

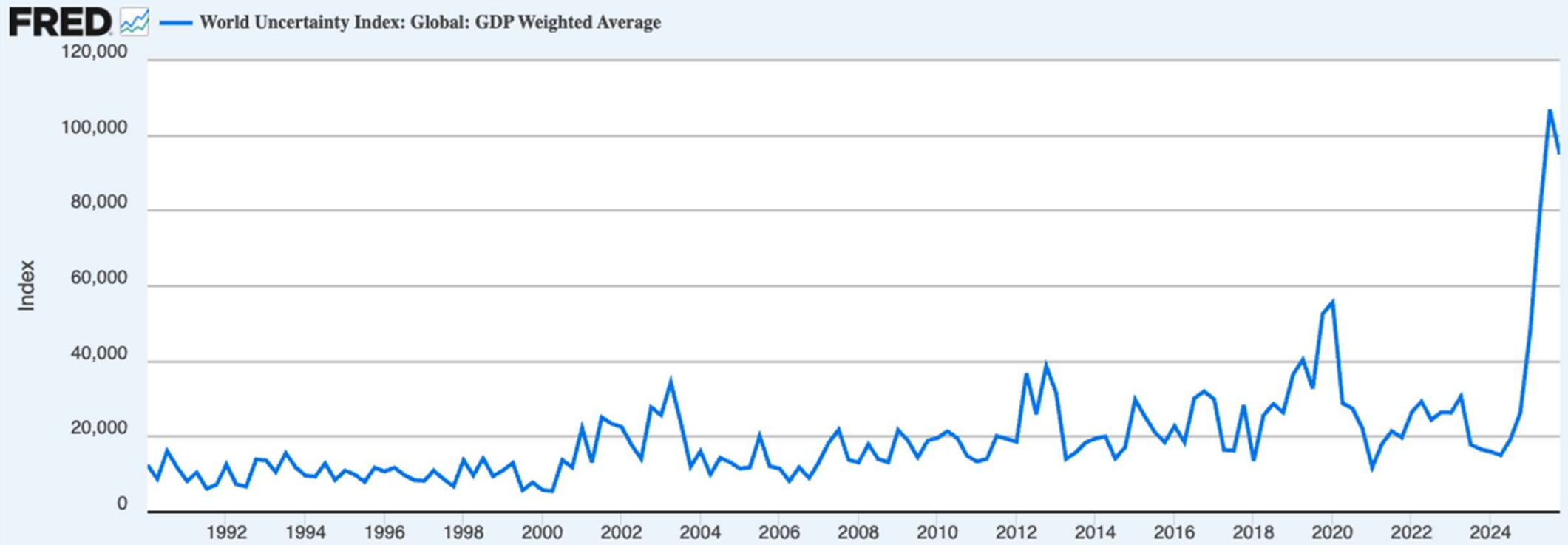
# AI Reality in 2026

A view from Salesforce

Ed Thompson, SVP Market Strategy  
[ed.thompson@salesforce.com](mailto:ed.thompson@salesforce.com)



# Uncertainty: At A 30 Year High



Sources: Ahir, Hites; Bloom, Nick; Furceri, Davide via FRED®

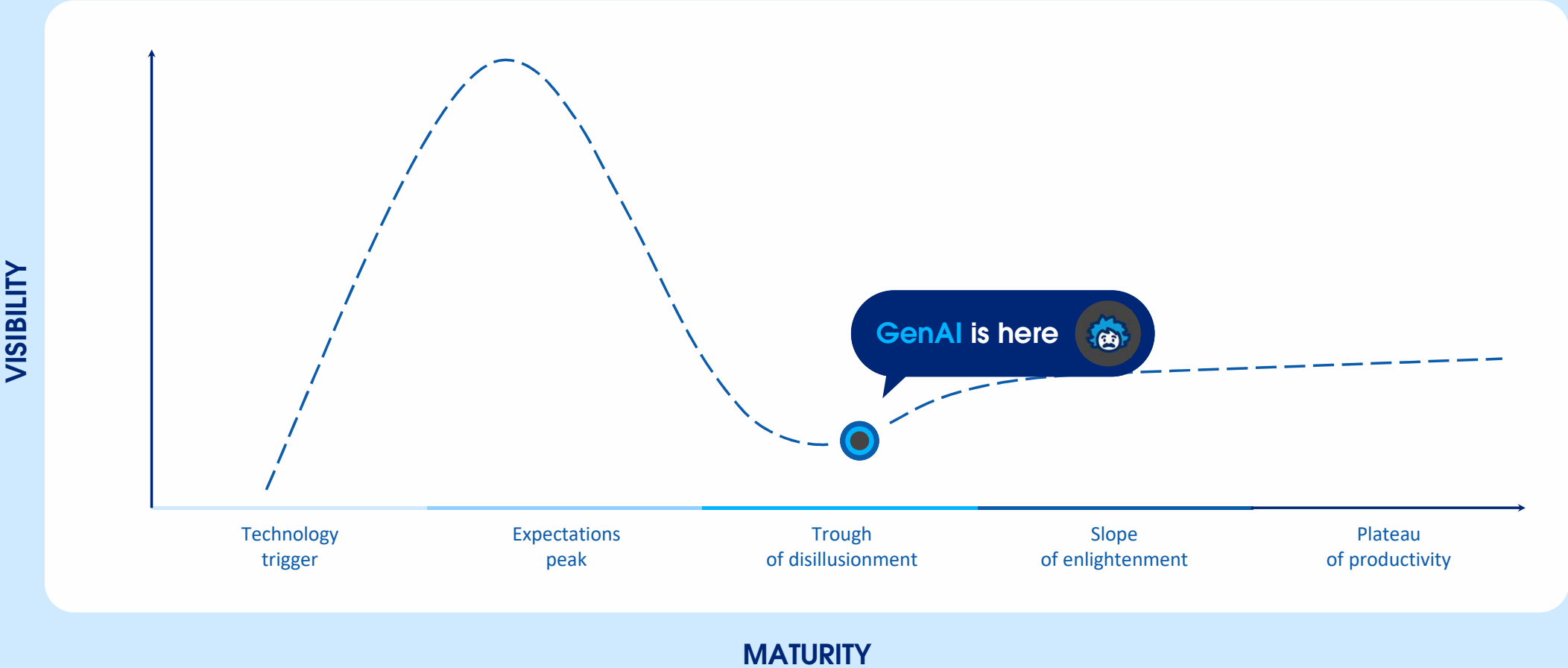
fred.stlouisfed.org



# Topic 1: The Last 3 Years of AI

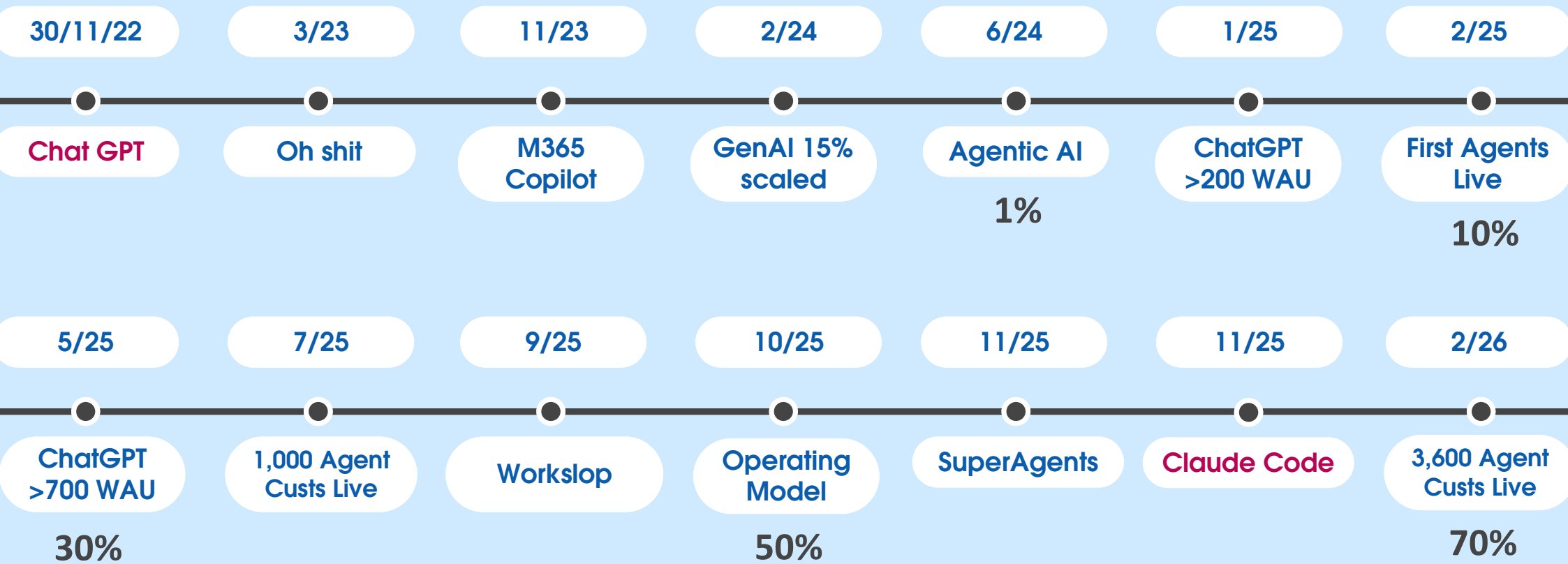


# Gartner Hype Cycle April 2026

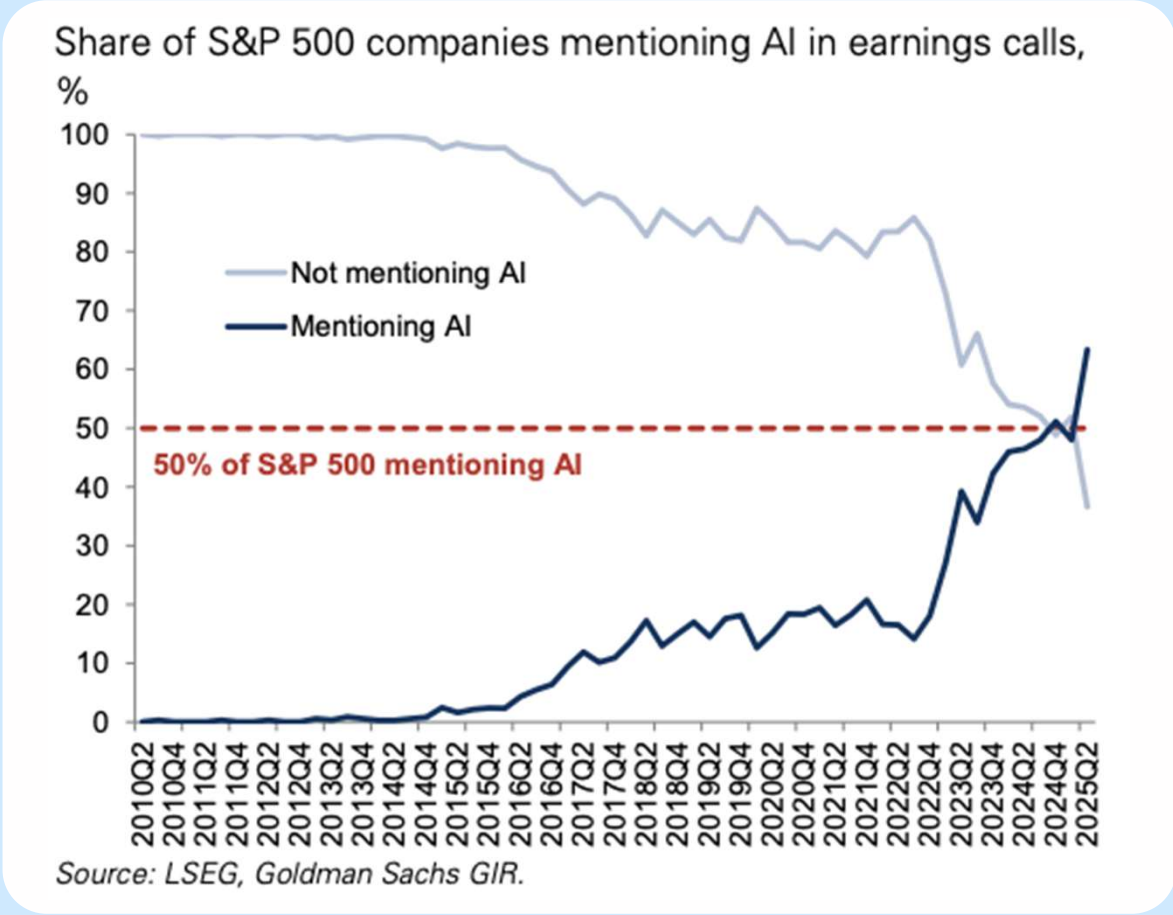


Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gartner\\_hype\\_cycle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gartner_hype_cycle)

# A Brief History of AI in the Last 3 years



# AI in Earnings Calls



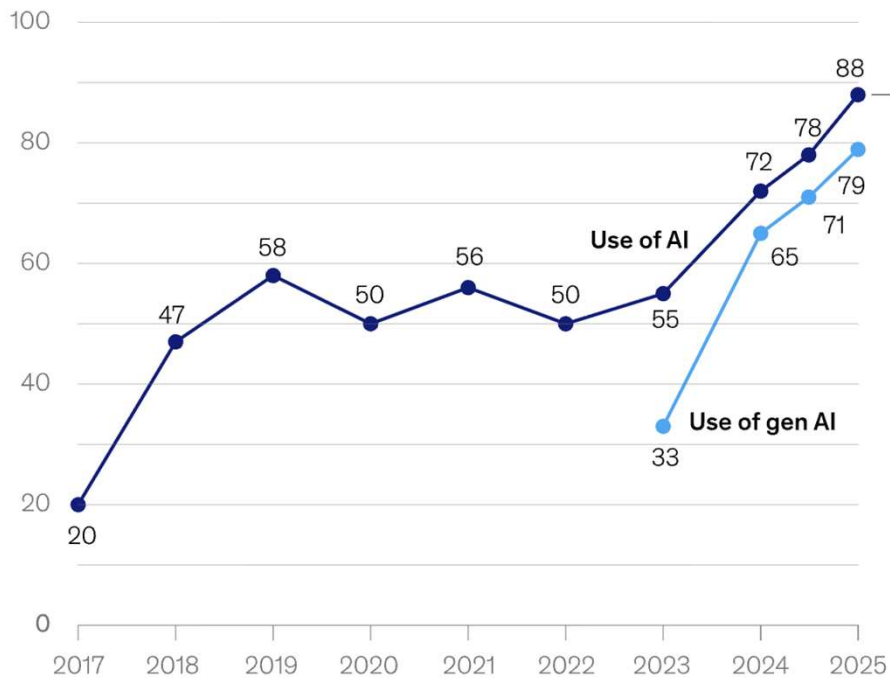
Source: LSEG, Goldman Sachs

# Use of AI: 2017-2025



Use of AI by respondents' organizations, % of respondents

Organizations that use AI in at least 1 business function<sup>1</sup>



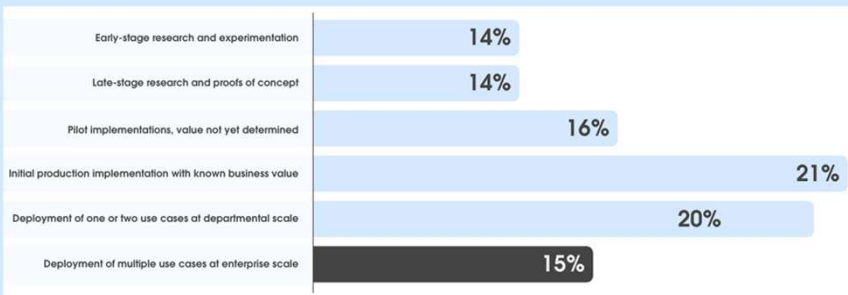
Phase of AI use among organizations using AI in 2025



# First Three Lessons from GenAI

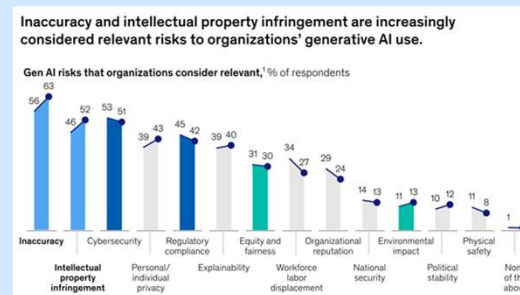


## Only 11-17% Scale Up



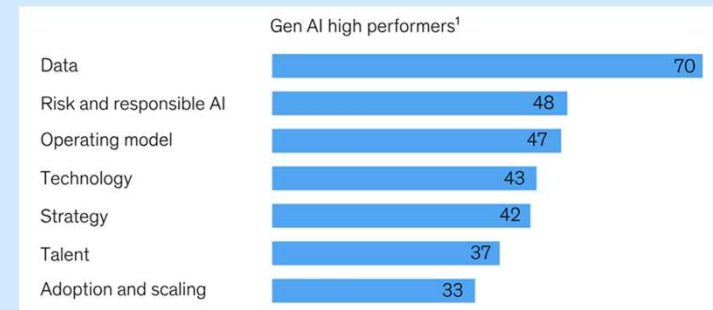
Sources: Forrester's Priorities Survey, 2024, IDC's Future Enterprise Resiliency & Spending Survey Wave 4  
Forrester Base: 4533 Business & technology professionals who have knowledge of the specific emerging technology IDC Base: 889

## Inaccuracy is the Biggest Risk



Source: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai/#/>

## High Performers Invest More In Data



Source: <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/quantumblack/our-insights/the-state-of-ai/#/>



# Biggest Lesson: CEO Top 5 Challenges Not Tech



01

Talent

27%

Business AI skills  
Cybersecurity  
Data skills  
Compliance skills



02

Governance  
of Risk

22%

75% use tools  
23% employer  
provided tools

03

Use case  
prioritisation

21%

30% of operations to be  
run by AI  
74% must be supervised  
by humans

04

Costs

13%



05

ROI

12%



# Employees: Fed up with Workslop



# HUFFPOST

POLITICS

ENTERTAINMENT

LIFE

PARENTS

SHOPPING

## What Is 'Workslop,' The AI Trend Workers Hate?

*Here's how to spot it.*

**By Amy Glover**

22/10/2025 02:55pm BST

“Workslop: AI-derived work (like emails, reports, memos) that looks polished but lacks real substance or meaningful value”

# AI Shifts Cognitive Reskilling in 3 Ways

salesforce

## From gathering information to verifying information

AI tools can gather and curate large amounts of information in response to a prompt—more since Deep Research. But it falls to us to check the AI's accuracy. In order to do that, humans will need to have a certain level of subject-matter expertise.

## From solving problems to integrating AI output

As AI becomes more proficient at providing solutions to prompts with clear answers, humans will be able to spend more time deciding whether models' responses fit the context of the request. Exercising good judgment—knowing what makes something not just correct but also meaningful—will take on increased importance.

## From executing tasks to overseeing them

AI Agents execute tasks. Humans will focus on allocating resources and managing different AI models.



# Personally: What is Everyone Using?



1Bn WAU (20m paying)

 **NotebookLM**



22-33m WAU (15m paying)

**Gemini**

>650m MAU

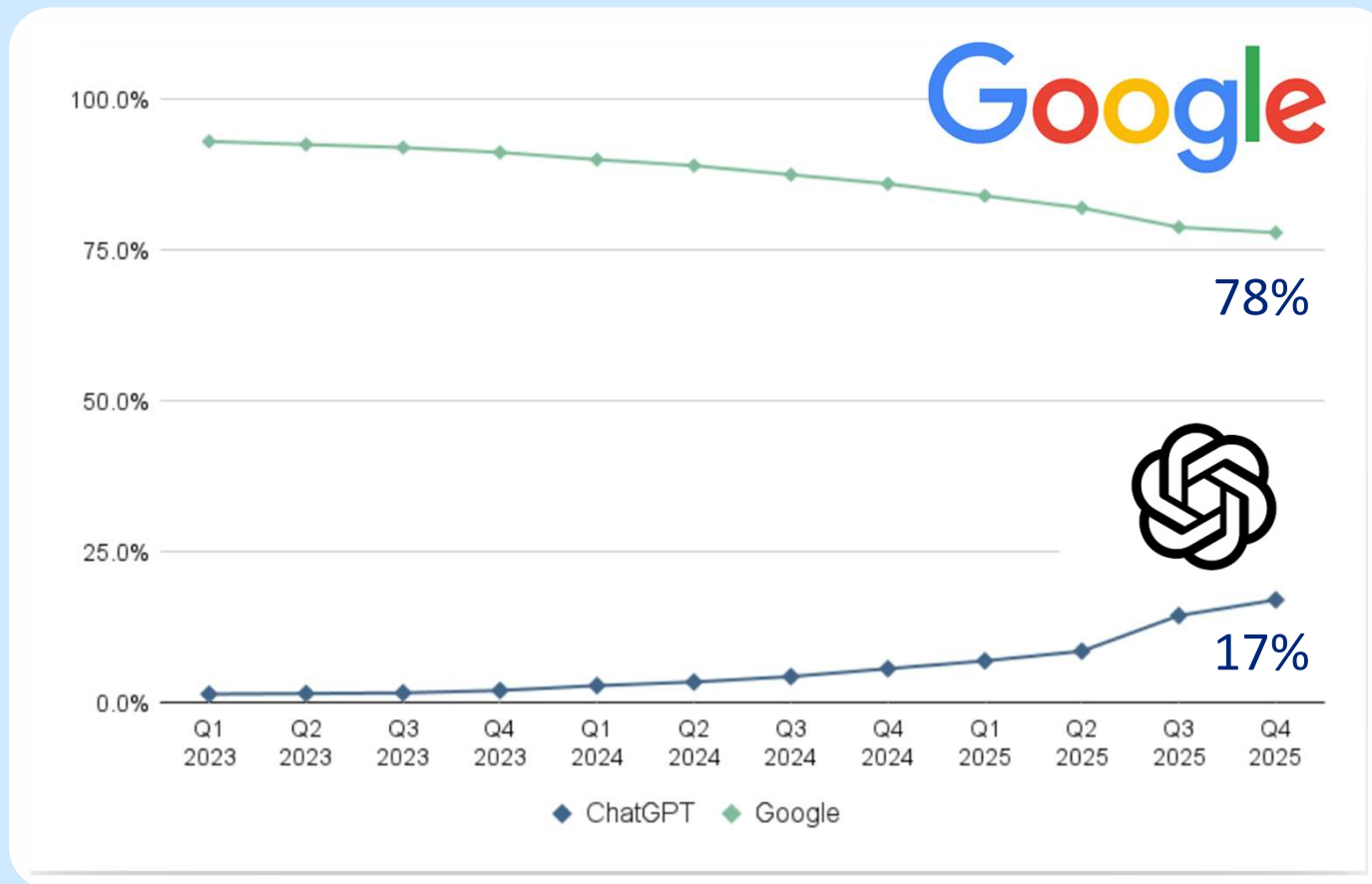
 **perplexity**

 **Claude**

176m MAU (37m business users)

 **deepseek**

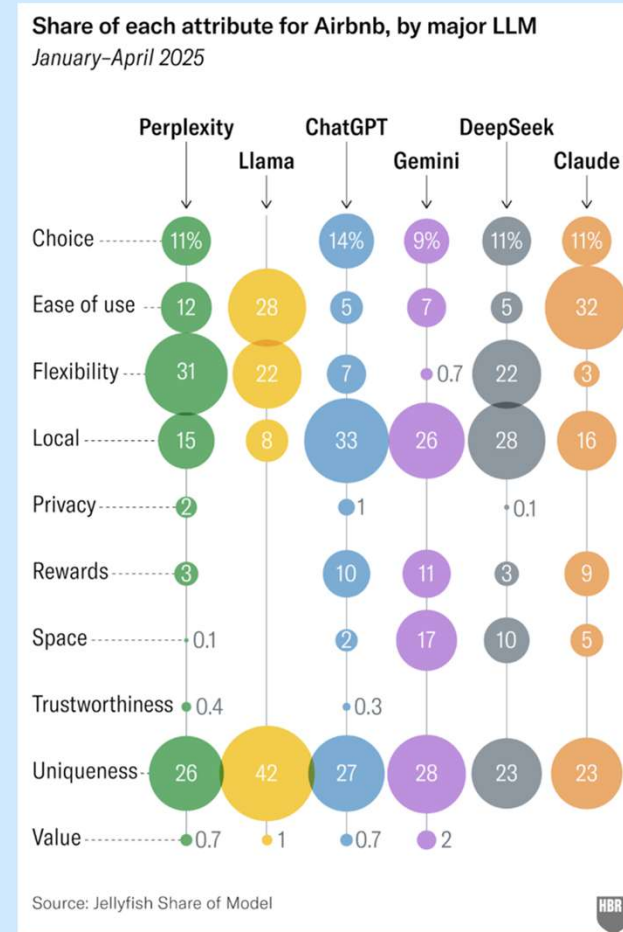
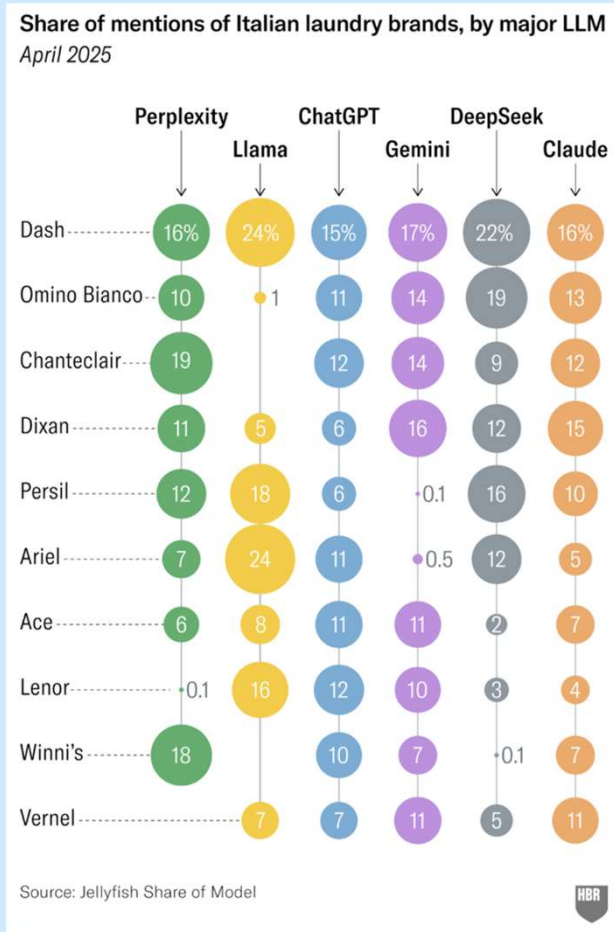
# Customers: ChatGPT vs Google



6 mins 12  
secs

13 mins 9  
secs

# What is your Share of Model?



# CFOs: Time Saved vs Value from GenAI



# CEOs: Under pressure and applying pressure



**“This won’t be put to bed until we see AI reflected in the Profit and Loss statement”**

**Julie Sweet,**  
CEO Accenture 2/26

**“Take the AI budget away from IT and make leaders accountable”**

**Melissa Di Donato,**  
CEO Kyriba 1/26

**“Half of CEOs believe their job is on the line if AI does not pay off in 2026”**

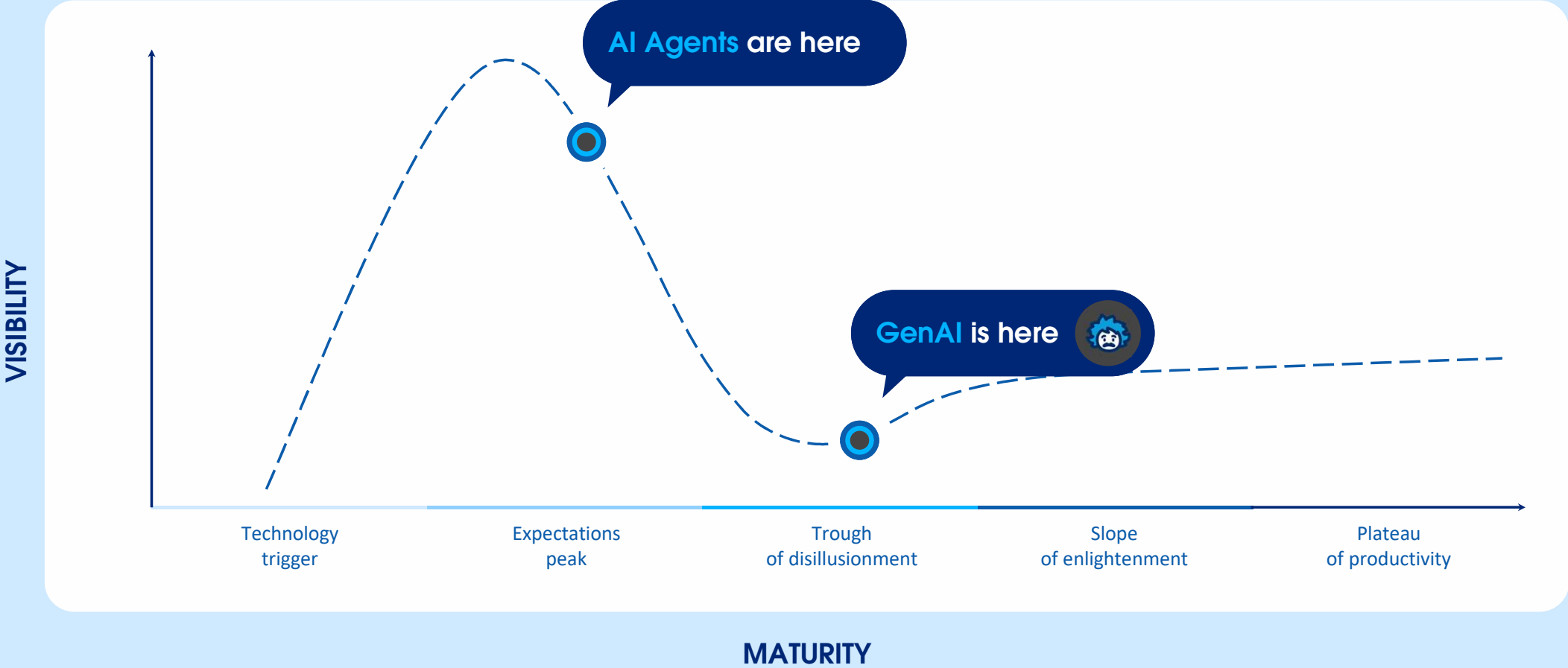
**BCG AI Radar**  
Global Survey 1/26



# Topic 2: Agentic AI Reality



# Gartner Hype Cycle April 2026



Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gartner\\_hype\\_cycle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gartner_hype_cycle)

# Agent

an intelligent system that **perceives**,  
**reasons**, and **acts** to achieve a goal

# What Are the **Attributes** of an Agent?



## Role

An agent's purpose on your team



## Knowledge

The data an agent needs to be successful



## Actions

The goals an agent can fulfill



## Guardrails

The guidelines an agent can operate under



## Channel

The applications where an agent gets work done



## Systems of Engagement



Sales



Service



Marketing



Commerce



Tableau



Industries

...

# Top 10 Use Cases So Far: Service > Sales



**1**

## Case Deflection

**Key Use Cases:** Automate Query Answering; Self-Service; Seasonal Surges  
**Benefit:** Reduce Response Times, No Down Time, Cost Savings

**2**

## Account Research Records + Quotes

**Key Use Cases:** Account Summary and Insights; Meeting Prep; Suggest Next Best Action  
**Benefit:** Efficiency Boost; Increased Win Rates; Shorter Deal Cycles

**3**

## Matching/Staffing

**Key Use Cases:** Create High Quality Matches Quicker  
**Benefit:** Productivity Gain; Higher Compatibility and Longevity of Matches

**4**

## Scheduling

**Key Use Cases:** Appointment Prioritization and Scheduling Based on History and Context; Appointment Follow Ups, Reschedules and Reminders  
**Benefit:** Accelerated Scale and Personalization; Op Cost Savings

**5**

## Personalized Coaching + Learning

**Key Use Cases:** Customizable, Flexible, Individual and Role-Based Learning Journeys  
**Benefit:** Improved Learning Outcomes, Scalability and Global Accessibility

**6**

## Attendee/Fan Experience

**Key Use Cases:** Event Info/Comms; Session Booking; Logistics; Surveys  
**Benefit:** Personalized Marketing, Streamlined Experience

**7**

## Lead Management/Sales Support

**Key Use Cases:** Leads Triaging and Qualifying, Sales Reps Follow Ups  
**Benefit:** Transformed Sales Process; Higher Conversion Rates

**8**

## Product Recommendation

**Key Use Cases:** Personalized Recommendation Using Latest Product Information  
**Benefit:** Drive Business Growth and Customer Loyalty

**9**

## Member Concierge/Care

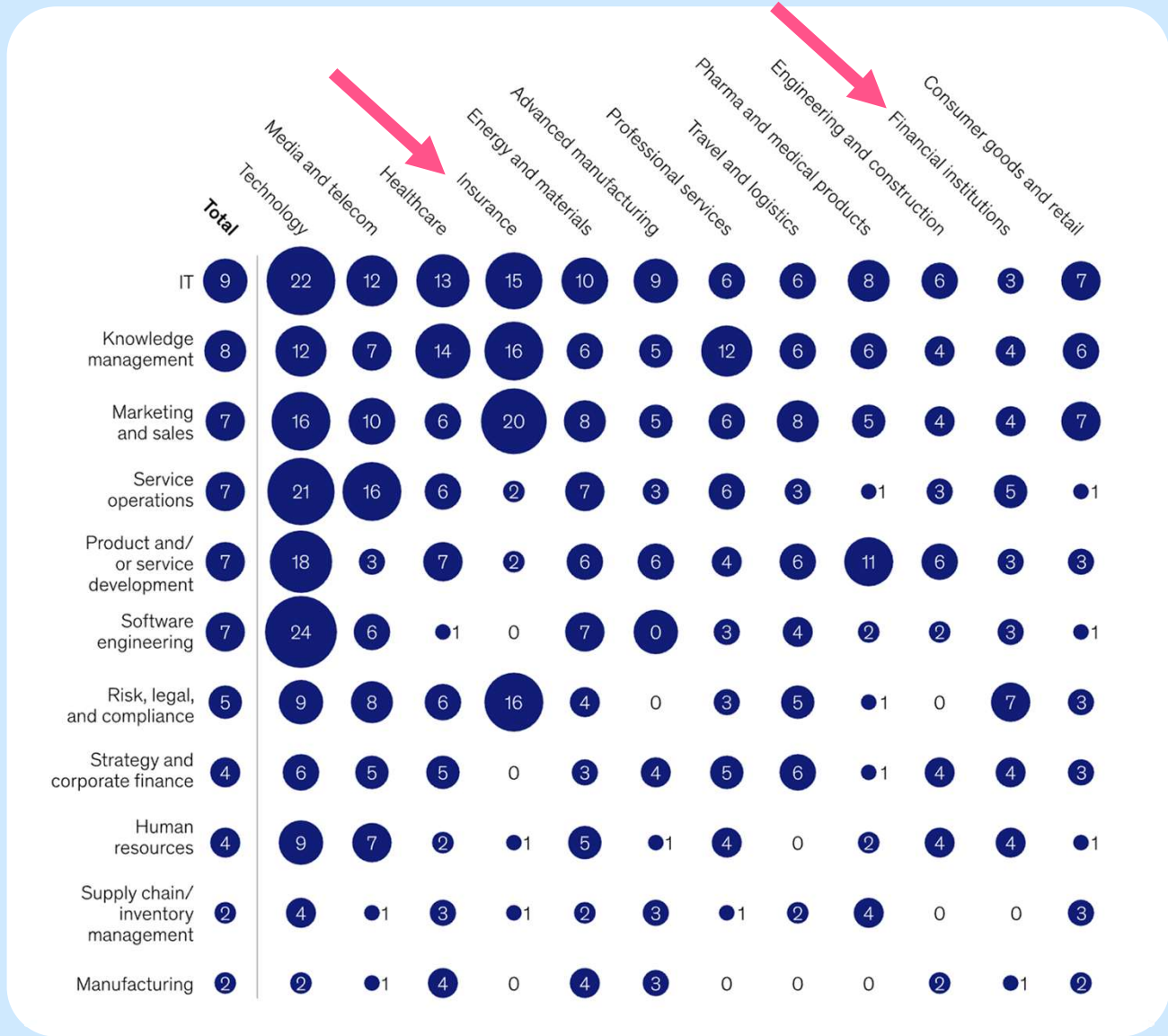
**Key Use Cases:** Always On Personalised Concierge  
**Benefit:** Increased Member Engagement, Acquisition and Retention

**10**

## Onboard, Register & Enroll

**Key Use Cases:** Streamline Onboarding and Training for Employees, Students, Partners  
**Benefit:** Simplified and Smooth Onboarding

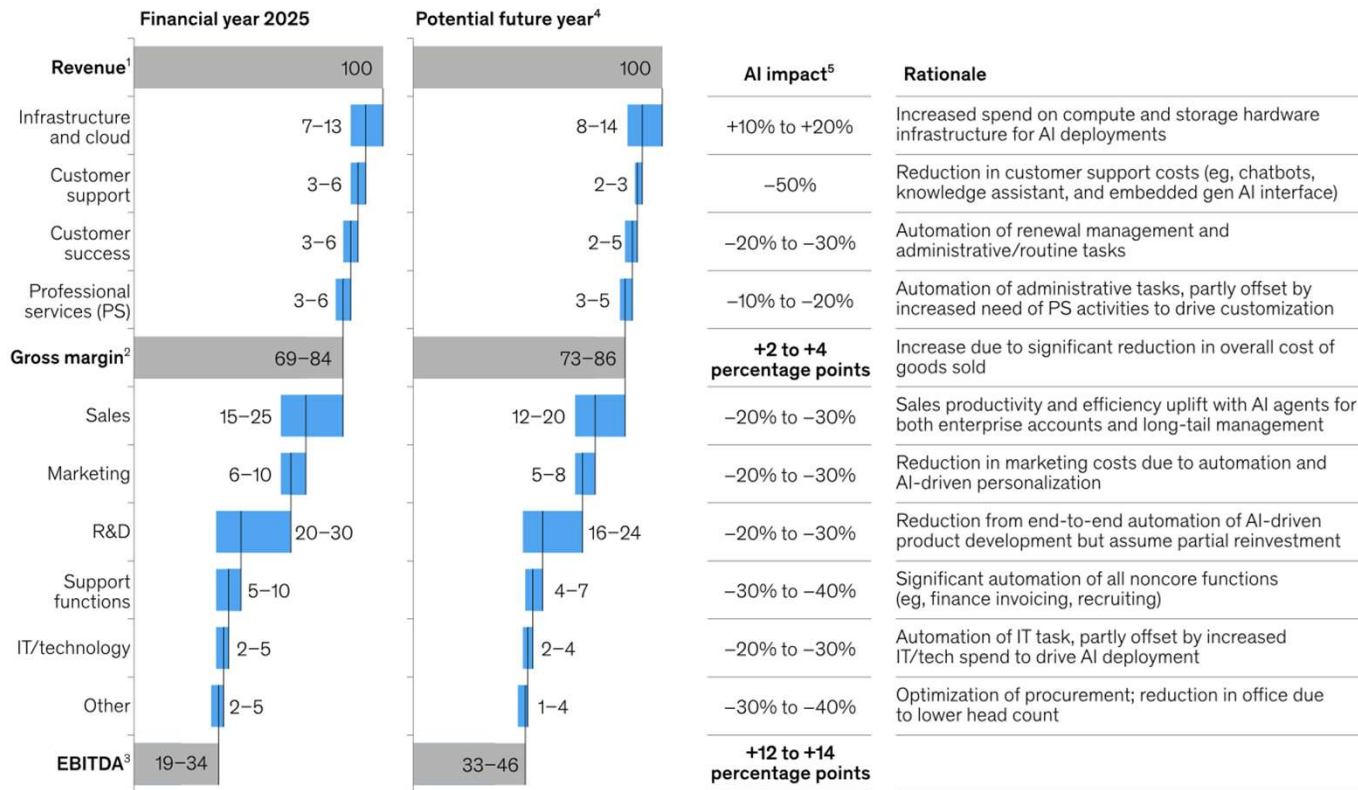
# AI Agents Scaling or Fully Scaled by Department by Industry 7/25



# Profit and Loss Evidence



Financials of software company in 2025, % (illustrative)



# Operating model questions our customers are asking us



## User Experience

If an Agent is operating on my customers' behalf, does my UX really matter?

## Front, Middle & Back Office

Will digital labour merge together these functions? Is it a legacy construct?

## Outsourcing

Outsourcing is typically human labour based. Do I need to rethink my sourcing strategy?

## Spans of Control

Do standard ratios still apply? Do we need to introduce digital labour spans?

## Brand

If Agent to Agent interactions occur, was does it mean for brand identity?

## Rol

Do I need to change the way I analyse return on digital investment with Agentic AI?

## Job Descriptions

Will jobs get broader and more fluid? How do we plan for this?

## Growth

Agents can scale limitlessly. Do I need to rethink my linear growth forecasting?

## Budgeting

My budgets are FTE based. Is that fit for purpose?

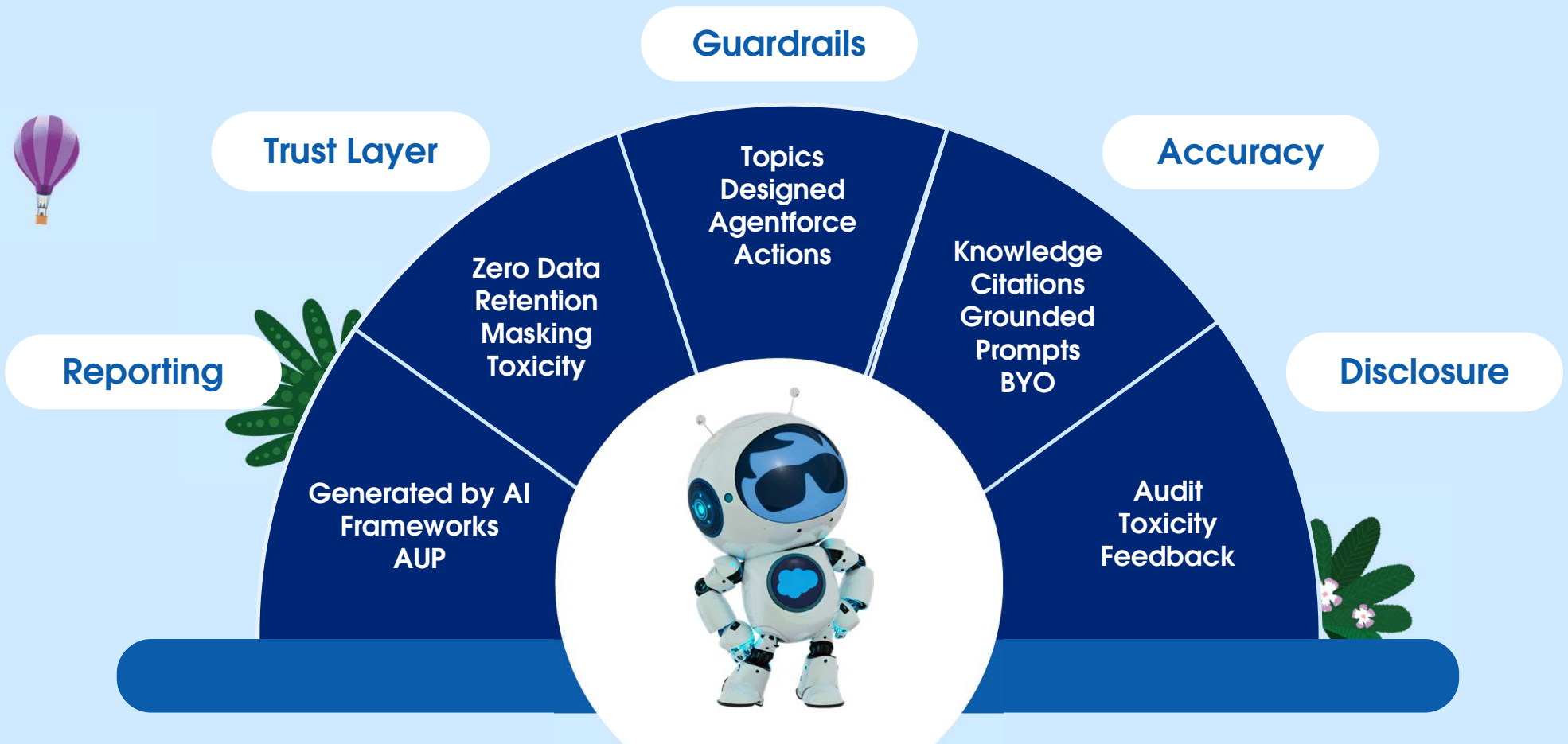


# Topic 3: Issues with Agents



# Issue 1 Security: The Overprivileged AI Agent

salesforce



# Issue 2 Reasoning: Breadth and Determinism



**Low scope**

**Agent with 1  
Action**

**Is an Agent  
needed?**

**Medium  
scope**

**Agent with  
<10 Topics**

**Orchestrate?**

**Broader  
scope**

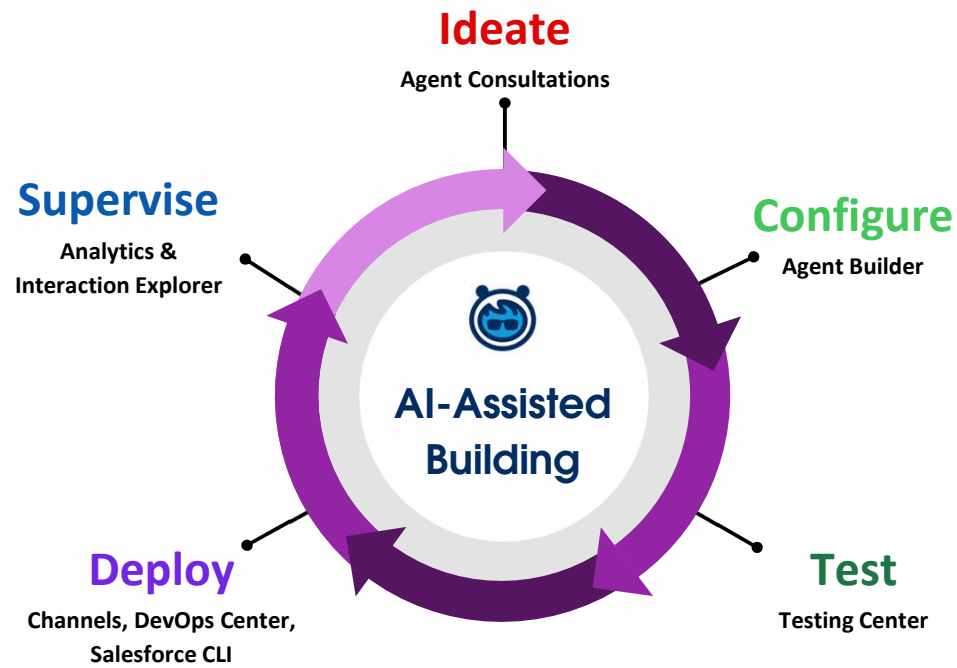
**Agent with  
>10 Topics**

**Debugging  
& updating?**

**Agent Scope**



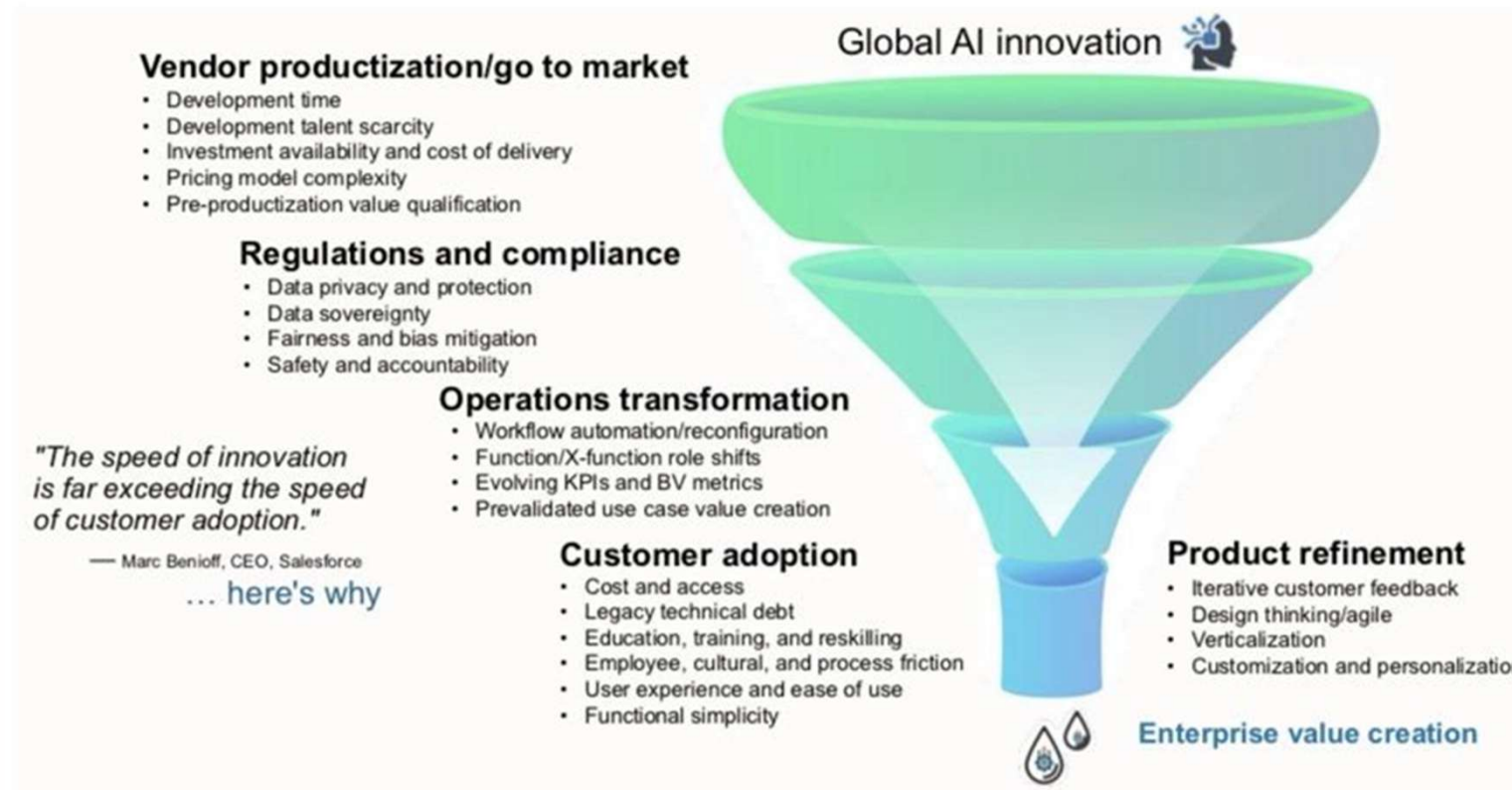
# Issue 3 Supervision: Beware Launch and Leave



# Issue 4: Adoption a Big Cause of AI Delays



## The speed of AI value creation in applications



Don't "De-weird"  
AI and "slot into  
existing processes"

The Economist

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By Invitation | Keep it unreal

## The IT department: Where AI goes to die

Ethan Mollick on why employers should treat AI as what it is: weird

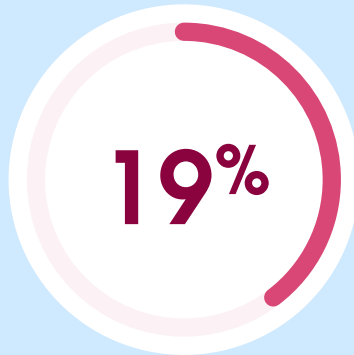
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# Issue 5: AI Agent Impact on Jobs



Customer Service



Average turnover rate in the last year of employees in customer service

Sales



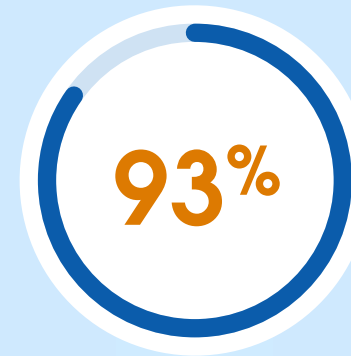
of top of the funnel activities automated\*

Middle Management



of CEOs will use AI to de-layer middle management within 5 years

Outsourcing

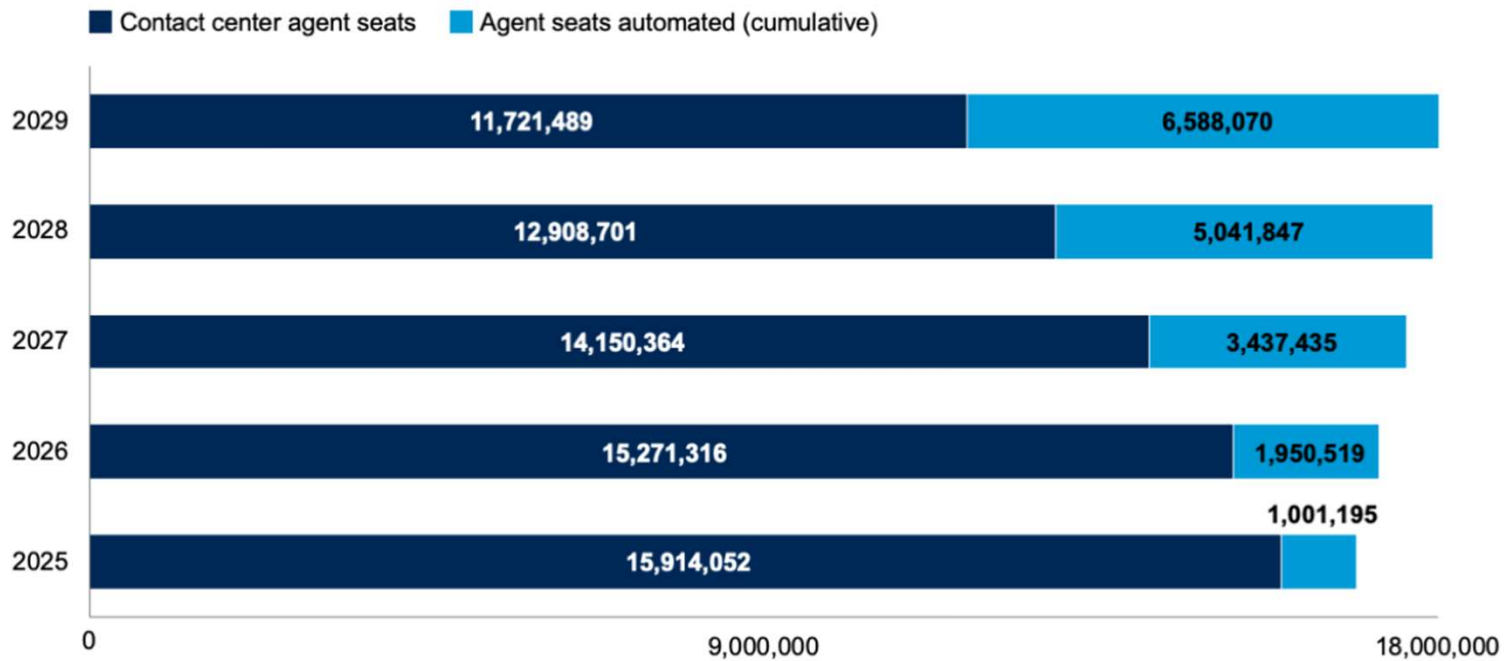


75%-93% interested in AI-powered outsourcing

# Contact Center Jobs Impact of AI Agent Forecast



## Contact Center Agent Seats Projection



Source: Gartner

# Early-career Employees: Impact of GenAI



## Canaries in the Coal Mine? Six Facts about the Recent Employment Effects of Artificial Intelligence

Erik Brynjolfsson\*      Bharat Chandar†      Ruyu Chen‡§¶

November 13, 2025

### **Abstract**

Using high-frequency administrative data from ADP, we document six facts characterizing labor market shifts following the widespread adoption of generative AI. Early-career workers (ages 22-25) in AI-exposed occupations experienced 16% relative employment declines, controlling for firm-level shocks, while employment for experienced workers remained stable. Adjustments occur primarily via employment rather than compensation, with employment changes concentrated in occupations where AI automates rather than augments labor. Results are robust to excluding technology firms and occupations that are remotable. These six facts provide early large-scale evidence consistent with generative AI disproportionately impacting entry-level workers in the American labor market.

# The Bottom Line



**Start simple:** do not get sucked into focusing on the **most complex use cases**

1

**Buy for parity, build for advantage:** focus build on your core differentiators

4

**Be honest with employees:** there will be job losses

7

**Prove it first:** move from **task to process to end to end journey**

2

**Seek out revenue generating AI use cases** once 5-10 efficiency use cases are live

5

**Don't stop recruiting** new young employees

8

**Treat AI Agents like humans:** recruit, train, monitor and retire

3

**Don't have IT own AI:** business leaders must be **accountable** for AI Agents not IT

6

**Prepare for the shift** from **automation to operating model** reinvention

9



# Q&A

## Contact information

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