

The CIO's Guide to Low Code

Beyond the Developer Shortage



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Faster innovation during the talent crunch

CIOs face a growing gap: the demand for digital solutions is rapidly increasing, but developers are scarce. By 2028, businesses will need to build **one billion** new logical applications to meet goals like enhanced customer experiences, process automation and business transformation.¹ And by 2026, **40%** of net-new applications will be intelligent apps that incorporate AI to help deliver on those priorities.² But who will build them? **Sixty-eight percent** of workers already struggle with their workload,³ and **61%** of engineering leaders say they have a moderate to major concern about not having enough talent to fill roles.³ The developer shortage is more than just an obstacle – it's forcing organisations to fundamentally reshape how they approach transformation.

Fortunately, a solution is available to help organisations meet this challenge. AI-powered low-code platforms can transform how organisations build software,

enabling teams to create custom applications without extensive coding expertise.

These low-code platforms address the talent shortage in two key ways. First, they dramatically accelerate development speed, letting you build applications in days instead of months. Faster development reduces both costs and technical debt, while making maintenance easier. Second, they create a bridge between technical and non-technical teams. Business users understand the problems that need solving. Developers know how to build solutions. Low-code tools bring them together, with a common language powered by AI.

This guide shows how low-code platforms can meet the IT talent shortage and accelerate digital transformation – helping you innovate at the pace your business demands.

USD 5.5T

Projected global economic impact of the IT talent shortage through 2026⁴

02

Breaking down development barriers

Low-code platforms combine visual tools, drag-and-drop functionality and AI assistance to make development accessible to more people. They let employees turn business ideas into deployable solutions without requiring extensive coding.

However, these platforms are sometimes met with scepticism, dismissed as useful only for simple applications and unsuitable for enterprise needs. In reality, today's low-code solutions are driving innovation, modernising legacy systems and powering secure, scalable and mission-critical software – faster than ever.

Let's break down the biggest misconceptions:

'Low code isn't enterprise-ready'

Reality: 87% of CIOs say low code helps modernise legacy applications.⁵ Modern low-code platforms offer robust security, scalability and governance features that support enterprise standards.

'It's just for simple apps'

Reality: Organisations are building custom applications that integrate with core systems entirely with low-code tools. When using these platforms, 86% of CIOs report more accurate data insights through tailored solutions that fit their exact needs.⁵

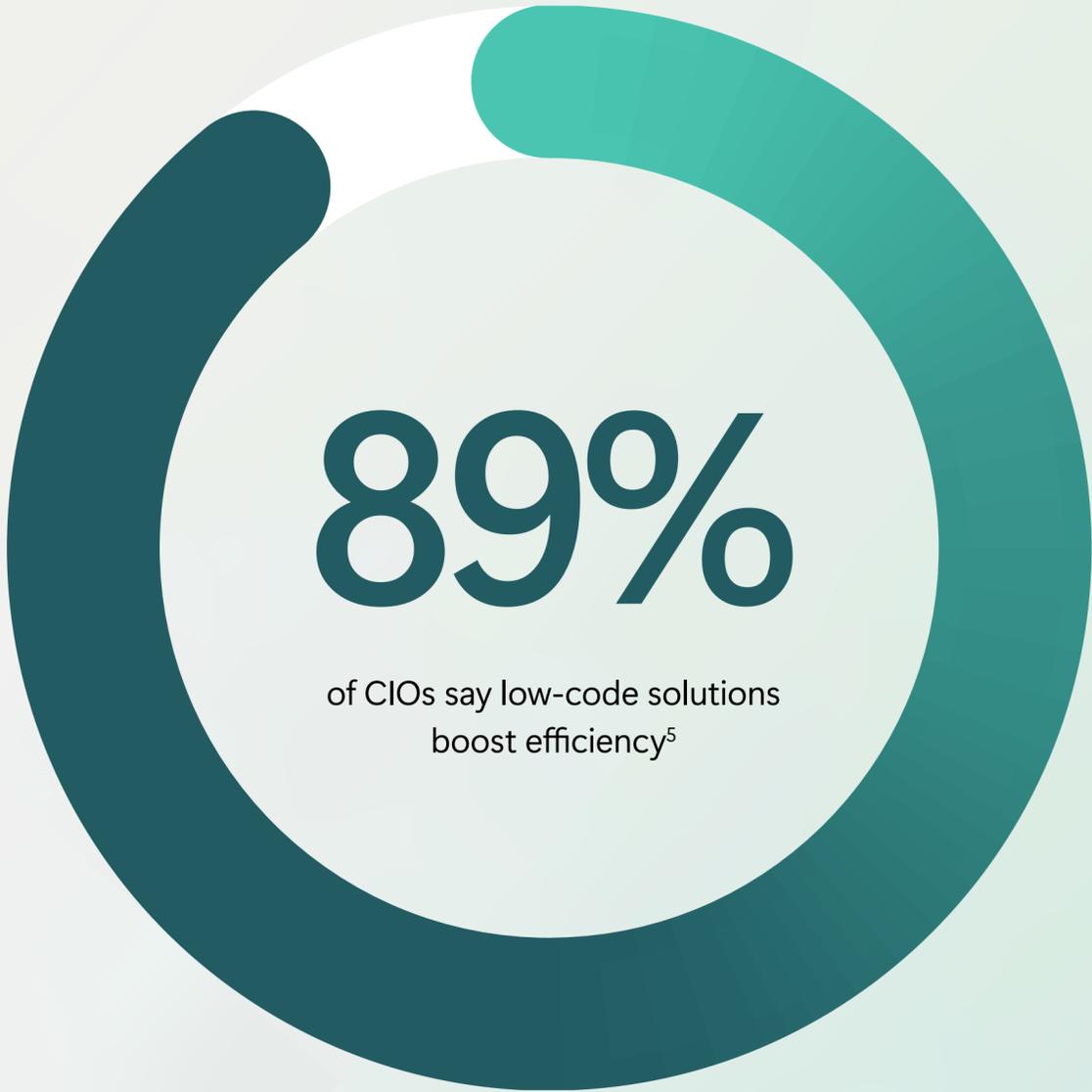
'Professional developers won't use it'

Reality: By 2028, 60% of software development organisations will adopt low code as their primary platform.⁶ Why? Because these tools automate routine tasks so developers can focus on more complex challenges.

03

Accelerating development to bridge the talent gap

The IT talent shortage requires new ways of working, and speed is key in closing the gap. Traditional development cycles can require months to take solutions from concept to deployment, and can't keep up with the growing need for digital solutions. Low-code platforms solve this by enabling faster development with fewer resources. Teams can build working prototypes in days – or even hours – delivering results without overreliance on scarce IT talent.



89%

of CIOs say low-code solutions
boost efficiency⁵



Low-code platforms help organisations:

- ✓ Empower business users to develop solutions tailored to their needs
- ✓ Reduce the workload on IT teams by simplifying development
- ✓ Seamlessly integrate new applications with existing systems
- ✓ Adapt and scale applications as business needs evolve

With faster, more inclusive development processes, low-code platforms increase the impact of available talent to help organisations meet their innovation goals.

04

Scaling low code

Scalability is the true power of low code – even amidst the IT talent shortage. As your organisation grows and evolves, your solutions can grow with you. It's not just about handling more users or data; it's about scaling innovation itself, while empowering your organisation's workforce.

Consider how these scaling dimensions address the talent gap:



Vertical

Add additional capabilities to existing applications without specialised coding expertise



Horizontal

Expand solutions across departments and processes so non-technical teams can create applications that IT teams can refine and support



Innovation

Invite more business users to create applications, reducing the demand on IT professionals while accelerating solution delivery



Impact

Increase the reach and effectiveness of digital transformation efforts without additional technical hires

By deploying a low-code platform, organisations can establish a scalable foundation that mitigates the impact of the IT talent shortage. Leveraging the platform's capabilities ensures sustainable growth, so increasingly sophisticated solutions can be deployed as needs evolve.



05

AI innovation with Microsoft Copilot Studio

Imagine having an unlimited team of AI-powered experts that know your business inside and out, work 24/7 and can be deployed wherever you need them. That's what Copilot Studio delivers. It's a low-code platform for building AI agents that can help tackle the developer talent shortage head-on, letting you build and deploy highly capable AI agents without extensive coding. These agents can understand context, take meaningful action and provide insights to help continuously enhance and refine business operations.



How Copilot Studio addresses the talent shortage:

Build without coding

Empower non-technical users to design sophisticated AI agents using natural language and visual tools

Connect everything

Choose from 1,500+ prebuilt connectors to popular data sources and apps for broader collaboration that reduces the need for custom development

Deploy anywhere

Push to web, mobile and messaging platforms with a single click, eliminating complex deployment processes

Enterprise ready

Ensure secure, compliant and scalable solutions that meet your requirements

Whether modernising customer service, streamlining IT support or enhancing employee experiences, Copilot Studio provides the foundation for intelligent automation that improves your business processes.

06

Bringing it all together

Microsoft Power Platform is an all-in-one low-code solution that helps organisations meet the developer shortage and achieve transformation. At its core are **Power Apps** for building applications, **Power Automate** for streamlining workflows, **Power BI** for data insights and **Power Pages** for creating business websites. **Copilot Studio** adds an additional layer of intelligence to the platform by enabling organisations to create AI agents that automate and execute business processes, working alongside employees or independently, to transform how work gets done.

Power Platform is a complete workshop for innovation – where professional developers and business experts work side-by-side to build new solutions. It's not just another development environment; it's where your organisation's knowledge meets transformational technology.'



Forrester Total Economic Impact™ studies reveal significant benefits for organisations:

USD 43.6M

in development costs avoided through Power Platform implementation⁷

50%

reduction in professional developer app development time with Microsoft Power Apps⁸

25%

time savings for employees using solutions built in Power Platform⁷

224%

return on investment⁷

Results are based on a composite organisation with 30,000 employees and an annual revenue of USD 10 billion, over a three-year period.

As the pace of change continues increasing, Power Platform offers a comprehensive and scalable solution that bridges the talent gap and empowers organisations to lead with innovation.

07

Moving forward with confidence

Digital transformation isn't just about deploying new technology – it's about reimagining how your organisation gets work done. With Copilot Studio and Power Platform, organisations can build a culture of innovation while ensuring robust security and addressing challenges like the developer shortage.

Start your journey by establishing a Centre of Excellence (CoE) as your organisation's transformation hub. The CoE brings together business experts and IT professionals to drive adoption, share knowledge and maintain governance. It's more than just a control centre – it's an enablement engine that helps create a culture of excellence by fostering innovation and efficiency.

Power Platform's Managed Environments feature provides the practical foundation your CoE needs. It simplifies how you govern Power Platform development, offering a structured yet flexible approach to oversight. When makers access development portals, they're automatically directed to personal development spaces, ensuring everyone has a secure area to build and experiment. This creates a framework where innovation can flourish within clear boundaries, making governance feel less like a gate and more like a guide.

Key features of Managed Environments:

- ✓ Personal developer environments that isolate each user's work, preventing accidental access or changes by others
- ✓ Pre-configured security settings and policies that reduce the IT team's need to manually manage permissions and controls
- ✓ Rich analytics and reporting tools that give administrators clear visibility into how solutions are being built and used across the organisation
- ✓ Streamlined environment management capabilities that help your CoE maintain standards while supporting maker creativity

To drive continuous improvement, establish regular checkpoints to:

- ✓ Document roles, responsibilities and named assignments
- ✓ Collect and integrate early adopter feedback into best practices
- ✓ Showcase business user innovations and ideas
- ✓ Conduct platform governance reviews and action outcomes
- ✓ Review solution architecture to ensure resilience
- ✓ Define reliability targets and track progress against them

Continuing success

Success in digital transformation is about more than the number of apps you build or automations you create. It's about how these solutions change the way work gets done. By combining the creative energy of employees with the secure governance of Managed Environments, you create opportunities to measure real, meaningful change.

Your transformation journey requires constant refinement. Through regular assessments you can see what works best for your organisation and adapt your approach accordingly. This continuous improvement mindset will help you get the most out of your low-code investment while ensuring solutions keep pace with evolving business needs. While platform metrics tell part of the story, the real measure of success lies in how your solutions enhance daily work and accelerate business impact.

With Managed Environments providing guardrails, and a CoE driving adoption, you can confidently expand development capacity without compromising security or quality. This lets you innovate faster while maintaining the control your organisation needs.

08

Getting started

The technology landscape continues to rapidly evolve. Talent shortages and digital demands are creating both challenges and opportunities. With Power Platform and Copilot Studio, you can help developers and business teams innovate faster, while maintaining enterprise control. The path to innovation starts today.

¹ IDC, '1 Billion New Logical Applications: More Background.' Doc #US51953724, April 2024.

² IDC, 'IDC FutureScape: Worldwide Developer and DevOps 2024 Predictions.' Doc #US50136023, October 2023.

³ 'AI at Work is Here. Now comes the Hard Part.' Microsoft Work Trend Index, May 8, 2024. <https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/ai-at-work-is-here-now-comes-the-hard-part>.

⁴ 'IT Skills Shortage Expected to Impact Nine out of Ten Organisations by 2026 with a Cost of USD 5.5 Trillion in Delays, Quality Issues and Revenue Loss, According to IDC.' IDC, May 14, 2024. <https://www.idc.com/getdoc.jsp?containerId=prUS52128824>.

⁵ 'Low-code: One of the best investments for IT departments in 2023.' Microsoft Power Platform Blog, April 13, 2023. <https://www.microsoft.com/power-platform/blog/2023/04/13/low-code-signals-2023/>.

⁶ '2024 Gartner Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Low-Code Application Platforms', Oleksandr Matvitsky, Kyle Davis, Akash Jain, 16 October 2024. <https://www.gartner.com/doc/reprints?id=1-2J40TC35&ct=241017&st=sb>.

⁷ 'The Total Economic Impact™ of Microsoft Power Platform', a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting, July 2024. <https://tef.forrester.com/go/Microsoft/PowerPlatform2024/>.

⁸ 'The Total Economic Impact™ of Microsoft Power Apps', a commissioned study conducted by Forrester Consulting, July 2024. <https://tef.forrester.com/go/microsoft/powerappstei/>.



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