FROM CONSTRAINTS
TO CAPABILITIES
AI AS A FORCE MULTIPLIER

BUSINESS **AGILITY**
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RESEARCH

EXECUTIVE **SUMMARY**

Over the past two years, organizations have invested in generative, predictive, and other modern Artificial Intelligence (AI) innovations at an unprecedented scale. The transformative potential of AI to streamline operations and amplify the effectiveness of staff is too great to ignore.

This report explores the potential of AI as a force multiplier to business outcomes; enabling people and teams to achieve significantly greater business outcomes than they could alone. This impact is highest when AI works alongside people, enhancing decision-making and creativity (augmentation) rather than replacing human effort (automation). This cooperative relationship redefines the role of people as "composers" who provide the inputs, quality control, and creative vision that AI cannot generate on its own.

The findings reveal that, even when organizations successfully complete their AI initiatives, they often fall short of achieving their anticipated business benefits. Despite its potential, the impact of AI is often undermined by organizational constraints and bureaucracy, such as rigid budgeting cycles, employee skill gaps, lengthy decision-making, and poor data quality.

Unlocking these constraints, and the potential of AI, requires a shift in traditional business practices. Leaders need to focus on new capabilities, such as cultivating a learning organization, funding work dynamically, streamlining workflows, and adopting governance systems that balance innovation with risk.

This human-centric approach provides a foundation for the ethical, responsible use of AI and maximizes its value as a transformative tool for innovation and growth. By addressing constraints and rethinking traditional business practices, leaders can ensure their organizations can compete at the speed of AI.

PRINCIPLES FOR **EFFECTIVE HUMAN-CENTRIC AI**

Augmentation, Not Automation:
Amplifying, not replacing, human-produced value.

From Creator to Composer:
Redefining the role of humans to direct AI's potential.

AI as a Force Multiplier:
Achieving greater business impact within existing capacity.

RESEARCH APPROACH: **THE EXPERT PANEL**

This study on the challenges, opportunities, and emerging trends in the field of AI, utilized the Delphi research method, a structured, iterative process designed to gather insights and achieve consensus from a panel of experts. Comprising specialists from diverse industries and fields, the expert panel contributed their expertise on AI adoption, integration, and impact. This collaborative approach ensured the study's conclusions were both comprehensive and practical for business leaders.

The Methods section has more detail on the panelists and research approach.

THE CURRENT AI LANDSCAPE

AI ADOPTION: VARIED BUT EXPANDING

Reflecting AI's broad potential, organizations are evaluating AI for a diverse range of needs. These range from leadership development to software engineering to bespoke strategic initiatives and, depending on the organization's capability, are either being undertaken in-house or by external specialized developers.

GENERATIVE AI: STILL A COMMON FOCUS

Generative AI solutions, including content and workflow automation, continue to be a dominant trend in many organizations. The investment in custom AI agents, personas, and workflows, underscores the value of tailoring Generative AI tools to specific needs.

BUREAUCRACY: LIMITING AI BENEFITS

When designed effectively, organizational bureaucracy balances governance controls against relevant risks. Unfortunately, the bureaucracy in most organizations is disproportionate, slowing down decision-making, stifling innovation, and limiting the agility needed to realize AI's potential.

THE POTENTIAL OF AI: A FORCE-MULTIPLIER

This study revealed the diverse array of AI initiatives and goals underway across different industries and organizations. Examples include leveraging generative AI to streamline repetitive and routine processes (such as commodity procurement or document preparation) and employing predictive models to enhance decision-making. Underscoring the versatility and potential of modern AI, a wide range of technologies are being adopted—including machine learning, natural language processing, and custom-built solutions. The diverse goals for AI across all organizations can be broadly classified as measurable improvements in 8 areas of business impact across 3 business areas: product & service delivery, business operations, and customer engagement.

Insights from the expert panel considered that, depending on the environment and context, organizations can expect AI to act as a force multiplier ranging from 1.2x (a small 20% improvement) to 3.2x (over 3 times better).

For example, a 2x multiplier in product development enables an organization to halve its time to market or double the product quality.

While most organizations will see improvements in these areas from AI, there is a massive difference between achieving a 20% versus a 320% improvement. Operational constraints and bureaucracy, such as rigid budgeting cycles, siloed structures, lengthy decision-making processes, or poor data quality, undermine and "absorb" the potential benefits of AI in many organizations. In other words, if AI can help you deliver a product 3x faster, can your leaders make decisions 3x faster?

AI MULTIPLIER TO PRODUCT & SERVICE DELIVERY

Workforce Capability

Using AI to augment individual skills and scale productivity/capacity.

1.6x — 3.2x

Innovation and Competitive Advantage

Using AI to drive breakthrough ideas and accelerate market experimentation & prototyping.

1.2x — 2.9x

Product Development

Using AI to accelerate time to market and improve product quality.

1.4x — 2.7x

AI MULTIPLIER TO **BUSINESS OPERATIONS**

Decision-Making

Using predictive-AI-generated insights to manage risk and enable smarter decisions.

1.3x — **3.0x**

Operational Efficiency

Using AI to reduce expenses and streamline key business processes.

1.2x — **2.5x**

AI MULTIPLIER TO **CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT**

Customer Availability

Using AI to ensure services are always available to customers.

1.6x — **2.8x**

Customer Experience and Personalization

Using AI to tailor interactions and meet individual customer needs.

1.4x — **2.7x**

Business Growth

Using AI to identify new market opportunities and reduce costs associated with business expansion.

1.4x — **2.7x**

BUT WAIT, **THERE'S MORE**

In addition to the quantifiable business impacts above, organizations reported other goals for their AI initiatives.

Human Elements: Many of the participating organizations stated explicit goals for the "human element" and the importance of AI in enhancing the employee experience. Improvements in employee satisfaction, job enrichment, and reduced burnout are expected from AI.

Shortsighted Goals: Some organizations are investing in AI initiatives that will have a limited (or negative) impact on the business. The most common are initiatives to leverage AI to reduce headcount through automation (rather than augmentation). The combination of a high implementation cost and low rate of success (e.g. systems producing a large number of errors) means that these initiatives often have a low (or negative) ROI. Especially when other automation technologies (e.g. Robotic Process Automation) are readily available.

WILL ORGANIZATIONS SEE A POSITIVE ROI FROM AI INITIATIVES?

Yes, Already Seeing It
24% of respondents cited having already seen increased and measurable operational efficiency, revenue, brand relevance, and customer value.

WE WILL 59%   NO 18%   24% YES
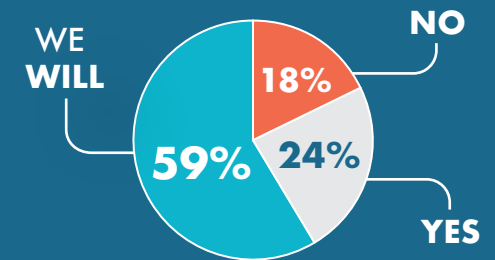
Yes, We Will See It
59% of respondents believe they will see future returns, citing their strategic and cultural readiness. This confidence comes from having AI initiatives aligned with organizational goals, employees empowered to use the tools effectively, and a long-term commitment to its value

No, Too Many Barriers
18% of respondents expressed skepticism about achieving a positive ROI from their current AI initiatives. Misalignment of initiatives with business goals and ambiguity/lack of metrics to measure AI impact accurately were commonly cited.

THE GAP BETWEEN AI POTENTIAL
AND REALIZATION

The Theory of Constraints, as described by Eliyahu Goldratt in The Goal, highlights that every system has at least one limiting factor that determines its maximum performance. In organizations, these constraints are often complex and set the upper limit for business outcomes.

Most businesses can't fully operate at the "speed of AI." Without improving the organizational system it operates within, companies may see little benefit from AI. Worse still, AI can actually amplify existing constraints, further limiting its potential. Leaders may then falsely attribute these limitations to AI itself and rashly scrap their AI strategy.

Despite the differences in size, structure, and operating model, this study identified six constraints that most organizations have in common, albeit with different levels of severity.

CONSTRAINT IMPACT SCORE

The expert panel evaluated the degree of impact of each constraint on AI, assigning scores from 1 (a minor inconvenience) to 5 (a critical bottleneck or major obstacle).

KEY: ⊗⊗⊗⊗⊗ Minor constraint

⊗⊗⊗⊗⊗ Critical constraint

LONG **BUDGETING CYCLES**

⊗⊗⊗⊗◑

The traditional process of creating annual plan-based budgets limits organizations from dynamically reallocating funds to fast-emergent opportunities. Long budget cycles struggle to keep pace with AI advancements, and organizations miss out on benefits when funding is delayed. In contrast, organizations that have adopted more dynamic and flexible funding models—such as platform-based funding, rolling budgets, or Beyond Budgeting practices—are better equipped to execute initiatives quickly and respond to opportunities as they arise.

SLOW (OR COMMITTEE-BASED) **DECISION MAKING**

⊗⊗⊗⊗◑

While AI can enhance decision-making, misunderstandings of AI capabilities (both under and over-estimated) lead to strategic paralysis and slow progress. Organizations that develop faster decision-making systems and associated leader competence for decision cycles that integrate AI insights, without over-reliance on them, ensure they can make timely data-based decisions.

POOR **DATA QUALITY**

⊗⊗⊗⊗◑

AI relies on high-quality data to produce accurate and reliable outputs, while poor data results in biased or ineffective solutions. Unfortunately, while organizations often report that their AI models are improving, many continue to struggle with inconsistent data management processes, legacy data technical debt, unclear data architecture, and an over-reliance on generic models. The result can be significant delays, unexpected costs, and quality issues with their AI initiatives. In other words, "garbage in, garbage out".

GAPS IN **WORKFORCE TALENT**

The rapid pace of AI development requires organizations to quickly upskill current employees or hire new talent. Regardless of role, as AI takes on many core tasks, individuals need a new set of skills to effectively collaborate with AI; transitioning from "creator" to "composer". For example, software developers have traditionally written code themselves. When working with AI, a developer needs to move to act as a composer - guiding their AI colleague through requirements analysis, prompt engineering, quality control, and integration. Organizations that establish education pathways tailored to these emerging needs will be significantly faster in leveraging AI.

DISPROPORTIONATE **BUREACRACY & GOVERNANCE**

Internal compliance processes often fail to strike the right balance between enabling innovation and managing risks. Many organizations either enforce overly restrictive policies or lack clear guidelines, leaving AI initiatives uncertain about how to proceed. Effective compliance frameworks foster innovation without stifling progress. While lightweight, yet effective controls, allow for rapid validation of AI outputs while ensuring they are accurate, ethical, and safe.

LOW TRUST **IN AI OUTPUTS**

As AI adoption grows, legitimate concerns about inaccurate or harmful outputs, such as hallucinations, have undermined trust in the technology. Additionally, increasing reliance on AI-generated data diminishes the availability of original sources for training models, compounding the issue. Organizations must build trust gradually by carefully implementing AI, demonstrating its value, and maintaining human oversight. Clear quality control processes and strong change leadership are essential to ensure AI integration aligns with organizational readiness and builds confidence in its use.

These are the top areas that, based on this study, are limiting organizations from achieving the full potential of their AI initiatives. Other constraints that were identified include ineffective change management processes, slow responses to market or customer feedback, ineffective quality control processes, and delays caused by lagging external partners (supply chain).

To unlock the potential of AI, organizations need to be willing to resolve their most limiting constraints by building new business capabilities and behaviors. This is a continuous process, as resolving one constraint will expose the next constraint in the system.

THE CAPABILITY TO
REALIZE AI'S POTENTIAL

Cultivate a "Learning Organization"

Unleash Workflow Creatively

Fund Work Dynamically

Realize People's Potential

Sense & Respond Proactively

Prioritize. Prioritize. Prioritize.

Balance Governance And Risk

Despite the constraints limiting AI's potential impact, its promise lies in amplifying the effectiveness of individuals and teams. By augmenting domain expertise and workforce capacity, AI enables organizations to explore and implement innovative ideas previously out of reach.

But to realize AI's full potential, organizations must focus on and develop human-centric business capabilities, such as those outlined in the Domains of Business Agility.

Based on previous research by the Business Agility Institute, as well as other studies of over two thousand companies, the Domains of Business Agility is a comprehensive model of 84 behaviors and 18 capabilities found in modern, human-centric organizations. Specifically, those that are highly responsive to market changes regardless of size or industry.

Using this model as a base, the expert panel identified the following 7 business agility capabilities as those *generally* most effective at overcoming the constraints to AI's potential impact. However, because each organization faces unique challenges and constraints, the most critical capabilities to focus on first may vary.

LEARN MORE
https://ba.institute/domains

THE ABILITY TO **CULTIVATE A "LEARNING ORGANIZATION"**

A learning organization embraces both planned learning opportunities and unexpected lessons from mistakes, with openness to experimentation and failure.

Adaptability, critical thinking, and a growth mindset are vital skills in organizations that aim to stay competitive. Although AI's transformative potential can benefit all organizations regardless of their cultural stance on learning, without continuous learning, organizations risk falling behind competitors, misinterpreting AI's potential, and fostering resistance to AI. In contrast, fostering a strong learning culture promotes innovation, enhances employee engagement, and prevents stagnation.

THE ABILITY TO **UNLEASH WORKFLOW CREATIVELY**

Truly agile organizations prioritize optimizing end-to-end workflows over efficiency, focusing on creatively addressing critical constraints to maintain system effectiveness.

With many organizations constrained by complex and siloed workflows, each handoff between business areas adds delays and limitations to AI. In contrast, when workflows are appropriately designed and optimized, AI can seamlessly integrate into the process, further automating repetitive tasks, detecting emergent patterns earlier, and ensuring the efficient flow of AI-driven insights between teams. This creates an environment where AI can thrive, driving greater efficiency, productivity, and overall business impact.

THE ABILITY TO **SENSE & RESPOND PROACTIVELY**

Modern organizations can no longer afford to take a "wait and see" approach but need to proactively scan for emerging patterns and trends to make informed, but bold, leaps.

AI's strength lies in its ability to identify patterns earlier and across more diverse data sets. However, as AI tools become more accessible, competitors can analyze the same data, making swift and effective responses a key differentiator. Organizations that can sense changes quickly and adjust proactively have an advantage in assessing whether their strategies are successful and pivoting as needed. This iterative process creates a continuous feedback loop, allowing for greater agility and resilience. By cultivating the ability to sense and respond dynamically, businesses not only unlock AI's potential for enhanced insights but also position themselves to create greater value in a rapidly evolving landscape.

THE ABILITY TO **PRIORITIZE. PRIORITIZE. PRIORITIZE.**

Leadership must relentlessly, and continuously, prioritize work to align with organizational goals, ensuring focused delivery of what matters most.

AI's potential to present vast possibilities creates the risk of losing focus, and without effective prioritization capabilities, organizations risk spreading themselves too thin or pursuing initiatives that offer limited value. In contrast, by focusing and aligning the use of AI against prioritized strategic goals and customer needs, organizations can channel their investments and energy into the areas with the greatest potential impact. Clear priorities also enable faster decision-making and streamline staff and resource allocation, allowing businesses to act on AI insights more quickly to maintain a competitive edge.

THE ABILITY TO **FUND WORK DYNAMICALLY**

Agile organizations can dynamically reallocate funds to high-impact opportunities, adapting at any time to changing circumstances and emerging needs.

Organizations unable to move allocated funds, quickly and easily, run the risk of missing opportunities that arise from the emergent learning of AI. In other words, AI's ability to uncover new opportunities for innovation, growth, and customer value is only impactful if businesses can quickly allocate funds to seize these opportunities.

Traditional budgeting processes often leave opportunities untapped as funds remain locked in predefined categories or lengthy approval processes. Dynamic funding models, such as platform funding, rolling budgets, or outcome-based allocations, empower organizations to respond swiftly to emergent opportunities identified by AI.

THE ABILITY TO **REALIZE PEOPLE'S POTENTIAL**

Realizing people's potential requires a partnership between leaders to nurture growth opportunities while individuals take responsibility for their own development.

When organizations invest in identifying and nurturing the unique strengths of their workforce, they empower employees to leverage AI as an enhancer of their capabilities, rather than as a replacement. But more than this, new skills and capabilities are required at all levels of the organization to enable an effective and collaborative human-AI workflow.

To this end, organizations face critical decisions and must weigh the tradeoff between upskilling their existing workforce and hiring new talent with the necessary expertise. Investing in upskilling ensures continuity, leverages institutional knowledge, and fosters employee loyalty, while hiring new talent can quickly address skill gaps but risks disrupting organizational culture. Organizations that fail to develop these new skills across their workforce risk underutilizing AI and losing talent.

THE ABILITY TO **BALANCE GOVERNANCE AND RISK**

Good governance enables faster results by empowering teams and removing obstacles to delivering customer value.

The ability to balance governance and risk is crucial to ensure that AI initiatives are both effective and ethically sound. Proper governance frameworks provide clear guidelines and oversight for using AI responsibly, mitigating risks such as bias, data drift, and compliance failures while fostering trust among stakeholders.

However, striking the right balance with the real level of risk is essential. Overly rigid policies can stifle innovation, while insufficient controls can expose the organization to legal, reputational, and operational risks. By implementing lightweight, adaptive governance systems, organizations can validate AI outputs quickly and safely, enabling faster deployment and experimentation. This balance allows businesses to harness AI's potential for innovation and efficiency while safeguarding against unintended consequences.

The expert panel noted that most of the other capabilities within the Domains of Business Agility had a moderate impact on enabling AI benefits.

Realizing AI's potential lies in the intersection of AI technology, strategic intent, and human empowerment. By cultivating these key business agility capabilities, organizations can overcome the constraints that limit AI's impact while equipping people to thrive in an AI-driven world.

KEEP THE **HUMAN IN THE LOOP**

Done well, the collaborative relationship between humans and AI enables organizations to consider innovative solutions to customer needs while addressing business challenges more efficiently, ethically, and responsibly. The value of human contribution within the organization needs to be the single greatest consideration for leaders.

Toward this goal, there are three key principles that organizations must keep in mind for effective AI outcomes.

AUGMENTATION, **NOT AUTOMATION**

AI systems, especially Generative and Predictive AI systems, are expensive and ineffective automation tools compared to dedicated automation technologies (such as Robotic Process Automation). Organizations using AI technologies for automation often reported high-severity errors and rarely reported a positive return on investment.

In contrast, the majority of successful use cases come from organizations using AI technologies to augment their existing workforce with new skills and capacity—leveraging improved decision-making, creative collaboration, or predictive insights. These organizations can deliver value far beyond what traditional automation can achieve by recognizing AI as a tool to complement human ingenuity rather than attempting to replace it.

For example, predictive analytics can help sales teams prioritize leads, while generative AI can assist marketing teams in crafting personalized content at scale. These tools enhance human decision-making and execution, amplifying productivity without diminishing the importance of human judgment and expertise. While without human oversight, AI systems can produce biased or inaccurate results, potentially amplifying errors instead of outcomes.

FROM CREATOR **TO COMPOSER**

"AI is an unlimited number of junior engineers that work with you."

As this quote from the expert panel succinctly describes, an As this quote from the expert panel succinctly describes, an AI-augmented workforce can accomplish in moments, activities that once required hours of manual effort.

However, this requires a fundamental redefinition of the role of humans in the workforce. Individuals need to transition from being hands-on creators to "composers" who strategically curate and refine inputs, assess outputs critically against the desired goals, and provide the creative vision that AI cannot generate on its own. It's not about relinquishing control but each person embracing a new level of leadership and synthesis.

The challenge for individuals, then, is not just learning how to use AI tools but mastering how to coordinate them effectively. For example, a marketer might leverage AI to generate campaign ideas but must ensure they align with brand values and resonate with the target audience.
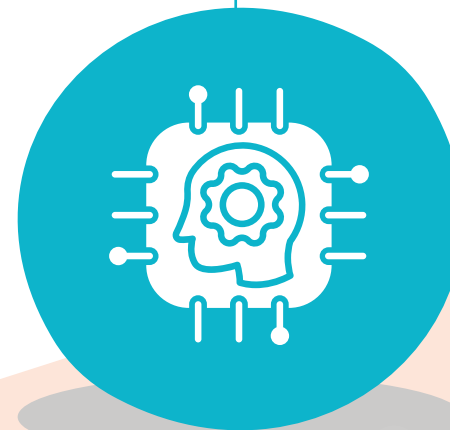
AI AS **A FORCE MULTIPLIER**

A force multiplier is any factor or tool that significantly increases the effectiveness, impact, or output of a person, team, or organization without requiring a proportional increase in resources or effort. For example, a 2x multiplier in product development enables an organization to halve its time to market or double the product quality.

This, when effectively integrated, is the true benefit of AI.

By enhancing the scale, precision, and speed of human work, an AI augmented workforce can deliver exponentially greater outcomes, drive innovation at an unprecedented scale, and tackle challenges and opportunities that would otherwise be out of reach.

However, as this report has shown, the effectiveness of AI as a force multiplier is often constrained by the bureaucracy of the organization. Without prioritizing the identification and removal of these constraints (by focusing on and cultivating modern business capabilities), many organizations are wasting their investment in AI technologies.

SO WHAT, **NOW WHAT**

With many organizations seeing the potential impact of AI absorbed by their bureaucracy, skill gaps, and outdated workflows, the urgency to act is clear. While there are many actions companies can take, we suggest starting with these three.

HELP EMPLOYEES **WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH AI**

The skills needed to "compose" AI outputs vastly differ from those required to "create" the work in the first place. We recommend investing in upskilling employees in prompt engineering, data literacy, and AI-augmented decision-making. Leaders should also redefine their expectations of their teams and rethink how they evaluate performance. Rather than traditional notions of measuring effort, leaders need to move toward evaluating impact and orchestration.

FIX WORKFLOWS **TO REMOVE AI BARRIERS**

AI will not magically improve productivity stuck in slow and outdated workflows. However, before redesigning workflows, we recommend clearly defining the expected impact of AI (i.e., a productivity multiplier or customer availability multiplier). With these clear goals, systematically map out how work actually gets done and identify critical constraints, like unnecessary approvals, slow decision-making, and bottlenecks. Once identified, act to remove each constraint and redesign the workflows around the integration of AI.

ASSESS WHERE THE ORGANIZATION IS **(AND WHERE IT'S NOT)**

Optimizing and improving individual workflows helps to unlock AI's potential in the immediate area. To fully unlock its broader potential, new capabilities must be ingrained across the organization. This requires investment to assess the current state of their capabilities. Assessments, like the Business Agility Profile, highlight areas that need more transformational focus and develop the capabilities that enable AI to achieve greater business impact.

With these, AI won't become another stalled, underutilized technology.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed the Delphi method, a structured, iterative process designed to gather insights and achieve consensus from a panel of experts. The Delphi method was chosen for its ability to harness collective intelligence and facilitate the synthesis of diverse perspectives across multiple rounds of consultation.

PANEL SELECTION

The expert panel consisted of 18 individuals selected based on their expertise in either Business Agility or AI development and strategy across various industries, including technology, aerospace, telecommunications, healthcare, and professional services. Panelists were identified through professional networks, industry affiliations, and peer recommendations, ensuring a diverse range of experiences and viewpoints.

DATA COLLECTION AND ITERATIVE ROUNDS

The study was conducted over four iterative rounds. In the first round, open-ended questions were used to capture a broad range of perspectives on AI adoption, benefits, and constraints alongside perspectives of business agility capabilities. Responses were analyzed to identify recurring themes and key areas of focus. In the second round, panelists were presented with a summary of the first-round findings and asked to provide feedback, prioritize issues, and elaborate on areas of disagreement. The third round refined the findings further, seeking consensus on critical factors and AI force multipliers. The fourth and final round was a series of group calls to clarify and finalize any open questions or insights from the panel.

Quantitative ranking and qualitative commentary were incorporated in each round to balance measurable insights with nuanced expert input.

DATA ANALYSIS

Responses from each round were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify patterns and consensus areas. Quantitative data, such as rankings and ratings, were statistically summarized to highlight priority issues, while qualitative feedback provided contextual depth and illustrative examples. Discrepancies between panelists' views were explored to ensure a comprehensive understanding of divergent perspectives.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Participation in the study was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all panelists. Responses were anonymized to encourage openness and mitigate biases. The iterative design ensured that panelists could review and refine their inputs based on collective feedback, enhancing the reliability and credibility of the findings.

By leveraging the Delphi method, the study achieved a robust and iterative examination of the role of AI in business, providing actionable insights grounded in expert consensus.

A NOTE ON AI TECHNOLOGY

Different AI technologies were being adopted by participating organizations. Generative AI, Predictive AI, Machine Learning, and NLP systems were most common, although other technologies such as Neural Networks, Computer Vision, and Digital Twins were also explored. Throughout this report, unless explicitly called out, we will refer to all of these as AI.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

This report is only possible through the gift of time, knowledge, and leadership from the research team. Special thanks to the expert panel and report authors for all their effort and insights.

All data collected through surveys is anonymized, securely stored, and made accessible only to those on the research team. Except where explicitly agreed, names of individuals, companies, and other potential identifiers have been removed or anonymized.

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  Gen AI Change Program Lead, Spark

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Four expert panel members requested to remain anonymous in the final report.

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ABOUT BAI

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We believe the businesses of tomorrow are agile, innovative, and resilient – perfectly designed to thrive in increasingly unpredictable markets.

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