Navigating AI in B2B Growth

AI Readiness Report 2025-2026

How Marketing and Sales Leaders Are Turning 2025 Insights into 2026 Action

An annual benchmark on how B2B marketing and sales leaders are advancing AI to drive measurable growth in 2026 and beyond.

STUDIO NORTH

MARKETLAUNCHER

Produced in partnership by StudioNorth and MarketLauncher, helping growth leaders connect human imagination with intelligent systems to move what matters, faster.

Forward

The Human Change Perspective

Every organization wants to be more intelligent. Few are ready for what that really means.

The promise of AI is not just speed or efficiency. It is the opportunity to reshape how people think, decide, and work together. We are learning that this kind of shift is a combination of technology and trust. And it all begins with culture.

The data in this report reinforces a truth we see every day in organizations navigating change: technology adoption follows human belief. Teams that feel included, empowered, and supported in the AI journey adopt faster and sustain success longer. When change is imposed, resistance grows. When change is co-created, momentum takes root. In practice, team culture becomes a cap on an organization's intelligence potential.

What I find most encouraging about this benchmark is how it balances the rational and the relational. It measures performance, but it also points to perception. This benchmark reveals how leaders are confronting barriers that are not about budgets or systems; they are about people. The human factors are where meaningful transformation either accelerates or stalls.

If 2025 was the year of experimentation, 2026 will be the year of orchestration. The next phase of AI maturity will require organizations to integrate uniquely human skills, business ethics, and technical precision into a continuous system of learning.

Research like this matters. It gives us a shared language for that work. It reminds us that no industry is immune to the learning process; but every industry is capable of progress. It helps us see that transformation is not a straight line, it is a practice.

The leaders who succeed in this next chapter will not simply implement AI. They will build cultures where people are valued and trusted first, because without that foundation, no tool - including AI - will ever be fully trusted. In doing so, they will create workplaces where imagination, technology, and co-intelligence move forward together.

Matt Wright
Change Management and
Human Factors Expert

About this Report

The AI Readiness Report 2025-2026 is StudioNorth and MarketLauncher's benchmark study on how marketing and sales teams are building the next generation of growth.

This isn't another trends report. It's a look at how human imagination and intelligent systems work together, revealing the barriers, breakthroughs, and behaviors shaping modern revenue engines.

This study represents our shared commitment to helping growth leaders see change clearly, move faster, and lead with confidence.

Introduction

Why We Created This Benchmark

At StudioNorth and MarketLauncher, we have seen AI move from the edges of marketing and sales strategy to its core. Clients across industries have asked us to help them stand up AI practices, embed intelligence into research workflows, and train teams to trust new systems.

Again and again, they asked the same question: "How does our progress compare?"

We launched this benchmark to answer that question with evidence, not anecdotes.

By hearing directly from more than **60 marketing and sales leaders** across industries, we set out to capture a clear, data-backed picture of how AI is being deployed, what is working, what is not, and where confidence gaps remain.

This report blends quantitative data with qualitative insight from **15 in-depth executive interviews.**

Together, StudioNorth and MarketLauncher bring strategy, storytelling, and research rigor that reveal patterns at scale and stories that matter.

AI in B2B is equal parts promise and pressure. This report exists to help leaders navigate both.

> " **We needed a way to measure maturity, not just momentum.**
>
> SVP Marketing
> Global Technology Company "

Executive Summary

Built on insights from 2025. Designed for leaders shaping 2026.

88% **21%**

88% of B2B leaders say AI is now part of their marketing strategy, but only 21% feel very confident they are using it effectively.

Across B2B organizations, AI is no longer the experiment. It's the environment. What began as isolated pilots has become a system for smarter, faster growth. Yet adoption still depends on two fundamentals: human confidence and organizational alignment.

AI is evolving within organizations from experiment to expectation. Yet beneath the optimism, our 2025 Benchmark reveals that most organizations are still learning to trust AI as much as they use it.

The **2025 Readiness Report** captures the voices of 60+ marketing and sales leaders across **technology**, **healthcare**, **financial services**, **manufacturing**, **professional services**, **public sector** (education and government), and other (energy, transportation, and retail).

Their collective story points to a clear shift: AI is moving from discovery to deployment. Leaders are applying it less to learn about customers and more to empower teams, simplify operations, and accelerate decisions.

60+
Marketing and Sales Leaders

Three patterns define the landscape ahead:

Efficiency
is the new enabler of insight.

Growth teams are using AI to reclaim time and attention for higher-value strategy.
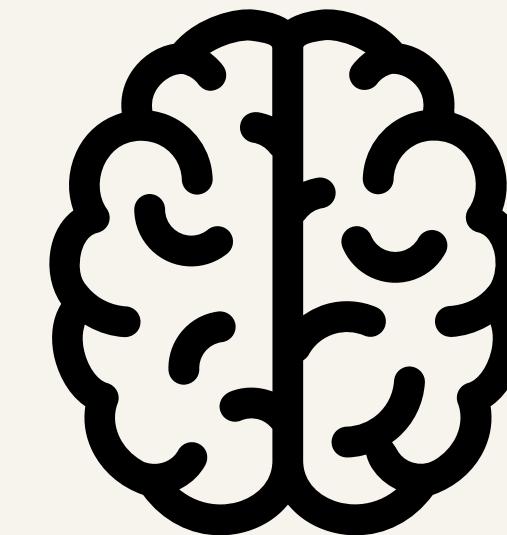
Confidence
is emerging as the real readiness metric.

Skills matter, but belief in human-plus-machine collaboration matters more.

Alignment
drives acceleration.

When marketing and sales share systems, language, and outcomes, AI's impact multiplies.

This report benchmarks where organizations stand today, and where momentum will come from next.

STUDIO NORTH

+ MARKETLAUNCHER

The Five Stages of AI Maturity

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

From exploration to acceleration, AI maturity is not about technology speed. It's about human confidence catching up to capability.

Exploration

AI begins with curiosity. Most teams start by exploring what's possible before defining what's valuable.

27%

of respondents said their organization is still in early learning or pilot phases of AI adoption.

Experimentation

Experimentation builds belief. Leaders test in small ways to learn in real ones.

43%

said they're actively testing AI tools in marketing or sales workflows.

Integration

AI moves from pilot to process. Integration signals progress toward sustained impact.

52%

reported AI is now part of at least one key workflow, such as content creation or predictive analytics.

Confidence

Confidence is the new readiness metric. Belief drives behavior, and behavior builds maturity.

55%

of leaders described themselves as confident but still learning in their AI approach.

Acceleration

Acceleration happens when insight turns into advantage. This is where AI moves growth forward.

47%

said they're using AI for predictive analytics or other performance-driving applications.

" "

Teams that treat AI as a journey, not a project, move faster and build stronger foundations.

Research Analysis
StudioNorth + MarketLauncher

Two Lenses of Growth Intelligence

Culture of Readiness

Systems of Enablement
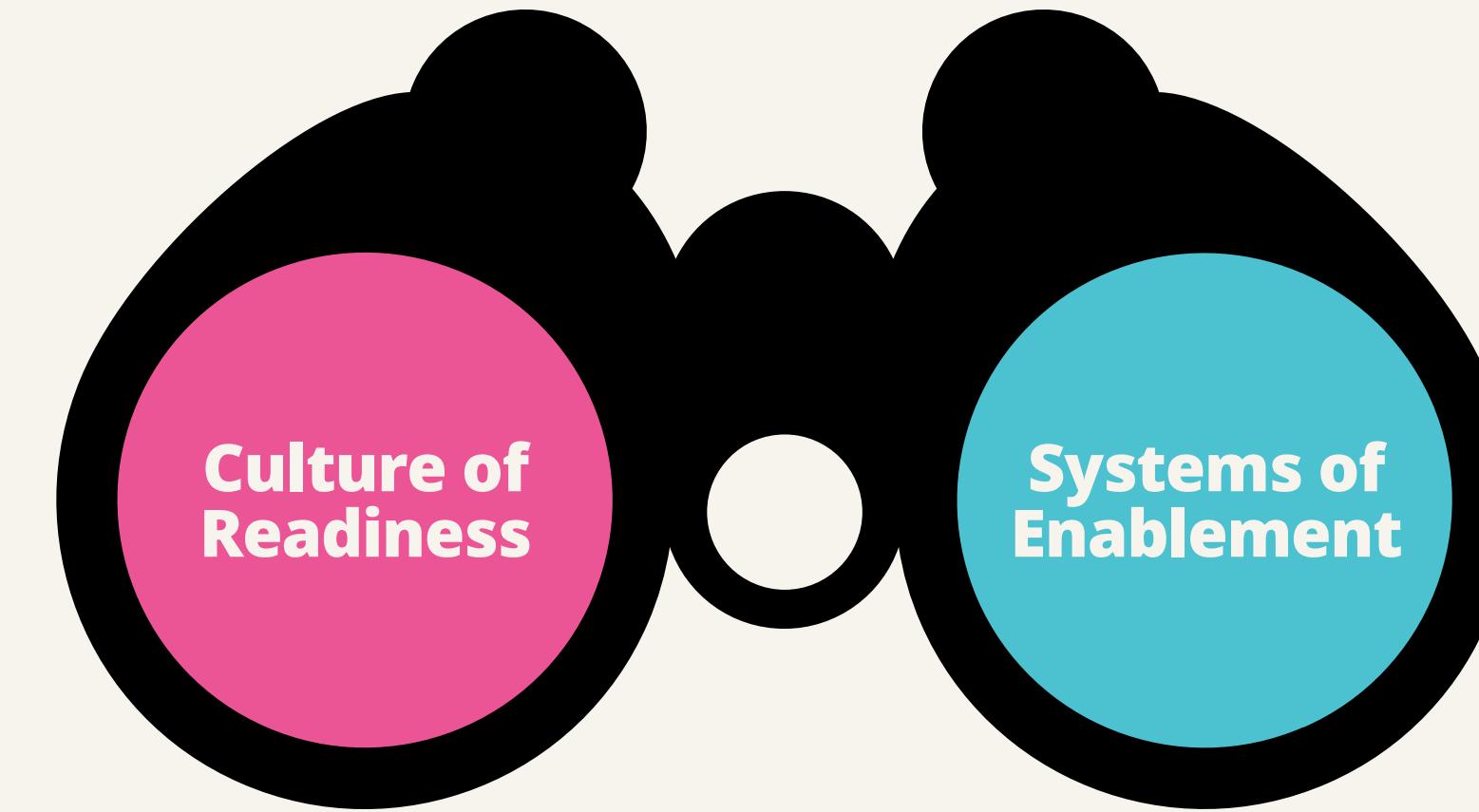
Lens 1: Growth Readiness
Building Confidence in Change

"*People assume AI replaces jobs, but I see it on a continuum. The real challenge is helping teams move from augmentation to true adoption.*"
— CEO, Large Healthcare System

"*We're all learning in real time. The organizations that admit that move faster than the ones pretending to have a playbook.*"
— CMO, Mid-Market Manufacturing Enterprise

"*It's about changing minds. We're teaching teams to ask: what's the first step where AI can take me further, faster?*"
— CMO, Global Professional Services Firm

"*Our biggest challenge isn't the technology. It's helping people trust what it can do.*"
— VP Marketing, Large Healthcare System

Lens 2: Marketing & Sales Enablement
Connecting Creativity and Conversion

"*When marketing and sales share the same data, the conversation changes. AI gives us a common language.*"
— VP Sales Enablement, Mid-Market Technology Company

"*We used to plan campaigns and hand them over. Now, AI keeps the work connected from message to meeting.*"
— Head of Demand Generation, Large Financial Services Firm

"*Marketing and sales are two parts of the same funnel. AI helps us design campaigns and handoffs as one connected system.*"
— CMO, Global Professional Services Firm

"*We're finally connecting real-time sales engagement with long-running ABM programs. AI makes execution more consistent across the funnel.*"
— Director of Product Marketing, Cybersecurity Software Company

StudioNorth + MarketLauncher Perspective

The data confirms what both strategy and research have revealed in the field: progress with AI is uneven, but purpose is universal. The organizations moving fastest are those investing equally in people and process, pairing imagination with intelligence to create measurable growth momentum.

Across industries, the center of gravity is shifting.

Leaders are moving from exploring AI for insight to applying it for efficiency and orchestration.

The story is no longer about what AI can reveal, but what it can release, time, focus, and creative energy.

As marketing and sales teams face tighter budgets and rising expectations, efficiency has become the new enabler of insight.

Key takeaways:

• Skills readiness is the universal barrier.

• Predictive analytics dominates as the top use case.

• Leaders across all sectors are focused on aligning people, process, and purpose.

Who We Heard From

These are the people responsible for turning AI from promise into performance.

Many of our in-depth interviews were conducted with senior executives at leading companies across financial services, healthcare, management consulting, and technology, offering a deeper window into how industry-leading organizations are approaching AI readiness.

Participants

- 41%
- 15%
- 21%
- 16%
- 7%
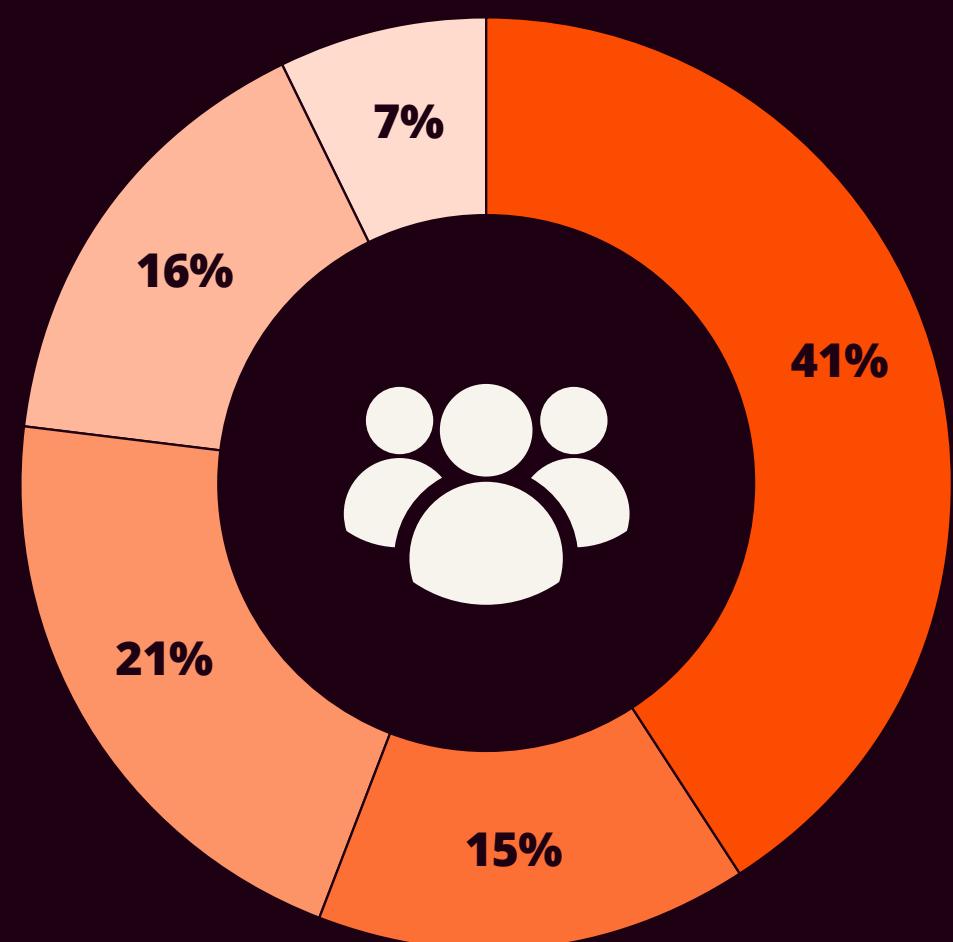
Legend:
- Director / Sr. Director
- CMO / C-Suite
- VP / SVP
- Sr. Manager
- Other (consultant, founder, advisor)

Industries

- 36%
- 26%
- 15%
- 7%
- 7%
- 5%
- 4%
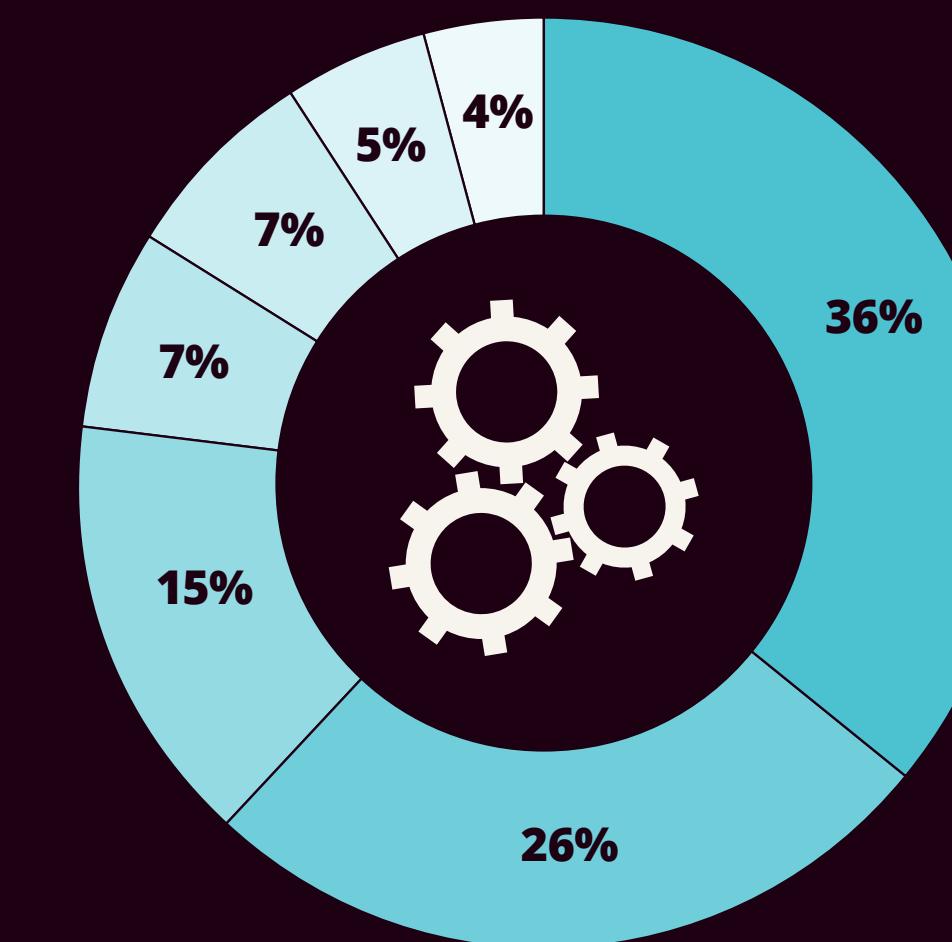
Legend:
- Technology
- Healthcare
- Professional Services
- Manufacturing
- Financial Services
- Public Sector / Education
- Other (Transportation / Retail / Energy)

Company Scale

- 30%
- 70%
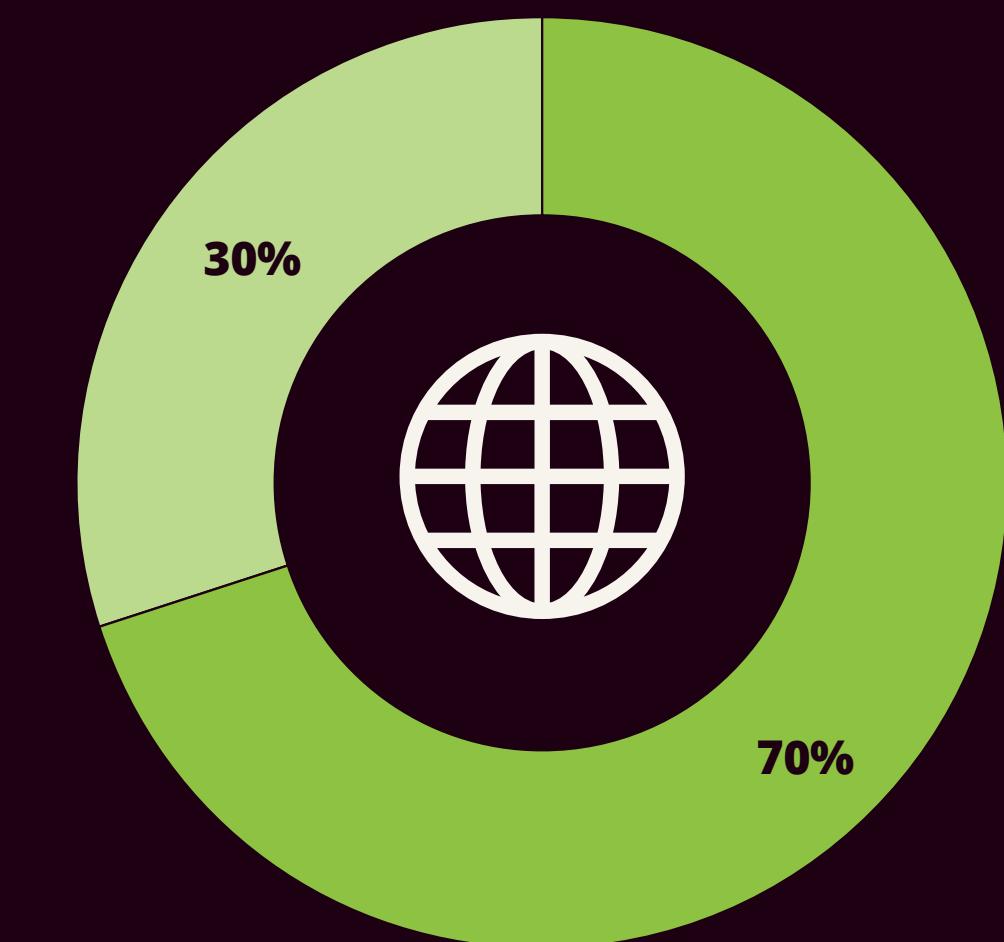
Legend:
- Enterprise (20% have global reach)
- Small Business

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

10 Surprising Patterns We Saw

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

Each data point revealed more than a shift. It showed where belief, behavior, and business reality meet. Together, these ten surprises capture what's really happening in B2B growth as AI takes root.

Here are ten signals that challenged our expectations about AI readiness in B2B growth.

1 Skills Beat Everything

68% of leaders said lack of skills is their biggest barrier to AI adoption.

Even in digitally advanced organizations, human readiness lags behind technical capability. Teams are enthusiastic but uncertain about how to apply what they've learned.

❝ *The barrier isn't access.
It's understanding.* ❞
— VP Sales, Mid-Market Technology Company

2 Budget is Not the Bad Guy

Only **14% of respondents** listed budget as a top challenge.

Healthcare remains the exception because of regulatory and governance costs. Across most industries, once AI delivers measurable value, investment follows naturally.

❝ *If the business sees value, the budget shows up.
That's never the blocker.* ❞
— Managing Director, Large Financial Services Firm

3 Insights Still Rule the Agenda

61% of respondents chose customer insights and personalization among their top AI goals.

AI is becoming less about automation and more about awareness. Growth leaders are using it to understand behavior, predict needs, and personalize engagement at scale.

❝ *AI doesn't replace our instincts.
It validates them.* ❞
— VP Marketing, Global Financial Services Enterprise

4 Confidence is the New KPI

55% of respondents described themselves as confident but still learning.

Confidence is now the truest measure of AI readiness. Belief is outpacing skill, which means the next phase of progress will depend on how well teams turn optimism into outcomes.

❝ *We're optimistic, but our process is still manual.
Confidence is ahead of capability.* ❞
— Managing Director, Large Financial Services Firm

5 Alignment Beats Ambition

Organizations that reported strong marketing and sales alignment also reported **20% higher satisfaction** with their AI results.

The teams growing fastest aren't the ones chasing the biggest ideas. They're the ones working from a shared system of truth.

❝ *When we connect our data, content, and timing, everything accelerates.* ❞
— Head of Sales Enablement, Mid-Market Technology Company

ROLLOVER ICON FOR MORE

10 Surprising Patterns We Saw

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

6 Visual Creation Is Quietly Rising

47% of respondents are using or exploring AI for visual creation.

Visual generation has gained traction across financial services and manufacturing, where brand consistency is becoming a measurable asset.

❝ *We've moved from words to visuals.
Our next frontier is consistency across AI tools.* ❞
— Creative Director, Large Financial Services Firm

7 Trust Is Earned, Not Engineered

Only 9% of respondents listed trust as a top barrier, yet in interviews, leaders still hesitated to delegate key workflows to AI.

❝ *We trust AI when we understand it.
Transparency builds belief.* ❞
— VP Operations, Mid-Market Manufacturing Company

8 Readiness Is a Shared Responsibility

Companies where both marketing and sales share ownership of AI readiness reported 30% greater confidence in implementation success.

❝ *We don't have an AI department.
We have AI expectations.* ❞
— CMO, Enterprise Technology Organization

9 Leadership Matters More Than Tools

Teams led by executives actively using AI reported 2X faster adoption than those led by non-users.

❝ *AI doesn't replace our instincts.
It validates them.* ❞
— VP Marketing, Global Financial Services Enterprise

10 Momentum Requires Meaning

72% of respondents said they use AI in at least one workflow, but fewer than half have a defined success metric.

❝ *We don't chase every tool.
We ask what problem it solves first.* ❞
— VP Growth, Mid-Market Manufacturing Company

Enterprise Voices Led This Research

70% of respondents in our quantitative study came from enterprise organizations.

While our qualitative interviews spanned multiple industries
and company sizes, enterprise leaders consistently reinforced two themes:

1. **AI adoption accelerates when executives model usage, and**

2. **Scale amplifies both the opportunity and the complexity of AI integration.**

These enterprise perspectives shape many of the trends across this report, particularly in readiness, alignment, and governance.

ROLLOVER ICON FOR MORE

Barriers to AI Implementation

Technology
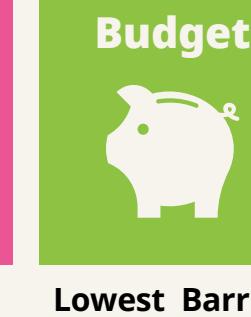
Skills — Top Barrier
Budget — Lowest Barrier

Healthcare
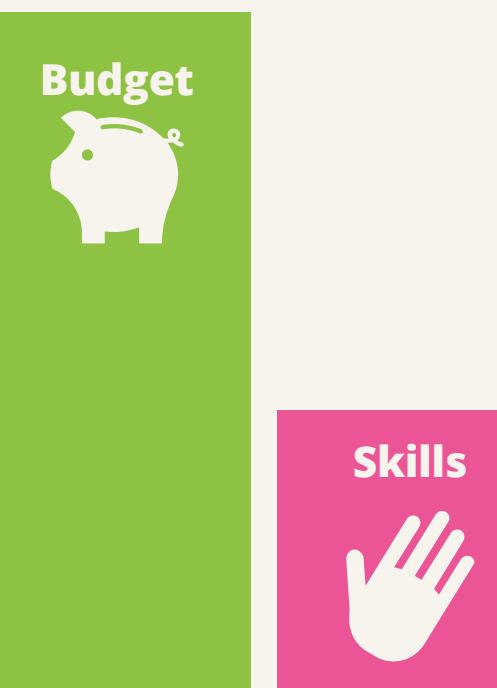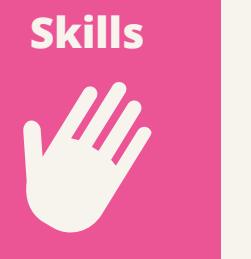
Budget — Top Barrier
Skills — Lowest Barrier

Financial Services
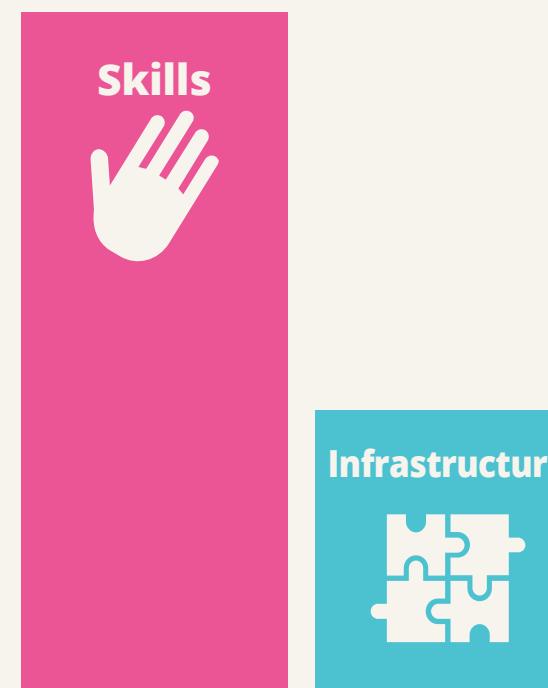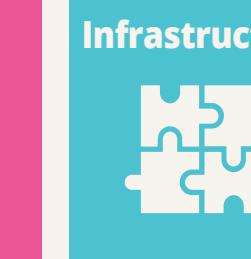
Skills — Top Barrier
Infrastructure — Lowest Barrier

Manufacturing
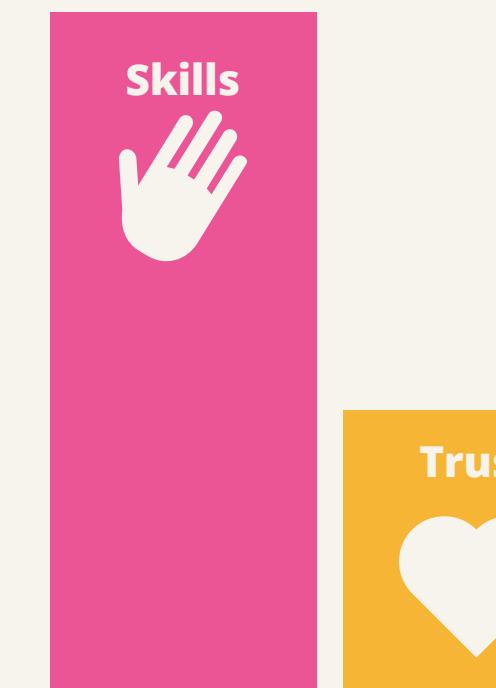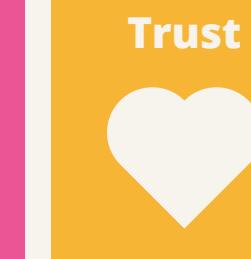
Skills — Top Barrier
Trust — Lowest Barrier

Professional Services
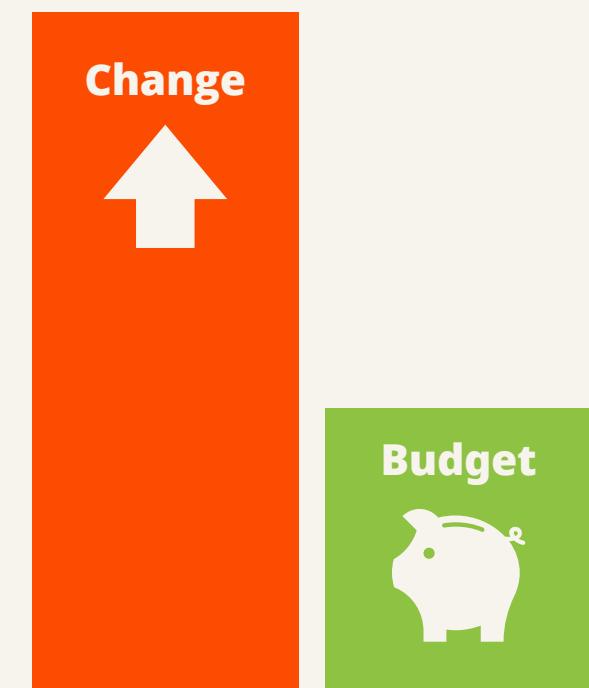
Change — Top Barrier
Budget — Lowest Barrier

Top barriers across respondents

- Lack of in-house **skills** or expertise
- **Change** management readiness
- **Budget** limitations
- Technology **infrastructure**
- **Trust** in AI within the organization

The barriers to AI adoption are no longer technical; they're human. Skills, confidence, and culture continue to outpace technology as the defining challenges.

Interpretation

The skills gap sits at the center of every readiness challenge.

Even when budgets exist, leaders struggle to apply them effectively without clarity and confidence.

AI maturity is now less about implementation and more about integration: helping teams move from knowing to doing.

> "You can't upskill people through PowerPoint. Confidence comes from trying it together."
>
> Matt Wright
> Human Factors Expert

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

Barriers to AI Implementation

Technology

Distinctive Feature

Moving fast but unevenly trained.

Technology companies have the highest experimentation rate but face the steepest skill scaling challenge. Early adopters are now managing complexity at scale, connecting multiple AI tools across marketing, data, and sales systems. The barrier is not adoption; it is orchestration.

Healthcare

Distinctive Feature

Responsible innovation.

Healthcare stands apart. Here, Budget rises above Skills as the top barrier, reflecting the realities of compliance and regulation. Investing in "responsible innovation" costs time and trust, not just money.

Financial Services

Distinctive Feature

Confident in tools, cautious in training.

Financial Services reports strong confidence in technology readiness but low confidence in human alignment. Teams have the tools but lack cross-functional literacy, the ability to translate between technical performance and customer strategy.

Manufacturing

Distinctive Feature

Practical confidence, applied learning gap.

Manufacturing faces a practical learning gap. Trust is high; teams believe in AI. But applied fluency, knowing where and how to embed AI into existing operations, lags behind.

Professional Services

Distinctive Feature

Cultural readiness gap.

Professional Services struggles most with change management. Talent is ready, but cultural norms still favor traditional processes over experimentation.

> "We've done the demos and the pilots. What we need now is integration, and that requires people who understand both the data and the business."
>
> CMO
> Enterprise Technology Organization

Barriers to AI Implementation

The data is remarkably consistent: no matter the size of the company or the sophistication of its technology stack, **skills readiness remains the single biggest obstacle to AI success.**

Across industries, leaders agree that AI is not failing because of what it can do, it is stalling because teams do not yet know how to use it well. The barrier is human, not technical.

Executives describe a widening confidence gap between AI awareness and AI fluency. Many have invested in technology, data platforms, and governance frameworks, but they still lack the internal skill base to scale experimentation into operational advantage.

> **We know what's possible. The challenge is doing it at enterprise scale.**
> Marketing Director
> Enterprise Technology Organization

A universal barrier, experienced differently

While the theme is shared, the nuances vary by sector.

Technology companies have the highest experimentation rate but face the steepest skill scaling challenge. Early adopters are now managing complexity at scale, connecting multiple AI tools across marketing, data, and sales systems. The barrier is not adoption; it is orchestration.

Healthcare stands apart. Here, Budget rises above Skills as the top barrier, reflecting the realities of compliance and regulation. Investing in "responsible innovation" costs time and trust, not just money.

Financial Services reports strong confidence in technology readiness but low confidence in human alignment. Teams have the tools but lack cross-functional literacy, the ability to translate between technical performance and customer strategy.

Manufacturing faces a practical learning gap. Trust is high; teams believe in AI. But applied fluency, knowing where and how to embed AI into existing operations, lags behind.

Professional Services struggles most with change management. Talent is ready, but cultural norms still favor traditional processes over experimentation.

The root cause: learning velocity

The real barrier underneath all others is learning velocity.

AI is evolving faster than most organizations can upskill their people. The result is a cycle of partial progress: teams launch pilots, see potential, but hesitate to scale because they lack confidence in governance, measurement, or change management.

When asked what would accelerate their progress, leaders pointed not to budget or leadership buy-in, but to time for learning. They want structured upskilling programs, internal AI champions, and communities of practice that make new skills stick.

This signals a pivotal moment in AI maturity. Technology is ready; organizations are not. Success now depends on how quickly companies can turn individual curiosity into collective capability.

The next frontier: human infrastructure

In this next phase, the infrastructure that matters most will be human.

Organizations that treat AI skill-building as a core strategic initiative, not an HR program or ad-hoc training series, will pull ahead. The future advantage lies in developing adaptive teams that can evolve with the technology.

Research Observations

- The story of AI in 2025 is not one of underinvestment, but of under-connection. AI adoption will accelerate when leaders stop asking, "Do we have the right tools?" and start asking, "Do our people know how to use them together?"

- The organizations that master skill development, trust building, and cultural fluency will move from piloting AI to performing with it, and that will define the next wave of growth.

- The most consistent signal was learning fatigue. Many leaders described an enthusiasm gap between early AI excitement and everyday application.

- What stood out in the data was how few organizations have defined what "AI readiness" actually means for their teams. Some measure it by tool adoption; others measure confidence. This inconsistency shows why skills remain the top barrier, without a shared definition, progress is difficult to quantify.

- AI capability is being built informally, often through trial and error. Leaders who document what works are quietly setting the new standard for operational maturity.

> **Skill development is the new AI infrastructure.**
> Managing Director
> Financial Services Enterprise

STUDIO NORTH

MARKETLAUNCHER

Where AI Creates the Most Value

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

The story of AI in B2B is no longer about experimentation. It's about expansion.

Teams are shifting from "Can we?" to "Where should we?" as AI takes root in the day-to-day rhythm of marketing and sales.

Across industries, five primary use cases surfaced from the survey. Predictive analytics still leads the field, followed by campaign personalization and content creation. Asset management and visual generation round out the list, with a noticeable rise in interest over the last quarter.

Top Five AI Use Cases
(Ranked by Average Priority)

1 **Predictive analytics**
Trend forecasting and journey mapping

2 **Personalization**
ABM and audience targeting

3 **Content creation**
Writing, messaging, and SEO support

4 **Visual creation**
Branded assets and AI-generated design and imagery

5 **Asset management**
Tagging, repurposing, and retrieval

Leader Perspectives on AI Use Cases

"Predictive analytics is the real unlock. It lets us look around corners instead of reacting to what already happened."
— VP Marketing,
  Global Professional Services Firm

"True personalization has always been the goal. AI finally gives us the scale to make it achievable."
— Director of Digital Strategy,
  Enterprise Technology Organization

"Content creation is where we started, but the bigger value is in how AI helps us accelerate derivative content."
— CMO,
  Enterprise Professional Services Organization

71% of respondents use or plan to use AI for predictive analytics.
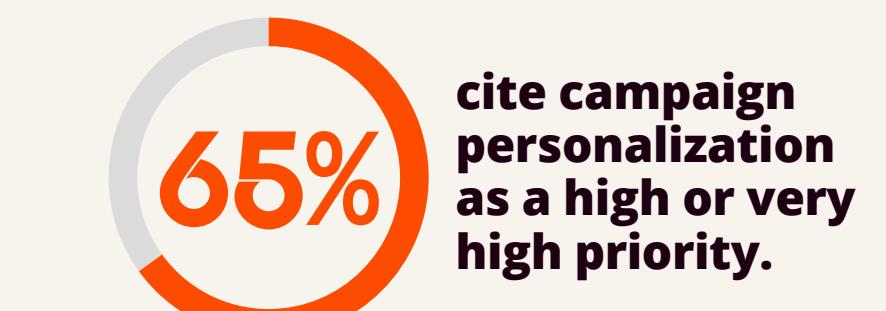
65% cite campaign personalization as a high or very high priority.
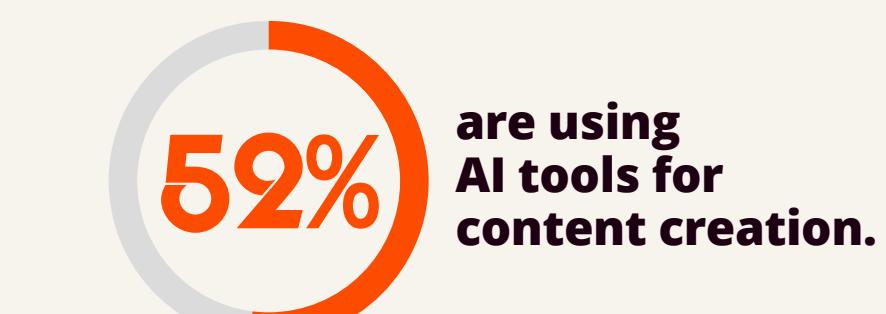
52% are using AI tools for content creation.
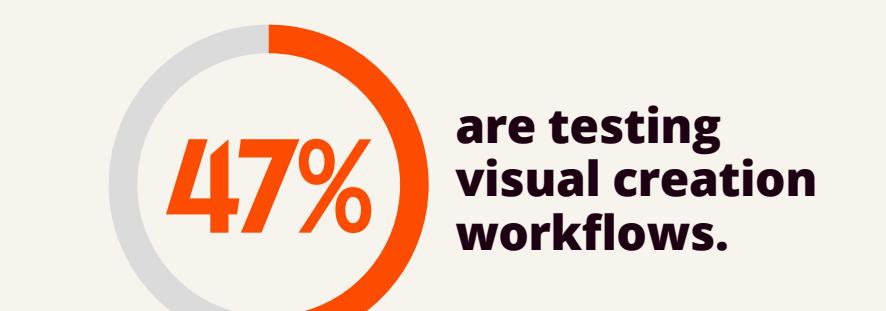
47% are testing visual creation workflows.

41% are exploring asset management to improve reuse and searchability.

What Leaders Told Us About These Trends

Asset management is the sleeper use case. The time we lose looking for the right content is staggering."
— Director of Product Marketing,
  Cybersecurity Software Company
  (Enterprise)

"We've moved fast on visual creation. It's becoming essential for brand consistency across markets."
— Creative Director,
  Large Financial Services Enterprise

"Predictive tools change the conversation. Our teams feel smarter walking into every customer interaction."
— Managing Director,
  Large Financial Services Organization

Predictive analytics dominates as the top use case across every industry.

AI's current power in B2B lies in foresight, not content creation.

Top 5 Use Cases by Industry

Average AI Use Case Ratings by Industry

Use Case	Healthcare	Technology	Manufacturing	Financial Services
Predictive analytics	●●●●◖	●●●●◖	●●●●◖	●●●◖
Campaign personalization	●●●◗	●●●◗	●●●◖	●●●◖
Content creation	●●●◗	●●●◖	●●●◗	●●●◗
Visual creation	●●◗	●●●◖	●●●●	●●●●◖
Asset management	●●●	●●●	●●◗	●●●◗
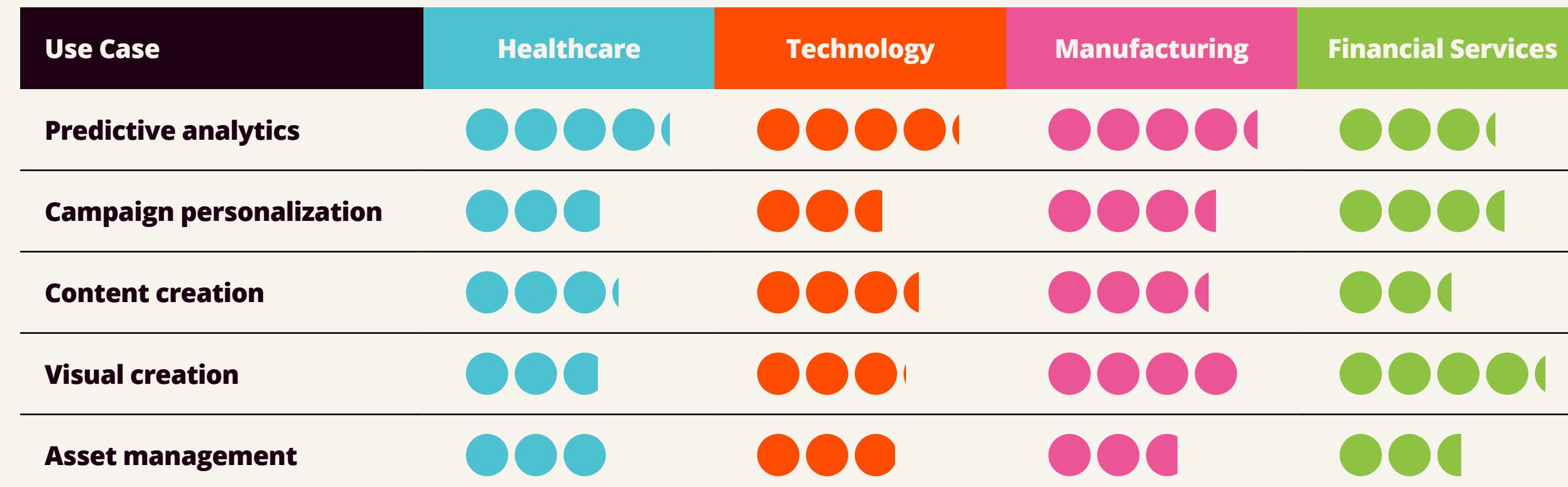
Predictive analytics leads every sector, while visual creation gains ground in Financial Services and Manufacturing.

Cross-Industry Lens

Technology: Predictive analytics remains dominant, used to forecast behavior and optimize sales handoffs. Personalization follows closely as data pipelines improve.

Healthcare: Predictive analytics is also the leader, but asset management shows momentum. Teams are using AI to manage regulatory documentation and reuse clinical content.

Manufacturing: Personalization and visual creation are nearly tied, as teams look to modernize outreach and product visualization.

Financial Services: Visual creation jumped into the top three use cases, signaling growing comfort with generative branding and design automation.

What This Means

AI use cases are becoming practical, not theoretical.

Predictive systems are now informing sales sequences, content calendars, and product strategies. Personalization is closing the gap between automation and authenticity. Visual creation is the next creative frontier.

The next phase is less about proving AI's value and more about connecting its capabilities into a cohesive growth engine.

What the Numbers Tell Us

• Predictive analytics is the clear leader across every industry.

• Campaign personalization gains traction in Manufacturing and Financial Services, where customer or partner segmentation drives measurable ROI.

• Visual creation is surging in Financial Services and Manufacturing, signaling confidence in generative design for brand storytelling and product visualization.

• Healthcare's second-highest score for content creation shows a pivot toward workflow simplification, producing regulated, reusable assets faster.

> **We are finally using AI to make smarter moves, not just faster ones.**
>
> VP Growth
> Global Technology Company

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

Top 5 Use Cases by Industry

Predictive analytics sits at the center of nearly every organization's AI strategy, but how it is being applied tells a deeper story.

Across industries, **AI use cases are evolving from experimentation to orchestration**, moving from siloed pilot projects to connected, revenue-driving systems. The gap between "doing AI" and "running on AI" is narrowing fastest where marketing and sales intersect.

> **The real ROI is in connecting marketing and sales workflows through AI. It bridges CRM data, content, and timing so we can finally operate as one team.**
>
> Marketing Director
> Enterprise Technology Organization

In **Technology** and **Professional Services**, AI is being used to personalize digital journeys and scale content ideation, but the real progress is happening in how those efforts feed pipeline health. Predictive insights now shape lead prioritization, retargeting sequences, and even meeting prep for sales teams.

In **Financial Services**, leaders describe AI as a tool for turning data into clarity. Here, "visual generation" isn't about creative imagery, it's about simplifying analytics and communicating trust. Dashboards and visualization tools use AI to help marketing and sales teams speak a shared language of performance and risk.

In **Manufacturing**, AI use cases focus on operational excellence: predictive maintenance, asset optimization, and efficiency tracking. Yet even in this sector, marketing is beginning to tap those operational datasets for insight-led storytelling and account-based engagement. When machines talk to each other, they create marketing intelligence that was never visible before.

Healthcare continues to use AI for insight generation and workflow optimization. Predictive models support not just patient outcomes but also the marketing side of patient and provider engagement, helping teams anticipate where communication and education can make the most impact.

And for all sectors, the fastest-growing connective tissue is **AI for sales enablement**. Respondents repeatedly cited the power of AI to bridge CRM data, content timing, and buyer intent signals. When the technology is embedded across both marketing automation and sales operations, teams spend less time guessing and more time connecting.

AI's role in marketing and sales alignment is no longer theoretical, it's measurable. The organizations seeing the highest performance gains are those treating AI as the **shared system of intelligence** across departments, rather than a tool owned by one function.

> **Our AI tools are valuable not because they save time, but because they keep us synchronized. When we see the same signals, we act with more confidence.**
>
> MCMO
> Large Financial Services Enterprise

As predictive and operational use cases mature, new opportunities will emerge around **moment orchestration**, the ability to sense, decide, and respond in near real time across the full customer journey. That's where alignment becomes acceleration

Research Observations

• The evolution of AI use cases shows a shift from efficiency to enablement. The organizations that win next will not be those using AI in isolation, but those that turn it into connective tissue across marketing, sales, and customer experience.

• In the field data, we observed clear movement from **creative curiosity** toward **data practicality**.

• Respondents are still exploring content generation, but the heaviest adoption is happening in **predictive analytics**, **reporting**, and **data visualization**.

• Interviewees consistently pointed to "data storytelling", the ability to communicate insights quickly, as the most immediate return on AI investment.

STUDIO NORTH

MARKETLAUNCHER

Goals of AI Investment

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

AI is not replacing strategy. It's reinforcing it.

The leaders we surveyed are clear: the goal is not output volume, but outcome quality.

When asked to rate the importance of five potential AI goals, respondents ranked improving operational efficiency and gaining strategic customer insights almost equally. Personalization, sales enablement, and cost reduction followed.

Top Five AI Goals
(Ranked by Average Priority)

1 Improving operational efficiency

2 Gaining strategic customer insights

3 Driving more effective sales enablement

4 Speeding up time to market

5 Reducing internal or external costs

What Leaders Told Us About Their AI Priorities

"Efficiency isn't just about speed, it's about freeing teams to focus on higher-value thinking."
— VP Marketing,
   Enterprise Professional Services Firm

"Customer insights are where AI pays off first. It helps us understand patterns and opportunities we could never see manually."
— Managing Director,
   Large Financial Services Enterprise

"Sales enablement is where alignment becomes impact. AI equips our teams to show up smarter in every conversation."
— Director of Sales Enablement,
   Enterprise Technology Organization

"AI shortens the path between signal and response. That's what speeds time to market."
— Head of Demand Generation,
   Mid-Market Technology Company

"Cost reduction is a byproduct, not the point. The real value comes when AI changes how we operate."
— CMO,
   Mid-Market Manufacturing Company

64% rated efficiency as "very important."

61% chose strategic insights as "very important."

55% placed sales enablement in their top three goals.

49% cited speed to market as a priority.

38% listed cost reduction as a major motivator.

"Efficiency matters, but only when it makes the whole go-to-market engine smarter. AI helps us eliminate friction, not just time."
— VP Revenue Operations,
   Enterprise Technology Organization

Goals of AI Investment

Cross-Industry Lens

Healthcare: Operational efficiency took the lead after new responses were added. Strategic insights ranked second, reflecting how these organizations are using AI to relieve team pressure while improving patient and stakeholder understanding.

Technology: Predictive and personalization goals remain highest. Efficiency is close behind, suggesting Tech teams are moving from pilot to integration mode.

Manufacturing: Predictive and personalization goals tied for first, showing an equal focus on forecasting and customized outreach.

Financial Services: Visual generation as a use case correlates with a stronger emphasis on brand expression and engagement consistency. Strategic insights remain critical in this sector.

What This Means

AI adoption has matured. Efficiency may be the immediate benefit, but insight remains the long-term ambition.

Leaders are now using AI to answer strategic questions: Who should we target? How do we connect faster? How do we create value across the customer journey?

> **AI is not about replacing talent. It's about revealing opportunities we couldn't see before.**
>
> CMO
> Enterprise Manufacturing Company

The future of AI in B2B will belong to organizations that blend operational clarity with customer understanding.

> **We're using AI to see our customers more clearly.**
>
> VP Marketing, Global Financial Services Enterprise

> **When sales and marketing share insights, speed follows naturally.**
>
> Director of Sales Enablement, Enterprise Technology Organization

> **Efficiency gives us the space to think bigger.**
>
> CMO, Enterprise Professional Services Firm

**AI is no longer just a time-saver.
It is a focus-shaper.**

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

AI's Purpose Evolves with Maturity

From saving time to shaping strategy.
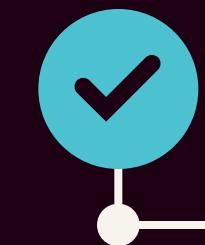
Efficiency

64% rated "Improving Operational Efficiency" as a very important goal.

AI starts by saving time and simplifying work. Efficiency is where confidence begins.

Enablement

55% ranked "Driving More Effective Sales Enablement" among their top three goals.

AI bridges marketing and sales. When teams share data and insights, collaboration turns into conversion.

Insight

61% rated "Gaining Strategic Customer Insights" as very important.

Once workflows stabilize, organizations use AI to see patterns, predict behavior, and personalize with purpose.

Acceleration

47% reported using AI for predictive analytics, the clearest signal of maturity.

AI moves from support tool to growth driver. Prediction and alignment create the conditions for scale.

When we asked B2B leaders what they hoped AI would deliver, one message rose above all others: AI is not a cost-cutting tool. It is a growth enabler.

Across every industry, respondents described AI as the pathway to smarter strategy and stronger alignment. Rather than asking AI to "do more with less," they are using it to create new value, faster insights, clearer handoffs, and more confident decision-making.

"We're using AI to understand our audience faster, not just to produce content faster."
— CMO,
Large Financial Services Enterprise

1. From productivity to precision

Efficiency remains an important outcome, but not the primary goal. For 56% of respondents, the top reason for investing in AI is to gain strategic customer insights, to turn data into direction.

"AI gives our teams time back to focus on higher-value work."
— VP Marketing,
Large Healthcare System

The second most common goal, selected by 51%, is improving operational efficiency. But the way leaders talk about efficiency has changed. It is no longer about headcount reduction; it is about giving teams time back to focus on creative and strategic work.

Efficiency has become the fuel for imagination.

2. Alignment drives performance

One of the most encouraging signals from the research is the growing importance of sales enablement as a oal for AI investment.

Nearly 40% of respondents ranked "Driving More Efficient Sales Enablement" among their top three goals, a clear indicator that the next phase of AI maturity is about integration across the revenue engine.

"The real ROI is in connecting marketing and sales workflows through AI."
— Marketing Director,
Enterprise Technology Organization

Leaders described how AI is bridging CRM data, content, and timing to create smoother handoffs between marketing and sales. Campaign insights flow into account strategies; predictive lead scoring connects directly to outbound priorities; and content recommendations are tailored to the buyer's exact stage.

When marketing and sales see the same signals, everything moves faster.

This shift signals a broader truth: AI's value is greatest when it connects functions, not when it automates tasks.

3. Predictive foresight replaces reactive marketing

Across every industry, predictive analytics emerges as the common denominator for future growth. Whether used for forecasting demand, prioritizing accounts, or identifying churn risk, predictive models are giving leaders a new lens on performance.

For Technology and Manufacturing organizations, predictive analytics drives pipeline optimization and operational efficiency. In Healthcare and Financial Services, it enables precision engagement, reaching audiences responsibly and effectively.

The most advanced organizations treat predictive insights as a unifying currency across marketing and sales. Instead of debating tactics, teams align around what the data is telling them will happen next.

"The next competitive edge isn't speed. It's foresight."
— VP Revenue Strategy,
Enterprise Technology Company

4. The emotional payoff: confidence

Beyond metrics, AI adoption is delivering something more intangible, confidence.

Leaders describe feeling more certain in their decisions, more aligned across teams, and more optimistic about the future of their functions. That mindset shift is transformative.

Confidence allows for experimentation. It fuels trust. It turns efficiency into energy.

STUDIO NORTH

MARKETLAUNCHER

Industry Spotlights

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

Technology
From Experimentation to Execution
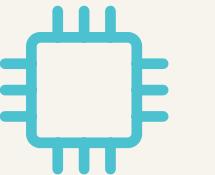
Industry Insight

Technology companies are shifting from innovation to integration. Predictive analytics and personalization have moved from pilot programs to core functions. The real challenge is consistency at scale, connecting multiple AI systems across marketing, data, and sales so they work as one.

When technology firms treat AI as a shared operating model instead of a toolkit, growth compounds.

"Scaling AI isn't the hard part, connecting the systems is. Integration is where the real lift happens."
— Director of Digital Strategy
   Enterprise Technology Organization

👉 Evidence from the Research

Survey respondents in Technology reported the highest number of active AI pilots and the widest spread of use cases. Interviews revealed that 78% now use predictive models for pipeline forecasting, and most see the next barrier as "process orchestration," not adoption.

Healthcare
Responsible Intelligence

Industry Insight

Healthcare organizations continue to balance innovation with caution. Predictive analytics is improving operations and patient engagement, but investment decisions remain shaped by governance and compliance. AI adoption here is guided by purpose rather than pace, with teams focused on trust, accuracy, and accountability.

"In healthcare, trust isn't optional. AI has to be accurate, explainable, and accountable every step of the way."
— CMO
   Large Healthcare System

👉 Evidence from the Research

Budget ranked as Healthcare's top barrier, followed by skills. Respondents consistently linked success to strong governance structures. Interviews highlighted partnerships between marketing a nd clinical teams as a key driver of responsible innovation.

Financial Services
Visual Confidence

Industry Insight

Financial Services leaders are using AI to translate complexity into clarity. Predictive analytics and data visualization help teams communicate insight, build credibility, and strengthen client trust. The focus is not creativity for its own sake, but transparency through data storytelling.

"Data is only useful if people understand it. AI helps us turn complexity into clarity for clients."
— Managing Director,
   Global Financial Services Enterprise

👉 Evidence from the Research

Respondents in this sector were twice as likely as average to cite "data visualization" as a primary AI use case. Qualitative interviews emphasized explainability and trust as the most valued outcomes of AI adoption.

Manufacturing
AI at the Core, Not the Edge

Industry Insight

Manufacturers are embedding AI deep within their operations. Predictive maintenance, process optimization, and supply chain forecasting lead the way. Skills readiness, not trust, remains the primary constraint. When operational intelligence meets marketing insight, manufacturing organizations uncover entirely new value chains.

"We see AI as operational intelligence. When insights meet the shop floor, everything becomes more predictable."
— VP Operations,
   Enterprise Manufacturing Company

👉 Evidence from the Research

Manufacturing respondents ranked skills readiness as their top barrier but also reported some of the highest satisfaction scores. Efficiency and predictability were cited as measurable gains within the first year of AI investment.

Industry Spotlights

Professional Services

The Creative Frontier

Industry Insight

Professional Services firms are embracing AI as a creative partner. Generative tools enhance ideation, accelerate content creation, and strengthen client delivery. The challenge lies in maintaining authenticity while increasing speed. The most forward-thinking firms are designing "human-in-the-loop" systems that keep expertise at the center.

"AI has become a true creative partner. It accelerates ideas, but the human voice still sets the direction."
— CMO, Global Professional Services Firm

☞ Evidence from the Research

Survey data shows that 62% of Professional Services respondents are already using generative AI for ideation or content development. Interviews underscored a focus on brand voice consistency and quality control over automation volume.

Public Sector

Learning in Public

Industry Insight

Education and government organizations are exploring AI through transparency and experimentation. Their focus is on ethical use, accessibility, and shared learning. Rather than racing ahead, they are building frameworks that ensure accountability and fairness.

"For us, AI adoption is about transparency. We're building frameworks that make progress visible and accountable."
— Director of Innovation, Public Sector Organization

☞ Evidence from the Research

Public sector participants represented a smaller sample but demonstrated high alignment around pilot programs and cross-agency collaboration. Leaders described early AI projects focused on service accessibility and policy simulation.

Other
(Energy, Transportation, Retail)

Momentum Through Modernization

Industry Insight

In diverse sectors such as energy, transportation, and retail, AI is modernizing legacy systems. Predictive analytics enables better forecasting and maintenance, while personalization tools improve customer engagement. These industries show that transformation can happen incrementally, driven by clear data visibility.

"Modernization isn't one big leap. AI helps us make steady, measurable improvements across legacy systems."
— Head of Operations, Large Industrial Organization

☞ Evidence from the Research

Respondents in this category cited predictive analytics and workflow automation as their leading AI initiatives. Interviewees highlighted measurable ROI in logistics planning and inventory optimization.

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

Predictions for 2026

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

ROLLOVER CARD TO FLIP OVER

Predictions for 2026

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER

Forward-Looking Perspectives from B2B Leaders

"AI's biggest shift will be from supporting workflows to orchestrating them. Systems will start thinking together."
— Managing Director,
   Enterprise Technology Organization

"We're heading toward a world where data doesn't just inform decisions, it anticipates them."
— CMO,
   Global Financial Services Enterprise

"The next wave of competitive advantage will come from real-time journey intelligence. Not faster, but smarter."
— VP Revenue Strategy,
   Enterprise Technology Company

"AI won't replace strategy, it will expand it. We'll make decisions based on patterns we couldn't see before."
— CMO,
   Enterprise Professional Services Firm

"As answer engines reshape discovery, the brands that structure content for clarity, not volume, will win visibility."
— Director of Digital Strategy,
   Global Technology Provider

Closing Reflection

The next wave of AI progress will not come from more sophisticated tools, but from more synchronized people. Together, StudioNorth and MarketLauncher believe that human adaptability is the ultimate differentiator. Technology will continue to evolve, but it is curiosity, connection, and trust that will define which organizations move fastest and go furthest.

"

AI's evolution mirrors team maturity. It begins with automation, then enables alignment, insight, and growth.

Research Analysis
StudioNorth + MarketLauncher

"

Methodology

This benchmark combined quantitative and qualitative research.

Quantitative: 62 senior marketing and sales leaders across seven industries completed a structured survey of 12 ranking and rating questions.

Qualitative: 25% of our interviews were confidential "sit downs" where leaders provided deeper context, capturing nuance in tone, hesitation, and conviction.

Analysis: Data analyzed for mean ranks, top two frequencies, and cross-industry deltas. Qualitative responses were coded for recurring themes.

Confidence: Results are directional, reflecting leadership sentiment rather than statistical projection.

We set out to measure progress and found transformation in motion.

About the Research Partners

STUDIO NORTH

StudioNorth is a B2B marketing agency that blends human imagination with intelligent systems to create meaningful growth. We partner with marketing and sales leaders to turn strategy into storytelling and creativity into measurable business momentum.

Visit: **studionorth.com**

MARKETLAUNCHER

MarketLauncher is a research-driven business development firm that helps B2B organizations identify, engage, and convert high-value accounts through primary research and data-informed outreach.

Visit: **marketlauncher.com**

Join the AI Readiness Report 2026-2027

Be part of the next wave of insights. Contribute your organization's perspective and help shape the next benchmark in AI readiness and revenue alignment.

Move what matters. Faster.

STUDIO NORTH

+

MARKETLAUNCHER