



Future-Proofing Healthcare IT: A Strategic Approach to CIO and CDIO Hiring

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01 Introduction

The roles of healthcare Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Chief Digital and Information Officer (CDIO) have evolved into pivotal positions within healthcare organizations.

Depending on an organization's digital maturity and innovation priorities, they typically have either a CIO or a CDIO leading their IT operations.

These roles are no longer just about maintaining systems; they now play a strategic role in driving innovation, enhancing patient care, and shaping the overall business strategy.

Drawing on Kirby Partners' 35 years of experience in healthcare IT executive search, this guide serves as a powerful resource for healthcare organizations. It empowers them to clearly define their leadership requirements and create compelling job descriptions for either CIO or CDIO roles based on their specific needs and digital transformation goals.

By leveraging these industry insights and best practices, organizations can position themselves to attract exceptional leaders who will drive their digital transformation and advance their strategic objectives.

02 Evolution of the CIO Role

The CIO role has significantly transformed as healthcare organizations navigate the digital age. Understanding this evolution is crucial for crafting compelling job descriptions that attract forward-thinking leaders. Based on industry research and our team's insights, we have identified three key stages in CIO evolution.

CIO Level 1 - Operational Enabler

Organizational Maturity: IT is primarily viewed as a support service, focused on maintaining infrastructure and system uptime.

Primary Focus: Delivering reliable IT operations and regulatory compliance.

Reporting Structure: May report to the CFO, COO, or CAO with limited strategic input at the executive level.

Title Level: Often titled Chief Information Officer, VP of IT, or Director of Information Services (without full executive team membership).

Key Responsibilities:

- Managing infrastructure, networks, security tools, and enterprise applications.
- Supporting day-to-day operational needs and responding to technical incidents.
- Ensuring system reliability, uptime, and disaster recovery readiness.
- Implementing and maintaining core IT compliance standards.
- Optimizing the cost-efficiency of IT services.

Ideal for: Organizations focused on operational reliability that have not yet embedded IT into broader business or clinical strategies.

CIO Level 2 - Business Integrator

Organizational Maturity: Technology is seen as a business enabler, integrated into clinical, administrative, and operational workflows.

Primary Focus: Aligning IT strategy with enterprise goals, improving operational performance, and enabling risk-managed growth.

Reporting Structure: Reports to the CEO, CFO, or Chief Strategy Officer, with active participation in executive discussions.

Title Level: Chief Information Officer/SVP of Information Technology

Key Responsibilities:

- Developing and executing IT strategies that align with business and clinical objectives.
- Facilitating enterprise system integration across departments and service lines.
- Enhancing cybersecurity resilience and business continuity capabilities.
- Supporting foundational enterprise analytics and governance programs.
- Improving operational efficiency through strategic technology adoption.
- Partnering cross-functionally to align IT investments with business transformation efforts.

Ideal for: Organizations that are evolving from focusing solely on IT system upkeep to leveraging technology as a strategic driver of operational performance and risk management.

CIO Level 3 - Digital Innovator

Organizational Maturity: Technology leadership is embedded in business initiatives, driving innovation, agility, and consumer-centric transformation.

Primary Focus: Leading digital initiatives that enhance patient experience, optimize clinical and operational workflows, and create strategic differentiation.

Reporting Structure: Reports to the CEO or President; collaborates closely with C-suite peers with board involvement.

Title Level: Chief Information Officer or Chief Digital and Information Officer (CDIO).

Key Responsibilities:

- Leading enterprise digital health initiatives (e.g., telehealth, digital front doors, ambient documentation, remote monitoring).
- Enhancing patient, consumer, and provider digital experiences through human-centered design.
- Implementing emerging technologies such as AI, machine learning, cloud ecosystems, and IoT.
- Building cross-functional groups combining IT, clinical, operational, and business expertise to collaboratively design and deliver digital innovations.
- Scaling data governance, automation, and advanced analytics capabilities across the organization.
- Establishing partnerships with tech vendors, startups, and academic institutions to accelerate innovation.

Ideal for: Organizations undergoing significant digital transformation and seeking to embed innovation and agility into core business and care models.

CIO Level 4 - Enterprise Digital Innovator

Organizational Maturity: Technology strategy is fully integrated with enterprise governance, driving competitive advantage, market growth, and consumer trust.

Primary Focus: Leading the healthcare organization's transformation into a digital-first, data-driven enterprise where technology is a catalyst for strategic success.

Reporting Structure: Reports directly to the CEO or Board of Directors and is treated as a full peer to C-suite leaders.

Title Level: Chief Digital and Information Officer (CDIO) or Chief Transformation Officer with IT oversight.

Key Responsibilities:

- Architecting enterprise-wide digital and AI strategies that drive clinical, operational, and financial innovation and efficiency.
- Advising the board on digital transformation, AI governance, cyber risk, and digital trust initiatives
- Leading cross-functional teams across clinical, operational, and technology domains to drive enterprise-wide digital transformation.
- Building resilient, cloud-first, consumer-first ecosystems underpinned by robust cybersecurity.
- Leading workforce transformation through reskilling, automation strategy, and AI enablement
- Creating an organizational culture of responsible innovation and continuous digital evolution
- Establishing sustainable innovation funding models by leveraging internal budgets, strategic partnerships, grants, philanthropy, and, at more advanced organizations, venture investments.

Ideal for: Large, digitally mature organizations where digital leadership is essential to long-term success, market differentiation, and delivering care excellence.

03 The Rise of the CDIO

As healthcare organizations increasingly recognize the transformative power of digital technologies, a new role has emerged among more innovative institutions: the Chief Digital and Information Officer (CDIO).

This position represents a strategic evolution beyond the traditional CIO role, emphasizing the critical importance of digital transformation in healthcare.

Chief Information Officer (CIO)

Primary Focus: Managing information technology infrastructure and systems

Key Responsibilities:

- Overseeing IT operations and security
- Managing enterprise applications
- Ensuring system integration
- Developing IT strategies aligned with business goals

Chief Digital Information Officer (CDIO)

Primary Focus: Driving digital transformation while managing IT infrastructure

Key Responsibilities:

- All CIO responsibilities
- Leading digital innovation initiatives
- Enhancing patient and provider digital experiences
- Integrating emerging technologies (AI, IoT, etc.)
- Driving data-driven decision-making across the organization



04 Deciding between a CIO & CDIO

Consider the following factors when deciding between a CIO and CDIO:

- **Organizational Size and Complexity:** Larger, more complex organizations may benefit from a CDIO to drive comprehensive digital transformation.
- **Digital Maturity:** Organizations in the early stages of digital adoption may start with a CIO, while those ready for advanced digital initiatives might need a CDIO.
- **Strategic Priorities:** If digital transformation is a top strategic priority, a CDIO might be more appropriate.
- **Budget and Resources:** CDIOs typically require larger budgets for innovation and digital initiatives.
- **Existing Leadership Structure:** Consider how a CIO or CDIO would fit into your current executive team.

We know from leading many executive searches for these roles that a CDIO role often attracts high-caliber candidates seeking broader responsibilities and greater influence on organizational strategy.

This expanded role can be a powerful draw for innovative leaders eager to spearhead comprehensive digital transformation.

Kirby Partners welcomes the opportunity to help you assess your IT leadership needs.

We can leverage our healthcare technology executive search expertise to help you identify the ideal IT leader for your organization's current and future needs, even if that means departing from past leadership models.

05

IT Needs Assessment

Before writing a job description, thoroughly assess organizational needs. Include diverse stakeholders for a comprehensive evaluation.

Consider current and future leadership requirements with an open mind. Use the following checklist to guide discussions.



Evaluate your current IT capabilities and infrastructure: Identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in your existing systems as well as technical debt



Identify critical technological and business challenges facing your organization: Consider both immediate issues and anticipated future challenges



Assess your organization's digital transformation readiness: Evaluate your current digital maturity and appetite for innovation



Review strategic priorities for the next 3–5 years: Evaluate IT roadmap alignment with organizational objectives; ensure IT strategy supports broader business strategy



Consider your budget for IT and digital initiatives: Assess financial resources available for technology investments



Evaluate your organization's culture and readiness for change: Gauge adaptability and openness to new technologies and processes



Assess the skills and capabilities of your existing IT team: Identify areas where leadership can complement or enhance current expertise

This evaluation will provide a comprehensive picture of your organization's current state and future needs. You may need a different type of leader than you've had previously.

06 Crafting an Effective Job Description

Whether you're hiring a CIO or CDIO, your job description should communicate the role's responsibilities, required qualifications, and your organization's expectations.

Here are important elements to include:

About the Organization

- Organization overview
- Description of your culture
- Diversity and inclusion statement

About the Role

- Job title and reporting structure
- Position summary
- Key responsibilities
- Qualifications

Role Context

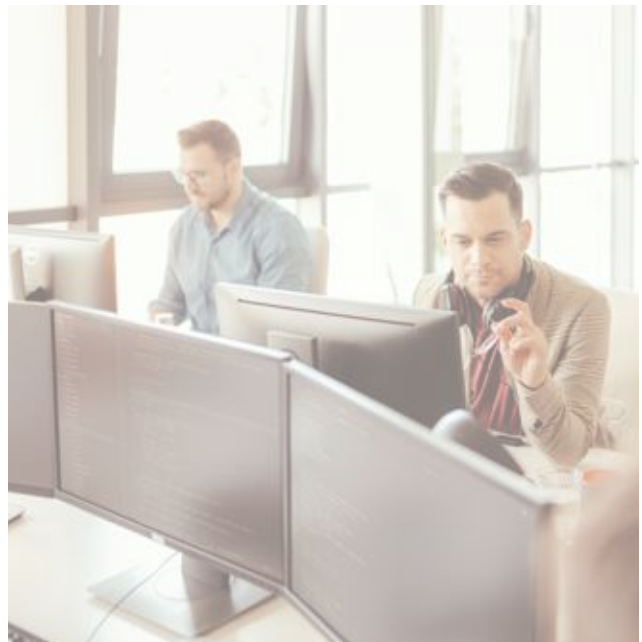
- Team structure
- Stakeholder relationships
- Performance expectations
- Key projects and initiatives
- Organizational impact

Work Arrangements and Benefits

- Work location
- Hybrid option (if any)
- Professional development opportunities
- Compensation and benefits

Application Process

- How to apply
- Timeline for decision making
- Contact person within your organization



07 Sample CIO/CDIO Job Description

About the Role:

Title: Chief Information Officer (CIO) OR Chief Digital and Information Officer (CDIO)

Reports to: Chief Executive Officer

Position Summary:

The [CIO/CDIO] will lead our organization's information technology strategy and operations, ensuring that our IT infrastructure and systems support and enhance our ability to deliver high-quality patient care and achieve operational excellence. This role is critical in driving our digital transformation initiatives and fostering organizational innovation.

Add the following for a CDIO role: The CDIO will spearhead comprehensive digital strategies, leveraging emerging technologies to revolutionize patient care, clinical operations, and business processes.

Key Responsibilities:

(For both CIO and CDIO)

- Develop and execute a comprehensive IT strategy aligned with organizational goals
- Oversee all IT operations, including infrastructure, security, and enterprise applications
- Ensure the effective integration of IT systems across the organization
- Lead IT governance and compliance efforts
- Manage relationships with technology vendors and partners
- Collaborate with clinical and administrative leaders to identify and implement technology solutions that improve patient care and operational efficiency
- Serve as a member of the executive leadership team, contributing to overall organizational strategy
- Drive digital innovation and transformation initiatives

Key Responsibilities Continued:

For a CDIO, add these elements to list on the previous page:

- Lead the identification, evaluation, and implementation of emerging technologies (e.g., AI, IoT, telemedicine) to drive innovation in healthcare delivery
- Enhance and reimagine patient and provider digital experiences, focusing on user-centric design
- Cultivate a culture of innovation and digital literacy throughout the organization
- Develop and implement strategies for digital health initiatives, such as remote patient monitoring and virtual care
- Drive data-driven decision-making across the organization, including the development of advanced analytics and AI capabilities
- Serve as the organization's digital evangelist, representing the company at industry events and fostering partnerships with other innovative healthcare organizations

Role Context:

Team Structure: The [CIO/CDIO] will lead a team of [X] IT professionals, including directors of Infrastructure, Applications, and Security. The role oversees an annual budget of approximately \$[X] million.

Stakeholder Relationships: The [CIO/CDIO] will work closely with the executive team, clinical leaders, department heads, and external partners. Key relationships include the [Chief Medical Officer, Chief Nursing Officer, and Chief Financial Officer, etc].

Performance Expectations:

- Improved IT system performance and reliability
- Successful implementation of key IT projects on time and within budget
- Enhanced cybersecurity measures and reduced security incidents
- Improved operational efficiency through technology solutions
- Demonstrated ROI on technology investments
- Increased user satisfaction with IT services

For a CDIO, add these items:

- Successful implementation of digital transformation initiatives
- Improved patient and provider experiences through digital solutions
- Increased adoption of innovative technologies across the organization

Key Projects and Initiatives:

- [List 2–3 major upcoming IT/digital projects or initiatives]

Qualifications:

(For both CIO and CDIO)

Education:

- Bachelor's Degree required
- Master's degree in Information Technology, Business Administration, or related field preferred
- Relevant certifications are highly desirable

Experience and Expertise:

- 10+ years of progressive experience in IT leadership roles, with at least 5 years in healthcare or a similarly complex industry
- Strong understanding of healthcare industry trends, regulations, and IT innovations
- Demonstrated success in managing enterprise-wide IT operations and infrastructure
- Deep expertise in IT governance, compliance, and risk management
- Strong background in IT service management and operational excellence
- Experience in optimizing IT processes and implementing best practices
- Proven track record in managing large-scale IT projects and system implementations
- Experience in developing and executing comprehensive IT strategic plans
- Expertise in vendor management and strategic sourcing
- Ability to align IT initiatives with overall business objectives
- Strong knowledge of IT financial management and budgeting
- Experience with advanced data analytics and cybersecurity in healthcare settings
- Track record of fostering innovation and driving cultural change in large organizations

For a CDIO, add these items:

- Demonstrated success in leading large-scale digital transformation initiatives
- Deep understanding of digital platforms and their potential applications in healthcare
- Expertise in user experience (UX) design and its application in healthcare settings
- Experience with emerging technologies such as AI and IoT in healthcare settings
- Strong background in digital product development and innovation methodologies
- Proven ability to drive data-driven decision-making across an organization
- Visionary leadership with the ability to inspire and drive organization-wide digital innovation
- Experience in developing and implementing comprehensive digital health strategies
- Ability to bridge the gap between IT and other departments to create a digital-first organization
- Track record of enhancing patient and provider experiences through digital solutions
- Expertise in change management specific to digital adoption and transformation

Qualifications Continued:

Leadership and Soft Skills:

- Strategic thinker with excellent problem-solving abilities
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills
- Proven change management and project management experience
- Ability to build and lead high-performing teams
- Collaborative approach to working with diverse stakeholders

Work Arrangements:

This is a full-time, on-site position based at our headquarters in [City, State]. Some travel to other facilities may be required. [Detail work arrangements]

Professional Development Opportunities:

We are committed to the growth of our leaders. The [CIO/CDIO] will have opportunities to attend industry conferences, participate in executive education programs, and engage in peer networking groups.

Compensation and Benefits:

We offer a competitive salary commensurate with experience and a comprehensive benefits package that includes health insurance, retirement plans, and professional development support.

Application Process:

Interested candidates should submit a resume and cover letter to [email/application portal]. The selection process will include initial screenings, panel interviews with key stakeholders, and a presentation of your vision for IT/digital transformation in our organization.

[Organization] is an Equal Opportunity Employer. We evaluate qualified applicants without regard to race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, disability, veteran status, and other legally protected characteristics.

08 Attracting High-Quality Leaders

Here are strategies to make your organization stand out and appeal to high-quality candidates:

Showcase Your Organization's Commitment to Innovation

- Highlight recent technological advancements or digital transformation initiatives
- Emphasize leadership's support for IT and digital strategies
- Showcase any partnerships with tech companies or startups

Offer Competitive Compensation

- Conduct market research to ensure your salary range and benefits are competitive
- Consider offering performance-based bonuses tied to specific IT objectives
- Provide opportunities for continued education and professional development

Emphasize Growth Opportunities

- Outline potential career progression paths within the organization
- Highlight opportunities to lead innovative projects or initiatives
- Showcase how the CIO role contributes to overall organizational strategy

Promote Work-Life Balance and Organizational Culture

- Emphasize your organization's mission and values
- Highlight flexible work arrangements, if available
- Showcase your organization's commitment to employee well-being

Leverage Your Network and Partnerships

- Utilize professional networks and industry associations to reach potential candidates
- Consider partnering with a specialized healthcare IT recruitment firm, such as Kirby Partners
- Encourage employee referrals, especially from your IT department

Optimize Candidates' Experience

- Streamline the application process with a user-friendly, mobile-responsive system
- Maintain clear and consistent communication throughout the recruitment journey
- Provide prompt feedback after each stage of the interview process
- Offer personalized interactions with key stakeholders and potential team members

09 CIO/CDIO Interviewing Strategies

Applying best practices on this page will help your organization assess candidates thoroughly and make informed hiring decisions.

Streamlining the Interview Process

Moving candidates quickly through the interview process reduces the chance they'll accept a competing offer while demonstrating that you value their time and are serious about their candidacy.

- Establish a compressed timeline for the entire interview process and communicate this to candidates upfront.
- Pre-arrange stakeholder availability to avoid delays in scheduling interviews.
- Leverage video interviews for initial rounds.
- Reduce the number of separate interview sessions. Consider panel interviews or full-day events where candidates meet multiple stakeholders.
- Offer quick feedback after each interview stage to keep candidates engaged and informed.
- Empower your hiring team to make quick decisions when they encounter exceptional candidates.

Preparing for Interviews

Brief stakeholders on the role requirements and provide them with relevant questions to ask during their interactions with the candidate. To support a streamlined process, consider organizing a single day of back-to-back interviews with all key stakeholders. This approach respects the candidate's time and allows for a comprehensive evaluation in a condensed timeframe.

- Review the candidate's resume and application materials thoroughly
- Familiarize yourself with the job description and key requirements
- Prepare a structured interview guide with specific questions
- Involve key stakeholders in the interview process and brief them on their roles

10 CIO/CDIO Interview Questions

The following list offers a sample of key questions for CIO and CDIO candidates. These represent some of the most revealing questions from our comprehensive list. Select the questions that best align with your organization's needs, challenges, and culture.

Opening / Rapport-Building Questions

1. Please give a two-minute overview of your career, focusing on your healthcare leadership responsibilities.
2. What interests you about this opportunity and our organization?

Leadership and Cultural Fit

1. How would you describe your leadership style and its impact on organizational culture?
2. Describe a time when you had to lead a team through a major change. What was your approach to change management?

IT Strategy and Roadmaps

1. Describe your experience developing and executing IT strategic plans. How do you ensure alignment with business objectives?

2. How do you balance risk and business agility in your IT strategy?

Maturing an IT Organization

1. How are you developing "blended" IT leaders who have both technical skills and business acumen?
2. What is your experience creating a culture of innovation in the IT organization and across the business?

Technical Expertise & Driving Results

1. How have you helped your current organization accomplish its goals and mission through technology?
2. What metrics and KPIs do you use to measure IT performance and demonstrate value?

CDIO Specific Questions

1. Describe a comprehensive digital transformation initiative you've led in healthcare. What were the key challenges, strategies, and outcomes?
2. As a CDIO, how would you bridge the gap between IT and other departments to create a truly digital-first organization?



11 Selecting Your CIO/CDIO

After interviews conclude, gather feedback promptly from all participants.

Within 48 hours, convene to discuss impressions and evaluate candidates against predetermined criteria. Consider how well each candidate's vision aligns with your organization's goals and assess any potential red flags.

When making your final decision, weigh both technical expertise and cultural fit. Evaluate each candidate's potential for growth and their ability to lead digital transformation initiatives. Pay close attention to how effectively they communicated their vision and strategies.

Look for candidates who can articulate a clear vision for technological transformation while also showing the leadership qualities necessary to inspire and guide their team through change. This balance of skills is crucial for advancing your organization's digital capabilities and maintaining a competitive edge in the rapidly evolving healthcare landscape.

Once you've made your choice, act decisively. Reach out to the selected candidate promptly with an offer, prepared to negotiate terms swiftly to secure their commitment.

12 Sustaining Excellence in Healthcare IT Leadership

The journey doesn't end with hiring the right leader. The technology landscape is constantly evolving, and to ensure your CIO or CDIO can lead effectively into the future, consider these key strategies:

- **Continuous Learning:** Encourage ongoing education and professional development. The rapid pace of technological change demands that IT leaders stay abreast of emerging trends and adopt best practices.
- **Industry Engagement:** Support participation in industry conferences and professional organizations like CHIME and The Scottsdale Institute. These platforms offer valuable opportunities for knowledge exchange and networking.
- **Flexibility:** Build flexibility into the role to adapt to changing healthcare and technology trends. The ability to pivot strategies and embrace new technologies will be crucial for long-term success.

- **Innovation Culture:** Foster a culture of innovation that embraces new ideas and technologies. Encourage your IT leadership to create an environment where creative problem-solving and calculated risk-taking are valued.
- **Succession Planning:** Develop a succession plan to ensure continuity of IT leadership. This safeguards your organization against unexpected transitions and provides a pathway for nurturing future leaders.

With the right leader and a commitment to ongoing development, your healthcare organization can leverage technology to enhance patient care, improve efficiency, and drive positive outcomes.

Revisit the strategies shared in this guide to navigate the complexities of healthcare IT leadership and drive your organization toward a successful, technology-enabled future.

13 About Kirby Partners

Specialized leaders, superior results

We find future-ready leaders to fill your critical C-suite, VP and director roles.

Our expertise:

- Chief AI Officers
- Chief Data Officers
- Chief Digital Officers
- Chief Digital and Information Officers
- Chief Executive Officers
- Chief Human Resource Officers
- Chief Information Security Officers
- Chief Information Officers
- Chief Innovation Officers
- Chief Medical Information Officers
- Chief Privacy Officers
- Chief Research Information Officer
- Chief Risk Officers
- Chief Technology Officers
- VPs/Directors of Application, Security, and Technology
- VPs & Directors of HR
- Enterprise Architects

[Kirby Partners' completed executive searches](#)

Unrivaled experience and connections

We excel at finding leaders who make transformative contributions and stay committed for the long term.

- 36 years of retained executive search experience
- Recognized as one of *Modern Healthcare's* "Largest Executive Search Firms"
- Named to *Forbes'* list of "America's Best Executive Search Firms"
- Certified woman-owned business committed to fostering diversity
- 100+ successful senior leadership searches in the last five years

To learn more about Kirby Partners, schedule a discovery call with our team.

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