

CEO/ The
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Institute

TOP 5 CEO ISSUES

MAY 2026

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01

AI Adoption, Automation & Business Model Impact

AI continues to be one of the most prominent issues being discussed by CEOs, with conversations shifting from general interest to practical implementation. Members are exploring how AI can improve productivity, streamline processes, reshape roles and support growth. At the same time, CEOs are concerned about selecting the right tools, managing security risks and understanding how AI may disrupt existing business models.



Federal Budget Implications

The federal budget, and the Victorian state budget, were a major topic, particularly around tax implications, government spending and the impact of policy decisions on business owners. CEOs raised concerns about trusts, CGT, negative gearing, inflation and broader government intervention. Many are seeking clearer advice from accountants, advisers and peers to understand how to respond.

Growth, Sales Pipeline & Profitability Pressure

Growth remains a challenge, with CEOs discussing sales growth, business profitability, company earnings and how to maintain momentum in a more difficult market. Some businesses are considering capital allocation, longer-term opportunities and new growth pathways despite short-term pressure. The focus is on finding disciplined, sustainable growth rather than pursuing expansion at any cost.



Productivity, Efficiency and Process Improvement

Productivity was raised as a major concern yet again, particularly in relation to declining labour productivity, team performance and the need to improve business processes. CEOs are looking more closely at workflow mapping, operational efficiency and how AI can support productivity gains. The discussion suggests many leaders are seeking practical ways to get more value from their existing people, systems and resources.

05

Leadership Capacity, Focus & Senior Team Pressure

CEOs are feeling the pressure of a volatile operating environment, with some reports highlighting stress across senior teams, competing priorities and the challenge of staying focused. Members discussed the importance of keeping strategic priorities visible while managing day-to-day demands. This reflects a broader need for stronger leadership rhythms, clearer priorities and better support for executive teams.



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