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What mature AI adopters know about unlocking AI's full potential

A new survey uncovered the most important indicators of success: maturity and a robust foundation of information management.

CIO

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Maturity is the new mandate

Artificial intelligence (AI) adoption is no longer a question of "if" but of "how well." According to new research conducted by Foundry on behalf of OpenText, 77% of organizations are already using AI in some form.[1] That number is expected to rise sharply, reflecting AI's increasingly critical role in digital transformation. But rapid adoption doesn't always equal effective implementation.

By the numbers

95% **of organizations are at least testing AI technology.**

27% **difference in ROAI satisfaction between mature adopters and newer adopters.**

78% **of mature AI users strongly attribute productivity improvements to modern information and automation tools.**

Organizations are moving fast, but not all are prepared. In the race to adopt AI, many are running on shaky ground. Without strong information management systems, clear governance, and scalable infrastructure, businesses risk stalling initiatives, not meeting expectations, or introducing new vulnerabilities.

The survey found that organizations seeing the strongest returns on AI — those with mature, strategic AI practices — have something essential in common: a robust foundation of information management. These mature adopters aren't just automating for the sake of efficiency. They're solving real problems, reducing risk, and building future-ready systems that unlock the true value of AI.

Based on insights from more than 500 senior IT leaders globally, the research reveals how mature organizations are leveraging AI to transform IT performance, improve digital experiences, and drive productivity. Unified platforms, trusted data, scaled automation, and strategic partnerships all play a critical role. Just as importantly, mature adopters focus on long-term impact. They define success by how AI helps solve meaningful business challenges, reduce enterprise risk, and drive strategic outcomes over time.

This white paper explores what leading organizations are doing differently and what others can learn from their approach.

AI maturity drives stronger outcomes

The headlines about AI often focus on speed: how fast organizations are adopting tools, deploying models, and experimenting with generative technologies. But speed per se isn't a strategy. In fact, moving too quickly without a plan can lead to fragmented initiatives, redundant technologies, and unrealized potential.

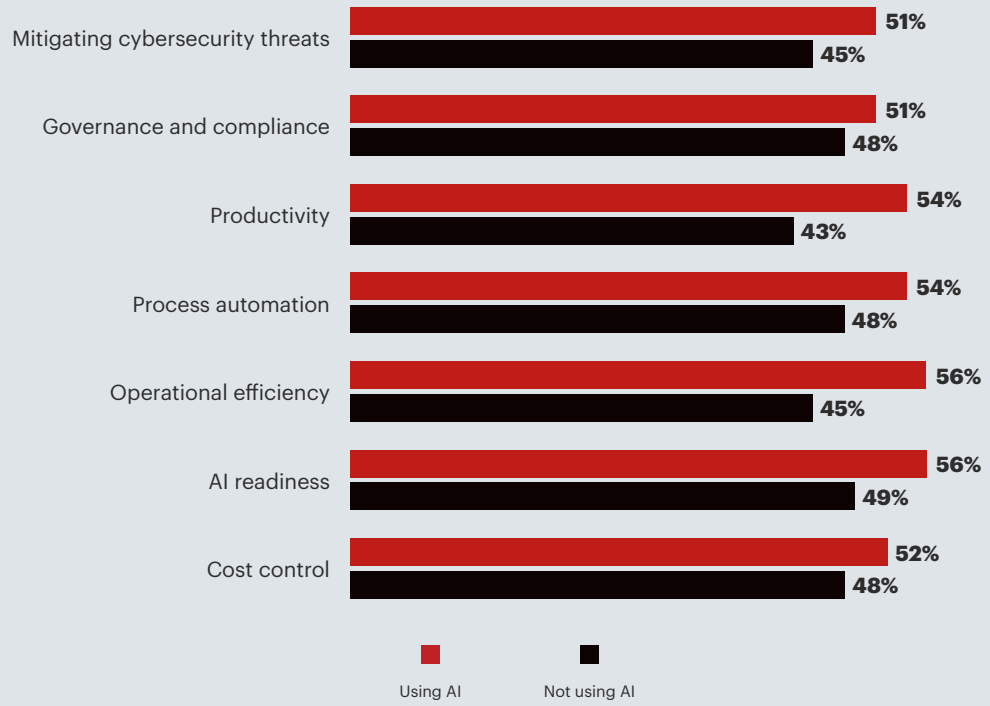
The survey revealed widespread AI enthusiasm and urgency, but adoption alone doesn't guarantee success. Not all organizations are realizing the full value of their AI investments.

The differentiator? Maturity.

Mature AI adopters report far greater satisfaction with outcomes, particularly in critical areas such as IT performance and digital experience delivery. These organizations have moved beyond pilot projects and point solutions. They've integrated AI into a broader purpose-built ecosystem that connects data, workflows, and decision-making.

[1] Foundry, on behalf of OpenText, "Information Management for an AI-Driven Future," June 2025.

Percent of respondents who say the following areas are working very well at their organization



For these organizations, AI isn't a bolt-on experiment. It's part of a larger digital strategy that's been intentionally designed and iteratively improved. AI tools are deployed in the context of unified platforms, governed data, and clearly defined business goals. As a result, they're not just experimenting — they're scaling with purpose.

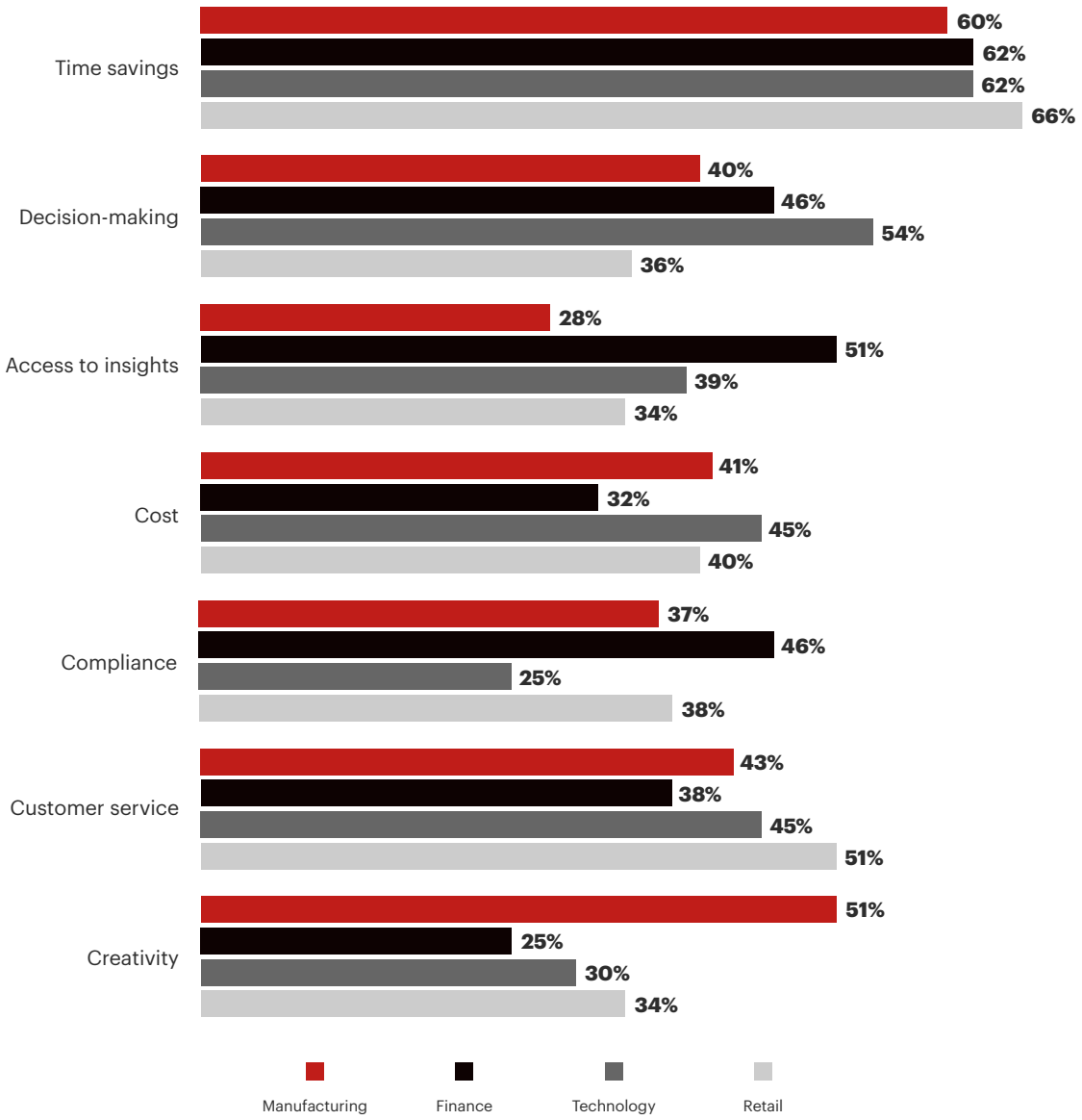
This alignment yields higher return on AI investment (ROAI): 69% of the mature adopters said they are satisfied with ROAI, compared to significantly lower rates (42%) among the newer or less coordinated adopters. Satisfaction increases as organizations shift from viewing AI as a tactical tool to regarding it as a strategic enabler of long-term value.

The takeaway is clear: Maturity and strategy matter. Organizations that ground their AI journey in robust information management, clear governance, and long-term planning see more meaningful, measurable outcomes — and position themselves to scale AI responsibly and effectively.

Productivity and efficiencies are the top AI goals

When asked about the primary benefits they expect from AI, respondents in different industry had different responses. However, they all pointed to a familiar and fundamental goal: productivity. In fact, more than. In fact, more than half of the participating organizations ranked it among their top three anticipated benefits — underscoring a broad desire to do more, faster, with fewer resources.

Top AI benefits by sector



And AI is delivering. A significant majority of the organizations said that modern information and automation tools are already driving measurable gains in output and efficiency. Among the mature adopters, the impact is even more pronounced. These organizations are seeing improvements not just in task execution but across entire workflows — resulting in streamlined operations, faster decision-making, and more time for strategic work.

These gains aren't just theoretical. Enterprises are reporting tangible reductions in process friction, bottlenecks, and manual rework. In many cases, AI is helping teams move from reactive to proactive operations — detecting issues earlier, routing tasks automatically, and accelerating outcomes that once required significant human intervention.

Benefits of AI (realized vs. expected)

Time savings
61% vs. 52%

Customer service
47% vs. 37%

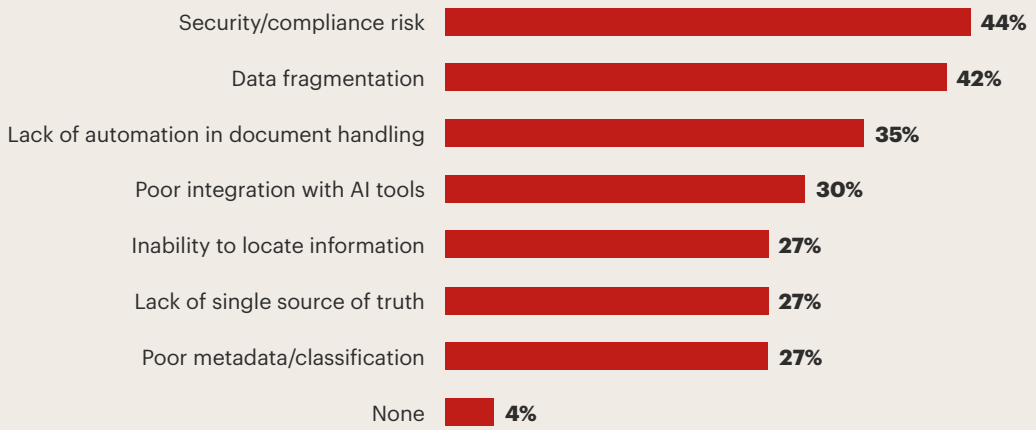
But what's enabling these gains isn't just the AI tools themselves. It's the infrastructure they depend on. AI can generate value only when it has access to high-quality data, clear process logic, and seamless system integration. Unified platforms that break down silos, automate repetitive tasks, and preserve data integrity are what enable AI to operate at scale — and deliver the outcomes organizations are expecting.

Mature adopters recognize this. They know that simply adding AI on top of fragmented or outdated systems is unlikely to produce results. That's why they invest in fixing the foundation first — consolidating platforms, cleaning and enriching data, and aligning teams around clear processes. For these organizations, productivity isn't just a goal — it's a byproduct of doing AI right.

Information management challenges are slowing progress

Excitement about AI is high, but foundational issues remain a significant barrier to progress. Many organizations are eager to scale AI initiatives, but core infrastructure limitations are holding them back. According to the research, the most common challenges include data silos (42%), security and compliance risks (44%), and a lack of automation (35%). These issues not only slow down adoption but also directly impact the accuracy, trustworthiness, and overall success of AI initiatives.

Biggest information management challenges



Poor data quality and disjointed platforms make it difficult for AI tools to deliver value. When information is scattered across departments, stored in incompatible formats, or subject to conflicting policies, AI models struggle to produce reliable, actionable insights. Even the most advanced algorithms require well-structured, enriched, and governed data to function effectively. Without that foundation, AI becomes little more than a costly experiment.

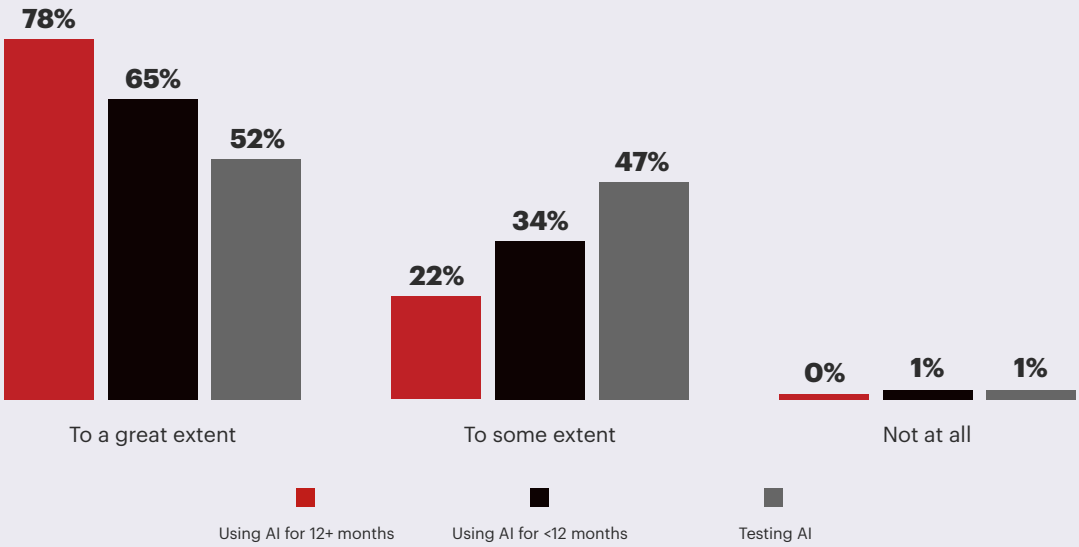
Security and compliance add another layer of complexity. Many organizations are deploying AI in environments where governance and compliance frameworks remain underdeveloped — with only 49% of the respondents reporting that their governance efforts are working "very well." As organizations apply AI to sensitive data — from customer records to financial transactions — they must also ensure that usage aligns with internal policies and external regulations.

Processes for controlling access, managing risk, and ensuring data integrity are often inconsistent or incomplete.

This mismatch — between AI's potential and the organization's readiness — creates risk. It can lead to incorrect decisions, regulatory exposure, or reputational harm if AI systems operate on flawed data or in unsecured environments. And when these risks materialize, they can erode trust in the very technology that organizations are working to embrace.

To move forward, companies must treat information as a strategic asset. That means dismantling data silos, implementing intelligent automation, and embedding governance into the fabric of their systems. It also requires collaboration between IT, compliance, and business leaders to define clear policies for data access, usage, and life cycle management. Only then can AI scale safely and deliver sustainable value.

To what extent can you attribute productivity gains to modern information and automation technology?



78%

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ROAI is real — but only for the prepared

Investments in generative AI (genAI) are accelerating rapidly. On average, enterprises are now spending $5.4 million annually on genAI tools and talent — a clear signal that AI is being treated as a strategic priority. But despite this growing investment, the return on AI investment (ROAI) isn't universal.

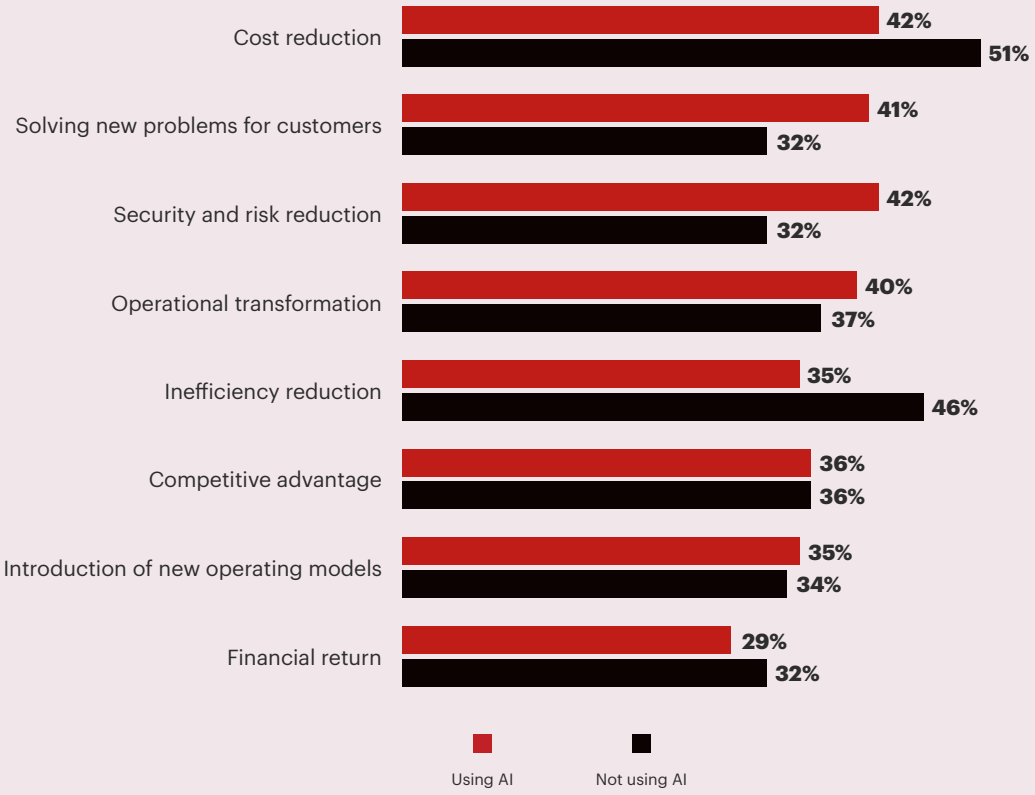
Only 58% of the responding organizations said they are satisfied with the outcomes they're seeing from AI. That leaves a sizable portion of companies still trying to bridge the gap between ambition and results. What's driving that gap? It's not just the size of the investment but also how long an organization has been using AI.

Among the more advanced adopters, satisfaction levels rise significantly. These organizations reported higher ROAI because they've laid the groundwork: aligning AI initiatives with business strategy, ensuring clean and accessible data, and embedding AI into core workflows rather than treating it as a one-off experiment.

There's also a deeper philosophical divide between organizations that are seeing success and those that aren't. Less mature companies tend to view ROAI through the lens of efficiency — how quickly something gets done, how many manual steps are eliminated, or how much labor is reduced. Although these benefits can create early momentum, they don't necessarily translate into long-term impact.

Mature adopters take a more strategic view. They evaluate ROAI based on AI's ability to solve real business problems and reduce risk — whether that's improving compliance, detecting threats faster, enhancing customer experiences, or driving innovation. These organizations aren't just deploying AI for speed — they're also using it to make better decisions and build resilience.

How do you measure ROAI?



This shift in perspective is critical. Quick wins may generate attention, but they rarely scale without the right foundation. Organizations that anchor their AI programs to business outcomes — rather than operational shortcuts — are more likely to see meaningful, repeatable value.

The bottom line: To unlock real ROAI, preparation matters more than ambition. A multimillion-dollar investment won't pay off without the systems, data governance, and strategy to support it. Sustainable success with AI doesn't come from chasing hype — it comes from building a plan.

Strategic partnerships and tools are key to scaling AI

Scaling AI across the enterprise isn't something organizations can do in isolation. The complexity of integrating AI into existing tech stacks, ensuring compliance, managing security, and aligning with business goals demands strong partnerships.

Industry spotlight: AI adoption leaders

AI adoption is accelerating across sectors — but the pace and depth of adoption vary significantly by industry.

- **Technology firms** lead the pack, with 61% reporting active use of AI for more than 12 months.
- **Finance organizations** follow closely behind, with 57% long-term adopters and an additional 20% reporting more recent implementations.
- **Manufacturers** are progressing more slowly. Just 36% reported long-term AI use, and 11% said they have no plans to adopt AI at all.

Then there's **retail**, which is a clear outlier.

- **100% of retail organizations surveyed are actively using AI,** making it the only industry in the study to reach full adoption.
- Retailers are also more likely to prioritize scalable infrastructure and reliable technology partnerships, underscoring how tightly AI success is linked to strong operational foundations.

As industries look to scale AI strategically, retail's example is instructive: It's not just about using AI; it's also about building the systems and relationships needed to make it work.

Enterprises are increasingly seeking vendors that bring not only tools but also strategy. According to the survey, the top capabilities organizations look for in an AI partner include:

- **Strong integration with existing systems (52%)**
- **Tools for classifying and enriching data (51%)**
- **High-level security features (48%)**

These requirements speak to a fundamental truth: AI success depends on more than algorithms. It also depends on infrastructure, governance, and trust.

The maturity advantage

The difference between AI hype and AI value is maturity. Organizations that treat AI as a strategic investment — grounded in information management, aligned with business goals, and enabled by strong partnerships — are seeing measurable returns.

Mature adopters understand that AI is not a shortcut. It's a capability that must be built, governed, and scaled with intention. They are unlocking real ROAI not by chasing trends but by laying the foundation for sustainable growth.

The path is clear. What separates leaders from laggards isn't access to technology but readiness to use it wisely.

This research, commissioned by OpenText, reveals what it takes to turn ambition into outcomes. Learn how to unlock the full potential of AI.