



Decoding AI: A CXO's Handbook for Success



January 2025



Infinite digital potential. Realised.

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Executive Summary

Artificial intelligence has become a transformative force in recent years, reshaping product industries and the way we run our businesses. By driving product and customer innovation, and enhancing productivity, AI is enabling enterprises to better address customer needs and increase competitiveness – both globally and in the Middle East, Türkiye, and Africa (META) region. Additionally, governments in the region play an extremely important role in driving AI transformation by setting strategic visions, investing in infrastructure, implementing regulations, and fostering innovation.

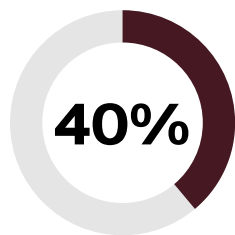
Driving AI innovation at scale requires enterprises to systematically assess the risks and challenges of organisation-wide AI implementation. This InfoBrief offers an overview of global and regional AI markets, focusing on the following key areas:

- **The AI Revolution:**
The transformative impact of AI on business and National AI initiatives
- **Demystifying AI:**
A non-technical overview of how AI algorithms work
- **A Deeper Look at AI Investments:**
Investments across the AI value chain
- **Understanding AI Challenges:**
Tackling the challenges to accelerate AI adoption
- **Succeeding with AI:**
The path to impact and key success factors
- **Understanding AI Use Cases:**
Productivity vs. revenue play
- **AI Governance by Design:**
Ensuring long-term success in AI
- **The AI Journey Ahead:**
Key takeaways for a sustainable AI-driven business

By addressing these critical areas, organisations can effectively navigate the evolving AI landscape, harness its full potential, and position themselves for long-term success in an increasingly competitive world.

The AI Revolution

The transformative impact of AI on business



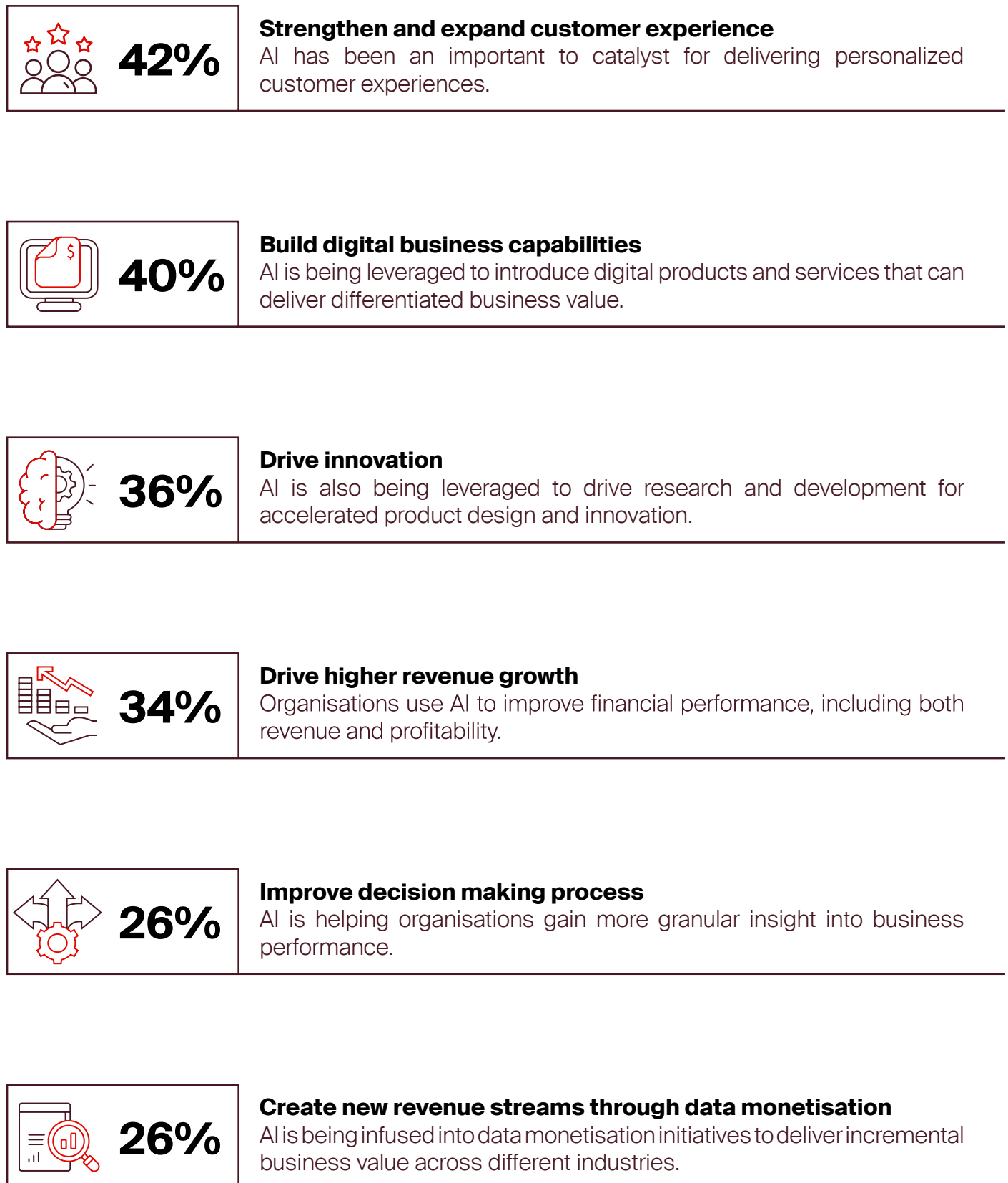
IDC Worldwide AI & Automation Prediction 2025

Growing AI Spending to Drive Product and Process Innovation of core IT spending of the world's largest 2,000 firms will be allocated to AI initiatives, leading to a double-digit increase in the rate of product and process innovations.

Artificial intelligence has, especially over the past two to three years, heralded game-changing innovation in both product development and operational processes, driving a fundamental shift in how enterprises function, bolster internal productivity, and meet customer needs. In the area of product innovation and advancement, AI empowers organisations to create and deliver exceptionally customised and relevant offerings. AI has the capacity to examine customer preferences and behaviors, empowering businesses to customise their products to cater to individual requirements. This transformative impact is reshaping industries and creating new opportunities for growth and differentiation. Around 60% of organisations in the META region have already prioritised AI investments to transform their business (*Source: IDC EMEA Digital Executive Sentiment Survey 2024*), a trend which has been driven by a number of key factors outlined below.



Top Drivers for AI Adoption in the META Region



Source: IDC Data, AI and Automation Survey 2023 (base: 344)

National AI Initiatives for Driving Global Competitiveness

Governments play a pivotal role in AI transformation by setting strategic visions, investing in digital infrastructure, introducing policies, guidelines, and regulations, fostering an innovation ecosystem of start-ups and scale-ups, revamping the education system, and building local AI skills. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia ranked 4th and 5th place, respectively, in terms of government promotion of investment in emerging technologies among 130 countries. This ranking underscores the strong commitment of these governments to driving the adoption and integration of cutting-edge technologies.

A Comparative View of AI Market Readiness (Global Ranking Among 130 Countries), 2023

Country	Government Promotion of Investment in Emerging Tech	Investment in Emerging Technologies	AI Scientific Publications	Regulation of Emerging Technologies
UAE	4	10	79	9
KSA	5	30	52	18
Türkiye	29	105	20	66
Egypt	43	75	84	24
Qatar	19	17	106	25
Oman	24	42	99	46
South Africa	84	40	25	60

Source: [networkreadinessindex.org/](https://www.networkreadinessindex.org/)

Examples of Government Initiatives Across META to Drive National AI Competitiveness



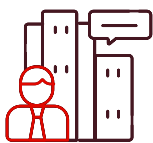
Data and AI Authorities

The Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority (SDAIA) was instituted in 2019.



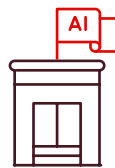
AI Strategy

Many countries in the region such as Türkiye, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt have already introduced their AI strategies.



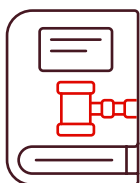
Introduction of New Ministries

The UAE introduced the AI Ministry in 2017. In 2019, the scope of the Ministry was expanded, and it was renamed the Ministry of AI, Digital Economy, and Remote Work Applications.



Workgroups/Councils to Guide Government Authorities and Drive AI Initiatives

The UAE Council for AI and Blockchain was established in 2018 to boost the number of AI initiatives.



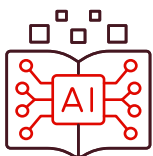
Guidelines and Thought Leadership

Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority published the second version of AI Ethics Framework version in 2023.



AI-Centric Policies and Regulations

Türkiye introduced Draft AI Law in 2024 to ensure the safe, ethical, and fair use of AI technologies.



AI Start-Up Programs

In 2024, Saudi Arabia announced that it will pledge \$1 billion to an AI startup accelerator program.



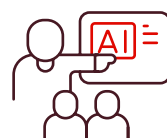
AI Technology Ecosystem

The UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Bahrain, and South Africa have attracted significant investment from cloud providers; government support is also available to nurture indigenous AI-centric tech companies.



Research and Development

The Falcon Foundation Model was developed by the Abu Dhabi Technology Innovation Institute; many other foundational model development initiatives were created across the region.



Transforming Education System

The first AI-focused university in the region, Mohammed Bin Zayed University of AI, was established in 2019 in the UAE.



AI-Centric Policies and Regulations

The Saudi Data and Artificial Intelligence Authority and Nvidia are working together to expand Saudi Arabia's supercomputing capabilities.



Talent Capacity

The UAE ranks third globally in attracting AI talent, after surging ahead in AI investment and education in 2023 (Source: *AI Index Report 2024, Stanford University*).

Demystifying AI

A non-technical overview of how AI algorithms work

What Is AI?

AI allows computers to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. This includes things like recognising patterns, making decisions, learning from data, and even understanding natural language.

Difference Between Rule-Based Systems and Artificial Intelligence

Rule-based systems operate by following a set of predefined “if-then” rules created by humans to make decisions or perform tasks. They are effective in well-defined, static environments but lack flexibility and cannot adapt to new situations unless the rules are manually updated.	AI systems learn from data and improve over time. AI can analyse patterns, make predictions, and adapt to changing conditions without needing specific rules for every possible scenario. This makes AI more suitable for handling complex, dynamic environments where outcomes are uncertain or difficult to predict in advance.
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Source: IDC META Digital Executive Sentiment Survey 2024 (base: 498)

A Simplified View of AI Technologies

Descriptive AI The analysis of images or event data streams enabling the detection, analysis, and response to people and objects in real time, such as through machine vision technology.	Predictive AI The analysis of large data sets to identify long-term patterns in behavior and to detect changes (e.g., digital twins and threat detection).	Generative AI Generating new content – such as text, images, video, or designs – by learning patterns from large data sets.
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Distribution of Total AI Spending

While predictive and descriptive AI currently dominate AI investments, the proportion of spending on generative AI is steadily growing.



Source: IDC UAE, South Africa, and Saudi Arabia Generative Survey, 2023 (base: 99)

A Deeper Look at AI Investments

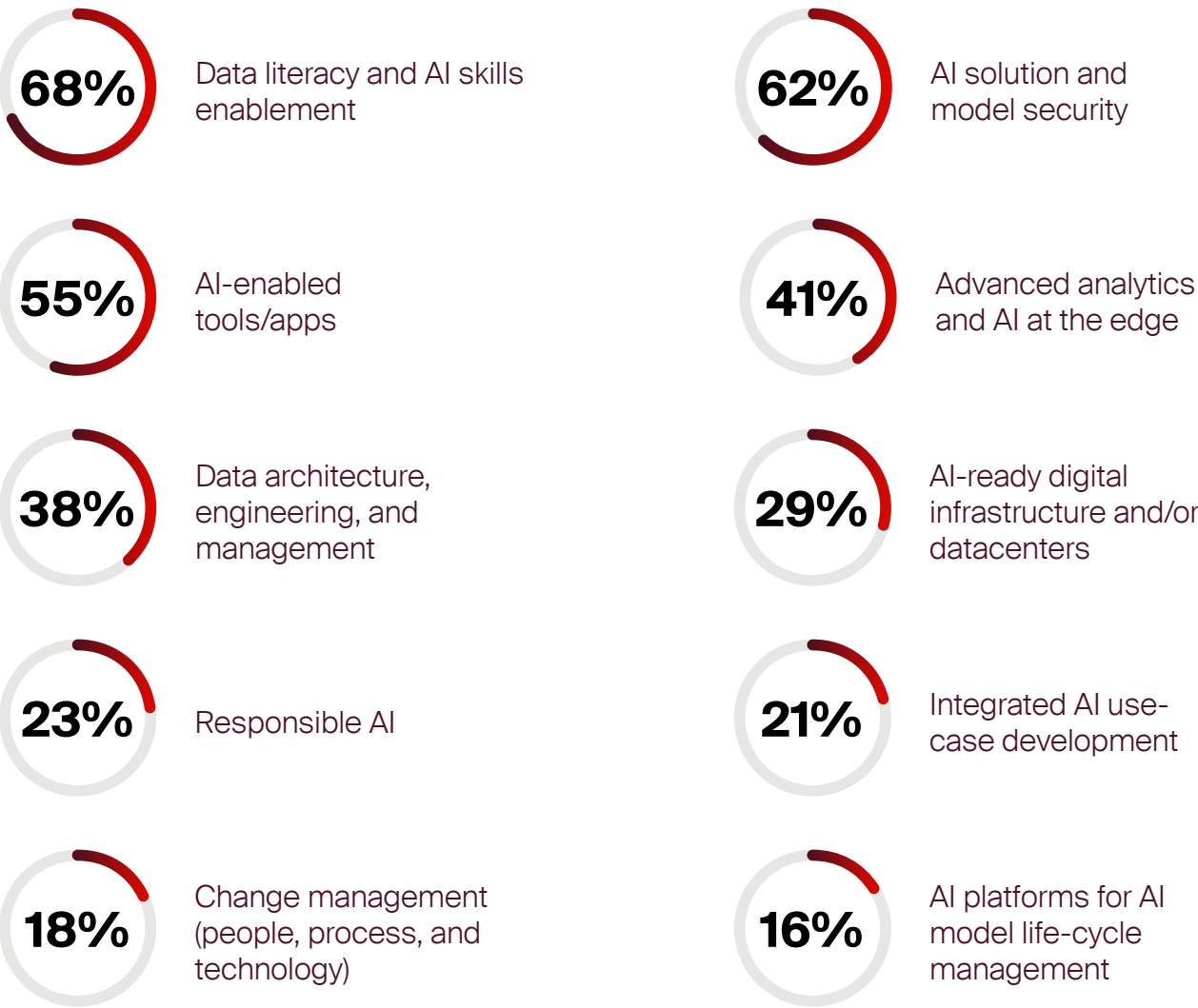
Investments across the AI value chain

Employee enablement through AI upskilling and reskilling initiatives, along with improving data literacy, ranks among the top AI-related investment priorities for organisations in the GCC.

Data architecture modernisation initiatives and AI-enabled advanced analytics also stand out as key focus areas. Organisations recognise that successfully integrating AI into business processes depends on the availability of high-quality data. Diverse, high-quality data is crucial for ensuring accurate predictions, improving model performance, and enabling organisations to extract meaningful insights. This capability drives effective decision-making and fosters innovation across various applications, positioning businesses to thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape.

AI solution and model security is also a high-priority area for many organisations. It is encouraging to see that the growing awareness of securing data and AI-driven digital business solutions is prompting organisations to prioritise security and privacy-related investments in their AI initiatives.

AI Investment Priorities Across the AI Value Chain in the META Region



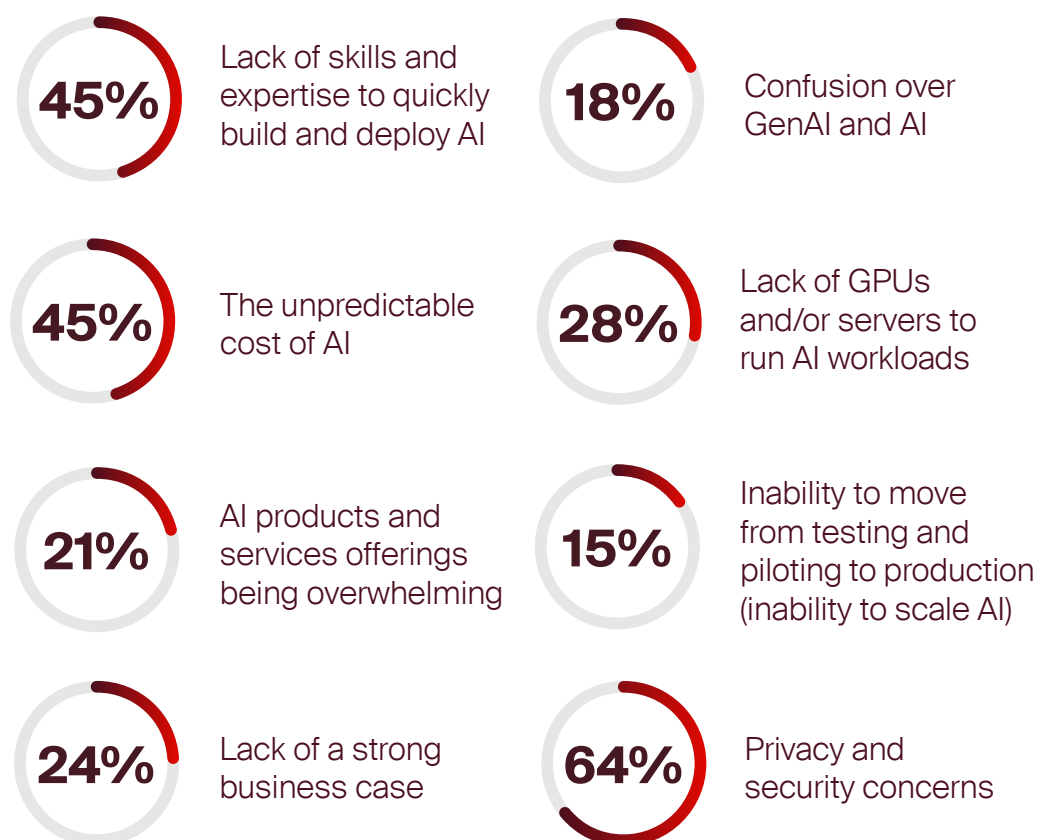
Source: IDC META Data and AI Survey, 2024 (base: 360)

Understanding AI Challenges

Tackling the challenges to accelerate AI adoption

Understanding AI challenges is crucial for success in the AI journey. These challenges – ranging from data quality and model bias to ethical concerns – are key obstacles to AI development. By addressing them head-on, you can ensure robust, accurate, and fair AI systems. Overcoming these hurdles also fosters innovation, as it encourages creative problem solving and adaptability. Additionally, tackling challenges builds trust with stakeholders, as it demonstrates a commitment to responsible AI. Ultimately, addressing these issues is essential for unlocking AI's full potential and achieving sustainable, impactful solutions that support advancements in various fields.

Understanding and Trackling the Challenges of Scaling AI Adoption Across META

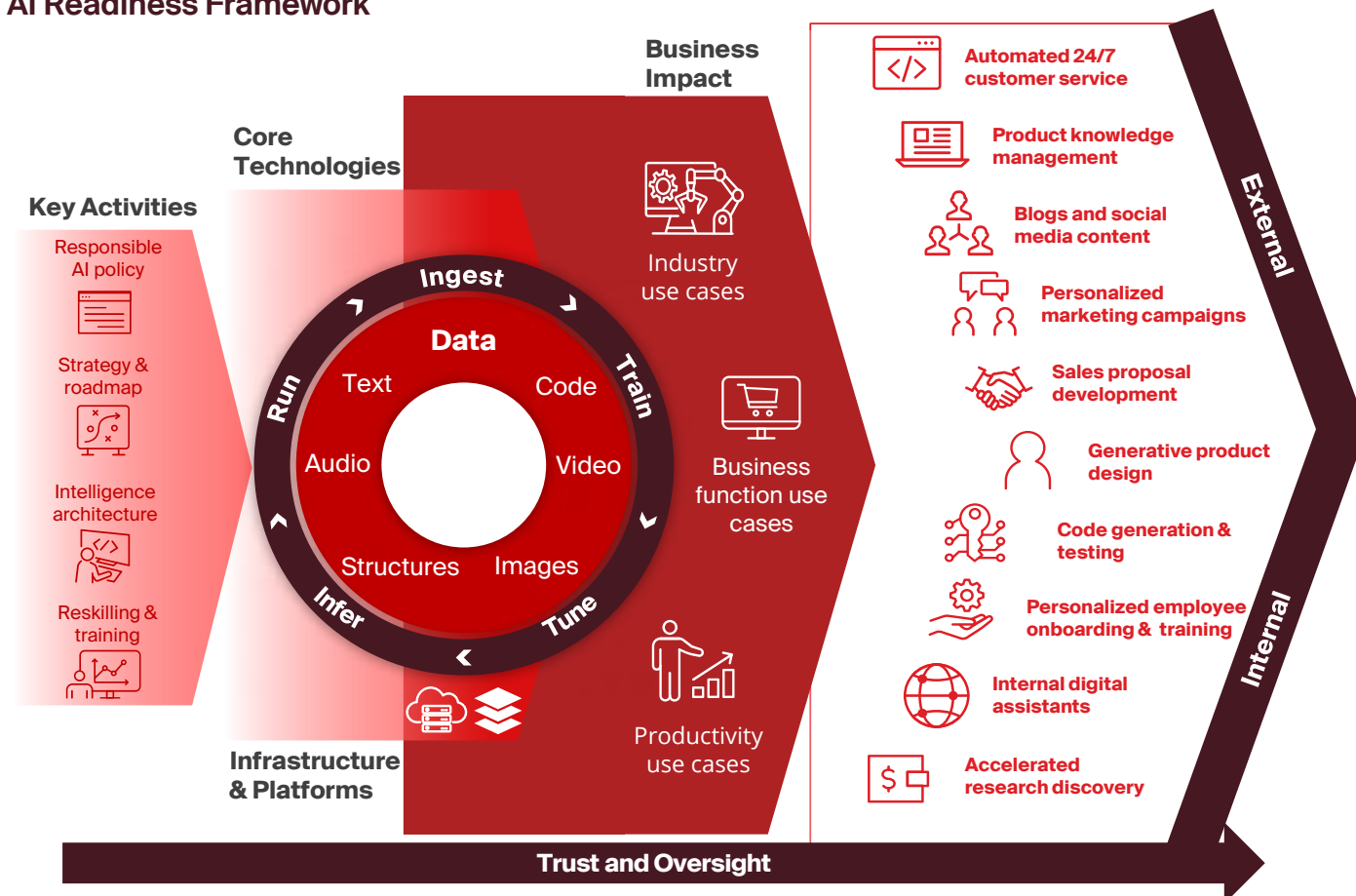


Succeeding with AI

The path to impact

The below framework is designed for business and technology leaders and outlines key characteristics for developing an AI strategy, prioritising use cases, and engaging stakeholders to maximise AI's value.

AI Readiness Framework



Source: IDC PlanScape: Developing Your Path to Impact with Generative AI

Key Activities: Before any of the core technologies of AI are explored, the set of key activities should be put in place, starting with the formulation of a robust, organisation-wide strategy, implementation of a responsible AI policy, designing a modern data architecture, and enabling employees through trainings.

Core Technologies: Once the key activities are in place, the next step is to develop a clear understanding of the data that is available, as well as the core AI technologies and their capabilities.

Infrastructure and Platforms: Deploying a cloud-native digital infrastructure for compute intensive AI workloads and enabling a data and AI platform are instrumental in maximising AI's value.

Trust and Oversight: Transparency, biases, regulatory compliance, governance, and ethics associated with AI should be subject to a robust trust and oversight program.

Use Cases: The next step is prioritising an identified set of use cases. IDC defines a use case as a business-funded initiative enabled by technology that delivers a measurable outcome.

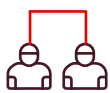
Key Success Factors

1 — Business and IT Alignment



Organisation-Wide AI Strategy

Build an AI strategy and roadmap with a set of defined and measurable business goals to align the organisation on the key areas that will most likely deliver the maximum business impact.



IT & Business Alignment and Innovation Culture

Enable an innovation-driven culture through a cross-functional collaboration between IT and business teams to deliver incremental business value.



Executive Sponsorship

Ensure cross-domain collaboration through executive sponsorship. This group should also be responsible for highlighting the vision, priorities, and risks on a regular basis.



Responsible AI Policy

Establish a responsible AI policy that includes defined principles around fairness, transparency, protections, and accountability relating to the data that is being used to train models, as well as the usage of the results.

2 — Building High-Performing AI Teams

On the technology front, organisations should focus on building strong teams with data and AI capabilities, integrating technical expertise with business competencies. The typical roles in AI teams include data engineers, data architects, AI/ML Engineers, data scientists, software developers, business analysts, ethics and compliance experts, industry domain experts, and change management specialists.

AI Skills Shortages in the META Region

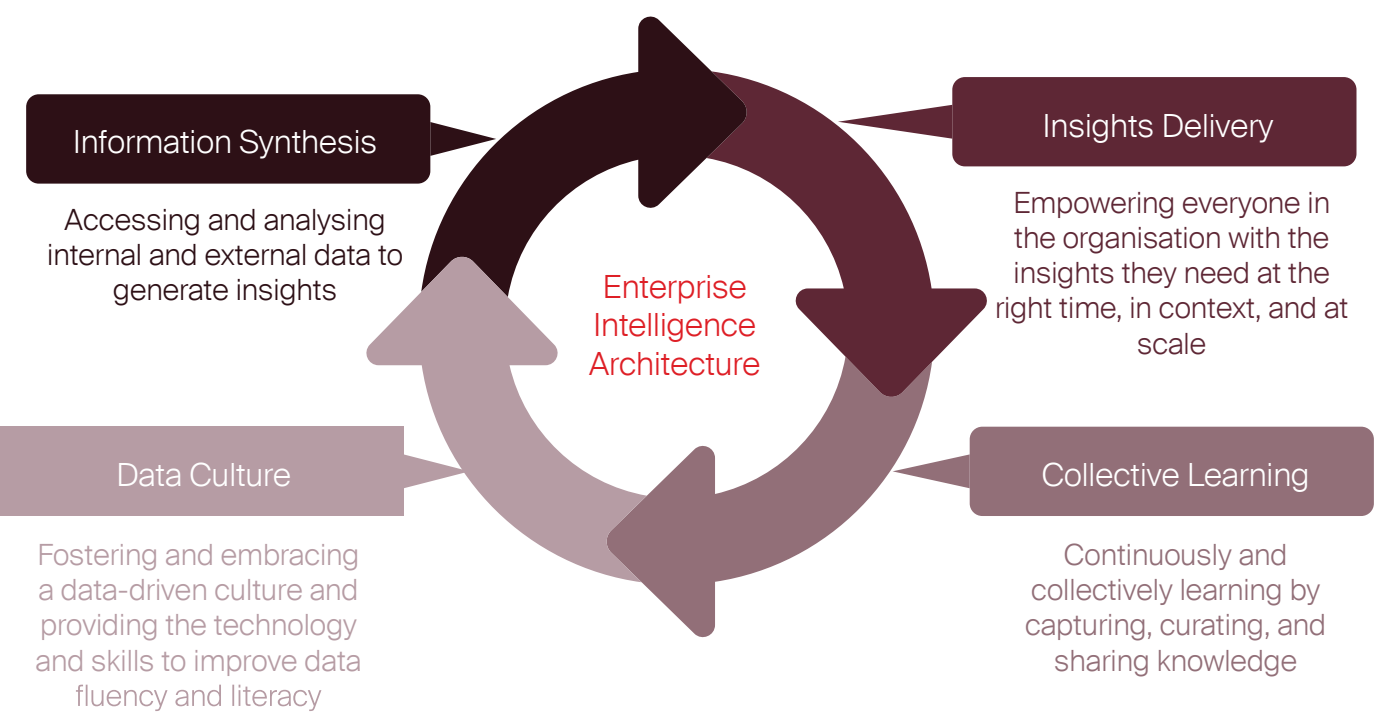
50%	AI Leader	49%	Data scientists
45%	Technology skills (e.g., Hadoop, R)	40%	Data architects/ engineers
40%	IT security/ privacy experts	36%	Functional analysts (e.g., HR, finance)
35%	SW/DevOps engineers	31%	Statisticians/ algorithm developers

Source: IDC Data, AI and Automation Survey 2023 (base: 443)

3 — Becoming a Data-Driven Organisation

Building a modern data architecture and becoming a data-driven organisation is a major struggle for any company. It requires a fundamental change in the way organisations govern their continuous transformation and evolution.

Key Capabilities Needed for Building a Strong Data Foundation



Source: IDC

Data-Related Challenges Highlighted in META

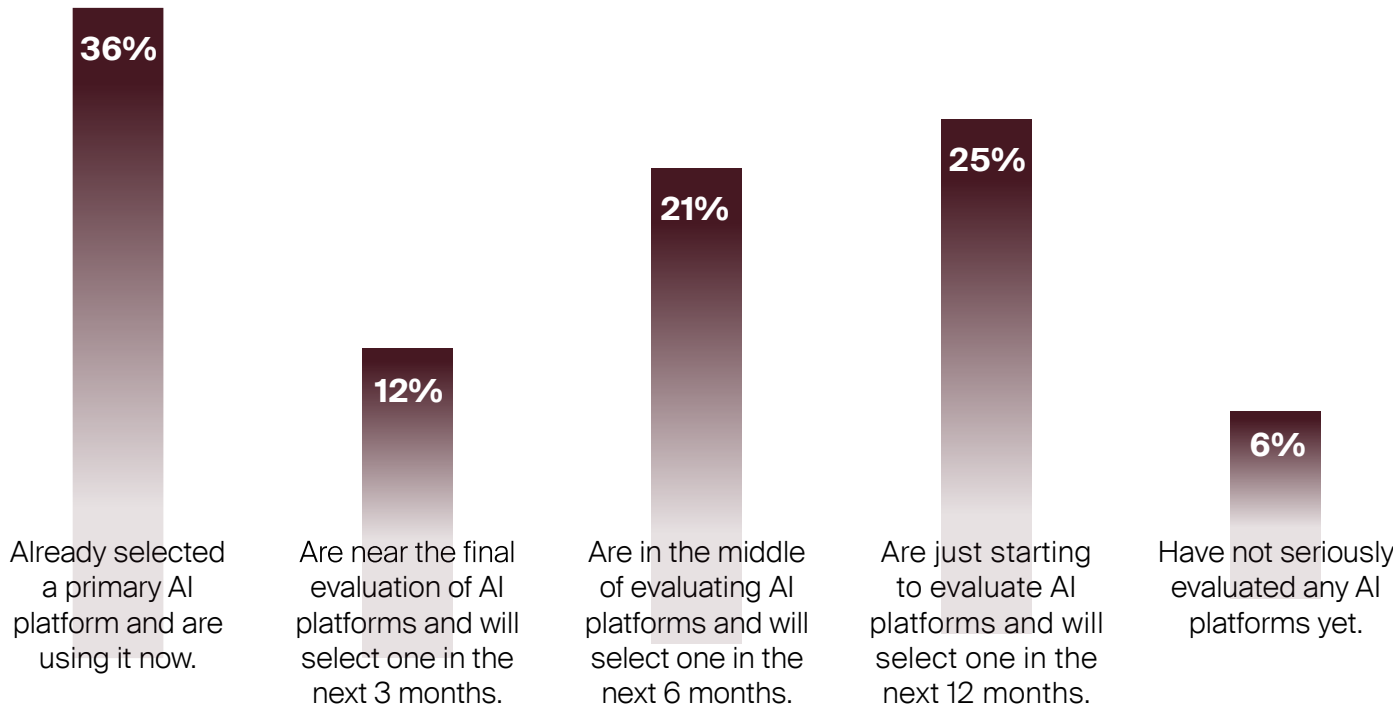
Organisations should identify their key data-related challenges and address them, as success in the AI journey depends on high-quality data.

	Data security risks		Inefficient data architecture and siloed/fragmented data
	Lack of skilled resources for data management and reporting		Lack of tools for optimal reporting/analysis
	Ineffective use of modern databases		Lack of standardised techniques to capture, store, and analyse data

4 — AI Platforms for Centralised Model Lifecycle Management

AI platforms facilitate the development and management of AI models and applications. It manages They manage the entire lifecycle starting with data ingestion and continuing through data preparation, model development, model testing, model deployment, and model lifecycle management, including monitoring model performance, model cost, and regulatory compliance.

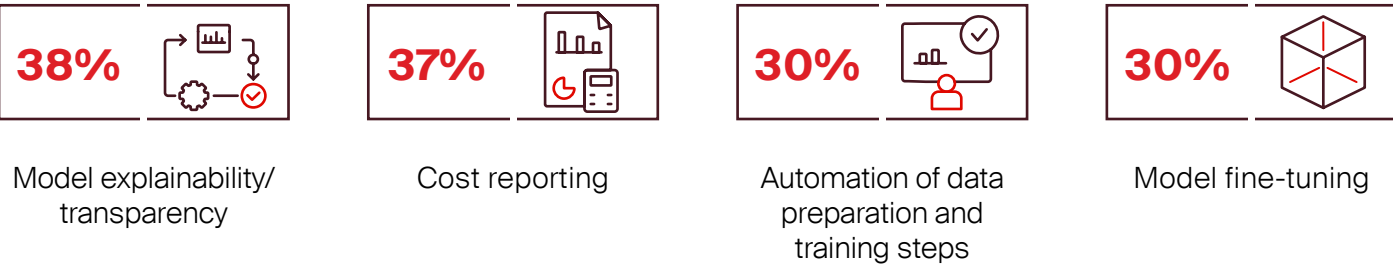
Adoption of AI Platforms in the META Region



Source: IDC META Data and AI Survey, 2024 (base:360)

META Organisations' Expectations of AI Platforms

Awareness is strong in the META region about the importance of implementing AI platforms to infuse AI across different processes.

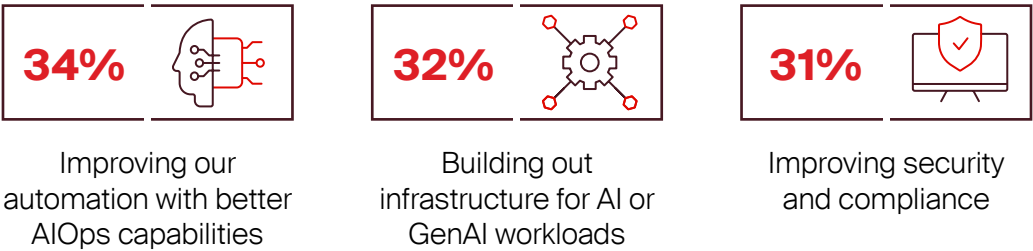


Source: IDC META Data and AI Survey, 2024 (base: 360)

5 — AI-Ready and Cloud-Native IT Infrastructure

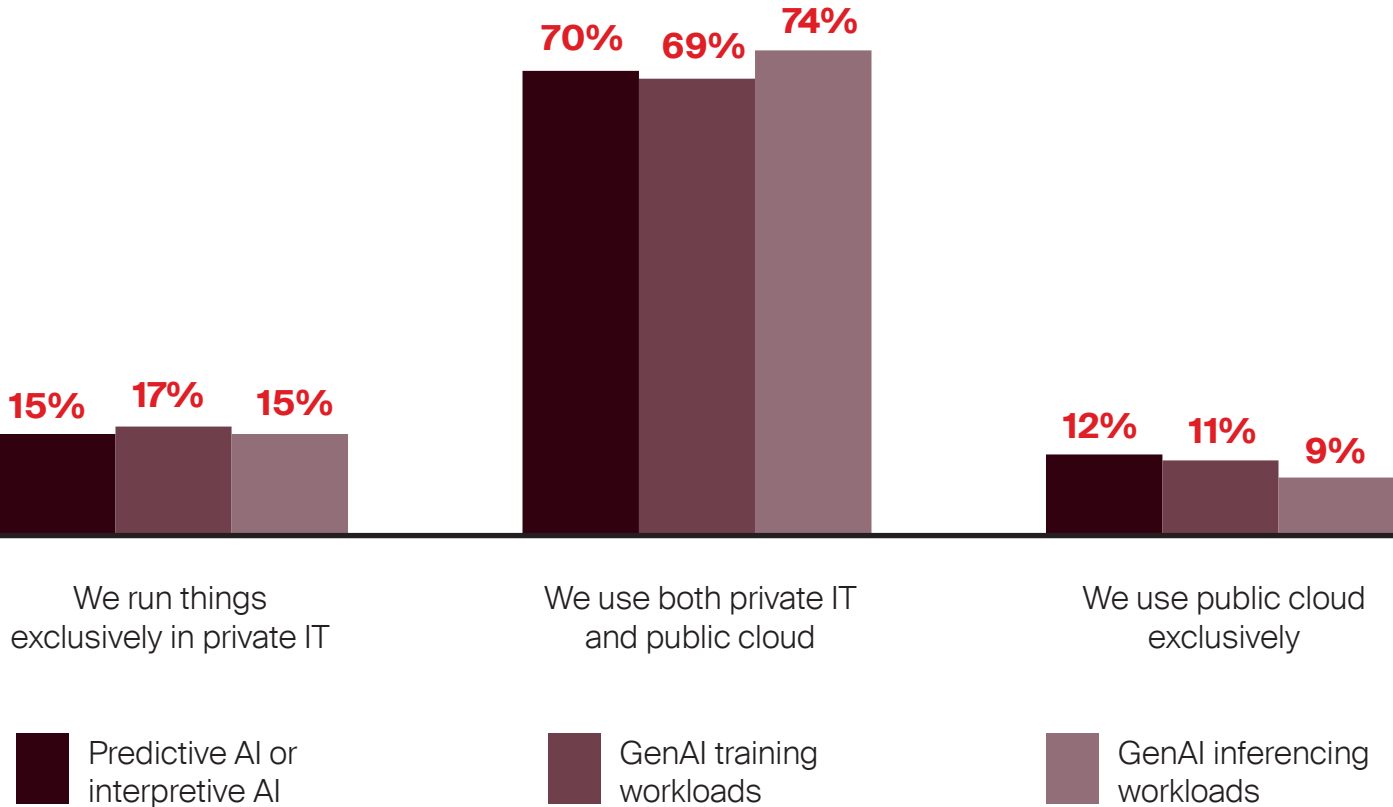
Availability and cost of AI-ready infrastructure are major challenges for organisations in the Middle East, Türkiye and Africa region. To remain competitive, they must plan for both current and future IT needs. A hybrid cloud model offers significant advantages by allowing organisations to dynamically scale resources and choose between public and private cloud environments based on workload requirements, ensuring efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Top 3 IT Infrastructure Priorities of Organisations in the META Region



Source: IDC AI-Ready Infrastructure Survey, 2024 (base: 354)

AI Model Deployment Preferences of Organisations in the META Region



Source: IDC AI-Ready Infrastructure Survey, 2024 (base: 354)

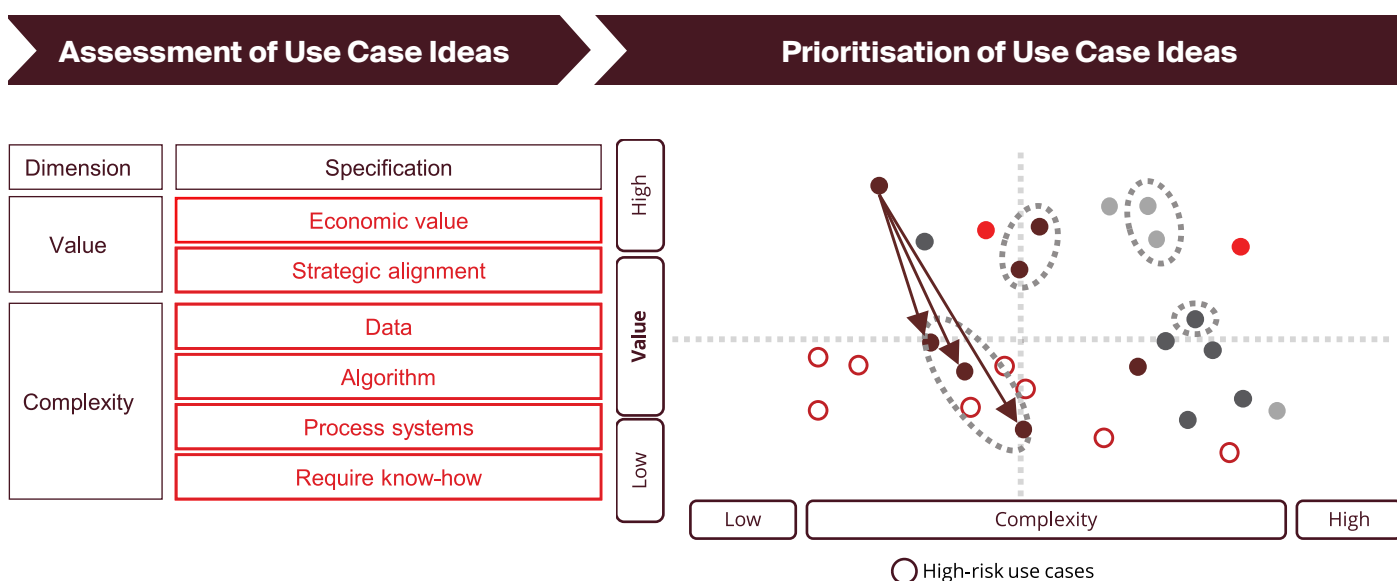
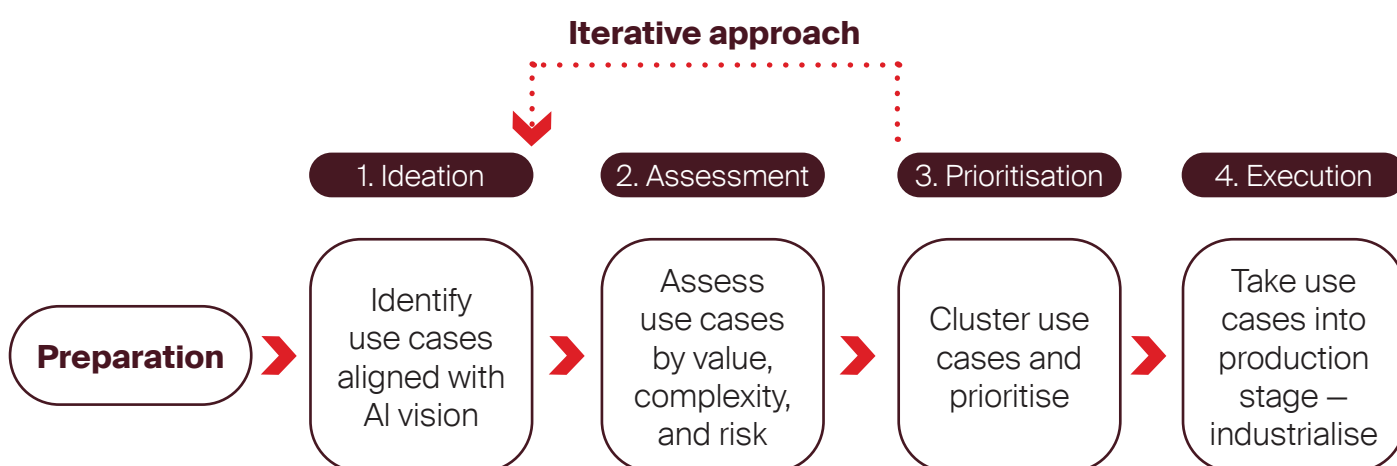
6 — AI Use Case Selection and Prioritisation

Promote a Culture of Experimentation

To succeed in their AI journey, organisations should encourage a mindset of experimentation where teams are empowered to test new AI solutions, learn from failures, and iterate quickly. This approach fosters innovation and helps identify the most effective AI applications for the business.

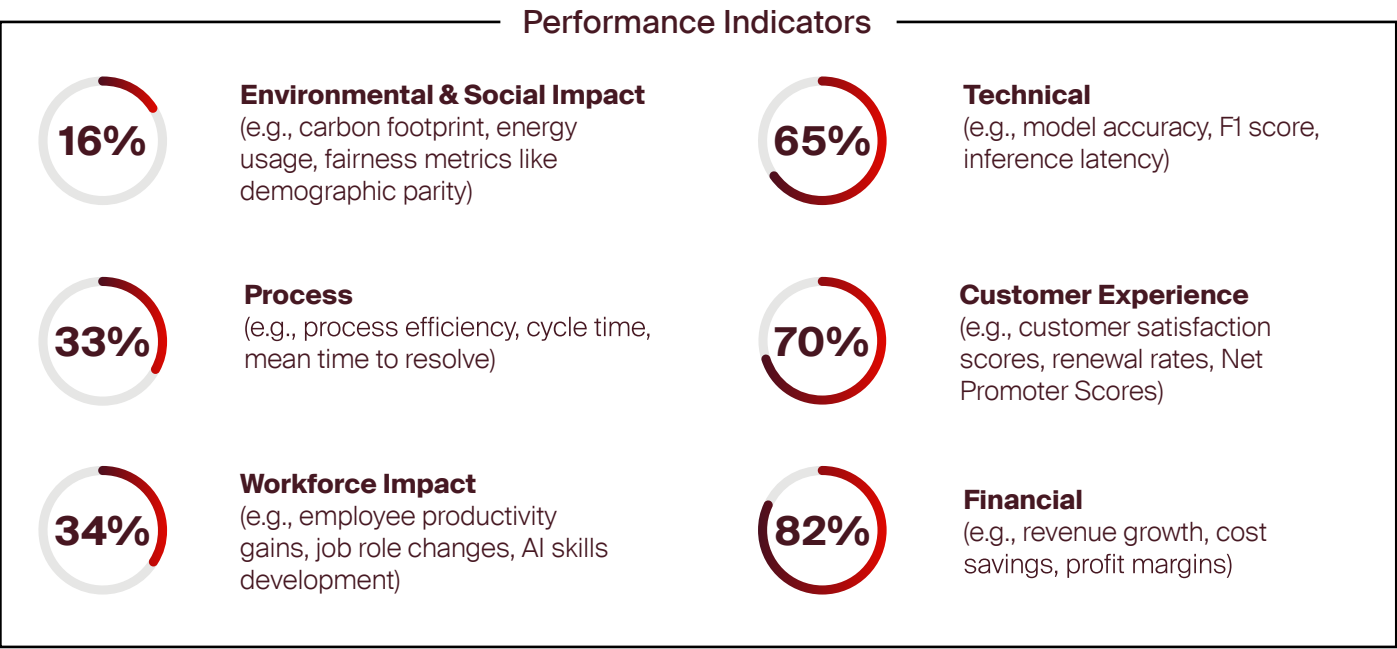
The source of new ideas does not have to come solely from an organisation's internal teams. The type and degree of collaborating with external stakeholders such as technology vendors, startups, academic institutions, and industry experts depends on the business needs. These partnerships bring in fresh ideas, specialised expertise, and innovative approaches that can accelerate AI adoption.

Prioritising GenAI Use Cases Based on the Business Impact



Source: IDC

Key Performance Indicators for Measuring Business Impact of AI



Source: IDC META Data and AI Survey, 2024 (base: 360)

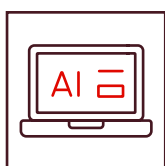


Understanding AI Use Cases

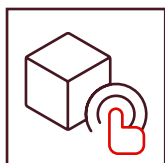
Productivity vs. revenue play

A use case is a business-funded initiative enabled by technology that delivers a measurable outcome. There are a mix of internal and externally facing use cases, each with its own level of potential risk and business impact, which needs to be incorporated into a use-case prioritization framework for any organisation kickstarting their AI journey. Generative AI has significantly transformed the way we approach use cases.

Three Broad Types of AI Use Cases Shaped by the Generative AI Evolution



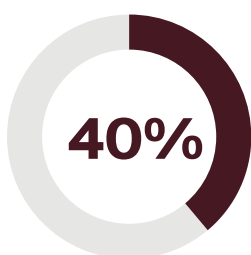
Productivity use cases are aligned to work tasks such as summarizing a report, generating a job description, or generating code. GenAI functionality is being infused into existing applications (e.g., Microsoft 360).



Business function use cases tend to integrate a model with corporate data for use by a specific department (e.g., marketing, sales, procurement). These business function use cases require integration with established enterprise applications from vendors such as Salesforce, Oracle, SAP, and ServiceNow.



Industry use cases will require more custom work. Examples include generative drug discovery in life sciences and generative material design for manufacturing.



IDC Worldwide Digital Business Strategies Prediction 2026

AI-augmented decision making for CXOs

of enterprises will develop new KPIs directly tied to digital business outcomes through the application of advanced analytics and AI.

Use Case Strategy: Productivity or Revenue Play?

Productivity

Enterprises will leverage GenAI and automation technologies to drive **\$1 trillion in productivity gains by 2026.**

IDC Future of Work FutureScape, 2024

Revenue

By 2025, 35% of enterprises will have mastered the use of GenAI to co-develop digital products and services, allowing their revenue growth to **double** compared to their competitors.

IDC Digital Business FutureScape, 2024

Autonomous AI Use Cases with Agents

From assistance to actions to ecosystems

Understanding AI Agents

AI Agents are LLM- powered autonomous software entities that perceive their environment, make decisions, act upon them and interact with users or other systems in a manner like a human. Today, these agents are advancing towards multi-modal foundation models and will be able to handle more complex workflows where multiple agents can collaborate to execute complex business processes.

Common Features of AI Agents

Planning

AI agents can plan and sequence actions to achieve specific goals. The integration of LLMs has revolutionized their planning capabilities.

Tool Usage

Advanced AI agents can use various tools, such as code execution, search, and computation capabilities, to perform tasks effectively.

Perception

AI agents can perceive and process information from their environment, to make them more interactive and context aware.

Memory

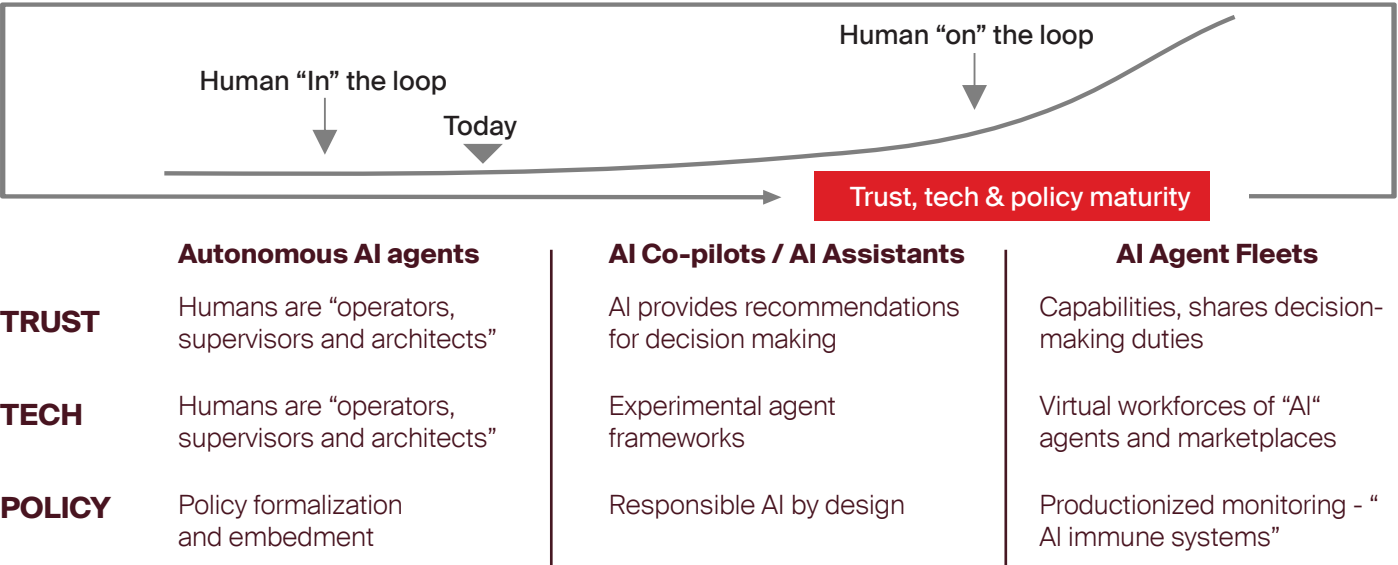
AI agents have the ability to remember past interactions and behaviors. They store these experiences and even perform self-reflection to inform future actions.



IDC Worldwide Artificial Intelligence and Automation Prediction 2026 Rise of AI Agents

of enterprises will develop new KPIs directly tied to digital business outcomes through the application of advanced analytics and AI.

Evolution Towards AI Fleets



AI Governance by Design

Ensuring long-term success in AI

A Holistic View of AI Governance

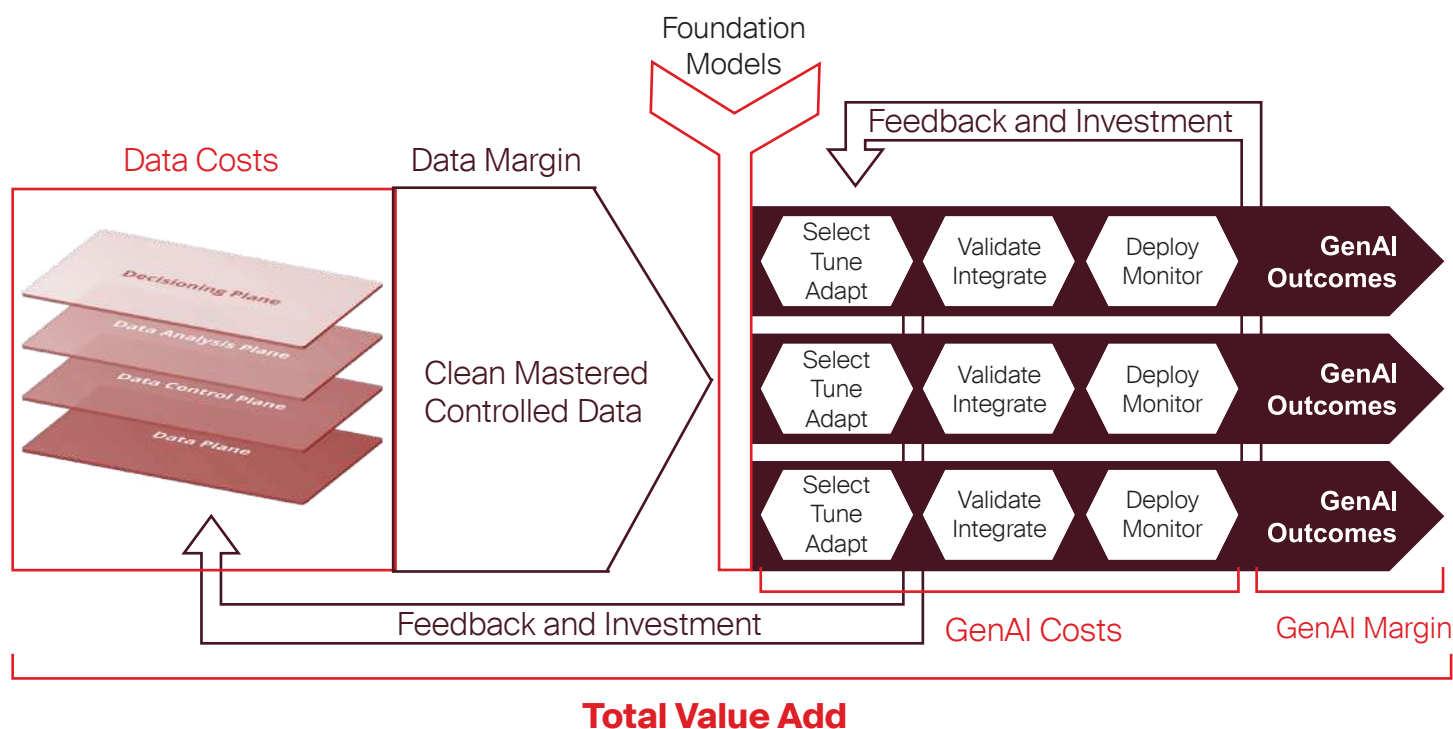
Organisations need a disciplined and systematic approach to leveraging AI. This approach involves the codependency among **data, models, and outcome**. However, new data value chains bring with them a set of concerns within the enterprise, including control of data and intellectual property (IP), infrastructure costs, regulatory risks, and accuracy of GenAI models. Additionally, GenAI adds another layer of complexity into how we work with AI; GenAI supports more modes of content, meaning that data used with foundation models can be multimodal. Data formats and types shared with foundational models are varied, from structured to unstructured and from alphanumeric text to binary audio, images, and video.

Why Is Enabling Data Governance for Generative AI Important?

Where more traditional AI solutions leverage data inside an enterprise to build models that are trained on the internal data, generative AI introduces new data value chains into enterprises in which internal data is used with external models to augment model outputs used to tune and refine public models, and in some cases, organisations are building private models.



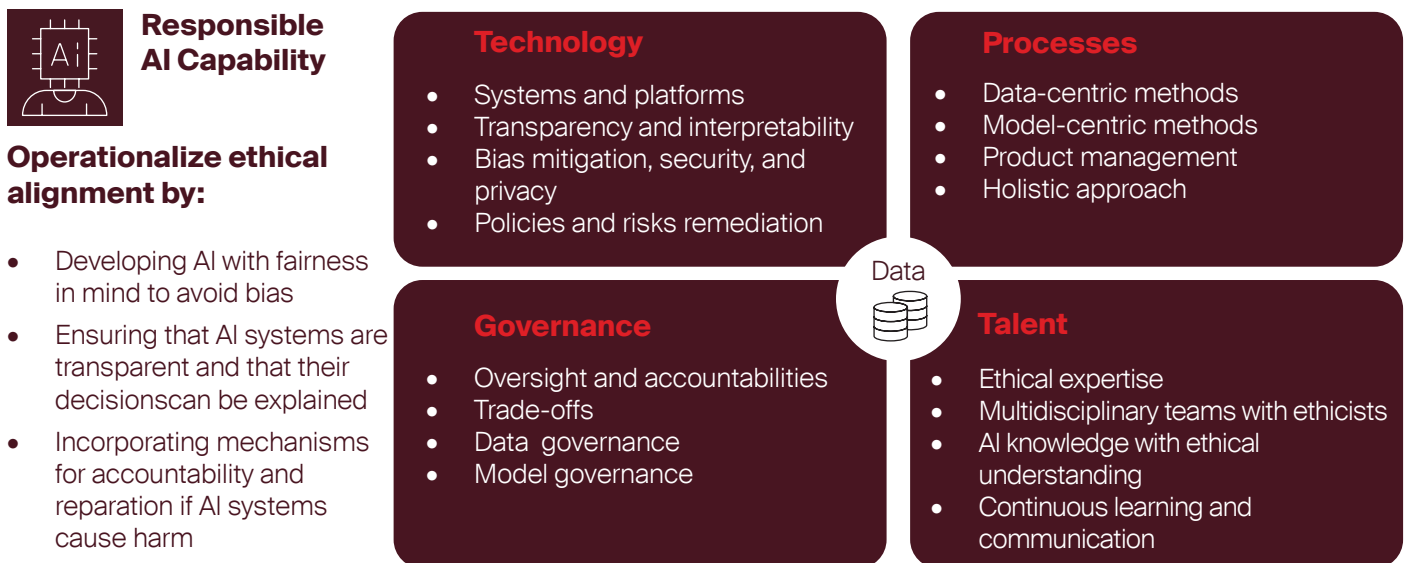
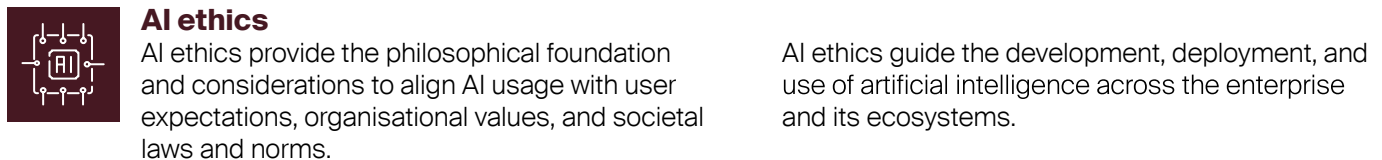
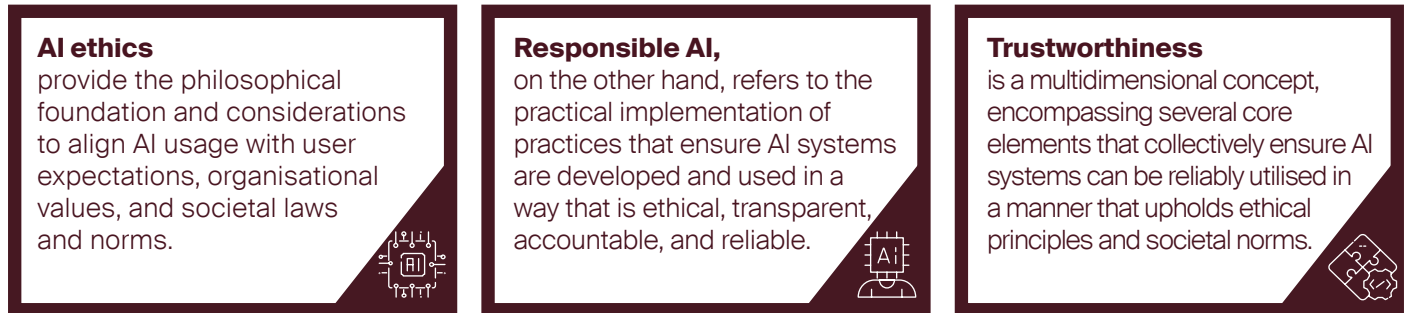
of organisations worldwide agree or strongly agree that GenAI models that leverage business data will give them a significant advantage.



Enabling data governance for AI drives improved relevancy and accuracy of AI model output, thus leading to meaningful and more impactful business outcomes. It also supports compliance with policies and regulations regarding the use of personal and/or corporate sensitive information in a responsible way.

Understanding the Broader Concept of Responsible AI Usage

Stakeholders, especially business executives, must understand AI's challenges and limitations and become educated/literate in fairness, ethics, and explainability. They must also assess how AI decisions will contribute to the ultimate goal – or do the opposite. They must become accountable for their domain and make the right decisions instead of leaving them to technical experts. Therefore, having a holistic understanding of the responsible AI concept is highly important for organisations that want to implement AI at scale.



The AI Journey Ahead

Key takeaways for a sustainable AI-driven business

1

Build an Organisation-Wide AI Strategy

Build an AI strategy and road map that aligns with the business goals and identify all key business stakeholders to ensure successful execution.

2

Develop Organisational Guardrails & Policies

Counter the rollouts with essential governance – both for IT and business – through a responsible AI policy.

3

Develop Internal Skills; Enable an Innovation-Driven Culture

Assess workforce requirements and launch training programs to upskill and reskill the workforce in emerging technologies; ensure cross-collaboration of different functional teams for an accelerated innovation journey.

4

Create a Partner Ecosystem-Led Approach for AI Adoption

Build an ecosystem of trusted partners to co-create and co-innovate; build solutions to address specific industry challenges.

5

Embrace a Data-First Approach

Manage and govern data based on a structured approach; capitalise on the data to build AI-enabled business use cases.

6

Build Hybrid-Cloud and Multicloud Architectures

Modernise the entire IT stack to enable a microservices-based, cloud-native IT architecture to drive platform-led AI innovation.

7

Enable an AI Platform-Based Model Lifecycle Management

Invest in AI platforms to manage and govern the entire model development, implementation, and operations lifecycle.

8

Assess and Address Privacy and Security Risks

Ask the essential questions about data security and privacy risks based on an organisation -wide trust framework.

9

Define the Business Needs and Identify Use Cases

Design-led thinking, structured brainstorming, and ideation sessions will uncover multiple value generators and business benefits.

10

Embark on Pilots and Measure their Impact

Establish metrics and other measures to make decisions about the value of use cases.

11

Scale from Pilots to Actual Deployments

Prioritize use cases with the biggest value and start scaling to create a wider organisational impact; ensure continuous monitoring and improvement.

Data and AI Practice at e& enterprise

e& enterprise **Data and AI** Practice transforms businesses by leveraging cutting-edge analytics to drive insights, optimise operations, and enhance decision-making

200+

Use cases developed

20+

Countries (clients)

e& enterprise Data & AI Value Proposition

In-Depth E2E Experience

We manage the entire AI process, from initial strategy to final deployment with proprietary AI-first enterprise transformation framework.

High-Impact AI Solutions

We have deployed 250+ AI/ML models and 200+ use cases across 20+ countries.

Accelerated Time-To-Value

Leverage and customise our pre-built solutions to enable faster deployment compared to in-house development.


Skilled AI & Domain Experts

We have a growing team of 100+ Data and AI professionals and sector specialists across multiple sectors.


Technology & Platform Agnostic

Compatibility with multiple technologies and platforms ensures our solutions are scalable and easily integrated.


Industry Focus




Banking & Insurance (BFSI)




Public Sector




Retail




Telecom




Oil & Energy




Logistics




Education



Healthcare



Aviation




Real Estate

Insights to Action: Leveraging Data and AI to Power Business Decisions

“ AI agents are transforming business operations, enabling real-time automation, decision-making, and hyper-personalization. Success isn't about replacing human intelligence but augmenting it. The future belongs to organizations that seamlessly integrate AI agents—adapting strategy, governance, and collaboration to drive efficiency, enhance customer experiences, and unlock new levels of innovation and growth

Amit Gupta
Vice President of Data & AI Practice, e& enterprise



Data & AI Consulting Services

AI Readiness

- Data & AI maturity assessment
- AI & data strategy formulation
- AI use-cases roadmap with priority, impact & feasibility
- Playbook & training module for chief AI & data office












Transformation

- Data monetisation strategy & execution
- Data governance & compliance
- Co-sourcing & resource secondment
- Data integration & interoperability

AI Scale Up

- Responsible AI framework
- design & implementation
- AI performance optimisation for speed and scalability
- Stakeholder engagement and change management planning & training
- Data & AI centre of excellence setup, strategy and operations

Solutions Tailored to Specific Business Needs

 <p>AI for Sustainability Intelligent practices for efficient operations</p>	 <p>Gen AI Offering Generate content (e.g., text, images, videos)</p>	 <p>AI in a Box Ready-to-deploy AI-based accelerators</p>	 <p>Tailored AI Customisable AI offering for business use cases</p>
 <p>Visualisation as a Service Dashboards for augmented insights & business intelligence</p>	 <p>e& enterprise Data & AI</p>		 <p>Data as a Service Modernise data platform, data warehousing, data migration and cloud data platform, master data management, data governance</p>
 <p>Embedded AI Customised AI layer for your existing business systems</p>	 <p>Robotic Process Automation Intelligent business process automation</p>	 <p>CVM as a Service Maximising the long-term value</p>	 <p>AI for Cybersecurity Intelligent practices for efficient operations</p>

About e& enterprise

e& enterprise is a digital transformation leader supporting governments and large-scale organisations in building and scaling their digital core.

Through optimising operations, enhancing customer engagement, and data-driven decision-making, we enable seamless, sustainable, and secure transitions into the evolving digital world.

Currently operating in the UAE, KSA, Egypt, Turkey and Oman, e& enterprise brings cutting-edge digital scalable solutions designed to deliver tangible business value and address the unique challenges faced by organisations and executives across industries.

With a proven track record as a trusted digital transformation partner, technical expertise, and the ability to deploy and manage complex solutions, e& enterprise provides collaborative tailored solutions that empower customers to navigate their end-to-end digital transformation journey.

To learn more about e& enterprise, visit our site or reach out:

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