**Gartner for Executive Leaders Tool**

Chief Innovation Officer Job Description

**December 2023**

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# General Information

**Salary grade/band:** Company-specific

**Organization/department:** C-suite

**Job family:** C-level executive (strongly encouraged but not required to be corporate officer)

**Reports to:** CEO

**Direct reports:** Company-specific

*\*\*As organizations explore new roles such as chief sustainability officer and chief AI officer, it is suggested they report into the CINO to establish vitality.*

**Effective date:** Company-specific

**Position summary:**

The CINO is the top executive responsible for ensuring that the enterprise’s business strategy is optimal for innovation and new opportunities are engaged across the business. It is the CINO’s role to be proactive, monitoring and further championing new technologies, culture shifts and ideas in line with the enterprise’s goals. The role also requires an adeptness to reactive understandings, embracing the current climate of disruption, rapid emerging realities and risks. The CINO will also execute on some or all innovation initiatives, which may include new product development, innovation hubs (such as labs, accelerators, incubators and studios), training initiatives and investment opportunities.

The details below describe the responsibilities, team, key relationships and skills for the CINO role. It may be amended to best fit each organization’s needs.

# Primary Responsibilities

* Works with executive board members, the CEO, chief strategy officer, the CIO, the chief marketing officer (CMO) and other C-level executives to bring new ideas that create value and match emerging disruptive capabilities with unmet business and customer needs.
* Creates a consistent innovation pipeline and fosters an innovation culture for the enterprise, identifying opportunities that grow business opportunities, capabilities and solutions.
* Ensures the enterprise has the tools, process, and support in developing new products and capabilities that will be needed to survive and thrive in the midterm and long term. Setting innovation goals (including Innovation OKRs) for the organization in line with overall business objectives, strategy, and growth targets.
* Leads the process to identify and evaluate innovative ideas across technology, culture, and new concepts. Proactively assessing emerging trends and technologies as well as potential disruptions to the business, aligning to business strategy and goals
* Leads the development of an enterprisewide innovation strategy and roadmap, and ensures its integration with the enterprise strategic planning process, and the resulting business strategy and plans. Provides a single point of coordination and executive oversight for all innovative initiatives and projects.
* Serves as champion/change agent in leading the organizational changes required to create and sustain an enterprisewide culture of innovation including process transparency, best practices (emerging technologies), learning and development.
* Establishes external ecosystem partners, which may include universities, venture capital firms, companies, accelerators and fellow enterprises.
* Defines, measures and reports key innovation measurements that represent progress against innovation goals. Measurements look at innovation inputs, process and outputs.
* Acts as thought leader on emerging trends and technologies, articulating the future and the enterprise’s role in it internally and externally.
* Establishes and maintains external relationships in academia and with industry bodies, vendors and emerging companies to learn and influence. Creates an innovation ecosystem inclusive of both internal and external partnerships that grow innovation capabilities and opportunities.
* Partners with the CDO, CIO, and IT organization to develop and exploit new digital solutions and scale digital capabilities to create a competitive edge for the enterprise. May also own and lead development teams and projects directly.
* Partners with the HR function to create programs for talent retention, support latest technology roadmap, grow innovation culture, along with key learning and development initiatives in the enterprise.
* Manages a team of trend researchers, cultural anthropologists, technologists, strategists and project-based program managers, product leaders, experience designers and specialist consultants for executing the enterprise’s business mission.

# Reporting Line and Team Structure

Reporting to the CEO, the CINO is a member of the enterprise’s executive committee. As with all senior business leaders, from time to time, the CINO is required to represent the company as a whole and must have broad knowledge of all aspects of the business. The CINO often also has broad organizational authority to drive cross-organizational collaboration and integration as needed, spearheading innovation across the enterprise.

(Note: It is understood a CINO may report to or have the added responsibility of another role, such as CMO, but reporting to many roles, such as the CIO or the CSO, risks a bias in focus toward specific aspects of the *current* business or technology areas. CINOs must be in a position to transform the business.)

The CINO will typically work with a small catalyst team of trend researchers, cultural anthropologists, technologists and strategists. The CINO generally will not have a large team reporting to it. These small teams might incubate larger future capabilities, and specialist or project functions, but the intent is to transfer those to the relevant line organizations in the enterprise, not to build a “mini-enterprise” of new within the enterprise overall.

The primary function that is core to all CINO roles is innovation strategy and management. In terms of strategy execution, the CINO may or may not lead development teams. But at a minimum, the CINO must be involved in strategy execution from a governance perspective to ensure that the strategic intent is realized, and to achieve an appropriate balance between the development of long-term, integrative capabilities and short-term, operational and project priorities. In terms of innovation program management, clear frameworks for innovation and emerging technology roadmaps for the enterprise are created by the CINO, and kept aligned to in idea sessions, and concept exploration or pilots that may be executed by other teams.

In some businesses, the CINO role may include an execution component particularly in the development of a product or service to pilot or invest externally. In this case, the CINO must own or have access to sufficient technical, marketing and other talent to deliver on the innovation portfolio, and responsibilities must be clearly delineated between the CDO, CIO, CMO and other leaders and their teams.

Eventually, new capabilities incubated directly by the CINO are likely to transfer or migrate to these other roles, so healthy relationships must be maintained.

# Governance and Key Relationships

The CINO chairs an innovation council that meets every three to six months. (Note: This depends on the perceived speed of change that the board has identified.) Participants typically include the CEO, CMO, CFO, CIO, CDO, head of risk, head of HR and leaders representing several key business units. Specialists may join, and it is encouraged that junior auditors from teams be invited to observe on a rotating basis.

The CINO participates in governance domains such as business strategy and planning, enterprise architecture, IT strategy and planning, and marketing strategy and planning.

The CINO must influence and build strategic relationships with the following key stakeholders:

* **The CEO, senior executives and the board —** The CINO must deeply engage with these stakeholders in a two-way dialogue to understand the highest-level goals of the enterprise as input to the innovation strategy, and to ensure all stakeholders understand the key areas of focus for internal planning and external activities.
* **The COO —** With change fast moving and a culture of innovation at the forefront, the CINO must align with the chief operating officer to align and provide strategic solutions around resources (such as technology vs. human capital, work environments and sustainable solutions), risk evaluation, and overall organizational transformation. The COO’s support of ensuring there is an infrastructure for the culture of innovation, key business goals specifically around business needs (such as business model transformation), increasing speeds to market, and integration (cost, functionality and scalability) creates a mutually beneficial relationship.
* **The chief communications officer (CCO) and senior team members (including external PR agency) —** As being seen as innovative and remaining centered in the conversation of relevant opportunities at large is often a priority, the CINO must support the communications strategy for the enterprise**.** In reverse, the CCO must assign support to the CINO with opportunities for press quotes, panel conversations, keynotes, op-eds, interviews and press attention to all relevant innovation releases.
* **The CIO and senior IT leadership team —** Innovation initiatives will often need to be tested and further implemented or integrated into the internal IT assets and capabilities, or cloud-based services, with deep implications for IT. The CINO needs to build a strong partnership with the IT organization to execute on these opportunities.
* **The CMO and/or digital marketing officer —** Given that a lot of innovation initiatives are customer-experience-centric and/or first-to-market headline grabbers, the CINO will work with the CMO (owner of the customer interface) to ensure that ideas, capabilities, platforms, technologies, partnerships and campaigns are integrated with best practices and thinking to support marketing objectives and internal KPIs.
* **The chief digital officer and senior digital team including strategy —** Given that new digital business initiatives must consistently be considered and adopted, the CINO and CDO combine practices to ensure that the digital products, strategies, and capabilities are integrated with the short and long-term, digital business strategy.
* **The CISO and security & risk management team —** As the CINO is responsible for bringing new technologies into the organization and creating new solutions, they should work with the CSO to perform risk assessments, better manage vulnerabilities and enforce controls. This involves identifying and managing security, privacy risks such as applying generative AI models and implementing AI trust.
* **The head of HR, and senior leaders of DEI and L&D —** Part of the innovation practice will be to plan for, source, develop and retain talent. The CINO needs to partner with HR to create an attractive, inspiring and satisfying workplace. This involves strategic workforce planning, and to develop a strategy to close gaps in skills and competencies, internal tools and technologies that are key to the execution innovation and fostering a culture of innovation internally and via public facing channels.
* **Business unit executives —** The CINO solicits input and gains an understanding of the business goals, concerns and opportunities from each business unit, integrating them into the development of the enterprise innovation strategy, and aligning to the innovation roadmap where relevant.
* **The innovation community at large —** The CINO needs to establish and maintain strategic partnerships with academia, researchers, culture movers, technology communities and vendors to advance the enterprise’s innovation work and promote it.

# Job Requirements

## Education

A bachelor’s or master’s degree in business administration or related field, or equivalent work experience. Additional education in marketing and technology disciplines is desirable.

## Experience

* Fifteen or more years of business experience, ideally in business management, technology management or marketing, ideally with some independent P&L or budget responsibilities.
* Five or more years of progressive leadership experience in leading cross-functional teams and enterprisewide programs, operating and influencing effectively across the organization and within complex contexts.
* Preferably familiar with the innovation landscape including deep relationships with leading technology companies, trend forecasts, and venture capital firms/start-ups.
* Experience in innovating business models and developing new channels, leading disruptions or business transformation.
* Strategy and management consulting experience desirable.
* Understand and practice inclusion as fundamental to the enterprise’s culture of innovation.
* Familiarity with mergers and acquisitions, angel investing and equity partnerships a plus.

## Knowledge/Skills

* Deep understanding of the innovation landscape, this includes trend forecasts, emerging technologies, culture shifts and new idea generation from the latest techniques to foster ideation to the latest/greatest ideas.
* Extensive knowledge of leadership styles, product development, business strategy, innovation practices and trend watching.
* Strong business acumen, nuanced understanding of leadership styles and dynamics, and domain-specific knowledge of the company and its business units.
* Excellent analytical, strategic conceptual thinking and consulting skills.
* Strong influence and negotiation skills.
* Understanding of technology marketplace and partnership deals.
* Ability to effectively drive people, process and disruptive change in a dynamic and complex operating environment.
* Excellent oral and written communication skills, including the ability to explain new concepts and technologies to business leaders, and business concepts to technologists.
* Exhibit a “fail transparently, win together” ethos.

## Key Behaviors/Competencies

**Table 1 features the competencies that will need to be refined to a list that is important to the success of the CINO role in your unique environment.** This is a senior-executive-level position. The jobholder is typically expected to demonstrate all the required competencies at a proficiency level of advanced or expert. Table 1 provides the behavioral descriptors at the expert level.

Table 1: Competency Definitions and Required Proficiency Levels — Expert

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| **Competency** | **Definition** | **Required Proficiency Level — Expert** |
| Business enterprise knowledge | * Solicits information on the enterprise’s direction and goals, and the industry’s competitive environment, to determine how the CINO function can add business value to the organization. * Makes recommendations that are clearly linked to the organization’s strategy and financial goals, reflecting awareness of external dynamics. * Demonstrates awareness by providing clear explanations for actions taken, relative to customer requirements, needs and industry trends. * Ability to look long term when exploring innovative opportunities | * Sponsors enterprisewide initiatives. * Defines creative imperatives in terms of the links between increased business value, enterprise needs and technological solutions. * Solicits support from the leading stakeholders in the enterprise. * Explains complex innovations and technological solutions in terms that meet the needs of the affected parties, both internally and externally. * Supports near- and long-term goals and objectives of the enterprise. Planning 5 to 10 years out (even up to 25 years) when considering innovative opportunities. |
| Innovation management | * Improves organizational performance through novel ideas and original thinking to existing and emerging methods, processes, products and services. * Employs sound judgment in determining how speed and impact of innovations will be deployed to produce ROI. | * Devises unusual and radically different approaches to deliver value-added solutions. * Analyzes previously used concepts, processes or trends, and devises new efficiencies that are not obvious to others. * Directs creativity toward the effective implementation of innovative solutions that may be technology-based or nontech based. |
| Strategic thinking | * Examines issues and creates plans with a long-term perspective. * Generates ideas and critically evaluates future scenarios. * Applies external and internal factors to strategy development. * Considers long-term strategic impact when making decisions or setting direction. * Ensures that short-term goals support long-term strategy. | * Envisions, compares and contrasts multiple, potential, long-range, enterprisewide futures. * Empathizes with multiple points of view. * Challenges assumptions. * Develops, researches and tests hypotheses. * Leverages insights from multiple resources including ecosystem partners, cultural trends, technology research, and industry trades. * Reasons and recognizes the importance of data and evidence-based research in creating new insights and understandings. * Facilitates the creation and exploration of scenarios. Identifies trends and inconsistencies. * Applies creativity and critical analysis in designing and creating organizational commitment for new objectives. * Approves, sponsors and spearheads the implementation of strategic initiatives, securing the support of senior management. * Guide prioritization of investment decisions. |
| Results orientation | * Sets and accomplishes challenging goals. * Defines standards in terms of doing what is appropriate and doing it well. * Competes resourcefully and takes calculated risks to achieve results. | * Continually measures the organization’s performance against the best-in-class peer group and sets a vision and plan to exceed those benchmarks. * Takes measured risks in investing enterprise resources in significant initiatives that transform organizational processes and/or practices to comply with world-class standards of practice. |
| Building relationships — *internal and external* | * Builds formal and informal professional networks. * Maintains and extends networks within, across and external to organizational boundaries. * Develops innovation ecosystem partner relationships within the company’s industry and emerging adjacent industries. * Solicits advice, support, championship, sponsorship and commitment that result in a smooth transition of innovation to the business. * Aligns to and provides support towards goals and objectives considered priority for individual stakeholders. Everyone gets a win mentality. | * Maintains and forms alliances with recognized experts and decision makers. * Partners with a wide circle of contacts, often globally, and involves them in generating mutually beneficial, long-term opportunities and negotiating win-win outcomes. * Draws on a wide base of relationships inside and outside the work environment. * Represents the company on strategic issues that are affecting multiple organizations, the community and the professional field. |
| Culture building | * Accountable and responsible to create a culture of innovation and to upskill innovation resources in various aspects of innovation capability. * Interrogate cultural considerations on business decisions and remain culturally attuned to major changes in internal/external climate. * Institutes a “no bad idea” ethos and respectful space for idea generation. * Prioritize embracing a diverse and inclusive innovation culture. | * Fosters a discipline of curiosity and openness to challenge. * Demonstrates active listening and a consistent passion for learning. * Builds an innovation community that extends across the organization. * Always learn from failure. * Always celebrate wins. |
| Technology expertise | * Awareness of emerging trends and technologies coming up from thought leaders, vendors and/or industry leaders. * Evaluates emerging technologies for innovation purposes. | * Determines, designs and manages roadmap for new technologies. * Sources and vets vendors for technology partnerships. * Oversees key relationships with Big Tech leaders for first looks, collaboration and marketplace understanding. |
| Product development (pilots) | * Product or innovation ownership including initial team development, external partners, and initial resources (including budget). * Create initial product roadmap and oversees beta testing. | * Supervises transfer to business unit or reasons to drop off the list. * Creates collaborative alpha testing environment and/or pilot initiative. * Encourages learnings through pre- and postmortem reviews. |
| Risk management | * Evaluate business disruptions and pursue transformative ideas while managing the accompanying risks. | * Routinely stress test innovation ideas. * Support business peers by anticipating high-risk disruptions and threats. |
| Financial responsibility | * Budget management for overall innovation budget, partnerships and as-needed projects. | * Understands accelerator, incubator, studio and lab financial models. * Negotiates trade, equity and fee-based partnership deals. * Supports individual business units in budget formulation for project transfers/product adoption. |
| Influencing others | * Communicates ideas or positions in a persuasive manner that builds support, agreement or commitment. * Takes actions that directly or indirectly influence others to create buy-in, gain trust and motivate actions in others or win concessions without damaging relationships. | * Thinks through and executes a variety of useful planned actions or initiatives (with both direct and indirect influence) as part of a sequenced, multistep, complex campaign for gaining support and ownership from others. * Deliberately uses information or concepts to implement and influence strategy for multiple audiences, in high-risk situations or in situations involving different perspectives to reach a common goal or have a positive impact on the organization. |
| Change advocate and leader | * First port of call for potential disruptions. * Pragmatic and solution focused disruption management. * Lead change or transformation agent in the enterprise. | * Collaborative mindset, works away from anchor bias and instills a solution focused environment. * Fosters inclusion across innovation initiatives to create a more change ready organization. |
| Team leadership | * Develops, directs, coaches, mentors and reinforces team members in line with the mission, vision, values, goals and performance standards of formal and informal teams. * Encourages and facilitates cooperation and results orientation. * Fosters an environment of collaboration. * Inspires, motivates and guides team members. * Fosters commitment, team spirit, pride and trust. * Allocates team roles and accountabilities. * Steward or organizationwide culture of innovation. * Fails transparently, wins together. | * Leads formal, multilevel, direct-report teams and informal cross-functional teams. * Sets the team’s vision, goals and strategic plan with input from its members. * Allocates functional roles, levels of accountabilities and strategic assignments. * Coaches, mentors and trains new and existing team members in political, organizational, industry/business, behavioral and technical skills. * Leads team strategy and planning meetings, conferences and organizationwide meetings. * Checks for morale, personal concerns, and work or relationship problems within and between teams. * Decides on solutions based on team’s or business partners’ input. * Represents the team to internal and external business leaders. * Approves candidates for team member recruitment. * Sets, monitors, provides and reinforces overall team performance feedback, including performance improvement and decisions/approvals with respect to rewards, redeployment and termination. |
| Industry advocate | * Attend and present at industry innovation forums. * Publishes frequently on innovation outcomes to industry in media or trade publications. | * Reputation as industry thought leader. Strong point of view demonstrated in portfolio of press and engagements. * Strong communication and presenting skills. Media training helpful. |

Source: Gartner (December 2023)

**Working Conditions**

**Travel required:** Company-specific

**Domestic:**  **International:**

**Telecommuting option:** Company-specific

## Disclaimer

The information about this job description given above has been designed to indicate the general nature and level of work performed by employees within this classification. It is not designed to contain or be interpreted as a comprehensive inventory of all duties, responsibilities and qualifications required of employees assigned to this job.

## Review/Approvals

**Line management:** **Date:**

**HR:** **Date:**

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