



**Executive guide**

# Gaining visibility



**The CIO's first step in foundational  
technology decision-making.**

In the Foundational stage, CIOs face an uphill battle for visibility. Business units make independent purchases, Finance often sees invoices before it sees strategy, and Procurement is brought in too late to influence terms. Instead of leading sourcing decisions, CIOs are forced into defense, answering questions without the data to back them up. The impact is immediate: credibility is on the line before it can be earned. Yet this is also the moment when visibility can become the CIO's most powerful lever for change.

## The CIO reality in foundational

At the growth stage, CIOs finally have more process but not enough consistency. Intake forms exist but aren't always followed. Renewals are tracked, but deadlines still slip. Finance and procurement are at the table, yet debates over data slow down decisions.

Meanwhile, SaaS portfolios keep expanding. Investment volumes grow faster than governance maturity, leaving CIOs accountable for spend they can't always defend. The board sees progress but expects more. Measuring Success evolves from simply keeping pace to how well the CIO balances speed with defensibility.

The real story isn't whether CIOs understand process; they do. It's that every transaction becomes a litmus test of leadership, proof to peers, the CEO, and the board that IT is steering, not stumbling.

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Too often, I'm brought in at the eleventh hour, after a deal is already committed. My role becomes explaining, not leading"

CIO Interview, 2025



# The tension triangle at its weakest

- CFO: Caught off guard by spend after it's committed, reinforcing skepticism.
- Procurement: Pulled in late, chasing paperwork instead of shaping strategy.
- CIO: Left defending choices they didn't drive, instead of guiding them.

Instead of healthy tension, it's misalignment. And when roles work in isolation, trust erodes and board-level confidence falters. The opportunity in Foundational is clear: visibility and shared goals are the first step to turning this triangle from friction into traction.

# Why this stage feels so risky

- Exploding sourcing volume brings more scrutiny, more renewals, and more exposure.
- Finance and procurement are active but often misaligned, turning every negotiation into a proving ground.
- Innovation cannot pause, yet every deal must satisfy competing demands for speed, ROI, and compliance.
- CIO credibility is tested in real time. A strong decision earns authority. A weak one reverberates in the boardroom.

Visibility isn't just operational efficiency — it's a safeguard for credibility.

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Without new sourcing governance, CIOs risk losing the ability to negotiate effectively.”

IDC Guidance, August 2022

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It's not the technology that keeps me up at night; it's the spend I don't know about until after it's already booked.”

CIO Interview ,2025



# What good looks like

Even small steps toward structure create big wins:

- CIOs gain clear visibility into contracts and renewal timelines.
- IT, Finance, and Procurement begin aligning around shared sourcing goals.
- A simple, standardized intake process cuts duplication and surprise spend.
- CFOs and boards see the start of defensible ROI models — not just invoices.

This is what progress looks like in the Foundational stage: the first moves out of reactivity and into authority. By building visibility and shared goals, CIOs establish credibility not just with Finance and Procurement, but most importantly, with the board itself.

Foundational is the starting line. Most organizations begin here. CIOs who seize this moment to create transparency and shared goals move quickly from reactivity to authority. Act II shows how to establish balance and build trust across Finance and Procurement, laying the foundation for sustainable credibility.

## Ready to move forward?

If this reflects your stage, you're not alone; many CIOs are in the same position today. The difference comes from the next step.

IDC partners with Growth-stage CIOs to:

- Map practical steps for standardizing inputs and evaluation
- Provide defensible benchmarks to navigate board scrutiny
- Turn the tension triangle into a lever for authority

**Your credibility strengthens with every move toward balance.  
Let's build the plan together.**

[Contact IDC](#) to begin your transition from reactivity to authority.

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