Chief Digital Officer salary and job description - What's the CDO role and how much does a Chief Digital Officer get paid?

How much should a Chief Digital Officer get paid, should the CDO report to the CEO or CIO, and what are the CDO responsibilities?

By Edward Qualtrough (https://www.cio.co.uk/author/edward-qualtrough/) January 15, 2018 CIO UK

The Chief Digital Officer role emerged in the mid-2010s as one of the most talked-about executive roles in the C-suite. The number of Chief Digital Officers increased, with the role well represented in the highest echelons of the 2016 and 2017 editions of the CIO 100. Chief Digital Officers are considered both the new stars of the C-suite as well as faddish or transitory roles which will eventually go away - a view even held by a number of CDOs themselves. But what are Chief Digital Officers doing and how much are CDOs getting paid? **[See also:** _Chief Data Officer salary and job description_ **- What's the role of the CDO and how much does a Chief Data Officer get paid? (https://www.cio.co.uk/cio-career/chief-data-officer-salary-job-description-cdo-role-3596334/)]**

At the end of 2017 Gartner reported a decrease in the number of Chief Digital Officer appointments, while fellow analyst house Forrester predicted Chief Information Officers would make the CDO obsolete in 2018 (https://www.cio.co.uk/it-strategy/chief-digital-officer-will-soon-become-obsolete-claims-forrester-3670284/).

CIO UK has spoken to a number of Chief Digital Officers about their jobs and responsibilities, as well as the executive search recruiters who are placing them and can explain why the CDO is becoming such a high-profile board level player.
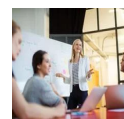
Chief Digital Officer salary - How much do Chief Digital Officers get paid?

At the beginning of 2018, Harvey Nash told _CIO UK_ the average salary for a Chief Digital Officer is **$175,303** [we have kept some salaries in dollars - global research such as the Harvey Nash survey was impacted significantly following the 2016 referendum on EU membership when the value of the pound fluctuated in relation to global currencies making year-on-year comparisons harder. Pound and dollar figures are contemporaneous with the time they were first reported - ed.]

Harvey Nash said that Chief Digital Officer salaries are down on the previous year, reflected by "the fact that the Chief Digital Officer is rapidly evolving as a role - more people are calling themselves CDOs".

The 2015 Harvey Nash survey had revealed an **average Chief Digital Officer salary of £114,750**, rising to **£158,180** for CDOs reporting directly to the Chief Executive.

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BMJ Chief Digital Officer Sharon Cooper Q&A - CDO role and retaining tech talent (https://www.cio.co.uk/cio-career/cdo-sharon-cooper-q-retaining-it-talent-increasing-creativity-at-bmj-3648164/)

CIO salary benchmark by industry - Average salaries of UK CIOs by sector (https://www.cio.co.uk/cio-career/cio-salary-industry-average-salaries-of-uk-cios-by-vertical-sector-3642762/)

CIO salary survey 2016 - CIO vs CTO vs CDO salaries in the UK (https://www.cio.co.uk/cio-career/cio-salary-survey-2016-cio-vs-cto-vs-cdo-salaries-in-uk-3642745/)

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In early 2017, Defra was advertising for a Chief Digital Officer reporting to Group CTO John Seglias with a salary of **£115,000** and a team of around 175. When the Cabinet Office named Conall Bullock as its first ever Chief Digital Officer in 2015 combining the CIO, CTO and CDO roles, it was reported the salary was around £90,000.

In 2015 Iain McKeand, Harvey Nash CIO Practice director, said: "This figure goes even higher depending on the scope and nature of the transformation. One recent CDO placement we made was for a major international FMCG; the remit was to link everything digital in the various businesses across the group. The base salary for this role was £170,000, but in addition – reflecting the transformational aspect of the role – there was also a highly attractive benefits package including a bonus of up to 50%. This compares favourably with a CIO bonus which would typically be circa 20%."

Alan Mumby, Head of the CIO Group at Odgers Berndtson, said in 2015 that CDO salaries vary enormously depending on skills, experience, industries and companies. He said that Odgers is seeing a base of less than **£100,000** in the public sector, to a base of **£250,000-300,000** for other verticals.

Chris Chandler, an executive search consultant at La Fosse Associates, said in 2015 he had seen publishers, digital agencies, broadcasters, fashion brands, retailers, gaming companies and media organisations hire Chief Digital Officers, with online retailers and professional services clients paying the most for the new CDOs at **upwards of £175,000** along with benefits and stock options.

Who does the CDO report to - should the Chief Digital Officer report to the CEO or CIO?

While there is no correct way with executive reporting lines, most viewpoints are trending towards the consensus that the Chief Digital Officer should report to the CEO. However, that does not mean that there are not CIOs with CDOs below them.

In November 2017 CIO 100 high-flyer Richard Cross, previously CIO and Chief Digital Officer at Atkins, was appointed Chief Digital Transformation Officer at Clear Channel, sitting on the Executive Committee working with the company's most senior international leadership.

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CIO salary survey 2016 - CIO vs CTO vs CDO salaries in the UK (https://www.cio.co.uk/cio-career/cio-salary-survey-2016-cio-vs-cto-vs-cdo-salaries-in-uk-3642745/)

Scottish Local Government Chief Digital Officer a 'virus for change in Scotland' (https://www.cio.co.uk/cio-interviews/scottish-local-government-chief-digital-officer-martyn-wallace-3669393/)

In the 2016 CIO 100, Chief Digital Officer at *The Economist* Jora Gill (https://www.cio.co.uk/cio100/2016/economist-3608551/) responded that he reported to the CEO and was also a member of the board. CDO and former CTO Sharon Cooper (https://www.cio.co.uk/cio100/2016/bmj-3608350/) reports to the BMJ CEO, while CIO 100 leader Richard Corbridge reports to the CEO at Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust. Fellow Chief Digital and Information Officer, Dylan Roberts of Leeds City Council who also has responsibility for smart cities and innovation, reports to the Deputy CEO.

In October 2016 insurance firm RSA hired former Zurich Chief Digital Officer Steven Zuanella to the role as Group Chief Digital Officer reporting to Group CIO Darren Price, while earlier in the year RSA announced plans to recruit a CDO for each of the company's regions. At fellow insurer Aviva, however, CDO Andrew Brem reports to the CEO (https://www.cio.co.uk/news/cio-career/aviva-goes-digital-first-with-new-cdo-appointment/).

Whatever the arrangement, former CDO at the British Library Richard Boulderstone believes the CDO must never report into finance (https://www.cio.co.uk/it-leadership/tech-leaders-cannot-enable-if-they-report-cfos-3573073/). "Technology is a strategic enabler and working for the CFO makes enablement really hard," he said.

CIO 100 panel member Jerry Fishenden added that the CDO reporting to the CIO was unnecessary. "It also doesn't make much sense to me for a CDO to report to a CIO if a Chief Digital Officer is really performing the role they're meant to do," he said.

Chief Digital Officer job description and responsibilities - CDO perspectives on the role of the Chief Digital Officer

The role of the Chief Digital Officer and the CDO duties and responsibilities vary vastly depending on industry, reporting line, and to what extent they have been truly empowered to do the job they were brought in to do. In the absence of a generic definition, here are what Chief Digital Officers in the role have to say about the job themselves:

"My objective is revenue, strategy, customer loyalty and the brand. The difference is that the CTO role was more about delivering products, this is still about delivering products, but there is a greater focus on strategic decisions so I am working with marketing, sales and editorial to create a blueprint for the digital business."
Jora Gill, *The Economist* Chief Digital Officer

"You could say I'm the bandleader. I don't get caught up on the title; in some cases the CIO will fulfil this kind role and may not change the title."
Bill Ruh, GE (/cio-directory/company-profiles/ge-101317/) Chief Digital Officer

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"It's partly strategic and a vision, but the Chief Digital Officer role is also about execution (https://www.cio.co.uk/it-leadership/digital-journey-for-whole-company-says-travelex-cdo-3530840/). And the cultural aspect. How do you get the business from thinking about IT to thinking about tech? How can you get the business to think more digitally, and to embrace digital?"
Sean Cornwell, former Travelex (/cio-directory/company-profiles/travelex-3637222/) Chief Digital Officer

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"I very much see CDO as the evolution of the CIO role. As CDO, I have developed, and own the implementation of, the digital strategy for the whole organisation. I am leading on introducing digital ways of working across the company. We have a digital playbook that explains different techniques and makes them accessible by showing where and how they have already been used in Atkins. It is great to see the terms like 'hackathon' and 'business model canvas' now entering the everyday vocabulary of the wider organisation."
Richard Cross, Clear Channel CDO, then Atkins Chief Digital Officer

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"Recent changes in remit have led to my promotion from CTO to CDO, and I now have responsibility for our user-experience/R&D lab, a venture I helped to set up two years ago, as well as direct P&L responsibility for one of our key digital portfolios. As part of the executive leadership team I get to play a key role in every decision we make, and running the technology team that develops those products, predominantly in-house, I am part of the team that shapes every product and its experience."

Sharon Cooper, BMJ (/cio-directory/company-profiles/bmj-3608350-3608350/) Chief Digital Officer

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"The problem with digital of course is that it can mean something different to everyone. We've really badged it as being about personalisation and connectedness."

Aaron Powell, NHS Blood and Transplant Chief Digital Officer

"I want to create a virus for change, a virus for innovation."

Martyin Wallace, Scottish Local Government Chief Digital Officer

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"It is not about the technology, this part is simpler. The real challenges are coming from selling the idea of digital to the company (https://www.cio.co.uk/insight/board-politics/selling-digital-board-ipsen-chief-information-digital-3629660/), but not the board because they are already on board, but finding out how to use digital technology to rethink completely the way we do things."

Malika Mir, Ipsen Chief Information and Digital Officer

"I don't think Chief Digital Officers will be around in five years. Currently the title has value as a change agent - it allows people to see that digital is being taken seriously at a board level - but the people working in future organisations won't need to be eduated about, and convinced by, digital. At some point, once the transformation elements are finished, the title will go away."

Arif Harbott, former Ministry of Justice (/cio-directory/company-profiles/ministry-of-justice-103069/) Chief Digital and Information Officer

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"The new Chief Digital Officer post is an amazing opportunity to make our capital even more open to innovation, support jobs and investment and make our public services more effective.

"The pace of change over the next decade requires public services to develop a stronger relationship with the tech sector. Our purpose is to fully harness London's world-class potential to make our public services faster and more reliable at doing things we expect online, but also adaptable enough to overcome the capital's most complex challenges."

Theo Blackwell, London Chief Digital Officer

"We would much rather disrupt ourselves than be disrupted by others."

Andrew Brem, Aviva (/cio-directory/company-profiles/aviva-4140/) Chief Digital Officer

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"The problem that CIOs have is that they have to wear multiple hats and in recent years they have had to focus on cost containment and so have become experts on managing budgets and not on innovation. Innovation has in many cases been outsourced to consultancies. Now organisations want to be closer to the customer they are finding they cannot outsource innovation. In my role at *The Economist* I do not deal with networks or infrastructure."

Jora Gill, *The Economist* Chief Digital Officer

"I think in general the remit of the chief digital officer spans into product and marketing on one side, and on the other side the CIO and CTO world. But the biggest mistake organisations can do is view chief digital officers as the person who runs the websites, or that it's a silo or channel. That sets you up for failure.

Sean Cornwell, Travelex (/cio-directory/company-profiles/travelex-3637222/) Chief Digital Officer

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"When we talk about a digital organisation, you'll see us continue to evolve and grow to where people will move based on their capabilities and desires - from traditional IT into running business and back and forth. I think the blending of this will happen naturally."

Bill Ruh, GE (/cio-directory/company-profiles/ge-101317/) Chief Digital Officer

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"I believe Chief Digital Officers will push further and further into the traditional IT space occupied by the CTO currently - as small digital services replace big outsourced contracts, the role will change to reflect this. But not everyone needs a Chief Digital Officer - for instance the role might well be called a CIO if broadly all your IT has undergone transformation."

Arif Harbott, former Ministry of Justice (/cio-directory/company-profiles/ministry-of-justice-103069/) Chief Digital and Information Officer

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"Importantly it is using analytics to get closer to the customer. You need those windows of analytics, testing, social and an attitude of 'let's experiment'. It is a different way of looking at the technology leadership role (https://www.cio.co.uk/news/cio-career/jora-gill-swaps-cto-for-cdo-role-at-economist/). In recent years the customer for technology leaders had been internal. At The Economist we will have more of a software company mentality to the business and learn from the likes of Amazon, eBay and Google."
Jora Gill, *The Economist* **Chief Digital Officer**

"Chief Digital Officer Andrew Brem has put together a digital proposition for consumers across all of our products and service areas globally, and I am going to build the technology that supports that. Together, we will be able to drive better propositions."
Monique Shivanandan, Aviva (/cio-directory/company-profiles/aviva-4140/) Global CIO

"If you put digital in a silo and park it that's how you fail. Actually this is really about a journey the whole business goes on, both internally and externally - how these different groups embrace digital and interact with it."
Sean Cornwell, Travelex (/cio-directory/company-profiles/travelex-3637222/) Chief Digital Officer

Chief Digital Officer Summit

CDO Club founder, David Mathison, has organised a CDO Summit in London in 2014 (https://www.cio.co.uk/it-strategy/gds-director-says-digital-leaders-crucial-in-transforming-public-services-3583505/) and 2015. As well as being the leading source of information and expertise on the Chief Digital Officer role, his CDO Summit gathers leading digital executives and some of the views from those CDOs are presented here:

"You'll never see a CDO at Google, that would be like having a chief radio officer at the BBC (/cio-directory/company-profiles/bbc-281/). They're digital natives and don't have a need for it. And the CIO role is not going to go away anytime soon. If something happens to all your data, you'll be going straight to the CIO and not the CDO.

"I'm a fan of CIOs, but it does look like the career path from CDO to CEO is smoother than that from CIO to chief executive."
David Mathison, CDO Club

"It's the personal responsibility of the employee to become digital and understand the technology as well as the company's responsibility to help. It's critical to have CTOs or CDOs on the board."
Jeff Moriarty, Johnston Press Chief Digital & Product Officer

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"Part of the role of the Chief Digital Officer is to break silos and hide the complexity, and eliminate waste. To build complexity is easy, to eliminate complexity is difficult. The role of the CDO to simplify and engage, and eliminate waste. Then you have to transform.
Jora Gill, *The Economist* **Chief Digital Officer**

"It's quite a challenge to change the mindset of the business. Storytelling is important to present those business solutions."
Dave Cook, Time Out Chief Digital Officer

"The Chief Digital Officer is a champion of user needs."
Mike Bracken, Co-operative Group Chief Digital Officer (https://www.cio.co.uk/news/cio-career/mike-bracken-appointed-co-operative-chief-digital-officer-3622018/) and former Government Digital Service Director

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"The Chief Digital Officer is a convenient and useful title for businesses which need to get started on this journey on transformation. Can't work without support of CEO, CFO and board."
Sean Cornwell, ex-Travelex (/cio-directory/company-profiles/travelex-3637222/) Chief Digital Officer

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"The world is getting more complicated. We are still wrestling with the enormous changes in the competitive landscape. Not only do we have 1001 fantastic little start-ups nibbling at our feet, you also have the likes of Google, Facebook and Apple who have decided to park tanks on the lawn of news."
Tanya Cordrey, former Guardian News and Media Chief Digital Officer

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"Key skill we recruit for isn't digital skills, its empathy. Trying to break down silos across those organisations, if you don't have people who understand their needs and those processes of why they have those processes you've fallen over at the first hurdle."
Lucie Glenday, ex-Surrey County Council Chief Digital Officer

"You have to do technology, product, and strategy as a CDO. It's a tough gig, but it's the coolest gig. You have to be ready for someone to come and eat your lunch. You don't know who they are or what they are going to do, but you have to be nimble and you have to be ready."

Jora Gill, *The Economist* Chief Digital Officer

"We need CTOs and technology leaders to focus on mission IT and common infrastructure services. And CDOs are instrumental in the shift from focusing on ourselves to focusing on our users."

Mike Bracken, Co-operative Group Chief Digital Officer and former Government Digital Service Director

Does your organisation need a Chief Digital Officer?

The most common criticism of the Chief Digital Officer title and requirement is that in some instances they might be doing part of the CIO role that the Chief Information Officer is failing to fulfil. Some CIOs have suggested in some industries and organisations, the CDO responsibilities are part of the CIO remit. Here are three leading CIOs - including a former Chief Operating Officer - on the necessity of the CDO job:

"Personally I consider new CDO roles to be fads. Some of these are springing up because they are missing from the traditional tech organisation, not because of a structural problem."

Chris Taylor, Telegraph Media Group (/cio-directory/company-profiles/telegraph-3227519/) CIO

"It's not about roles, it's about digital culture. Business leaders need to become more like digital leaders; and there needs to be a transformation of business leaders also.
"There really need a chief digital awareness officer."

Keith Hopkinson, former Genus CIO

"Ability to influence business strategy is what the CIO has always been about, and the CDO just a new way of emphasising that. The CDO as I've seen it described is what the CIO should be doing, putting things together and taking the business forwards."

Dr Carolyn Brown (/cio-directory/cio-profiles/carolyn-brown-3509247/), former University of Westminster (/cio-directory/company-profiles/university-of-westminster-3637993/) CIO

"Is the CDO good news or bad news? I'd say it's no news.

"Organisations need people or groups of people to work out what digital means for the business – some will need it and some won't. Groups of people coming together to affect change, a good CIO will be able to do that."

John Finch, Bank of England CIO

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Becoming a Chief Digital Officer - Expert tips on starting new role as a CDO

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