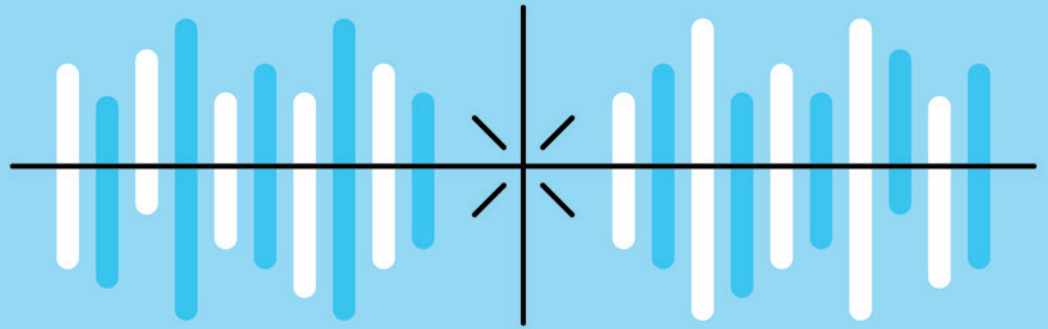




Unlocking AI's Revenue Potential

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Governance Is the Growth Engine in the AI Era

Artificial intelligence (AI) has moved past the hype cycle and into the operating model of revenue teams. Across every industry, go-to-market (GTM) teams are asking how far they can take AI, how fast, and under what conditions. Today the AI conversation is about deciding how much work is handed to intelligent system and what remains distinctly human.

Most organizations are still framing this as an efficiency story about faster content, faster follow-ups, and faster decisions. The opportunity for most organizations is turning AI into a genuine driver of GTM performance, not just a way to do the same work faster. That shift only happens when AI moves from producing insights to driving execution and acting in the moment. And as AI takes on more real-time work, the cost of getting it wrong rises just as fast as the upside of getting it right. That is especially true in regulated industries, where a single ungoverned action can cost more than any efficiency gained.

This is why governance can't sit at the edge of the AI conversation. There's a near-universal agreement that AI needs strong guardrails to be used safely and ethically—yet few organizations have built the framework. That gap between conviction and action is the real story of this moment. Organizations that build governance into how AI operates,

in the moment work happens, will be best positioned to move fast without losing control of where they're going. This report explores that tension by examining how organizations are scaling AI into their GTM performance engines, where they are finding real value, where ambition still outpaces results, and what it will take culturally and structurally to close the gap. We sponsored this research because we believe the winners in this next era will be the organizations that learn how to move fast while staying governed.



Rob Tarkoff
Chief Executive Officer
Seismic

Unlocking AI's Revenue Potential

Revenue enablement is at a critical inflection point. As global competition intensifies and pressure to improve sales increases, organizations are increasingly recognizing the value of using artificial intelligence (AI) to provide revenue-generating functions with the right tools, resources, and content to effectively engage with prospective and existing buyers.

“MOST EVERYTHING THAT revenue enablement teams are doing can be augmented by AI,” says Steve Busby, chief executive officer of Revenue Operations Associates, a go-to-market (GTM) execution company based in New Canaan, Conn. By embedding and scaling AI across revenue-generating processes and workflows, he says, AI can create “a gold mine of opportunity” to empower every role across the revenue cycle, including sales, marketing, customer support, and revenue enablement.

In a June 2026 survey by Harvard Business Review Analytic Services of 208 members of the *Harvard Business Review* audience, 75% of respondents say their organization has increased its use of AI for revenue-generating activities over the past year. All respondents are familiar with their organization’s business-to-business

revenue-generating activities (including sales, marketing, customer support, and/or revenue enablement) and the tools these teams use.

But while revenue-generating teams’ AI usage is increasing, the focus appears to be on improving productivity rather than realizing revenue gains such as GTM performance, which entails moving beyond generating content and analyzing interactions to actively optimizing how teams execute revenue strategies. That’s a missed opportunity to gain a competitive edge. Of all the revenue-generating areas the survey asked about, using AI for revenue enablement processes is the area the most respondents say has gained their organization significant or moderate value.

So how can organizations facilitate a shift from adopting AI for increased efficiencies to embedding

HIGHLIGHTS

 **84%**

of artificial intelligence (AI) adopters agree that a **strong governance framework is necessary** for revenue-generating teams to use AI ethically.

 **71%**

of respondents at organizations using AI for **revenue enablement processes** say their organization has realized significant to moderate value from it.

 **54%**

of AI adopters say their organization’s **revenue-generating teams use real-time AI to generate meeting prep/materials**, while fewer (9%) use it for training/onboarding of new hires.

Due to rounding, some figures in this report may not add up to 100%.

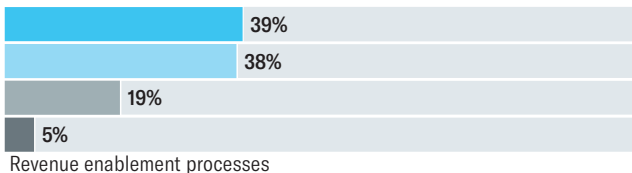
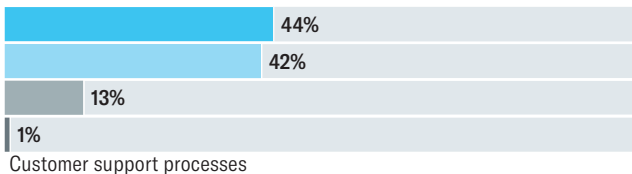
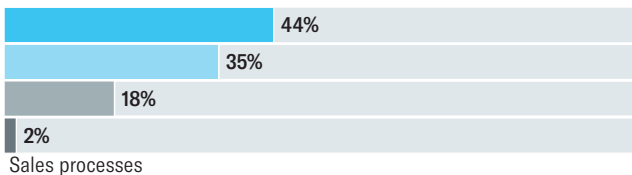
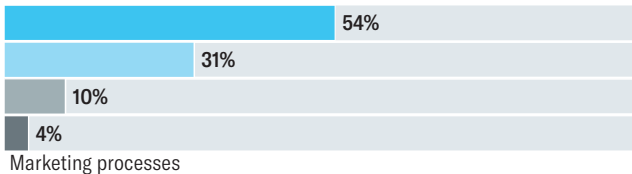
FIGURE 1

The State of Artificial Intelligence Adoption

Over half of respondents say their organization is using AI for marketing purposes, followed by sales and customer support

To what extent is your organization using or considering using AI for the following areas?

■ Using AI for this ■ Considering using AI for this
■ Not using or considering AI for this ■ Don't know



Base: 192 to 205 respondents, varies by row. Excluding "Don't have this department."

Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services survey, June 2026

AI for tangible financial gains? It begins with overcoming technological, organizational, and operational challenges including strategic shortcomings, a stringent regulatory environment, and skills gaps. In response, organizations must establish a clear AI strategy, address privacy and governance concerns, instill confidence in AI, and shore up the necessary talent. Only then can organizations fully realize AI's potential for driving revenue generation.

This report will explore the rise of AI, the barriers to unlocking AI's revenue enablement potential, and

the strategies for optimizing AI's potential as not only a productivity-enhancing tool but also a catalyst for better revenue execution and improved GTM performance.

An Overlooked Opportunity

Organizations are increasingly looking to AI to reduce manual work, boost productivity, and enhance the buyer experience. For marketers, this mission-critical technology promises to accelerate content creation and personalize interactions. Sales teams are using AI to surface the right information at precisely the right time, while customer support agents are tapping into AI's power to resolve complex queries.

In fact, a majority of respondents (54%) are using AI for marketing processes, followed by sales processes (44%) and customer support processes (44%). The fewest (39%) say their organization uses AI for revenue enablement processes. The respondents who say their organization is using or considering using AI in any of these revenue-generating functions are defined here as AI adopters. **FIGURE 1**

Although using AI to attract and support customers is a valuable application of the technology, organizations that have been slow to adopt AI for revenue enablement could be missing out on some serious financial returns. A case in point: 71% of respondents at organizations using AI for revenue enablement processes say they are realizing significant to moderate value—slightly more than any other process, including customer support (69%), marketing (66%), and sales (63%).

The Efficiency-Revenue Enhancement Divide

To facilitate AI's shift from productivity tool to revenue performance enhancer, it's helpful to explore what

Seventy-one percent of respondents at organizations using AI for revenue enablement processes say they are realizing significant to moderate value—slightly more than any other process, including customer support (69%), marketing (66%), and sales (63%).

organizations hope to achieve by integrating AI into revenue-generating workflows.

When asked what business benefits their organization most hopes to realize from embedding AI into revenue-generating activities, 40% of AI adopters say they want more efficient processes (the most desired benefit), and 52% of those at organizations already using AI for revenue-generating activities say they've realized this sought-after benefit. **FIGURE 2**

Timothy Dickson understands the operational advantages of AI. As chief digital and information officer for Regal Rexnord, a Milwaukee-based manufacturer of motors and related components, Dickson says that in the past it would have taken the company's customer care team nearly four hours to respond to a single email request for a quote. Now, he says, by deploying efficiency-boosting AI-powered assistants, the same process takes seconds, resulting in an uptick in deals and more time for support agents to focus on core competencies such as customer outreach.

Another way AI deployments are paying off for organizations is by increasing their understanding of customer behavior, from buying patterns to channel preferences. Thirty-six percent of AI adopters are eager to gain better customer insights/analytics from AI—a goal 34% of those at organizations using AI for revenue generation have already achieved.

The London-based fund management company Royal London Asset Management (RLAM) implemented an AI-powered sales enablement tool that allows it to examine the performance of its client-facing content across critical buyer touchpoints. The company found that a double-digit percentage of its overall collateral was not being used by sales teams whatsoever, according to Michelle Calcutt, RLAM's head of client group services.

"We were spending time and energy creating content that wasn't effectively returning a conversion," she says. Fast-forward to today and Calcutt says RLAM has "a better understanding of what content is working, what's not working, and what we should spend more time on."

There are also some surprise benefits of embedding AI into revenue-generating activities: 26% of AI adopters say their organization most aims to realize higher-quality proposals and presentations (and 32% of AI users say they have realized these) as well as better, faster decision making—an advantage most sought by 24% and realized by 31%.

But while AI users are often attaining operational goals, financial and performance gains are less common. Lower operating costs, named by 27%, is one of the top three benefits AI adopters say their organization most aims to realize from embedding AI into its revenue-generating activities. Yet notably fewer (18%) of the AI users say their organization has achieved this objective.

Similarly, efforts to use AI for greater revenue growth are also missing the mark: 19% of AI adopters say their organization seeks increased revenue/new revenue streams most from AI, with 11% of AI users succeeding. Other bottom-line advantages their organizations are less likely to realize include a faster sales cycle (8%) and higher win/conversion rates (7%).

Barriers to Artificial Intelligence Revenue Enablement

The factors preventing organizations from converting AI adoption into measurable revenue and GTM performance extend beyond technical hurdles such as fragmented data, security vulnerabilities, and user resistance. Rather, strategic shortcomings are more commonly cited as obstacles than are technical barriers or budgetary constraints. The top barrier preventing AI adopters' organizations from using AI more effectively for revenue-generating activities, selected by 45%, is lack of a clear AI strategy. Meanwhile, 38% say their organization plans to establish a clear AI strategy over the next 12 months to achieve better collaboration between human revenue-generating teams and AI. Doing so is critical for creating a

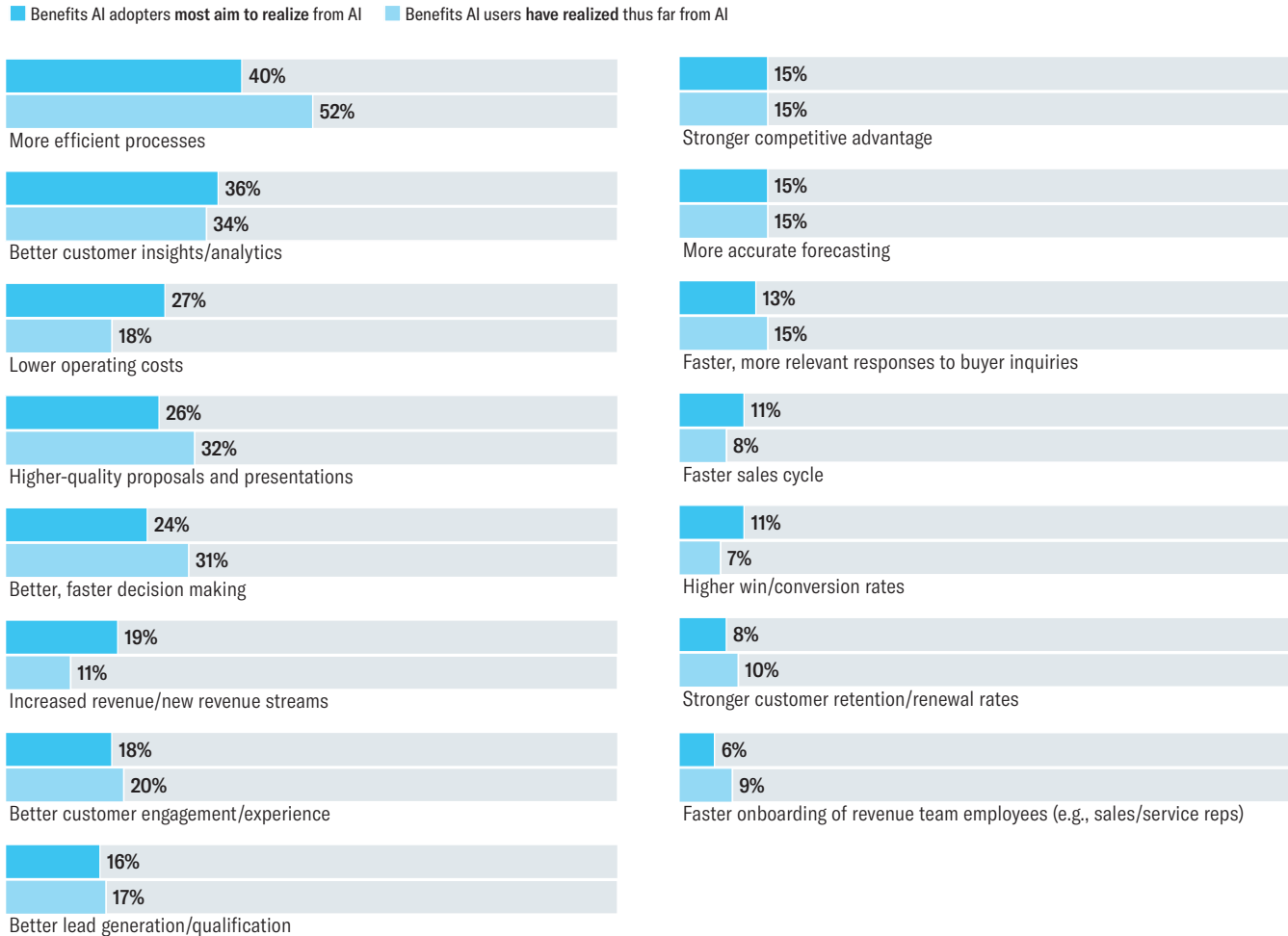
FIGURE 2

Desired vs. Actual Business Advantages

For the most part, respondents are realizing the benefits sought from AI, namely greater efficiencies and data-driven insights

What business benefits does your organization most aim to realize from embedding AI into its revenue-generating activities, if any?
Select up to three.

What business benefits has your organization realized thus far from embedding AI into its revenue-generating activities, if any?
Select all that apply.



Bases: 195 AI adopters, 143 AI users. Not shown: 0% and 8% Don't know, 3% and 0% Other, 1% and 5% None.

Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services survey, June 2026

foundation for guiding AI investments and connecting AI initiatives to revenue objectives. **FIGURE 3**

“We’re still in the hype phase of AI in terms of measurable ROI and meaningful business impact,” says Revenue Operations Associates’ Busby. “Deployment, testing, and experimentation in individual areas—that’s all great and definitely increasing productivity and generating new insights, but companies need to catch their breath and come up with a holistic plan. They should think about the business three years from now and how the operating model will fundamentally change with the power and potential of AI and then develop an organizational chart, an operational plan, and a go-to-market plan to get there.”

Another roadblock to using AI more effectively for revenue-generating activities is privacy/governance, cited by 37%. Establishing a holistic AI strategy and stringent privacy and governance controls requires skilled leadership—an elusive asset, according to Busby. “I would contend that the skills needed are in limited supply right now,” he says. Navigating today’s AI landscape, Busby says, demands a unique blend of strategic vision, change management, and operational acumen across all business functions. In fact, 36% say a lack of talent with AI expertise is preventing AI adopters from using AI effectively for revenue generation.

Then there is the matter of justifying investments in AI for the purposes of revenue-generating activities. “We’ve come to the realization that the return on investment of AI is far more difficult to calculate, because it can’t be tied directly to just an increase in profitability,” says Elodie Blyth de Fontenay, RLAM’s head of data and AI transformation.

Indeed, more than one-third (36%) of AI adopters cite difficulty measuring AI value/ROI as a barrier to the effective use of AI. Other cited obstacles to AI success include AI being mostly applied to simple tasks vs. high-impact work (32%), data quality issues (30%), and IT/data infrastructure that’s not prepared to integrate AI tools (29%).

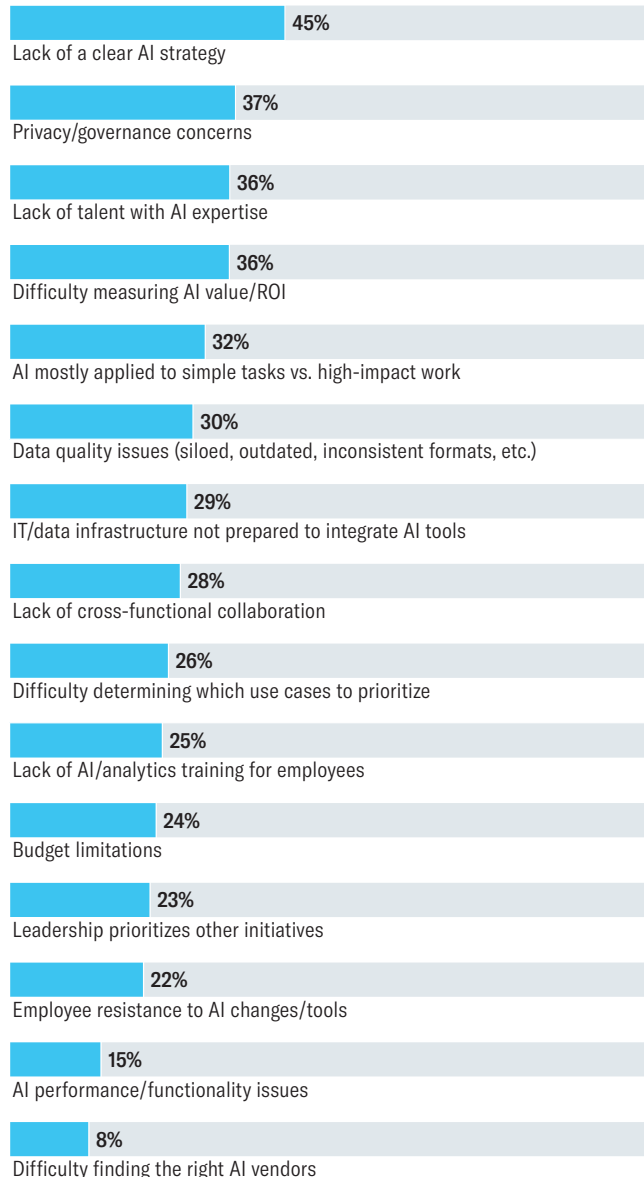
Culture can also play a significant role in limiting AI’s ability to transform sales, marketing, customer support, and revenue enablement functions. Although organizations are

FIGURE 3

Obstacles to AI Success

Lack of a clear AI strategy, privacy/governance concerns, and skills gaps top the list of barriers

What barriers are preventing your organization from using AI more effectively for revenue-generating activities? *Select all that apply.*



Base: 195 AI adopters (respondents whose organizations are using or considering using AI in revenue-generating functions). Not shown: 4% Other, 1% Don't know, 0% None.

Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services survey, June 2026

increasingly embracing AI for revenue-generating activities, many users question whether they have the skills, tools, and resources necessary to optimize AI outcomes.

“There are people who still doubt AI and its value,” says Regal Rexnord’s Dickson. “You’re just never going to get 100%.” A mere 12% of AI adopters say their revenue-generating teams are highly confident in their ability to make effective use of AI. Meanwhile, 55% say these teams have low confidence (38% say they are “slightly confident,” and 17% say they are “not confident”).

Pathways to AI Maturity

Despite strategic barriers and cultural roadblocks, organizations can take constructive steps to achieve greater AI maturity when it comes to revenue-generating activities. Strategies to consider may include determining the right leadership, valuing human skills, and establishing AI guardrails.

One of the most important steps organizations can take to achieve AI success for revenue enablement is to build a robust organizational structure to support the use of AI. Although corporate frameworks for AI vary from company to company, many respondents seem to prefer a senior technology or business executive at the helm.

The individuals or teams most cited by AI adopters as primarily responsible for AI for revenue-generating activities at their organization are the chief information, technology, or data officer or equivalent (21%); the CEO or equivalent (15%); and the chief revenue officer or equivalent (12%). The non-C-level marketing and sales titles, including sales lead (6%), customer engagement/experience lead (2%), and revenue enablement lead (2%), were some of the least selected.

This leadership misalignment may be cause for concern. If revenue enablement is where respondents say AI is creating substantial value, it stands to reason that revenue enablement should play a prominent role in an AI strategy. That’s one of the many reasons the Vancouver, Wash.-based

software company ZoomInfo hired a GTM knowledge engineer, says Gabe Sweet, vice president of revenue enablement. The newly created position entails combining sales and marketing knowledge with AI skills to build systems that will support the company’s revenue-generating activities, he says.

Distinctly human skills are also integral to accelerating growth with AI-powered revenue enablement. After all, AI can produce leads, customer responses, and recommendations quickly. But it cannot reliably determine what new use cases should take priority or whether customer preferences are on the verge of shifting.

“It takes a good leadership team to understand what their future-state business model looks like with AI and how AI will impact workflows and customer value across the entire company,” says Busby. “That lens is critical, but many companies are currently making important technology decisions without it. We’ve entered a new business dimension, and many companies are not equipped to have that forward-looking transformational view.”

It’s no wonder that more than half (55%) of AI adopters say that for their organization’s revenue-generating employees, critical thinking and judgment are the most important skills to have in order to get value from using AI, followed by knowing when to use/not to use AI (49%) and AI literacy (35%).

Once the proper organizational structure is in place, leaders can begin establishing guardrails around AI. Without firm boundaries, AI can expose organizations to reputational damage and legal liabilities. An overwhelming 88% of AI adopters agree that a strong governance framework is necessary for revenue-generating teams to use AI safely and effectively, while 84% agree to the same about using AI ethically.

Yet only 32% of AI adopters say that in order to achieve better collaboration between human revenue-generating teams and AI their organization is creating a strong governance framework/guardrails for AI over the next year—a gap between conviction and action. Clearly, there is a consensus on what is needed for the ethical use of AI. But when leaders fail to execute on strategy, they leave revenue-generating

“It takes a good leadership team to understand what their future-state business model looks like with AI and how AI will impact workflows and customer value across the entire company.”

Steve Busby, chief executive officer, Revenue Operations Associates

teams to navigate AI's risks without the guardrails widely acknowledged as essential.

Fortunately, some organizations are finding new pathways to operationalizing AI guardrails. Two years ago, Regal Rexnord teamed up with a third party, Dickson says, to “establish an AI governance policy, communicate that policy to our business and executive teams, and set up the structure, cadence, intake, evaluation, and voting of AI use cases through deployment into production.”

Today Dickson leads Regal Rexnord's AI governance committee and delegates responsibilities to the head of cybersecurity, along with members of the company's business, legal, data privacy, compliance, accounting, and project management teams, for a truly collaborative endeavor.

“We believe in having a cross-functional group of people responsible for ethically and responsibly deciding on the right AI use cases,” says Dickson. Members meet on a biweekly basis to discuss new AI requests, current events, and tools, he says.

But AI-powered revenue enablement platforms and highly skilled teams perform better when they work in tandem. To develop greater synergy between humans and AI, many organizations are integrating AI directly into day-to-day processes. For instance, 46% of AI adopters say their organization is embedding AI directly into tools/workflows used by revenue-generating teams over the next 12 months in order to achieve better collaboration between human revenue-generating teams and AI.

A perfect example is Regal Rexnord's use of AI to automate the company's sales enablement processes. In the past, Dickson says, “sales teams were spending way too much time getting ready for customer calls, visits, or trips. We needed to find a way to leverage AI to pull together all the information about our company, including products, solutions, and services, and find a quicker, easier way to create content, documents, and PowerPoints that we can send to customers ahead of time.”

With personalized content and real-time insights now seamlessly integrated into revenue-generating workflows,

Dickson says, AI saves sales teams nearly four hours per week searching for the proper information, and they can close deals in a quarter of the time once required—a huge win for the entire company.

Another top strategy for fostering collaboration between human revenue-generating teams and AI is investing in AI literacy and skills training, cited by 45% of AI adopters. Sweet at ZoomInfo says his company's educational efforts include think tanks, hack-a-thons, and AI Fridays—days designated for helping teams learn about an urgent or timely AI-related topic.

Similarly, 41% of AI adopters say that educating employees on the business value of using AI is a step their organization is taking to enhance human-technology synergies within revenue-generating teams. RLAM's Calcutt agrees with taking an educational approach to AI adoption. Due to the inherently cautious nature and regulatory environment of the financial industry, she says, asset managers tend to work at a slower pace when it comes to change. In response, Calcutt says, RLAM often presents its revenue-generating teams with proofs of concept that show the value of using AI, thereby encouraging swifter enterprise-wide adoption.

The Future Is in Real Time

As organizations secure the necessary talent, technologies, and structures to achieve more from AI, the next frontier of revenue enablement is emerging. The most common use cases for real-time AI today center around generating content rather than more complex tasks such as analytics and human interactivity. When asked how their organization's revenue-generating teams are using real-time AI, 54% of AI adopters cite generating meeting prep/materials, followed closely by generating post-call summaries (50%). On the other end of the scale, fewer respondents select use cases related to autonomous assistance and training, such as AI agents assisting revenue-focused employees in real time (18%) and providing real-time feedback on practice pitches/

FIGURE 4

Real-Time AI Use Cases

The most common use cases for real-time AI revolve around content generation rather than more sophisticated applications

In which of the following ways is real-time AI currently being used by your organization's revenue-generating teams, if at all? *Select all that apply.*



Base: 195 AI adopters (respondents whose organizations are using or considering using AI in revenue-generating functions). Not shown: 7% None, 4% Don't know, 3% Other.

Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services survey, June 2026

role-plays (15%). While automating content generation can save time, more advanced uses of real-time AI may have a more profound impact on performance. **FIGURE 4**

That's because more sophisticated use cases can tap into the most significant moments in the revenue cycle as sellers connect with customers, buyers engage with products, and customer support agents respond to queries.

By using AI in the moment, the technology becomes more than simply a provider of static content and materials; it is an active revenue partner that can deliver real-time personalized recommendations, individualized training, tailored content, and consistent messaging across revenue processes.

A Positive Outlook

Organizations are readily embracing AI, encouraged by its ability to enhance operational efficiencies and streamline workflows. But AI adopters must move beyond using AI simply for productivity perks and embed it for measurable financial gains.

"When we first rolled out AI functionality, it was very much with a push to increase efficiency and productivity," says Sweet. "Now it's about, 'How do we actually drive outcomes for the business?'"

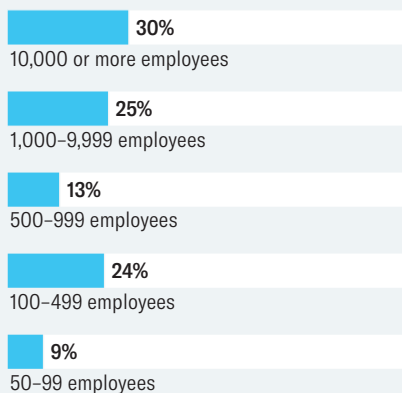
The answer to this question is by overcoming technological, organizational, and operational challenges. Lack of an AI strategy, privacy regulations, skills gaps—they can all stand in the way of transforming revenue enablement and achieving better GTM performance. However, by establishing a clear AI strategy, creating an AI governance framework, building an AI-confident workforce, and investing in training and talent, organizations can fully realize AI's potential for driving sustainable revenue growth.



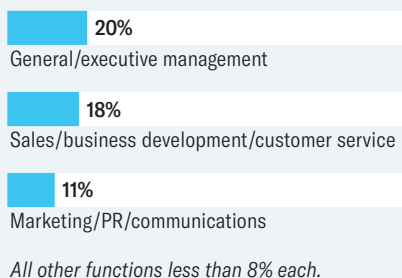
METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Harvard Business Review Analytic Services surveyed 208 members of the *Harvard Business Review* audience via an online survey fielded in June 2026. Respondents qualified to complete the survey if they worked at an organization that sells business-to-business products or services and they are familiar with their organization's revenue-generating activities and the tools teams use for those activities.

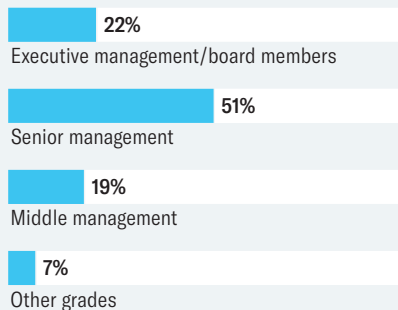
ORGANIZATION SIZE



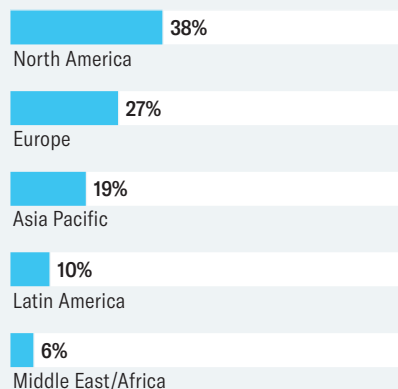
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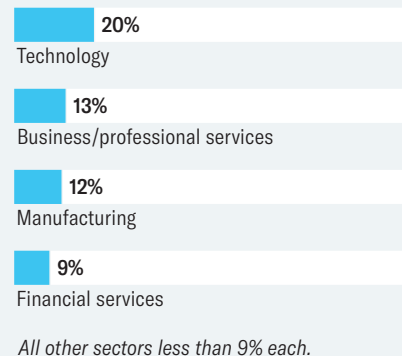
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