THE TECHNOLOGY LEADER'S NEW AGENDA
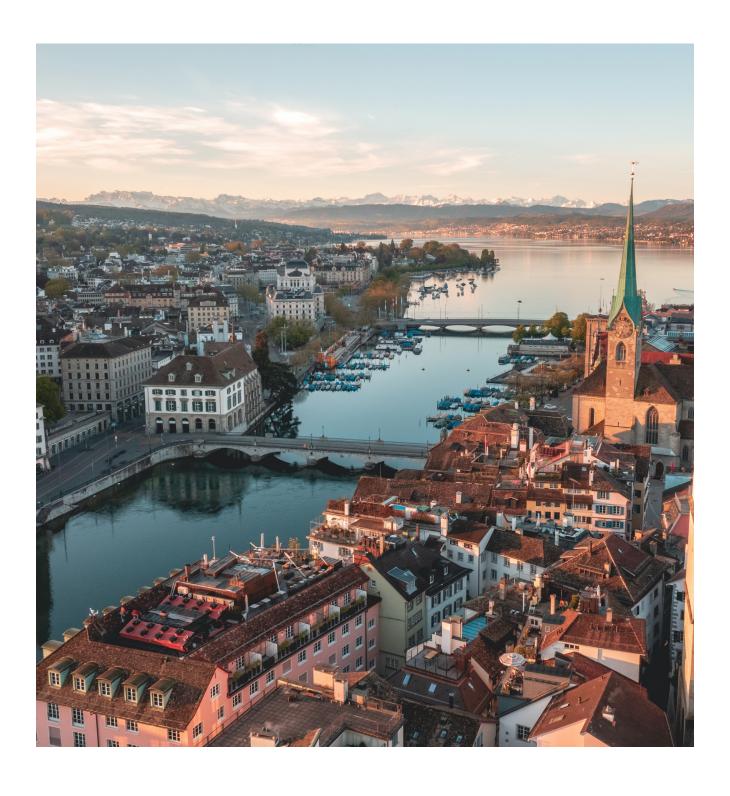
CYBER RESILIENCE, SUSTAINABILITY AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION THROUGH HYBRID CLOUD

The technology leader's new agenda
Cyber resilience, sustainability and digital transformation through hybrid cloud

The technology leader's new agenda: Cyber resilience, sustainability and digital transformation through hybrid cloud' – a CIONET Executive Dinner in association with Hitachi Vantara – took place on 12 July 2023 at Baur au Lac, Zurich.

Today's technology leaders face an increasing range of responsibilities. The job is no longer simply to "keep the lights on". Rather, it is to lead and protect, to respond to changing social imperatives, and to drive the business forward.

To be a modern technology leader is about safeguarding data and keeping out bad actors. It's about helping to reduce carbon footprint and minimise environmental impact. And it's about delivering digital solutions that will transform. At the heart of those digital solutions is a hybrid cloud environment, combining the best of public cloud on on-premise infrastructure.

Following CIONET and Hitachi Vantara's successful evening in Vienna exploring these very issues, we took the discussion to Zurich in mid-July. The event – titled *'The technology leader's new agenda: Cyber resilience, sustainability and digital transformation through hybrid cloud'* – brought together senior executives from across the Swiss economy and provided another opportunity to explore the technology, business and cultural challenges and opportunities influential organisational leaders are facing up to.

As before, the conversation began with attendees identifying the issues that currently top their agenda. Among the priorities cited were software modernisation, data availability and security, keeping across new technology trends including generative AI, and driving innovation while simultaneously reducing costs.

The discussion moved on to an exploration of the merits of hybrid cloud, effectively a single operating model that allows organisations to employ a mixture of infrastructure – from on-premise through to public cloud – and deliver it through a single lens. Most of those who have adopted hybrid cloud were positive about its impact, although one delegate suggested that hybrid as a strategy can have a downside.

"It can become a way of putting off decision making."

More than one attendee argued that successful business change – underpinned by digital transformation – is as much reliant on human acceptance as it is on successful technology adoption.

"What really matters is culture,"

said one guest. Another added:

"Cultural acceptance takes far longer than technical delivery."

"The magic of getting people to change,"

said another delegate,

"Is to develop a sense of urgency and importance."

Urgency and importance comes from defining strategy from the top and then empowering teams to deliver upon it. Sometimes cloud can accelerate that cultural shift by demonstrating what's possible and providing the tools for change.

Does good culture mean consensus? Not always, argued one attendee.

"Sometimes you've got to take the sharp decisions from the top. After all, you're never going to get everyone to agree on everything."

As an example, it is important to impose discipline when it comes to the introduction of new operating processes or applications. You can't allow for "creative license". This attendee accepted, however, that local champions were critical in winning acceptance over time.

The discussion turned to the connective tissue that links overarching business strategy and technology execution. For some, top down strategy is essential.

"Good strategy is a framework that allows room for manoeuvre. It is set at the top and then N -1 [those just below the c-suite] put meat on the bones and N -2 are all about implementation."

Another guest had a less generous view of top-down strategy.

"Often the strategy is too vague to help with execution."

While many recognised this characterisation, most said it needs to be countered. Another delegate described strategy as the tip of a triangle.

"The tip of the triangle needs to be super strong."