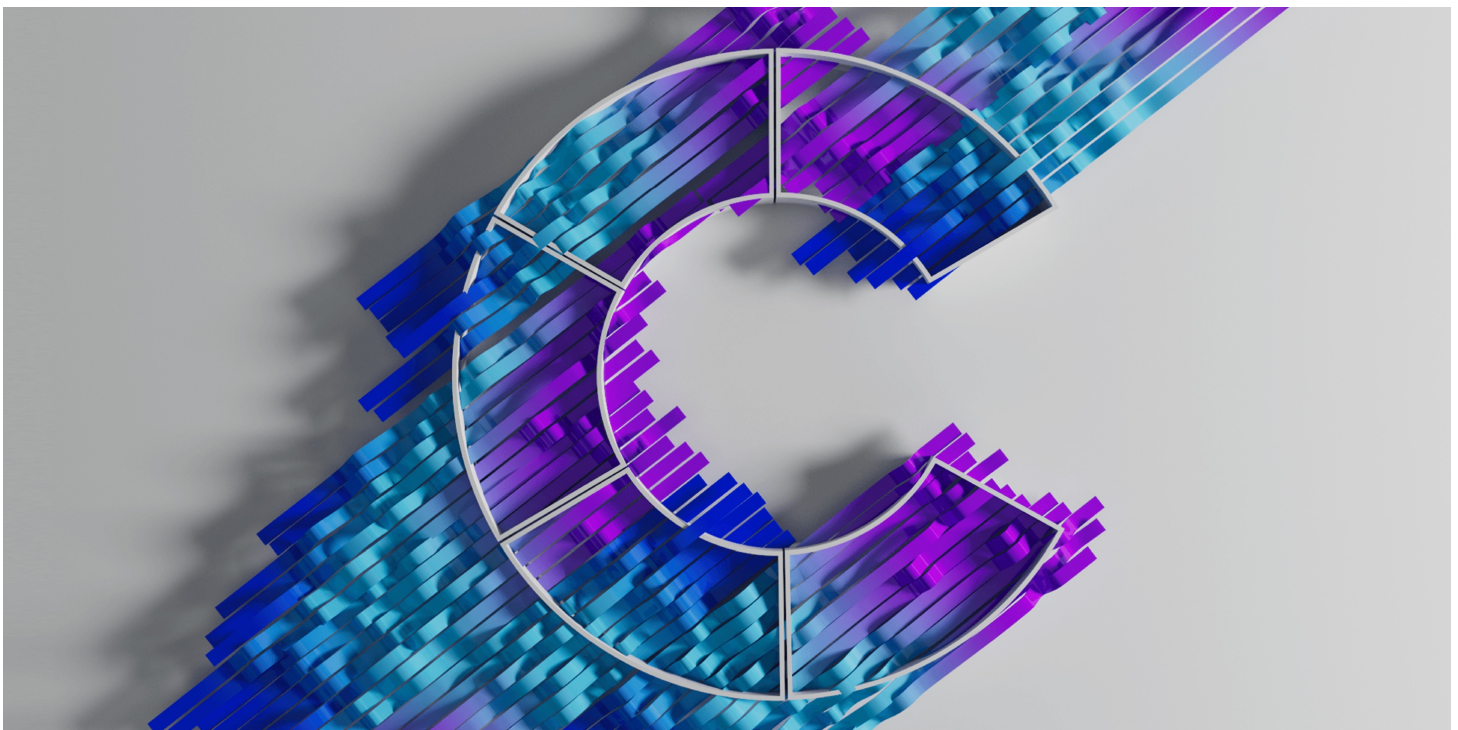


CAIOs Key to AI Success: Up to 36% Higher ROI on AI spend, Finds IBM-Dubai Future Foundation Study

- Joint IBM Institute for Business Value and Dubai Future Foundation study highlights UAE's enterprise AI leadership, featuring perspectives from RTA and Dubai Customs.

- 33% of UAE organizations have appointed Chief AI Officers, compared to 26% globally, demonstrating strong AI leadership commitment.

- Foreword by H.E. Omar Sultan Al Olama underscores AI's role as a force multiplier for nations and how the Chief AI Officer is a translator between vision and execution.



Dubai, United Arab Emirates – July 15, 2025 – A new global study by the IBM Institute for Business Value (IBV), conducted in collaboration with the Dubai Future Foundation (DFF), finds that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is leading a global shift toward appointing Chief AI Officers (CAIOs) to drive enterprise-wide AI strategy and execution.

According to the global study* of more than 600 CAIOs across 22 countries and 21 industries, more UAE organizations are appointing a CAIO role than global peers: 33% of surveyed organizations in UAE have a CAIO, compared to 26% globally. The impact is clear: globally organizations with a CAIO see a 10% higher return on investment (ROI) on AI spend, and those where CAIOs drive a centralized or hub-and-spoke AI operating model can realize a 36% higher ROI on AI initiatives.

The report opens with a foreword by **His Excellency Omar Sultan Al Olama, UAE Minister of State for Artificial Intelligence, Digital Economy and Remote Work Applications**, where he writes: “AI is not a singular breakthrough, it’s ten thousand small shifts. It’s cultural. It’s institutional. It’s a habit. The CAIO will be the one pushing that habit forward – across public administration, healthcare, education and logistics. More than a technologist, the CAIO is a translator between vision and execution, a bridge between strategy and science, and a steward of value across the enterprise.”

The report also includes perspectives from other leading UAE entities such as Roads and Transport Authority (RTA) and Dubai Customs, providing a multi-sector view on AI leadership.

“Dubai’s early adoption of the Chief AI Officer role reflects our national commitment to a responsible, future-ready government,” said **Saeed Al Falasi, Director of the Dubai Center for Artificial Intelligence** “This study reinforces that CAIOs are strategic enablers and catalysts that drive the city’s vision for the future. By empowering these leaders with the right tools, we are setting the stage for scalable, measurable AI impact across key sectors in Dubai.”

“The UAE is setting a global benchmark by embedding Chief AI Officers within organizations, ensuring AI is a strategic enabler across sectors. This is a testament to the nation’s foresight in shaping a future-ready economy.” said **Shukri Eid, VP and GM, IBM Gulf, Levant and Pakistan**. “As we continue our collaboration with the Dubai Future Foundation, IBM remains committed to helping organizations scale their AI capabilities to drive measurable, long-term impact.”

“By appointing CAIOs early and giving them visibility and budget control, UAE organizations have laid a strong foundation for enterprise AI,” said **Lula Mohanty, Managing Partner, Middle East and Africa, IBM Consulting** “The next step is execution, moving beyond pilots, embedding AI into core business functions and delivering measurable ROI. IBM is proud to partner with UAE clients on this next phase of their AI journey.”

UAE leads the way



1 in 3

UAE organizations
have appointed
a CAIO (vs. 1 in 4
globally)

69%

promoted from within
(vs. 57% globally)

Empowered to deliver impact



90%

of UAE CAIOs receive
direct CEO support
(vs. 80% globally)

79%

control their
AI budgets
(vs. 61% globally)

UAE CAIOs benefit from stronger leadership support

CAIOs in the UAE are more likely than their global peers to have direct backing from senior leadership:

- 90% of UAE CAIOs say they get sufficient CEO support compared to 80% globally.
- 86% of UAE CAIOs say they have broader C-suite support, versus 79% globally.
- 69% of UAE CAIOs were appointed internally, compared to 57% globally, reflecting a commitment to developing AI leadership from within.

CAIO roles in the UAE come with broader mandates and implementation responsibilities

UAE CAIOs are playing a central role in driving AI strategy and implementation:

- 79% of UAE CAIOs control their organization's AI budget, compared to 61% globally.
- 62% of UAE CAIOs prioritize building business cases for AI, compared to 45% globally.
- 50% of UAE CAIOs list direct AI implementation as a primary responsibility, in line with 48% globally, though 38% of UAE CAIOs find implementation very difficult, compared to 30% globally.

Career backgrounds of UAE CAIOs reflect a focus on data and operations

UAE CAIOs bring a mix of technical and operational expertise to their roles:

- 69% of UAE CAIOs have a career background in data, similar to 73% globally.
- 48% of UAE CAIOs have focused on operations, compared to 38% globally, suggesting a pragmatic, execution-focused leadership profile.

AI measurement matters, but action won't wait

UAE CAIOs recognize the value of measuring AI outcomes, while maintaining momentum by experimenting and innovating even without perfect metrics:

- 76% of UAE CAIOs say their organizations risk falling behind without AI impact measurement compared to 72% globally
- 74% of UAE CAIOs agree they initiate AI projects even if they can't measure their effects compared to 68% globally

AI adoption maturity highlights room for growth

While UAE organizations have made significant leadership investments, many remain in early phases of AI deployment:

- 76% of UAE organizations are still at pilot stages with limited deployment, compared to 60% globally.

For more information and to access the full study, visit: <https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/en-us/report/chief-ai-officer>

***Study Methodology**

The IBM Institute for Business Value (IBM IBV), in cooperation with Oxford Economics and The Dubai Future Foundation conducted a global survey in the first quarter of 2025 to examine the emerging role of CAIOs. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design, collecting responses from 600+ CAIOs or equivalent across 21 industries and 22 countries. The survey examined the role, responsibilities, and challenges faced by CAIOs across organizations, covering the origins of the position, career backgrounds, perceptions of influence and challenges, team structure, and key responsibilities. It also assessed AI initiative performance, impact measurement, organizational strengths in AI governance, and areas for improvement.

The IBM IBV and IBM's thought leadership think tank, combines global research and performance data with expertise from

industry thinkers and leading academics to deliver insights that make business leaders smarter. For more world-class thought leadership, visit: www.ibm.com/ibv. To receive more insights, subscribe to the IdeaWatch newsletter: <https://ibm.co/ibv-ideawatch>.

About IBM

IBM is a leading provider of global hybrid cloud and AI, and consulting expertise. We help clients in more than 175 countries capitalize on insights from their data, streamline business processes, reduce costs and gain the competitive edge in their industries. Thousands of governments and corporate entities in critical infrastructure areas such as financial services, telecommunications and healthcare rely on IBM's hybrid cloud platform and Red Hat OpenShift to affect their digital transformations quickly, efficiently and securely. IBM's breakthrough innovations in AI, quantum computing, industry-specific cloud solutions and consulting deliver open and flexible options to our clients. All of this is backed by IBM's long-standing commitment to trust, transparency, responsibility, inclusivity and service. Visit www.ibm.com for more information.

Media Contact:

Sherry Italia
IBM Communications
sherry.italia@ibm.com

Additional assets available online:  [Photos](#) 

<https://mea.newsroom.ibm.com/IBM-DFF-CAIO-study>