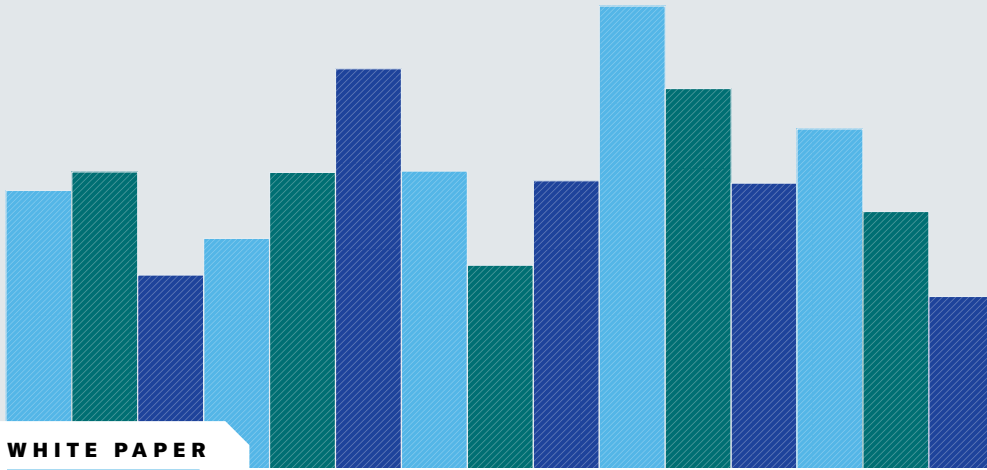




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ANALYTIC SERVICES



WHITE PAPER

Unlocking Gen AI's Potential by Strengthening Data and Organizational Readiness



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We've come a long way in a short time. Since the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022, the whole tech industry has been turned inside out by the explosive innovation centered on generative AI. For a little over a year, there has been a steady drumbeat of new technologies and techniques, from models to retrieval-augmented generation to agent-based systems architecture. Amidst this upheaval, it can be a dizzying undertaking for organizations to try and determine how to get involved in the emerging artificial intelligence (AI) economy. Where and when should an organization start? Which opportunities will bear fruit? What are the potential pitfalls? More than most innovations, AI has extremely high stakes for both risk and reward.

At Boomi, we have been helping organizations thrive in digital business for years by providing intelligent automation and integration solutions. We have gone through our own AI journey. Early in our history, we started collecting metadata that showed how our customers were connecting their systems. We have since used that information to streamline our user experience, first through machine learning and a graphical user interface, then through generative AI and a conversational interface. Along that journey, we have learned lessons about how to apply these new technologies in a practical and responsible way.

Today, through our own experiences and with the help of our products and services, we are helping companies around the world prepare for the AI economy, and then take their first safe and meaningful steps into it. Whether those companies are optimizing user experiences with the aid of AI, automating manual process steps, or introducing new digital offerings, our focus is always on getting to business value as quickly as possible.

In this report, Harvard Business Review Analytic Services has done an incredible job covering the full spectrum of AI readiness. Through interviews with industry experts and practical implementers, this report will serve as an empirical guide as you plot your own path into the world of AI. The report covers more than technology. Organizational considerations are provided, as well as the fundamental operating models and governance approaches that are emerging in companies with a higher degree of AI maturity. It's all here. So, if you want to help your organization go from AI curious to AI ready, keep on reading!



Matt McLarty
CTO and Vice President
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Unlocking Gen AI's Potential by Strengthening Data and Organizational Readiness

The hype surrounding generative AI (gen AI) has energized C-suites and boardrooms, but it may also be pressuring them into running experiments and using artificial intelligence (AI) before their organizations are ready.

To be sure, gen AI's potential is vast—Gartner Inc. describes the profound impact gen AI will have on society as “similar to that of the steam engine, electricity[,], and the internet.”¹ The Stamford, Conn.-based technological research and consulting firm reports that enterprises with higher levels of AI maturity will gain greater benefits to their revenue through a broad range of use cases, from product development and new channels to talent, process, and sustainability improvements. It forecasts rapid uptake of gen AI across industries and predicts that by 2024, 40% of enterprise applications will have embedded conversational AI, up from less than 5% in 2020.²

But overeager adopters may put themselves at a distinct disadvantage against better-prepared competitors if they don't master certain fundamentals necessary for the effective use of gen AI. “There's a reckoning that will occur,” says Bill Wong, an AI research fellow at Info-Tech Research Group, a London-based information technology research and advisory company. Corporations that forge ahead without attending to foundational issues such as data quality, systems integration, and organizational readiness will achieve only a certain level of success with gen AI, largely in efficiency gains, he says. “But the firms that will exceed these less-prepared adopters in performance are the ones that say, ‘Hey, we built a platform that's optimized for AI. We're going to share data as a corporate resource. It's not just specific to these use cases.’ Those firms will advance further and faster.”

While no one can say with certainty what the long-term impacts of gen AI will be, there are important, practical steps nearly every organization could be taking now to prepare for the deployment of gen AI across the enterprise. Even

HIGHLIGHTS

Overeager adopters may put themselves at a distinct disadvantage against better-prepared competitors if they don't **master certain fundamentals necessary for the effective use** of generative AI (gen AI).

While no one can say with certainty what the long-term impacts of gen AI will be, there are **important, practical steps nearly every organization could be taking now to prepare for the deployment of gen AI** across the enterprise.

It becomes **critical to address the barriers to more advanced gen AI adoption** because gen AI is poised to impact the entire organization—and the ecosystems in which it operates.



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as organizations engage in gen AI experimentation and early use case adoption, Wong and others caution organizations to bolster the technical, process, and cultural elements necessary to support even more impactful use of gen AI—and other forms of AI—in the future.

Preparing the organization starts with understanding the challenges that often come with gen AI adoption and the errors that are made in response to pressure to take action. That context makes it clear why certain prerequisites are a must to help organizations maximize value from their gen AI investments. It’s also important to understand how a strong foundation enables more impactful, business-driving gen AI use cases and how organizations are getting those prerequisites in place—and already reaping benefits.

Himanshu Arora, vice president and chief executive officer advisor at Infosys Ltd., a Bangalore, India-based IT and consulting firm, says early AI use cases are akin to left-brain thinking, focused on efficiencies, cost reductions, and incremental improvements in things like operations, customer service, marketing, sales, and code development. The bigger opportunities in gen AI, however, require a right-brain mindset, Arora says. “We could do something drastically different,” he explains. “We could reimagine this business; we could create new business models. That part still needs a lot of good focus, and that’s where I think people need to evolve their thinking and mindset.”

This paper will explore the challenges organizations are experiencing around gen AI adoption and the missteps some of them are making. It will identify the prerequisites organizations need to have in place to maximize value from their gen AI investments, describe how those will provide a strong foundation for gen AI use cases, and share best practices to get those requirements in place.

Not the Usual Early Adopters

Industries that traditionally hold back from embracing new technologies due to regulatory concerns or general conservatism, such as health care, banking, insurance, and life sciences, are among the early adopters of gen AI. *Fortune*

magazine reported over 30,000 mentions of AI on earnings calls by the end of 2023.³ CEOs are attending gen AI tech talks normally populated only by IT types. Infosys’ research has found that, in contrast to most technologies where the lack of leadership advocacy is a significant obstacle to adoption, less than 4% of vice presidents and C-suite executives at the U.S. and Canadian companies it surveyed via telephone in August and September 2023 named such endorsement as an issue with gen AI. “We have never seen this in the past with any tech shift,” Arora notes.

That enthusiasm, though, has created its own obstacles to effective adoption of gen AI. “It disrupted digital transformation strategy,” says Kevin Collins, CEO and founder of Charli AI, a Vancouver, B.C.-based financial services-focused AI software firm. “It painted the art of the possible. So everybody jumped on that shiny new ball. The reality check is, getting to that shiny new ball is expensive. It’s complicated.”

Those inflated expectations, and the intensified pressure they engender from shareholders and executives, are joined by several other significant obstacles to accessing gen AI’s greatest potential.

On the organizational side, for example, many gen AI adopters are forging ahead without identifying a clear value proposition, establishing a strategy-aligned roadmap, or setting well-considered policies around responsible use, verification of outputs, and privacy, security, and risk. Many organizations have not yet assigned clear lines of responsibility to lead the change management and technical decision making required to maximize gen AI benefits or identify and fill the skills gap needed to successfully integrate gen AI into enterprise systems. Meanwhile, AI understanding is often lacking, leading decision makers to misdirect resources, such as earmarking funds for gen AI when another form of AI is better suited to the challenge at hand.

Organizations don’t always recognize the scope of the obstacles they face. In a survey of 200 vice presidents and higher decision makers at U.S. organizations with more than \$1 billion in revenue that was conducted by New York professional services firm KPMG in June 2023, respondents were asked to rank their top three barriers to implementing

gen AI in their organizations. **FIGURE 1** The most-cited barriers were lack of skilled talent to develop and implement the technology and inability to pivot legacy applications and systems to use it (28% each), along with cultural resistance internally (25%) and concerns about the uncertain regulatory landscape (23%). The inability to access/leverage data for use with gen AI (16%) was dead last in respondents' list of 14 top barriers.

The low ranking of “accessing and leveraging data” in the KPMG survey underestimates the importance of data hygiene to AI. In a Harvard Business Review Analytic Services survey of 343 executives conducted in June 2021—before gen AI burst into widespread awareness—the majority of respondents reported data issues being a moderate or major cause of problems, including inaccurate/incomplete data (87%), data silos (87%), inconsistent data formats (80%), poor enterprise data governance (77%), conflicting information between data sources (77%), lack of data accessibility (76%), unclear responsibilities for the manager of the data (71%), and data inconsistencies between geographic regions (57%).

Gen AI experts say such inadequacies in data architecture, data curation, and data hygiene not only still exist but will now impact organizations' ability to mature beyond entry-level stages of gen AI use. In fact, the challenge has only increased because adding to these prerequisites is the need for information to be in the right context, and have the right metadata attached, to fulfill advanced use cases.

“Typically, in large enterprises in particular, data is messy,” says Maryam Alavi, professor of IT management at Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta. They have “silos, different versions of the same data, different approaches to naming data elements, different formats, and large volumes and velocity of data. Data needs to be managed a lot better in all aspects—[whether it’s] integration, issues around security, privacy, access control—than it has been.”

To be clear, these obstacles are not stopping the adoption of gen AI. Already in production are the low-hanging fruit of use cases: gen AI functionality built into commercial software such as customer relationship management or content generation tools, as well as for applications where the data quality is already good and the app is not dependent on a lot of other systems. The Infosys survey found 73% of companies with more than \$10 billion in revenue, 38% of \$1 billion to \$10 billion companies, and 27% of \$500 million to \$1 billion companies have implemented or are currently implementing gen AI solutions or have established gen AI use cases that create business value.

But installing one-off gen AI applications without doing the work to prepare for a more holistic approach will hold organizations back from adopting more advanced use cases. “They’re creating these silos of AI apps and silos of data,” Info-Tech Research’s Wong says. “And when it comes to integrating

FIGURE 1

Barriers to Gen AI Adoption

A talent gap for implementing the technology narrowly beats other challenges

What are currently the biggest barriers to implementing generative AI within your company? Rank your top responses up to 3, where 1 is the biggest barrier, 2 is the second biggest, and 3 is the third biggest. The blue bar represents combined #1, #2 and #3 rankings.



Source: KPMG survey, June 2023



“We truly believe that whatever centralized value office you set up should take up the right conversations around strategy, architecture, governance, value frameworks, data readiness, and skill building across the enterprise,” says Himanshu Arora, vice president and chief executive officer advisor at Infosys Ltd.

data, advancing up the maturity curve, it is really challenging when you have all these silos. They will limit the organization from maximizing the value from AI and the data.”

Getting the Culture Ready

It becomes critical to address the barriers to more advanced gen AI adoption because gen AI is poised to impact the entire organization—and the ecosystems in which it operates. The technology also comes with some risks, such as hallucinations from data, that similar-scale IT projects have not had to deal with. So, preparing to evolve and mature in the use of gen AI means getting a wide range of functions and processes involved in ensuring the organization is set up to make the most of the technology while staying within well-considered guardrails.

Getting the culture ready means establishing governance, creating a roadmap, setting up policies, and handling the change management, education, and mindset shift that gen AI adoption requires.

In addition to those organizational tasks, the employees responsible for gen AI adoption must also guide the technical process, from preparing data and systems to upskilling IT and non-IT roles to make good usage decisions. Metrics to gauge progress and outcomes must also be established.

One thing to note is that, while gen AI is getting the lion’s share of attention, these steps actually help prepare for all forms of AI, including “traditional” AI, such as machine learning; extractive AI, which is about gleaning applicable data; and multimodal AI, which combines multiple types of data to drive more accurate results.

Integrating gen AI into an organization’s strategy, business processes, and culture requires both technical and business knowledge and skills. To cover all their bases, organizations are establishing clear leadership as well as a place to share best practices, such as a center of excellence, an AI value office, or a community of practice.

Many advisors recommend a cross-functional approach, including roles for IT, human resources, legal, and risk management professionals, as well as for line-of-business managers. “I think that companies should have a group, maybe it’s an AI steering committee, not just made up of

technologists but [of] people in the business who are somewhat knowledgeable about [gen AI],” says Tom Davenport, professor of information technology and management at Babson College in Wellesley, Mass.

The title of chief AI officer is rising in popularity to lead the gen AI integration initiative, but creating reporting lines among C-level IT titles—chief data officer, chief digital officer, chief analytics officer, among others—can be controversial. What’s more important is that the AI leader, or leaders, be capable of handling the breadth of the work, from being a gen AI evangelist to being an immersive technical decision maker to being an architect who can not only select a gen AI model but also set up a framework to manage AI reuse and technical debt.

“I think if you have somebody who’s really good, very business-oriented, very well connected to senior executives, then having one overall technology data analytics officer is the way to go,” Davenport says. However, he notes that his own yet-to-be-published research suggests that chief AI officers are the least well-connected people to the business in the companies that have them. So multiple gen AI leaders may be required to span the wide scope of responsibilities.

“We truly believe that whatever centralized value office you set up should take up the right conversations around strategy, architecture, governance, value frameworks, data readiness, and skill building across the enterprise,” adds Infosys’ Arora. “The adoption will happen, and the innovations will happen, with the line of businesses coming in and working with this AI value office in a hub-and-spoke kind of a model.”

The hub-and-spoke model builds alignment, capability, and buy-in across the organization to achieve transformational outcomes powered by generative AI, he explains. “With a coordinated AI value office guiding strategy, companies can organize decision making around AI adoption in a way that responsibly unlocks value at scale.”

Establishing the Gen AI Roadmap

One common error some organizations are making in their rush to respond to gen AI pressures is to pursue use cases without putting them into the context of strategic goals. “It

comes down to what the business objectives are,” says Seth Earley, founder and CEO of Earley Information Science Inc., a Carlisle, Mass.-based professional services firm. “What is the organization trying to do? What’s strategically important? How are we differentiating in the marketplace? What is part of our core competence that can be accelerated or enriched? Gen AI use cases need to directly support measurable processes aligned with these strategic objectives.”

But AI application areas that have the potential to deliver high value are not always the easiest to adopt. “It’s helpful to prioritize the array of AI opportunities and temper the potential benefits by asking, ‘How feasible is this project?’” says Wong. One project might take only a weekend for the cloud provider to implement, while another project may appear to drive more value but also require giving up three of the organization’s best subject-matter experts on a part-time basis to help train the model. “Which project should the organization choose? You will need to prioritize based on both factors, value versus feasibility, of the project,” he says.

Arora recommends evaluating use cases along six dimensions, the first being to assess the use case’s business validity and feasibility. Second, he says, organizations should look at a given use case’s quantified business value. The third is data readiness, and the fourth is alignment with Responsible AI; if it crosses the organization’s ethical AI boundaries, it’s not a great candidate. The fifth consideration is whether the culture is ready to adopt the use case. The final criterion is the cost. It can be helpful to reference use cases that are generating value within the organization’s industry in the roadmapping process, he notes.

Another lens organizations should consider applying as they plan out their AI use cases is one that distinguishes AI use cases designed to bring efficiency from those designed to drive growth.

Efficiency comes from automating processes, gathering data, streamlining workflows, and performing tasks such as handling huge amounts of information. For example, a large bank customer of Infosys assigned 83 people to spend eight to 10 weeks preparing year-end loan risk profiling. After an optimization project that included gen AI, the firm was able to reduce that to 65 people working for four weeks. However, 37 of those 65 people actually performed quality control rather than preparing risk profiling reports because people were mistrustful of the dramatic impact of the technology.

While efficiency-based use cases like this one are noteworthy now, they will soon become commonplace as more businesses adopt gen AI; they’re an example of the low-hanging fruit mentioned earlier.

The flip side of efficiency is gen AI use cases that drive growth by focusing on differentiators, such as idea generation, business model innovation, and other higher-order tasks.



“Competitive advantage comes from differentiation. Differentiation is based on your knowledge and your expertise and your ways of serving customers,” Seth Earley, founder and CEO of Earley Information Science Inc.

“Competitive advantage comes from differentiation,” says Earley of Earley Information Sciences. “Differentiation is based on your knowledge and your expertise and your ways of serving customers.”

Gen AI applications that enable faster access to that knowledge and expertise speed up the information metabolism of the enterprise, he continues. “So everybody’s getting better, faster answers more quickly, and that will accelerate time to market. [It] will accelerate virtually every process in the organization.”

Instituting Governance Standards

Gen AI’s unique ability to create new ideas, content, chatbot responses, and so on is among the reasons creating a sound usage policy is an essential, foundational element of gen AI. KPMG’s gen AI survey found that organizations place the highest priority on cybersecurity, with 62% giving it a 6 or 7 on a 7-point scale, followed by privacy concerns with personal data and legal/copyright/intellectual property issues.

Most experts agree it’s essential to establish sound policies at the start of the gen AI journey to ensure the organization embraces Responsible AI, which is a set of guiding principles enabling organizations to mitigate risk and reduce unintentional consequences of the adoption of AI. Guiding principles for developing or deploying AI applications should include data privacy, explainability and transparency, safety and security, fairness and bias detection, reliability and validity, and accountability. Systems must avoid introducing biases into processes and be inclusive of and respectful to individuals and communities. Gen AI systems must ensure privacy and data protection, and decisions made by AI models should be understandable to humans. Policies should also work to protect the organization’s intellectual property.

Progress—or lack of progress—toward establishing AI governance was measured in a survey by Info-Tech of IT professionals at 430 global organizations that have adopted or



“Addressing AI risks is best handled when the team involves representation across the organization, not just IT staff,” says Info-Tech Research’s Wong.

will adopt gen AI in 2024 (adopters) and another 176 that won’t adopt gen AI in 2024 or have no plans to adopt gen AI (skeptics) conducted from May to August 2023. **FIGURE 2** The results revealed that adopters were most likely to have published clear explanations about how AI is intended to be used and what predictions it makes (33%, versus 14% of skeptics) and most likely to have conducted impact assessments on AI systems (32%, versus 15% of skeptics). Both categories of respondents were least likely to have implemented measures to manage anonymized data (19% versus 9%).

Beyond setting policies and enacting guardrails to ensure adherence, organizations can access additional mechanisms to protect themselves.

Building out libraries of use cases, vetted via testing for policy compliance, helps users understand what is and isn’t okay in what context, says Earley. Those policies should include guidelines, such as it’s okay to upload the strategic plan to a private large language model (LLM) but not to a public one. “You need gold-standard use cases with established answers that you can test across different systems” to ensure the use cases comply with rules and policies, he says. “The biggest thing that I think organizations can do is have that gold source of truth that the LLM can operate from and then mitigate a lot of the risks around hallucinations or going outside brand guidelines.”

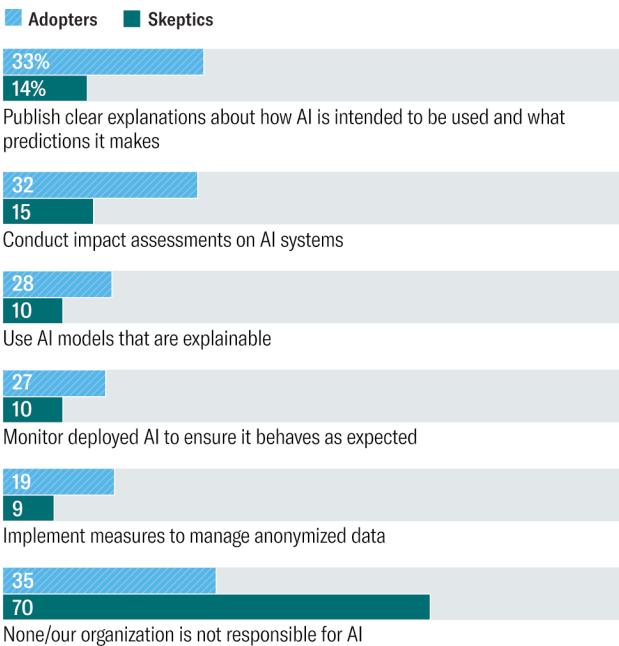
Adding reliable third-party data, fine-tuning the LLM to use only ingested knowledge, and involving people in the ongoing maintenance and vetting of the LLM and its outputs are also key steps to ensuring policies and protections are working and hallucinations are limited. That’s another reason a cross-functional team is essential to guide organizations through gen AI use—to stay on course as models drift or get replaced and use cases evolve.

“We see many organizations delegating the task of developing Responsible AI principles to the IT team as well as the tasks of mitigating the risks that can come with AI,” says Wong. “These assignments should be distributed and include members of the senior leadership team, representatives from the line of business, and end users. Addressing AI risks is best handled when the team involves representation across the organization, not just IT staff.”

FIGURE 2

Many Organizations Have Not Adopted AI Governance

Guidelines and impact assessments are what have been most widely adopted



Source: Info-Tech Research Group survey, 2023

Creating an Open Organizational Culture

The introduction of gen AI to the public might be considered a masterclass in marketing, providing everyday users with tools to interact firsthand with LLMs. But there’s a flip side to gen AI’s high profile—namely, management overconfidence and employee trepidation about the technology.

A survey of 300 enterprise board members across four countries conducted by Irvine, Calif.-based software company Alteryx published on the company’s website in October 2023 found 67% of board members of companies using gen AI rated their understanding of the technology as either expert (28%) or advanced (39%). The majority of respondents whose entities are using gen AI (70%) felt confident that their board has enough understanding and knowledge to make informed

strategic decisions for their organization. “They had wildly overly optimistic views of how much they knew about this technology and how they could really guide their companies in the use of gen AI,” says Babson’s Davenport.

Chief AI officers or others charged with leading their organizations’ gen AI efforts will need to—tactfully—address this gap by elevating the AI knowledge of executives and board members. They should also be a part of education and change management initiatives across the workforce, not just to ensure adherence to policy but also to set expectations, alleviate mistrust, engender a mindset shift where workers come to view gen AI as augmenting what they do rather than replacing them, and help ideate new ways to leverage gen AI in their jobs.

“Create an organizational culture that is open and [where] there’s high trust,” says Georgia Tech’s Alavi. “And be very authentic,” making it clear that the intent is not to replace people but instead to enable them—if that is indeed the goal.

Also, be transparent if layoffs are possible. “People themselves, especially knowledge workers, can be creative and start using the tool. If it is a trusting environment, they are going to be forthcoming” in how to make the most of it, Alavi says. Emphasize that the people who learn to use gen AI will be more productive, effective, and marketable than those who don’t, Davenport adds.

Laying the Data Foundation

Organizational readiness for gen AI isn’t just a cultural and governance matter; it very much depends on laying a solid data foundation and measuring whether the use cases deploying the technology are reaching preset standards of achievement.

Standardized and harmonized data, well-integrated data repositories and platforms, and clear data pipelines are considered must-haves for most organizations to mature beyond entry-level use cases of gen AI. Achieving this environment may mean upskilling and recruiting talent and aligning with new partners. It’s also helpful to measure progress toward gen AI adoption, to ensure alignment with the roadmap, make sure new gen-AI enabled use cases are delivering, and course-check and learn from gen AI experiences.

“Data is becoming more important than it ever was before because you’re now feeding generative models that are more prone to hallucinations,” says Charli AI’s Collins. “Your business is going to be running on those models and they’re going to be making predictions. So they’d better get it right, because it is garbage in, garbage out.”

For example, says Earley, a request such as “Give me the project status” is impossible for gen AI to fulfill without groundwork in place to properly identify, clean, and categorize data so the LLM has the context to understand which project to check. “There’s still this big lack of understanding of the role of



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data quality and curation, especially in unstructured content and knowledge management,” he says. Managing and curating institutional knowledge is an ability many organizations are missing—and achieving it could pay dividends when it comes to gaining value from gen AI, Earley notes.

“Knowledge management is one of the top use cases that organizations would like to implement,” Wong says. “This would enable their employees to be more productive and deliver an improved customer experience to their clients by leveraging insights into the organization’s knowledge base.” However, this aspiration requires the organization to provide clean and trustworthy data. Gen AI does not provide a shortcut with respect to the work needed to ensure the quality and integrity of your data assets; rather, data governance becomes even more important when it needs to support AI applications, he says.

Collins recommends a data readiness review to ensure access to the right sources to feed gen AI as well as a standardized integration strategy to make it easy to tap that data across platforms for holistic decision making. Otherwise, two separate apps incorporating gen AI functionality are going to produce two different recommendations optimized for different sets of conditions and it will be unclear which is better aligned to overall strategy and what’s best for the business as a whole.

Organizations may need to flesh out their data management investments and skill sets to set the right data foundation as well as optimize gen AI use moving forward. Infosys’ research found 41% of the customers it surveyed wanted to reskill and upscale existing employees, 33% wanted to partner with vendors for talent, and 26% wanted to market themselves and recruit people with those skill sets.



“We’re going to see a lot of course corrections in the next year. We’re going to see a lot of revamping and looking at the basics—referencing organizing principles like taxonomies, ontologies, and knowledge graphs as well as core knowledge curation. Because it just doesn’t work the way a lot of people think it works. But when it works, with the right foundation, the impact will be enormous,” says Earley Information’s Earley.

“We advise them to have a healthy mix of all three” to access institutional knowledge as well as learnings from other organizations in the same industry, Arora says. While gen AI requires higher-order technical skills combined with knowledge of engineering, design, product development, and risk management, he notes that, depending on the scale of the implementation and area of application, the best way to reap value from gen AI is to recruit what he calls problem finders and problem solvers. “Invest in people who are skilled in empathy and collaboration and who understand gen AI ethics and the Responsible AI part of the story.”

Besides data preparedness, instituting the right metrics for measuring effectiveness is also key to ensuring successful gen AI adoption. Setting baselines and then measuring progress toward adoption, as well as the outcomes of use cases in production to ensure ROI, help keep the initiative aligned with strategy and goals. Metrics can also be essential to rally continued leadership support of gen AI.

There are five dimensions along which an organization may want to measure gen AI, according to Arora. The first is its level of data readiness and how much is being used to support gen AI processes. Another level is the efficacy of the models—namely, how well tuned they are to the business need and their resulting output. Then comes the value being produced at the use case level, including their impact on business KPIs such as cost reduction or revenue increase—for example, how much faster are clients being onboarded or how much more efficient is the coding process? The fourth level is the business value gen AI is producing at a strategy level—in other words, the results that will show up on the balance sheet and in the annual report.

The final level is measuring regulatory and compliance KPIs, things like “the fundamentals of the data, the models, the responsible fundamentals, the ethical fundamentals, the privacy, how secure we are as an organization so far,” says Arora. “What’s our liability? What is it that we have missed? What came out from the gen AI model that we were not even thinking through?”

The Importance of a Reinforced Foundation

The excitement around gen AI is high—but also well earned. Early adopters are producing impressive results, often bringing greater speed and efficiency to historically tedious and labor-intensive workflows. But experts warn that, without establishing a firm foundation in data quality, systems integration, and organizational readiness, corporations will miss out on gen AI’s greatest potential. Those next-level benefits include leveraging gen AI’s ability to do just that—generate. And the fruits of that generation will include gen AI accelerating innovation, creating new products, driving new business models, and freeing workers to do higher-order critical-thinking tasks.

Accessing those capabilities requires identifying business problems and user needs that gen AI can best address; establishing a center of excellence or a C-suite position that focuses on goals, risk, governance, and user experience in addition to technology; setting KPIs to measure adoption and usage progress; upskilling around data governance and how to establish data pipelines; developing usage policies and mitigating risk; and adopting the culture/mindset needed to redefine habits, roles, and workflows.

“We’re going to see a lot of course corrections in the next year,” predicts Earley. “We’re going to see a lot of revamping and looking at the basics—referencing organizing principles like taxonomies, ontologies, and knowledge graphs as well as core knowledge curation. Because it just doesn’t work the way a lot of people think it works. But when it works, with the right foundation, the impact will be enormous.”

Endnotes

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