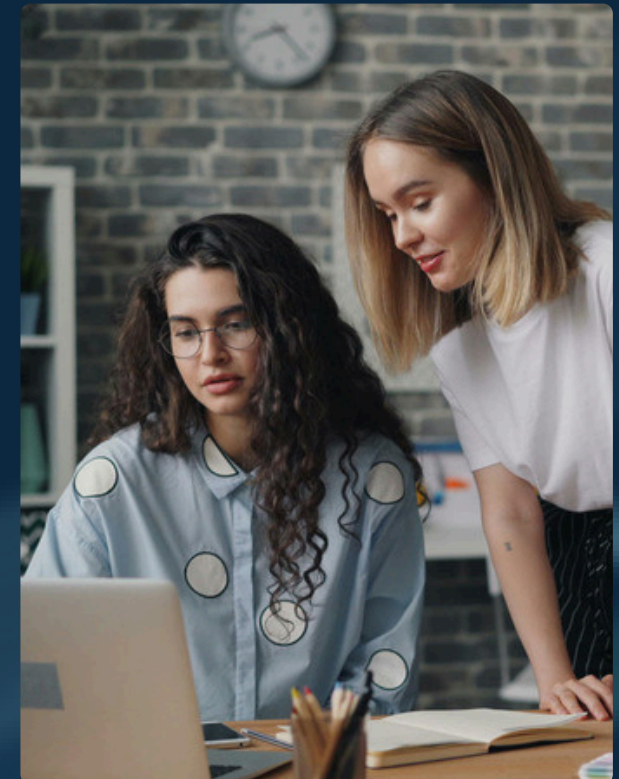
The definition of a CTO, Melissa notes, is becoming increasingly fluid and demanding. She describes a rapidly changing landscape for technology roles with automation and AI diminishing traditional developer roles, pushing those who remain into more senior positions or out of the industry. This shift broadens the CTO's remit dramatically. "It kind of feels like the CTO isn't just a specific role anymore. It's like you're being expected to do sales, pre-sales, account management, program management, project management, product management even ... you have to know about security and ISO and compliance and SOC and all these things. Otherwise, you're almost going to become irrelevant," she warns.

Leading in an Era of Overload

The accelerating pace of technological change is undoubtedly creating significant stress. Melissa personally finds it "very stressful" to keep up, admitting, "It almost feels like I want to be able to plug it into my brain just to keep up. My reading list is massive." To combat this, she emphasises the importance of shared knowledge and community. That extends beyond technology leaders to other disciplines including areas of security and compliance such as the nearby Dublin-based legal firm who hold monthly meetup on compliance that Melissa supports "it's great because they can tell me exactly what's happening in the industry, what the latest news is, the latest hacks, everything." Melissa also advocates for shared space with peers "There's a quarterly roundtable of CTOs I go to often as well. And it helps. It's a bit of a therapy session. You know, you complain about your troubles, but at least you know you're not alone and you learn quite a lot from your peers."

Beyond technical expertise, Melissa's leadership philosophy is deeply human-centric. Drawing from her own journey and mentorship, she believes in empowering people not just for individual success but for the broader impact on their careers and what difference that can mean to their lives and those around them. "I got into one of those STEM bursaries ... If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't be here today. End of story ... And then throughout my career, it's been just people investing in me."

"One of my best mentors .. didn't actually run the (1:1) sessions. He would make me present to him. When somebody explains something to you, you kind of listen and it goes in one ear and out the other. But when you have to explain it, you realise how much you don't know ... I like the same approach because I feel like a lot goes in. Both parties learn a lot."



Interviews

Tamara Miner

Chief Technology Officer, Climate Policy Radar



Beyond Climate

For Tamara Miner, like for many CTO's, immediate focus is marked by significant expansion. Her team is on the cusp of launching a new Litigation dataset in collaboration with Columbia University's Sabin Center, an initiative poised to double their existing data set and user base. This growth isn't just about scaling; it's a strategic pivot. "I'm excited to start driving our technology strategy around platformisation, which will enable us to expand beyond the climate domain." This forward-thinking approach highlights a key challenge for many CTOs: how to build extensible, scalable systems that can support current success while opening doors to future, unforeseen opportunities.

Future-Proofing the CTO: AI, Ethics, and Global Dynamics

Tamara believes the next five years will fundamentally redefine the CTO's role, driven by three forces: AI, geopolitics, and climate change. She emphasised the critical importance of responsible AI development, "As CTO, caring deeply about responsible and ethical AI – both in development and how we use it – is very top of mind". This commitment extends to ensuring humans are firmly in the loop to ensure accuracy and credibility in what they are building, proactively setting standards to prevent potential pitfalls.

Beyond AI, Tamara's perspective on geopolitics and climate change underscores a broader truth: technology leaders must now operate with a deep awareness of global events.

Empowering Potential

Tamara shared a profound lesson from the technology community: "Create opportunities for people to stretch and demonstrate capabilities beyond your expectations." She passionately advocates for trusting potential, noting that "just because someone hasn't yet demonstrated something doesn't mean they don't have the capacity to do it, and even do it well!" This philosophy—taking calculated risks and showing confidence in individuals—often yields surprising successes.

Tamara actively "pays that forward" by coaching new leaders, encouraging them to empower their teams and providing tailored support. This involves helping them understand how to "help set others up for success in different contexts," recognising that a junior engineer requires a different level of guidance than a seasoned veteran.

Create
opportunities for
people to stretch
and demonstrate
capabilities beyond
your expectations.



Methodology

The final list of 100 influential technology and engineering leaders was compiled through a process designed to balance widespread industry input with the expert judgment of our community's leadership.

The journey began with a publicly available nomination survey, which extended far beyond the CTO Craft community to capture a truly global perspective. This open call resulted in a rich pool of candidates, comprising both self-nominations from accomplished leaders and powerful peer nominations submitted by colleagues, mentors, and industry observers who recognised the nominees' impact.

The nomination criteria were strictly focused on concrete evidence of leadership and individuals who demonstrated excellence in one or more of the report's critical themes. We evaluated submissions based on their demonstrable influence in:

- **Innovation:** Driving forward-looking technology agendas and translating new research into scalable, impactful products.
- **Organisational Impact:** Making a measurable difference to their company's resilience, strategic direction, and overall technological maturity.
- **Community Contribution:** Actively shaping culture, promoting ethical technology deployment, or investing in the development of future technical talent.

Following the initial collection phase, CTO Craft community's leadership undertook a thorough review of the entire candidate list to provide informed and experienced judgment; guided by a core commitment to reflecting a broad, global, and diverse modern technology industry.

The goal was to ensure the final cohort of 100 names was not only exceptionally accomplished but also offered a comprehensive snapshot of the most impactful and forward-thinking senior technical leadership operating across the world in 2025.

This final, curated list represents the leaders whose ideas and actions are genuinely setting the pace for the technology and engineering landscape.

Acknowledgements

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Sally Lait
Fractional Technology Leader &
Advisor, Self Employed



Claus Höfele
Head of Engineering
On



Lee Provoost
Chief Technology Officer
Flagstone



Sophie Davies-Patrick
Chief Technology Officer
MPB



Claire Knight
Chief Technology Officer
Sailhouse



Melissa Proxenos
Principal Solutions Director
Brightbeam



Tamara Miner
Chief Technology Officer, Climate
Policy Radar



Dwayne Forde
Co-Founder & CTO
Mantle



Michael Lopp
Founder
Rands in Repose

About Us

At CTO Craft, we're all about building a vibrant, supportive community for senior technology leaders. Since 2017, we've grown from a few informal meet-ups into a global network of over 18,000 tech leaders who come together to learn, share, and support one another.

Being a CTO or senior tech leader can feel isolating – full of challenges and tough decisions. That's why we're here: to help you connect, grow, and feel part of a community that truly understands your journey.

We bring people together – whether through lively Slack groups, insightful Campus sessions, or flagship conferences where you can share stories and learn from peers. Plus, our roundtables, in-person Bytes, and mixers keep the conversation going, both online and offline.

We believe in the power of shared wisdom. Our Mentoring Circles and one-on-one coaching pair you with experienced CTOs who've been there before. Whether it's deep-dives, quick Bytes for inspiration, or hands-on workshops, we're here to support your growth.

We're passionate about keeping you ahead of the curve with valuable content – from insightful reports and thought pieces to videos, newsletters, and certifications.

Join the CTO Craft Community

The CTO Craft Community is for Chief Technology Officers and senior technology leaders from all types of organisations: whether you're leading in a start-up, scale-up, enterprise, or non-profit, or you're simply aspiring to step into a senior technology leadership role.

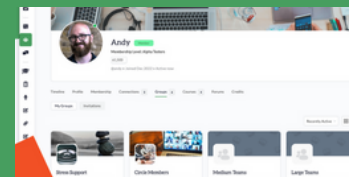
By joining CTO Craft, you gain access to:

- **Learning Opportunities:** Access a wide range of resources to enhance your leadership skills and expertise, including engaging conferences, in-person Mixers, interactive online Bytes events, hands-on workshops, our comprehensive online learning hub Campus, and tailored mentoring programmes.
- **A Supportive Network:** Connect with a diverse community of peers in our exclusive Slack membership group who've faced similar challenges, offering you valuable insights and guidance.
- **Expert Guidance:** Benefit from the wisdom of experienced professionals and industry leaders who provide actionable strategies and practical advice.
- **Collaborative Environment:** Enjoy a safe, inclusive space across all of our online resources and in-person events where you can share experiences, tackle challenges, and build meaningful connections with like-minded leaders.

Join the CTO Craft Community



Upcoming Events



Campus



Mentoring Circles

A huge **thank you** to everyone who took the time to nominate a leader. Your insights and reflections have been invaluable in shaping this report and shining a light on the achievements of 100 outstanding technology leaders.

This work simply wouldn't exist without your contributions. By sharing your experiences, you've helped us capture a clearer picture of today's tech leadership landscape and ensured this report truly reflects the voices of our community.



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Thank you to our Partners:

