

EXECUTIVE PERSPECTIVES ON TOP RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Cyber Threats and Workforce Readiness Cited Among Top Risks as TMT Firms Accelerate AI Push

By **Scot Glover**

Managing Director, global leader, Technology, Media and Telecommunications Industry

Over the last 13 years, Protiviti has issued annual research reports on the top risks faced by leaders all over the world. This year, we have added an emphasis on opportunities to set the tone for identifying and responding proactively to emerging trends, market shifts and evolving customer expectations.

This paper offers specific insights into these issues from the perspective of the technology, media and telecommunications industry. It explores the future of TMT as industry leaders focus on AI acceleration, digital platform expansion and data monetization. It also covers top challenges, investment priorities and strategic transformations expected over the next decade.

Where do TMT industry leaders see the greatest opportunities for their organization over the next two to three years?

The strongest opportunities are in accelerating AI-enabled products and services, expanding digital platforms and unlocking additional revenue streams from data. Many TMT leaders expect growth from personalized customer experiences, cloud-native modernization and monetization of network capabilities, particularly 5G/6G, edge computing and immersive experiences.

They see strategic partnerships and ecosystem collaboration as key to scaling innovation quickly.

There is optimism for potential growth opportunities



Based on a five-point scale assessing agreement/disagreement.
Percentages reflect sum of "Agree completely" and "Agree somewhat" responses.

What will be the most significant AI-related challenges over the next two to three years for TMT organizations?

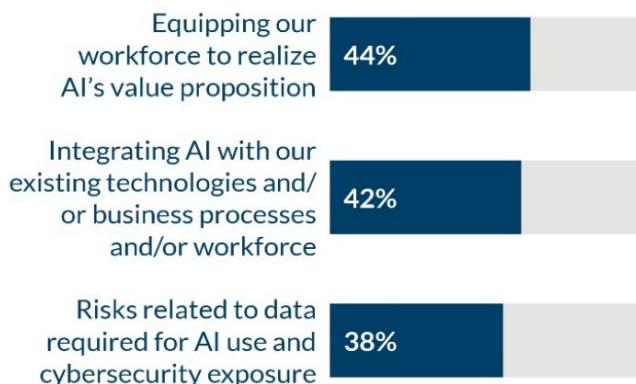
Executives expect challenges with responsible AI governance, data quality and managing the pace of change in relation to talent readiness. According to Protiviti's [recent AI Pulse Survey](#), technology sector respondents repeatedly flagged legacy interfaces, fragmented platforms and cross-cloud/tool sprawl as barriers to reliable production rollout.

While tech companies lead other sectors in terms of AI maturity, the survey shows many are still concerned about the risks of moving from AI model experimentation to larger-scale deployments.

In the telecom sector, AI has introduced new cybersecurity vulnerabilities, amplifying threat vectors. Another challenge involves how to leverage AI-powered tools to reduce the high costs of 5G deployment.

Overall, across the TMT landscape, there is a strong call for clear policies, auditability and transparency tools to ensure trust in AI decision-making processes. Maintaining credibility with customers and regulators while advancing AI adoption will require substantial leadership attention.

Top 3 priorities – impact of AI



What are the most significant short-term (two-to-three years) concerns and risks on the minds of TMT executives?

Short-term concerns include cybersecurity threats, AI-driven disruption, changing customer expectations and increasing regulatory pressures. Leaders are also focused on macroeconomic uncertainties, competition from digital-native entrants and the rising costs and scarcity of specialized technical talent. Ensuring digital infrastructure resilience is another top priority.

Sustainability has regained priority, with concerns about the environmental impact of large-scale construction projects. Energy and natural resource consumption is also a concern that needs to be addressed.

Top global near-term risks

2026 rank	Risk issue	Average*	2025 rank
1	Cyber threats	3.23	1
2	Adoption of new and emerging technologies elevating the need to upskill/reskill our workforce	3.16	2
3	Emergence of new risks from implementing AI	3.05	4
4	Rapid speed of disruptive innovations enabled by new and emerging technologies and/or other market forces	3.01	3
5	Operations and legacy IT infrastructure unable to meet performance expectations	3.00	10

* Average based on a five-point scale where 1 reflects "No impact at all" and 5 reflects "Extensive impact."

Based on these near-term risks, in what areas are TMT organizations likely to invest the most over the next two to three years, and why?

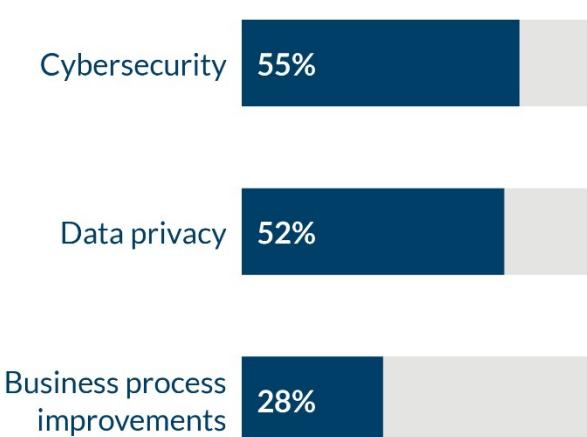
Organizations are expected to prioritize investments in advanced cybersecurity capabilities, AI platforms, cloud modernization and talent development to enhance operational resilience, scale digital innovation, and manage compliance.

On the cybersecurity front, many firms are investing in zero-trust architecture and advanced threat detection powered by AI. For instance, **Microsoft** expanded its AI-powered security suite in 2025 after a surge in generative AI-enabled phishing attacks, and **Verizon** launched a 5G security initiative to protect edge computing environments, addressing vulnerabilities in telecom networks.

The growth of these investments, alongside privacy-enhancing technologies and automated compliance tools, is likely to escalate in the years ahead.

Regarding the workforce, the top 10 risks from our survey show some separation between

Top 3 investment areas



upskilling or reskilling to meet technological demands and talent acquisition and retention, but these priorities are inseparable — companies that fail to invest in talent development will inevitably struggle with retention. Case in point: Last year, Google introduced new internal AI bootcamps for employees to accelerate adoption of its Gemini AI platform.

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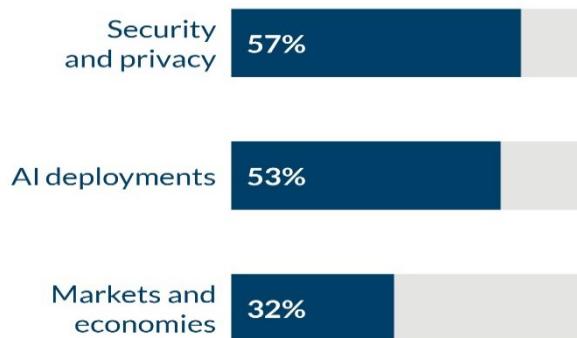
Investments in systems for managing data and digital tools that put the customer first will continue as organizations seek to strengthen competitive differentiation. In the media and entertainment industry specifically, we expect investments in acquisitions to increase as traditional cable networks face challenges from streaming services and smaller media companies looking to buy (versus build) to stay ahead of competitors. The bidding war late last year for Warner Bros. Discovery is a harbinger of what is coming in this sector.

How do TMT industry leaders view the 10-year risk outlook for their organization?

Over the next decade, leaders anticipate significant structural shifts shaped by AI maturity, evolving regulatory regimes, future network architectures and global cybersecurity challenges. They also expect changes in workforce models, intellectual property risks, data sovereignty and technology ethics.

The long-term outlook combines prime opportunity with high volatility, necessitating continuous innovation, adaptable operations and proactive risk management.

Top 3 long-term challenges



Guidance/call to action for next two to three years

True transformation requires rethinking people and processes before deploying technology. This is particularly true with AI. Organizations risk becoming a hammer looking for a nail by pursuing tools without addressing underlying inefficiencies.

TMT firms should move beyond surface-level AI and technology adoption and embrace holistic transformation—one that balances innovation with governance, investment with ROI, and technology with human capital.

Here are a few practical things TMT organizations can do:

- Establish robust governance frameworks to ensure effective risk management, compliance and control.
- Strategically allocate resources and track the ROI for every technological deployment, justifying each investment with measurable benefits.
- Continue to invest in workforce training and development to fully leverage new technologies, while cultivating a culture of change management that supports adaptation and seamless integration.
- Prepare for a world where global market shifts and regional conflicts affect supply chains and investment priorities.
- Re-evaluate investment priorities, emphasizing resilience, diversification and strategic partnerships.
- Explore alternative markets and production methods.

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About the survey

Our 14th annual [Executive Perspectives on Top Risks and Opportunities Survey](#) contains insights from 1,540 board members and C-suite executives around the world regarding their views on:

- Three specific areas for growth considering the current environment
- Opportunities and challenges associated with the transformative impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on their organizations
- Top near-term (two to three years) risks related to 28 specific risks across three dimensions (macroeconomic, strategic, and operational), and the top long-term (a decade from now) risks encompassing 12 risk themes
- Their organizations' near-term strategic investment priorities, given the opportunities and the risks they face.

The participants shared their views through an online survey conducted from early September through mid-October 2025.



Scot Glover is a global leader for Technology, Media & Telecommunications in our San Francisco office and focuses on helping companies assess, understand and mitigate their most important risks to drive key business improvements. He is a member of our Internal Audit and Financial Advisory services practice, which helps Fortune 1000 technology, media and entertainment companies optimize their governance, risk and compliance activities. Prior to joining Protiviti, Scot was a risk advisory services partner at Ernst & Young.

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