

CF.WEBINAR

Starting Soon

How Is The AI Hype Translating
Into Real Business Value? +
Q&A

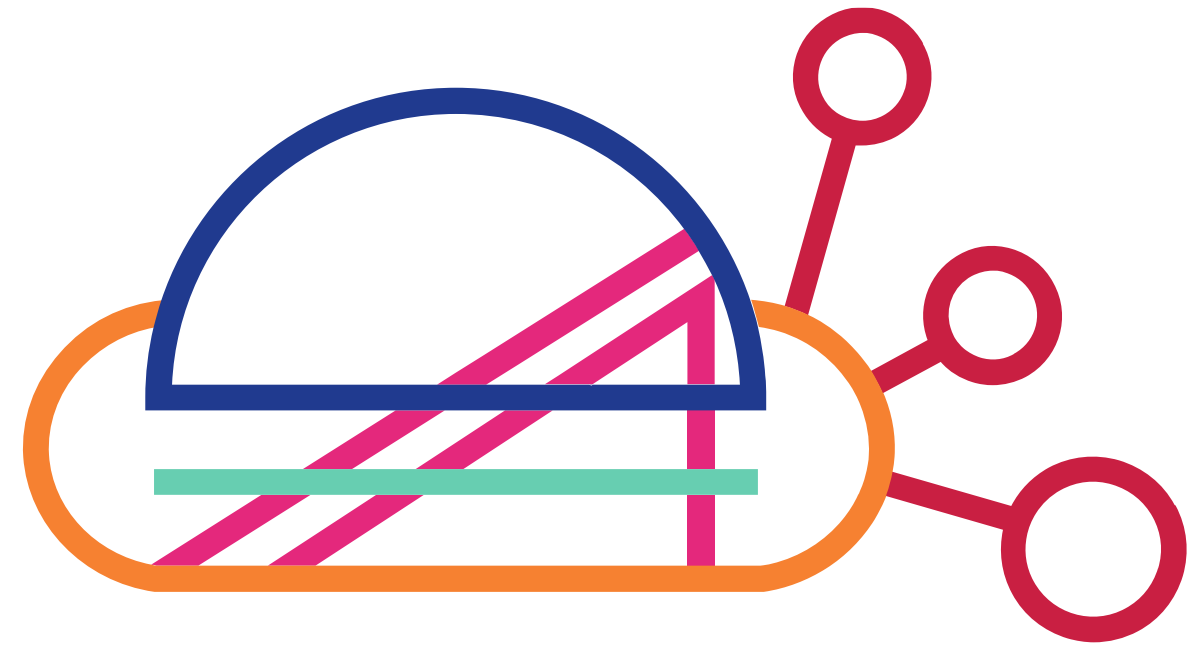
THURSDAY
26TH MARCH 2026
12.30PM - 1.30PM
GMT

Informed By The Cloud
Formations Data and
AI Survey 2025



DANIEL ADDY
CEO

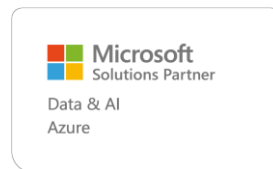




Cloud Formations

How Is The AI Hype Translating Into Real Business Value?

Cloud Formations Data & AI Survey 2025



Evertreen



Cloud Formations



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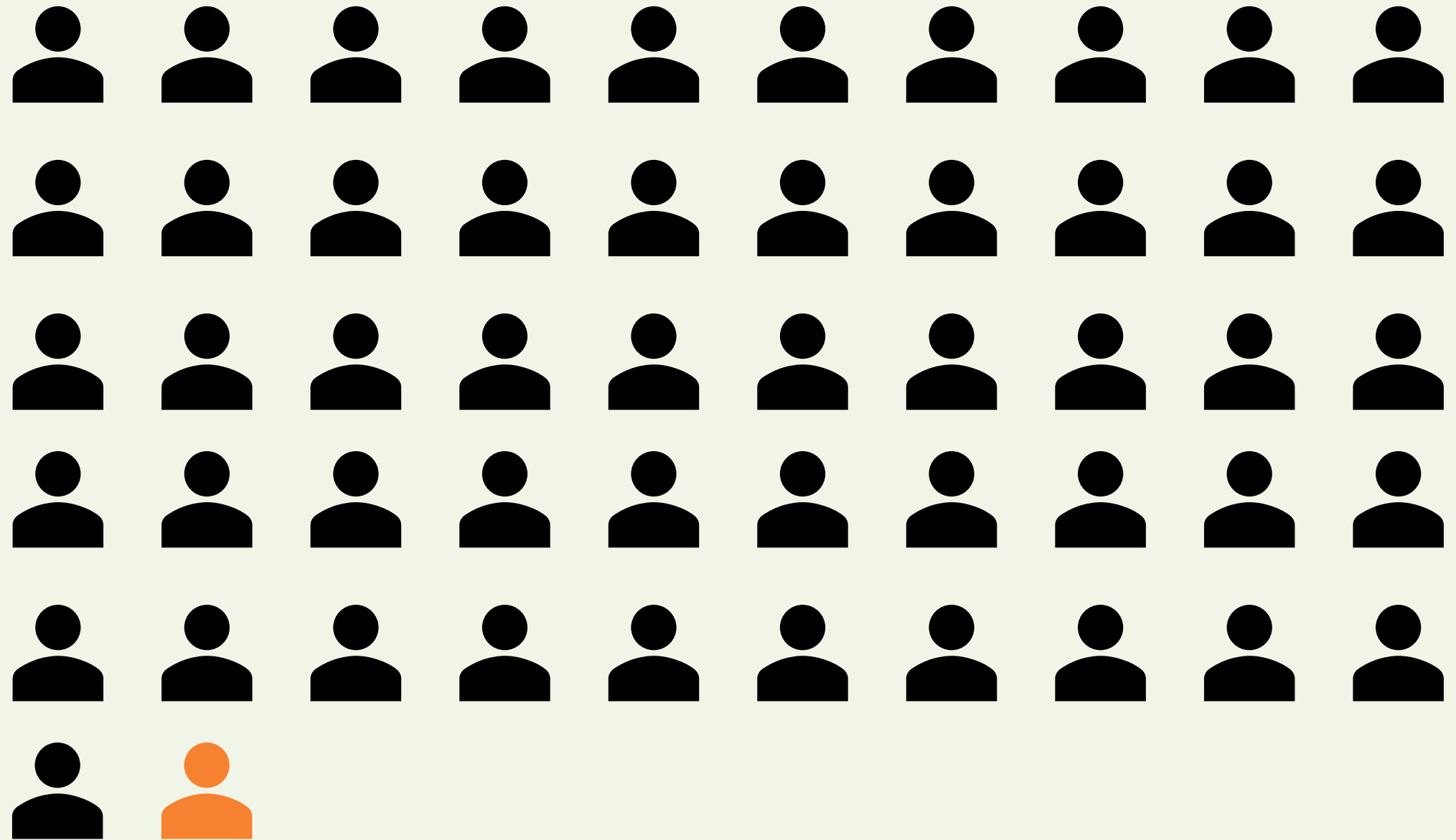
person, out of 52

said more than 75% of their AI projects
delivered value

1

person, out of 52

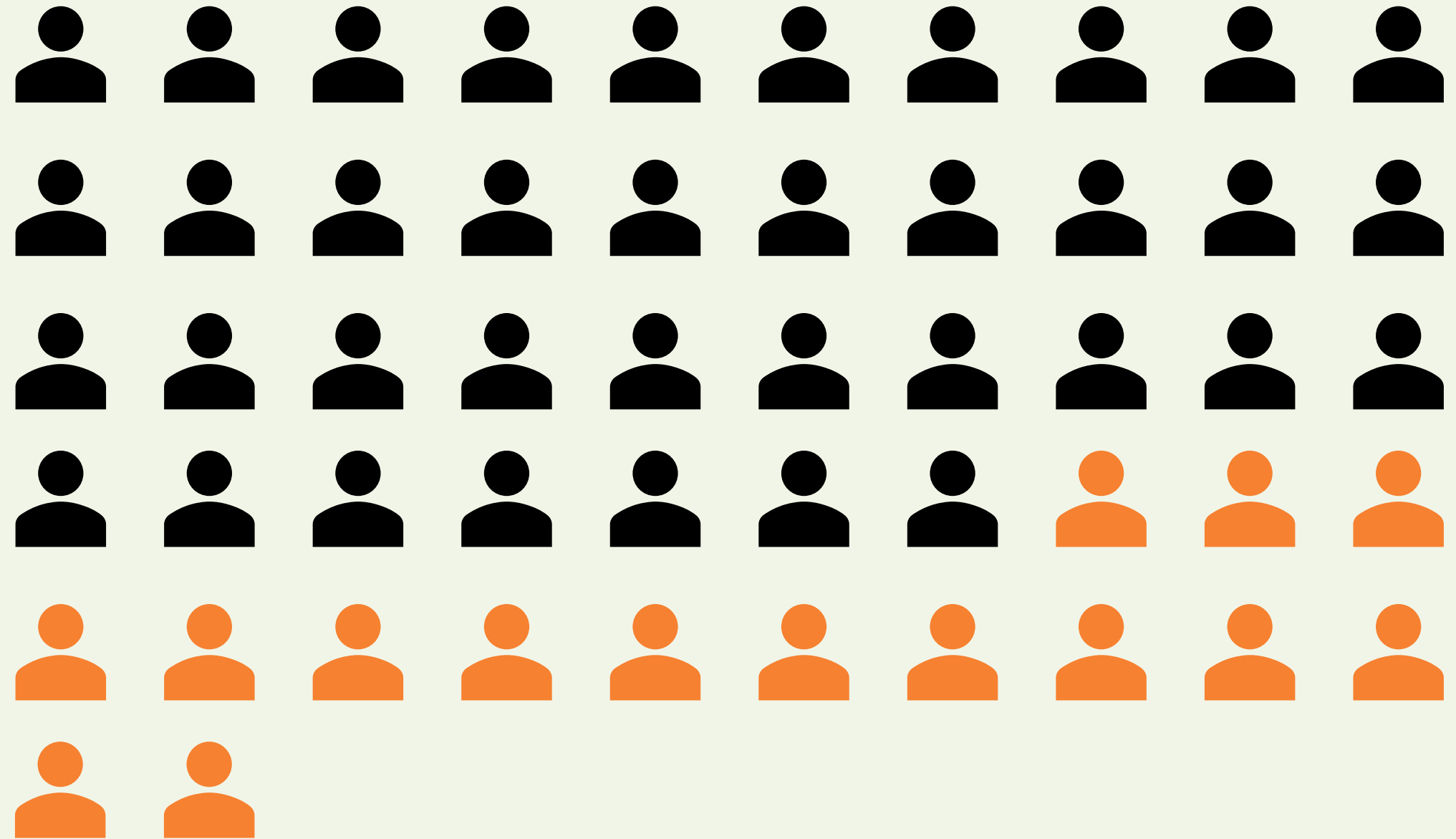
said more than 75% of their AI projects delivered value



15

people, out of 52

said more than **half** of their AI projects
delivered value



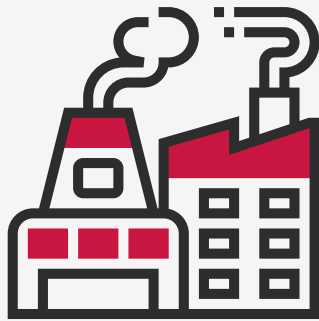
Who We Surveyed

52 frontline data and AI professionals. The people building and deploying AI, not approving the budget for it



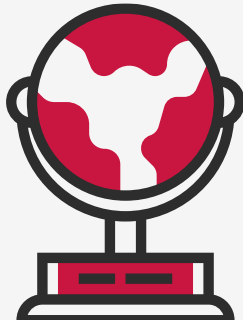
Roles

25% Data Engineer **19%** Consultant / Advisor
13% Data Architect **10%** Head of / Director



Industries

31% Consulting **17%** Financial Services
17% Technology **10%** Public Sector



Geography

58% UK **13%** W. Europe **12%** Nordics

What Our Respondents Said

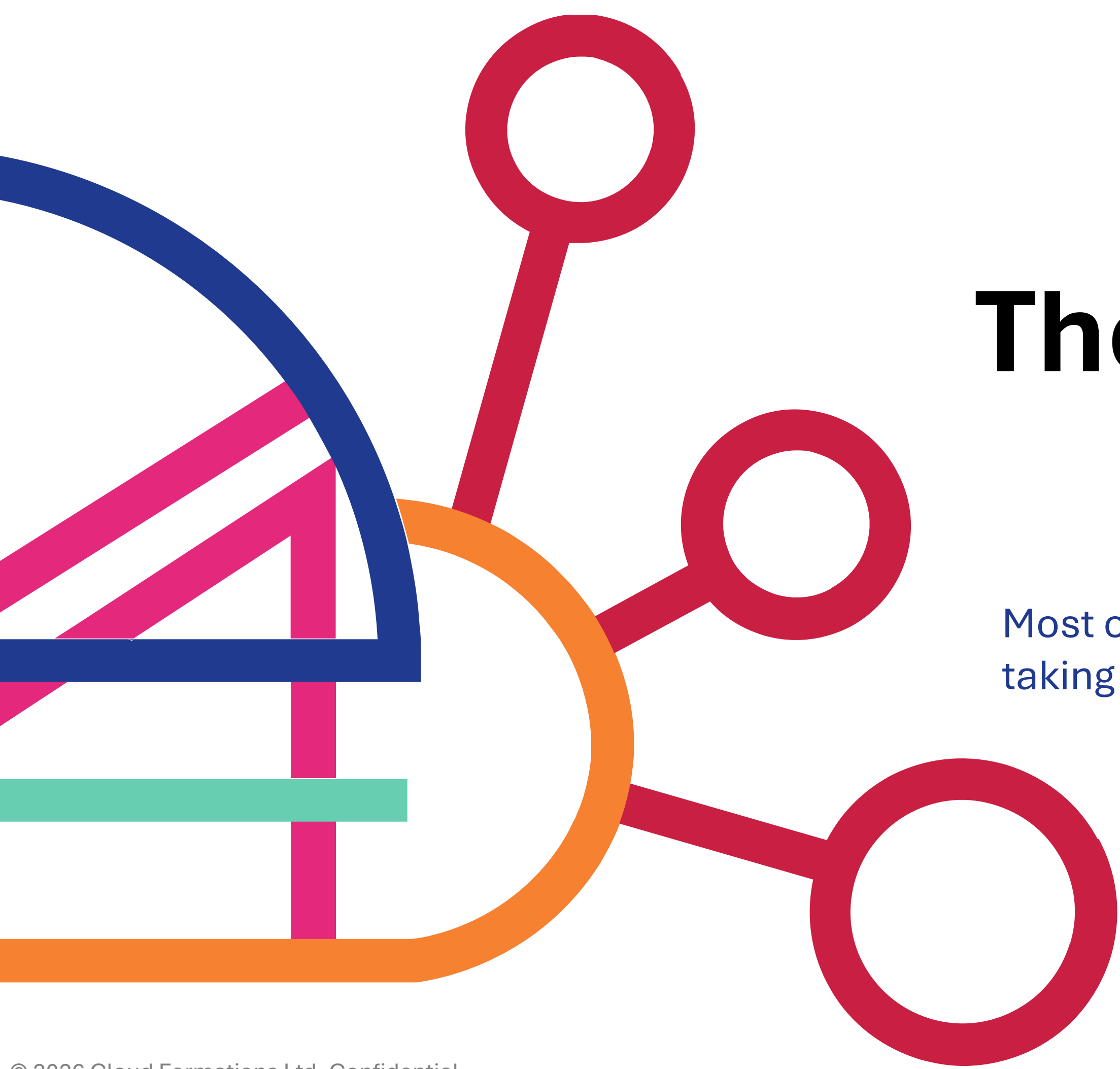
What will have the biggest impact on data and AI in 2026?

“I see AI leading efficiency gains, but not game changing transform just yet.”

Data Engineer, Technology

“When AI work starts feeling less like an IT project and more like a business transformation, that's when real value emerges.”

Data Product Manager, Public Sector

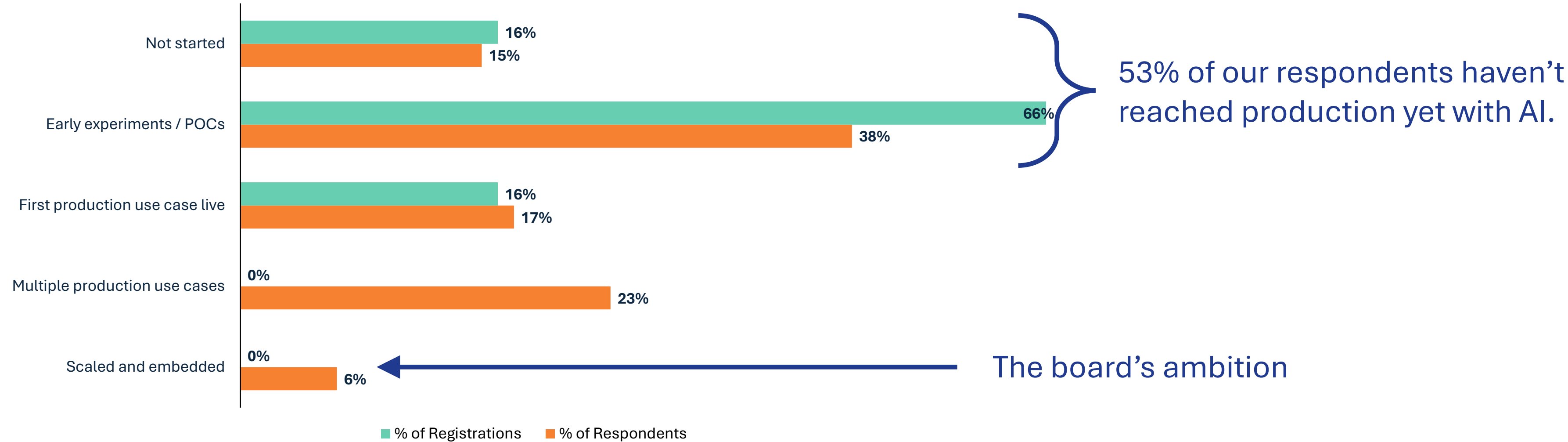


The State of Play

Most organisations are building the runway. Not taking off.

AI Maturity

Where would you say your organisation is on its AI journey?



So What?
This isn't a question of capability. What's blocking the path?

Data & AI Approach

How would you describe your approach to delivering data or AI work?

15%
Rapid & Iterative
Ship value and refine as you go.

50%
Prototype first, then harden.
A balance of speed and rigour.

21%
Planned releases.
Structured delivery with predictable cadence.

13%
Governance first
Minimise risk and follow defined processes

So What?

Does the **how** predict the **how far**?

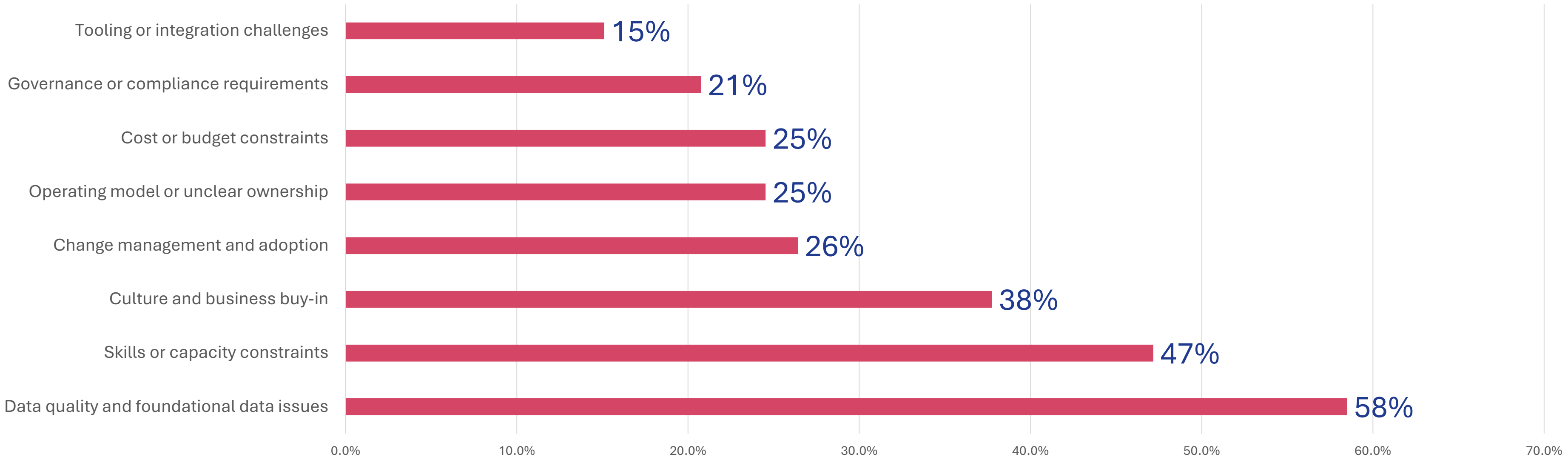
An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide. It features several thick, curved lines in dark blue, magenta, orange, and green. These lines are interconnected with three large, hollow red circles. The circles are arranged in a vertical line, with the top one being the smallest, the middle one medium, and the bottom one the largest. The lines appear to be part of a larger, partially visible structure on the left edge of the frame.

The Value Gap

AI isn't failing because of AI
It's failing because of foundations and leadership

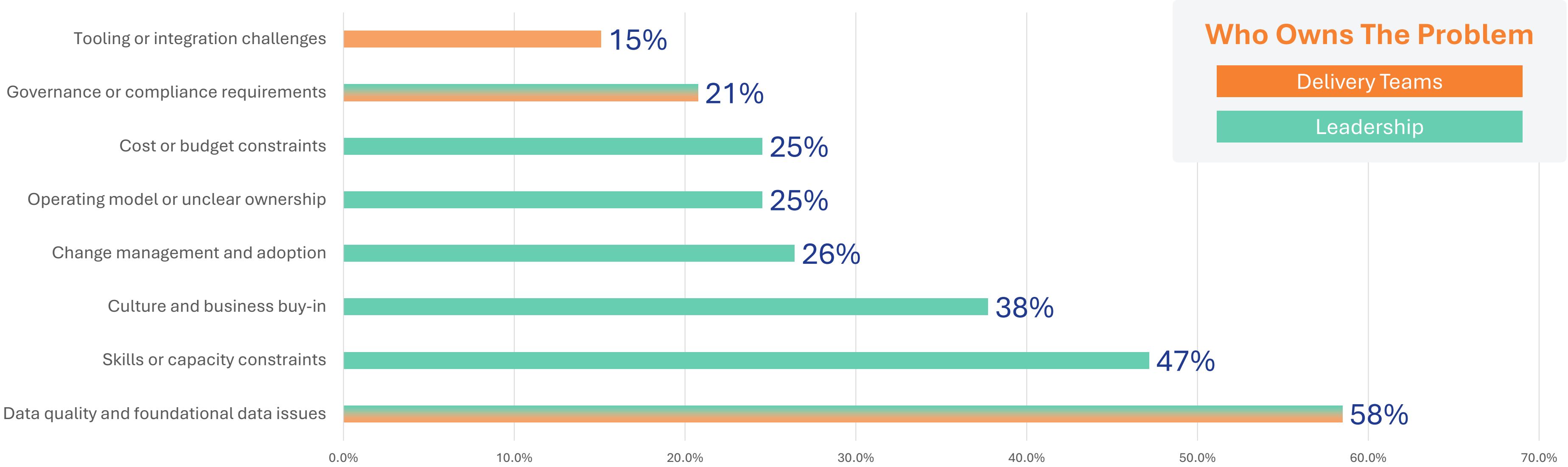
What's Blocking AI Value

Top blockers to AI value (% who selected as a top-3 barrier)



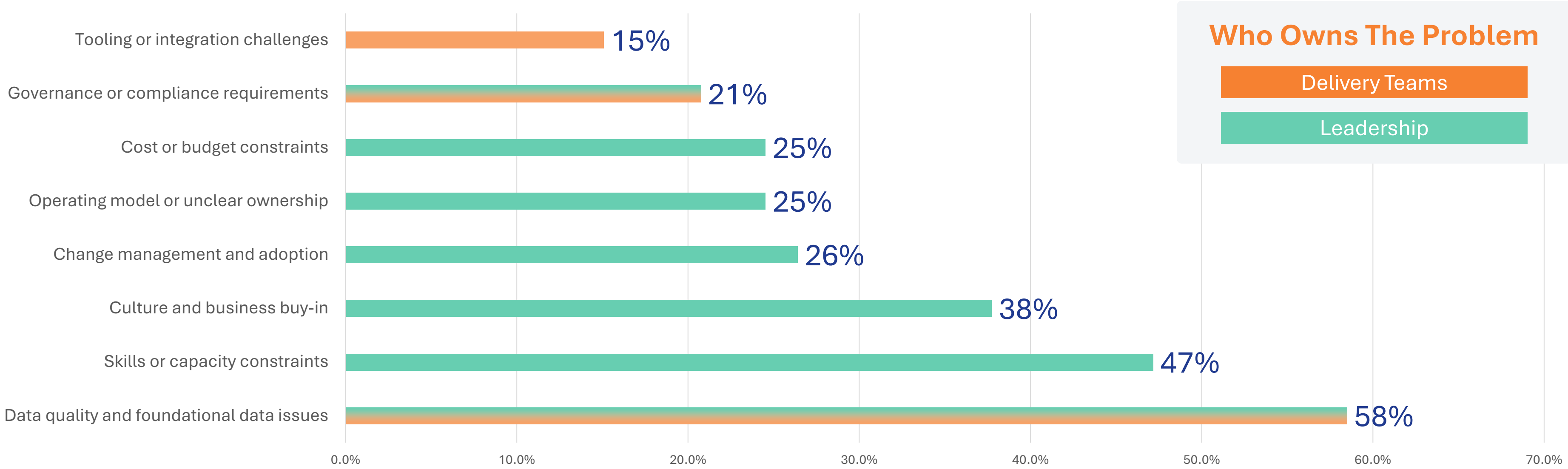
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Top blockers to AI value (% who selected as a top-3 barrier)



Who Owns The Problem

- Delivery Teams
- Leadership

So What?
Typical blockers aren't technical. They're organisational

What we see

Common failure modes

Sponsoring Without Committing

Sponsorship without presence isn't sponsorship. It's permission to fail quietly

Expecting AI Value Without Investing in Data Quality

Rubbish in, rubbish out. AI just gets you there faster

AI is an IT Project

AI value comes from a cultural shift, not a project deliverable

What Our Respondents Said

"Getting foundations in place when exec wants shiny sexy AI stuff without realising what they need."

Data Architect, Consulting

"Can't get away with shitty data models sprinkled with glitter in a report anymore. (This is good.)"

Data Engineer, Consulting

"When AI work starts from real business problems, projects are far more likely to land and scale."

Data Product Manager, Public Sector

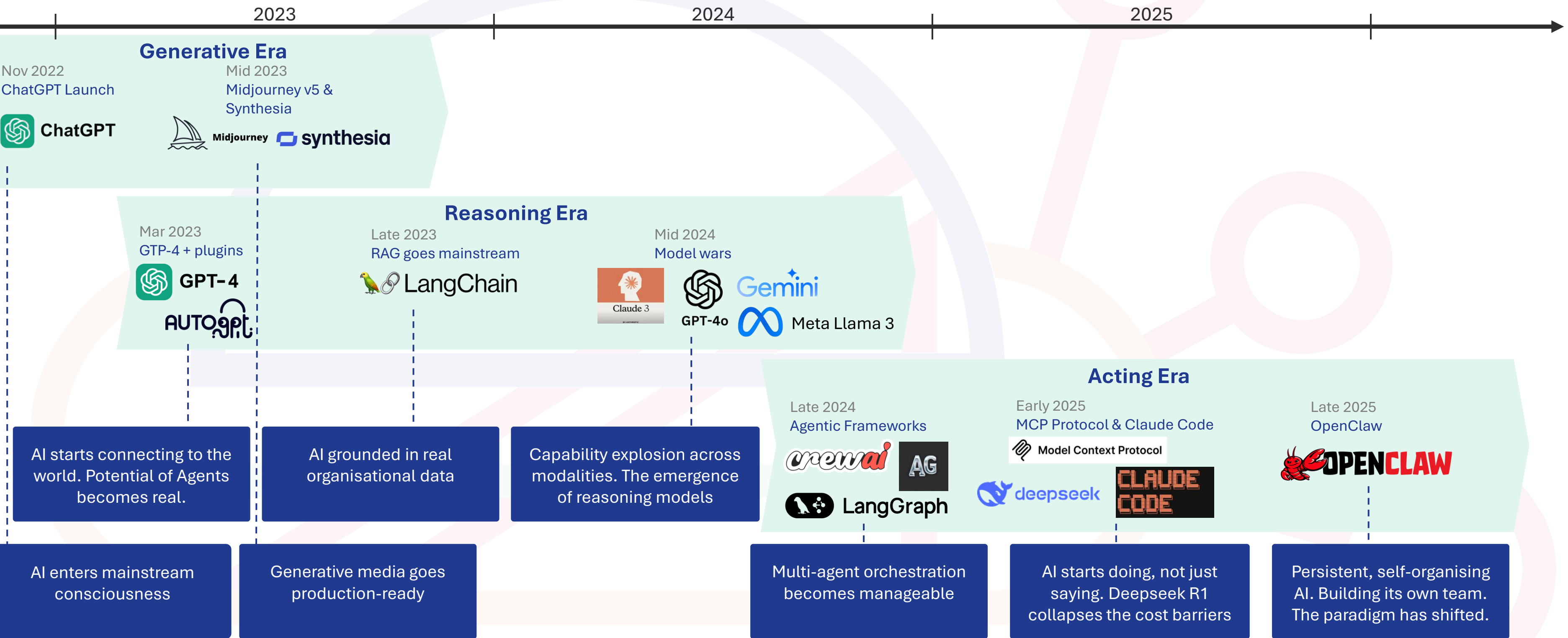
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Agentic AI: Value vs. Hype

The most anticipated and least understood shift in the AI landscape

A Brief History of Agentic AI

Three years that changed everything



The Hype vs. Reality Tension

What our respondents actually think about agentic AI

54%

Flagged 'autonomous agents' an overused buzzword of 2025
The hype was ahead of reality

42%

Rated agentic AI as their lowest priority
Most organisations aren't preparing for it yet.

30%

Of those using agentic AI said it underperformed expectations
When tried, it often disappoints

42%

Watching agentic and multimodal closely for 2026
Intent is there, it's a question of readiness

So What?

Agentic AI is coming whether organisations are ready or not.


What Agentic AI Actually Means

The key shift: from AI as an analytical layer to AI as an operational layer

Traditional AI

**You ask a question.
It gives you an answer.**

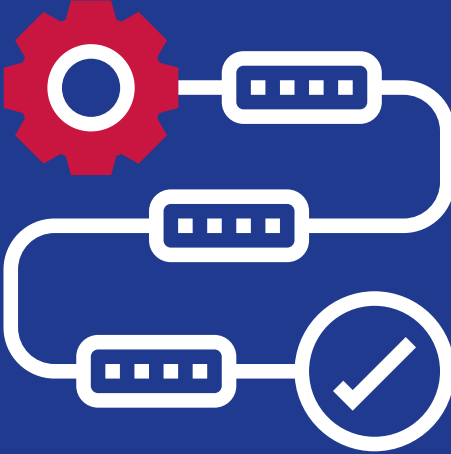
You act on the answer.



Agentic AI

**You define a goal.
It takes action to achieve it.**

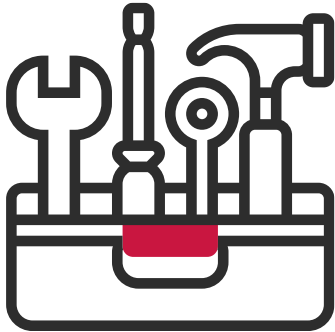
With minimal human intervention.



A model that gives a bad answer is annoying. An agent that takes a bad action can be costly.

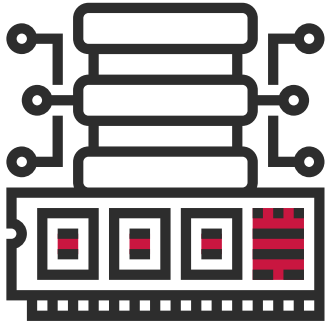
What Agentic AI Can Do

AI that doesn't just answer. AI that acts.



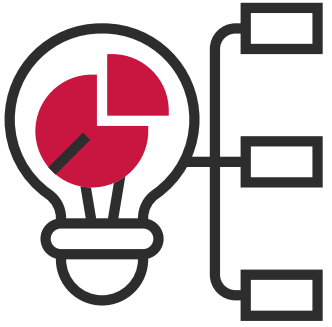
Tool Use

Connects to external systems. APIs, databases, browsers, code execution, file systems.



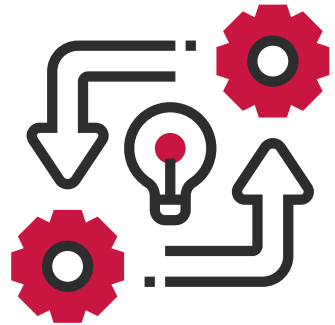
Persistent Memory

Remembers context across sessions. Learns from previous interactions, not just the current prompt.



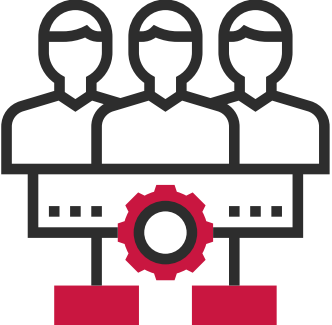
Goal Decomposition

Breaks complex objectives into executable steps. Replans when it hits obstacles.



Autonomous Action

Operates without step-by-step instruction. Sets and works its own task queue.



Multi-agent Coordination

Spawns and directs specialist agents. Builds its own team for complex workflows.



Environment Perception

Reads documents, interprets data, sees images, monitors system states.

These capabilities make an agent capable of doing real work.

That changes your risk model, your operating model, and your data model.

A Practical Framework for Agentic AI

Where it's working, where it's promising, and what to watch

Tier 1: Delivering Genuine Value Now

Code generation & developer workflows | Document processing & extraction at scale | Knowledge retrieval (RAG) & dissemination | Simple process automation

Maturity: Proven in production

Risk: Bounded, failures are visible and recoverable

Tier 2: Exploratory But Directionally Correct

Data pipeline orchestration | Sales & CRM enrichment | Automated reporting & commentary | Distributed process automation

Maturity: Promising but fragile

Risk: Moderate, data quality and human oversight are critical

Tier 3: Watch for 2026

End-to-end workflows across systems (MCP enabled) | Enterprise platform embedded agents | Autonomous multi-agent coordination

Maturity: Emerging

Risk: High, governance and regulation still catching up

Tier 1: Delivering Genuine Value Now

Proven use cases with clear, measurable ROI

Code Generation & Developer Workflows

Autonomous coding agents that write, test, and iterate entire features. The clearest ROI of any AI application.

- Why it works:
- Feedback loop is immediate
 - Code either works or it doesn't
 - Errors are visible and correctable
 - Scope is inherently bounded

Tools & Technology:

GitHub CoPilot
Inline assistance, mature and widely adopted

Claude Code
Autonomous agent, writes and iterates entire features end to end

Document Processing & Extraction at Scale

Insurance claims, legal reviews, financial document ingestion. The agents handle volume, humans handle exceptions.

- Why it works:
- High volume, repetitive, well-bounded
 - Doesn't need to be perfect
 - Exceptions route to humans

Tools & Technology:

Microsoft Azure Document Intelligence
Extraction from forms and unstructured docs

AWS Textract
High volume, cloud-scale document processing

LangChain document pipelines
open source, flexible, custom extraction workflows

Knowledge retrieval (RAG) & dissemination

Agents over internal data, policy docs, technical documentation, and support knowledge bases.

- Why it works:
- Bounded data keeps hallucination risk low
 - Queries are structured and answerable
 - Works when the data is maintained

Tools & Technology:

Microsoft Copilot / Fabric
RAG now default in platforms teams already use

LlamaIndex, LangChain
Open-source retrieval frameworks

Caution: Data quality directly determines output quality

Simple process automation

Agents that handle repetitive, rules-based workflows end to end. Form processing, data routing, notification triggers, approval chains.

- Why it works:
- Rules are explicit and testable
 - Agent behaviour is predictable
 - High repetition surfaces errors quickly
 - Human intervention on exceptions

Tools & Technology:

n8n / Make
Workflow automation with native AI nodes

Microsoft Power Automate
Process automation with Copilot integration

Custom LangChain agents
Bespoke routing and decisioning logic

High volume + repetitive + well bounded scope + fast feedback loop = reliable agent performance

Tier 2: Exploratory but Directionally Right

Promising but early. Invest with realistic expectations

Data pipeline orchestration

AI agents that monitor pipelines, diagnose failures, and trigger remediation.

Why it works:

- Pipelines have clear pass/fail signals
- Recovery actions are bounded: retry, reroute, alert, skip
- Failure volume at scale is time intensive
- Historical failure patterns are learnable

Tools & Technology:

Custom agents
No credible off-the-shelf agentic pipeline product exists yet

Sales & CRM enrichment

AI agents that continuously enrich prospect and customer records by pulling signals from web, news, and call transcripts.

Why it works:

- Structured & repeatable
- Event triggered
- Multi-source, multi-step write-back
- Feedback is instant

Tools & Technology:

Clay
Closest to agentic enrichment available today
Apollo.io / Zoominfo
Auto enrichment available through CRM integrations
Gong / Chorus
Conversation intelligence

Automated reporting & commentary

AI that generates narrative commentary on structured data, board packs, ops summaries, performance reports.

Why it works:

- The trigger is data landing
- Narrative structure is templated
- First draft output is low-risk (HITL)
- Scale quickly outpace human capacity

Tools & Technology:

Custom agents
Limited off-the-shelf agentic products
Microsoft Fabric Copilot
Narrative commentary in enterprise reporting
Databricks Genie
Foundational generated narrative outputs

Caution: Data quality directly determines output quality

Distributed process automation

AI handling routing logic and cross-system handoffs in multi-step enterprise workflows. Approval chains, data hand-offs, exception management.

Why it works:

- Multi-step, multi-system execution
- Exception routing is time intensive
- 24/7 operation requirements
- Audit trails emerge naturally

Tools & Technology:

n8n / Make
Workflow automation with native AI nodes
UiPath
RPA layer for legacy systems without APIs
Claude / GPT-4o
Decision and routing logic

Right use case + human in the loop + data foundations in place = worth the investment

Tier 3: Watch for 2026

Emerging. Track the trajectory and build the foundations

End-to-end workflows across systems (MCP enabled)

AI agents that execute complete business workflows across multiple enterprise systems. MCP standardisation enables no human handoffs between steps.

Why we're watching:

- MCP is maturing fast
- Potential is enormous
- Early movers now will benefit most when it matures

Tools & Technology:

MCP server ecosystem
Emerging standard connecting agents to enterprise systems
Claude / GPT-4o with MCP tools
Agents operating across connected systems
Zapier / n8n MCP integrations
Early workflow automation via MCP

Enterprise platform embedded agents

AI agents built directly into the enterprise platforms organisations already run. This removes the integration lift and puts AI where work already happens.

Why we're watching:

- No custom integrations needed
- Native governance and compliance
- Clean adoption path

Tools & Technology:

Salesforce Agentforce
Autonomous agents embedded in CRM workflows
Microsoft Copilot Studio
Agent builder across the M365 and Dynamics stack
ServiceNow AI Agents
Workflow automation across ITSM and enterprise ops

Autonomous multi-agent coordination

Multiple specialised agents orchestrating work between each other. Planning, delegating, and executing at a complexity no single agent can handle.

Why we're watching:

- Step change in problem complexities
- Dramatically expands automation potential
- Reliability and attribution still unsolved

Tools & Technology:

LangGraph
Stateful multi-agent orchestration framework
Microsoft AutoGen
Multi-agent conversation and task coordination
CrewAI
Role-based agent teams for structured task execution
OpenClaw + Claude Code
Credible autonomous multi-agent stack

Track the trajectory + understand the risk + build the foundations = ready when it arrives

The gap is already opening

The capability curve is moving faster than most boards realise

What's changed in the 90 days since this survey ran

MCP became infrastructure, not a protocol

The Linux Foundation took over MCP. No longer Anthropic's tool, it has become an industry standard

Enterprise platforms shipped a capability wave

Microsoft, Snowflake, NVIDIA, IBM, Salesforce all launched material agentic capabilities. These were coordinated, not incremental

Reasoning models reached professional-grade

GPT-5.4 has shipped explicitly for complex multi-step professional tasks

OpenClaw made autonomous agents tangible

250k GitHub stars in four months. The abstract idea of autonomous agents has become something anyone can run today

The maturity data you just saw is already conservative.

The window to build foundations is narrowing. **Not because AI is slowing down but because it won't**

60%

Of our respondents cited data quality as a top AI blocker

Generative AI

Bad data = bad answer

You catch it

Agentic AI

Bad data = bad action

At scale. No human in the loop

In an agentic world, that problem gets **worse**, not better.

An abstract graphic on the left side of the slide. It features several thick, curved lines in blue, pink, orange, and green. Three red circles are connected to the lines by thin red stems, arranged in a vertical line on the right side of the graphic. The overall style is modern and minimalist.

What the Winners Are Doing Differently

Hint: it's not the tech stack

Three Differentiators

The gap isn't capability. It's structure.

1. Executive Accountability, Not just Sponsorship

Nearly all blockers trace back to leadership issues. 38% cited culture and business buy-in as a top blocker

Those who've scaled have executives who stay in the room to make data quality decisions, unblock organisational resistance, and tie AI outcomes to business KPIs rather than project milestones.

What this looks like in practice: A named senior owner whose success metric is business outcome, not delivery date.

2. Business Problem Owners, Not Project Managers

25% cited operating model and unclear ownership as a top blocker

A named business domain owner, accountable as the technical leader. Not just attending steering committees, but someone whose problem doesn't get solved until the AI works.

What this looks like in practice: The business stakeholder defines success criteria on day one and is embedded throughout.

3. Governance as an Enabler, Not a Gate

Governance-first teams (13% of respondents) show consistently slower AI progress.

Winners define guardrails, not gates. Teams prototype within governed frameworks rather than seeking permission at each step. Governance needs to add value rather than block.

What this looks like in practice: “Yes” by default, within these boundaries.

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2026: Bubble or Breakthrough?

Crystal ball time

Three Camps on 2026

What respondents predict for the biggest change for AI in 2026

AI Matures & Embeds Agents go mainstream. Costs drop. More in production. Foundations start paying off.

"AI agents will finally turn our POCs into day-to-day automation."

Data Engineer, Software Provider

Expectations Reset More realism. Governance catches up. Hype deflates but value survives.

"AI ambitions will become more grounded. Better-defined needs will drive better outcomes."

Advisor, Consulting

The Bubble Bursts Cost vs. value equation breaks. Boards lose patience. Spend gets scrutinised.

"Current cost of AI is obscured by hype and vendor-subsidised products."

Anonymous, Financial Services

Which one you experience depends on what you do now

The bubble won't burst for organisations
building on **solid foundations.**

2026 will separate

those who are already experimenting and building foundations
from those still waiting for permission to start

Three Things to Take Away

1. Most organisations are still building the runway

Which is fine. The dangerous position is not knowing where you are.

2. The blockers to AI value are primarily leadership problems

Data quality, skills, culture, buy-in. All require decisions from above the data team.

3. Agentic AI is real, powerful and it's here

It demands better foundations though. Start with the data.

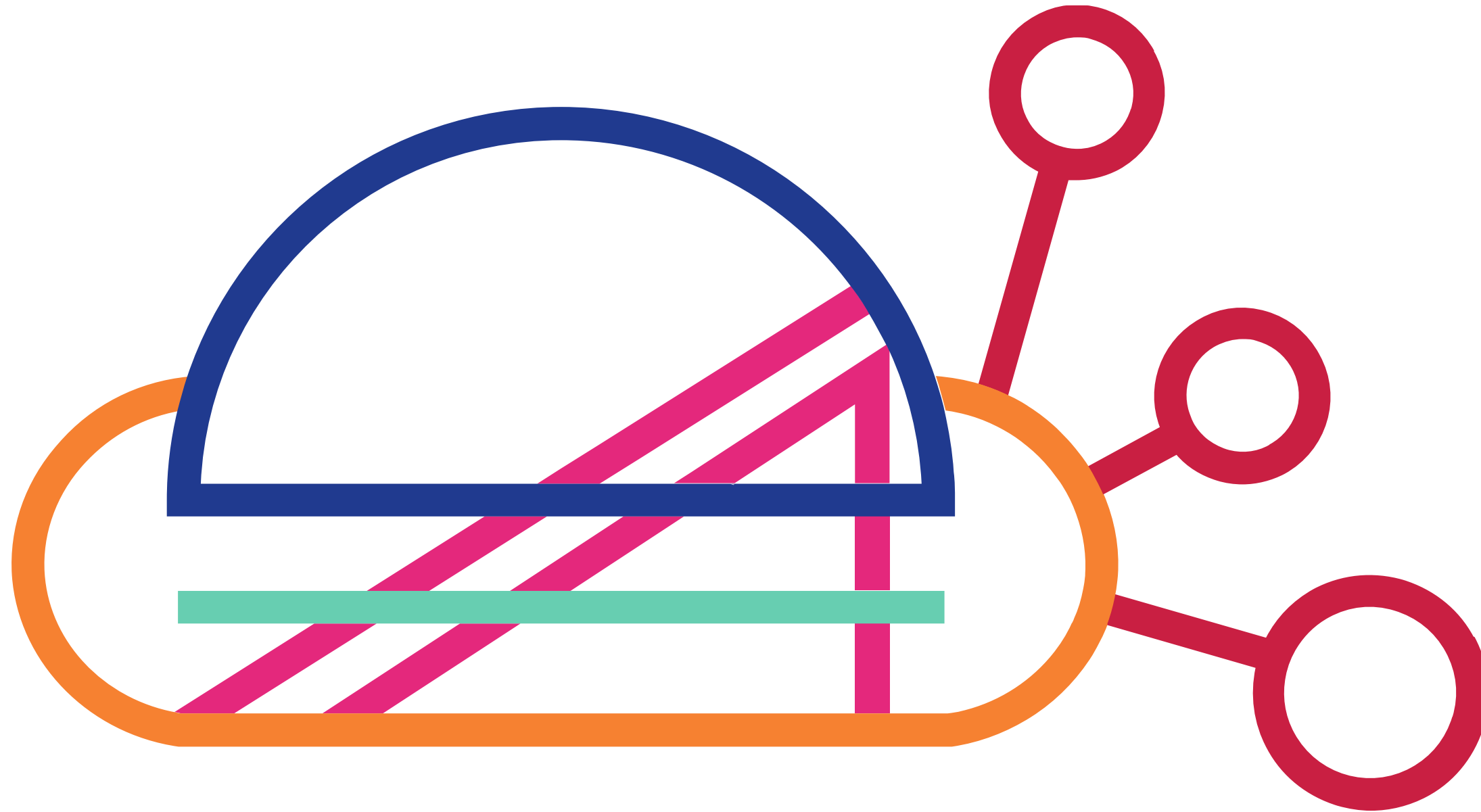
Next Step






AI Readiness Assessment

A structured diagnostic that tells you where you are, what's blocking you, and what to prioritise next

Link in the chat. We'll also follow up by email.

Thank You



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