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Best Practices for AI in Business

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Introduction

Business leaders are under pressure to leverage advancements in AI technology. However, the field and its players are still evolving—and at a rapid pace. It can be hard to know where to start, especially when a solution might be outdated by the time it's launched.

The good news is that many AI deployments are now taking twelve months or less, with the average being eight months.[1] Organizations are also seeing a return on their investments within fourteen months.

This eBook is designed to give you an overview of considerations when deploying AI and help you identify some quick-win use cases for your business.

Your organization can see a return on investment for AI deployments within just fourteen months.[1]

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[1]Ritu Jyoti and Dave Schubmehl, "The Business Opportunity of AI: How Leading Organizations Around the World Are Using AI to Drive Impact Across Every Industry," November 2023, IDC, https://info.microsoft.com/ww-landing-idc-delivering-real-business-value-from-ai.html
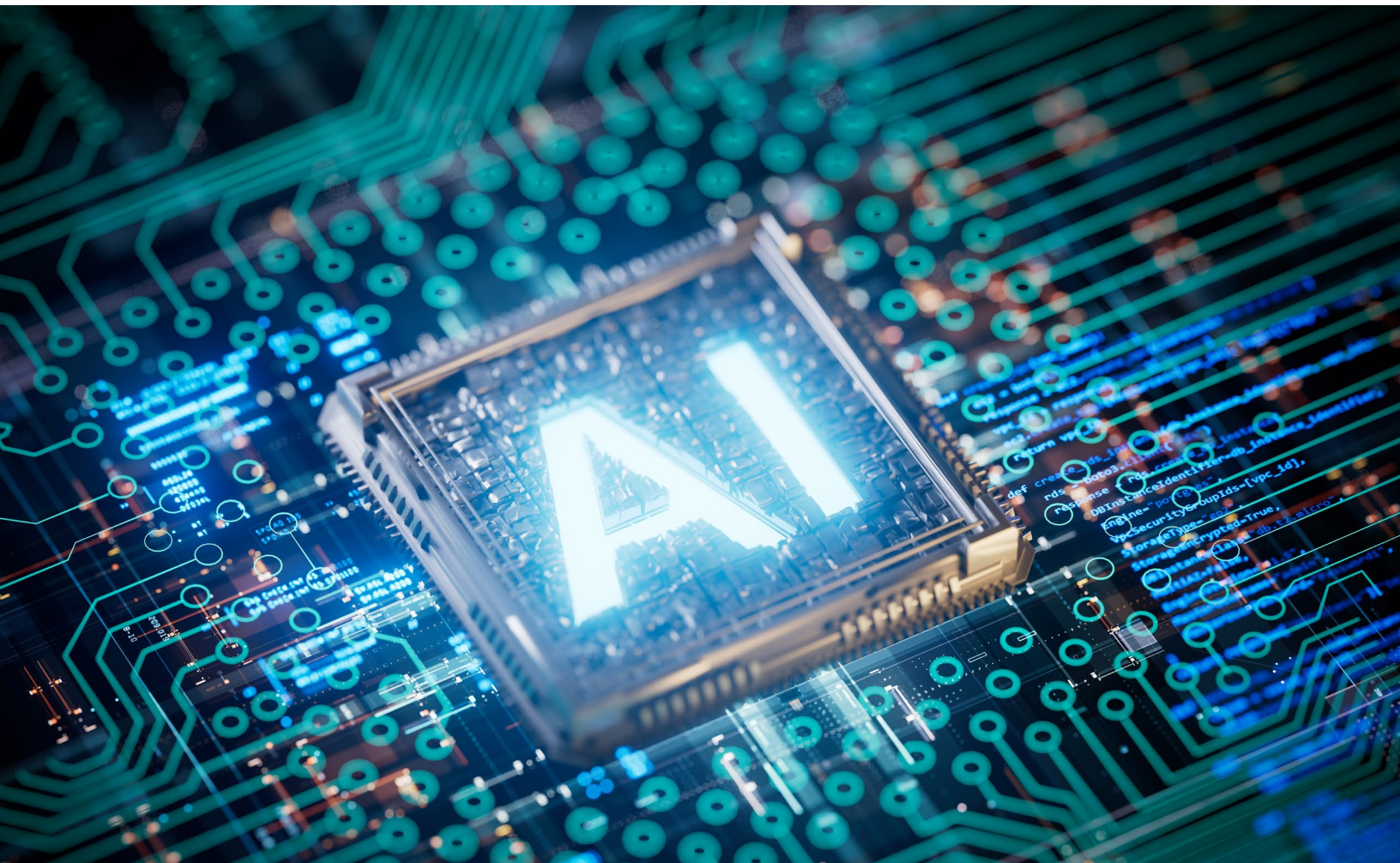
Why Your Business Needs AI to Remain Competitive

The automation and intelligence gains from AI will be a big driver of business change in the next few years.[2] For smaller organizations, AI can help level the playing field against larger market leaders.[3]

AI is an investment that pays big dividends, with companies realizing, on average, a $3.50 return for every $1 they invest.[2] That return comes in the form of increased productivity, personalized experiences that create brand loyalty, accelerated time to market, and unlocked revenue.

One example of the gains your company can see with AI comes from Microsoft Copilot—a generative AI solution. Microsoft studied its use internally and found that 67% of users said Copilot saved them 14 minutes per day, or 1.2 hours per week.[4] Imagine what that could mean for your company's productivity over time.

Companies that wait to implement AI may struggle to keep up with the estimated 73% of U.S. companies already adopting AI in some area of their organization. Let's look at some ways your company can leverage AI today.

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[2]Ritu Jyoti and Dave Schubmehl, "The Business Opportunity of AI: How Leading Organizations Around the World Are Using AI to Drive Impact Across Every Industry," November 2023, IDC, https://info.microsoft.com/ww-landing-idc-delivering-real-business-value-from-ai.html

[3]Glenn Gow, "AI's Competitive Advantage," Forbes, May 12, 2024, https://www.forbes.com/sites/glenngow/2024/05/12/ais-competitive-advantage-for-small-and-medium-enterprises/

[4]"What Can Copilot's Earliest Users Teach Us About Generative AI at Work?" Microsoft, November 15, 2023, https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/copilots-earliest-users-teach-us-about-generative-ai-at-work

Quick-win Use Cases for AI, by Industry and Job Function

The applications for AI are vast. A research report from Goldman Sachs found that two-thirds of all jobs in the U.S. and Europe could see some form of automation in their functions, and generative AI can perform a quarter of all current work.[5]

Here are a few helpful use cases by industry to get you thinking about how AI might fit into your organization.

Industry	Use Cases
Life Sciences	Drug research and development, drug manufacturing, adverse event tracking, IP protection (cybersecurity)
Energy	Resource management, Demand Response Management (DRM), smart grids, forecasting, energy storage, predictive maintenance
Financial Services	Customer services chatbots, personalization, fraud prevention, credit risk management, cybersecurity, regulatory compliance, underwriting and collections
Manufacturing	Simulations, predictive maintenance, digital twins, predictive analytics, inventory management, supply chain management
Retail	Personalization, demand forecasting, inventory management, supply chain management, shrink prevention, customer service

[5]Jan Hatzius, Joseph Briggs, Devesh Kodnani and Giovanni Pierdomenico, "The Potentially Large Effects of Artificial Intelligence on Economic Growth," Goldman Sachs, March 26, 2023, https://www.gspublishing.com/content/research/en/reports/2023/03/27/d64e052b-0f6e-45d7-967b-d7be35fabd16.html

Now, let's look at several use cases by job function, which is another helpful way to think about AI deployments regardless of industry.

Job Function	Use Cases	ROI
Customer Service	Chatbots and intelligent virtual assistants (IVAs)	By 2025, companies that use AI in multi-channel customer support platforms can boost operational efficiency by 25%.[6]
Sales	Updating CRM, identifying prospects, personalizing outreach	Microsoft's internal sales team saved on average 90 minutes per week with Copilot.[7]
Marketing	Content analysis, competitor research, copywriting/editing	A Microsoft Copilot study found that users were 29% faster in a series of tasks (searching, writing, and summarizing).[7]
Finance	Validating data quality, streamlining financial reporting, forecasting, fraud detection, reconciliation automation, compliance	KPMG and Nets created an anti-fraud engine that, when used with existing AI fraud measures, can reduce fraud by 40%.[8]
HR	Recruiting, talent management, generating learning resources, employee or candidate-facing chatbots	A LinkedIn survey found that 57% of recruiters find it faster and easier to write job descriptions with AI.[9]

[6]Brian Manusama, Bern Elliot, Magnus Revang and Anthony Mullen, "Market Guide for Virtual Customer Assistants," Gartner, July 11, 2019, https://www.gartner.com/en/documents/3947357

[7]"What Can Copilot's Earliest Users Teach Us About Generative AI at Work?" Microsoft, November 15, 2023, https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/copilots-earliest-users-teach-us-about-generative-ai-at-work

[8]"Artificial Intelligence Prevents Fraud," KPMG, https://kpmg.com/dk/en/home/insights/2020/04/artificial-intelligence-prevents-fraud-.html

[9]"The Future of Recruiting," LinkedIn, 2024, https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/resources/future-of-recruiting"

Use cases by job function *(continued...)*

Job Function	Use Cases	ROI
IT	Code generation, incident response automation, QA testing, system and application monitoring	IBM found that one company using AIOps reduced its app's mean time to repair (MTTR) by 66%.[10]
Cybersecurity	Threat intelligence and detection, identity and access management(IAM), behavioral analytics, fraud prevention, incident investigationand response, automated reporting, cloud security, endpoint security management	The average cost of a data breach was $4.45 million last year. However, companies with AI-driven security saved $1.76 million annually compared with those who don't use AI.[11]

[10]"What is AIOps?," IBM, https://www.ibm.com/topics/aiops#

[11]"Cost of a Data Breach Report 2023," IBM, 2023, https://www.ibm.com/reports/data-breach

Readying Your Data for AI

According to research by IDC, 25% of companies surveyed said not having data centralized and optimized in the cloud was holding them back from leveraging AI.[12] Maybe that's also the case for your organization.

AI deployments are most effective when the data fed into the algorithm is clean and complete. Clean means your data is correct, has no duplicates, and is formatted correctly. Complete means it is not missing critical information that might live in another database.

Assessing your data quality and removing silos is a great first step when planning for AI projects. Once you know what data you have (sources, types, locations, volume, and lineage) and its quality, you can clean it up and transform it to work with machine learning algorithms.

Keep in mind that more data isn't necessarily better. Quality and relevance matter much more than quantity.

Connection's Copilot Readiness Assessment

We can help you evaluate your data readiness and ensure you get the full value from your data before deploying Microsoft Copilot.

The assessment will help you:

1. Discover and catalog data across on-premises, cloud, and hybrid sources using Microsoft Purview, a data governance tool that provides a unified view of the data estate.

2. Protect and govern data across Microsoft 365 applications and services, such as Outlook, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Teams, SharePoint, OneDrive, Exchange Online, and more, using best practices for data loss prevention, sensitivity labeling, retention policies, encryption, and more.

3. Identify the gaps and opportunities for improving their data quality, security, and compliance, and create a data governance roadmap and plan for implementing Copilot.

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[12]Ritu Jyoti and Dave Schubmehl, "The Business Opportunity of AI: How Leading Organizations Around the World Are Using AI to Drive Impact Across Every Industry," November 2023, IDC, https://info.microsoft.com/ww-landing-idc-delivering-real-business-value-from-ai.html

Data Management, Governance, and Security for AI

Data is the lifeblood of machine learning algorithms. That makes it critically important to have well-defined data management and governance policies. You want to know that your data is safe, organized, and can only be accessed by authorized users.

Once you've cleaned your data, a good next step is to categorize it. For instance, are you handling personally identifiable information (PII), payment card industry data (PCI), or health data? Flagging the type of data allows you to establish rules governing how it is stored, handled, and accessed. This set of rules is part of your data loss prevention policy, which helps ensure sensitive data does not end up in the wrong hands.

28% of organizations surveyed by IDC say concerns about data or IP loss are holding them back from using AI.[13]

Compliance is another consideration. Your company likely already has processes to comply with current privacy laws, but can it ensure AI will also follow the law? What if an AI solution surfaces private information to non-authorized users? Putting guardrails around your AI solutions and their use of data is necessary to ensure you meet all regulations and industry standards.

Shadow IT, where employees use apps and devices that IT has not approved, is a significant problem. Limiting the AI solutions your employees can use to those you've vetted and approved is important for maintaining compliance. Cloud app security brokers like Microsoft Defender for Cloud Apps can help you whitelist approved apps and block others.

"60% of CIOs say AI is part of their innovation plan, yet fewer than half feel the organization can manage its risks."[14] - Gartner

Lastly, AI security is on the minds of many leaders right now. Concerns include potential IP loss, exposure of sensitive customer data, and the attractive target AI presents to hackers. It can be challenging to assess the security of AI solutions because the technology's use in the marketplace is so new. There are yet unknown vulnerabilities and risks. Good data policies, along with continuous monitoring and vulnerability scanning, can help your organization identify unusual patterns.

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[13]Ritu Jyoti and Dave Schubmehl, "The Business Opportunity of AI: How Leading Organizations Around the World Are Using AI to Drive Impact Across Every Industry," November 2023, IDC, https://info.microsoft.com/ww-landing-idc-delivering-real-business-value-from-ai.html

[14]"Get AI Ready — What IT Leaders Need to Know and Do," Gartner, https://www.gartner.com/en/information-technology/topics/ai-readiness

AI-embedded Hardware, Including AI PCs

AI is a resource-heavy solution. This means many current laptops and mobile devices do not have the processing power needed to take full advantage of its capabilities. That's why hardware manufacturers are developing new AI PCs and mobile devices built to support AI workloads.

How are new AI-embedded devices different from what your organization has been using?

New, AI-embedded devices are engineered from the ground up to support on-device AI processing rather than cloud processing. This setup is more efficient, secure, and personal. AI PCs, for example, have built-in neural processing units (NPUs) that work alongside traditional CPUs and GPUs and are purpose-built for efficient deep learning.

What should you look for when assessing speed?

The new measurement for AI processors (NPUs) is trillions of operations per second (TOPS). As you might imagine, the larger the TOPS number, the more powerful the device. However, other factors such as memory bandwidth and energy efficiency are also important.

What types of devices are available today?

There are currently three categories of devices available for AI use:[15]

1. **AI capable:** These devices have a maximum TOPS value of 10 and rely on cloud AI solutions, so there is no on-device processing, making them less efficient. Companies may need to plan for additional cloud computing costs when leveraging AI-capable devices.

2. **AI PCs and smartphones:** With a maximum TOPS of 30 and an NPU along with a CPU and GPU for on-device AI processing, these devices boast more efficient and secure AI processing.

3. **Next-gen AI PCs and smartphones:** New in 2024, these PCs have a TOPS of 30 to greater than 45 and on-device generative AI that's 100 times more efficient for AI workloads than previous generation PCs.

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[15] "The Future of Next-Gen AI Smartphones," IDC, February 19, 2024, https://blogs.idc.com/2024/02/19/the-future-of-next-gen-ai-smartphones/

Partnering with Trusted Experts for Maximum Returns

AI can bring incredible value to your business—when done well. Whether you are exploring use cases or ready for implementation, Connection is here to partner with you on your AI journey. We offer consulting on AI best practices, along with both customized and off-the-shelf AI solutions. As a trusted partner to businesses and top technology brands, we're here to help meet your AI and digital workspace technology needs with innovative solutions and services.

Explore Our Resources
Digital Workspace
Artificial Intelligence
Microsoft Copilot

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