

## VIEWPOINT



### Ben Jones Chief Technology Officer

Ben Jones has been Group CTO at GfK for five years.

He is a passionate customer- and transformation-focused technology leader with broad industry experience across media and information, financial services, and retail sectors, founded upon learning to program at an early age on a Spectrum, Commodore, and BBC Electron.



Sponsored Content



## For True Digital Transformation, Culture and Collaboration are Key

Global Market Research leader GfK has successfully delivered a root and branch digital transformation journey that has seen the company repositioned as a technology and data leader. For over 85 years GfK has provided global brands such as Samsung, Apple, Sony, and Haier with critical consumer and market insights to support key business decisions.

Under the guidance of Chief Technology Officer Ben Jones, the company has put technology at the heart of the business and its culture by forging strong cross-functional collaboration and innovation. Jones talks about GfK's journey, successes, and where the business is headed.

### How would you summarize GfK's digital transformation journey so far?

Digital transformation is not simply about the tech function. I always say (tongue in cheek) that tech is the easy bit. We already get it. Transforming the rest of the business is what takes time but is where the value is realized. We always were a technology/data business. It's in our DNA – we just forgot that for a while. You have to review/re-invent all of it, including the organization design and co-developing a technology strategy aligned with the business. Now initiatives we started in tech such as our GfK University or our annual conference we.Create, have been replicated in the broader business.

**What are some successes you and your team have achieved?** The role of the CTO is to balance cost efficiency, risk, and innovation to deliver profitable and sustainable bottom- and top-line growth. We have reduced the annual run costs of technology by over 30% whilst also increasing our IT Service Management Satisfaction rating year on year. We also made a significant investment in a multi-year program to increase our information security maturity and grow our

team from single figures to over 30 – I believe information security is the biggest risk a CIO currently faces and indeed one of the biggest corporate risks any company faces. Pre COVID-19 we had already invested in a global rollout of Office 365, Workday (HR), and Salesforce (CRM), which enabled us to successfully switch 70+ offices to fully remote working in under a week with little to no business interruption. We also have hired 300 new full-time employees and launched a new platform – GfK Newron.

### How has culture played a part?

Culture-wise, GfK wasn't in a good place from a tech point of view and heads were low. My role is to be a champion for technology and its place in the company. But that means understanding and contributing to our multi-year business strategy and then having shared goals (and measures) with the other functions which I then make public. I believe leadership is about authenticity and trust. The key to successful digital transformation is bringing together great, diverse, cross-functional teams and seizing opportunities/solving problems together.

To learn more about GfK, visit [gfk.com](https://www.gfk.com).