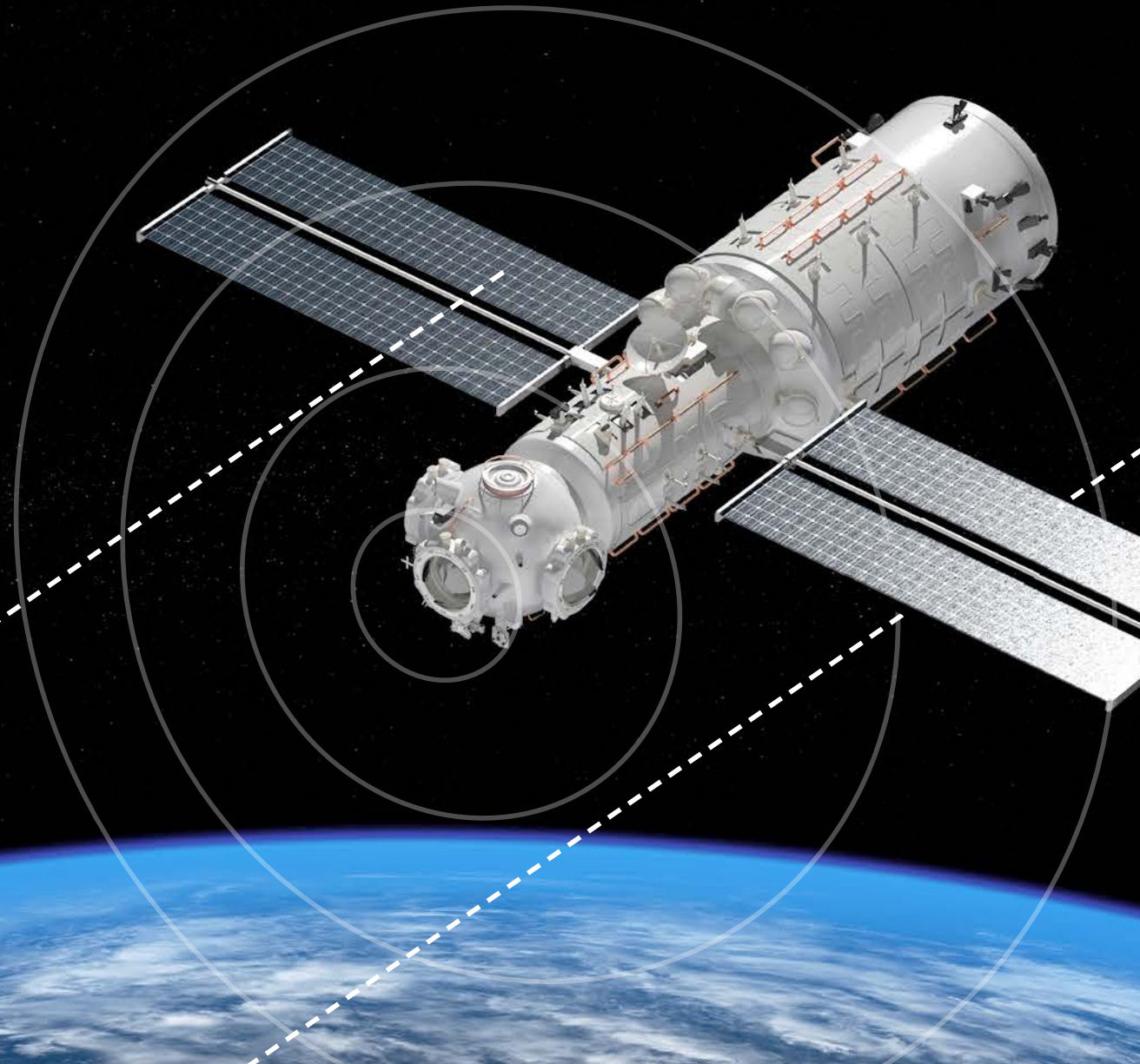


# Top Priorities for IT: Leadership Vision for 2021

Security and Risk  
Management Leaders



## Introduction

2020 has been a year full of terms like “unprecedented” and “unanticipated.” Every industry has been affected in some way by the COVID-19 pandemic, economic fallout and social unrest around the globe. Strategic and business model change has translated, and continues to translate, into new challenges and priorities for function leaders. For the CIO and the whole IT organization, 2021 brings with it the imperative to generate more business value using innovative technologies and approaches to information.

Each IT role faces specific challenges — from planning and supporting digital acceleration to integrating more strategically with the rest of the business. As business partners grow more comfortable with identifying and using technologies, IT leaders will need to become more sophisticated in their partnership and collaboration.

And, despite the challenges, a significant great opportunity exists to transform business operations and models from the ground up, enabling the organization to respond to future disruption quickly and strategically.

This e-book highlights the trends and challenges security and risk management leaders will have to reconcile in the coming year and provides specific actions that they can take in response — and to better align their piece of the organization with the business.

IT leaders have learned many valuable lessons in the past year, from how to quickly move entire organizations to remote workforces, how to create a secure work environment and how to prioritize digital initiatives like never before.

But there is more work to be done.

Leading in 2021 will look different from leadership in 2020, but understanding and planning for unknowns and continued disruption across the IT organization is critical to moving forward.



**Chris Howard**  
Chief of Research, Gartner

There is no question that dramatic change will continue to occur. The old patterns for protection are just not fully applicable to public cloud computing, digital democratization and radical outsourcing.

Gartner has identified a number of new success patterns, but it will take several years to fully establish best practices for digital environments that are still evolving. Top-performing security and risk management leaders have the courage to experiment with new ideas.

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**By 2023, 30% of chief information security officers' effectiveness will be directly measured on the role's ability to create value for the business.**

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Source: Gartner

## Only **12%** of CISOs are able to exceed the expectations of executive leadership in all four areas.



**Lead the function**



**Organize security service delivery**



**Embed governance in workflows**



**Influence strategic decision makers**

Source: Gartner

# 3 trends that will impact security and risk management leaders in 2021

## **Citizen computing accelerates**

Citizen computing is when a user creates new business applications using development and run time environments approved by IT. However, it's generally outside of IT visibility and traditional enforcement, which creates complexities for security and risk leaders tasked with protecting the organization.

## **New digital initiatives create challenges**

The security team is often not consulted until digital plans for the organization are well underway. In addition to reorienting the security program to address new technologies, effective security leaders are working with the board and business leaders to manage cyber-risk control expectations.

## **Cybersecurity mesh emerges as the preferred delivery model for security services**

This cloud-based and highly modular architecture makes it much more practical to control the uncontrollable. Cybersecurity mesh is the most efficient and effective way to extend security policy to digital assets that are outside of the traditional enterprise.

## 2 challenges facing security and risk management leaders in 2021

Although security and risk leaders will face many challenges in 2021, here are two to begin strategizing for:



### Acceleration in digital business is outstripping cybersecurity investment

It is often simply assumed that the security and risk team will be able to adequately protect the organization regardless of what the business decides, but the heritage security infrastructure is just not designed to expand in scope across new and unfamiliar systems.



### Cybersecurity knowledge gap

Demand for cybersecurity skills already outstrips availability. New digital initiatives mean organizations need more cybersecurity effort with new and different skill sets. Digital initiatives almost always use new forms of digital computing that require new skill sets. Virtually all Gartner clients struggle to find the skills needed to apply public cloud computing.

## 2 actions for security and risk management leaders to take in 2021

Given the challenges that security and risk leaders will encounter, consider these two actions to help move the organization in the right direction:



### Practice influence, not coercion

Don't be "Doctor No." With decentralized security, chief information security officers (CISOs) have less control as roles evolve away from building and operating, toward facilitating, enabling and ensuring. Successful CISOs are limiting the number of battles that they choose to fight and seeking ways to apply their limited resources where they will be most beneficial in risk reduction.



### Develop talent, don't try to hire it

The competition for needed talent in cybersecurity is fierce. It is virtually impossible to hire people with security skills for public cloud computing and other newer digital domains. Make a plan that addresses the need for critical security skills and manages their development. Avoid getting trapped in old preconceptions about the types of people, or sources of people, who might be suitable for cybersecurity roles. Be more open to experimentation.

## Focus on competencies, not cybersecurity skill sets or tactical knowledge



### **Adaptability**

Demonstrates flexibility, agility and the ability to respond effectively to changing environments



### **Outcome-driven**

Focuses on desired results and business outcomes, sets and achieves challenging goals



### **Business acumen**

Demonstrates awareness of internal and external dynamics with an acute perception of business issues



### **Collaboration/synergy**

Collaborates with other members of formal/informal teams in pursuit of common mission, vision, value and goals



### **Digital dexterity**

Is able to leverage information and technology in unique and innovative ways



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