TechnologyAdvice

2024 IT & Cybersecurity Buyer Insights **Report**

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Introduction

To the IT & Cybersecurity Technology Provider,

In June of 2024, we surveyed 1,100+ IT and cybersecurity professionals across our community who are at the forefront of software and technology decision-making at small, mid-sized, and large enterprises around the world.

We also analyzed the most recent website traffic and audience engagement patterns across TechnologyAdvice's flagship tech media sites and product review pages including TechRepublic, eSecurity Planet, TechnologyAdvice.com, eWeek, and Datamation.

The following report summarizes the results from the survey and media site analysis to provide B2B technology providers with fresh new insights on the current priorities for IT tech buyers and how their buying behaviors are evolving.

In this report, we'll answer questions such as:

- What are the biggest challenges currently facing IT and cybersecurity teams?
- How are IT tech buyers prioritizing their budgets in the year ahead?
- What are the top cybersecurity priorities for SMBs and large enterprises?
- How do IT tech buyers prefer to research and evaluate new vendors?
- Which topics and product categories are most frequently researched by companies in different industries in 2024?
- How important is AI to today's IT tech buyers and where do they see it having the greatest impact in the year ahead?

We hope this report will serve as a valuable resource for understanding the current state of the IT and cybersecurity market, and help you develop effective marketing strategies and tactics tailored to meet the needs and preferences of today's tech buyers. Dig into the detailed data below, or hop down to the Key Findings section for a summary of what we feel are the 5 big takeaways for IT and Cybersecurity technology vendors to help you improve your go-to market strategies in the months ahead.

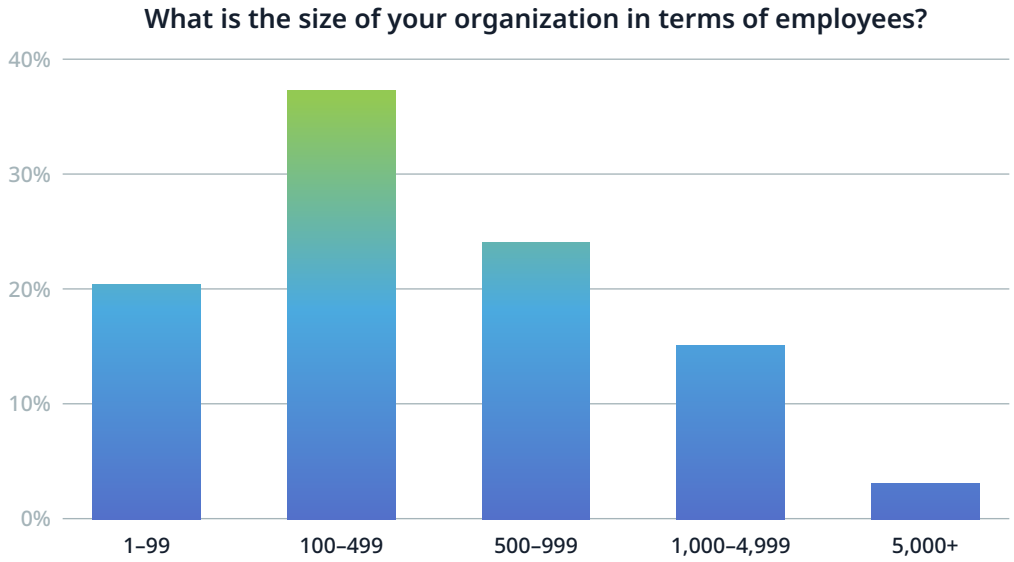
Rob Bellenfant
Founder and CEO,
TechnologyAdvice

Part 1: Audience Breakdown

IT & Cybersecurity Decision Makers

For this report, we surveyed 1,164 IT and cybersecurity professionals who are actively involved in the decision-making process for new technology purchases at small, mid-sized, and large enterprises. While the original survey included more than 1,500 respondents, individuals not directly involved in technology purchase decisions were omitted from the final data set.

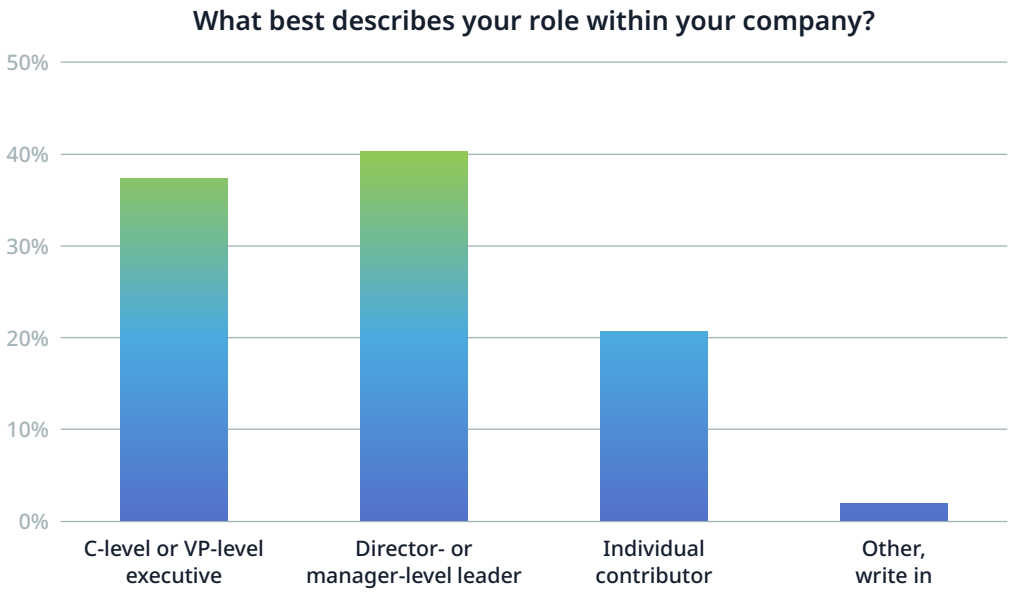
Organization Size



Respondents to this survey represented IT and cybersecurity professionals from small, mid, and large-sized businesses around the world.

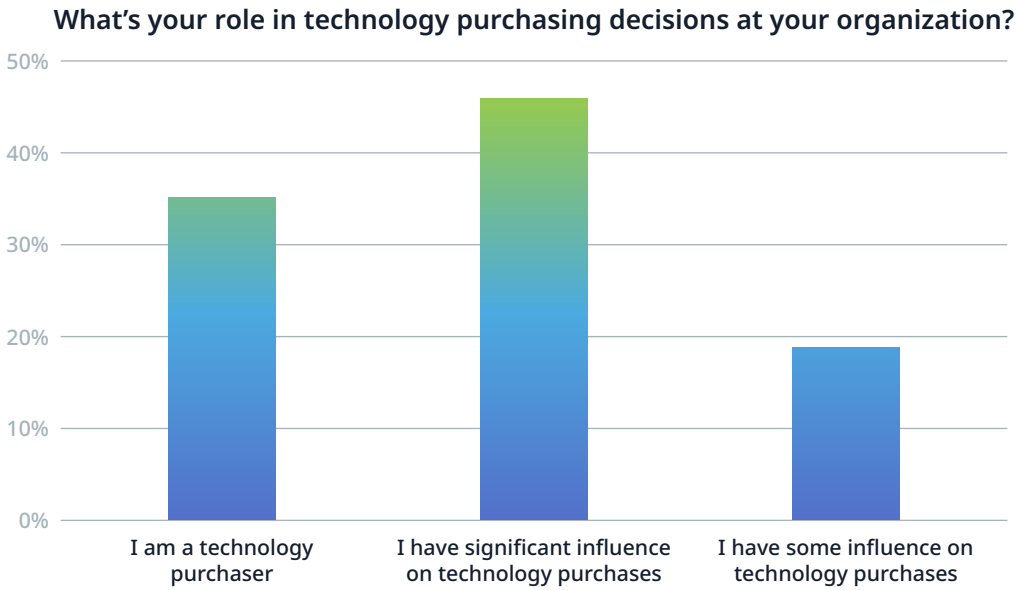
Throughout this report, we highlight notable differences in how questions were answered by respondents in small and mid-sized companies (1-999 employees) vs. those in large enterprises (1,000+ employees).

Role Breakdown



The majority of those surveyed were senior-level professionals with 78% of respondents indicating they were in a manager/director position or higher.

Purchasing Influence



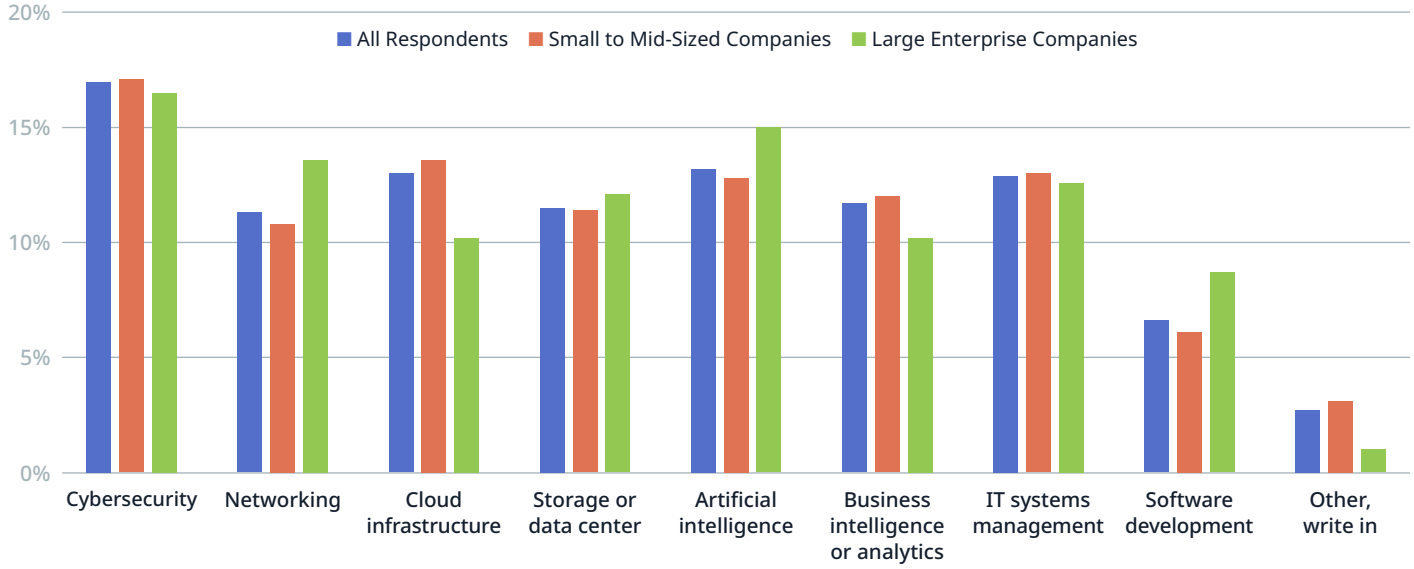
All survey respondents included in the final data set are involved in technology purchases with 81% indicating they were a primary technology purchaser or had "significant influence" on technology purchases.

Part 2: The Buying Process

Most Recently Purchased IT Solutions

The survey respondents represent a wide range of companies that have most recently purchased a diverse set of IT products.

Which category best describes the most recent IT product/service you helped evaluate or purchase?



The most common product types that were most recently purchased include cybersecurity, AI, IT systems management, cloud infrastructure, and business intelligence.

Here's how the most recent IT purchases broke down by company size:

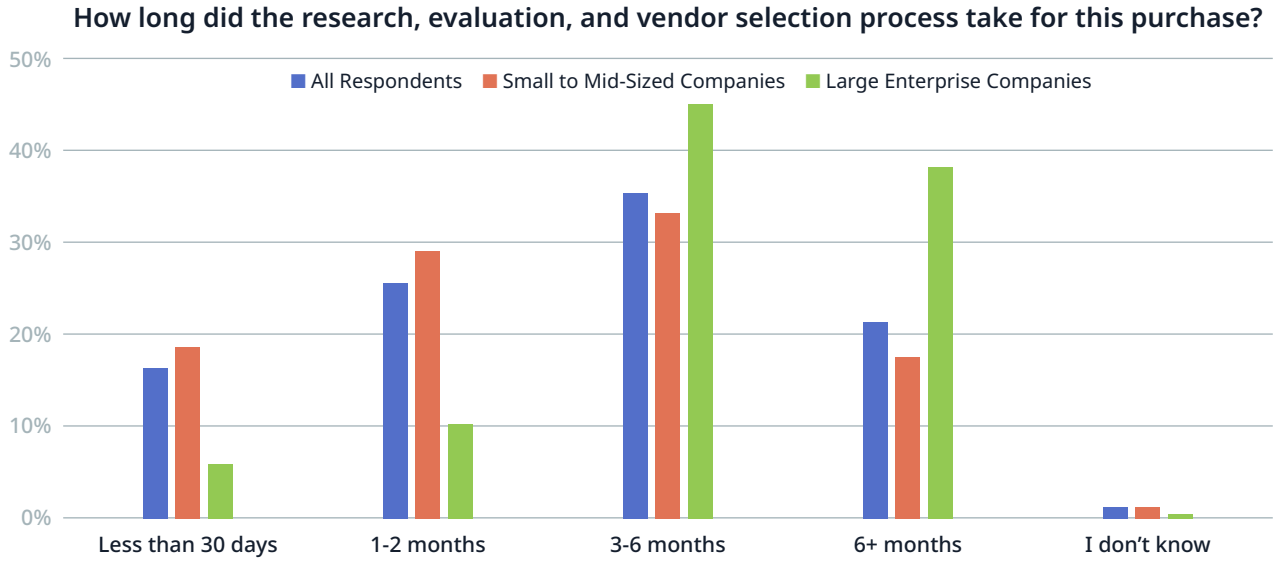
Top 4 Most Recently Purchased IT Solutions		
All Respondents	**Small to Mid-Sized Companies**	**Large Enterprise Companies**
1. Cybersecurity	1. Cybersecurity	1. Cybersecurity
2. Artificial intelligence	2. Cloud infrastructure	2. Artificial intelligence
3. Cloud infrastructure	3. IT systems management	3. Networking
4. IT systems management	4. Artificial intelligence	4. IT systems management

Key takeaway: While cybersecurity was the most common product type that was most recently purchased by all company sizes, small and mid-sized businesses have also been prioritizing cloud infrastructure and IT systems management while large enterprises have prioritized AI and networking solutions.

Length of the Buying Cycle

While the buying journey will differ greatly from one type of product purchase to another, it's clear that the majority of purchase decisions take months, not days or weeks.

58% of respondents indicated that the research, evaluation, and vendor selection process for their most recent IT product purchase took 3+ months to complete. This jumped to 83% for respondents at large enterprise companies.



Key takeaway: The buying journey for the majority of IT solutions takes more than 3 months to complete, with larger companies reporting the longest buying cycles. In fact, nearly 40% of large enterprises indicated that it took more than 6 months to research, evaluate, and procure their most recent IT product. As a B2B technology provider, be prepared for long buying journeys with a mix of self-service online research across many digital channels and vendor-led product evaluations.

Preferred Information Sources

IT technology buyers aren't ready to just take your word for it. In fact, they rely heavily on reviews and validation from 3rd party experts, analysts, and other customers.

According to survey responses, the top 3 most important information sources for IT technology buyers during the research and evaluation process are:

1. Customer testimonials/case studies
2. Independent research by analysts or experts
3. Product reviews/comparison charts

Here's how it broke down by company size:

Preferred Information Sources: Ranked by Importance		
All Respondents	**Small to Mid-Sized Companies**	**Large Enterprise Companies**
1. Customer testimonials or case studies	1. Customer testimonials or case studies	1. Independent research reports by analysts or experts
2. Independent research reports by analysts or experts	2. Independent research reports by analysts or experts	2. Customer testimonials or case studies
3. Product review pages or comparison charts	3. Product review pages or comparison charts	3. Product review pages or comparison charts
4. Vendor websites or content (e.g., blogs, eBooks, white papers)	4. Vendor websites or content (e.g., blogs, eBooks, white papers)	4. Vendor websites or content (e.g., blogs, eBooks, white papers)
5. Webinars or virtual events	5. Webinars or virtual events	5. Webinars or virtual events
6. Online communities or newsletters	6. Online communities or newsletters	6. Industry trade show
7. Industry trade shows	7. Industry trade shows	7. Online communities or newsletters

Although there are some key standouts, it's clear to see by the chart below that *all* of these information sources are important to buyers. This emphasizes the need for technology providers to adopt a multi-channel approach when marketing to IT and cybersecurity buyers.

How would you rate the importance of the following information sources during your research and evaluation process (1 = Not important; 5 = Very important)?

		1	2	3	4	5
Independent research reports by analysts or experts	All respondents	7.8%	10.8%	20.0%	32.3%	29.0%
	SMB	6.8%	10.8%	19.8%	33.6%	29.0%
	Enterprise	12.3%	10.8%	21.2%	26.6%	29.1%
Online communities or newsletters	All respondents	8.3%	14.5%	24.7%	30.6%	21.9%
	SMB	6.9%	13.5%	25.4%	31.1%	23.1%
	Enterprise	14.8%	18.7%	21.7%	28.6%	16.3%
Industry trade shows	All respondents	11.0%	13.1%	22.3%	30.2%	23.4%
	SMB	10.3%	12.1%	21.0%	32.3%	24.3%
	Enterprise	14.4%	17.3%	28.2%	20.8%	19.3%
Webinars or virtual events	All respondents	8.7%	11.7%	21.8%	30.9%	26.9%
	SMB	7.4%	11.0%	21.8%	32.5%	27.3%
	Enterprise	14.4%	14.9%	21.8%	23.8%	25.2%
Product review pages or comparison charts	All respondents	7.5%	12.4%	20.8%	31.6%	27.6%
	SMB	6.9%	11.7%	20.7%	32.3%	28.4%
	Enterprise	10.3%	15.8%	21.7%	28.1%	24.1%
Vendor websites or content (e.g. blogs, ebooks, white papers)	All respondents	7.7%	10.8%	22.5%	32.6%	26.3%
	SMB	6.7%	10.7%	21.9%	33.8%	26.9%
	Enterprise	12.4%	11.4%	25.2%	27.2%	23.8%
Customer testimonials or case studies	All respondents	8.4%	9.9%	18.5%	31.1%	32.0%
	SMB	6.9%	9.8%	18.7%	31.6%	33.0%
	Enterprise	15.3%	10.3%	17.7%	29.1%	27.6%

Key takeaway: Each of the top three preferred sources of information represent 3rd party validation of technology solutions. Customer case studies represent the voice of the customer, independent research represents the voice of subject matter experts, and product reviews and comparisons represent the voices of both customers and market experts.

While it is key to diversify your marketing programs to reach potential buyers with various forms of content across a variety of channels and programs, be sure to prioritize creating and amplifying content that validates your solution through the voice of your customers, industry experts, analysts, and product reviewers.

Information Struggles

With increasingly complex buying committees and longer buying cycles, there's no doubt that IT tech purchasers spend more time researching and evaluating new solutions.

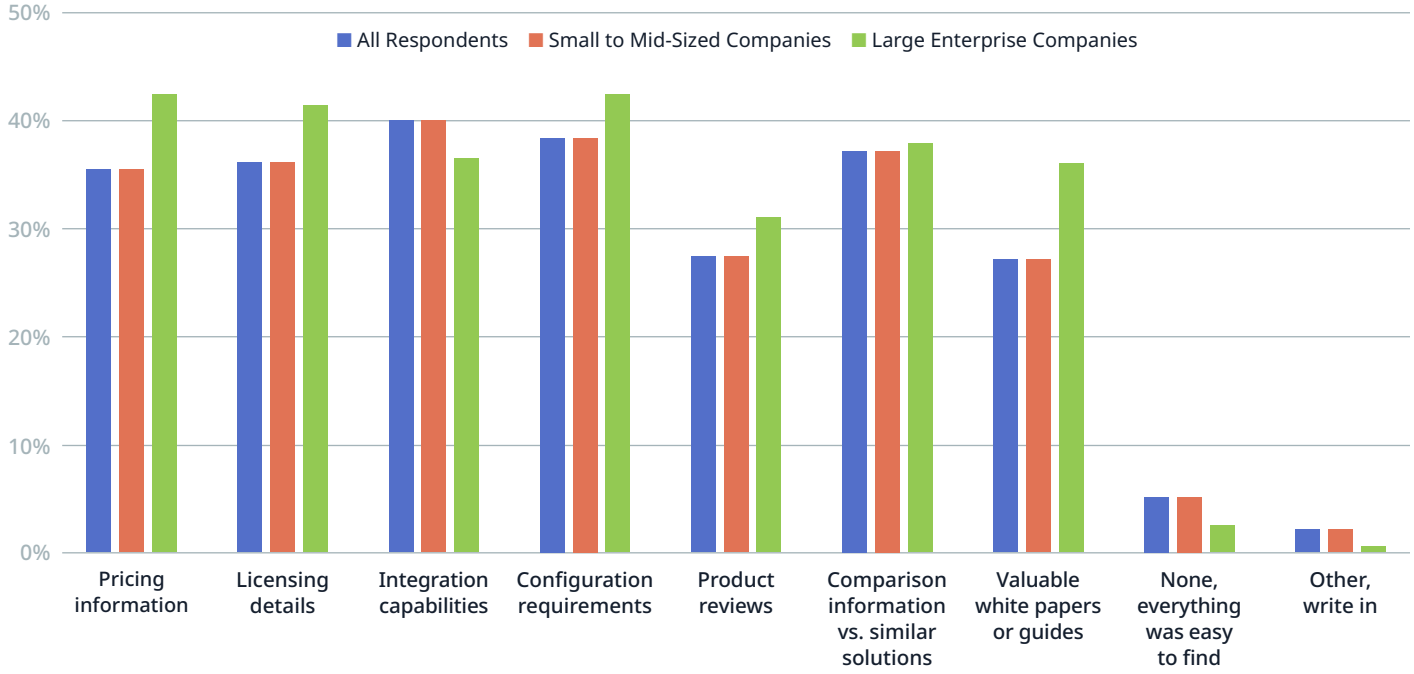
The best thing you can do? Make sure your marketing materials and product information are easy to access on the channels your prospects are already engaging on.

According to survey responses, the top 5 'hard to find' information for buyers during their solution research were:

1. Integration capabilities
2. Configuration requirements
3. Comparison information vs. similar solutions
4. Licensing details
5. Pricing information

If you're doing these well, this could give you a leg up on the competition.

Which information types were hard to find during your solution research? Select all that apply.



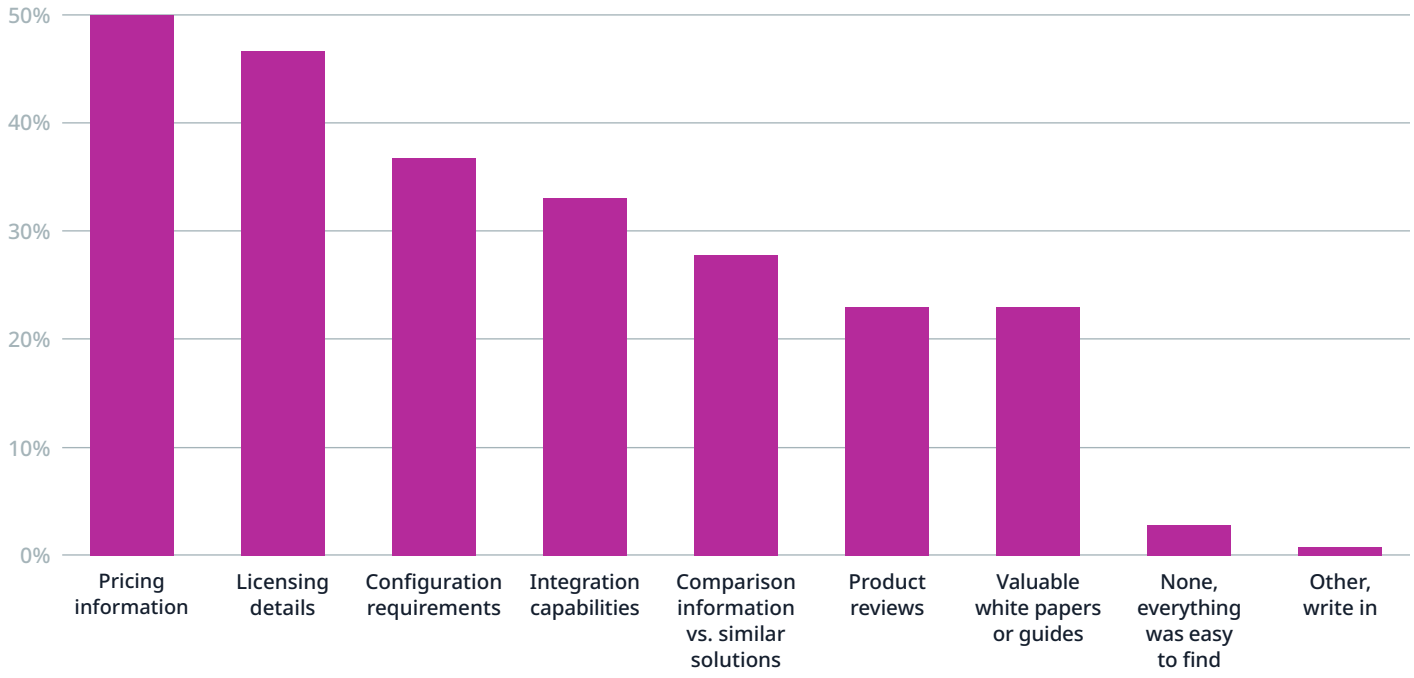
On the other hand, product reviews and whitepapers/guides were easier for buyers to find during the research process, and as noted in the previous section, can also be very important in influencing their decision. You'll want to make sure yours are not only visible but high quality and highly credible.

Information Struggles: Cybersecurity Buyers

Cybersecurity marketers take note!

Survey respondents who had most recently purchased a cybersecurity solution reported having a harder time finding pricing and licensing information during their research phase.

Which information types were hard to find during your solution research? Select all that apply.



Key takeaway: The absence of information like pricing and licensing details can create friction and frustration for buyers, causing them to abandon their research in favor of competitors who provide this information upfront. Consider making this type of information easily accessible for your buyers, not just as a courtesy but as a strategic way to build trust, improve the buyer experience, and drive better business outcomes.

Stakeholder Involvement

According to survey respondents, the stakeholders most involved in purchase decisions were at the manager/director level.

It's interesting, however, to see how involved the C-level is during the decision-making process for IT solutions, including the CEO and CFO. Nearly 50% of respondents at small and mid-sized companies report that the CEO and CFO were both *involved or very involved* in their most recent IT solution purchase.

How involved were the following stakeholders in that purchase decision (1 = Not involved; 5 = Very involved)?

		1	2	3	4	5
CEO	All respondents	16.9%	18.4%	20.5%	24.9%	19.4%
	SMB	13.9%	16.8%	20.4%	27.0%	21.9%
	Enterprise	30.8%	25.8%	20.7%	15.2%	7.6%
CFO	All respondents	13.6%	17.9%	22.9%	27.3%	18.3%
	SMB	11.4%	16.2%	22.8%	29.0%	20.6%
	Enterprise	23.5%	25.5%	23.5%	19.5%	8.0%
C-level or VP-level IT executive	All respondents	11.8%	12.6%	21.4%	31.8%	22.4%
	SMB	10.1%	11.7%	21.1%	32.1%	25.0%
	Enterprise	19.1%	16.6%	23.1%	30.7%	10.6%
Director- or manager-level IT leader	All respondents	9.1%	15.2%	18.6%	32.0%	25.2%
	SMB	7.7%	15.1%	18.2%	32.8%	26.2%
	Enterprise	15.3%	15.3%	20.3%	28.2%	20.8%
Individual contributor	All respondents	14.3%	11.9%	22.8%	30.9%	20.1%
	SMB	13.4%	10.2%	21.8%	32.3%	22.3%
	Enterprise	18.4%	19.4%	26.9%	24.9%	10.4%

Here's how stakeholders ranked in order of level of involvement in the purchase decision. Notice the relative order ranking remained consistent across company sizes:

Stakeholder Involvement: Ranked by Importance		
All Respondents	**Small to Mid-Sized Companies**	**Large Enterprise Companies**
1. Director- or manager-level IT leader	1. Director- or manager-level IT leader	1. Director- or manager-level IT leader
2. C-level or VP-level IT executive	2. C-level or VP-level IT executive	2. C-level or VP-level IT executive
3. Individual contributor	3. Individual contributor	3. Individual contributor
4. CFO	4. CFO	4. CFO
5. CEO	5. CEO	5. CEO

Stakeholder Involvement: Cybersecurity Buyers

For those respondents who had most recently purchased a cybersecurity solution, the results had an interesting twist.

More than 30% of those respondents indicated that stakeholders at *every* level were *very involved* in the decision-making process, including the CEO and CFO. Notice in the chart below how the numbers skew much further to the right compared to the charts above.

How involved were the following stakeholders in that purchase decision (1 = Not involved; 5 = Very involved)?

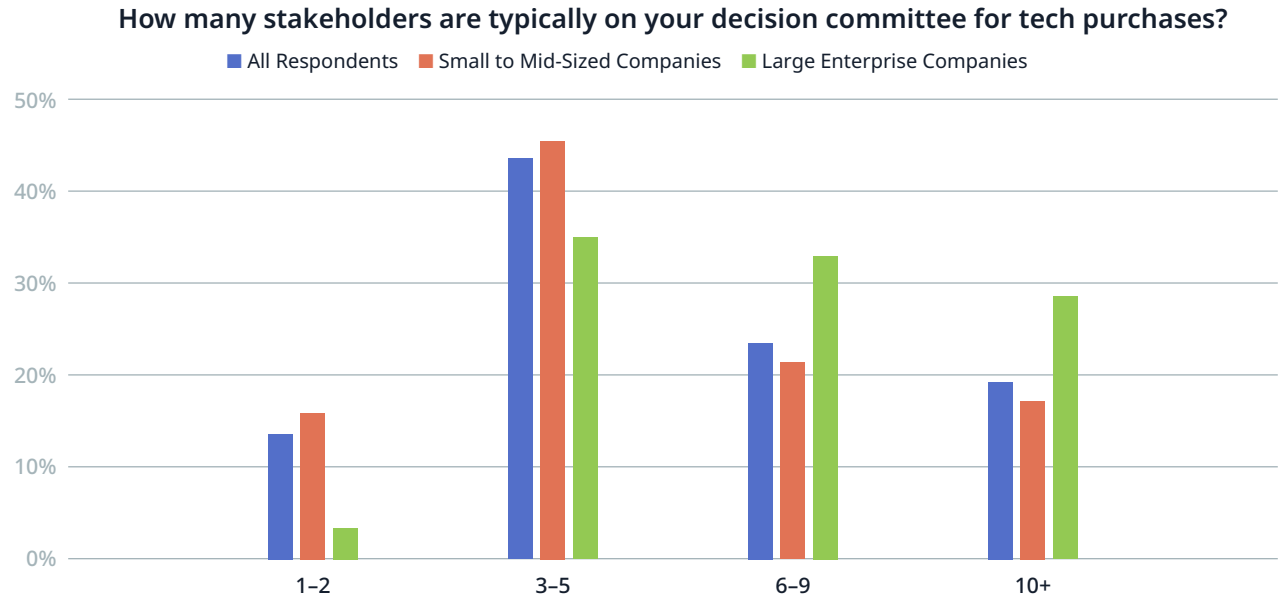
		1	2	3	4	5
CEO	**Cybersecurity**	19.0%	12.2%	18.0%	20.1%	30.7%
CFO		12.7%	16.9%	15.3%	18.0%	37.0%
C-level IT		5.3%	11.1%	18.5%	32.8%	32.3%
Director-Level IT		8.9%	5.7%	14.1%	30.7%	40.6%
Individual contributor		9.6%	12.2%	18.6%	27.7%	31.9%

Key takeaways: While mid-level IT managers and directors typically have the greatest influence over purchase decisions, it's important to influence a variety of potential stakeholders ranging from individual contributors to CIOs and even the CEO/CFO. This is particularly important for cybersecurity vendors, as a wider (and more senior) range of stakeholders may be closely involved in the purchase decision process.

Number of Stakeholders

Buying teams are rarely made up of fewer than 3 people, and in many cases, this may balloon to 10+ stakeholders.

Large decision-making groups continue to be the reality for most organizations with 86% of respondents having 3+ stakeholders on their decision committees for technology product purchases and 43% of total respondents reporting 6+ stakeholders. In large enterprises, this number increased significantly with more than 60% reporting 6+ stakeholders and nearly 30% reporting 10+ stakeholders on average.



Key takeaway: In the evolving landscape of B2B purchasing, it's clear that buying teams are expanding and diversifying. This means that decision-making for IT solutions now often involves a broader range of stakeholders both within and *beyond* the IT department.

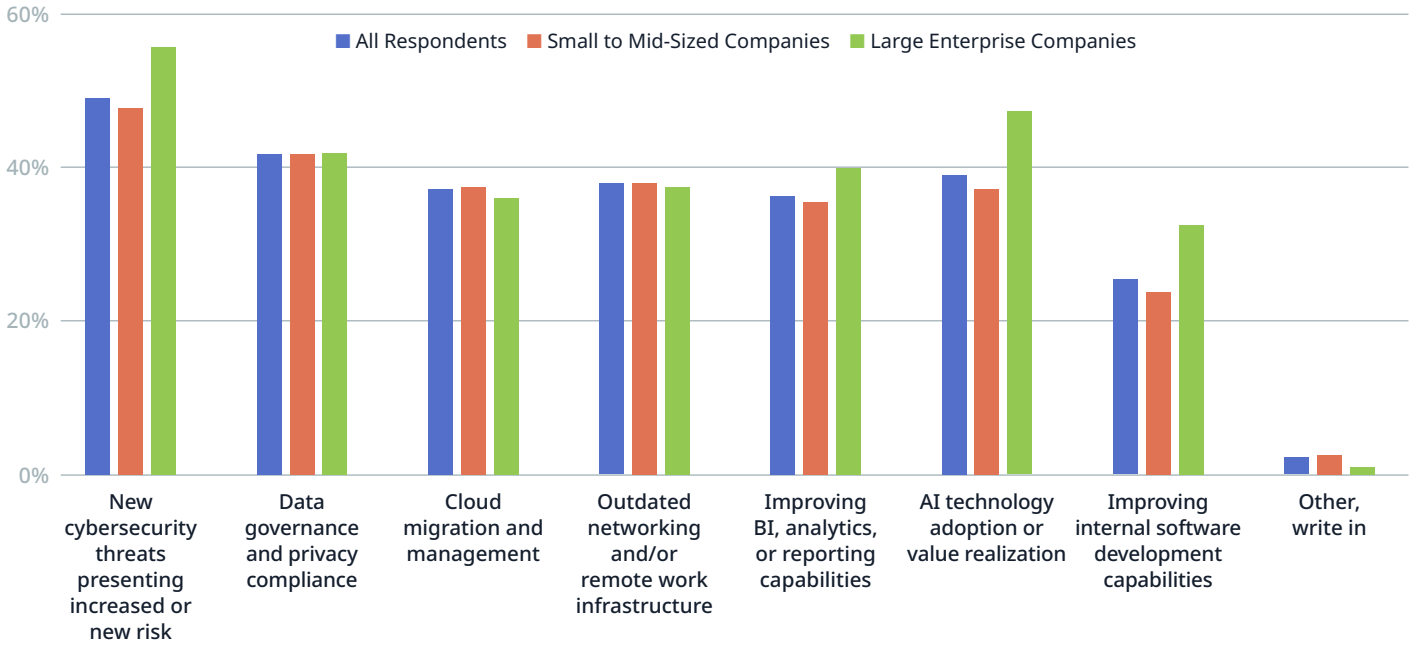
Technology providers should double down on personalized messaging and content that resonates with these various stakeholders, addressing their specific needs and concerns. They may also need to consider new marketing channels and program types to reach additional audiences such as line-of-business leaders, CIOs, CEOs, and even CFOs.

Part 3: Challenges and Priorities for the Year Ahead

It's clear that IT organizations are facing a wide variety of challenges, but one of the most pressing and persistent issues is the escalating threat of cybersecurity attacks.

These threats are not only growing in frequency but also in sophistication, posing significant risks to organizations of all sizes and industries.

What challenges does your organization currently face or expect in the next 6 months? Select all that apply.



Top Challenges

The top 5 greatest challenges currently facing IT organizations are:

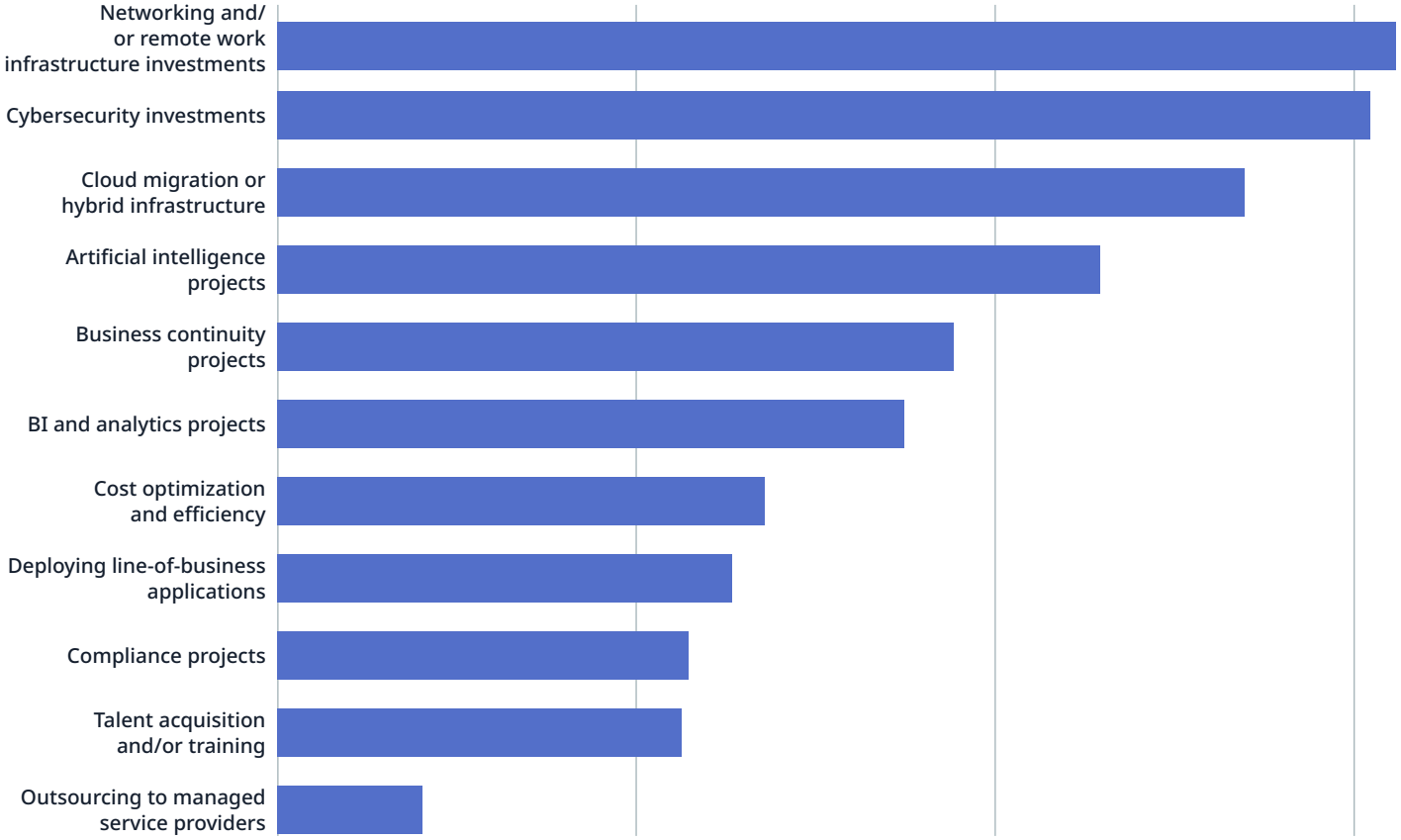
1. New cybersecurity threats presenting increased or new risk
2. Data governance and privacy compliance
3. AI technology adoption or value realization
4. Outdated networking and/or remote work infrastructure
5. Cloud migration and management

Key Takeaways: Cybersecurity, network infrastructure, and AI technology adoption top the list of current challenges for IT organizations, reinforcing related trends we're seeing in what types of articles and product review pages are getting the highest engagement across TechnologyAdvice's portfolio of tech media sites (more on that later in the report!). It's also worth noting that respondents from large enterprises were much more likely to list AI technology adoption as a current challenge — a clear indication that AI is a big topic of discussion for larger enterprises where it has the greatest potential to drive cost efficiencies and business productivity.

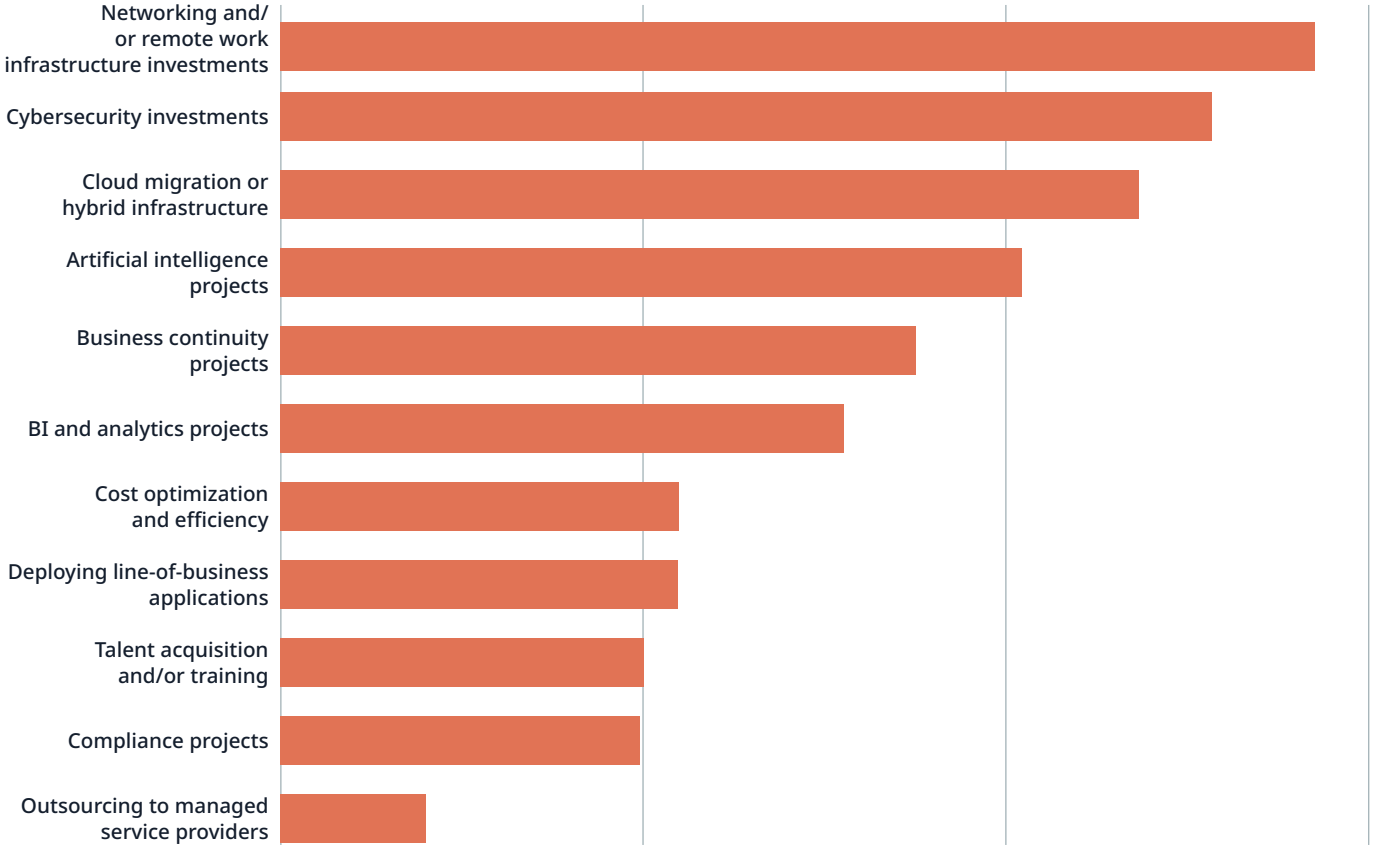
Top IT Priorities: All Respondents

When asked to rank their top IT priorities, respondents placed networking infrastructure and cybersecurity investments at the top of their lists.

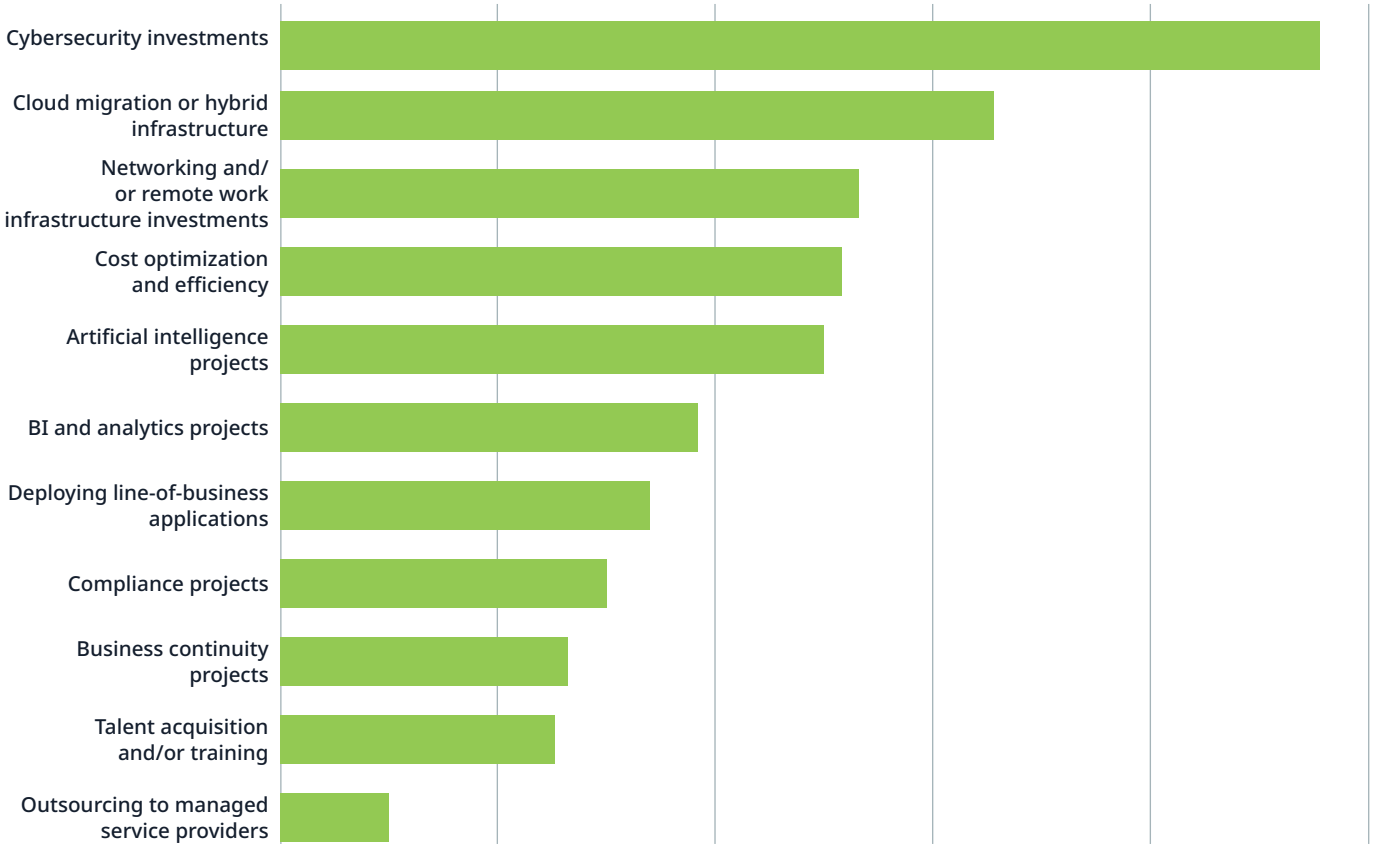
What's interesting to note, however, are the shifts in priorities based on company size. While networking and cybersecurity remained top of mind for small to mid-sized companies, priorities shifted to cybersecurity and cloud migration/hybrid infrastructure for large enterprises (with cybersecurity winning out as the top priority by a *significant* margin).



Top IT Priorities: Small to Mid-Sized Companies



Top IT Priorities: Large Enterprise Companies



Key Takeaways: Network infrastructure, cybersecurity, and cloud migration top the list of priorities for IT organizations in the coming months. Small and mid-sized companies are showing greater demand for networking and/or remote work infrastructure while large enterprises are prioritizing cybersecurity and cloud solutions.

AI solutions followed closely as an additional priority for companies of all sizes, following the trend of the top current challenges reported and topics being most heavily researched on TechnologyAdvice's portfolio of tech media sites.

Future Investments

IT and cybersecurity investments are on the rise across the board.

78% of companies are planning to either increase or significantly increase their investments in cybersecurity in the next 12 months. This jumped to a whopping 85% for large enterprise companies.

Meanwhile, roughly 60% of respondents are expecting to increase or significantly increase their investments in most other categories, including AI, cloud infrastructure, IT systems management, and line-of-business applications.

In the next 12 months, how do you expect your IT organization to invest in the following technology areas?

		Decrease investment	Remain unchanged	Increase investment	Significantly increase investment	I don't know
Cybersecurity	All respondents	2.1%	16.3%	43.1%	35.3%	3.2%
	SMB	2.3%	16.7%	42.7%	34.8%	3.5%
	Enterprise	1.1%	12.6%	46.0%	39.1%	1.1%
Networking	All respondents	8.3%	23.0%	35.7%	23.4%	9.6%
	SMB	7.1%	23.4%	37.3%	23.6%	8.6%
	Enterprise	13.7%	21.3%	28.4%	22.3%	14.2%
Cloud or hybrid infrastructure	All respondents	8.4%	21.1%	36.3%	24.1%	10.1%
	SMB	7.1%	21.4%	38.2%	23.5%	9.9%
	Enterprise	14.6%	19.7%	27.8%	26.8%	11.1%
Storage or data center	All respondents	7.5%	23.8%	34.3%	24.0%	10.5%
	SMB	6.0%	23.5%	35.9%	25.5%	9.1%
	Enterprise	14.2%	24.9%	26.9%	17.3%	16.8%
Artificial intelligence	All respondents	7.0%	17.9%	32.2%	28.6%	14.3%
	SMB	6.6%	18.0%	32.9%	29.6%	12.8%
	Enterprise	8.7%	17.3%	29.1%	24.0%	20.9%
BI or analytics	All respondents	7.6%	22.0%	35.1%	24.6%	10.8%
	SMB	6.9%	22.3%	36.3%	24.8%	9.6%
	Enterprise	10.7%	20.3%	29.4%	23.4%	16.2%
IT systems management	All respondents	9.1%	19.5%	35.0%	26.6%	9.8%
	SMB	7.7%	18.5%	37.2%	27.9%	8.6%
	Enterprise	15.2%	24.2%	24.7%	20.7%	15.2%
Line-of-business applications	All respondents	7.0%	22.9%	34.3%	25.2%	10.7%
	SMB	6.3%	22.2%	36.1%	25.2%	10.3%
	Enterprise	10.2%	26.0%	26.5%	25.0%	12.2%

Here's how it broke down by company size:

IT investments in the Next 12 months: Ranked by level of planned investment		
All Respondents	**Small to Mid-Sized Companies**	**Large Enterprise Companies**
1. Cybersecurity	1. Cybersecurity	1. Cybersecurity
2. Artificial intelligence	2. Artificial intelligence	2. Artificial intelligence
3. IT systems management	3. IT systems management	3. BI or analytics
4. Line-of-business applications	4. Line-of-business applications	4. Line-of-business applications
5. BI or analytics	5. Storage or data center	5. Cloud or hybrid infrastructure
6. Cloud or hybrid infrastructure	6. BI or analytics	6. Networking
7. Storage or data center	7. Cloud or hybrid infrastructure	7. IT systems management
8. Networking	8. Networking	8. Storage or data center

Key takeaways: Cybersecurity and AI lead the way as the top challenges, priorities, and expected areas of investment for companies of all sizes. Small and mid-sized companies are also prioritizing investments in IT systems management while large enterprises are planning greater investments in business intelligence and cloud infrastructure. It's also worth noting that overall, small and mid-sized businesses were more likely to report increased investments in all areas of technologies compared to large enterprises, with the exception of cybersecurity, where large enterprises are showing clear expectations of increasing investments in the months ahead.

Future Investments: Cybersecurity Buyers

An interesting note for cybersecurity marketers!

Respondents who had most recently purchased a cybersecurity product were *even more likely* to report that they would be increasing investments in cybersecurity in the months ahead.

In the next 12 months, how do you expect your IT organization to invest in the following technology areas?

		Decrease investment	Remain unchanged	Increase investment	Significantly increase investment	I don't know
Cybersecurity	Cybersecurity	0.0%	6.6%	56.6%	33.8%	2.9%
Networking		4.4%	23.0%	43.2%	23.0%	6.6%
Cloud or hybrid infrastructure		4.3%	23.9%	42.9%	21.2%	7.6%
Storage or data center		3.8%	25.5%	44.0%	19.0%	7.6%
Artificial intelligence		1.6%	15.9%	49.5%	20.3%	12.6%
BI or analytics		4.9%	25.7%	41.0%	18.0%	10.4%
IT systems management		7.6%	18.5%	45.7%	19.6%	8.7%
Line-of-business applications		3.8%	26.2%	45.4%	16.4%	8.2%

Key takeaway: Cybersecurity continues to be a hot topic and is a major priority for businesses of all sizes, even if they've already been investing in this area.

Impact of AI Technologies

IT organizations are expecting new AI technologies to have the most significant impact on cybersecurity, business intelligence, and IT systems management in the next 1-2 years.

How do you expect new AI technologies to impact the following areas of the IT industry over the next 12-24 months?

		No impact	Slight impact	Meaningful impact	Significant impact	I don't know
Cybersecurity	All respondents	8.0%	14.4%	29.6%	39.2%	9.0%
	SMB	7.2%	13.3%	30.6%	40.6%	8.4%
	Enterprise	11.6%	19.2%	24.7%	32.8%	11.6%
Networking	All respondents	8.8%	18.3%	34.0%	28.9%	9.9%
	SMB	7.9%	16.6%	36.7%	30.1%	8.7%
	Enterprise	13.3%	26.0%	21.4%	23.5%	15.8%
Cloud or hybrid infrastructure	All respondents	8.3%	15.5%	33.9%	32.0%	10.4%
	SMB	7.1%	15.0%	34.5%	33.2%	10.2%
	Enterprise	7.1%	15.0%	34.5%	33.2%	10.2%
Storage or data center	All respondents	9.3%	20.1%	32.3%	27.8%	10.5%
	SMB	8.3%	18.9%	35.2%	28.5%	9.0%
	Enterprise	13.6%	25.3%	19.2%	24.7%	17.2%
BI or analytics	All respondents	8.5%	13.0%	32.1%	35.1%	11.3%
	SMB	7.4%	12.2%	33.9%	35.9%	10.6%
	Enterprise	13.3%	16.8%	24.0%	31.1%	14.8%
IT systems management	All respondents	8.5%	13.9%	31.7%	34.3%	11.7%
	SMB	7.2%	11.9%	33.5%	36.7%	10.8%
	Enterprise	14.6%	22.7%	23.2%	23.7%	15.7%

Here's how it broke down by company size:

Impact of AI on IT solution categories: Ranked by level of expected impact		
All Respondents	**Small to Mid-Sized Companies**	**Large Enterprise Companies**
1. Cybersecurity	1. Cybersecurity	1. Cybersecurity
2. BI or analytics	2. IT systems management	2. BI or analytics
3. IT systems management	3. BI or analytics	3. Cloud or hybrid infrastructure
4. Cloud or hybrid infrastructure	4. Cloud or hybrid infrastructure	4. IT systems management
5. Networking	5. Networking	5. Storage or data center
6. Storage or data center	6. Storage or data center	6. Networking

Key takeaway: AI is having a very broad impact and people are expecting it! Focus on being part of the conversation and forming your own unique POV on the topic to establish thought leadership in your space, especially if you provide solutions for cybersecurity, business intelligence, IT systems management or cloud infrastructure.

Impact of AI Technologies: Cybersecurity Buyers

Those who most recently purchased a cybersecurity product are even more bullish on AI's impact in that space.

How do you expect new AI technologies to impact the following areas of the IT industry over the next 12-24 months?

		No impact	Slight impact	Meaningful impact	Significant impact	I don't know
Cybersecurity	**Cybersecurity**	8.1%	5.9%	38.4%	39.5%	8.1%
Networking		9.9%	12.6%	45.1%	25.3%	7.1%
Cloud or hybrid infrastructure		9.2%	14.7%	44.0%	24.5%	7.6%
Storage or data center		10.4%	15.4%	36.3%	26.9%	11.0%
BI or analytics		7.6%	12.0%	45.7%	25.5%	9.2%
IT systems management		6.5%	13.0%	39.7%	33.2%	7.6%

Key Takeaway: 78% of respondents who had most recently purchased a cybersecurity product within their IT organization stated that AI will have a meaningful or very significant impact on cybersecurity. If you're a cybersecurity vendor, ensure that AI is a core part of your messaging and thought leadership!

Part 4: Cybersecurity Challenges and Priorities

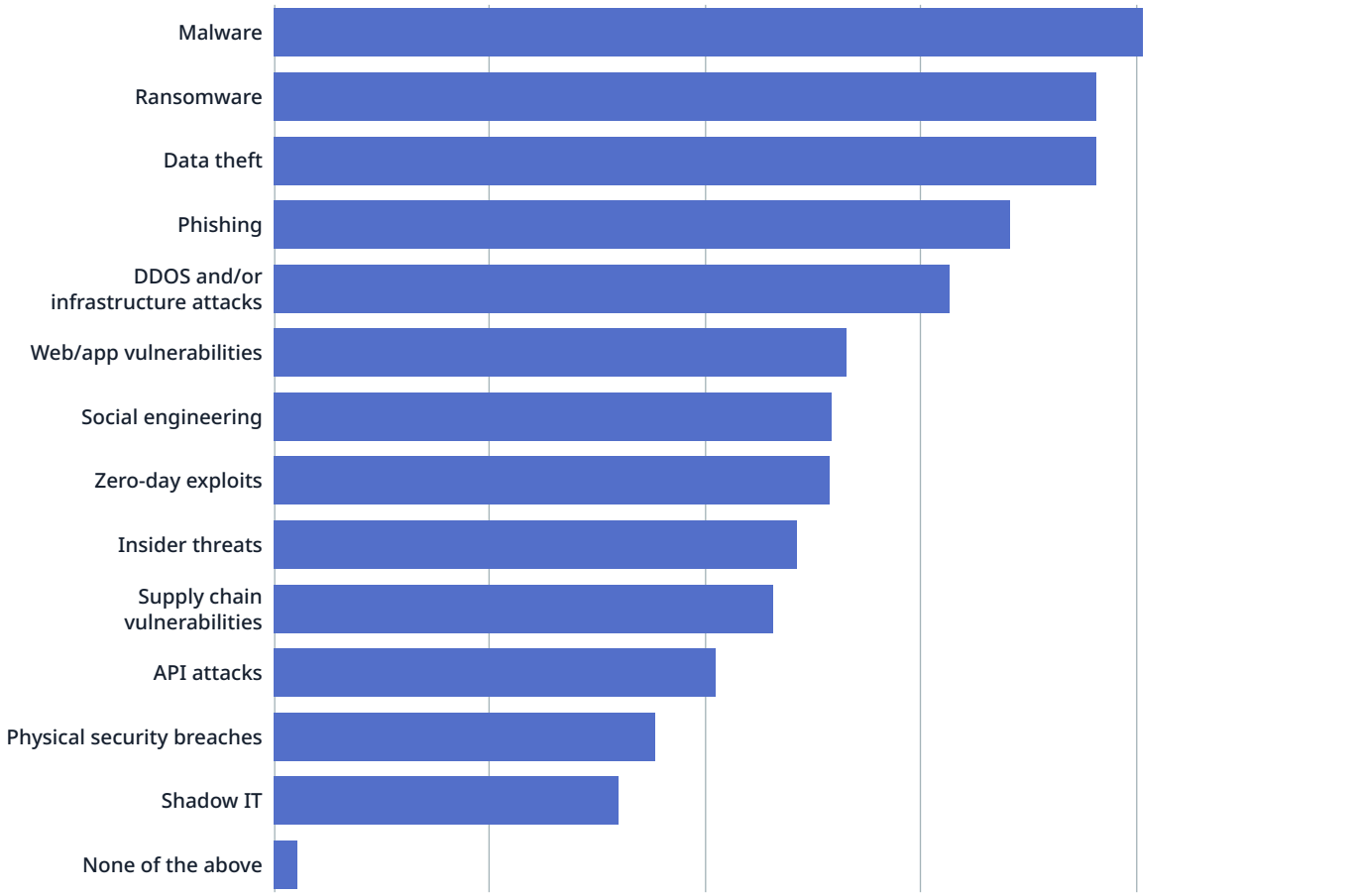
Cybersecurity is a clear priority for IT organizations. With the increasing sophistication of malware, ransomware, DDOS, and other attack vectors coupled with the rise of remote work and AI-powered applications, it's no surprise that *cybersecurity threats* ranked as the top challenge that IT departments are facing in the year ahead.

This section dives deeper into cybersecurity-specific challenges, priorities, and buying behaviors reported by survey respondents. Note that responses from individuals who are not directly involved in cybersecurity within their organizations have been omitted from the data set.

Security Threat Priorities: All Respondents

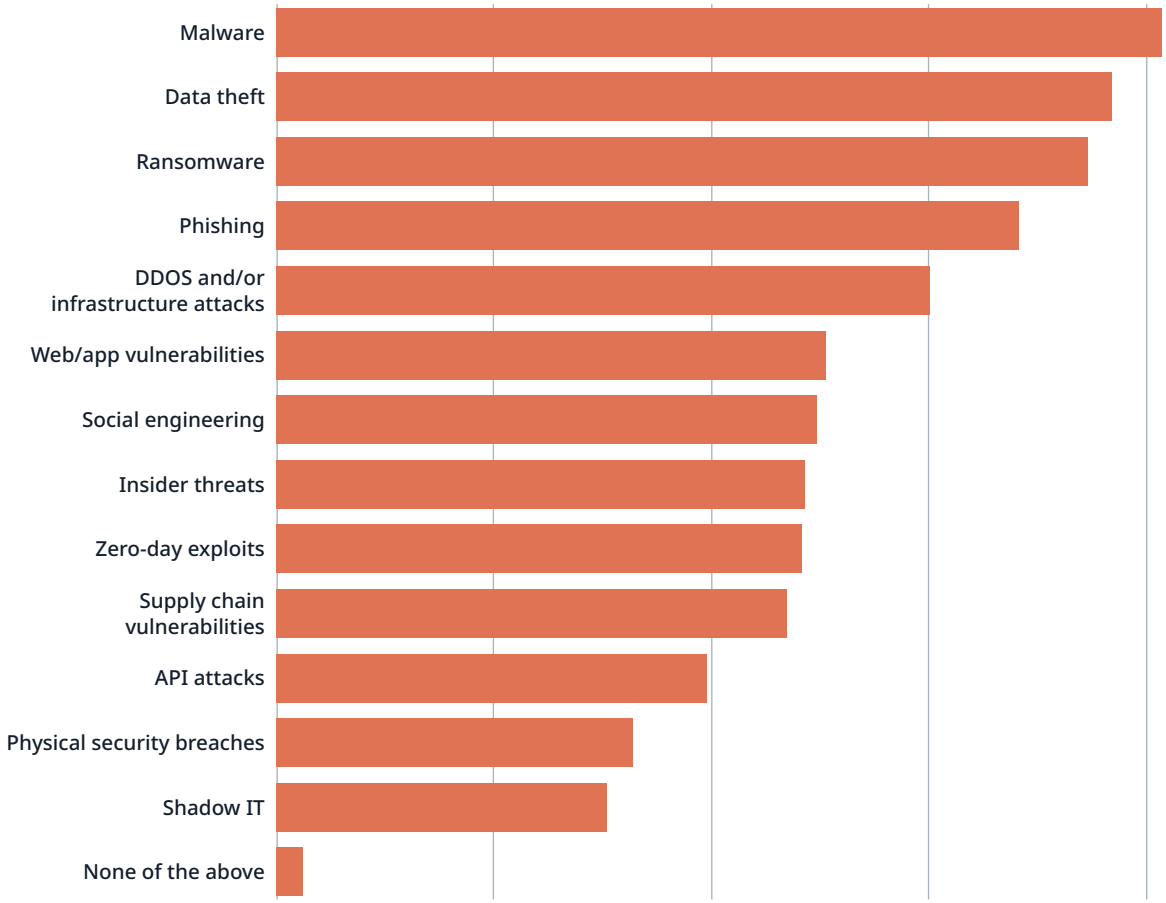
Cybersecurity professionals are prioritizing a wide range of threats and attack vectors, with a few clear stand-outs as the most pressing.

Which of the following security threats does your organization currently prioritize? Select all that apply.



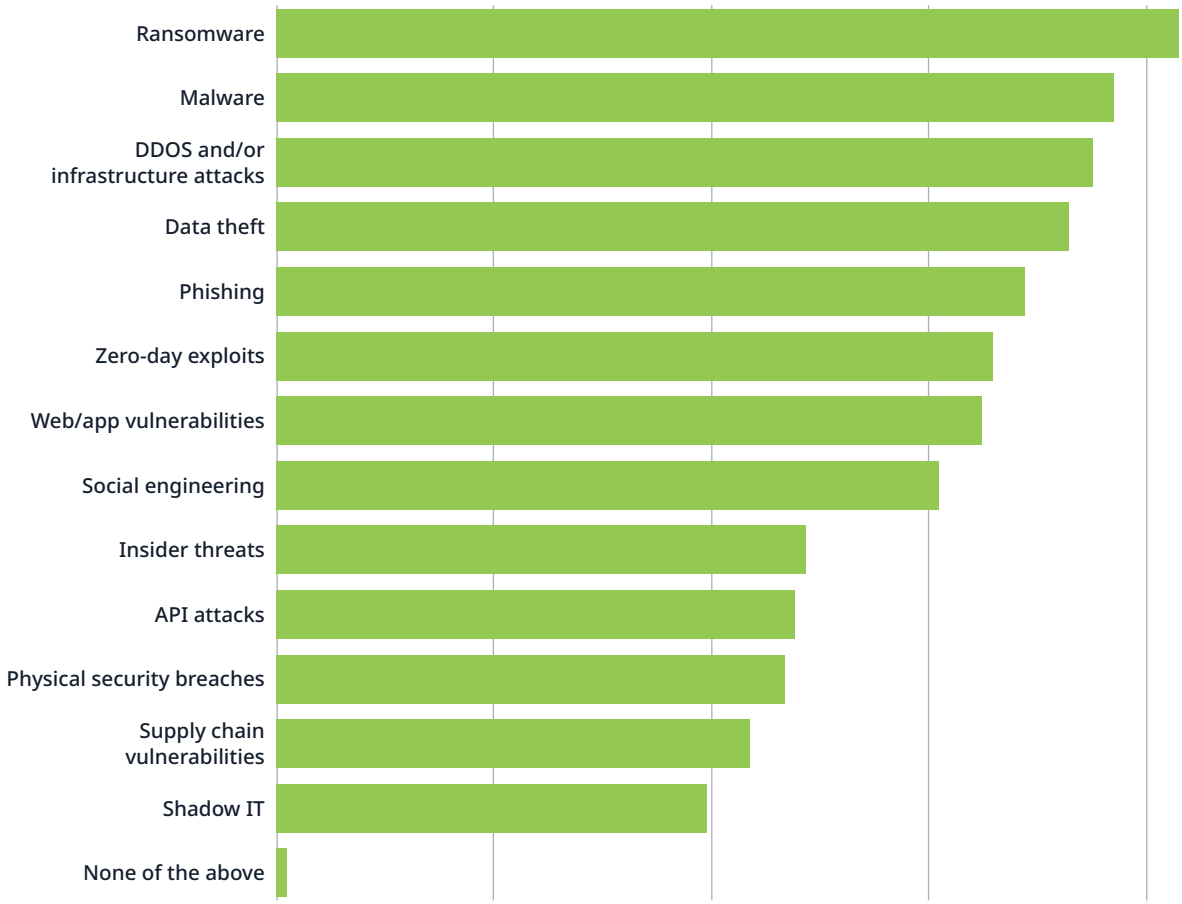
Security Threat Priorities: Small to Mid-Sized Companies

Which of the following security threats does your organization currently prioritize? Select all that apply.



Security Threat Priorities: Large Enterprise Companies

Which of the following security threats does your organization currently prioritize? Select all that apply.

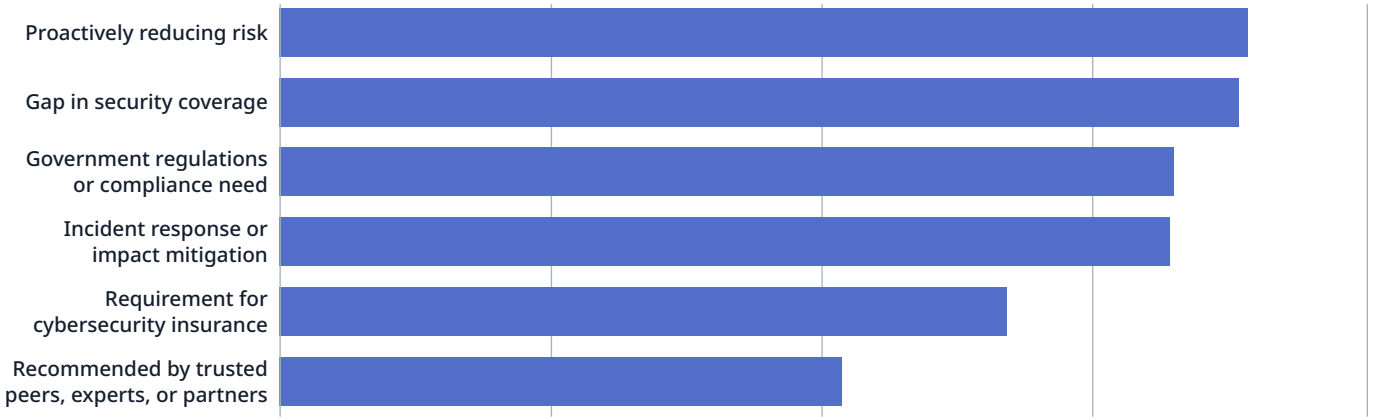


Key Takeaways: The top security threats being prioritized by cybersecurity teams include malware, ransomware, and data theft, with large enterprises also prioritizing DDOS, infrastructure attacks, and zero-day exploits. Be mindful of these priorities when positioning your cybersecurity solutions.

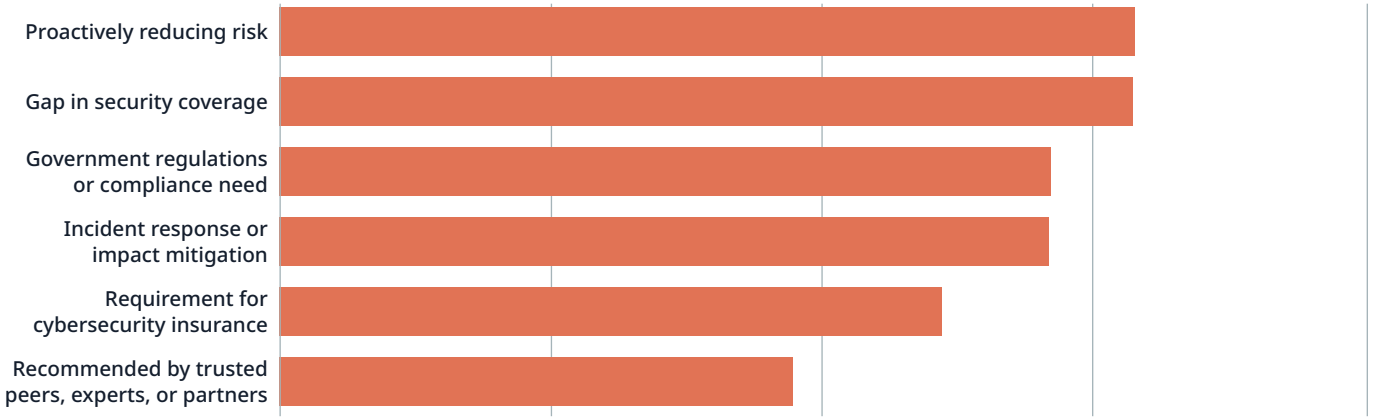
Motivators for New Cybersecurity Solutions

When asked to rank their top motivators for evaluating new cybersecurity solutions, respondents placed proactively reducing risk, covering gaps in security coverage, complying with government regulations/ compliance needs, and incident response/impact mitigation at the top of their lists.

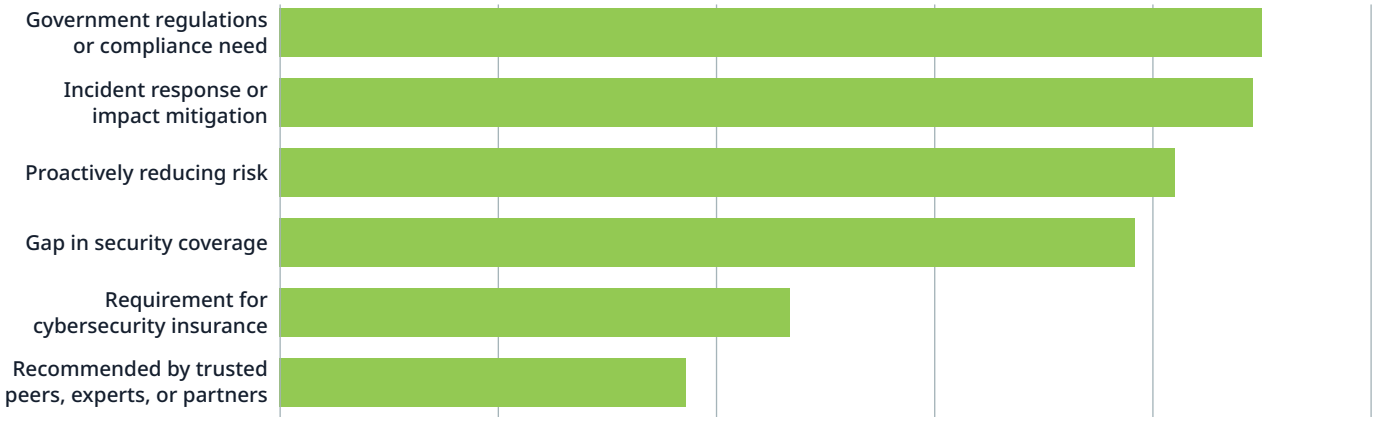
Most Common Motivators for Evaluating New Cybersecurity Solutions: All Respondents



Most Common Motivators for Evaluating New Cybersecurity Solutions: Small to Mid-Sized Companies



Most Common Motivators for Evaluating New Cybersecurity Solutions: Large Enterprise Companies



Key takeaways: It's interesting to note that while proactively reducing risk was the most common motivator for small to mid-sized companies, this shifted to government regulations and compliance needs for large enterprises. This likely suggests that SMBs are more focused on safeguarding their assets and data against potential threats before they occur, likely due to their limited resources and higher vulnerability to attacks. On the flip side, large enterprises may be more driven by the need to adhere to strict legal and regulatory requirements, which can be complex and varied across different regions and industries.

Important Factors Involved in Evaluating Cybersecurity Vendors

There are clearly many factors that go into evaluating cybersecurity vendors. As shown in the chart below, each of the listed categories had more than 50% of respondents indicating "important" or "very important" — from product capabilities all the way down to supplier relationships.

How would you rate the importance of the following factors when evaluating new cybersecurity vendors (1 = Not important; 5 = Very important)?

		1	2	3	4	5
Product capabilities	All respondents	8.7%	12.9%	21.7%	28.2%	28.6%
	SMB	7.2%	11.9%	22.0%	28.9%	29.9%
	Enterprise	15.3%	17.9%	20.0%	24.7%	22.1%
Vendor reputation	All respondents	8.7%	12.2%	19.9%	36.2%	23.0%
	SMB	8.4%	10.8%	19.5%	36.2%	25.1%
	Enterprise	10.1%	18.6%	21.8%	36.2%	13.3%
Vendor information transparency	All respondents	8.9%	11.3%	22.5%	32.0%	25.3%
	SMB	7.6%	10.8%	22.1%	31.8%	27.8%
	Enterprise	15.3%	13.7%	24.2%	33.2%	13.7%
Vendor-produced content or thought leadership	All respondents	7.4%	14.1%	24.8%	34.8%	18.9%
	SMB	7.0%	13.7%	23.2%	35.3%	20.8%
	Enterprise	9.5%	15.8%	32.1%	32.6%	10.0%
Reviews and/or referrals from trusted sources	All respondents	9.1%	11.9%	26.3%	32.6%	20.1%
	SMB	8.6%	11.4%	25.5%	32.6%	21.9%
	Enterprise	11.6%	14.2%	30.0%	32.6%	11.6%
Pricing	All respondents	8.8%	12.6%	21.6%	32.8%	24.2%
	SMB	7.3%	11.8%	21.4%	33.4%	26.1%
	Enterprise	15.8%	16.3%	22.6%	30.0%	15.3%
Integrations with existing platforms	All respondents	9.0%	13.7%	18.7%	34.0%	24.6%
	SMB	8.6%	12.9%	18.6%	33.9%	26.0%
	Enterprise	10.5%	17.4%	18.9%	34.7%	18.4%
Bundled security tool offerings/ platform availability	All respondents	10.8%	12.2%	19.6%	37.7%	19.7%
	SMB	9.4%	10.8%	20.1%	38.3%	21.4%
	Enterprise	17.4%	18.4%	17.4%	34.7%	12.1%
Risk assessment	All respondents	8.0%	11.7%	22.0%	30.1%	28.2%
	SMB	6.8%	11.3%	21.4%	29.9%	30.7%
	Enterprise	13.7%	13.7%	24.7%	31.1%	16.8%
Supplier relationship	All respondents	10.7%	11.7%	22.3%	33.7%	21.7%
	SMB	9.2%	10.2%	22.3%	34.4%	23.9%
	Enterprise	17.5%	18.5%	22.2%	30.2%	11.6%

Here's how it broke down by company size:

Factors Involved in Evaluating Cybersecurity Vendors: Ranked by Importance		
All Respondents	**Small to Mid-Sized Companies**	**Large Enterprise Companies**
1. Risk assessment	1. Risk assessment	1. Integrations with existing platforms
2. Product capabilities	2. Product capabilities	2. Vendor reputation
3. Vendor information transparency	3. Vendor information transparency	3. Risk assessment
4. Vendor reputation	4. Pricing	4. Product capabilities
5. Integrations with existing platforms	5. Vendor reputation	5. Reviews and/or referrals from trusted sources
6. Pricing	6. Integrations with existing platforms	6. Vendor-produced content or thought leadership
7. Supplier relationship	7. Supplier relationship	7. Vendor information transparency
8. Vendor-produced content or thought leadership	8. Bundled security tool offerings/platform availability	8. Pricing
9. Bundled security tool offerings/platform availability	9. Vendor-produced content or thought leadership	9. Bundled security tool offerings/platform availability
10. Reviews and/or referrals from trusted sources	10. Reviews and/or referrals from trusted sources	10. Supplier relationship

Key takeaways: It's interesting to note that the rankings of these priorities were quite different from small to mid-sized businesses vs. large enterprises. Small to mid-sized businesses prioritized risk assessment and product capabilities while enterprise respondents prioritized integration capabilities and vendor reputation. When building out your marketing plan for different audience segments, be sure to consider these different priorities!

Important Factors When Evaluating Cybersecurity Vendors: Cybersecurity Buyers

Those who had most recently purchased a cybersecurity product were more likely to prioritize product capabilities, risk assessment, and vendor reputation, and overall skewed more towards the "very important" end of the spectrum for all categories.

How would you rate the importance of the following factors when evaluating new cybersecurity vendors (1 = Not important; 5 = Very important)?

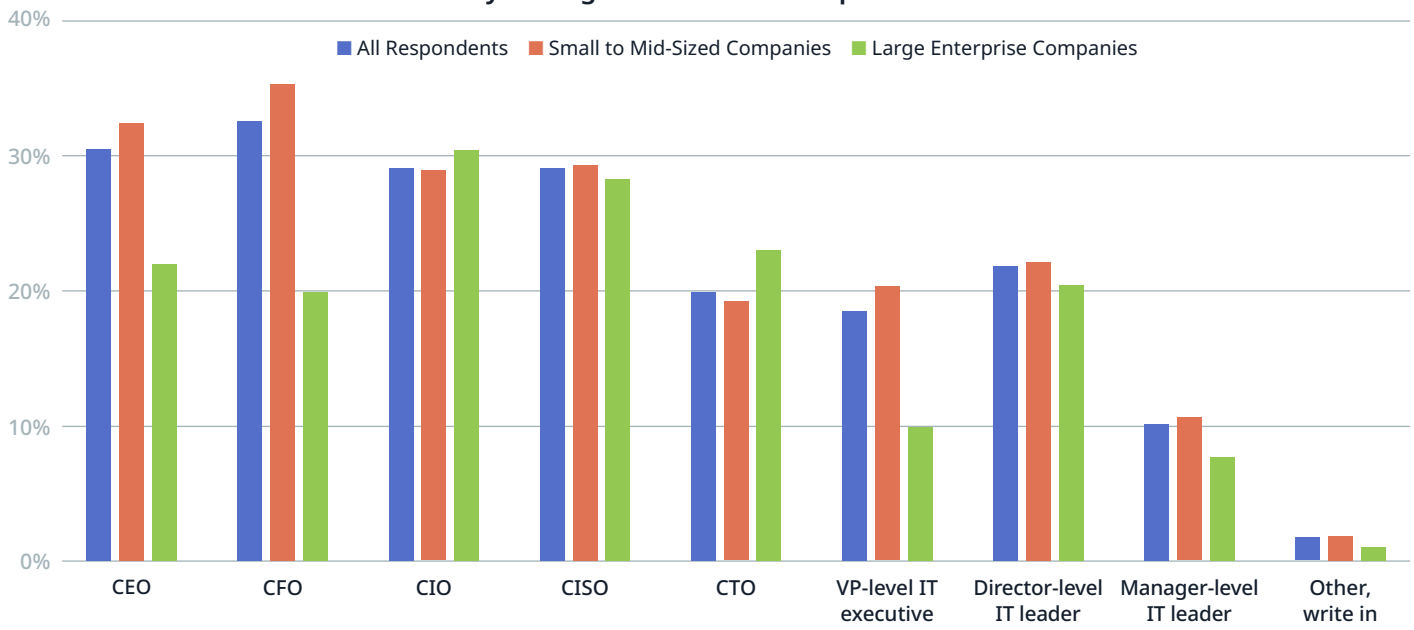
		1	2	3	4	5
Product capabilities	**Cybersecurity**	6.1%	8.8%	21.5%	21.0%	42.5%
Vendor reputation		6.6%	9.9%	14.4%	30.4%	38.7%
Vendor information transparency		6.7%	10.1%	19.0%	28.5%	35.8%
Vendor-produced content or thought leadership		4.4%	13.9%	24.4%	27.8%	29.4%
Reviews and/or referrals from trusted sources		4.4%	9.4%	31.5%	24.3%	30.4%
Pricing		6.7%	10.0%	16.1%	29.4%	37.8%
Integrations with existing platforms		8.3%	10.6%	16.7%	27.8%	36.7%
Bundled security tool offerings/platform availability		8.3%	9.9%	21.0%	32.6%	28.2%
Risk assessment		6.6%	9.4%	24.3%	18.2%	41.4%
Supplier relationship		5.1%	12.9%	20.2%	31.5%	30.3%

Key takeaways: When it comes to marketing and selling cybersecurity solutions, there is little-to-no margin for error! These buyers place a higher importance on everything from product capabilities and risk assessments to product reviews, vendor transparency, and vendor reputation.

Common Decision Makers

For small to mid-sized companies, the CEO and CFO are the most common decision makers for cybersecurity solutions, whereas at large enterprise companies, the CIO/CISO are the most common.

Who are the most common decision makers for new cybersecurity product purchases in your organization? Select up to three.



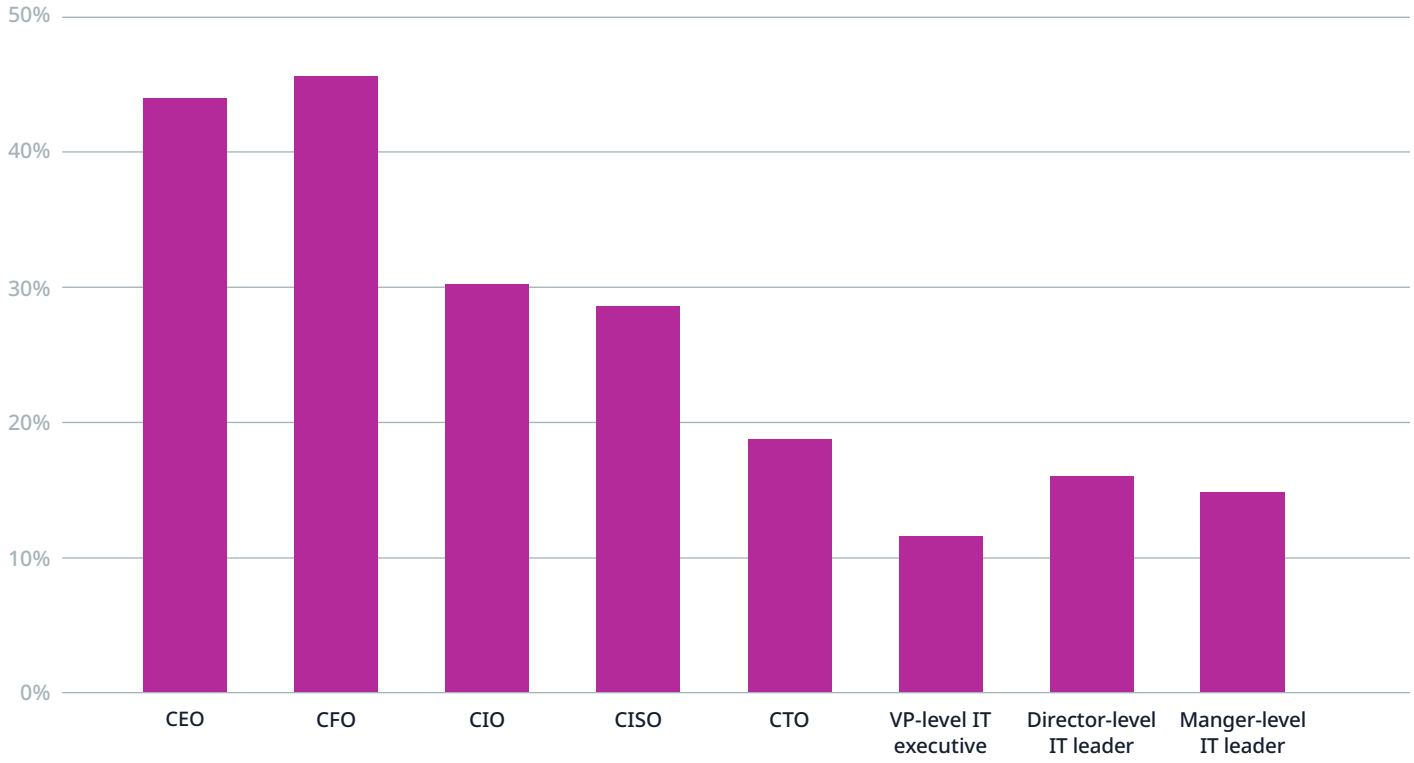
Key takeaway: Cybersecurity product decisions have the attention of the C-level in all sizes of organizations. CISOs, CIOs, and CTOs have the most involvement in cybersecurity purchase decisions at large enterprises. In smaller organizations that may not have a C-level IT role in the company, the CEOs and CFOs are stepping in to play a key part in purchase decisions.

What's interesting to note is that in the previous section of the report, Director and Manager level IT leaders were the most common decision makers for IT product purchases overall at companies of all sizes. However, when it comes to cybersecurity purchases, the C-level is much more involved.

Common Decision Makers: Cybersecurity Buyers

Those respondents who had most recently purchased a cybersecurity product were far more likely to report that the CEO/CFO were common decision makers.

Who are the most common decision makers for new cybersecurity product purchases in your organization? Select up to three.



Key takeaway: Don't underestimate the importance of influencing C-level executives, including the CEO and CFO, if you are marketing and selling a cybersecurity product. Understand their main goals, priorities, and questions they may have about evaluating or purchasing a new cybersecurity product, and build targeted content assets to address those directly.

Part 5: Additional Insights from TechnologyAdvice Data

In addition to the survey findings, we also analyzed the most recent website traffic and audience engagement patterns across TechnologyAdvice's flagship tech media sites and product review pages including TechRepublic, eSecurity Planet, eWeek, TechnologyAdvice.com, and Datamation.

The goal of this analysis was to identify new insights from the actual research behaviors of IT technology buyers and to compare those to what they self-reported in the survey-based questions.

Below are some key findings and insights from this data analysis.

BOFU Research Engagement by Category

The table below highlights the top 10 IT product categories that saw the most traffic and engagement to bottom-of-funnel website pages such as product reviews and vendor comparisons during the first half of 2024.

1.	Cybersecurity Software
2.	Business Intelligence & Analytics
3.	API Management Software
4.	Vulnerability Management Software
5.	Managed Service Provider (MSP) Software
6.	AI Software
7.	Next-Gen Firewall (NGFW) Software
8.	Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR)
9.	Network Access Control (NAC) Software
10.	Cloud Backup & Storage Software

Cybersecurity software saw the highest engagement of any IT product review category in the first half of 2024, followed by business intelligence, API management, vulnerability management, and AI software.

Key Takeaway: While IT professionals researched products in more than 100 different IT solution categories, they most frequently read product reviews and comparisons within cybersecurity, business intelligence, API management, AI software, and networking related categories. It's interesting to note the prominent placement of the AI software category given how new it is, reinforcing the strong interest in AI technology from the IT professionals.

BOFU Research Engagement by Industry

The table below illustrates how the total engagements in product reviews and comparisons broke down by industry during the first half of 2024.

1.	Business Services
2.	Manufacturing
3.	Software
4.	Finance
5.	Retail
6.	Government
7.	Hospitals & Physicians Clinics
8.	Hospitality
9.	Organizations
10.	Consumer Services

Key takeaway: When it comes to researching IT product reviews and vendor comparisons and alternatives, companies in the business services, manufacturing, software, and finance industries were the most active in the first half of 2024. If your business targets customers within these industries, ensure you're prioritizing product reviews and related information as part of your marketing strategy!

Most Popular IT Topic Categories

In addition to the above analysis of engagements in BOFU research content, we analyzed how many pageviews there were for more top-of-funnel (TOFU) articles in different IT-specific categories across the TechnologyAdvice media portfolio. The top IT topic categories, based on total pageviews during the first half of 2024, were as follows:

Global Audience (ALL):

1. IT Systems Management
2. Artificial Intelligence
3. Cybersecurity
4. Software Development
5. Analytics
6. Networking
7. Business Intelligence
8. Cloud Infrastructure

EMEA Audiences:

1. IT Systems Management
2. Artificial Intelligence
3. Cybersecurity
4. Software Development
5. Analytics
6. Networking
7. Storage or Data Centers
8. Business Intelligence

North America & Latin America Audiences:

1. IT Systems Management
2. Artificial Intelligence
3. Cybersecurity
4. Software Development
5. Cloud Infrastructure
6. Networking
7. Business Intelligence
8. Analytics

APAC Audiences:

1. IT Systems Management
2. Artificial Intelligence
3. Cybersecurity
4. Software Development
5. Business Intelligence
6. Storage or Data Centers
7. Analytics
8. Cloud Infrastructure

Key takeaways: Consistent with the findings in our IT Buyer survey, Cybersecurity, AI, and Network Infrastructure are clear priorities for IT organizations in 2024.

After the top four categories, priorities shifted for readers in different regions. Cloud Infrastructure, Networking, and BI were the next most popular topics in the Americas while readers in EMEA prioritized Analytics, Networking, and Storage. Meanwhile, Business Intelligence was the next most popular topic for readers in Asia-Pacific followed by Storage and Analytics.

In addition to having a high volume of engagement, AI stood out as having the highest number of pageviews per article, reinforcing that AI continues to be a very hot topic for IT professionals.

Key Findings

Key Finding #1:

Cybersecurity, AI Adoption, and Network Infrastructure top the list of current challenges and priorities for IT organizations.

When asked about the current challenges and future priorities for their IT organization, respondents ranked cybersecurity, AI technology adoption, and network infrastructure as their top considerations, with respondents from large enterprises also highlighting cost efficiencies as a key priority.

Cybersecurity software saw the highest engagement of any IT product review category in the first half of 2024 while IT professionals prioritized reading articles about AI, IT systems management, and cybersecurity across the TechnologyAdvice portfolio of websites.

Recommendations for Technology Providers:

Align your marketing programs with these top priorities for IT organizations. Invest in programs that will help you build brand authority in key categories like cybersecurity, AI, cloud infrastructure, and IT systems management. Ensure you are well represented on product review sites for these categories and look for opportunities to influence buying behaviors of IT decision makers who are actively researching solutions in these areas.

Key Finding #2:

Buying teams have a large number of stakeholders with significant C-level involvement in purchase decisions, including the CEO and CFO.

Large decision-making groups continue to be the reality for most organizations, with 86% of respondents indicating 3+ stakeholders on their decision committees for technology product purchases and 43% reporting 6+ stakeholders. In large enterprises, this number jumped to more than 60% reporting 6+ stakeholders and *nearly 30% reporting 10+ stakeholders*.

Meanwhile, C-level executives including the CEO and CFO are frequently involved in purchase decisions. 19% of all respondents indicated that both the CEO and CFO are *highly involved* in new IT and cybersecurity product purchases. For those companies who had most recently purchased a cybersecurity product within their IT group, this number jumped to 31% stating the CEO was highly involved and 37% stating the CFO was highly involved.

Recommendations for Technology Providers:

Review your recent customer wins to better understand the different stakeholders involved and their unique challenges and perspectives. Leverage these insights to identify new ways to engage, educate, and influence different stakeholders within your target accounts, including those within and outside of the IT organization. Create targeted content and thought leadership for different roles (including the CFO and CEO) that directly address the problems those individuals are trying to solve, concerns they may have, and questions they are commonly trying to answer when evaluating solutions in your category. If required, find new marketing channels to reach these different audiences with targeted messaging as a way to build brand affinity and influence them throughout the buying journey.

Key Finding #3:

Longer buying cycles with many sources of information create more complex buying journeys for marketers to manage.

58% of respondents indicated that the research, evaluation, and vendor selection process took 3+ months for recent IT product or service purchases. This jumped to 83% for respondents at enterprise companies with 1000+ employees.

While customer case studies, independent research by analysts and experts, and product reviews topped the list of go-to information sources during the research and evaluation process, it was clear that IT buyers are looking at *many* different information sources and content formats when researching and evaluating new products.

Recommendations for Technology Providers:

Ensure you're developing a cross-channel content, thought leadership, and demand generation strategy that aligns with the changing expectations of today's B2B buyers. Invest in credible and impactful customer stories, case studies, product reviews, vendor comparisons, and educational content that offers validation from clients, analysts, industry experts, and trusted 3rd party brands. Be mindful that buying journeys may take 6+ months, particularly if you're marketing to large enterprises, and invest in programs that help you build brand relationships throughout the research process and capture demand from late-stage buyers.

Key Finding #4:

Cybersecurity will continue to be a priority as concerns over Malware, Ransomware, and DDOS remain prevalent.

With *new cybersecurity threats* topping the list of challenges faced by IT organizations in 2024, it's no surprise that cybersecurity was the most frequently purchased product type for all sizes of business over the last year, while 78% of companies are still planning to increase or significantly increase investments in this area over the next 12 months.

The top security threats being prioritized by IT organizations include malware, ransomware, and data theft with large enterprises also prioritizing DDOS, infrastructure attacks, and zero-day exploits.

Recommendations for Technology Providers:

If relevant to your business, prioritize building brand authority and generating demand for cybersecurity solutions in the year ahead. Consider investing in timely content, thought leadership, 3rd party validation, and new marketing channels that help you stay top of mind with cybersecurity decision makers. Prioritize hot topics like malware, ransomware, data theft, and protection from DDOS attacks in your marketing messages to align with the top security concerns of today's IT professionals.

Key Finding #5:

Companies in Business Services, Manufacturing, Software, and Finance are most actively researching IT product reviews and comparisons.

When it comes to researching IT product reviews and vendor comparisons/alternatives, companies in the business services, manufacturing, software, and finance industries were the most active in the first half of 2024.

While individuals at these companies researched products in more than 100 different IT solution categories, they most frequently read product reviews within the cybersecurity, business intelligence, API management, AI software, cloud storage, next gen firewalls, and network access control solution categories.

Recommendations for Technology Providers:

If you target companies in the Software, Finance, Manufacturing, and/or Business Services markets, be sure to have a strong presence on 3rd party product review sites such as TechnologyAdvice.com. *Especially* if you sell cybersecurity, business intelligence, API management, AI software, cloud storage, firewall, or NAC solutions!

About TechnologyAdvice

TechnologyAdvice connects B2B technology buyers around the world with leading technology providers. We help our customers build their brands and generate demand with technology buyers who are actively researching new products and services across our network of more than 50 tech media brands, product review sites, tech newsletters, and social media channels. With a global editorial team and a captive audience of 100M+ business professionals, we help you influence and convert key accounts on the tech media sites they already trust.

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