



CRITICALEYE

The Peer-to-Peer Board Community

# CPO

# RESEARCH

# 2025

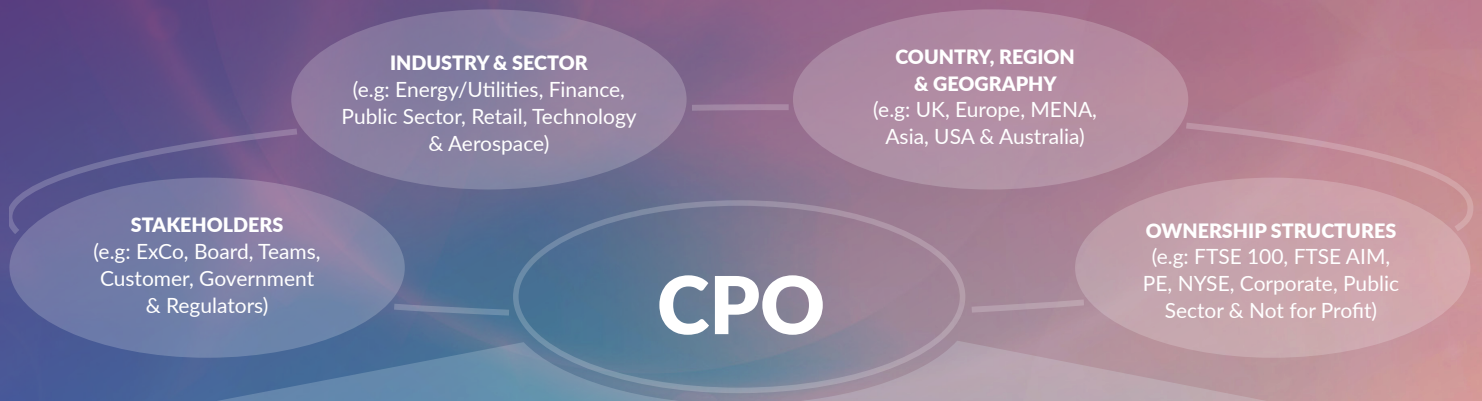
REIMAGINE  
RESHAPE  
REINVENT

# OVERVIEW

Criticaleye has over 21 years of experience transforming global leaders including current and aspiring Chief People Officers (CPOs). Through a combination of targeted mentorship, strategic guidance and immersive learning experiences, Criticaleye empowers leaders with the skills and insights necessary to become world-class. Based on our CPO research, key areas of support include but are not limited to the following:

- Building a world-class HR function and strengthening leadership capabilities within teams
- Championing culture, purpose and values across the organisation and becoming an enterprise-wide strategic leader
- Leading successfully as a CPO and being a strategic partner to the CEO, CFO and ExCo
- Influencing effectively at Board level including with Remuneration and Nomination Committee Chairs and fostering alignment in the leadership team
- Growing as a leader through reference points beyond current sector and curiosity regarding the external landscape
- Identifying, nurturing and investing in diverse talent, ensuring all voices are heard, modelling inclusive decision making and leadership

Our 360-degree support is designed to accelerate leaders into the CPO role. Criticaleye supports aspiring CPOs to identify and secure the right position for them, accelerate their development as CPO and become a broader enterprise leader on the C-Suite. We accomplish this through tailored access points into the following key areas:



A **Relationship Manager** will coordinate all the different elements of your Membership and ensure your individual goals and priorities are identified and delivered.

**Mentoring:** A trusted reference point and impartial sounding board for your CPO succession journey, as well as your personal and commercial objectives.

**CPO Retreat:** Two-day immersive Retreat bringing together CPOs, C-suite leaders and Board Directors to share, interact, reflect and learn about best practice leadership.

**Events:** Virtual Roundtables & Forums for CPOs to access global knowledge and insight from anywhere in the world, e.g: *Employee resilience in times of uncertainty*.

**Network & Connections:** Peer connections will accelerate your impact by connecting you to the right person at precisely the right time, e.g: *Navigating your first 100 days as CPO*.

**Pop-up Boards:** Engage an external panel of relevant Executive and Non-executive experience to validate strategic plans or externalise key challenges, e.g: *Building an Agile Work Culture*.

# INTRODUCTION

**This latest Criticaleye research with leading CPOs and HRDs reveals an acute awareness among these leaders of their role in driving the organisation's strategy, and supporting ambitions for growth and transformation.**

With a sharp focus on the crucial role of people and talent in today's challenging environment, respondents identified shaping organisational culture and trust as the top priority in the CPO role. They also highlighted that enabling their businesses to operate at the right pace for transformation provides a clear opportunity to demonstrate their position as changemakers.

Technology integration is clearly on the minds of leading CPOs, with 47 percent identifying this as a key challenge in their organisations this year. People and skills will be fundamental to successful tech innovation and change, which explains why over a third (37 percent) said that skills gaps and workforce readiness were the biggest risk to the business.

A further 32 percent identified talent retention and turnover as a key risk, highlighting the need to both build and retain skills simultaneously, so organisations can respond to significant challenges while also maximising opportunities. When asked about expectations for CPOs from their Boards, maximising workforce productivity

and performance came top (46 percent). In addition, 58 percent said they wanted to improve the quality of debate with the Board, a key stakeholder group, around strategy.

Acknowledging the vital strategic role of CPOs in their organisations, it is important that HR leaders take the opportunity to develop themselves and look up and out from the operations of the business to be world-leading in their roles. The majority (83 percent) agreed that all senior leaders need access to external reference points to be effective in their roles. Equally, access to views, opinions and benchmarking opportunities was where CPOs said they most needed to improve as leaders.

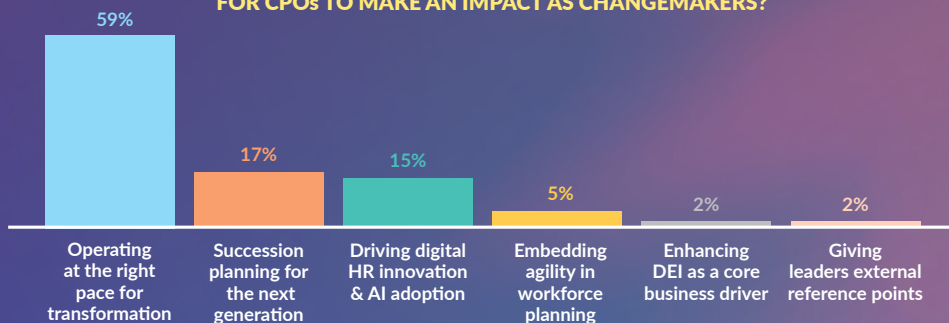


**JAMIE WILSON, MANAGING DIRECTOR, GROUP SERVICES, CRITICALEYE**

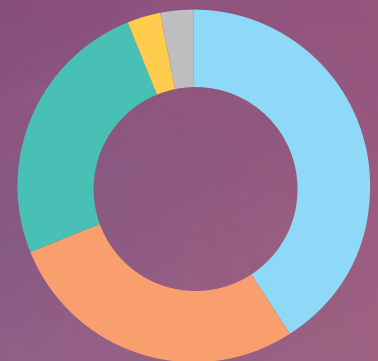
## WHICH AREA HAS MOVED UP YOUR LIST OF PRIORITIES IN YOUR ROLE AS A CPO?



## LOOKING AHEAD, WHERE DO YOU SEE THE BIGGEST OPPORTUNITY FOR CPOs TO MAKE AN IMPACT AS CHANGEMAKERS?



## AS THE ROLE OF CPO EVOLVES, WHAT SKILLS WILL BE MOST CRITICAL FOR FUTURE SUCCESS?



## THE INSPIRING LEADERS PODCAST: STEPPING UP TO GROUP CPO

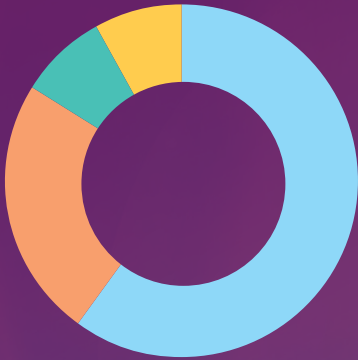
Click [here](#) to listen to Vicky Wallis, CPO at Direct Line Group and Jane Pateman, NED and RemCo Chair at Knights, explore the transition from a divisional or regional CPO to a Group CPO role.



# LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES

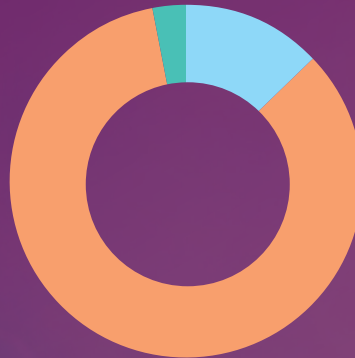
WE ASKED CPOs IF THEY HAVE THE RIGHT SKILLSETS TO LEAD EFFECTIVELY AND WHAT CHANGES THEIR ORGANISATIONS ARE UNDERTAKING.

WHY DO SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAMS BECOME TOO FOCUSED ON SHORT-TERM GOALS?



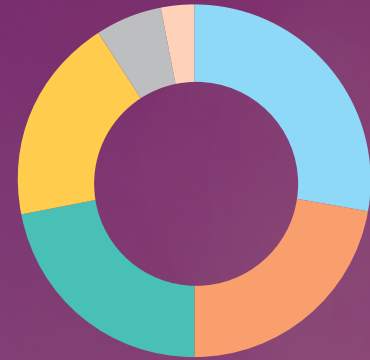
- Pressure to provide returns to investors / shareholders 60%
- Leadership team is too tactical, rather than strategic 24%
- Certain bonus & incentive schemes encourage short-term thinking 8%
- A lack of external reference points 8%

DOES YOUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM HAVE THE RIGHT SKILLS AND CAPABILITIES TO NAVIGATE STRATEGIC UNCERTAINTY?



- To a great extent 13%
- To some extent 84%
- To a minor extent 3%
- Not at all 0%

WHERE DO YOU SEE THE BIGGEST CHANGES OCCURRING IN YOUR ORGANISATION?



- A leaner operating model 28%
- Improved organisational agility 22%
- Technology integration 22%
- Culture 19%
- How we engage & connect with customers 6%
- Managing different stakeholder expectations 3%

**“IT’S CRUCIAL FOR LEADERSHIP TEAMS TO POSSESS A BLEND OF STRATEGIC FORESIGHT, ADAPTABILITY AND RESILIENCE. REGULAR ASSESSMENTS AND TARGETED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES CAN HELP BRIDGE ANY SKILL GAPS.”**

CPO RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

WHAT DO YOU FORESEE BEING THE MOST CHALLENGING FOR YOUR ORGANISATION OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?



## CRITICALEYE INSIGHT: HARNESSING CULTURE IN A TECH POWERHOUSE

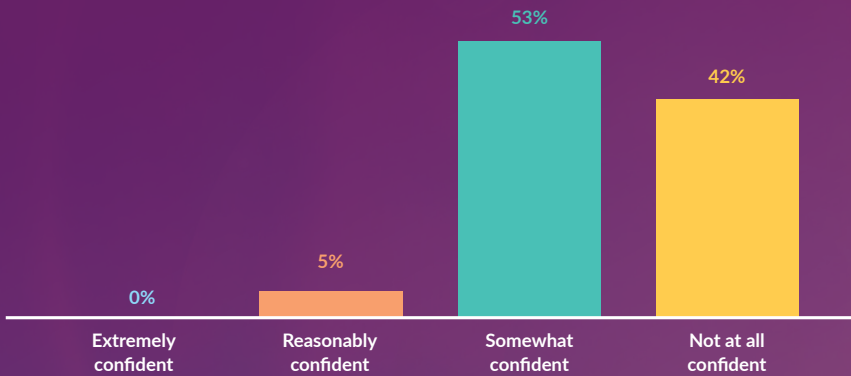
Lenovo, a global tech leader with a quarter of the PC market, is driven by a robust HR strategy. CHRO Gao Lan discusses Lenovo's culture of innovation and talent development with Criticaleye's Bridgette Hall. Click [here](#) to read the interview.



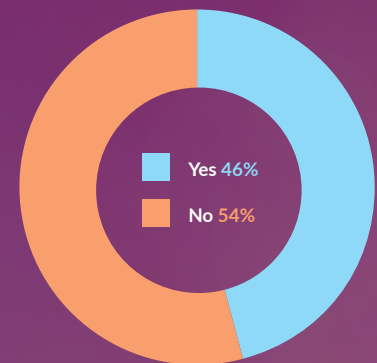
# ECONOMY AND GROWTH

CPOs GIVE US THEIR PREDICTIONS ON THE ECONOMY AND PLANS FOR BUSINESS GROWTH OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS.

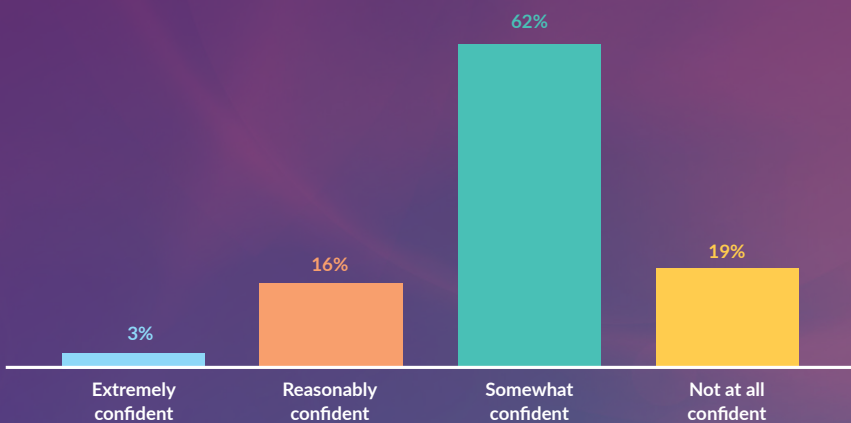
HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT THE RATE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE UK WILL INCREASE OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?



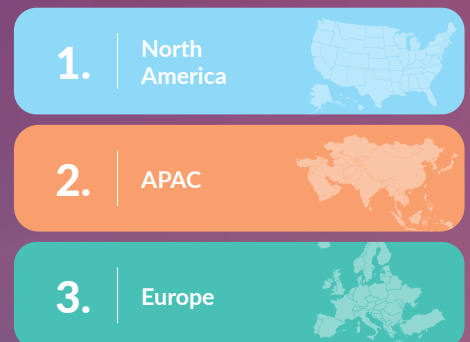
DO YOU EXPECT TO CONDUCT M&A OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?



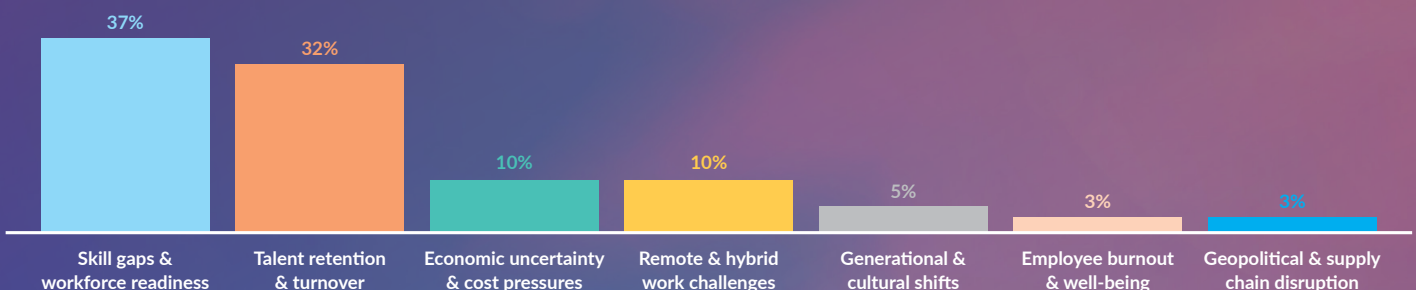
HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU THAT THE RATE OF GLOBAL ECONOMIC GROWTH WILL INCREASE OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?



IN WHICH REGIONS DO YOU EXPECT TO SEE A STRONG GEOGRAPHICAL PERFORMANCE IN YOUR ORGANISATION OVER THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?



WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST RISK TO YOUR WORKFORCE?



## CRITICALEYE VIDEO: CPOS ADDRESSING CAPABILITY GAPS ON THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Click [here](#) to watch leaders explore how CPOs can close leadership gaps, drive development and align team skills with business goals.

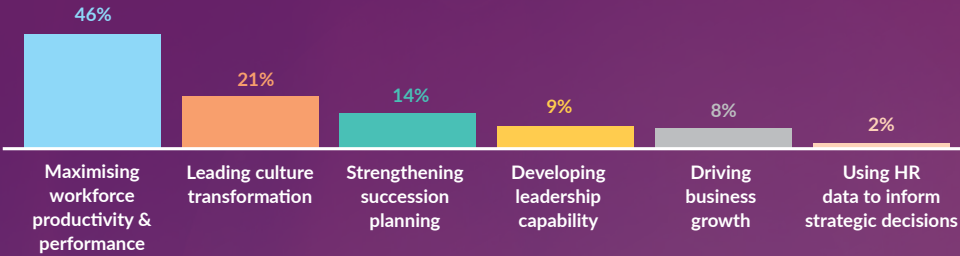
Featuring comments from **Misti Melville**, NED at AlJammaz Group, **Neil Hayward**, Chair at Skills Union, **Helen Bradley**, CHRO at Alstom and **John Duncan**, Professor at Durham College's Faculty of Business.



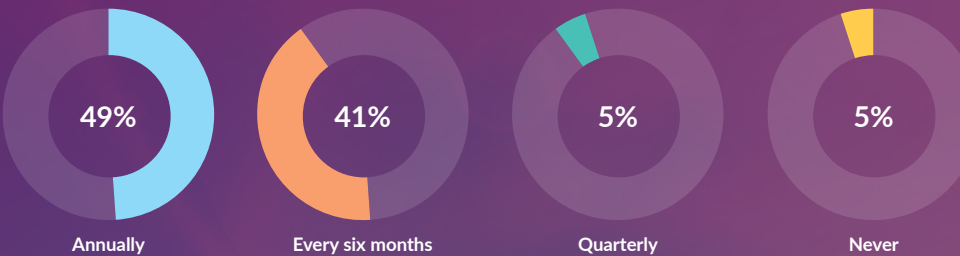
# STAKEHOLDERS

## CPOs REVEAL THE CHALLENGES OF SUCCESSFUL STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT AND ASSESS THEIR RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE CHAIR AND THEIR BOARD.

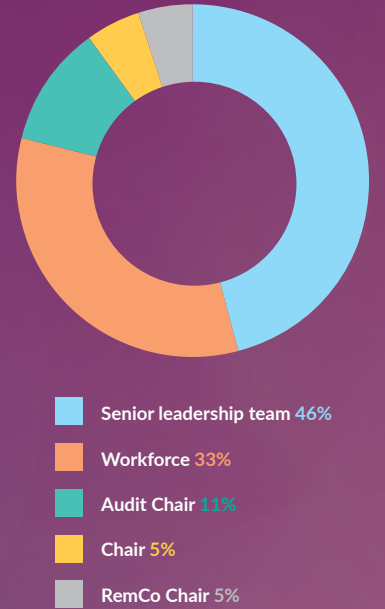
### WHICH EXPECTATIONS FROM THE BOARD HAVE INCREASED THE MOST FOR CPOs?



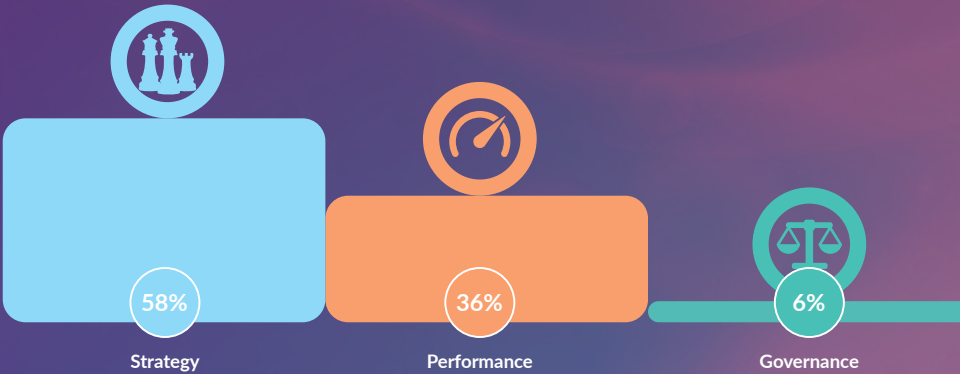
### HOW OFTEN DO YOU REVIEW YOUR SUCCESSION PLANS FOR THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM?



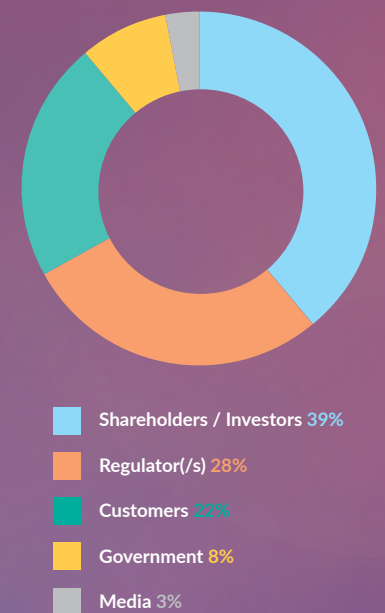
### WHO IS YOUR MOST CHALLENGING INTERNAL STAKEHOLDER?



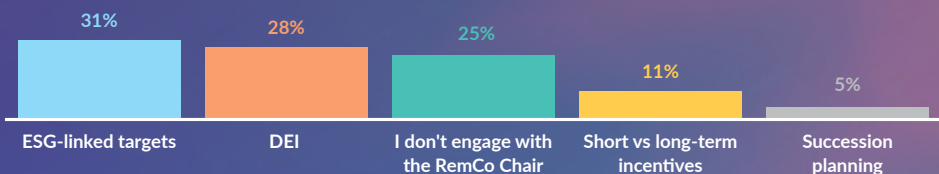
### IN WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS DO YOU NEED TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF DEBATE WITH THE BOARD?



### WHO IS YOUR MOST CHALLENGING EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDER?



### WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO BE THE LOWEST PRIORITY IN YOUR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE REMCO CHAIR IN 2025?



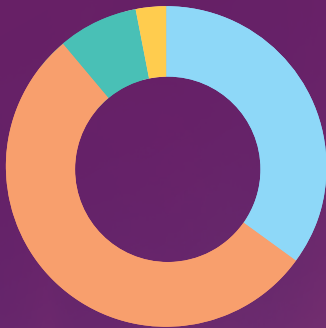
### DOES YOUR CHAIR ADD VALUABLE SUPPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE TEAM?

YES 73%

NO 27%

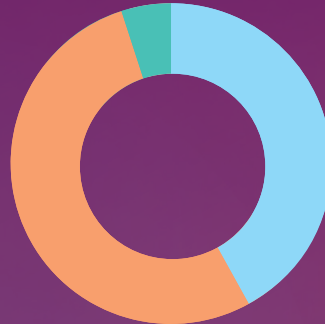
# PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

WE ASKED CPOs WHAT THEY FIND MOST EFFECTIVE WHEN BUILDING SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING THE EXTERNAL LANDSCAPE.



HAS MENTORING HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON YOU AND/OR YOUR LEADERSHIP CAPABILITY?

- To a great extent 35%
- To some extent 54%
- To a minor extent 8%
- Not at all 3%



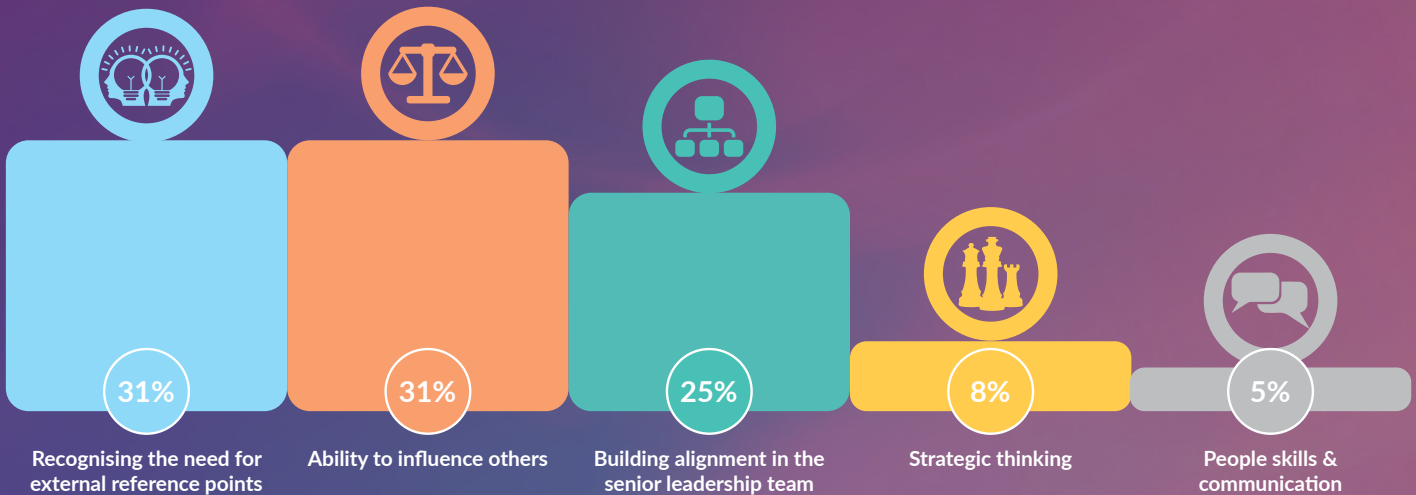
TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AND YOUR SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM REQUIRE EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS?

- To a great extent 42%
- To some extent 53%
- To a minor extent 5%
- Not at all 0%

**“EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS ARE INVALUABLE FOR BENCHMARKING AND GAINING INSIGHTS INTO INDUSTRY BEST PRACTICES. ENGAGING WITH PEER NETWORKS AND ATTENDING DIFFERENT FORUMS HELPS TO PROVIDE THESE ESSENTIAL PERSPECTIVES.”**

CPO RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

WHERE DO YOU NEED TO IMPROVE AS A LEADER?



## SOME OF OUR INSPIRING BOARD MENTORS

OUR GLOBAL GROUP OF OVER 100 BOARD MENTORS ARE SELECTED TO SUPPORT THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF EACH CRITICALEYE MEMBER. THEY PROVIDE A TRUSTED, INDEPENDENT AND IMPARTIAL REFERENCE POINT.



FRANCESCA ECSERY  
NED  
AIR FRANCE



NEIL HAYWARD  
CHAIR  
SKILLS UNION



FEIYU XU  
NED  
AIRBUS



SHATISH DASANI  
CHAIR  
UNICEF UK



ROBIN R. SANDERS  
NED  
EURAFRIQUE



BRUCE CARNEGIE-BROWN  
CHAIR  
LLOYD'S OF LONDON

TO DISCUSS THE CPO PROGRAMME IN MORE DETAIL, PLEASE CONTACT:

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**“THE CRITICALEYE COMMUNITY HAS OFFERED ME TREMENDOUS SUPPORT, ESPECIALLY THROUGH THE INSIGHTS AND EXPERIENCES SHARED BY MY BOARD MENTOR. THEIR CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP HAS PROVIDED MY TEAM WITH AN INVIGORATING ENVIRONMENT TO CONNECT, ABSORB ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE, EXPLORE EXTERNAL REFERENCE POINTS AND DEVELOP THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THOUGHT LEADERSHIP, ALL OF WHICH HAS BEEN CRUCIAL FOR THEIR SKILLS AND MINDSET DEVELOPMENT.”**

**HEATHER HAYES**  
GLOBAL HR DIRECTOR, LIGHTSOURCE BP

