



CIO-CxO
DIGITAL LEADERSHIP
FORUM
SETTING THE TONE FOR DIGITAL LEADERSHIP AT THE TOP

The 2026 CIO CONCLAVE

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS REPORT



LEAD THE DIGITAL FUTURE

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Day One:

STUDENTS & GRADUATES TECH LEADERSHIP WORKSHOP



1. Introduction

This report documents the full proceedings of the Students and Graduates Tech Leadership Workshop 2026, convened under the banner “Lead the Digital Future” by the CIO–CXO Leadership Forum. The forum brought together top industry executives, government officials, emerging technologists, and a primary audience of Ugandan university and college students.

The centrepiece of the event was the official launch of Uganda’s National IT Talent Registry a piece of national infrastructure, not merely a database. It is a ten-year initiative designed to capture the skills, certifications, and project portfolios of Ugandan students and graduates, making that talent visible to CIOs and employers across the country. It is the engine of the digital future: a structured, verifiable initiative built to close the persistent gap between academic training and market-ready employability, and to grow a generation of globally competitive technology professionals from Ugandan soil.

Beyond the Registry launch, the forum featured high-impact keynote addresses, panel discussions, and structured commitments from industry, government, and academia. Every voice on the platform converged on a single message: Uganda’s digital future is not waiting to be assigned to its youth. It is waiting to be built by them.

2. Event Overview and Objectives

The workshop was structured around three strategic objectives. The first was to bridge the networking and opportunity gap between employers and early-career talent. The second was to officially launch and operationalize the National IT Talent Registry as the backbone of a coordinated, verifiable talent pipeline for Uganda. The third was to reframe the role of the CIO as a business strategist, shifting focus from technology management to value creation and strategic impact.

The event attracted representation from private-sector technology executives, public-sector regulators at NITA Uganda, international partners, and over 200 university students from institutions across Uganda.

3. The National IT Talent Registry

The National IT Talent Registry is the centerpiece of Uganda's ten-year digital workforce strategy. It is not a passive directory. It is active national infrastructure, purpose-built to capture the skills, certifications, and project portfolios of Ugandan students and graduates and make that evidence visible to CIOs, hiring managers, and employers across the country. For a generation of technically capable young people who have consistently struggled to connect with opportunity, the Registry closes that gap by design.

“The National IT Talent Registry is not just a database. It is the engine of Uganda’s digital future national infrastructure that makes your skills, certifications, and project portfolios visible to every CIO in the country”

3.1 Vision

Establish a verifiable, industry-aligned national pipeline that transforms graduates into globally competitive professionals and catalyzes Uganda's digital economy.

3.2 Five Strategic Goals

- Build a future-ready IT workforce aligned to global demand.
- Reduce reliance on expatriate labour and grow local capabilities at every level of the technology stack.
- Align skills with Vision 2040, NDP IV, and the national digital transformation roadmap.
- Create inclusive pathways for youth, women, and rural communities.
- Support public-private partnerships to scale impact nationally.

3.3 Five Operational Objectives

- Skills Development and Certification.
- Talent Identification and Nurturing.
- Employment and Industry Linkages.
- Retention and Career Growth.
- Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

4. Keynote Speaker Summaries



4.1 George Ouma

Co-chair, CIO CXO Leadership Forum | Senior Manager IT Projects, NSSF

George Ouma opened one of the forum's most impactful segments. His address centred on a fundamental reorientation of how young professionals should think about technology, skills, and value creation. The technology industry increasingly rewards not technical competence alone, but the ability to think strategically about systems, value, and problems. He challenged attendees to move beyond asking what skill they need to get a job and instead interrogate why a system exists, why a technology exists, and where value is created within it.

Core Message: From Technical Skill to Strategic Thinking

Ouma's principal argument was that in an era when AI can write code, the strategic layer – identifying which problems to solve and why is the irreplaceable human differentiator. He also made clear that learning is no longer confined to the classroom, and that the forum itself is a direct signal that the gap between students and the technology industry is actively closing.

"Chase excellence and success will follow you."

"Understanding is rare. Understand why a system exists, why that technology exists, where the value is created this is what separates the technical person from the strategist."

"Don't ask: what skill do I need to get a job. Ask instead: how do I become someone who solves a real problem? How do I think beyond the code?"

Key Themes

- Excellence as a prerequisite: Success is the natural byproduct of pursuing excellence relentlessly a standard of daily conduct, not a destination.
- Strategic comprehension over technical execution: Those who understand the purpose of technology within a larger system drive value and earn leadership.
- Problem-centric identity: Build an identity around problem-solving, not job titles or certifications.
- Thinking above the code: The strategic layer identifying which problems to solve and why is the irreplaceable human differentiator in the age of AI.



4.2

Rowena Turinawe

CEO, RukaPay | Vice Chair, Advisory Council

Rowena Turinawe, CEO of RukaPay and Vice Chair of the CIO CXO Advisory Council, delivered one of the most energising addresses of the forum. Her message was grounded in personal testimony, practical wisdom, and a genuine passion for youth empowerment. As a primary sponsor of the forum, she brings not just words but personal investment to the development of Ugandan talent.

Background and Forum Impact

Turinawe shared that she has always been driven by two consistent forces: disciplined study and faith. “Always studied, always helped by God and people.” Her ascent to CEO is a testament to the compounding power of deliberate skill-building, openness to mentorship, and courageous action. She described the forum as giving youth “traction” a word chosen deliberately to convey momentum, grip, and forward movement.

"This forum is giving us traction."

Generating Traction and the Digital Stewardship Initiative

Turinawe addressed the paradox at the heart of Uganda’s talent crisis: high youth unemployment existing alongside a severe shortage of market-ready tech professionals. The missing element, she argued, is traction. To provide it, she announced the official launch of the Digital Stewardship and Talent Lab Initiative. She also issued a direct challenge to business leaders: stop complaining about the talent pipeline if you are unwilling to actively build it. Her core philosophy was clear ready people are rare, but stretchable people are everywhere. Industry must provide the internships, mentorship, and real opportunities for raw talent to grow.

Five Charges for Personal and Professional Growth

Charge	Message
Charge 1	Never underestimate the power of studying and certifying. Credentials create verifiable, tangible evidence of dedication and competence.
Charge 2	Always say yes to exposure. You can figure it out after. Opportunities demand courage before competence.
Charge 3	Become useful. The world does not reward potential it rewards execution. Move from “what do I have to do?” to “what problem can I solve?” Execution gets you paid.
Charge 4	Find mentors that are reachable. A mentor protects you from costly mistakes. A mentor is wasted on a proud person.
Charge 5	Learn the tools. Technology is not here to replace you your incompetence will. Embrace technology and AI to stay competitive and relevant.



4.3

Mrs. Janey Rachel Nakato

CTO, Pearl Bank Uganda

As CTO of Pearl Bank Uganda and a member of the CIO CXO Advisory Council, Mrs. Janey Rachel Nyakato anchored her address in systemic thinking. She introduced the official architecture of the National Tech Skills Talent Program, including its five objectives and five pillars, and mapped a clear ten-year roadmap from the Foundation Phase (2026–2027) through the Scale Phase (2028–2031) to the Global Competitiveness Phase (2032–2035).

Nakato articulated the paradox at the heart of Uganda's talent crisis: thousands of graduates annually, yet a persistent inability to fill critical technology roles. Her call to action was directed at three distinct audiences. Students were charged to register in the National IT Talent Registry and treat it as the professional portfolio it is designed to be. Universities were challenged to align curricula with the national IT skills framework. Employers were called to open internship pipelines and stop waiting for talent to arrive perfectly formed.

She was explicit: the success of the program will ultimately be measured not by participation numbers, but by the global competitiveness of the talent it produces.





4.4

Eman Conde

CCIE | Agent Alchemy Global Networks, LLC (AGN)

Eman Conde arrived at the forum as one of its most internationally recognized voices a Cisco Certified Internetwork Expert and veteran technologist with over 52 years of experience navigating the rapidly evolving landscape of digital infrastructure. His expertise spans digital transformation, data center architecture, AI, and technology governance. His presence in Kampala was itself a signal of Uganda's growing stature in the global technology conversation.

Opening Reflection: Energy, Motivation, and Africa's Moment

Conde opened by expressing genuine excitement about the energy and momentum he observed in Uganda – noting that people across the country are actively making and building things. He contrasted this with a common narrative of African tech ecosystems as merely consumers of global technology, and challenged that framing directly. Uganda, he argued, is at an inflection point, and the young people in the room were not spectators but potential architects of that transformation

The Power of Certification: A Career-Defining Investment

Drawing from his personal journey, Conde spoke at length about the transformative impact of professional certification. His own path to becoming a CCIE – one of the most demanding technical certifications in the networking world – was not merely a credential milestone; it was the event that fundamentally repositioned him in the eyes of employers, mentors, and the global technology community.

He emphasized that certification is the universal language of competence. In a job market crowded with graduates holding similar academic qualifications, a globally recognized certification makes a resume immediately stand out. Certifications in network infrastructure, cybersecurity, cloud computing, and AI are not optional extras – they are baseline differentiators for anyone serious about a technology career.

"Certification is not just a piece of paper it is proof that you did the work when no one was watching."

Conde also highlighted the communal dimension of certification culture. He described mentors and senior professionals who provided free training, shared materials, and opened doors for early-career technologists creating a self-reinforcing ecosystem of knowledge transfer. He urged students to both seek out such communities and, in time, to become contributors to them.

Adapting Across 52 Years of Disruption

Perhaps the most compelling thread of Conde's address was his reflection on the sheer volume of technological disruption he has witnessed and survived over five decades. From the early days of networking hardware through the internet revolution, the cloud era, and now the age of artificial intelligence Conde has not merely observed these transitions; he has actively retrained, recertified, and repositioned himself through each one.

His message to students was unambiguous: the technology landscape will look completely different in ten years, and the professionals who thrive will be those who cultivate not a fixed skill set, but a habit of continuous learning. Passion for the field is what makes that continuous investment sustainable.

"Over 52 years, technology has changed everything around me multiple times. What has never changed is the need to love what you do and keep learning."

Mentorship: Navigating Careers Through Trusted Guides

Conde placed significant emphasis on mentorship as a structural career accelerator. He spoke about the role of mentors including industry figures like Wayne Lightfoot at Amazon – in helping him navigate pivotal decisions, access networks that would otherwise have been inaccessible, and avoid costly professional mistakes. He urged students to approach mentorship with humility and preparation – arriving not with vague requests, but with clear goals and demonstrated work ethic.

AI: The Great Equalizer for African Talent

Conde's most forward-looking remarks centered on the role of artificial intelligence in reshaping global opportunity. He argued that AI represents an unprecedented equalizing force – one that gives talented individuals in Kampala, Nairobi, or Lagos genuine competitive parity with counterparts in Silicon Valley or London, provided they invest in learning the tools.

"AI is the great equalizer. With the right skills, a young person in Kampala can compete with anyone in the world."

The AI Equalizer: Levelling the Playing Field

Conde challenged the historical narrative of "developed versus developing" nations. The explosion of AI has effectively levelled the global playing field. The knowledge and tools available to a student in Silicon Valley are now equally accessible to a student in Kampala. The defining factor for success is no longer geography, but the ambition to master these new tools and translate them into practical solutions.

University vs. Certification: Complementary, Not Competing

Addressing a debate common among young tech professionals, Conde was direct: certifications do not replace university education. The true value of the university experience is that it instills discipline and teaches a student how to learn a critical survival skill in an industry where technology changes daily. High-level certifications then act as a gold badge of honor that makes a profile stand out globally, proving to employers that a candidate has the grit and technical depth to endure rigorous, sustained challenges.

The ‘Dumbest in the Room’ Mindset

Conde attributed much of his half-century of success to deliberately seeking out rooms where he was the least knowledgeable person present. He urged students to view a lack of knowledge not as a deficit but as a signal to move toward superior talent. Surrounding oneself with people who know more forces rapid learning and prevents career stagnation.

Erasing Borders Through Global Mentorship

Social media and digital platforms have erased geographical borders in mentorship. Ugandan students can now connect directly with global experts, and Conde committed personally to acting as that conduit connecting students with lead engineers at Amazon, authors of foundational networking textbooks, and cloud infrastructure leaders from around the world.

Practical Commitments Made to the Student Body

During the Q&A session, students raised two practical concerns: the prohibitive cost of elite certifications and fears that foreign workers would take the jobs created by Uganda’s new data center infrastructure. Conde responded with concrete pledges.

- **Cost Reduction through Collective Bargaining:** By organizing cohorts of 30 to 40 Ugandan students, Conde committed to negotiating training and exam fees down to a fraction of the standard price, which can exceed \$2,000 per candidate.
- **Bringing Academies to Uganda:** He pledged to help introduce and sponsor the Cisco Networking Academy within Ugandan universities, providing structured, world-class networking education locally.
- **Local Job Security:** Reaffirming his commitment to a \$10 million data center investment in Uganda, he assured students that physical infrastructure inherently requires local talent. From Layer 1 and Layer 2 hardware roles to advanced security engineering, the jobs created by Uganda’s infrastructure boom are designed for the local workforce.
- **Launched an online community** titled “Uganda, the Data Center of Africa” to build a coordinated professional network around data center development and cloud infrastructure.
- **Committed to distributing high-value educational videos** to forum attendees, including one by Jeff Doyle on TCP/IP foundations and another from a leading AI researcher, as immediate learning resources.



4.5

Ms. Julian Rweju

Director E-Government Services, NITA Uganda

Ms. Julian Rweju brought the authoritative voice of Uganda's National Information Technology Authority to the forum. As a regulator, implementer, and senior technology leader with extensive experience across the telecommunications and public sectors, her address carried the dual weight of institutional credibility and personal conviction. She was not merely a government representative at a tech forum she was a practitioner who has lived the challenges she described, and her remarks were all the more powerful for it.

Opening Observation: What Employers Actually See

Ms. Rweju opened with a candid and disarming observation. She told the audience that she had been watching them since arriving studying the room with the same lens she uses when reviewing internship applications at NITA Uganda. How you present yourself, how you carry yourself, and how you treat time are not soft extras. They are data points that employers collect before a single question is asked.

She illustrated this with a vivid anecdote about a new intern who arrived late to NITA Uganda on their first day, citing traffic. The intern's technical qualifications were strong but the impression left in those first minutes was one that required deliberate effort to overcome. The lesson: in a competitive talent market, character and professionalism are evaluated alongside credentials, and often before them.

"When I walk into a room full of young people, I don't just see students. I see potential employees and I'm always watching."

The Role of NITA Uganda and the Infrastructure Gap

Ms. Rweju provided the audience with a clear overview of NITA Uganda's mandate overseeing ICT regulation, policy, and implementation across the country. She described the significant infrastructure investments the government has made: data centers, fiber optic networks, and digital government platforms. But she was equally frank about the critical gap that infrastructure alone cannot fill.

Technology infrastructure without skilled human capital to operate, maintain, innovate, and expand it is not an asset – it is a liability. Uganda has built the roads, she argued, but it urgently needs the drivers. Data center specialists, cloud architects, cybersecurity analysts, data scientists, and AI practitioners are operationally essential for the country's digital future to be realized.

"We have built the infrastructure. Now we need the talent to make it work. That talent is in this room."

Attitude, Values, and the Workplace Reality

One of Ms. Rweju's most direct contributions was her unvarnished assessment of the attitude gap she observes among young talent entering the workforce. She described a pattern repeated across the sector: technically capable graduates who arrive with a sense of entitlement, an impatience with process, and an underestimation of professional culture.

Her counsel was not discouraging it was clarifying. Dress code, punctuality, respect for colleagues and seniors, and a willingness to do the unglamorous work are not bureaucratic formalities. They are the foundation upon which trust is built, and trust is the currency through which opportunity flows in any organisation. Technical skills open the door; character determines how far you walk through it.

Mobile Money, Problem-Solving, and the Innovation Imperative

Ms. Rweju drew on the transformative success of mobile money in East Africa as proof that young Africans are not lacking in creative or innovative capacity they simply need the right conditions, tools, and encouragement to apply that capacity to national challenges. Mobile money was not invented by outsiders; it was built by young people who understood a local problem and had the technical fluency to engineer a solution.

She challenged attendees to think in the same frame about Uganda's current infrastructure and governance challenges, using the example of a pothole-mapping application as a model for the kind of problem-solving mindset she wants to see from Uganda's next generation of technologists.

"Mobile money was built by young people who saw a problem and solved it. That same energy is what Uganda's digital future needs."

Government Commitment: Official Launch of the National Tech Skills

In the most formally significant moment of her address, Ms. Rweju used her platform to pledge the full support of NITA Uganda and the broader government apparatus to the National Tech Skills Program. She invited senior forum members to join her in the official launch ceremony, signaling that this was not a private-sector initiative awaiting government blessing it was a jointly owned national commitment.

Action Commitments from NITA Uganda Program

- Coordinate with the Ministry of Education and relevant stakeholders to implement the National Tech Skills Program in alignment with government objectives.
- Work with private-sector CIOs and international partners to build a national pool of skilled young people and create structured job and opportunity pathways for program graduates.
- Ensure government-built digital infrastructure – data centers, fiber networks, and digital platforms – is matched with trained local talent capable of operating and innovating within it

5. Panel Sessions

5.1 Panel One: National Talent Imperative

Moderated by Mr. Jonathan Kayemba, the first panel featured Dr. Shamim K. Matovu and Mr. Andrew Jombwe in a rich discussion on the systemic and personal dimensions of talent development.

Dr. Matovu emphasized personal responsibility in defining one's story and purpose, cautioning students about digital presence and the importance of critical thinking in an age of technological acceleration. She stressed that talent development is not solely a government responsibility it is a community and individual obligation.

Mr. Jombwe introduced the TVET Act and the national Qualifications Framework described as a “universal translator” for vocational certifications as Uganda's legislative response to the outdated and misaligned vocational training system. He called for industry involvement in curriculum development and the standardization of role-specific training programs.

5.2 Panel Two: CIO Perspectives on Hiring and Value

The second panel, moderated by George Ouma representing the Senior Manager IT Projects, NSSF of NSSF, brought together Tadeo Kyeyune (CTO, Tugende Limited), Jim (CIO, RukaPay), and Dr. Robert (Faculty Dean, private university). The conversation centered on what CIOs actually look for when hiring – with a clear consensus that practical problem-solving ability, intellectual curiosity, and the capacity to explain complex ideas clearly outweigh academic pedigree alone.

Tadeo shared a formative anecdote from an interview at Thoughtworks that illustrated the premium placed on demonstrating how one thinks, not merely what one knows. Jim contextualized the CIO role around the imperative of safeguarding information and ensuring system reliability – qualities that demand both technical rigor and trustworthiness.

Key Takeaways

- **Problem-solving ability:** CIOs consistently value how candidates think over what they know. Demonstrate your reasoning process, not just your qualifications.
- **Intellectual curiosity:** Showing genuine interest in learning and evolving distinguishes candidates in competitive hiring.
- **Clear communication:** The ability to explain complex ideas simply is as important as technical depth.
- **Trustworthiness:** In roles that handle data and systems, character and reliability are evaluated from the first interaction

6. Additional Sessions



6.1 Apollo Mbowa

Manager Financial Literacy, National Social Security Fund (NSSF)

Financial Literacy and the Self-Management Imperative

In a session designed to ground the technical ambitions of the forum in personal reality, Apollo Mbowa addressed delegates on the foundational skill of self-management. He argued that technical knowledge is merely an entry requirement, but personal discipline and financial literacy are what determine long-term professional and personal survival..

Knowledge vs. Skill

Mbowa made a sharp distinction between the academic knowledge acquired in institutions and the practical skills required to generate and sustain wealth. While academic knowledge “gets you in the room,” it is the application of specialized skills that generates income. He identified self-management as the most critical skill for a digital leader.

"If you fail to manage your life, you have failed your life."

The Financial Sovereignty Framework

Addressing the philosophy that money grows on time, not on trees, Mbowa challenged delegates especially students and young professionals to begin their financial preparation immediately. He delivered a stark warning on the nature of capital: if you cannot save money, it will not save you.

Mbowa noted that while students are currently sheltered by parental support, the transition to independence is a sudden shift in responsibility. Those who do not prepare for this transition during their sheltered years will face significant hurdles in the professional world.

The Call to Immediate Action

The session concluded with a mandate for pre-professional preparation. Financial literacy and personal management are not skills to be acquired after securing a high-paying role; they are the prerequisites for reaching that role. For the digital economy to thrive, its leaders must be financially resilient, ensuring that the wealth created through digital transformation is managed with the same precision as the technology itself.



6.2

Nkurunungi Gideon

Executive Secretary, CIO–CXO Digital Leadership Forum

Institutionalizing the CIO–CxO Fraternity

In the final leadership address on Day One, Nkurunungi Gideon moved the conversation from individual inspiration to institutional structure. He defined the Forum not as a one-time event, but as the official “home” for a new fraternity of technical and business leaders dedicated to Uganda’s digital sovereignty.

Building the Technical Fraternity

Nkurunungi addressed the long-standing isolation of the ICT industry. While other professions such as auditors and accountants have well-established bodies, ICT has historically operated in silos. The CIO–CXO Forum was officially institutionalized as the bridge between the private and public sectors. Delegates are no longer just a collection of individuals; they are a fraternity. This unified voice is what will ensure the ICT sector permanently maintains its strategic seat at the leadership table

The Annual CIO Playbook: A Roadmap for Alignment

To ensure the discussions lead to measurable outcomes, Nkurunungi introduced the concept of the Annual CIO Playbook. Every year, the Forum will establish and circulate a list of key priorities, ensuring that every CIO in the network is working toward the same national objectives, preventing the fragmentation of resources and efforts. He called for a community that is very intentional one that does not just meet to talk but meets to plan, and whose planning translates into tangible solutions.

The Theory of Change

Nkurunungi summarized the Forum’s path forward through a three-pillar Theory of Change: first, actively mentoring the next generation by transferring high-level leadership and technical skills to students and young professionals; second, maintaining a permanent, high-level dialogue between the IT office and the C-suite throughout the year; and third, ensuring that the implementation of disruptive technologies, particularly AI, is guided by ethics, accountability, and national interest.

Digital Skills as Economic Infrastructure

In a final policy stance, Nkurunungi argued for a fundamental shift in how the nation views technical talent. He mandated that the CIO community treat digital skills as economic infrastructure, equivalent in importance to roads, water, and power. Closing the digital adoption gap is not just an HR task; it is a prerequisite for national economic growth. Closing with a reference to Proverbs 22:29, he reminded delegates that excellence in their craft is the only way to stand before kings.

7. Action Steps and Commitments

7.1 For Students and Graduates

- Register in the Uganda National IT Talent Registry to make skills, certifications, and project evidence visible to employers.
- Pursue at least one internationally recognized certification in cloud computing, cybersecurity, data analytics, or AI.
- Identify and approach a reachable mentor within your professional field. Arrive with clear goals and demonstrated work ethic.
- Build and actively manage a positive digital presence as a professional portfolio.
- Say yes to internships, volunteer projects, and exposure opportunities, even when you feel unready.

7.2 For Universities and Training Institutions

- Align curricula with the national IT skills framework and global certification standards.
- Send top students to participate in the National Tech Talent Program and hackathons.
- Implement career readiness and employability modules from year one of study.

7.3 For CIOs, Employers, and Industry Partners

- Open company doors to the national talent pipeline through structured internship and hiring commitments.
- Contribute to certification training initiatives and mentorship program.
- Participate in the online community “Uganda, the Data Center of Africa.”
- Provide students access to practical server environments and real-world project experience.



8. Next Milestones and 10-Year Roadmap

The National IT Talent Registry anchors a structured ten-year plan to transform Uganda's ICT talent landscape. The roadmap moves through three phases, each building on the last to grow a workforce that is locally competitive and globally recognized.

Phase	Timeline	Key Targets
Foundation Phase	2026–2027	Establish skills framework, pilot academies, and fully launch the National IT Talent Registry.
Scale Phase	2028–2031	Expand regionally; develop 50,000 trained and certified professionals enrolled in structured pathways.
Global Competitiveness	2032–2035	Position Uganda as an outsourcing hub with 200,000+ verifiable ICT professionals; recognized as Africa's top digital outsourcing destination.

9. Key Takeaways – Day One

- **The National IT Talent Registry is national infrastructure:** Not a graduate directory. A piece of national infrastructure built to capture skills, certifications, and project portfolios and make that evidence visible to every CIO and employer in Uganda.
- **The gap is real, and it is closing:** Thousands of graduates enter the workforce annually, yet critical technology roles remain persistently unfilled. The Registry, the roadmap, and the partnerships announced at this forum are the structures designed to close it.
- **Strategic thinking is the irreplaceable differentiator:** AI can write code. What AI cannot do is understand why a system exists, identify which problems are worth solving, and lead an organization through the consequences of solving them.
- **Certification is how talent becomes visible:** Internationally recognized certifications are the professional language that employers across Uganda and around the world actually speak.
- **Execution is the only currency that matters:** Potential gets you noticed. Execution gets you paid. Students willing to say yes to exposure, to build before they feel ready, and to register their skills are the ones who will build Uganda's digital future.
- **Government has committed and the infrastructure is real:** NITA Uganda's commitment to the National Tech Skills Program is backed by data centers, fiber networks, and digital platforms that already exist. The roads have been built. The nation urgently needs the drivers.
- **The fraternity is now formal:** The CIO–CXO Forum is the official professional home of Uganda's technology leadership community, with an Annual CIO Playbook to align national objectives.

10. Conclusion – Day One

The Lead the Digital Future Workshop 2026 was more than a forum it was a declaration of intent. Uganda's technology leaders, government partners, and industry executives came together not merely to inspire, but to build a structured, verifiable, and sustained pipeline of world-class ICT talent.

From George Ouma's call to think beyond the code, to Rowena Turinawe's five charges for courageous execution, to Eman Conde's testament to lifelong learning and his landmark commitments, to Ms. Julian Rweju's government commitment backed by infrastructure and policy every voice at this forum converged on a single, clear message: Uganda's digital future is not waiting to be assigned to its youth. It is waiting to be built by them.

The National Talent Registry, the 10-year roadmap, the certification initiatives, and the mentorship networks launched or advanced at this forum are not endpoints. They are starting points the infrastructure for a generation that is ready to execute.

"A hungry person needs food. A generation hungry for opportunity needs more than inspiration – it needs access, structure, and the courage to execute."

- Rowena Turinawe



Day Two:

CIO-CxO DIGITAL LEADERSHIP FORUM CONCLAVE



11. Opening Remarks and Strategic Vision



Nkurunungi Gideon

Executive Secretary, CIO-CxO Digital Leadership Forum

The Forum commenced with a powerful and visionary address from Executive Secretary Nkurunungi Gideon, who set an urgent and passionate tone for the day's proceedings. Moving decisively away from conventional IT discourse, the opening remarks framed technology not merely as a business tool, but as a strategic weapon capable of dismantling systemic challenges across the continent. The address established a bold agenda that would guide all subsequent sessions.

11.1 Disrupting Unemployment and Economic Transformation

Nkurunungi rooted the Forum in a transformative vision: to harness technology as a powerful force to tackle youth unemployment, accelerate economic transformation, and redefine Africa's position in the global digital economy. He stressed that without an aggressive, coordinated approach, the region cannot meaningfully shift its economic trajectory. This was not a ceremonial framing it was a call for accountability across every sector represented in the room.

11.2 The Research Imperative

A critical warning was issued regarding the state of innovation across the continent. Nkurunungi observed that despite the presence of groundbreaking technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, research intensity in Africa has significantly declined. He challenged delegates to intensify local research efforts with urgency, warning that without a serious reinvestment in original research and development, the continent will remain a consumer not a creator in the global digital economy.

Key Challenge

Africa risks remaining a net consumer of global technology unless local research and innovation output is dramatically increased. Every session at this Forum must be measured against whether it advances original African solutions.

11.3 Reclaiming the Boardroom and Rebuilding Trust

A defining theme of the opening was the historical exclusion of IT leaders from executive decision-making tables. Nkurunungi established an unambiguous mandate: digital transformation must no longer be treated as an operational afterthought. Every company should have an IT leader embedded in their boardroom as a strategic necessity, not a technical support function. He acknowledged that currently, few IT leaders are trusted to deliver large-scale digital transformations, and argued that by building a unified, highly intentional community, CIOs can develop a consolidated voice that executive boards can trust

"Every company should have an IT leader in their boardrooms."

11.4 The Art of Continuous Studying

Contributing to the opening discourse, Eman Conde emphasised that education and capacity building must extend far beyond formal schooling. He introduced the concept of mastering the art of continuous studying a non-negotiable mindset for digital leaders who intend to survive and thrive amidst rapid technological evolution. This philosophy would recur as a central thread throughout the day's proceedings.

12. Strategic Frameworks

To ensure that the passion and energy of the Forum translates into actionable, year-round impact, Nkurunungi outlined the foundational frameworks that will guide the community's work in the months and years ahead.

12.1 The Annual CIO Playbook

To maintain a unified strategic direction, the Forum will operate through structured engagement and cross-sector collaboration anchored by an Annual CIO Playbook. Every year, key priorities will be established, agreed upon, and circulated across the entire CIO community ensuring that collective efforts over the following twelve months are coordinated, measurable, and purposeful rather than fragmented.

12.2 The Theory of Change

The Forum's long-term impact will be driven by a three-pillar Theory of Change.

Pillar	Name	Description
1	Mentor the Next Generation	Actively transferring knowledge and experience to secure the future of African technology leadership.
2	Sustained Leadership Engagement	Maintaining continuous dialogue and accountability rather than producing isolated annual events.
3	Responsible Leadership Adoption	Ensuring technology is implemented ethically, effectively, and in service of national development goals.

12.3 Core Focus Areas

- Digital Skills as Economic Infrastructure: Closing digital adoption gaps by treating technical skills with the same urgency as physical infrastructure such as roads and power grids.
- Job Creation: Positioning digital transformation explicitly as a strategy to create meaningful, scalable employment.
- Sustainable Financing: Developing long-term financial models to support digital growth beyond donor cycles and short-term project funding.
- Implementation Enablers: Utilizing global technology trends specifically as tools to implement local, context-appropriate solutions.

13. Translating Disruption into Measurable Value



Eman Conde

**Global Technology Leader | CCIE | Agent Alchemy
Global Networks (AGN) | Veteran of 52+ Years**

The keynote session was introduced with a thought-provoking video featuring AI pioneer Geoffrey Hinton, confronting the rapid and often disorienting acceleration of artificial intelligence. Against this backdrop, Eman Conde delivered a grounding, pragmatic message for modern CIOs: AI should not be a source of fear, but a tool to be understood, mastered, and directed toward measurable value. The defining challenge for leaders today, he argued, is taking disruptive technologies and translating them into ROI, enterprise value, and sectoral transformation.

13.1 The AI Reality Check: Optimism with Oversight

Addressing the intense hype surrounding artificial intelligence, Conde advocated for a balanced posture of optimism and structured realism, drawing on the foundational impact of initiatives like the Human Genome Project as a model for technology's true long-term potential. While AI is proving highly transformative in pharmaceutical research and accelerated drug discovery, Conde cautioned that it is not yet fully reliable in direct clinical applications without active human oversight. CIOs must guide AI adoption with strict accountability, robust ethical frameworks, and a genuine commitment to continuous improvement. Unreflective adoption of AI without these guardrails is a governance failure, not an innovation win.

"AI is not perfect. These systems can still make errors. CIOs must guide adoption with accountability, ethics, and a commitment to continuous improvement."

13.2 The Journeyman Philosophy: People Over Systems

Drawing on a career spanning from the U.S. Navy in 1974 through high-stakes engagements with the U.S. Department of Defense and major institutional modernization projects, Conde shared his evolution from focusing on technology to focusing on the people who build, operate, and benefit from it. Success in multi-billion-dollar infrastructure projects is ultimately driven by the human ecosystem behind the technology, not the technology itself. He emphasized the integration of journeymen skilled professionals who combine global expertise with deep local knowledge to create scalable, context-appropriate solutions.

13.3 Infrastructure and the Demographic Advantage

Conde highlighted the immense structural opportunity present in a demographically young country. While developed nations often face institutional resistance to new digital infrastructure such as community opposition to data centers developing economies possess a unique strategic agility to embrace high-end computing and leapfrog traditional development pathways entirely. A young, energized population is not simply a social asset; it is Uganda's greatest digital infrastructure advantage.

13.4 Actionable Commitments and Landmark Pledges

Initiative	Commitment Details
\$10 Million Infrastructure Pledge	A dedicated commitment toward the development of data centers, high-quality datasets, and digital infrastructure in Uganda.
End-to-End Talent Pipeline	A personal pledge to sponsor and follow a cohort of students throughout their entire journey from academic enrolment through to professional employment and career development.
Institutional Certification Deal	A newly finalized partnership with one of the country's largest educational institutions to deliver internationally recognized technology certifications at scale.



14. The Public Sector Mandate: Platforms, Ethics, and Enterprise Value



Julian Rweju

Director of E-Government Services, NITA-Uganda (Delivered on behalf of the Executive Director)

Julian Rweju delivered a rallying address for the unification of Uganda's digital professionals, marking a definitive shift from fragmented IT operations toward a consolidated, nationally aligned digital ecosystem. Her address combined institutional authority with genuine urgency, drawing on NITA-U's central role in Uganda's digital transformation agenda..

14.1 The End of Professional Silos: Building a Digital Fraternity

"For too long, the IT industry in Uganda has lacked a unified home. While accountants, auditors, and other professionals have well-established forums, our sector has often operated in silos. We are no longer just a collection of individuals; we are a fraternity."

This unification is not merely symbolic. It is a structural necessity to permanently secure the ICT sector's rightful seat at the national leadership table. As Uganda intensifies its focus on productivity and digital service delivery, every enterprise now requires a dedicated, empowered CIO to unlock its full operational potential.

14.2 Ecosystems Over Islands: The National Enterprise Architecture

A major technical directive issued from NITA-U is the decisive shift away from building isolated applications and platforms toward the collaborative development of shared national digital infrastructure. The government is actively building national digital platforms and is calling on CIOs across all sectors to integrate and collaborate rather than duplicate efforts that drain limited national resources. Rweju announced the forthcoming release of the National Enterprise Architecture a comprehensive framework to guide interoperable, collaborative digital development across public and private sectors.

14.3 Trust as a Metric for Transformation

Beyond infrastructure, Rweju highlighted the critical human and ethical dimension of digital exchange. CIOs must lead the charge in understanding and enforcing ethical data practices across their organisations. The success of Uganda's digital transformation hinges entirely on the trust of citizens and enterprises. Without strict consideration of ethical data use, the value proposition that IT leaders bring to the boardroom collapses.

14.4 Vision 2040 and Major National Milestones

Reaffirming the government's commitment through the National Development Plan and Vision 2040, Rweju emphasised the mandate to leapfrog Uganda to its next economic level leveraging the skills and energy of the country's young population as its primary competitive asset. She officially launched and invited delegates to two landmark upcoming events: the Digital Transformation & E-Government Awards launching on 2 October 2026, and the Africa Digital Summit also scheduled for October 2026, which will gather global partners in Uganda to showcase local innovations and absorb global best practices.



15. Bridging the Generational Gap and Ecosystem Collaboration



Jonathan Kayemba

CEO, LOGOS CLOUD EDGE LIMITED | Chairperson, Governing Board

Jonathan Kayemba brought a candid and structurally grounded perspective to the Forum, drawing on fifteen years of experience as an information systems engineer and AI entrepreneur. His session confronted the institutional and generational barriers preventing genuine digital transformation, while mapping a clear roadmap for ecosystem unification.

15.1 Governing the “BBC” Generation

Kayemba opened with a necessary and often-avoided observation: a significant proportion of current institutional decision-makers belong to the BBC (Born Before Computers) generation. While traditional leaders possess deep institutional memory and experience, a widening gap exists in their ability to govern a digitally native, technologically empowered workforce. This generational disconnect is why digital leadership remains heavily underrepresented in core decision-making structures. IT leaders are currently brought in merely to report on infrastructure, not to shape organizational strategy. The Forum’s mandate is to elevate digital leaders so they are embedded directly into the C-suite, not positioned beneath it.

15.2 Ending Ecosystem Fragmentation

A major and urgent theme of Kayemba’s address was the systematic duplication of effort across Uganda’s technology landscape a structural problem that drains both resources and momentum from the national digital agenda. Individual organizations are expending limited budgets attempting to solve identical problems in isolation problems that a coordinated national approach could address once, effectively, and at scale. Government institutions are launching digital initiatives the private sector remains unaware of, while the private sector holds innovations the government urgently needs. Structured, intentional collaboration is not optional; it is mandatory.

15.3 Debunking the “Local Content” Myth

"Good software doesn't change the world; you need a seat at the table with the people who change the world. Guard data as identity that is how you build institutional trust."

Local talent in AI and advanced software has existed in Uganda for decades. The true deficit is not capability it is visibility, coordination, and the ability to translate technical excellence into business language. Technical leaders must move beyond code and develop fluency in business strategy, policy, and the legal frameworks governing procurement. This translation skill is the critical missing bridge between technical excellence and national impact.

15.4 The SME Opportunity and the Job Market

Turning to national economics, Kayemba confronted the looming challenge presented by Uganda's 700,000 annual graduates entering a constrained job market. Traditional large employers telecommunications companies, banks, and government agencies cannot absorb this workforce volume. The real and sustainable opportunity lies in empowering Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The technology community must focus on building platforms that enable SMEs to adopt technology, scale sustainably, and become the primary drivers of job creation at the national level.



16. Transforming Talent: The National Tech Skills Talent Program (2026–2035)



Mrs. Janey Rachel Nakato

CTO, Pearl Bank Uganda

Addressing the stark and persistent disconnect between academic output and industry readiness, Janey Rachel Nakato delivered a comprehensive blueprint for Uganda's human capital development. Her session transitioned the Forum's focus from identifying the talent gap to actively engineering a structured ten-year solution to close it.

"We want founders and creators, not just job seekers. We are moving from being users of technology to being builders of technology."

16.1 Bridging the Education–Industry Divide

Despite the country producing an estimated 700,000 graduates annually across all disciplines, enterprise leaders consistently struggle to source job-ready IT professionals locally. This is not a failure of individual graduates it is a systemic structural disconnect between academic curricula and real-world industry demand. The CIO-CXO Digital Leadership Forum officially detailed the National Tech Skills Talent Program around five core objectives: building a future-ready IT workforce aligned precisely with global enterprise demand; drastically reducing reliance on expatriate ICT labor; aligning national technical skills with Vision 2040; creating inclusive, intentional pathways for youth, women, and underserved rural communities; and strengthening public–private partnerships across education, training, and structured job creation

16.2 The Five Strategic Pillars of Execution

Pillar	Name	Description
1	Skills Development and Certification	Establishing an internationally aligned IT skills framework — mapping global certifications, securing scholarships, and building structured learning pathways.
2	Talent Identification and Nurturing	Moving beyond traditional hiring by utilizing hackathons, national IT job portals, and employer-led bootcamps to surface hidden talent.
3	National IT Talent Registry	A centralized, verifiable database capturing the qualifications and certified competencies of local tech professionals for employer access.
4	Employment Linkages and Retention	Participating CIOs have committed to recruiting directly from the Talent Registry, with continuous professional development pathways built in.
5	Innovation and Entrepreneurship	Funding incubators, accelerators, and seed mechanisms to empower local developers to scale proprietary solutions to market.

16.3 The 10-Year Implementation Roadmap

Phase	Timeline	Strategic Focus and Key Milestones
Phase I: Foundation	2026–2027	Establishment of the national skills framework, piloting of tech academies, and full operationalization of the National IT Talent Registry.
Phase II: Scale	2028–2031	Expansion through regional hubs across Uganda. Primary target: at least 50,000 certified ICT professionals enrolled in structured pathways.
Phase III: Global Competitiveness	2032–2035	Positioning Uganda as a regional leader in certified digital talent. Target: 200,000 certified professionals and recognition as Africa's top digital outsourcing destination.

17. The Value-Driven CIO: Defining Board-Level Value



Peter Mukuru

Director of Business Technology, Uganda Development Bank

Peter Mukuru opened his session with a deliberately interactive and diagnostic exercise. Rather than presenting a framework from the outset, he turned to the audience with a direct and disarming question: What is your biggest value point or your biggest pain point? The responses from across the room surfaced five recurring concerns: the shortage of market-ready talent, organisational risk that is consistently deferred until it becomes a crisis, lapses in integrity and professional standards, the ever-evolving threat landscape of cybersecurity, and the escalating operational costs associated with emerging technologies particularly artificial intelligence.

With these responses on the floor, Mukuru then posed a sharper and more confronting question: How much of what you just described does your board actually care about? The room fell into a moment of reflection and that reflection was precisely the point.

17.1 Who Determines Value?

Mukuru challenged delegates to interrogate the concept of value from first principles. CIOs consistently aspire to a seat at the decision-making table and to demonstrate value creation but he argued that this ambition must be grounded in an honest understanding of the organisational hierarchy and what those at the top are actually incentivised to care about.

He raised a pointed structural observation that resonated throughout the room: when a Managing Director or Executive Director position becomes vacant, why is it almost never the CIO who steps in to fill the gap? Why is it overwhelmingly the CFO, COO, or another C-suite peer who is considered and why has the IT function historically been absent from that conversation?

"We want to be at the seat where decisions are being made. But first, we must speak the language of the people already sitting there."

The answer, he argued, lies not in competence but in language. Technical leaders have historically communicated in a dialect that executive boards do not recognise as strategic. To change that dynamic, CIOs must understand with precision that boards are actually measuring when they assess the health and performance of an organisation.

17.2 The Five Things Your Board Actually Cares About

Drawing on his years of experience operating at the intersection of technology and executive leadership, Mukuru identified five fundamental priorities that govern boardroom thinking. These are not aspirational they are the operational and strategic metrics by which organisations are ultimately judged:

#	Board Priority	What the Board Actually Wants to Know
1	Revenue Growth	Are we bringing in money? IT initiatives must be explicitly tied to revenue generation and new income streams.
2	Cost Optimisation	Are we optimising costs? Technology must demonstrably reduce operational expenditure and improve financial efficiency.
3	Risk Management	Are we managing risks? Boards expect IT to proactively identify, quantify, and mitigate organisational risk.
4	Customer Impact	How are we affecting the customer? Every digital initiative must be measured by its effect on the customer experience.
5	Regulatory Compliance	Are we meeting compliance requirements? In an increasingly regulated environment, IT is a frontline compliance function.

17.3 The Language Shift: From Technical to Strategic

Mukuru's central argument was that CIOs are already engaged in work that speaks directly to each of these five board priorities. The missing element is not action it is translation. When a CIO presents a cybersecurity upgrade, the board hears a cost. When a CIO frames the same initiative as a risk mitigation strategy that protects revenue continuity and regulatory standing, the board hears a strategic investment.

He challenged delegates to audit their own communication habits: to what extent are conversations about infrastructure, systems, and technology being framed around revenue optimisation, customer impact, risk reduction, and compliance outcomes? When that language shift becomes consistent and deliberate, the transition from operational manager to value-driven CIO is complete.

- Instead of reporting system uptime – report the revenue-hours protected from downtime.
- Instead of reporting patch compliance rates – report the risk exposure eliminated from the balance sheet.
- Instead of reporting AI tool deployments – report the operational cost savings and productivity gains generated.
- Instead of reporting customer portal launches – report the improvement in Net Promoter Score and digital self-service adoption.

18. The Value-Driven CIO: Translating Technology into Enterprise Value



Fred Percy Kisa

Senior Manager Transformation, National Social Security Fund (NSSF)

Challenging the conventional metrics of IT success, Fred Percy Kisa delivered a masterclass on executive repositioning. He argued that to secure a strategic seat at the boardroom table, technical leaders must abandon operational jargon and adopt the language of enterprise value, ROI, and human impact.

"The CFO knows the numbers, the COO knows the process, and the CCO knows the market. But we are the only ones who sit at the centre of all three. The only missing piece is our ability to speak the language of the business."

18.1 The Paradigm Shift in Vocabulary

For decades, the traditional IT department has measured success through operational survival: uptime percentages, ticket resolution times, and service level agreement compliance. Kisa acknowledged that keeping the lights on is necessary, but it does not earn a place in the boardroom. The transition to a Value-Driven CIO requires a complete transformation in how IT communicates its impact.

The difference is stark. A traditional report states: "Our annual IT infrastructure costs were \$4 billion." This focuses on expenditure and positions IT as a cost center. A value-driven report states: "Our digital initiatives optimized processes to save the corporation \$8 billion this year, while generating an additional \$2.1 billion in revenue." This focuses on return on investment and positions IT as a growth engine.

18.2 The Five Strategic Pillars of Execution

Perspective	Traditional CIO Metric	Value-Driven CIO Metric
Financial	IT budget variance and cost per ticket.	Revenue generated by digital channels and total bottom-line savings from IT-led optimization.
Customer	99.999% system reliability and uptime.	Net Promoter Score, member delight, and digital self-service adoption rates.
Internal Processes	Patch compliance and successful server migrations.	Speed of service delivery — how fast are client claims paid out end-to-end?
Learning and Growth	Number of accumulated training hours and certifications.	Number of innovation pilots successfully scaled to deliver measurable business outcomes.

18.3 Case Study: The Human ROI of Digital Transformation

To illustrate the fundamental difference between IT output and genuine business outcome, Kisa shared a case study from NSSF. Previously, a member would spend up to six hours travelling from rural areas to Kampala, incurring significant transport costs and enduring long queues simply to access funds they had already earned and were entitled to. NSSF deployed an AI-driven documentation and auto-generation system, effectively reducing member travel time and associated costs to zero.

Report Type	How the Success Was Communicated
Traditional IT Report	We successfully rolled out the mobile app, optimized data flow, and ensured 100% server uptime.
Value-Driven Business Report	We restored dignity to our members. By eliminating travel costs and processing times, families remain financially stable, trust in the NSSF brand is solidified, and operational efficiency has directly driven the recruitment of new members.

"The ultimate job of the CIO is not merely to build systems it is to remove friction from the human experience, thereby accelerating business growth."

19. Confronting the Gender Gap in Technical Leadership



Nkurunungi Gideon

Executive Secretary, CIO-CxO Digital Leadership Forum

Shifting the Forum's focus to workforce sustainability, Gideon presented the Forum's official ICT Sector Position Paper on Confronting the Gender Gap in Technical ICT Leadership. He established a definitive and non-negotiable stance: the gender gap in technical leadership is not merely a social equity issue or a diversity metric it is a critical national digital workforce challenge with direct implications for Uganda's economic competitiveness.

A central philosophy driving this initiative, derived from extensive interviews and stakeholder engagement, is holistic inclusion: to effectively empower and elevate women in technology, the initiative must actively engage all genders. Closing the gap is a collective ecosystem responsibility, not an isolated women's issue

19.1 The Data: Tracking the Talent Leakage

Stage	Women's Representation	Trend
ICT University Graduates	35%	Reasonable foundation.
General Technology Workforce	28%	First significant drop-off.
Women in Technical Leadership	18%	Broken career progression ladder.
Women in Specialized Technical Roles	10%	Critical innovation risk.

19.2 The Cost of Exclusion

Failing to harness the intellectual capital of 50% of the population carries severe economic consequences. The underrepresentation of women in core technical roles directly results in slower national digital transformation, wasted national potential, reduced innovation capacity through lack of diverse perspectives in product design, and a competitiveness risk that directly hinders Uganda's ambition to become a leading digital hub in Africa.

19.3 Multi-Layered National Response

Because the challenge is systemic rooted in deep structural and cultural barriers the Forum proposed a four-quadrant strategic response, moving decisively from passive inclusion to active, strategic acceleration.

- Bridge the Education Gap: Directly connect tertiary education to concrete career opportunities through partnerships and structured pathways.
- Fill the Talent Pipeline: Address the immediate crisis of women missing from core infrastructure and specialized technical roles.
- Advance Women: Actively promote women into specialized technical and leadership positions through targeted mentorship and sponsorship.
- Retain Women: Dismantle the deep-rooted structural and cultural barriers that cause women to leave technical careers mid-journey.

19.4 The Snowball Strategy for Execution

To operationalize this response, the Forum introduced the Snowball Strategy a step-by-step framework to build a resilient, inclusive digital economy;

- Identify and Strategize: Recognize sector challenges and set clear, measurable policy objectives.
- Assign and Measure: Appoint lead actors across organizations and collect disaggregated ICT workforce data to track real progress.
- Plug Leaks and Support: Address specific drop-off points in the education pipeline and create robust support networks for women in the workplace
- Inspire and Foster: Ignite aspiration by encouraging young girls to pursue ICT, while fostering genuinely inclusive workplace cultures that actively engage all genders..

20. The Portable CIO: Panel Session



Albert Gitta

CIO, MTN Mobile Money Uganda



Joanita Asio Banda

**Head of Emerging Technology,
Stanbic Bank Uganda**

This panel session explored the evolution of the modern technology leader into what the speakers termed the Portable CIO an executive whose value is not derived from mastery of a specific technology stack, but from a set of meta-skills and strategic mindsets that translate powerfully across any organization or industry.

20.1 The Portable Mindset

A portable leader relies on meta-skills emotional intelligence, strategic agility, and systems thinking rather than rigid technical certifications or specific platform expertise. This adaptability allows leaders to transition seamlessly between industries and lead effectively regardless of the technology environment they inherit.

20.2 The Co-Founder Approach

Tech leaders must stop viewing themselves as order-takers or gatekeepers of IT infrastructure. Instead, they must adopt a co-founder mentality focusing on how technology can directly drive market growth, improve operational efficiency, and elevate the customer experience. IT leaders manage trust at scale and serve as architects of organisational opportunity.

20.3 Boardroom Translation

A major pitfall for technical leaders is defaulting to technical jargon acronyms like APIs or TAT when speaking to the C-suite or board of directors. To build lasting credibility, a CIO must translate complex technical architectures into business outcomes: P&L impact, revenue growth, and competitive positioning.

20.4 Empowering Talent and Building Succession

Effective leaders do not need to be the most technically brilliant person in the room. The most impactful CIOs hire brilliant people, give them space to make fast decisions and fail fast, and actively groom the next generation of leaders rather than protecting their own position.

20.5 What Modern Tech Leaders Must Learn versus Unlearn

What to LEARN and Embrace	What to UNLEARN and Stop Doing
Business Fluency: Deeply understanding the company's financial and operational goals.	Platform Sentimentality: Being overly attached to a specific vendor, software, or tool beyond its useful life.
Emerging Tech: Staying sharp on AI, Machine Learning, and system observability.	Cost Sentimentality: Hoarding a budget at the expense of organizational speed and agility.
Radical Technical Depth: Maintaining enough architectural knowledge to spot technical fluff and vendor exaggeration.	Vendor Reliance: Letting external vendors dictate the company's internal technology roadmap and strategic direction.

21. Closing Address: The Evolution of the Strategic CIO



Collin Babirukamu

Executive Director of Information Technology, Bank of Uganda

Closing the inaugural CIO Conclave, Collin Babirukamu delivered a definitive roadmap for the future of technology leadership. Drawing from nearly three decades of experience navigating the evolution from early hardware-centric networks to today's AI-powered ecosystems, he articulated a clear mandate: the modern Chief Information Officer must fully complete the transition from technical expert to strategic business executive

21.1 Problem-Solving Over Technical Complexity

The central premise of Babirukamu's address was a call for IT leaders to permanently abandon infrastructure-centric thinking. Executive boards and C-suite peers are fundamentally concerned with value creation not the technical intricacies of data centers and server architecture. Every IT initiative must be explicitly aligned with organizational goals and demonstrate tangible impact through enhanced efficiency, cost reduction, and direct revenue growth.

21.2 Speaking the Language of the Boardroom

To secure genuine executive support and drive enterprise strategy, technical leaders must undergo a fundamental shift in communication. Babirukamu stressed the necessity of replacing technical jargon with simplified, outcome-oriented language that resonates with non-technical stakeholders. CIOs must master the financial and strategic language of the business framing projects around Return on Investment, Net Present Value, and operational efficiency. Sharing his personal journey of pursuing an MBA, he illustrated that actively bridging the gap between technology and business strategy is a non-negotiable requirement for modern leadership.

21.3 Ecosystem Simplification and Collaborative Integration

Babirukamu advocated for a highly integrated, empathetic enterprise approach. A strategic CIO does not implement systems in a vacuum by actively listening to and understanding the specific operational challenges of departments such as finance, risk, and audit, IT can deliver targeted, genuinely relevant solutions. Organizations must shift away from fragmented, redundant IT environments toward simplified, service-oriented ecosystems that provide leadership with real-time insights through unified dashboards, accelerating enterprise decision-making.

21.4 Navigating the AI Era Through Continuous Learning

As artificial intelligence and machine learning rapidly reshape industries enhancing capabilities from real-time data analysis to advanced fraud detection relying on legacy knowledge is an active career risk. Babirukamu urged leaders to commit to continuous adaptation, actively acquiring new competencies to remain competitive and relevant in an increasingly automated landscape.

21.5 Executive Visibility and National Impact

Beyond internal corporate operations, the closing address challenged CIOs to elevate their external influence and societal impact. Developing strong presentation skills and maintaining a visible professional presence across industry forums are essential for building the credibility that accelerates career growth. Citing the implementation of national payment systems as an example, Babirukamu demonstrated how digital solutions can drive massive economic transparency, inclusivity, and efficiency. The modern CIO is not just an enterprise manager they are a potential catalyst for national societal transformation.

"You are not just managing IT. You are managing trust, driving growth, and if you choose to see it that way building the infrastructure of a better Uganda."

21.6

CIO-CxO Awards

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DIGITAL LEADERSHIP FORUM
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2ND OCTOBER

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LRA
Luganda Revenue Authority
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a better life
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22. Conclusion – Day Two

The Day Two proceedings of the CIO Conclave 2026 were not simply a continuation of the previous day's work they represented a significant deepening of both the intellectual framework and the actionable commitments that will define Uganda's digital future.

From Nkurunungi Gideon's opening call to reclaim the boardroom and reorient technology toward economic transformation, to Eman Conde's \$10 million infrastructure pledge and his testament to lifelong learning; from Julian Rweju's government-backed mandate for a unified national digital ecosystem, to Jonathan Kayemba's structural diagnosis of ecosystem fragmentation; from Janey Rachel Nakato's detailed ten-year talent engineering blueprint, to Fred Percy Kisa's masterclass on value-driven leadership communication; from the Forum's bold position on gender inclusion to Collin Babirukamu's definitive roadmap for the strategic CIO every address converged on a single, clear message.

"Uganda's digital future is not waiting to be assigned. It is waiting to be built by unified, strategic, value-driven, and inclusive technology leaders who understand that their role is not to manage systems, but to transform institutions and communities."

The frameworks launched, pledges made, and communities formed at this Forum are not endpoints. They are infrastructure the beginning of a sustained, coordinated, and measurable effort to position Uganda as Africa's leading digital economy within a decade.



The 2026 CIO CONCLAVE

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