unisys

From Run to Real-Time

Orchestrating Digital Success with Intelligent Operations

Intelligent Operations:

Orchestrating your digital success

In Unisys' collaborative work with clients, we see a clear opportunity for transformation through intelligent operations.

Despite significant investments in cloud, automation, and AI, many organizations face operational challenges that limit their potential. Enterprise leaders struggle to extract meaningful insights from applications, while companies with outdated operations report declining customer satisfaction.

Legacy IT systems built for stability rather than agility cannot keep pace with today's digital demands. This creates a gap between technology investments and actual business outcomes.

The Everest Group report you're about to explore maps the journey from basic to intelligent operations. This shift positions operations as a strategic catalyst for innovation, resilience, and growth. Intelligent Operations anticipate challenges before they affect your business, unify fragmented environments, and embed security throughout your ecosystem.

At Unisys, we help organizations build operational maturity step by step. Our clients achieve remarkable transformations - dramatic reductions in production issues, substantial improvements in system performance, and significant savings in IT costs. We bring this expertise to some of the world's most complex organizations, from financial institutions to government agencies, all seeking the agility that intelligent operations deliver.

We're excited to collaborate with you on this journey. By focusing on real-time insights, automation, and business alignment, we can build operations that create competitive advantage and drive measurable growth.

Want to see what's possible?

Learn how Unisys' cloud solutions can support your transformation and let's begin to transform your operations.

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Everest Group®

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From Run to Real-time: Orchestrating Digital Success with Intelligent Operations (IO)

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Introduction

Despite years of significant investment in cloud, automation, and AI, several enterprises still struggle to realize the full value of digital transformation. The root cause is not technology but the operational foundation that supports it. Legacy IT operations, built for stability rather than agility, fail to keep pace with modern digital business demands. Operations include activities, processes, and systems that manage and maintain the functionality, performance, and security of an organization's IT infrastructure and services. This includes tasks such as monitoring, incident management, problem resolution, and continuous service delivery.

But the game has changed. Over the last decade, digital services, customer touchpoints, and agile development practices have surged, outpacing traditional IT operating models. Whether digital-native or in transition, enterprises now grapple with a complex IT environment spanning legacy infrastructure, multi-cloud platforms, SaaS sprawl, and edge systems. This complexity has strained IT operations, revealing their inability to deliver resilience, scalability, and proactive support.

To meet today's digital enterprise needs, operations must become intelligent, integrated, and proactive instead of remaining incident-driven and siloed. This transition means embedding automation, analytics, and resilience into every IT operations layer to keep the lights on and drive continuous innovation and stability at scale.

This Viewpoint examines the evolving enterprise operations landscape and the growing need for Intelligent Operations (IO). The report covers:

- How enterprise IT operations have matured and why many still operate reactively
- Key challenges impacting operational maturity and transformation
- The shift from traditional run functions to intelligent, proactive IT operations and its benefits
- Foundational capabilities required to build a future-ready operations model
- How to evaluate an organization's operational readiness

Evolving enterprise operations for the modern IT era

Until recently, enterprises measured operational success through uptime. As long as systems were online, operations were considered effective. But this narrow focus, combined with a siloed approach across enterprise architecture, applications, infrastructure, and networks, led to inefficiencies, limited scalability, fragmented digital experiences, and heightened exposure to cyber threats. It created a reactive model where teams constantly played catch-up, fixing issues after they occurred rather than preventing them, leaving little room for innovation or long-term improvement.

As IT evolved from traditional on-prem setups to hybrid models and now to cloud-native and distributed architectures, the pace and complexity of change have grown significantly. The old working methods, with siloed teams and manual processes, cannot keep up anymore. Today's businesses need operations that are fast, connected, and support continuous real-time delivery. Oftentimes, these changes necessitate transformation across cloud, applications, and data.

About 85% of enterprises that have not adequately modernized operations reported a decline in customer satisfaction over the past year.[1]

Transitioning from reactive support to strategic operations

Leading enterprises are redefining operations, evolving them from a post-deployment support function into a strategic capability embedded across the IT lifecycle. Modern operations are built from the onset to ensure resilience, security, and scalability. Rather than reacting to issues after launch, teams prevent them while supporting faster delivery and continuous improvement. This transition moves enterprises from fragmented, reactive models to integrated, proactive operations that enable agility, resilience, and innovation at scale.

Most enterprises are navigating different operations maturity stages, progressing from ad hoc to reactive to systemic models. Systemic operations feature integrated tools and processes, enterprise-wide visibility, strong accountability, and automation aligned with business objectives.

1 Everest Group survey of 150 CXO-level executives from enterprises with an annual revenue of over US$500 million

Several converging forces are driving this evolution:

- **Complex IT environments:** Hybrid, multi-cloud, and edge computing demand seamless integration and management beyond legacy capabilities
- **Business agility:** Reactive operations slow down transformation, limiting speed to scale and innovate
- **Cost and efficiency pressures:** Manual processes lead to inefficiencies, cost overruns, and higher IT spend under tighter scrutiny
- **Security and compliance risks:** Growing cyber threats and regulatory demands require proactive, intelligent security measures
- **Data and AI readiness:** Huge data volumes need real-time analytics and AI-driven insights for better decision-making
- **Enhanced customer experiences:** Even minor downtime or service disruptions impact revenue and brand loyalty, demanding resilient, always-on IT operations

To meet these demands, leading enterprises are embedding key design principles into their operations models:

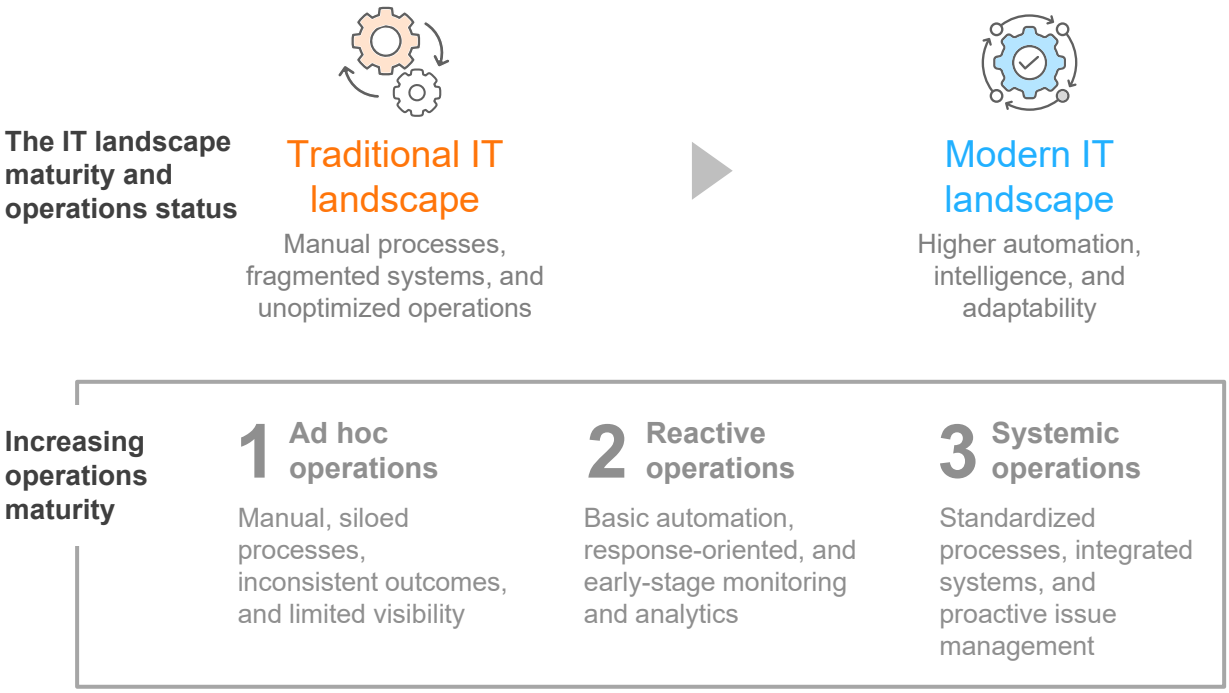
- **Resilience by design** ensures systems can anticipate, absorb, and recover from disruptions
- **Security by design** integrates proactive data protection across infrastructure and applications
- **Automation by design** streamlines repetitive tasks to improve speed, accuracy, and efficiency
- **Observability by design** enables end-to-end visibility across complex, distributed environments
- **Adaptability by design** allows operations to respond dynamically to evolving business and technology needs
- **Scalability by design** enables seamless growth across workloads, platforms, and user demands
- **Data intelligence by design** architects data foundations that support real-time analytics, interoperability, and AI-driven insights

Enterprises operate at different operational maturity stages depending on their technology and business landscape.

Exhibit 1 illustrates three distinct operations maturity levels across enterprise IT landscapes, from traditional models to modernized environments.

Exhibit 1: Enterprise maturity journey – from traditional to modern IT landscape

Source: Everest Group (2025) [ILLUSTRATIVE]



While modern operations have laid the foundation for efficiency and scalability, rising customer expectations demand more. Persistent challenges continue to emerge, highlighting the need to move beyond modernization and adopt IO.

About 78% of enterprise leaders believe they are still unable to extract insights from their applications despite transitioning to a modern IT landscape.[2]

2 Everest Group surveyed 194 Chief Experience Officers from enterprises with over US$1 billion in revenue

Elevating operations through intelligence

Enterprise leaders must challenge their current paradigms through strategic introspection to identify these gaps. They must also answer the following questions, which are diagnostic markers to assess operational maturity.

- Can your infrastructure scale dynamically with the changing market demand?
- Are your IT and business teams aligned, or is a struggle between centralization and decentralization slowing down agility and responsiveness?
- Are your customer experiences consistently resilient and supported by real-time operational insights?
- Is your data unified and strategically leveraged across the enterprise, or is it siloed?
- Do your operations integrate security, automation, and intelligence seamlessly to support sustainable growth?
- Can your operations adapt quickly to new regulatory requirements or market shifts without disruptions?
- Do timely data-driven insights consistently support organization-wide decision-making?

If your answer is Yes to four out of seven questions, your organization must elevate toward IO. For enterprises, advancing to IO means progressing to cognitive maturity powered by automation, predictive insights, and strategic alignment with business goals. This shift enables agility, resilience, and long-term growth by transforming operations from cost centers into value-driving engines.

> **Everest Group take**
>
> Many enterprises have modernized their operations, yet key challenges continue to hinder their ability to scale, respond with agility, and deliver sustained business value.

"Shifting to intelligent operations transformed our service delivery and enhanced customer satisfaction, improving provisioning processes by 60%."

– Global Director of a telecom provider, EMEA

Key enterprise benefits of IO are:

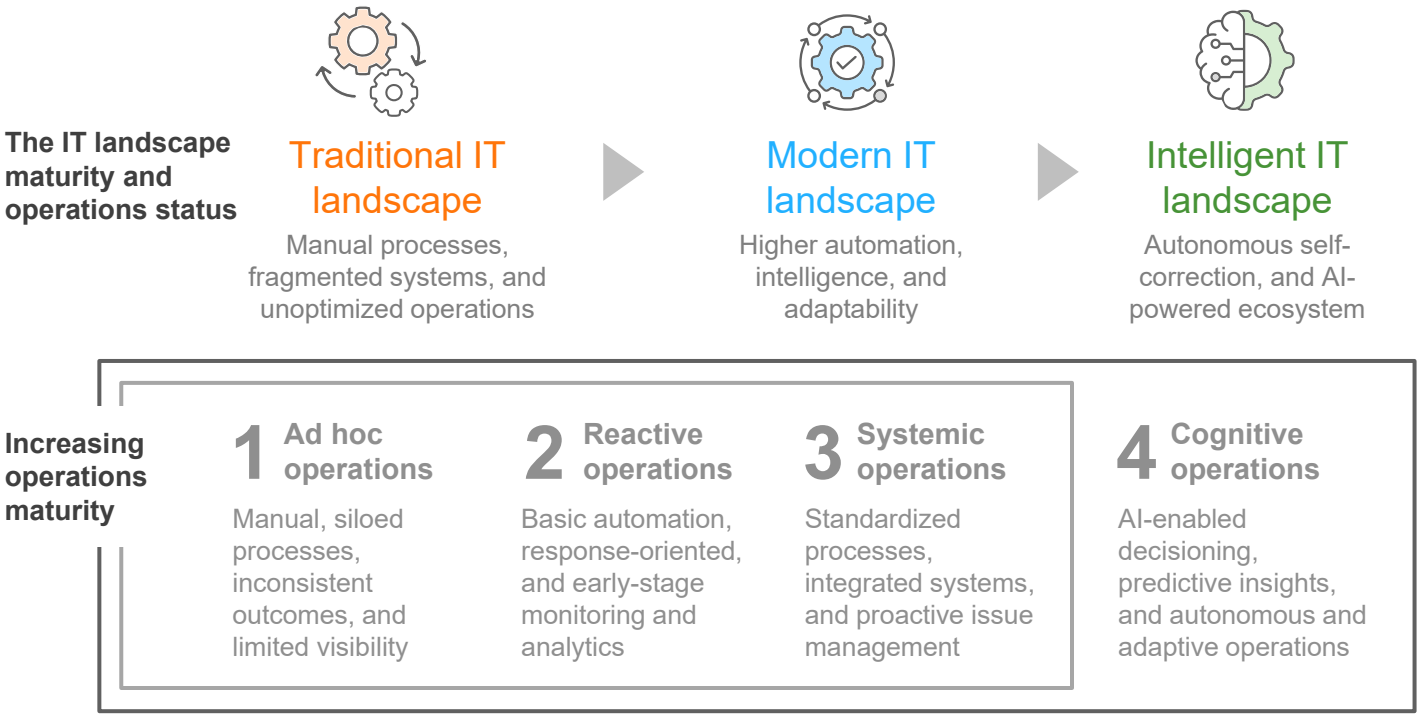
- Real-time data-driven decision-making
- Lower operational costs from reducing manual effort and improving efficiency
- Tighter business-IT alignment that ensures operations as a strategic growth enabler
- Improved customer experiences driven by real-time responsiveness and service consistency
- Faster time-to-value through predictive insights and agile execution
- Stronger security and compliance through embedded intelligent risk management

These capabilities position operations as a core digital transformation enabler, empowering enterprises to scale confidently in an increasingly complex business environment.

Exhibit 2 outlines the enterprise maturity journey from traditional IT to an intelligent IT landscape.

Exhibit 2: Enterprise maturity journey – from traditional to intelligent IT landscape

Source: Everest Group (2025) [ILLUSTRATIVE]



These benefits highlight IO's transformative potential when pursued as a strategic imperative and not just a technology upgrade.

What is IO?

IO is a modern operating model that integrates automation, data, AI, and cross-domain processes to enable real-time visibility, predictive action, and continuous optimization. It allows enterprises to move from reactive firefighting to proactive, business-aligned operations. Yet, many enterprises still confuse IO with automation or monitoring tools, focusing on technology without transforming operating models.

Exhibit 3 highlights some misconceptions related to IO and what truly defines it.

Exhibit 3: IO – reality versus misconceptions

Source: Everest Group (2025)

[ILLUSTRATIVE]

IO reality	IO misconceptions
Proactive and predictive: anticipates and resolves issues before they impact the business	**Monitoring:** intelligence is more than visibility; it enables prevention and resolution
End-to-end integration: unifies IT, applications, cloud, and business processes	**Standalone tools:** disconnected tools do not equal intelligence without orchestration and context
AI-driven decision-making: leverages ML for proactive optimization and self-healing	**Only automation:** task automation without insight does not deliver intelligent outcomes
Business-aligned: positions IT as a resilience, innovation, and measurable business outcomes driver	**Sole IT focus:** IO must align with and enable business goals
Security-embedded: integrates security and compliance across every layer	**A security add-on:** security is not an afterthought but a core function

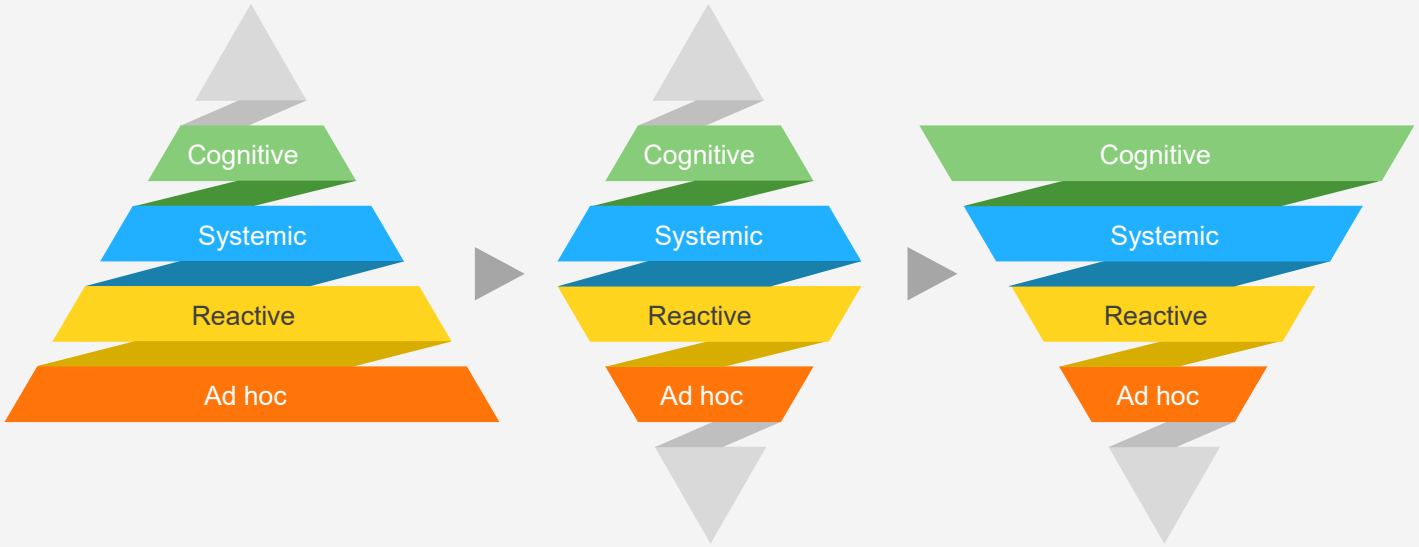
From awareness to evolution

Recognizing the difference between IO and common misconceptions is the first step. In the early stages, most operations of enterprise workloads are concentrated in the ad hoc layer, with progressively fewer in the reactive, systemic, and cognitive stages. As they begin their modernization journey, enterprises' operations stabilize at the reactive and systemic layers, where most of the workload resides, before advancing toward cognitive maturity. Ad hoc practices still exist in limited areas, while cognitive operations begin to emerge in domains with more mature automation, AI, and data integration.

Exhibit 4 illustrates how intelligence becomes central as the operational model inverts. The majority of workload operations become cognitive-centric, with systemic and reactive layers supporting where needed. More mature enterprises must focus on scaling automation, AI, data, and orchestration to enable a seamless and sustainable shift to IO.

Exhibit 4: Transitioning to IO through IT maturity

Source: Everest Group (2025) [ILLUSTRATIVE]



However, maturity is rarely uniform. While an organization may identify with a specific stage, the reality is often more complex, where different business units, geographies, and technology environments may operate at varying levels. This layered reality demands a flexible, context-aware transformation approach. To successfully transition to IO, enterprises must adopt a structured approach, leveraging key enablers that drive automation, embed AI, and enable data-driven decision-making to ensure seamless evolution toward intelligent, autonomous operations.

IO blueprint

To realize IO's full potential, enterprises require a cohesive but flexible roadmap. The path to cognitive operations is not a one-size-fits-all journey. It requires a structured approach tailored to the organization's existing capabilities, gaps, and strategic priorities. Everest Group recommends a two-phase operational transformation strategy:

- Phase 1: Assess functional maturity
- Phase 2: Translate maturity into action

Phase 1: Assess functional maturity

In this phase, enterprises assess key enablers to understand functional readiness and prioritize transformation.

Exhibit 5 presents how each enabler appears across the four operational maturity stages. These attributes help enterprises assess where each function stands and establish a clear starting point for their transformation journey.

Exhibit 5: Assessing enablers across different functional maturity stages

Source: Everest Group (2025)

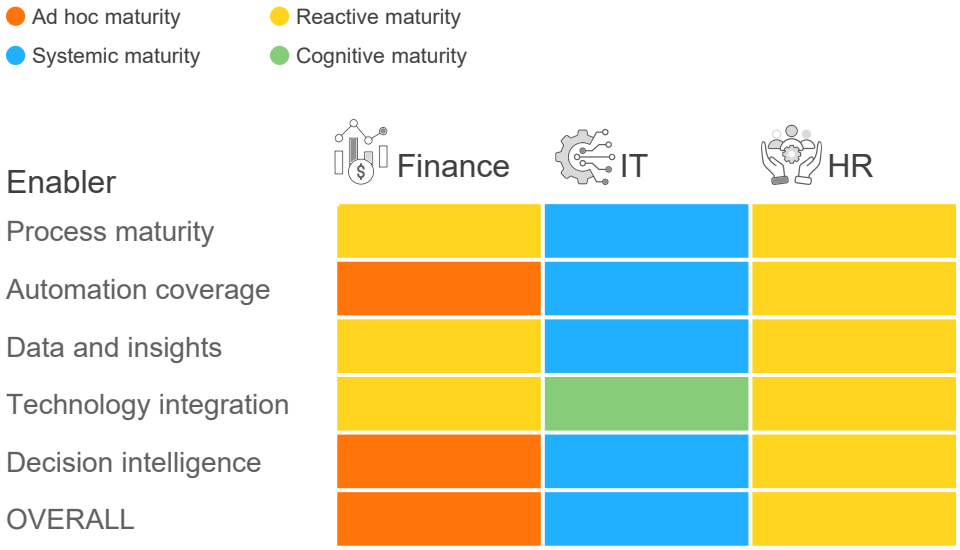
Enabler	Ad hoc maturity	Reactive maturity	Systemic maturity	Cognitive maturity
Process maturity	Inconsistent, undocumented workflows	Partially defined, team-localized	Standardized, centrally governed	Adaptive, continuously improved
Automation coverage	Manual processes, no strategy	Basic task-level automation	End-to-end automated workflows	Autonomous, AI-enhanced automation
Data and insights	Fragmented, limited operational use	Descriptive analytics for reporting	Unified, real-time decision-making	Predictive insights embedded in workflows
Technology integration	Siloed systems with minimal connectivity	Basic point-to-point integrations	APIs and centralized architecture	Composable, dynamically orchestrated
Decision intelligence	Experience-based decisions	Rule-based, reactive logic	AI-/ML-guided decisions with oversight	Contextual, adaptive, continuously learning

While each business function in an enterprise may operate at a different maturity level, understanding the overall maturity landscape is essential to initiate transformation effectively. Enterprises must identify their dominant maturity state, where most core functions cluster across the organization. One effective way to visualize this is by building a maturity assessment heatmap across the five key enablers for each function.

Exhibit 6 demonstrates a sample enterprise maturity assessment heatmap across Finance, IT, and HR functions in a leading life sciences company.

Exhibit 6: Enterprise maturity assessment heatmap across functions

Source: Everest Group (2025)



Phase 2: Translate maturity into action

By understanding their current operational maturity, enterprises can identify the next logical step in their transformation journey. Rather than taking a one-size-fits-all approach, Phase 2 is about making strategic choices:

- Which functions are ready to scale into cognitive operations?
- Which functions need foundational improvements before embedding intelligence?
- Where will IO deliver the most immediate business value?

By addressing these strategic questions, enterprises can tailor their transformation path based on functional readiness and business priorities.

Exhibit 7 outlines targeted actions aligned to each maturity stage, ad hoc, reactive, and systemic, helping organizations advance their IT operations with greater efficiency, automation, and intelligence.

Exhibit 7: Priority actions for enterprises to advance their operational maturity

Source: Everest Group (2025)

Ad hoc maturity

- Identify, document, and standardize essential workflows
- Look for high-volume, rule-based tasks as automation entry points
- Improve data foundation and centralize fragmented data sources
- Map system landscape and identify integration gaps
- Replace intuition-led decision-making with simple rule-based logic

Reactive maturity

- Enforce standardized processes across teams
- Expand from task automation to full workflow coverage
- Move from reporting to diagnostic analytics with real-time dashboards
- Connect systems through APIs or workflow tools to improve data flow
- Use analytics to support faster rule-based decisions

Systemic maturity

- Introduce feedback loops and continuous improvement models
- Enable cross-functional orchestration and exception handling
- Embed predictive models into operational decision-making
- Strengthen platform modularity and reusability
- Deploy AI/ML to support semi-autonomous, human-in-the-loop decision-making

Strategic IO considerations

As enterprises pursue IO, many encounter recurring challenges that limit scale, impact, and sustainable outcomes. While technology is key, the most persistent barriers are strategic and organizational. Some common pitfalls on the path to IO include:

- Focusing on tools over strategy
- Fragmented efforts without cross-functional alignment
- Disjointed and poor-quality data
- Low adoption due to the lack of stakeholder engagement
- Unrealistic expectations from AI/automation pilots
- Change fatigue and organizational resistance
- Lack of clear, measurable business outcomes

Approximately 76% of enterprises have faced significant challenges impeding operational transformation.[3]

Some organizations navigate these hurdles independently, while many lack cohesion, structure, and long-term vision for their transformation journeys. At this point, providers can be vital, not just as implementers but as strategic transformation partners.

Partnering with providers can influence transformation success through their expertise in integration, automation, and AI coupled with cross-industry experience, scalable delivery, and outcome-driven execution capabilities.

Enterprise considerations for provider selection

Enterprises should go beyond the basics of capability checklists and evaluate partners via the following questions:

- Has the provider delivered measurable IO outcomes in similar industries or business functions?
- Is the provider actively co-innovating in AI agents, cognitive orchestration, or self-healing systems and applying them in client environments?
- Does the provider have a defined approach to integrating legacy platforms, cloud-native applications, and siloed systems using proven tools and accelerators?
- Do they have a structured AI/ML deployment framework, including model governance, explainability, and compliance management?
- Are success metrics co-defined with clients to reflect business outcomes rather than limited to Service Level Agreement (SLA) compliance?
- Do they offer a structured change management framework to drive adoption and behavior change, including stakeholder engagement, training, and sustained enablement across functions?

A structured, criteria-driven approach to provider selection helps enterprises prioritize partners who can deliver real, scalable impact through IO.

> ### Everest Group take
>
> Enterprises must view partner selection as a long-term capability investment, not a short-term procurement exercise. The ideal partner brings both engineering rigor and business fluency, enabling transformation that sticks.

3 Everest Group survey of 150 CXO-level executives from enterprises with an annual revenue of over US$500 million

Conclusion

The future of enterprise success depends on more than just adopting advanced technologies – it demands full transformation of how operations are structured, governed, and executed. IO represents a leap, migrating from fragmented, reactive support models to integrated, adaptive systems aligned with business strategy and empowered by automation, AI, and data. As enterprises tackle rising complexity, evolving customer expectations, and increasing performance demands, a deliberate shift to cognitive maturity becomes essential. With the right strategic vision, operational blueprint, and transformation partners, organizations can build resilient, future-ready, and business-centric operations.

Everest Group®
With you on the journey

Everest Group is a leading research firm helping business leaders make confident decisions. We guide clients through today's market challenges and strengthen their strategies by applying contextualized problem-solving to their unique situations. This drives maximized operational and financial performance and transformative experiences. Our deep expertise and tenacious research focused on technology, business processes, and engineering through the lenses of talent, sustainability, and sourcing delivers precise and action-oriented guidance. Find further details and in-depth content at www.everestgrp.com.

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