Our greatest ally?

Combining human and AI capabilities can superpower organisations for quicker and more effective progress towards business goals

How three Microsoft leaders are driving real change with AI

Microsoft's Jenny Lay-Flurrie on creating more accessible workplaces

PLUS:

Microsoft and Denodo help organisations unlock AI by prioritising data

Connection's CNXN Helix brings proven Navy-grade AI power to enterprises

Structured implementation drives industrial AI success, says AVEVA's Jim Chappell

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New visions for the old order

ANDY CLAYTON-SMITH: EXECUTIVE EDITOR

We live in a time of change, where seemingly monolithic establishments and philosophies are challenged daily by new ways of thinking and technology that powers innovation. In this issue of *Technology Record* we examine how fresh perspectives are driving change within enterprise and public sector organisations, where the arrival of generative AI is accelerating progress across all walks of life.

Our introduction to this theme begins on page 36 as we talk with senior leaders from Microsoft about the ways in which AI is transforming organisations of every kind. The specially extended executive interview shows how powerhouse trio Kathleen Mitford, Satish Thomas and Shelley Bransten are working together to help organisations move beyond the confines of conventional thinking to reimagine both industry and civic landscapes worldwide.

While AI is enabling a new wave of infrastructural development, it is also changing the conversation at an individual level by creating opportunities for those who would historically have found it difficult to progress through traditional organisational environments. Microsoft's chief accessibility officer Jenny Lay-Flurrie tells us how technology is broadening accessibility for those who may previously have been overlooked, by creating more inclusive and supportive workplaces for everyone. You'll find that story beginning on page 94.

The summer season is a busy one for industry events, many of which *Technology Record* is delighted to collaborate with as a media partner. From the industrial AI-focused ARC Asia in July to FabCon EMEA in September, which will explore data analytics with Microsoft Fabric, these events reflect the themes shaping numerous industries today – many of which are explored in greater depth in our dedicated features starting on page 102.

As always, I hope you enjoy the read.

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OUR GREATEST ALLY?

Combining human and AI capabilities can superpower organisations for quicker and more effective progress towards business goals

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Learn more at www.synergy-technical.com/copilot   tellmemore@synergy-technical.com

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Technology Record

The best of enterprise solutions from the Microsoft partner ecosystem

Tudor Rose

Technology Record is a quarterly magazine about technology solutions for enterprise organisations, published by Tudor Rose in collaboration with Microsoft. For further information and to subscribe, please visit: www.technologyrecord.com/subscribe

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Coretek is a leading Microsoft AI Cloud Provider, renowned for solving complex business challenges through high-performance consulting, managed services, security and AI-driven innovation.

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Microsoft backs Europe's digital future

Microsoft commits to building a broad AI and cloud ecosystem, upholding Europe's digital resilience, protecting the privacy of European data and strengthening economic competitiveness across the continent

Microsoft has made five new commitments to support digital resilience and the cloud ecosystem, protect data privacy, improve cybersecurity and strengthen economic competitiveness across Europe.

"As a multinational company, we believe in transatlantic ties that promote mutual economic growth and prosperity," said Brad Smith, vice chair and president at Microsoft. "We were pleased the Trump administration and the European Union (EU) recently agreed to

suspend further tariff escalation while they seek to negotiate a reciprocal trade agreement. We hope that successful talks can resolve tariff issues and reduce non-tariff barriers, consistent with the recommendations in the recent Draghi report."

The first commitment will see Microsoft expand its cloud and AI infrastructure in Europe to help every country fully leverage these technologies and boost economic competitiveness. These include a 40 per cent increase in European data centre capacity over the next

two years and expanded operations across 16 countries.

"AI and cloud data centres represent the next stage of industrialisation," said Smith. "They are creating real-world capabilities to fuel business and manufacturing innovation, run national health systems, enable secure government services and support digital tools in education – all while keeping data and operations close to home, subject to European laws and regulations."

To ensure users have confidence in the digital infrastructure, Microsoft's

Photo: Atlantic Council

Microsoft president Brad Smith (right) announcing the company's five commitments on stage at an Atlantic Council Front Page event in Brussels, Belgium

European data centre operations will be overseen by a board of directors consisting exclusively of European nationals and operating under European law. Microsoft also vowed to "promptly and vigorously" contest any order by a government anywhere in the world to suspend or cease cloud operations in Europe, should the unlikely event ever occur. It will also make contingencies with European partners to ensure operational continuity if it is ever required by a court to suspend its services across the continent.

"By including a new European Digital Resilience Commitment in all of our contracts with European national governments and the European Commission, we will make this commitment legally binding on Microsoft Corporation and all its subsidiaries," said Smith. "We are confident of our legal rights to ensure continuous operation of our data centres in Europe."

The third commitment ensures Microsoft will continue to protect the privacy of European data by enabling customers to control where their data is stored and processed, how it is encrypted and secured,

support interactions. Microsoft also provides tools via Microsoft Azure Confidential Compute, Azure Key Vault, Purview Customer Key, and its Cloud for Sovereignty for securing and encrypting data.

Additionally, Microsoft has appointed a new deputy chief information security officer for Europe – temporarily held by Ann Johnson, who leads Microsoft's Enterprise Cybersecurity Group – as part of its Cybersecurity Governance Council. This senior executive will be accountable for compliance with current and emerging cybersecurity regulations in Europe. Microsoft will also dedicate additional resources to comply with the Cyber Resilience Act, which sets common cybersecurity standards for products with digital elements in the EU.

Plus, the new European Security Program will expand the geographic reach of Microsoft's existing work and introduce new elements that will protect European governments from ransomware groups and cyberattacks. There are three key elements to the programme: increasing AI-based threat intelligence sharing with European governments, making

Microsoft's new European digital commitments

1 We will help build a broad AI and cloud ecosystem across Europe.

2 We will uphold Europe's digital resilience even when there is geopolitical volatility.

3 We will continue to protect the privacy of European data.

4 We will always help protect and defend Europe's cybersecurity.

5 We will help strengthen Eurpose's economic competitiveness, including for open source.

which were launched in 2024 to ensure the Azure AI platform and infrastructure is open to a variety of business models. It now hosts over 1,800 AI models, most of which are open-source models and available via public APIs to facilitate interoperability. This allows customers to choose which models to use and where to build and run their AI-powered solutions – on Azure, in another public cloud, or in their own data centre.

"As we celebrated Microsoft's 50th birthday, earlier this month we recognised that our longstanding presence in Europe has been a lynchpin of our success," said Smith. "Europe has treated us well. Our support for Europe has always been – and always will be – steadfast."

"We will always be dedicated to creating jobs, promoting economic opportunities and strengthening cybersecurity on both sides of the Atlantic"

and when Microsoft can access it. The EU Data Boundary project, which was implemented in January 2024, offers European customers the ability to have their data stored and processed in Europe. It was extended in 2025 to include professional services data from technical

additional investments to strengthen cybersecurity capacity and resilience, and expanding Microsoft's partnerships to disrupt cyberattacks and dismantle networks used by cybercriminals.

Finally, Microsoft committed to updating its AI Access Principles,

Member of
Microsoft Intelligent
Security Association

Microsoft Security

Microsoft Build 2025 was opened by
Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft

Microsoft to 'help every developer build apps and agents that empower people and organisations everywhere'

At Microsoft Build, which took place in Seattle, USA, from 19-22 May 2025, Microsoft unveiled an array of new tools and features designed to help developers build AI agents and contribute to the open agentic web.

An asynchronous coding agent has been integrated into GitHub so developers can experiment with models from Grok, Hugging Face, Meta and Mistral without leaving the platform. The agent can help to fix bugs, build new features or manage ongoing code maintenance, all autonomously.

Additionally, Windows AI Foundry offers a unified and reliable platform to support AI developers through training and inference. Developers can manage and run open-source large language models via Foundry Local or bring a proprietary model to convert and deploy across client and cloud. General availability of Azure AI Foundry Agent Service means developers have access to multiple specialised agents to handle complex tasks, while new features in Azure AI Foundry Observability provide an overview of metrics for performance, quality, cost and safety.

Plus, developers can now choose from more than 1,900 partner-hosted and Microsoft-hosted AI models to securely manage data, model customisation and governance.

Define: agentic web [uh-JEN-tik] noun

A new layer of the internet where AI agents – built on large language models, reasoning engines and integrated APIs – act on behalf of users with greater autonomy and less direct supervision to proactively plan, decide and act.

"The open agentic web is reshaping every layer of the stack, and our goal is simple: help every developer build applications and agents that empower people and organisations everywhere," said Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, which has launched NLWeb – a new way for websites to talk directly with AI – on GitHub.

Microsoft identifies 'frontier firms' as shaping the future of work

There is a seismic shift underway in the world of work, according to *The 2025 Work Trend Index Annual Report*.

A new type of organisation is emerging: the frontier firm, which has intelligence on tap and sees AI agents working alongside humans. This new type of firm is already taking shape, and Microsoft expects every organisation to be on the journey to becoming one within the next two to five years.

The report found 46 per cent of organisations are already using agents to fully automate workstreams, with 81 per cent of leaders saying they expect to use digital labour to expand workforce capacity in the next 12-18 months. Currently, 71 per cent of workers at these frontier firms say their company is thriving, compared to just 37 per cent of workers globally.

To further support organisations in this new era of work, Microsoft also revealed wave two of the Microsoft 365 Copilot Spring release, which includes Copilot Notebooks, Copilot Search and updates to Copilot Control System.

Find out more about frontier firms in our cover story, on page 46

Work Trend Index Annual Report

2025:
The Year the Frontier Firm Is Born

Illustration by Joe McKendry, in collaboration with AI

Microsoft

Armor Defense cuts cybersecurity threat investigation time to 40 seconds

The Armor Intelligence Platform (AIP), a core capability in the company's managed detection and response architecture, uses agentic AI to compress complex threat investigations from 15 minutes to just 40 seconds.

"Accelerating time to action is not just about speed – it is about replicating the sharp judgment of top-tier analysts at scale," said Brady Willis, vice president of security operations at Armor Defense. "This is not automation for its own sake. It's applied intelligence: modular agents designed to think like humans, act at machine speed and deliver consistent, explainable decisions. This is how we rethought detection and response – and why it is changing what is possible in cybersecurity."

Read more about Armor's approach to AI on page 62
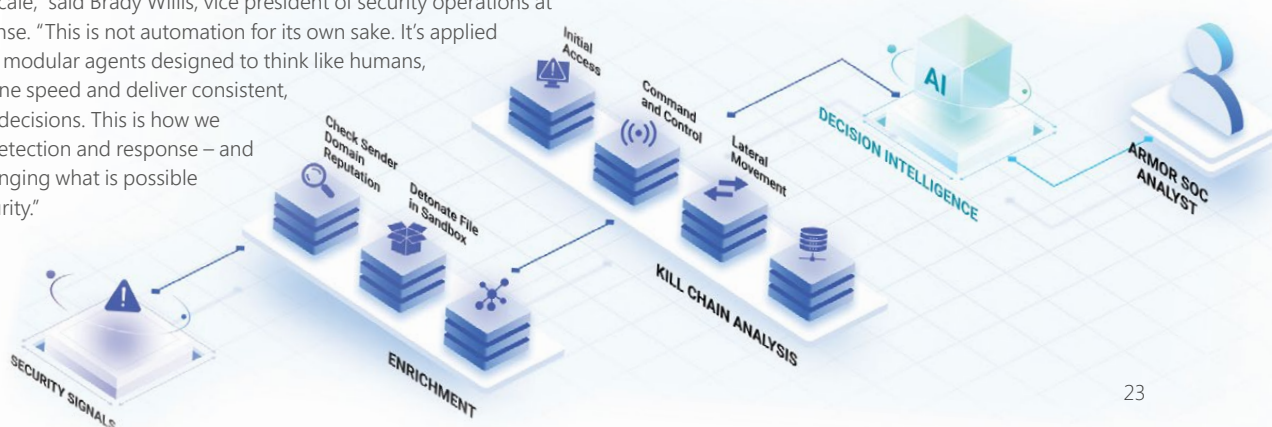
Synergy Technical helps businesses navigate their AI journeys

Synergy Technical's AI Transformation Strategy Engagement provides a roadmap to responsible, effective AI adoption. Starting with use case discovery, the programme helps firms evaluate AI solutions and outlines a customised roadmap aligned with business goals, security requirements and compliance standards. Clients receive strategic guidance on vendor selection, risk mitigation and phased implementation.
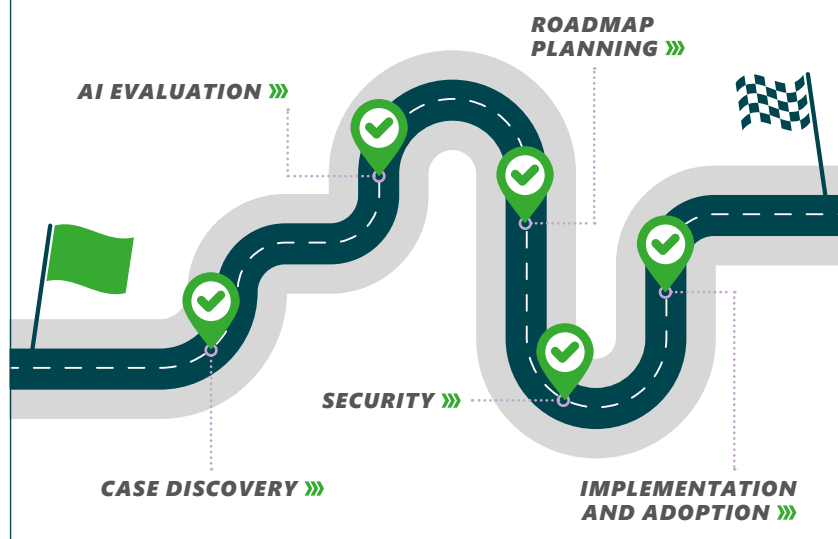
AI EVALUATION »

ROADMAP PLANNING »

SECURITY »

CASE DISCOVERY »

IMPLEMENTATION AND ADOPTION »

Unlocking regional growth:
The impact of AI adoption by SMEs
May 2025

WPI STRATEGY

Microsoft

AI could help boost productivity, innovation and competition for small and medium-sized businesses in the UK to the amount of £78 billion ($105 billion) in additional economic value by 2035.

Read more in Microsoft's Unlocking Regional Growth: The impact of AI adoption by SMEs *report*

Jabra launches Engage AI Complete
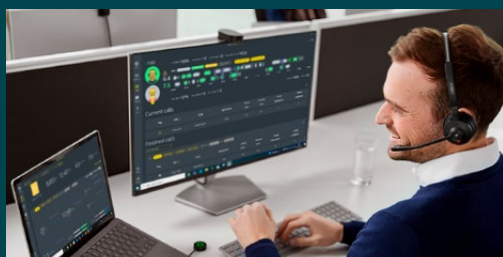
Professional audio brand Jabra has launched Jabra Engage AI Complete for call centres, a new premium tier for its Engage AI software. Engage AI Complete provides real-time speech-to-text transcription and generative AI to improve customer interactions. The software is designed to support employee with live assistance, personalised coaching and automated call summaries to help boost efficiency and customer communications. Supervisors will be able to obtain real-time insights, sentiment analysis and analytics tools, enabling them to better support teams.

Infiterra introduces new solution for streamlined subscription billing

Infiterra's new vendor-agnostic billing importer for IT distributors, managed service providers and telcos lets teams easily upload and reconcile monthly data from any cloud vendor – no manual formatting or custom workflows required.

By standardising inputs across providers, Infiterra eliminates reconciliation bottlenecks, accelerates close cycles, and boosts accuracy. Finance and operations leaders can now scale faster, reduce overhead, and more easily support growing service portfolios. According to Infiterra, early adopters have reported up to a 40 per cent productivity gain after implementing the solution.

(unify)

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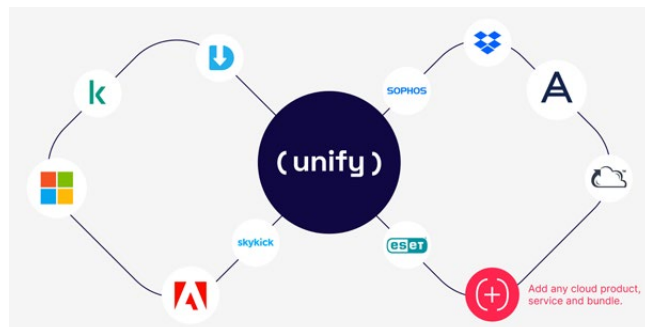
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Output Columns

Specify what data you would like to output. New columns will be inserted to the right of the input range for these new columns.

Name
Salutation
Address
GeoLocation
Phone
Email
Address Information

- ☑ Address Type
- ☑ Delivery Indicator
- ☑ Extra Address Information
- ☑ Suite
- ☑ Private Mailbox
- ☑ Urbanization (PR only)
- ☑ City Abbreviation
- ☑ State Name
- ☑ ISO Country Code
- ☑ Carrier Route
- ☑ Delivery Point
- ☑ Universal Time Code

Census Information
Demographics
Parsed Address

Listware for Excel

Clean Operations

Select the operation(s) you want to peform:
Select Operation(s):

- ☑ Check Address
- ☑ Verify Contact
- ☑ Move Update
- ☑ Append

Next

Listware for Excel

Results

Check the result below based on the count that we're calculating. We're collecting the result codes and counts from the Results column.

Total Records: 34

	Address	Company	Email	Name	Phone
Appended	0	0	4	0	8
Bad	8	0	0	0	0
Corrected	25	0	0	0	0
Empty	1	0	30	0	26
Good	25	0	4	0	8
Moved	3	0	0	0	0
Verified	22	0	4	22	8

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Barclays Bank to roll out Microsoft 365 Copilot to 100,000 employees

Barclays Bank is integrating Microsoft 365 Copilot into its own colleague productivity tool to create a single agent, which will enable 100,000 of its employees globally to access the bank's ecosystem of collaboration tools, portals and online resources. Barclays employees will be able to access several new AI-powered tools, such as Colleague AI Agent, which will deliver self-service solutions and help workers to book business travel, check policy compliance and find answers to human resources-related questions quickly.

"Our rollout of Copilot, integrated with our colleague productivity tool, is a significant step forward in simplifying the way we work, making it easier to get things done," said Craig Bright, group chief information officer and deputy group co-chief operating officer at Barclays.

Connection earns all four Microsoft Security specialisations

IT solutions provider Connection has achieved Microsoft Security specialisation across all four key areas: cloud security, identity and access management, information protection and governance, and threat protection. These recognitions highlight Connection's deep expertise in delivering end-to-end security solutions built on Microsoft technology.

"Attaining all four specialisations reflects the significant investment Connection has made in our technical expertise, resources and solution-building capabilities – and our commitment to helping customers integrate advanced security into every layer of their organisations," said Dave Hall, general manager at Connection. "We will continue to align with trusted partners and invest in our capabilities to help customers build innovative, effective security strategies to protect their users, devices and critical data."

BlinkOps launches industry's only agentic security automation platform

BlinkOps has launched Security Agent Builder, the industry's first no-code platform that lets enterprise security teams deploy custom AI-powered security agents at scale in minutes to handle specific tasks across the security operations centre, identity and access management, cloud security, network defence, vulnerability management, and governance, risk and compliance.

Teams define every aspect of each agent, from its role and permissions to the workflows it supports (its capabilities). Agents can operate autonomously or collaborate with other agents to complete more complex tasks, helping security teams resolve issues faster and scale response without adding additional headcount.

Security Agent Builder enables a modular, auditable approach to automation. Organisations maintain full control over what each agent does and what it executes, reducing
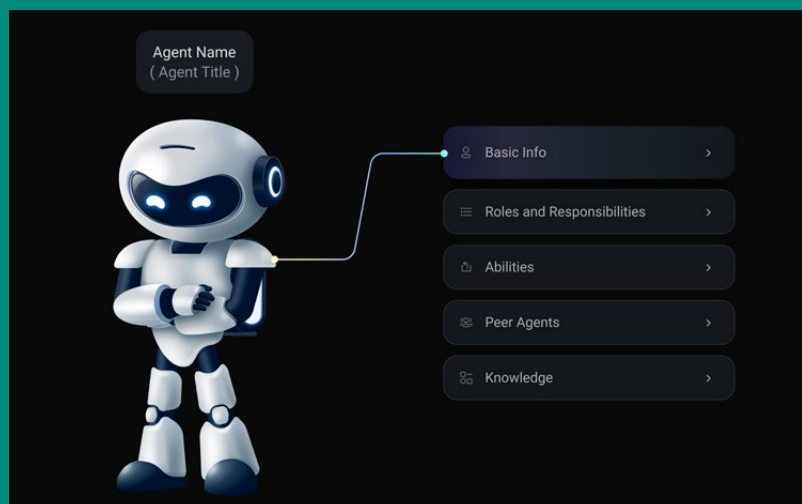
manual effort, minimising risk and freeing analysts to focus on higher-level investigations and strategy.

"Security Agent Builder gives organisations the ability to create agents tailored to their exact technology stack, processes and policies," said Gil Barak, co-founder and CEO of BlinkOps. "In just a few weeks since the launch, our customers have built more than 200 unique agents, automating work across their security teams."

New ClickShare Hub from Barco enhances meeting room connectivity

Collaboration technology provider Barco has introduced the ClickShare Hub, a modular, wireless video conferencing system designed to enhance hybrid meetings. The hub features two ClickShare Buttons (with Wi-Fi 6E and USB-C DisplayPort) and provides meeting participants with secure, 4K wireless content sharing and dual display support to improve meeting engagement and visibility.

For IT managers and integrators, ClickShare Hub Pro offers a customisable solution for all room types, enterprise-grade security and compliance. ClickShare is built on Microsoft's Device Ecosystem Platform to meet enterprise-grade security and compliance requirements.

Shure IntelliMix Room Kits certified for Microsoft Teams

Shure's new IntelliMix Room Kits, which are designed to scale from small to large meeting spaces to support different organisations, have been certified for Microsoft Teams. In addition, the IntelliMix Room Kits are built with high-quality audio technology to accurately capture participant speech, which will help improve transcription and feedback in AI tools such as Copilot in Microsoft Teams. They are now available across the Americas.

For more information, visit: www.shure.com/ IntelliMixRoomKits

Huddly introduces new AI-driven video bar

Huddly's new C1 video bar makes meetings smarter and more inclusive by capturing clear audio and automatically framing participants. Designed for small and medium-sized meeting rooms, the device features a 150-degree field of view and uses onboard AI to deliver enhanced sound through a 16-microphone array.

The Huddly C1 works both as a standalone solution and can be expanded with Huddly Crew Add-On Cameras for increased visual coverage in larger spaces.

Huddly showcased the video bar as part of a joint European roadshow with Microsoft and Lenovo prior to its official launch at Infocomm 2025. Pre-orders are now available, with worldwide shipping from September 2025.

GEP shares how manufacturers are responding to the tariff war

Global manufacturer demands for inputs (raw materials, components and commodities) reduced in April 2025, according to the *GEP Global Supply Chain Volatility Index*, signalling a likely production slowdown in the near future.

In North America, factories have been responding to tariffs by buying fewer inputs and aggressively stockpiling. Meanwhile, purchasing activity by Asian manufacturers is at its weakest since December 2023 as demand slumps across the region.

"The first blows of the tariff war have landed on global manufacturers," said John Piatek, vice president of consulting at GEP. "Stockpiling is accelerating at a concerning rate and the first signs of manufacturers anticipating slower demand and supply shortages have emerged."

Read how procurement and supply chain leaders can tackle ongoing tariff uncertainty on page 64

GEP supply chain volatility index

Positive = supply chains are stretched. Negative = underutilised capability
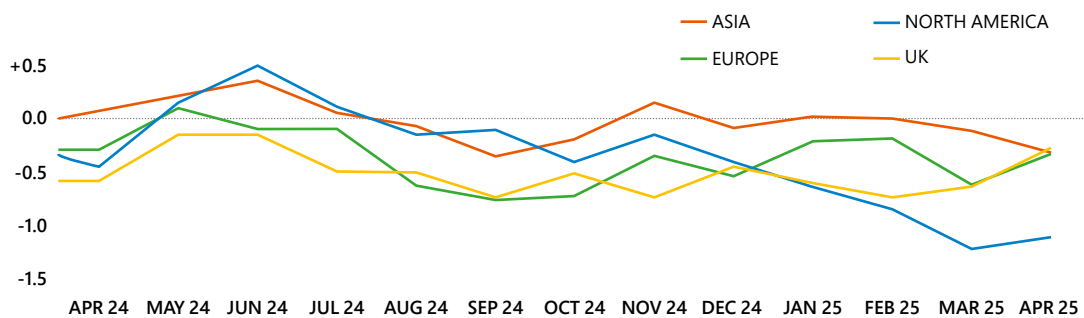
Sources: GEP, S&P Global PMI

SAP and Microsoft to speed up cloud migration

SAP and Microsoft's joint initiative, the SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program with Microsoft Cloud, will help businesses move faster and work smarter with cloud and AI.

The programme makes it easier for companies to upgrade to cloud-based SAP software by combining SAP's business tools with Microsoft 365, Azure and Copilot. This enables smoother data flow between systems, so users can access insights from SAP's Joule copilot directly from Microsoft tools like Teams and Outlook.

"By combining forces, we provide partners with proven frameworks, shared resources and scalable tools that address complex challenges," said Karl Fahrbach, chief partner officer at SAP.

Reflecting on AVEVA World 2025

AVEVA's customers and partners came together at AVEVA World 2025 in April 2025 to discuss how radical collaboration can unlock innovation and drive sustainable value by connecting people, expertise and technology.

The event had over 150 breakout sessions covering 12 industries, discussing how industrial intelligence is enabling companies to analyse, visualise and contextualise their data to improve decision-making, build resilience and enhance sustainability across the enterprise.

AVEVA World 2025 also featured over 160 global speakers including Stanford professor Erik Brynjolfsson; Olivier Blum, CEO of Schneider Electric; Starlee Sykes, CEO of Archaea Energy; and many other business leaders.

To watch AVEVA World sessions on demand, visit: events.aveva.com/aw-2025

Optimising media for real-time results

Media organisations are under pressure to do more with their content by being faster and smarter, and working across more platforms than ever before. Coretek empowers firms by integrating advanced Microsoft platforms to optimise content creation, streamline asset management and strategise distribution. But in a fast-evolving media landscape, efficiency alone isn't enough. Our solutions leverage real-time analytics to repurpose and maximise the value of produced media, enhancing audience engagement and enabling faster, data-driven decisions. By connecting creative and operational workflows, we give teams the tools to respond to change in real time and stay ahead. This integration offers a reliable method for companies to unlock their creative potential and scale with confidence.

Brian Barnes is chief product officer at Coretek

A lesson from Moody's in embracing the risk of being an early adopter

Moody's journey with generative AI shows how rapid experimentation and strategic partnerships can turn uncertainty into innovation.

Early 2023
CEO Rob Fauber says Moody's "sprints into the fog" by committing to exploring generative AI, even without a clear destination.

July 2023
Moody's partners with Microsoft to gain access to Microsoft Azure and OpenAI models.

December 2023
First generative AI product, Moody's Research Assistant, goes live.

July 2024
Advanced Query workspace launches within Research Assistant, unlocking the capability to perform complex analyses and screening for entities based on user-defined criteria.

June 2025
Moody's pioneers the use of AI agents and its proprietary data to automate high-value workflows, purpose-built for each customer.

LSEG brings its financial data tools to Excel and PowerPoint

London Stock Exchange Group (LSEG) has launched a new Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint Add-in for its Workspace that makes it easier for finance professionals to access and visualise market data.

Available globally through Microsoft AppSource, the LSEG Workspace Add-in lets users explore deals data, build charts with key news annotations and reuse content like tables and slides – all within familiar Microsoft tools.

Workspace Add-in is powered by Microsoft's cloud and productivity platforms and aims to help users make faster, smarter decisions. It is the latest step in the 10-year partnership between Microsoft and LSEG to modernise financial services workflows.

UK police force uses Microsoft technology to better protect the public

Durham Police is using Microsoft technology to speed up public information requests.

The UK police force worked with Microsoft Power Automate partner Robiquity to develop bespoke case management systems for legislations. These include Clare's Law and Sarah's Law, which help individuals assess potential risks related to partners or ex-partners for domestic violence or abuse, as well as enable parents or carers to request information about individuals who have contact with children, particularly if there are concerns about child sexual abuse.

Each request is discussed as part of a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference application, with information given by representatives from the police, health organisations, child protection, housing, probation and other organisations. The new management system automates these applications to cut the average time it takes between an individual requesting the information and receiving an answer from the police from 28 to 17 days.

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Make more possible with a global partner that combines leadership and partnership to drive your business forward. LSEG plays a vital role in the world's financial system, guiding you to opportunities that work for your business. Our cutting-edge markets infrastructure, open approach and unmatched data and analytics capabilities empower you to create sustainable growth. With a 300-year track record of stability, resilience and innovation, we're here to help you achieve more.

As one of the world's leading providers of financial markets infrastructure, we deliver financial data, analytics, news and index products to 44,000+ customers in over 170 countries. Operating across every point of the trade lifecycle, LSEG can help you seize opportunities and stay ahead of changing markets.

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IBC2025: where media and entertainment take shape

5-9 September 2025 | Amsterdam, Netherlands

Photo: IBC

The world's leading broadcasters, content owners, rights holders and solution providers will converge at IBC2025 to address the challenges and opportunities shaping the media industry.

The three-day programme will include keynotes, panels and research presentations delivered by media experts. Sessions are set to explore use cases for AI in content creation and distribution, as well as immersive content and next-generation workflows.

Confirmed conference speakers include representatives from BBC Studios, CBS News, Disney, Facebook, Formula One, Microsoft, Netflix, NowTV, Paramount, Warner Bros Discovery and YouTube. Speakers will cover topics like reshaping the business of broadcast, the rise of new platforms for TV and solving the prominence problem.

Plus, over 1,250 exhibitors will showcase their solutions including Adobe, Akamai, Avid, Prime Focus Technologies, Samsung, Sony and Yamaha.

To find out more and register for IBC, visit: show.ibc.org

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

ARC Asia
10-11 July 2025
Bangalore, India
www.arcweb.com/events/arc-industry-leadership-forum-asia-bangalore

ITS World Congress
24-28 August 2025
Atlanta, USA
www.itsamericaevents.com/world-congress/en-us.html

IBC2025
12-15 September 2025
Amsterdam, Netherlands
show.ibc.org

European Microsoft Fabric Community Conference
15-18 September 2025
Vienna, Austria
www.sharepointeurope.com/european-microsoft-fabric-community-conference

Sibos
29 September – 2 October 2025
Frankfurt, Germany
www.sibos.com

DTX & UC Expo London
1-2 October 2025
London, UK
www.dtxevents.io/london

Sibos: bringing the financial services industry together

29 September – 2 October 2025 | Frankfurt, Germany

The 2025 edition of Sibos will host thousands of business leaders, decision makers and experts from across the financial ecosystem.

This year's theme is 'the next frontiers of global finance' and will focus on the transformative forces reshaping the financial ecosystem and how enterprises can drive greater connectivity, interoperability and resilience to successfully adapt to these changes.

Conference topics will include the role of AI, sustainable finance, cybersecurity, data governance and customer experience.

On the exhibition floor, Microsoft and a variety of its partners will present tools and solutions to support financial institutions. Partners in attendance include Accenture, Cognizant, EY, Finastra, Infosys and Kyndryl.

To find out more and register for Sibos, visit: www.sibos.com

Photo: Swift

BOOST25: driving the change

24-25 September 2025 | Antwerp, Belgium

BOOST25, an event hosted by Ferranti Computer Systems to connect energy and utility leaders, will take place on 24-25 September 2025 in Antwerp, Belgium.

Data, AI and security will be big topics of discussion with technology use cases, customer cases and industry analysts sharing their knowledge. For example, Microsoft's Swamy Narayana, vice president of the Dynamics 365 customer experience programme, will lead a session on 'The autonomous enterprise: how generative AI is reshaping business applications', and Matt Jackson, customer relationship management solution specialist, will highlight digital transformation in the utilities industry.

The event will host keynotes from industry visionaries like Rik Vera, a renowned futurologist and business philosopher, and Gaia Gallotti, research director at IDC Energy Insights Europe.

Attendees can learn about Microsoft Azure Services, Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Ferranti's cloud offering MECOMS 365, which is based on the Microsoft technology stack. They will hear about how the technology is helping to better connect the energy and utility industry across customer care, billing, meter data management and more.

Panel discussions will include experts from Ferranti and partners like Microsoft, IDC, Faktion Dadir, Conscia and Tabellae. They will inspire attendees and cover technology trends and opportunities, such as AI, virtual power plants, cyber resilience and more. Experts from Ferranti will also host 'deep dives', focused on customer engagement and information, field services, finance and operations, and process integration and orchestration. Plus, attendees can hear from energy providers Corona Energy, Fluvius, Gen-I and Scholt Energy on how they are using technology to enhance operations.

To find out more and register free of charge for BOOST25, visit: www.ferranti.be/boost25

Real change, right now

Three Microsoft executives – Kathleen Mitford, Shelley Bransten and Satish Thomas – share their insights on how generative AI is transforming industries and what's next as organisations move from experimentation to scaled implementation

BY ANDY CLAYTON-SMITH

Behind every successful AI transformation is a sharp strategy and at Microsoft, that strategy is being driven by a powerhouse trio who are helping organisations move beyond hype to real-world impact, combining deep industry insight, cutting-edge technology and strong partner momentum.

Kathleen Mitford, corporate vice president of global industry marketing, leads with the industry lens by helping ensure Microsoft's AI solutions are grounded in the unique needs of sectors like healthcare, retail, financial services and manufacturing. Satish Thomas, corporate vice president of Microsoft business and industry solutions, brings the technology to life by showcasing how Microsoft's latest innovations, industry-adapted models and next-generation AI agents are moving customers from concept to implementation. And Shelley Bransten, corporate vice president of global industry solutions, focuses on outcomes by sharing how customer and partner collaboration is driving measurable results.

Together, they're shaping the future of AI across industries and in this interview, they share how.

As Microsoft enters a new fiscal year, can you share how AI is already making an impact, and how it will continue to accelerate transformation at scale across sectors?

Kathleen Mitford: Over the past year, I've had conversations with business and government leaders around the world, and there's a clear shift happening. The question is no longer whether to use AI. The question now is how to get the most out of it. We've reached a point where AI is no longer a distant concept. It's here, it's real and it's already transforming how people work across industries, roles and geographies.

At Microsoft, we're working alongside customers and partners to support AI transformation and while productivity is often the starting point, what's most exciting is how organisations are using AI to go much deeper. AI is empowering employees with tools that

enable them to focus on more creative and strategic work; transforming how they engage with customers through more personalised and responsive experiences; streamlining operations to automate workflows and provide real-time insights; and accelerating innovation to bring new ideas to market faster.

The real impact of AI is increasingly being measured in three strategic ways. First, organisations are seeing a return on employee. AI is helping people focus on higher-value work by automating repetitive tasks, reducing burnout and improving engagement. Second, there's a clear return on investment. Companies are realising cost savings, accelerating time to market and unlocking new revenue streams, especially when AI is applied to high-impact, industry-specific scenarios. And third, there's a return on future opportunity. AI is enabling organisations to innovate with confidence, whether that means launching new services, entering new markets, or rethinking how they deliver value to customers.

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24-25 SEPTEMBER
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Join the energy and utility sector's most forward-thinking professionals at BOOST25, an event designed to connect, inspire, and accelerate innovation. Hosted in the vibrant city of Antwerp, BOOST25 brings together industry leaders, technology experts, and utility professionals to explore the future of energy through the lenses of AI, data, cybersecurity, and customer engagement.

Expect visionary keynotes from thought leaders, alongside deep dives into cutting-edge topics such as Virtual Power Plants, dynamic pricing, agentic AI, and the EU AI Act. With interactive panel discussions, hands-on workshops, and exclusive tech lounges, BOOST25 offers a unique opportunity to shape the future of smart utilities.

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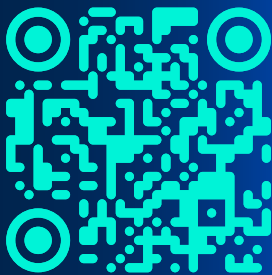
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As we enter Microsoft's new fiscal year, our focus is on helping customers lead with AI, starting with tools and technologies that are grounded in the realities of their industry. AI can't be one-size-fits-all. It needs to reflect the language, processes, regulations and challenges that are specific to each sector. That's why we take an industry-first approach, combining the full breadth of the Microsoft Cloud with industry-specific AI capabilities and the deep industry expertise of our global partner ecosystem.

Our ambition is to help every organisation evolve into what we call a 'frontier firm'. These are companies that use AI not just to optimise but to transform. They bring together human expertise and intelligent systems to move faster, operate more efficiently and innovate more boldly. They're structured for agility and scale, with AI embedded across their value chain. Whether in healthcare, manufacturing, retail or finance, becoming a frontier firm means being ready to lead in this new era of AI.

We will continue to power innovation across industries by advancing a new wave of AI capabilities that are built specifically for the needs of each sector. A clear example is the emergence of industry AI agents and industry-specific copilots. These agents are designed to automate tasks and support individuals, teams or entire organisations. What makes them unique is their ability to address sector-specific needs. Whether it's gathering real-time insights in financial services, improving personalised shopping experiences in retail, or accelerating factory issue resolution in manufacturing, these agents are built to address the unique use cases of each industry. They're fully customisable, allowing customers to align them with their own data, workflows and business logic.

Alongside these agents, we're also expanding our impact with solutions like Microsoft Dragon Copilot, the first unified voice AI assistant for healthcare. It uses ambient intelligence to streamline documentation and surface insights during patient visits, helping reduce administrative burden and improve care quality. Together, these innovations are helping organisations move faster, operate more intelligently and deliver better outcomes in ways that are deeply aligned with their mission.

Microsoft's Karuana Gatimu hosted an interview with Mitford and Thomas at Microsoft Ignite 2024, where they discussed industry-specific solutions

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Hidden Hurdles: The Quest for Visibility

86% of decision-makers find it challenging to securely integrate the devices, sensors, and technologies necessary for enhanced visibility in their facilities and supply chain

The Top Forces Shaping Tomorrow's Factories

Decision-makers rate industry challenges

1.
Digitalization of operations

2.
Investment in technology to improve supply chain visibility and traceability to support production

3.
Needing more immersive technologies to support workflows and assembly lines

4.
Accommodating sustainability in the manufacturing process

Tech Speed Surges

86% of decision-makers agree the pace of technological innovations is accelerating at a rate that their organization is struggling to keep up with

AI is The Rising Growth Engine

41% 2024 | **61%** 2029

Percentage of decision-makers that expect AI to drive business growth by improving performance, workflows and maintenance

The Digital Imperative

92% of respondents agree digital transformation is a strategic priority for manufacturers

Desired Outcomes for Plant Floor Automation

Percentage of decision-makers

48% Provide flexible scale to meet fluctuating demands

47% Increase worker efficiency and productivity

42% Deploy within existing facilities without major infrastructure changes

42% Improve overall competitiveness

39% Reduce production line errors

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Looking more closely at the technology driving this innovation, what is Microsoft's approach from an engineering perspective?

Satish Thomas: As generative AI technology matures, we are entering the next phase: the autonomous enterprise, where organisations and people leverage technology, particularly AI and automation, to operate and adapt in an age of rapid transformation and innovation. Where there once was 'an app for that', there will now be 'an agent for that'.

This transformation isn't just about automation, it's about people. By putting intelligent agents in the hands of every employee, organisations are empowering individuals to focus on higher-value work, make decisions faster and drive innovation. Sales teams can deepen customer relationships without being bogged down by administrative tasks. Finance professionals can move from manual reconciliation to strategic forecasting. Marketers can go from idea to execution and product managers can orchestrate complex workflows with clarity and speed.

When we think about AI-first companies, human ambition is a key part of it, augmented by a copilot. There will be a copilot for every user and an intelligent agent for every business process and of course, for each of those copilot experiences there might be multiple agents that enable them to scale that effort. So think of copilots as the UI for AI.

And one of the things that you'll hear in the context of the work we are doing is how we enable agent scenarios across business processes and industries that move from having humans with assistants to being human led, agent operated. This is where we are really thinking about how to reimagine our industry and business applications to enable our customers to become AI-first companies.

Alongside the current generation of Microsoft cloud tools, could you give us a brief look at what's next for AI?

ST: First of all, our biggest differentiator as a company is the Microsoft Cloud. We've got planet scale infrastructure with Azure, industry leading low-code and low-code/no-code solutions with Power Platform, collaboration with Teams, business applications with Dynamics 365, and data and AI with Azure AI Foundry and Microsoft Fabric – all underscored by a foundation of security, privacy and governance.

When you think about the comprehensiveness of the Microsoft Cloud, we have a complete and very competitive technology stack for our customers and partners to build upon.

We also have an innovative agent platform with Copilot Studio, which provides a standardised protocol for agents to seamlessly interact with our business and industry applications, helping to ensure consistency, reliability and scalability. What you can expect from us is that we will have out-of-the-box agents for business processes across the enterprise and small to medium-sized businesses, industry-specific agents that help drive functions such as personalised shopping in retail, or factory operations in manufacturing. And at the limit, we are a partner company and will work closely with our partner ecosystem to enable them to take advantage of our platform and tools to extend and build agents to deliver the last mile of functionality for our customers.

> ## "Transformation isn't just about automation, it's about people"
>
> SATISH THOMAS

One of the latest innovations we've announced to accelerate the development of agents is the adoption and compliance with Model Context Protocol (MCP) across our business applications and development platforms. At our Build conference in May 2025, we announced MCP servers for Dynamics 365 enterprise resource planning and customer relationship maangement business applications, in addition to MCP support for our developer platforms such as GitHub and Copilot Studio.

MCP standardises how applications provide context to large language models, enabling seamless integration with different data sources and tools. This open standard connects AI assistants and agents to various systems where data resides, such as content repositories, business tools and development environments. An MCP compliant agent uses rich contextual information to act efficiently, unlike a non-MCP compliant agent which lacks necessary context.

In the age of the autonomous enterprise, we need to move fast and MCP servers will help break down the silos between applications and data. Customers and partners will no longer have to piece together a maze of bespoke connectors or manually discover every API, hard-code prompts with these actions to pass the right context, map ever-shifting schemas or thread role-based security into each call. Weeks of work is almost seamlessly accelerated by this standardised approach to deliver immediate impact for our customers and partners. This is something we are very excited about.

Let's talk about customer momentum. What are the tangible benefits that you and your colleagues have witnessed when talking with Microsoft customers about the early adoption of AI tools? How far is its impact reaching across the daily operation of an organisation?
KM: AI is transforming business at a pace we've never seen before, unlocking possibilities that would have felt out of reach not long ago. We can personalise learning for every student, anticipate climate threats to support food security and help doctors detect illness earlier to improve patient outcomes. These examples are already in motion and delivering results.

What's especially powerful is how organisations are starting to move beyond pilots. AI is becoming part of how they operate, serve customers and make decisions. This is where real transformation begins, when AI is tied to strategy and focused on solving specific industry challenges.

The frontier firms are setting the pace. These companies acted early and are now applying AI across every area of the business. According to the *2025 Work Trend Index,* they're seeing faster innovation cycles, stronger employee engagement and greater resilience. Many are developing their own AI solutions, upskilling teams and expanding adoption across numerous departments.

And this shift is visible across every sector. In healthcare, for example, nearly 80 per cent of workers say they don't have enough time or energy to do their jobs effectively. At the same time, 79 per cent of healthcare leaders plan to use digital labour to expand capacity in the year ahead. These numbers highlight a broader trend. AI is helping bridge the gap between growing demands and limited human capacity.

Shelley Bransten: It's incredible to see what our customers are doing with AI technology. And we've really seen a big shift from 'proof of concept' to 'proof of value' when we look at how they're deploying AI and the impact it's having. One of my favourite examples is Venchi, the Italian chocolate and gelato maker. As Venchi expanded into more than 70 countries, it partnered with Microsoft to modernise its supply chain with AI and enhance in-store experiences using agents. The results have been substantial with over 1,500 hours saved annually through automated fulfilment, optimised inventory levels, and having grown its loyalty programme by 800,000 customers, all while maintaining a customer satisfaction score of 4.9 out of 5.

Another favourite is our work with Pets at Home, the UK's largest pet care company. Pets at Home created an AI agent to support its retail fraud detection team in investigating suspicious transactions. With this low-code agent extending and seamlessly integrating into existing systems, the company's fraud department can act more quickly. What used to take 30 minutes is now handled by the AI agent within seconds, plus the company is identifying fraud 10 times faster and is processing 20 times more cases a day.

Meanwhile, in manufacturing, Rolls-Royce is using AI to boost machine usage by 30 per cent and prevent around 400 unplanned maintenance events every year. That translates into major savings and greater productivity

The trio work together to empower organisations across all industries with Microsoft cloud and AI technologies
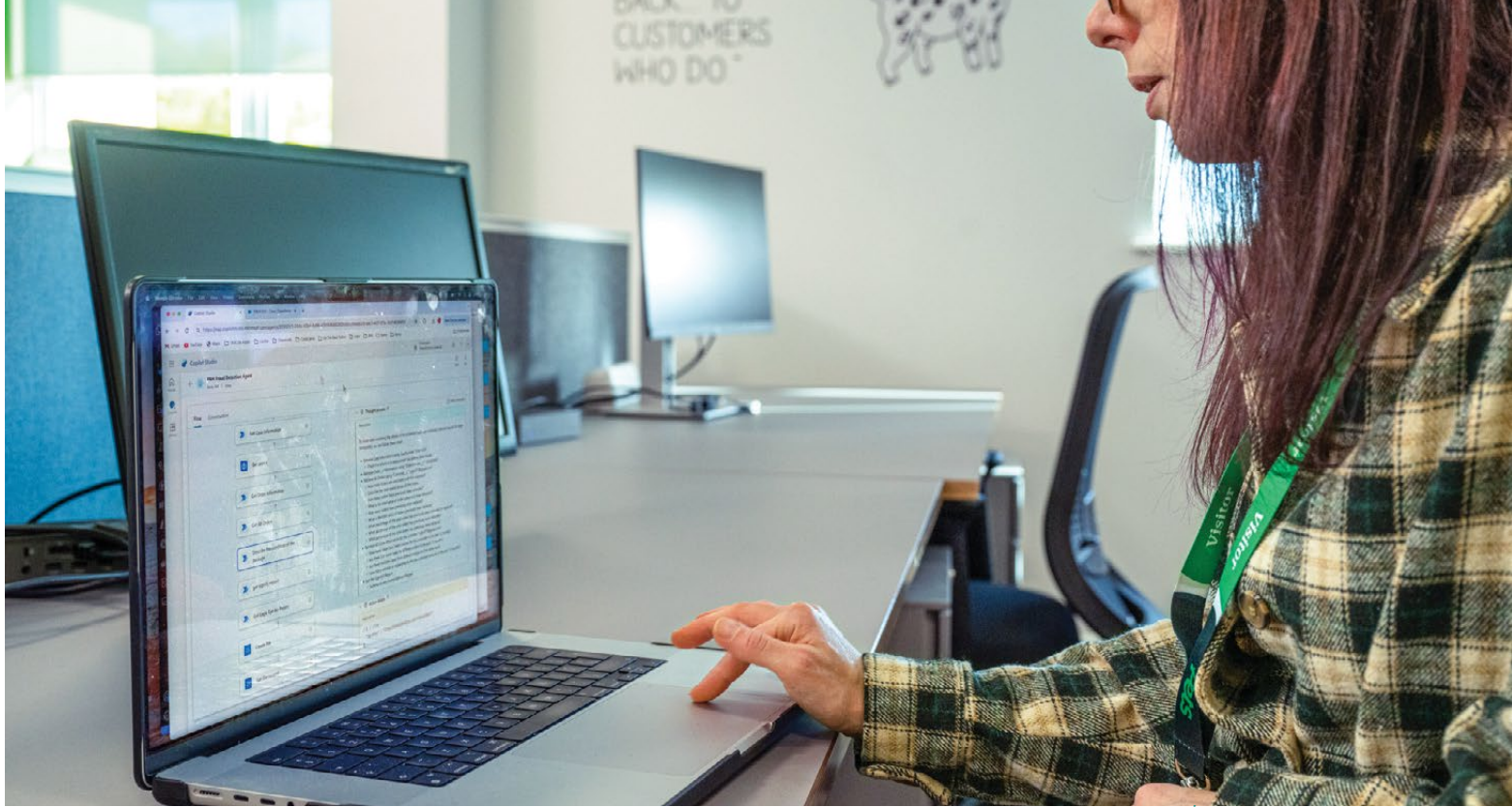
across its operations. In financial services, Aditya Birla Capital is using AI for faster time to market, a 20 per cent boost in contact centre productivity and more than 40 per cent in cost reductions.

KM: What ties all of these customer stories together is a clear focus on solving industry-specific challenges. Whether it's optimising production, streamlining customer service or improving real-time decision-making, these organisations are using AI to deliver meaningful results. And they're doing it with the help of our global partner ecosystem. By combining Microsoft's platforms with partners' deep industry expertise, we are helping customers go from early adoption to complete transformation, with results that are tangible and lasting.

As technology continues to open new markets and ways of delivering services, how do you see the lasting value of having a strong, global community of technology partners working alongside Microsoft?

SB: One of the reasons I joined Microsoft seven years ago was because of the incredible Microsoft partner ecosystem. They're the envy of the technology world and in many ways our secret sauce. I've been blown away by the pace and scale of change the past two years and that only seems to be accelerating. So as we think about how AI is reshaping and reimagining industries, our partners bring the agility, specialisation and local expertise that allow Microsoft to meet customers where they are, navigate this change and solve their most pressing challenges to ultimately take their businesses into the future.

What makes the Microsoft partner ecosystem enduring is its diversity and depth. With over 500,000 partner organisations worldwide, we're able to co-innovate across every sector, from startups building on Azure to global systems

"The frontier firms are setting the pace"

KATHLEEN MITFORD

integrators delivering complex solutions. These partners extend Microsoft's capabilities, infuse their own IP and co-sell with us to create tailored, high-impact solutions. As a platform company, we rely on our partners to deliver industry specific solutions and capabilities to our customers, all built on the Microsoft Cloud.

When we talk about the power of partnership to drive industry innovation, two great examples come to mind: Blue Yonder and Sitecore.

With Blue Yonder, we've been partnering together to help customers across manufacturing, retail and logistics transform their supply chains and move toward intelligent, autonomous operations. Together, we're delivering real-time visibility, predictive disruption management, smarter demand forecasting and optimised fulfilment. This means that when a storm disrupts a shipping route, a retailer can reroute inventory before shelves go empty. It means a manufacturer can anticipate demand shifts and adjust production before waste builds up. It's about building supply chains that don't just react – they think, adapt and respond in real time to keep businesses moving and customers satisfied. For example, the Coca-Cola Bottlers' Sales and Services Company's IT organisation, known as Coke One North America Services (CONA), is transforming operations for Coca-Cola's largest bottlers across North America. By integrating demand, supply and production planning with Blue Yonder and migrating to Azure, CONA is unifying planning processes and pioneering AI-driven forecasting. This enables bottlers to anticipate market shifts, optimise production schedules and ensure timely product delivery.

The Sitecore AI Innovation Lab is a joint initiative with Microsoft that empowers marketers to rapidly explore and validate AI-driven solutions for content and experience. The Lab offers a guided, collaborative environment where marketing teams work directly with experts from Sitecore and Microsoft. Together, they prototype solutions tailored to real-world challenges, such as automating content tagging, generating personalised copy at scale or streamlining campaign workflows. These innovations feed directly into Sitecore's digital experience platform, ensuring that what's built in the Lab delivers measurable business results: faster

execution, more relevant customer experiences, and a clear path to AI adoption.

These are just two examples of how we're working with partners to turn bold ideas into real-world transformation for customers

Where do you see this unfolding story taking Microsoft customers? What is the ongoing potential for innovation in the years ahead?
KM: We are just scratching the surface of what's possible with AI. What we're seeing now is the beginning of a much broader transformation, one where AI becomes deeply embedded in how organisations operate, innovate and grow. The next phase is about building intelligent systems that are integrated across business functions and aligned to strategic goals.

For those who haven't started yet, the gap is widening, but there's still time. With the right use cases, a strong data foundation and trusted partners, organisations can ramp up quickly and begin seeing results in a matter of weeks. The key is to take that first step. Once momentum builds, progress tends to accelerate.

Looking ahead, AI will play a more integrated role in helping industries solve complex, cross-functional challenges. In

CONA Services, responsible for Coca-Cola's products across North America, improved production schedules by migrating to Blue Yonder on Azure

manufacturing, we may see more adaptive production systems that respond to real-time data. In healthcare, more proactive models of care that reduce administrative burden and improve outcomes. In financial services, more personalised and secure experiences at scale. And in retail, more agile supply chains and seamless customer journeys.

This direction aligns with what we describe as the model-forward era, a shift where every layer of the technology stack is being reimagined to support AI-first innovation. It also connects to our vision for the open agentic web, where intelligent agents, grounded in secure access to data and business logic, can act on behalf of users and organisations across digital environments. But technology alone isn't enough. Realising this vision requires more than tools. It demands a strong data foundation, a culture that embraces change, and a clear connection between AI and business strategy. It also requires people. While AI is accelerating what's possible, it's human creativity, empathy and judgment that give innovation its purpose and direction. The most successful organisations will be those that empower their workforce to lead alongside AI, where people are not replaced, but elevated.

We're seeing the rise of a new kind of organisation, AI-operated and human-led. People are beginning to manage AI teammates, delegating tasks and collaborating with digital agents to expand capacity and amplify impact. These 'agent bosses' are using AI tools and leading teams that include AI agents, and they're redefining what productivity and leadership look like in this new era.

> "What makes the Microsoft partner ecosystem enduring is its diversity and depth"
>
> SHELLEY BRANSTEN

Frontier firms are already operating this way. They're building their own copilots, aligning AI with the specific needs of their industries and with their business goals, and creating new ways of working. And we're committed to supporting every organisation that's ready to take that step, with the technology, expertise and partner ecosystem to help them lead. ■

Bransten and Microsoft's Bill Borden rang the opening Nasdaq bell to celebrate Microsoft's 50th anniversary in April 2025

Our greatest ally?

Combining human and AI capabilities can
superpower organisations for quicker and more
effective progress towards business goals

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

Employees may be more prepared to embrace AI in the workplace than business leaders think.

"They are more familiar with AI tools, they want more support and training, and they are more likely to believe AI will replace at least a third of their work in the near future," according to McKinsey & Company's *Superagency in the Workplace* report.

Of the 3,613 employees surveyed, nearly all (94 per cent) said they were at least somewhat familiar with generative AI tools. Leaders need to understand how widely AI is already being used by their teams, and where the greatest potential lies.

Microsoft is encouraging business leaders to consider how the technology can take on more cognitive, human-like tasks to support daily work. "When I think about AI's current abilities, I consider these five key cognitive tasks: perceiving, understanding, reasoning, executing and creating," says Jared Spataro, chief marketing officer of AI at Work at Microsoft, in a column for the firm's *WorkLab* publication. "Looking at how each is handled in your organisation today can help identify opportunities for AI to lighten the load."

Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk is among the firms to have already unlocked value from AI. It is using tools in Microsoft Azure to better understand the diseases it delivers treatments for.

"AI is changing the way that we do drug discovery," says Karin Conde-Knape, senior vice president of early development at Novo Nordisk. "With disease understanding, we can pinpoint a particular dysregulated biology to address. It's AI helping you define where you position your treatment first rather than the way that we maybe normally approach it."

KPMG, meanwhile, is using Microsoft Copilot to reshape how it delivers its audit text and advisory services.

"AI has given us a competitive advantage by changing our go-to-market strategy by shortening the time it takes to work through analytical data," says Kelle Fontenot, chief digital officer at KPMG, who explains how engaging in meetings with contextual information supported by Copilot has changed the relationships the firm has with its clients.

Microsoft refers to organisations like these as 'frontier firms', successfully integrating AI agents into their operations.

"A new organisational blueprint is emerging," reads *Microsoft's 2025 Work Trend Index*. "One that blends machine intelligence with human judgement, building systems that are AI-operated but

> "When I think about AI's current abilities, I consider five key tasks: perceiving, understanding, reasoning, executing and creating"
>
> JARED SPATARO, MICROSOFT

human-led. Structured around on-demand intelligence and powered by 'hybrid' teams of humans and agents, these companies scale rapidly, operate with agility and generate value faster."

Frontier firms are "powered by intelligence on tap, human-agent teams, and a new role for everyone: agent boss," according to the *Work Trend Index.*

As organisations transform into this new type of enterprise, a workplace model focused on collaboration between humans and AI agents is appearing. Microsoft says this model develops through three distinct phases.

First, AI assistants empower every employee to work smarter and faster by automating routine tasks and providing real-time support. Second, digital agents join teams as 'digital colleagues', handling specific tasks under human guidance. These agents become active team members rather than mere tools. Third, humans set strategic direction while agents execute complex business processes and workflows, autonomously checking in when needed.

Within this framework, the role of an 'agent boss' has developed, where human managers oversee one or more AI agents. This human-agent team structure is designed to address

the 'capacity gap', which Microsoft identifies as a growing mismatch between the volume and complexity of business demands and what people alone can manage. In Microsoft's *Work Trend Index*, 53 per cent of leaders say they need more productivity from their teams, yet 80 per cent of employees report lacking the time or energy to get their work done. During a typical workday, employees are interrupted every two minutes by meetings, emails or pings, with an average of 275 daily interruptions, when including after-hours activity. As a result, nearly half of employees (48 per cent) and over half of leaders (52 per cent) say their work feels chaotic and fragmented.

"No one becomes a clinician to do paperwork, but it's becoming a bigger and bigger administrative burden, taking time and attention away from actually treating and supporting patients," says Satya Nadella, chairman and CEO of Microsoft.

By assigning repetitive or transactional tasks to AI agents, organisations can reduce this overload, giving employees more space to focus on creativity, judgement and building meaningful connections. This shift not only improves job satisfaction but also drives organisations to prioritise expanding team

Chemical producer Dow is using Microsoft-powered agents to identify hidden losses in its manufacturing and production process
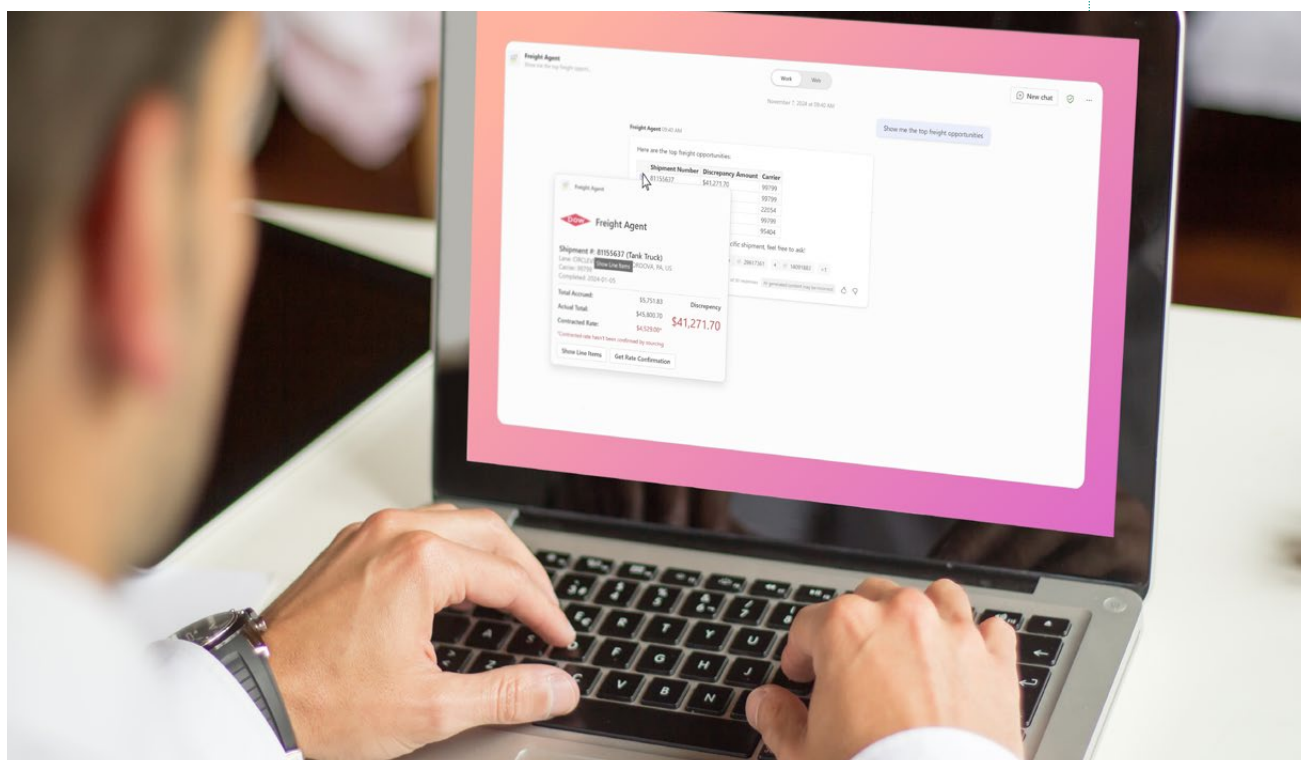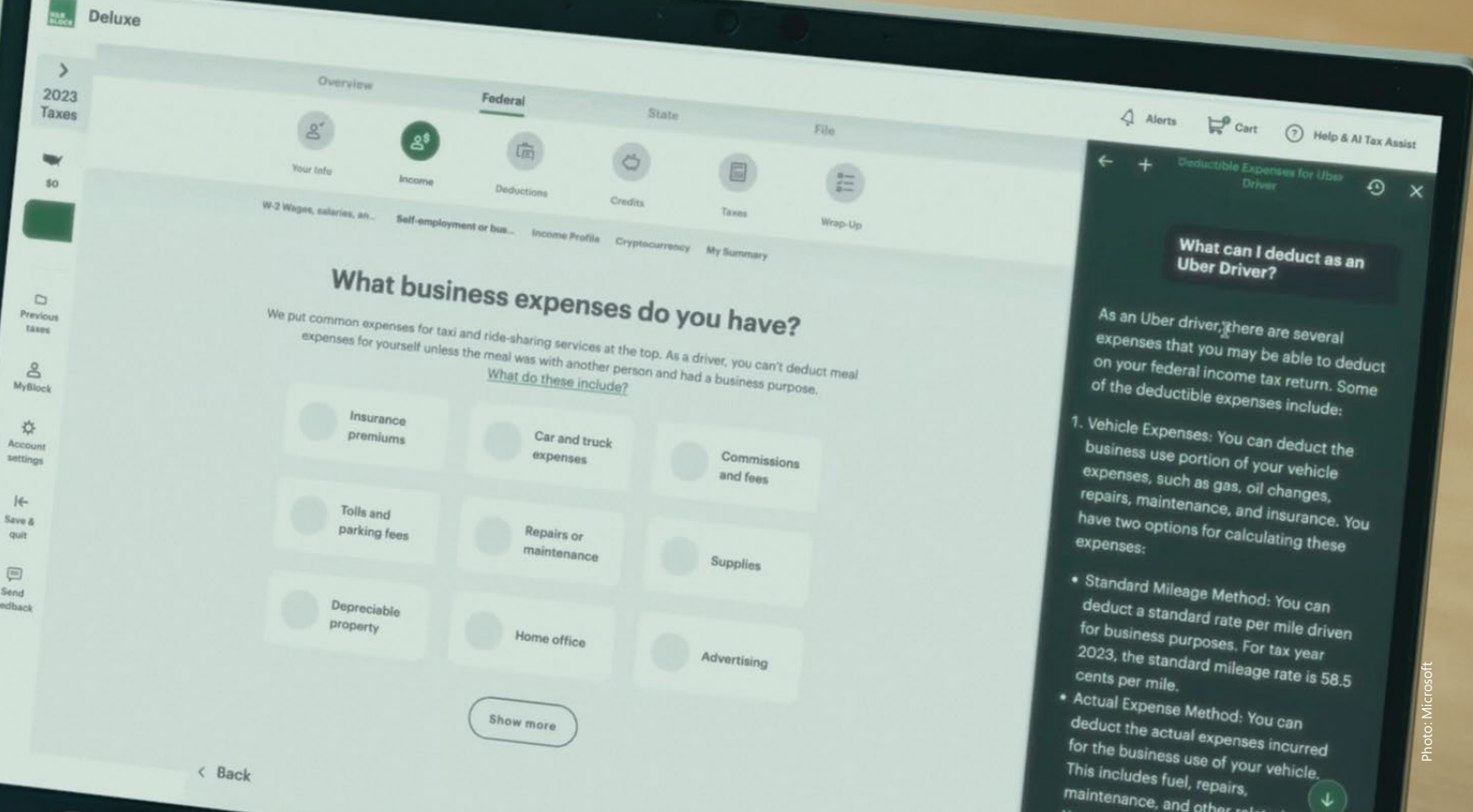
Photo: Microsoft

capacity through digital labour. According to Microsoft, nearly half of leaders (45 per cent) see this expansion as a key focus in the next 12-18 months, second only to upskilling their existing workforce (47 per cent), as they adapt to evolving demands and new ways of working.

However, there are practical challenges that organisations need to overcome to become frontier firms, including getting the human/agent ratio right.

"Just as HR manages human performance and IT manages systems, organisations will need new models to allocate and manage intelligence resources," notes the *Work Trend Index*.

Successfully navigating this shift requires leadership to understand the interplay between people and technology, ensuring AI is integrated in ways that support and enhance the human workforce rather than creating barriers to work.

"If you have a people problem, you will have an AI problem," says Amy Webb, futurist and CEO of Future Today Strategy Group, a consulting firm specialising in technology foresight. "As multi-agent systems redefine the workplace, the challenge will be to integrate and manage them securely and effectively. Companies that already know how to enable their human workforce will succeed – breaking down silos, fostering collaboration and ensuring the entire organisation works toward common goals."

In navigating this transformation, Microsoft plays a unique role as 'customer zero', using its own AI technologies internally before they are widely released. This approach allows Microsoft to test solutions in real enterprise scenarios and share valuable insights with customers. Nathalie D'Hers, corporate vice president of Microsoft Digital, explains that this strategy has accelerated Microsoft's digital transformation in ways that would have been impossible just a few years ago.

"Part of our mission is to be Microsoft's first and best customer and then share our learning with customers," she says. "In that spirit, we've learned a lot about enterprise AI, especially ways to accelerate time to employee value."

Microsoft has empowered more than 4,000 of its own Copilot champions (enthusiastic early adopters who share their knowledge and help peers embrace AI in daily work). This has helped Microsoft explore the evolving role of AI not just as a tool, but as a collaborative partner.

This experience allows Microsoft to help its customers in all sectors achieve their AI goals.

Tax preparation provider H&R Block, for example, is using generative AI to deliver more responsive, personalised experiences to clients. "It's transforming how we work and evolve as an organisation," says Aditya Thadani, vice president of AI platforms at H&R Block. "Our purpose remains the same, but how we live up to that promise is the opportunity – and AI is helping us get there."

In the professional services sector, Accenture has developed an AI agent

H&R Block is using generative AI to deliver more personalised tax advice to its customers

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GENERIC AI ISN'T BUILT FOR TODAY'S PROCUREMENT.
YOUR SPEND DESERVES BETTER.

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General-purpose AI knows a little about everything. And most AI platforms are designed for broad use cases.

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www.gep.com

Anna, a digital concierge by Holland America Line, uses Microsoft AI to answer questions from cruise guests
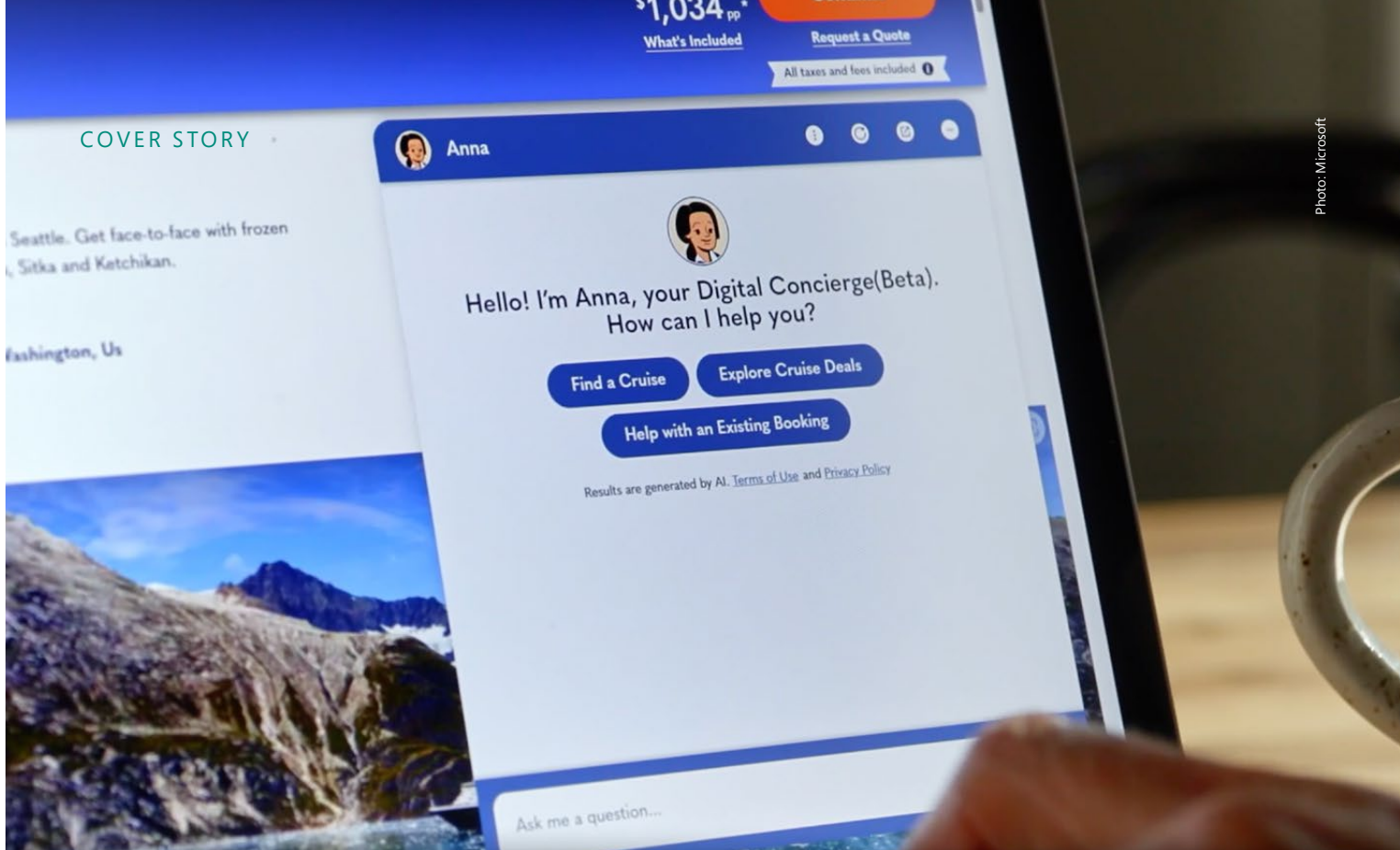
to automate and streamline past-due payments, accelerating collections and contributing directly to improved financial performance.

Bayer's researchers are using AI agents to save up to six hours per week. This added efficiency allows the firm to bring new products to market faster and drive greater innovation in agriculture. Chemical producer Dow, meanwhile, has deployed agents to identify hidden losses and improve the accuracy of logistics and billing processes. These enhancements are expected to save millions of dollars in the first year alone.

And in travel and hospitality, Holland America Line is using a conversational AI concierge called Anna to respond to thousands of queries each week, delivering timely, helpful answers and enhancing the overall cruise experience.

These examples show how AI agents are already creating measurable impact, from improving internal operations to enriching the customer journey. Spataro compares its potential impact to some of the most profound shifts in human history, including the Industrial Revolution, the invention of the airplane and the rise of the internet. These breakthroughs didn't just introduce new tools; they fundamentally changed how people live and work. In the same way, generative AI is poised to redefine the modern workplace, reshaping

job roles, decision-making processes and how value is created across every industry.

But as organisations look ahead, it's clear that success will require more than just adopting AI. It calls for full immersion. As Conde-Knape puts it: "Full immersion is different from technology adoption... we're not training somebody on how to do their job differently using technology, we're training people on how to think about their job differently."

> ## "If you have a people problem, you will have an AI problem"
>
> AMY WEBB, FUTURE TODAY STRATEGY GROUP

This shift in mindset marks a critical turning point. Rather than layering AI on top of existing processes, the most forward-thinking organisations are reimagining work from the ground up, with AI as a core enabler. Ultimately, generative AI can supercharge productivity and unlock new levels of innovation – but real success depends on managing its adoption thoughtfully, with the human experience at the heart of every deployment. ∎

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Partner perspectives

We asked Microsoft partners how they are helping businesses to empower their workforces with generative AI

Saket Srivastava
Chief Information Officer, Asana

"AI is promising to skyrocket productivity in the workforce, but what's missing is a central place to effectively coordinate the work of both humans and AI to drive teamwork at scale. Asana's work management platform, supercharged with AI and pre-built workflows, is designed for a human and AI approach that combines employee oversight with AI efficiency. This is key to driving clarity, transparency and accountability across the business to not only elevate employees beyond tedious work, but also unlock real benefits such as greater productivity, reduced digital exhaustion and return on investment."

"Ascent's structured, design-led AI framework empowers organisations to achieve more in less time. We collaboratively prioritise use cases by team impact, risk and complexity, run experiments to prove value, build data and cultural readiness and design roadmaps that accelerate delivery with pre-built AI architecture, agents and apps.

This guided approach builds confidence, smooths adoption and drives results faster. Real-world examples include enabling a legal team to save more than £500,000 ($680,000) per month with AI-powered contract analysis, an analytics team to better interrogate customer data at a premium UK retailer, and a critical procurement team to transform cost-efficiency at a global food services leader."

Murray Foxcroft
Chief Technology Officer, Ascent

"Industrial workers have used AI for decades, but recent generative AI advances and new humanised AI tools are taking that further. You needn't be an AI expert to extract the full value of your operational data. Like a Microsoft Teams chat, you just tell the AI what you want and it responds in the same everyday language. AVEVA AI delivers near-instant dashboards, visualisations and optimised engineering designs. Together with other types of AI, generative AI delivers benefits such as productivity gains (one client achieved 80 per cent automated data reconciliation), shorter time-to-value, and lower costs ($34 million from one predictive alert). We've only just begun to unlock AI's real value in industry."

Jim Chappell
Global Head of AI and Advanced Analytics, AVEVA

"Many business leaders dream of a highly productive workplace that enhances collaboration. Bring your own device (BYOD) meeting room solutions by ClickShare, help companies optimise their meeting spaces. No matter the setup or size of a space, the users and their preferences are always at the centre of the meeting experience.
   ClickShare is now enhanced with the addition of AI-driven features like voice recognition and attribution. Speaker recognition allows users to maintain their identity in the transcript when joining from a BYOD room, enabling more accurate meeting transcripts in Microsoft Teams and intelligent meeting recaps with Microsoft 365 Copilot."

Dan Root
Head of Global Strategic Alliances, Barco ClickShare

Automate Everything

500+
Agents

10,000+
Workflows

30,000+
Integrations
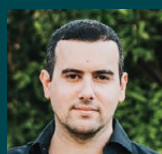
Gil Barak
Co-Founder and CEO, BlinkOps

"BlinkOps helps security and IT teams rapidly create an army of virtual security employees designed and trained to solve specific operations challenges. For example, the security operations centre, identity access management, DevOps and the governance, risk and compliance team members can quickly build a custom agent to monitor communications for suspicious links, cross-check threat feeds, isolate endpoints and notify teams within seconds. The platform enables teams to create autonomous micro-agents with specific abilities defined by deterministic workflows. This enables businesses to remain in full control of their virtual employees operating within defined boundaries to execute critical security and IT tasks."

"CNXN Helix accelerates workforce transformation by deploying AI copilots and intelligent agents that automate tasks, enhance decision-making and boost productivity. Our seven-step methodology, combined with world-class engineering expertise, ensures tailored AI solutions aligned with each organisation's goals. We prioritise secure AI deployments through robust trust frameworks, adhering to standards like The Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program and the National Institute of Standards' AI Risk Management Framework. This approach delivers measurable outcomes – significant cost savings, increased efficiency and scalable intelligence – empowering employees to focus on innovation and strategic initiatives."

Jamal Khan
Head of CNXN Helix Center for Applied AI and Robotics, and Chief Growth and Innovation Officer, Connection

Brian Barnes
Chief Product Officer, Coretek

"At Coretek, we integrate generative AI with Microsoft's robust platforms to transform employee productivity. Our technology solutions automate repetitive tasks, deliver actionable insights and seamlessly integrate AI-driven tools into everyday workflows. This approach accelerates decision-making and enhances operational efficiency, ultimately cultivating a resilient and agile workforce that drives meaningful business outcomes in today's evolving digital landscape."

"At Ferranti, we're harnessing the power of AI to transform our MECOMS software documentation into new training and support experiences, such as real-time virtual Q&A agents. This innovation gives MECOMS users instant access to essential knowledge, improving decision-making and performance. By integrating AI into daily workflows, we reduce training time and speed up adoption, fostering faster workforce development. It's more than just smarter software, it's about empowering people with the right information at the right time. The result is a more agile, knowledgeable workforce, ready to meet the evolving challenges of the energy and utilities sector with confidence and efficiency."

Johan Vandekerckhove
Chief Commercial Officer, Ferranti

"At Huddly, we bring AI into meetings to support real human connection. Our camera systems use on-device machine learning to shape dynamic, inclusive collaboration experiences that empower any team, anywhere, to do their best work together. That's why seamless integration with Teams Rooms and Copilot is essential. By combining our technology with Microsoft's generative AI, we enable people to engage, connect and keep the momentum going with AI amplifying the magic that naturally happens when people come together."

Stein Ove Eriksen
Co-Founder and Chief Product Officer, Huddly

Nigel Dunn
Vice President and Managing Director, EMEA North, Jabra

"Generative AI is transforming the way we work and boosting productivity by providing AI voice transcriptions and actions from Teams meetings. Speaking is four times quicker than typing, but in noisy environments the choice of headset is crucial to get the most from AI tools. Jabra's professional headsets maximise the performance of generative AI with premium microphones that deliver 97 per cent transcription accuracy compared to average consumer earbuds.

Jabra's products are tested and approved for AI. Whether you are using the Jabra Evolve2, Engage headsets or Speak2 speakerphones, your voice will be captured clearly and accurately."

denodo

Powering Responsible AI.
Enabling Confident Decisions.

Denodo delivers the data agility today's businesses need, without compromise.

SELF-SERVICE, NOT SHADOW IT

Empower analysts and decision-makers with governed access to live, distributed data.

AI-READY DATA, NOT JUST AI HYPE

Ensure Generative, Predictive, and Agentic AI operate on explainable, real-time insights.

COMPLIANCE WITHOUT THE COMPLEXITY

Drive ESG, regulatory, and risk controls through logical data products and traceability.

RESPONSIBILITY BY DESIGN

Avoid ethical blind spots by embedding data governance and lineage into every AI pipeline.
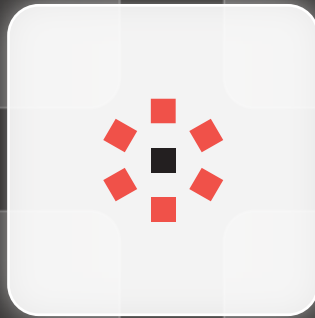
Trusted outcomes begin with trusted data.
That's where Denodo starts.

DENODO IN ACTION:
A New Architecture for a New Era

BUILT FOR SELF-SERVICE & SPEED

- Live data views from any source
- Semantic search and discovery
- No duplication, no delays

AI THAT WORKS BECAUSE THE DATA DOES

- GenAI, ML, NLP, Agentic AI powered by real-time, governed access
- Compatible with Microsoft Copilot, Azure OpenAI, Microsoft Azure AI and more

COMPLIANCE THAT'S HOLISTIC, NOT JUST TICKED BOXES

- Traceable data products
- Federated governance
- Integrated data privacy controls

CSP-ALIGNED, CLOUD-NATIVE

- Deployed with AWS , Microsoft Azure
- SaaS-ready with Denodo Agora
- No lock-in, all flexibility

Join the global leaders already delivering responsible AI with Denodo.

"Melissa combines over 40 years of data quality expertise with the latest AI-enabled assistance in its software, reference data and services. The result is unmatched support for data quality, enrichment and customer intelligence. Melissa supports a broad range of data domains, including contact data, identity verification, geolocation, business, property and healthcare. We offer time-efficient solutions for agile needs through documented API microservices. For complex needs, we provide unified, low-code environments for end-to-end data quality management. Current and emerging AI applications enable high-confidence machine reasoning and expert large language model based assistance, reducing time and effort to reach high-value outcomes. Integrated third-party resources – such as Azure, Dynamics 365, Office 365 and customer relationship management solutions – help realise full potential efficiently."

Bud Walker
Chief Information Officer, Melissa

"At M-Files, we are leveraging generative AI to transform the way businesses operate. By integrating AI-driven productivity features into our products, we empower employees to automate repetitive tasks, enhance decision-making and foster innovation. Our solutions enable seamless collaboration and provide personalised insights, leading to improved efficiency and productivity. The impact on business outcomes has been significant, from increased operational efficiency and reduced costs, to enhanced employee satisfaction. Our commitment to AI-driven solutions is helping businesses stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market."

Samppa Lahtinen
Senior Manager, Industry Solutions, M-Files

"If enterprises want to stay in control of their most valuable assets, information and decisions, they must begin treating AI agents as active actors. That means knowing what exists, who owns it, what it can access, and whether it is still necessary. At Rencore, we are evolving at the same pace as Microsoft when it comes to Copilot and agent technology. Where Microsoft empowers you to embrace AI, we are making sure that you have the means to govern it automatically, creating a secure, efficient and cost-effective platform that keeps your business ahead of the game."

Howard Friedman
Vice President,
Digital Alliances, NRI

"For companies to truly gain an advantage from AI, they need to bridge the gap from the promise and excitement of early adopters to a secure company-wide adoption. Through our partnership with Microsoft, NRI can help guide these organisations. NRI has breadth, depth and years of experience in AI, coupled with deep expertise in the entire Microsoft platform. But that's not what sets us apart. To truly bridge that gap from promise to production, our adoption and change management practice is driving the realisation of these new productivity tools."

Matt Einig
CEO, Rencore

Tyler Troutman
Strategic Market
Development, Shure

"Investing in the latest meeting technology makes businesses more productive by removing barriers to clear communication. Plus, high-quality audiovisual (AV) technology is crucial when using AI tools like Copilot in Teams. These tools combine to empower employees with AI-driven enhancements that streamline workflows and improve collaboration.

Certified solutions like Shure IntelliMix Room Kits ensure accurate audio capture and allows Copilot in Teams to deliver transcription data, attribute speakers, create meeting summaries and provide next steps, allowing participants to engage fully without distractions. This synergy between AI and AV technology reduces miscommunications, significantly boosting efficiency and driving the modern workplace forward."

From insight to action

ERROL RODERICKS AND PETER HUMBLE: DENODO AND MICROSOFT

Microsoft and Denodo are working together to ensure organisations get the most out of their AI transformation by focusing on the key element: data

Generative AI is currently redefining how businesses work, but it's just one facet of the broader AI opportunity. The organisations that focus solely on generative AI risk missing out on the wider transformation potential that AI offers.

True business value comes from integrating generative AI with predictive analytics, real-time decision-making and autonomous systems, all powered by governed, real-time data. AI is only as powerful as the data that fuels it and for tools to drive real productivity, organisations need data that is not only complete and current but also trusted and instantly accessible.

This is where the partnership between Microsoft and Denodo comes into play. Microsoft Copilot offers a powerful and intuitive way to interact with data, while Denodo provides businesses with a data layer that connects and activates information across cloud, on-premises and hybrid environments without

the need for data movement, so that users can get more out of their Copilot experience.

Microsoft's belief is that AI should be woven into the tools people already use to transform everyday actions into intelligent outcomes. For instance, Microsoft 365 Copilot turns familiar applications such as Microsoft Outlook, Word and Teams into intelligent assistants. Many organisations are now taking this one step further and realising that Copilot is so much more than just a productivity assistant.

The tool is a gateway to an entire armoury of AI capabilities powered by the Microsoft Cloud. Behind the scenes lies a formidable infrastructure made up of Azure OpenAI, Azure Machine Learning, Azure AI Foundry, Cognitive Services, Microsoft Fabric and more. However, these capabilities can only be fully realised when there is access to high-quality data.

Denodo's mission is to support this by enabling real-time, secure access to distributed data across cloud and on-premises environments, helping organisations to maximise the value of their Microsoft investments. The aim is to eliminate the data bottleneck and put insights into the hands of those who drive the business. Instead of spending months integrating sources or duplicating data sets, Denodo's Logical Data Management platform gives Copilot the context and continuity it needs from day one.

Success has to start somewhere and for the AI implementation process it comes down to having a smooth transition from proof-of-concept to production.

The most successful AI initiatives start with a clearly defined business use case. Whether its improving customer retention, reducing risk
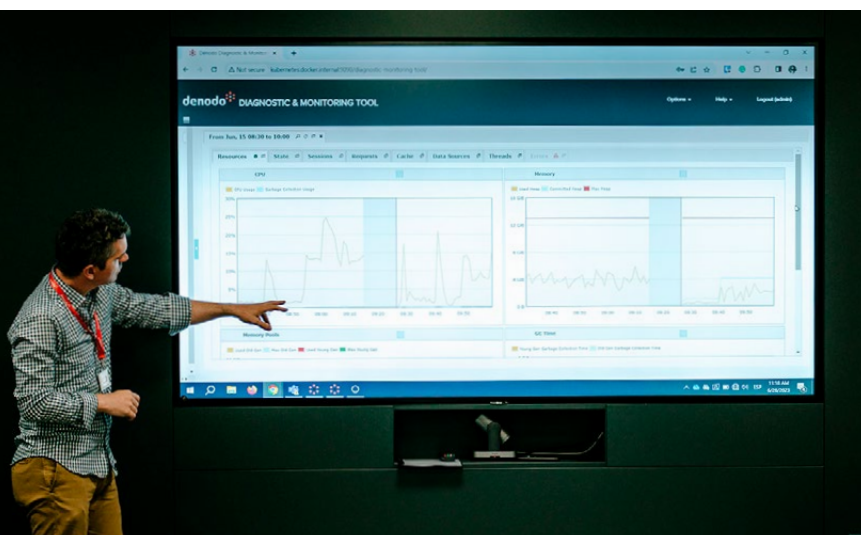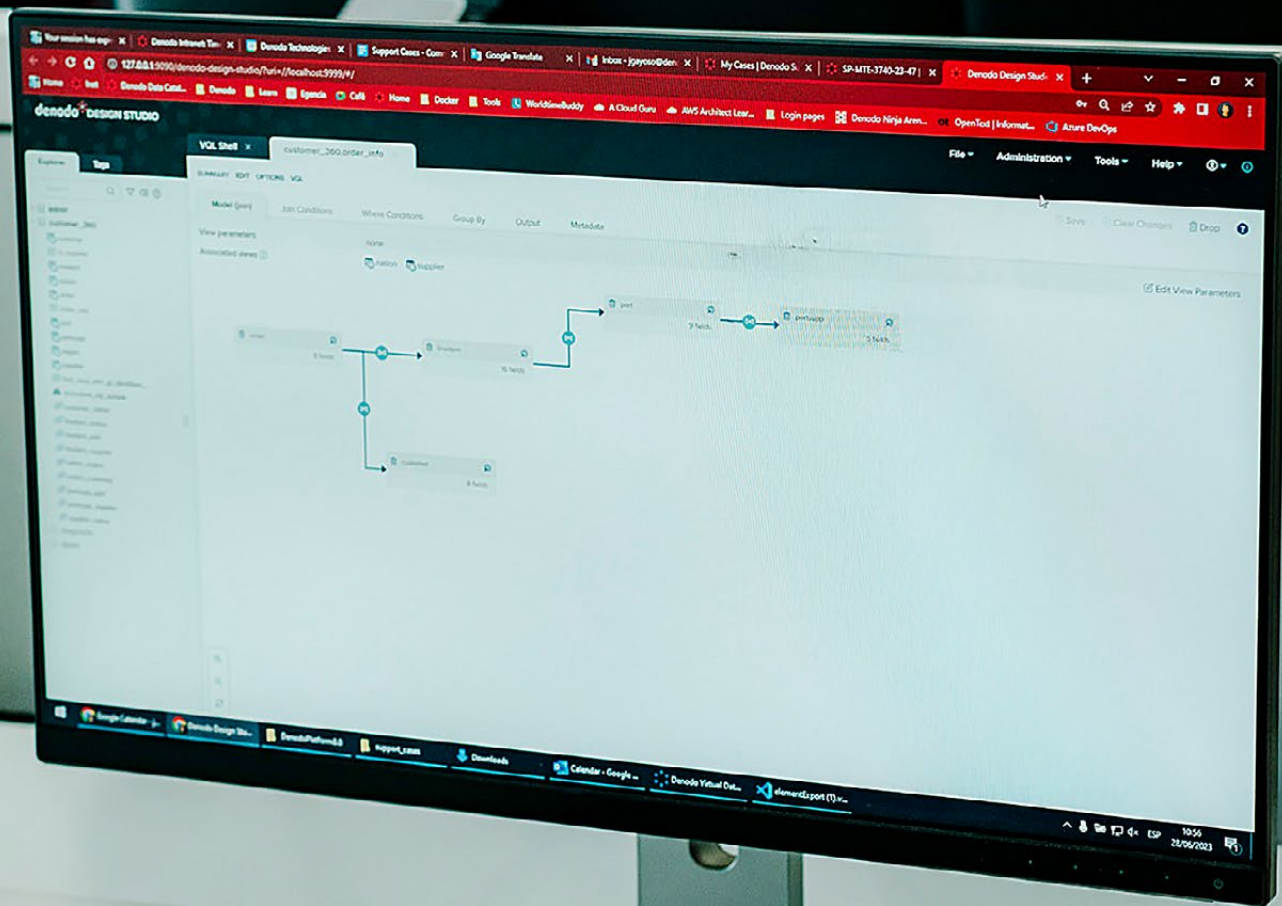
or speeding up decision-making, the goal must come first and ideally have a measurable impact.

Once the customer has identified their AI goal, Denodo can help the firm get their data in order while Microsoft delivers the targeted AI insights, working in tandem to ensure business value is both measurable and scalable.

We are already seeing this collaboration unlock value across industries by accelerating compliance, improving frontline decisions and transforming citizen services. That's the difference between AI that generates answers and AI that generates action.

Denodo's Logical Data Management approach also enables the creation of highly valued, reusable data products in the form of modular, governed views of enterprise information that can be analysed by Copilot or other business applications. It reduces time to insight, builds trust in AI outputs and helps scale generative AI without spawning new silos.

Generative AI may be impressive, and it can be easy to rush ahead, but in regulated sectors this isn't enough. Use cases need to be explainable, auditable and compliant. That's why Denodo and Microsoft are aligned not just on innovation, but also on responsibility. Microsoft's Responsible AI framework is the industry benchmark and Denodo is reinforcing it by delivering lineage, role-based security and policy enforcement at the data layer. Together we don't just power AI, we make it safe to scale.

"Together we don't just power AI, we make it safe to scale"

Even with a strong start, many organisations can still stumble at the final step: making sure the AI tool has the data it needs, when it needs it. Denodo aims to eliminate that friction and its platform delivers real-time access without delays, making Copilot a true decision-making partner, not just a chatbot.

You shouldn't have to rethink your infrastructure to adopt AI. You just need to rethink how you activate your data. ◼

Errol Rodericks is director of product marketing for EMEA and LATAM at Denodo. Peter Humble is director of Azure technology specialists at Microsoft UK

Denodo is working with Microsoft to help organisations make the most of their data

Built for speed, designed for trust

Armor Defense's Brady Willis explains how the company's new AI-powered platform accelerates threat detection with complete transparency and explainability

BY LAURA HYDE

Working in the field of security requires transparency. That's why black-box models can make security professionals more anxious or sceptical, rather than feeling safer or more confident.

"We set out to build something different," says Brady Willis, vice president of security operations at Armor Defense. "We developed the Armor Intelligence Platform (AIP) to deliver better outcomes with greater visibility, speed and precision."

Armor is using agentic AI to help organisations – from fast-growing start-ups to large enterprises – protect their mission-critical workloads and detect the most sophisticated threats.

"Security teams are overwhelmed," says Willis. "Too many alerts. Not enough people. And constant pressure to respond faster without missing something critical. Basic automation helps, but it often lacks the context or judgment to make smart decisions.

"We designed AIP to mimic how experienced analysts think. Instead of relying on a single model, AIP is made up of modular, goal-driven agents. Each one handles a specific part of the investigation process, much like a team of specialists working together."

AIP has cut investigation time from 15 minutes to just 40 seconds, without compromising clarity. Each decision made by AIP includes a traceable path, so analysts and customers can see exactly how and why it was made.

"Customers want to know why a domain was flagged or dismissed," says Willis. "With AIP, we make decisions faster and give our customers a built-in, auditable reference of agentic AI findings and recommended actions."

AIP does not sideline analysts. It gives them high-confidence, context-aware insights so they can make faster, smarter decisions. "AIP provides less noise and fewer escalations so analysts can make better use of their time," adds Willis.

"With AIP, we make decisions faster and give our customers a built-in, auditable reference of agentic AI findings and recommended actions."

What is malicious in one environment might be perfectly normal in another, which is why AIP agents are trained with threat-specific logic and environmental context. It is not just about what a threat is – it's about where it's happening and why it matters.

"We're continuing to expand AIP with improvements to signal correlation, intelligent escalations, and cross-environment insight," says Willis. "But the core values remain the same – speed, transparency and customer control." ■

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Managing procurement and supply chain at scale

Santosh Nair explains how GEP's solutions leverage real-time insights, automation and risk management to help enterprises adapt to market volatility, enhance supplier resilience and align procurement with broader business goals

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

One US-based financial services firm – which is ranked among the nation's top 100 by revenue and has over 100,000 employees and 10,000 suppliers operating in 40 countries – was facing increasing pressure to manage complex supply chains and procurement operations efficiently, securely and at scale. After partnering with GEP, the company was able to enhance security, improve accessibility, update more than 1,000 purchasing policies and transition almost entirely to digital invoicing. It's not the only large enterprise that has significantly improved operations by implementing GEP's technology.

"We build a central intelligence layer for enterprise procurement and supply chain operations, empowering organisations to unlock the full power of AI and automation," says Santosh Nair, global head of product strategy at GEP. "Our embedded AI analytics deliver real-time insights into spend, category, and supplier, enabling faster, smarter decisions and proactive risk management."

GEP provides a suite of platforms and solutions designed to simplify and optimise procurement and supply chain operations. At the core is GEP Quantum, a low-code/no-code platform built natively on Microsoft Azure with AI and machine learning capabilities. It brings together data, automation and intelligence to help organisations streamline complex workflows, guide users through easier processes and make advanced insights accessible across the business.

"The foundation of our solutions on Azure provides stability, scalability and performance necessary for enterprise procurement and supply chain operations," says Nair. "This architectural synergy ensures customers benefit from a robust, secure environment."

GEP Quantum platform powers key solutions including GEP SMART, GEP NEXXE and GEP GREEN. GEP SMART supports the entire source-to-pay process, helping businesses analyse spending, manage sourcing and contracts, collaborate with suppliers, and run procurement operations more efficiently in one place. GEP NEXXE is focused on supply chain management, combining planning, visibility, collaboration and execution tools

Photo: iStock/gorodenkoff

to help companies stay agile and aligned with their long-term goals. GEP GREEN is a core environmental, social and governance solution that empowers enterprises to seamlessly measure, manage and improve sustainability performance across their supply chains, driving toward net-zero goals.

The firm's offerings are accessible to a wide audience of Microsoft customers who can use GEP capabilities directly within their existing Azure environments. "This integration enhances our value proposition and solidifies our position as a leading provider of comprehensive procurement and supply chain solutions within the Microsoft cloud landscape," says Nair.

GEP's strong investment in AI drives value and return on investment for its customers around the world.

"By working closely with clients to understand their priorities, co-create solutions and align procurement with broader business objectives, we ensure our tools deliver meaningful outcomes," says Nair. "We also help streamline procurement budgeting by allowing clients to set clear priorities, track spending in real time and ensure alignment with financial and strategic goals."

GEP also supports customers by identifying key trends that are shaping the future of procurement and supply chain management, and helps them to overcome those challenges.

"Our experience working with chief procurement and supply chain officers highlights the fear of uncertainty to new software and automation," he says. "Yet, the alignment of legal, IT, finance and business units with AI is essential for maximising the value of strategic partnerships, avoiding miscommunication, ensuring procurement initiatives are fully integrated with company goals."

Another challenge for procurement and supply chain leaders is ongoing tariff uncertainty.

"Tariffs don't only affect procurement – they ripple across finance, sales, logistics and legal," says Nair. "Forming cross-functional war rooms ensures faster, more aligned decision-making across the business. Procurement and supply chain leaders can prepare strategies for this by enabling impact analysis and scenario modelling so teams can simulate tariff changes by region, supplier or product and adjust sourcing, pricing and fulfilment accordingly."

These pressures are also accelerating the need for more resilient sourcing strategies, particularly in the face of geopolitical uncertainty.

"Leaders should start by mapping multitier supply chains to identify upstream vulnerabilities," says Nair. "Visibility into sub-tier suppliers, especially in high-risk geographies, allows you to proactively mitigate exposure and build early warning capabilities. It's also important to avoid overdependence on any single region or supplier. Dual sourcing or multisourcing, regional balancing and nearshoring can help maintain continuity."

"Forming cross-functional war rooms ensures faster, more aligned decision-making across the business"

And firms should consider strategic suppliers not just by cost, but by resilience potential.

"Forge deeper, collaborative relationships with key suppliers," says Nair. "This includes sharing forecasting data, jointly managing risk and establishing flexible commercial terms such as buffer capacity or variable pricing tied to external volatility indicators."

Additionally, firms should embed geopolitical risk insights, trade data and market intelligence into category and sourcing decisions.

"Intelligent category management solutions help by incorporating data and analytics into sourcing strategies for dynamic risk adjustment," says Nair. "Plus, shifting from rigid long-term sourcing to modular, agile contracts that allow faster pivots enables organisations to respond quickly to market volatility, minimise disruption and maintain supply continuity." ∎

NOTE FROM MICROSOFT

"We're excited to offer GEP's AI-powered procurement software suites via Azure Marketplace, helping our mutual customers make smarter decisions and thrive in today's fast-moving world. GEP SMART and GEP NEXXE were built natively on Azure to help organisations manage spending, uncover savings and risks, and build more sustainable supply chains."

Yvonne Muench
Senior Director, Marketplace and Independent Software Vendor Journey, Microsoft

Evolving with the industry

Kris Caron and Brian Gatke share how Connection and Microsoft are collaborating to help customers capitalise on new technologies and operate more securely and efficiently

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

Connection started as a catalogue PC seller in the 1980s but today the company is a far cry from its transactional beginnings. Now a managed services provider and strategic technology partner, Connection has evolved in lockstep with changing customer expectations and the technology leaders it partners with, particularly Microsoft.

"We became more of a services provider due to a shift in the industry," says Kris Caron, director of Microsoft alliance for Connection. "We've seen customers transition from needing a source to procure their IT products to wanting a partner that can understand their environment and unique challenges, and then provide hands-on services to solve those problems."

This move from focusing on transactions to building relationships has transformed not only how Connection serves its customers, but also how it works with Microsoft. The company has been a Microsoft partner since the early 1990s, but as Brian Gatke, vice president of go-to-market solutions strategy and portfolio at Connection, notes its relationship with Microsoft has "skyrocketed – or let's say, got much deeper – in recent years."

That depth is evident in how closely aligned the two companies have become in terms of strategy and delivery.

"About 50 per cent of our assets and capabilities are directly tied to Microsoft technologies," says Caron. "We have a strong emphasis on supporting our customers' Microsoft environments, whether that be on the modern work side, the Azure side or the Microsoft Copilot and AI side of things. We have a more deeply, strategically integrated alliance with Microsoft."

This close partnership enables Connection to build value-added services around Microsoft's innovations.

"We were already working on a workshop the month Copilot was launched in 2023," says Gatke. "That workshop helped to introduce our customers to AI so they could better understand its use cases. Then we expanded it to also help them understand if they were technically ready to embrace the technology."

> ## "50 per cent of our assets and capabilities are directly tied to Microsoft technologies"
>
> KRIS CARON

Connection then developed a broader set of services. "We continued our services by preparing businesses for AI adoption through checking data, identity, access and security," says Gatke. "This was to make sure that Copilot not only does what it should, but also that it doesn't damage what it shouldn't."

Security has become another major pillar of Connection's offerings. The company supports customers in simplifying and strengthening their security posture, often by helping them better utilise the Microsoft tools they already own.

"What we're finding is that customers have bought so many security tools they have an amalgam of different things that do the same job," says Gatke. "We can go in there, clean that

up, replace it with Microsoft tools and eliminate the other costly ones."

Another area of focus is productivity and collaboration, particularly with Microsoft Teams. "We make sure a company can truly move to Teams as their single voice and video platform," says Gatke.

These value-driven services have helped Connection gain Microsoft's attention.

"Last year, when Copilot came out, we shot to the top of Microsoft's leadership visibility," says Gatke. "Microsoft saw the potential of Connection and really started investing in us."

The partnership now extends beyond product readiness into joint go-to-market strategies.

"We're always trying to stay in lockstep with Microsoft," says Caron. "That includes lead sharing, pipeline development and synchronised account planning. We come to the table as a joint force and that really resonates with our customers."

Part of Connection's success lies in knowing where to complement, rather than duplicate, Microsoft's capabilities. "We look at the products and solutions Microsoft provides, and then ask where we can step in to develop an offering to fit a need that Microsoft isn't able to cater for itself," says Caron. "One of our sweet spots is small and medium corporate customers where Microsoft may not have the support engine. We can support both the largest enterprises and these smaller entities."

Connection's depth of expertise is reflected in the various Microsoft certifications it holds and its role as a cloud solution services provider, though both Caron and Gatke emphasise that the organisation's real value is evident in the outcomes it delivers for customers. Gatke shares a notable example.

"We worked with a customer that does underwater construction around the world, using ships, cranes and deep-sea divers," he recalls. "AI might not be the first thing that comes to mind with a company like this, but they quickly saw its potential, from streamlining common tasks like developing customer contracts to more specialised use cases, such as gaining deeper insights into the waterways they operate in, navigating maritime law and improving operational efficiency. What they needed from us was help managing the technical readiness, security and infrastructure to actually implement AI."

"We make sure a company can truly move to Teams as their single voice and video platform"

BRIAN GATKE

From navigating deep waters to helping customers embrace next-generation productivity tools, Connection is showing what it means to "live in the gaps," as Caron puts it, by helping organisations succeed in the spaces between their business goals and the raw capabilities of their tools.

"We simply want to be more for our customers," says Gatke. "And 'more' means completing the solution with services." ∎

The invisible assistant

ROBERT LOVELACE: CORETEK

AI is already operating in the backgrounds of our daily routines. The quiet revolution demands urgent action from business leaders on security, ethics and accountability

You might not see, hear or think about it, but AI is quietly shaping your daily life in ways you probably never imagined. From the moment you wake up to the time you go to bed, AI is working behind the scenes, making decisions, offering suggestions and streamlining your world. It's not science fiction; it's your reality.

That weather update on your phone? AI. The curated playlist that seems to know your mood better than you do? Also AI. Even your smart thermostat adjusting the temperature before you get out of bed is using machine learning to predict your preferences. These systems learn from your habits – your weekday morning alarm time, the news you read, your coffee order – and adapt accordingly.

This extends into our shopping habits. Have you ever wondered how Amazon seems to

"AI isn't just about robots or futuristic gadgets. It's about invisible systems that make life more convenient, efficient and personalised"

know exactly what you need before you do? AI algorithms analyse your browsing history, purchase patterns and how long you linger on a product page. The result? Hyper-personalised recommendations that feel eerily accurate. Grocery apps use similar technology to suggest your usual items or offer discounts on items you're likely to buy. Your credit card company also uses AI to detect unusual spending behaviour and prevent fraud, often before you notice something's wrong.

Plus, if you use Google Maps or Waze, you're relying on AI to get you where you need to go. These apps analyse real-time traffic data, road closures and user reports to find the fastest route. Some cars now come equipped with AI-powered driver assistance systems that can help you park, stay in your lane or avoid collisions.

AI isn't just about robots or futuristic gadgets. It's about invisible systems that make life more convenient, efficient and personalised. But this quiet revolution also raises important questions about who controls the algorithms, how your data is being used and what happens when machines know you better than you know yourself.

As AI becomes more deeply embedded in our daily lives, the importance of data privacy and security has never been greater. While end users are rightfully concerned about how their personal information is used, the real responsibility lies with the businesses building and deploying AI systems. For them, protecting data isn't just a legal obligation, it's a trust imperative. Businesses leveraging AI must go beyond compliance checklists. They need to embed privacy-by-design principles into every stage of development and deployment. This means minimising data collection to only what's necessary, encrypting data both in transit and at rest, implementing access controls to ensure only authorised personnel can view sensitive information, and auditing AI models for bias, fairness and explainability.

But even with best practices, the complexity of AI systems makes security a moving target. That's where robust tools and platforms come in. With business just getting started with AI
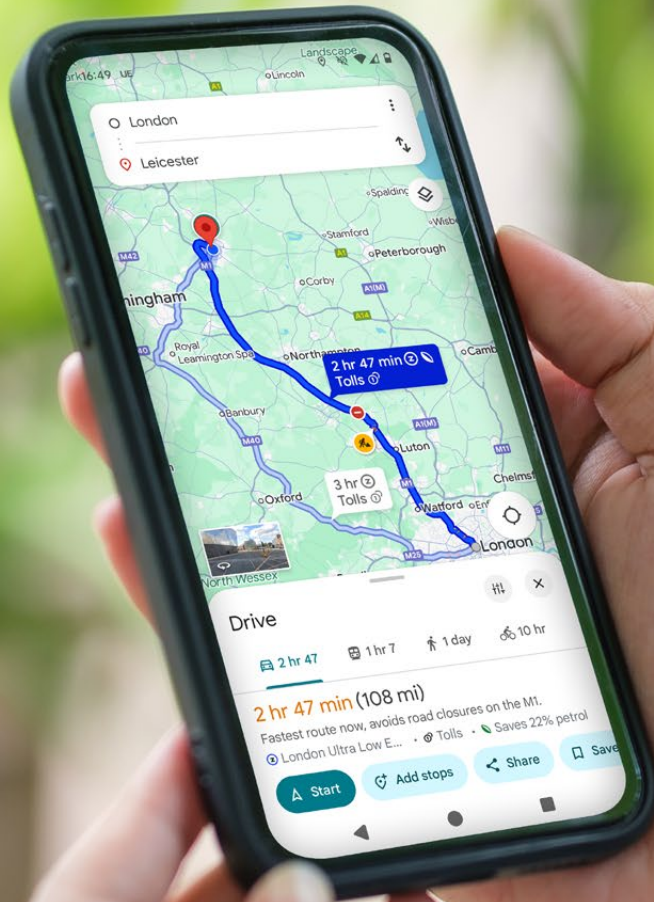
for their customers, Microsoft offers a suite of enterprise-grade tools designed to help businesses secure their AI initiatives while maintaining transparency and compliance.

Microsoft Purview is a unified data governance solution that helps organisations discover, classify and manage sensitive data across hybrid environments. It's essential for tracking where data lives and how it's used in AI models. Microsoft Azure AI and Responsible AI Dashboard provides built-in tools for responsible AI development, including fairness assessments, model interpretability, and error analysis. The Responsible AI Dashboard helps teams visualise and mitigate risks in real time.

Meanwhile, Microsoft Defender for Cloud offers end-to-end threat protection for cloud-based AI workloads. It monitors for vulnerabilities, misconfigurations and potential breaches across your infrastructure. Plus, Azure Confidential Computing ensures that data remains encrypted even during processing, using secure enclaves, which is critical for healthcare, finance and government.

As AI continues to evolve, one thing is clear: it's not coming, it's already here. And it's changing everything, whether you notice it or not. ◼

Robert Lovelace is practice director of AI, data and cloud at Coretek

Technology is already in the background of everyone's lives, such as real-time map updates

The biggest barrier to AI success isn't the technology

Synergy Technical's Rohana Meade explains why organisations must prioritise people, processes and readiness to maximise AI adoption

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

Organisations are split between rapidly adopting generative AI and cautiously holding back.

"Some organisations are rapidly embracing generative AI and piloting use cases across departments," says Rohana Meade, president and CEO of Synergy Technical. "Others are still in wait-and-see mode, concerned about data privacy, hallucinations, security and long-term return on investment (ROI)."

However, McKinsey & Company's *Superagency in the workplace* report suggests workers are more prepared for the introduction of AI than their employers believe, with surveyed personnel being three times more likely to use the technology than their leaders anticipate. The report also reveals that 48 per cent of employees rank training as the most important factor for generative AI adoption, yet nearly half feel they only receive moderate (or less sufficient) support.

"Many leaders are excited by AI's promise of rapid productivity gains, often assuming employees will intuitively use these tools and that ROI will naturally follow," says Meade. "In reality, employees frequently feel underprepared, confused about how Copilot fits into their daily responsibilities and unsure how to use it effectively. Some may even feel anxious about being replaced or judgement based on AI-driven performance. This disconnect can lead to poor adoption, missed opportunities and frustration on both sides."

To bridge this gap, Synergy Technical aligns leadership vision with employee readiness.

"We start with a Microsoft 365 Copilot readiness assessment to ensure the technical environment is secure and well-governed," says Meade. "From there, we work closely with organisations to identify role-based use cases and deliver tailored, hands-on training that maps AI capabilities directly to specific job functions. Our goal isn't just deployment – it's to help teams understand, trust and integrate Copilot into their daily work."

One of the biggest hurdles isn't the technology itself but ensuring the organisation's environment is truly ready for AI.

"The biggest challenge we see consistently is environmental readiness," says Meade. "Copilot works by surfacing data from across Microsoft 365 including emails, documents, chats and more. If a company hasn't properly locked down its data architecture, there's a real

> "Just because AI – particularly generative AI – is still evolving doesn't mean it isn't effective today"

risk that sensitive or confidential information may be exposed to users who shouldn't access it. At Synergy Technical, we deploy Microsoft 365 Copilot using a holistic, phased approach. Our goal is not just to get the technology

running but also to ensure it's running safely, securely and strategically."

When implemented successfully, Copilot can transform daily routines, helping employees across departments work more efficiently, creatively and confidently. It becomes a trusted assistant that reduces manual effort and empowers teams.

"Copilot fundamentally reshapes daily work routines across departments," says Meade. "Legal departments are using Copilot to streamline contract reviews. These teams use it to compare new contract language against pre-approved legal terms, summarise lengthy agreements to quickly surface risks or unusual clauses, and draft standardised language based on historical templates and policies."

Meanwhile, marketing teams are using the tool to generate first drafts of blog posts, campaign emails and social media content. IT teams use it to create and maintain technical documentation, such as password guidelines and troubleshooting instructions.

As organisations introduce AI tools, effective change management drives successful adoption and long-term value.

"Change management is critical to successfully adopting AI in the workplace," says Meade. "While the technology itself is powerful, the people and processes around it determine its effectiveness. Without it, even the most advanced AI deployments risk low adoption, wasted investment and user resistance."

For leaders wary of AI's complexity and rapid evolution, a thoughtful, measured approach makes all the difference.

"You don't need to go from zero to enterprise-wide AI transformation overnight," explains Meade. "Start small, prove value and scale responsibly. Just because AI – particularly generative AI – is still evolving doesn't mean it isn't effective today. Waiting comes with risk. While you're hesitating, competitors are already implementing AI, learning and gaining efficiencies that will compound over time." ■

Unlocking the power of agentic AI

DENNIS PERPETUA: KYNDRYL

Adopting new AI tools can be a daunting task for any organisation, but by following Kyndryl's clear guidelines a successful implementation can be ensured

Knowing where to get started with AI is a pressing concern for many IT and business leaders. The rapid evolution of the technology can be daunting, especially as challenges surrounding the responsible use of AI, privacy, security and hallucinations can further complicate implementation.

Even now, the public conversation around AI is shifting from generative to agentic. Looking forward, organisations must understand how they can leverage the technology across diverse use cases while maintaining a positive return on their investments.

The most effective approach to using AI involves enabling the connected experience

> "The Connected Experience framework defines a set of priorities that IT leaders should focus on throughout each level to implement agentic AI with the highest chance of success"

via a framework designed to personalise user experiences, measure success through managed observability, and achieve higher levels of productivity through agentic AI solutions.

When implementing agentic AI, it's beneficial to follow a progression of complexity which allows different use cases to be tested to ensure the business processes and technology are well understood. While this progression can

vary between companies, the common route consists of five key levels.

Levels one and two focus on deploying AI-powered technology services and support in the back office, with use cases including self-help solutions, data access and email and calendar management.

Level three focuses on employee workflows, with key use cases in human resources such as automated onboarding and offboarding and tailored training materials. Then, level four focuses on the wider business processes and application modernisation through the automation of application refactoring aided by AI discovery tools.

Finally, level five focuses on consumer workflows and applies AI to the customer experience, with use cases including QR code-enabled virtual agents and personalised product suggestions.

A robust connected experience framework defines a set of priorities that IT leaders should focus as they progress through each level to implement agentic AI with the highest chance of success. For instance, personalisation is key for facilitating discovery and justifying investments, while creating experience level agreements are important for highlighting risks and guiding adjustments.

It's currently estimated that between 70 and 85 per cent of AI projects fail to achieve their intended return on investment. While some of these failures can be attributed to the technical challenges presented by the rapid acceleration of AI, struggles can also be due
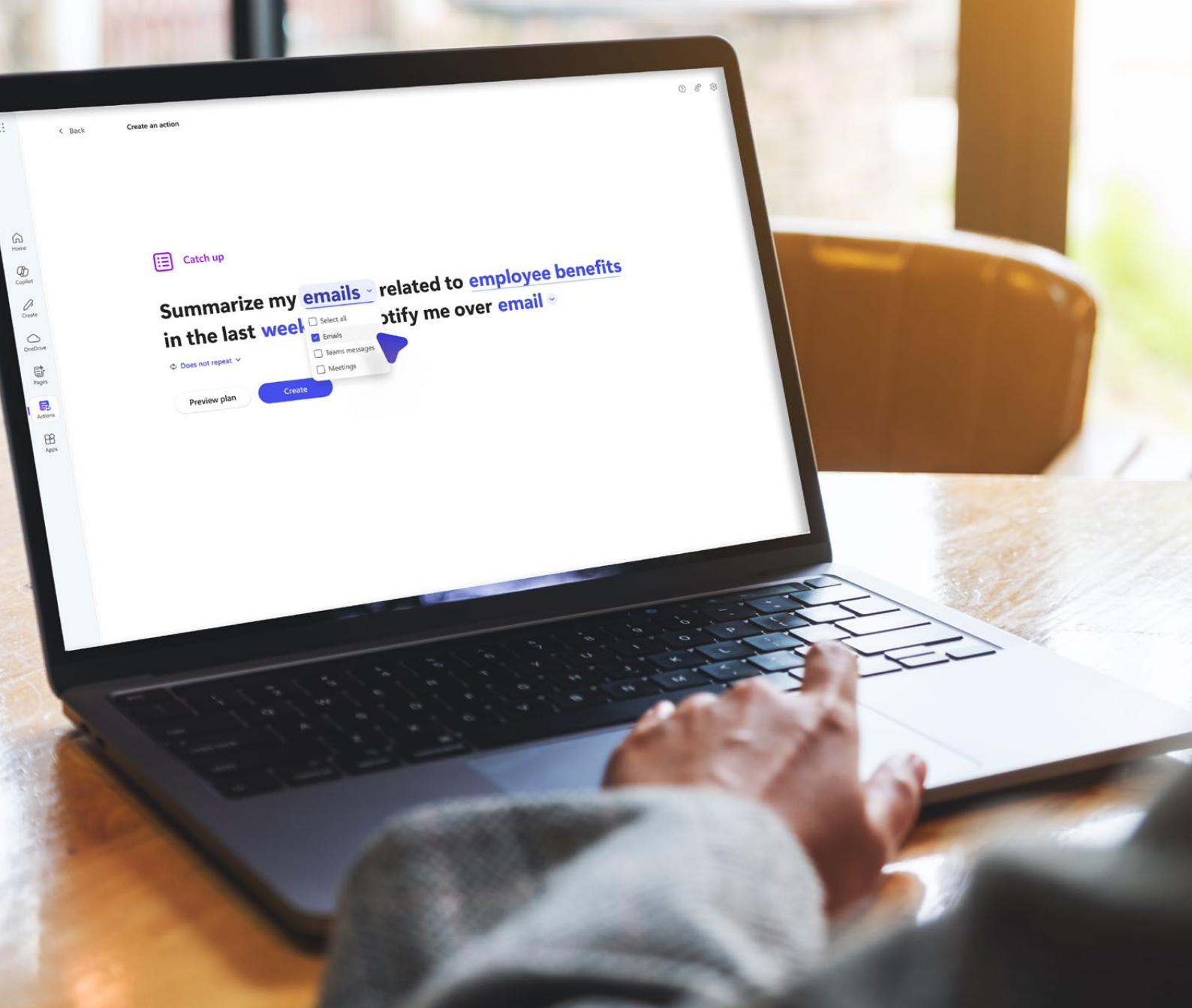
to a lack of clear, measurable objectives or a weak data focus.

Security and the responsible use of AI are important factors for organisations to consider, and ensuring proper data handling is key. Furthermore, given that AI is designed to evolve over time, any tool being used must be properly governed to ensure no unexpected outcomes occur.

There are also serious cost considerations, especially as organisations are now spoiled for choice with the variety of AI tools available. Of course, not all AI is cost effective compared to the use case at hand, and solutions should be tailored to problems, not the other way around.

By focusing on delivering a connected experience, organisations can blend consultative strategies with traditional IT rollouts, emphasising personalisation and measurable outcomes. As adoption grows, industries will generate reusable agentic components, fostering innovation and confidence in AI-driven workflows.

With proper governance, technology selection and workflow optimisation, agentic AI can transform automation into a dynamic and impactful element of the enterprise ecosystem. ■

Dennis Perpetua is vice president and chief technology officer of Digital Workplace Services at Kyndryl

Discover how Kyndryl is helping organisations unlock the potential of AI: https://bit.ly/4exKiXQ

Workers are using Copilot Studio Agent Builder to automate daily tasks and ease their workload

AI that's ready for duty

CNXN Helix has proven the power of its secure, scalable AI platform in a major US Navy challenge. Now, it's bringing those capabilities to enterprises everywhere. Connection's Travis Cook tells us more

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

Organisations across all industries are increasingly investing in robust, accessible and trustworthy AI solutions to help employees fulfil tasks such as drafting critical operations reports, analysing cyberthreat data, or managing complex logistics to keep fleets mission-ready. Recognising the potential of this technology, the US Navy launched a challenge to identify secure, scalable AI solutions that non-experts could use to perform real-world tasks in a variety of operational environments.

The CNXN Helix Center for Applied AI and Robotics, the AI practice of IT solutions provider Connection, met that challenge head on. The centre specialises in accelerating AI-driven solutions to fuel business growth and earned first place for its preconfigured platform that blends custom and commercial AI components to enable everything from automated document drafting to intrusion detection while safeguarding sensitive data and supporting operational deployment across ships, command centres and naval logistics networks.

"The winning solution from CNXN Helix proposed an air-gapped AI platform that supports large AI models while empowering users with no-code and low-code interfaces, offering the navy a trusted solution for mission-critical operations," says Travis Cook, director of industry solutions at Connection. "Adhering to a complex and rigorous set of standards, the concept features both custom and commercially available components that use industry-standard best practices to ensure data security, isolation and confidential computing at every layer. Presenting to the panel of judges, the CNXN Helix team demonstrated a secure, preconfigured environment that supports both experimentation and operational use by non-AI and machine learning experts.

Photos: X/AmericasNavy
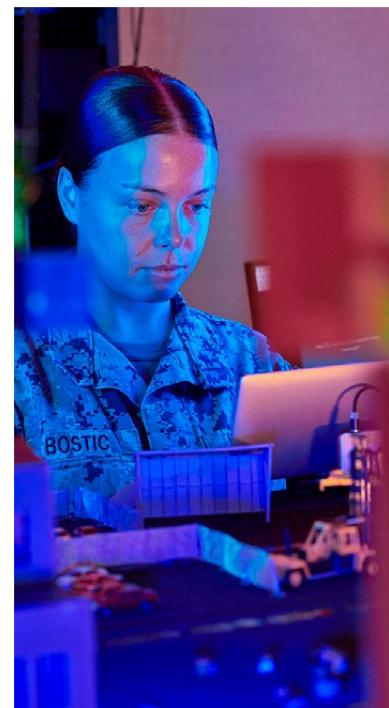
"The Microsoft Azure AI portfolio is an integral part of our customer offering"

CNXN Helix Center for Applied AI and Robotics won the US Navy challenge to create a secure AI solution for a variety of its operations

"The team also highlighted several use cases where CNXN Helix successfully deployed flexible versions of the platform within the defence environment. Looking ahead to the future, it's clear that national defence operations will increasingly leverage classified, zero-trust AI architectures to maintain strategic superiority."

CNXN Helix was built to help organisations that face similar challenges to the navy and respond rapidly and securely to the evolving needs of customers. The team of more than 100 employees aims to help businesses overcome challenges such as outdated infrastructure, fragmented data environments and the growing need for secure, scalable AI solutions that deliver real-world results.

"Many struggle with legacy infrastructure that isn't designed for modern AI systems, which requires them to make substantial investment in technological modernisation," says Cook. "Additionally, these organisations often lack clear AI governance frameworks to address ethical considerations, regulatory compliance and data privacy concerns, a particularly challenging area given evolving regulations across global markets. The talent gap presents another obstacle – the demand for AI specialists far exceeds supply and is forcing companies to compete aggressively for limited expertise while they simultaneously upskill existing employees."

CNXN Helix offers technical expertise, end-to-end solutions and deep industry partnerships with technology providers like Microsoft, to help businesses harness the full potential of AI. Having recently earned first place in the Navy's AI prize challenge; Helix has proven its ability to develop AI tools for real-world use that can easily be adapted for different contexts. Now, it's applying that same attention to the enterprise space by guiding companies with AI implementation. By aligning with Microsoft technologies such as Azure AI Studio, Copilot and AI app design tools, Helix helps organisations envision and implement practical solutions.

"The Microsoft Azure AI portfolio is an integral part of our customer offering," says Cook. "We're planning deeper collaboration through additional investments in technical capabilities, competencies and services to enable the portfolio."

This investment is timely, as businesses are rapidly shifting from exploring how AI can be used for isolated automation to how it can be fully integrated across an enterprise to drive widespread transformation.

"One of the most talked about trends this year is how AI agents will transform enterprises by evolving from single-task automation tools into autonomous systems that can manage entire business processes," says Cook. "AI agents will manage everything from scheduling and project coordination to vendor negotiations and customer interactions while maintaining brand consistency. The most valuable implementations will feature agents that collaborate effectively with human teams. This shift will fundamentally reshape workforce composition, with employees focusing on strategy and creativity while AI handles operations." ∎

Leading the shift to AI-augmented work

BRIAN BARNES: CORETEK

Microsoft is at the forefront of the AI revolution, transforming industries with intelligent agents and predictive AI

Generative AI is no longer experimental – it's embedded in workflows, customer experiences and decision-making processes. Rather than being a niche capability, it's now a foundational layer of enterprise transformation. Microsoft's own internal transformation, as documented in its *2025 AI Decision Brief*, illustrates this shift. Over 4,000 Microsoft Copilot champions are driving adoption across the enterprise, supported by gamified learning programmes like Camp Copilot.

AI is now a strategic necessity. Service providers are embedding AI into core offerings and using predictive analytics to shift from

> "Predictive AI stands out as the most likely candidate to achieve widespread, mainstream adoption in the near future"

reactive to proactive operations. Enterprises are moving beyond proofs of concept to full-scale deployments, with AI driving measurable gains in efficiency, personalisation and risk mitigation.

In the financial sector, agentic AI is already transforming operations. Banks and insurers are using these systems for hyper-personalised services, advanced risk modelling and intelligent automation. For example, Coretek assisted our customer in developing a prototype for a

virtual chief financial officer solution designed to process financial account details and generate actionable insights in a natural language format. This integration improved customer engagement and accelerated decision-making, leading to increased reliability, scalability, enhanced security and cost reduction.

Meanwhile, in the defence industrial base, our team worked on an AI solution to provide financial governance within Microsoft Azure, implement data security governance for AI and assist in deploying the first production AI workload that included HR Policy retrieval-augmented generation. This resulted in our customers gaining their first AI production case and security approval for further AI deployments.

The next frontier is agentic AI, where systems not only respond to prompts but act autonomously, learn from outcomes and orchestrate complex workflows. These agents are evolving through four levels: reactive, proactive, adaptive and fully agentic systems. Microsoft's experimental platform, Magentic-One, exemplifies this shift. It integrates with enterprise systems to automate workflows, provide real-time assistance and continuously improve through self-learning. Internally, Microsoft is preparing for this future by deploying agent builders in SharePoint and exploring agents that can act on behalf of employees.

As AI agents become more of the primary interface for information retrieval, traditional search engine optimisation is rapidly losing relevance. Users are no longer typing keywords
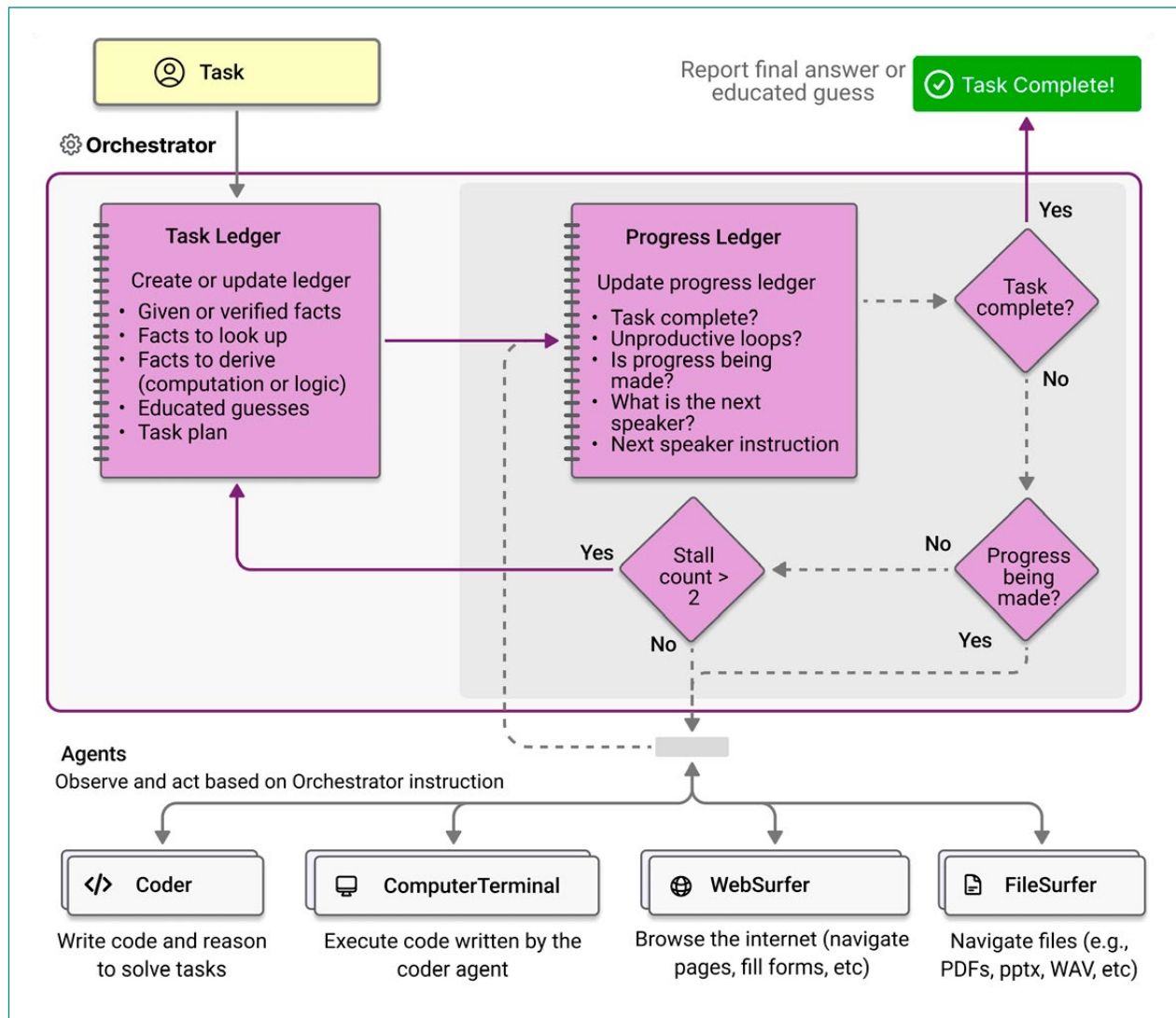
into search engines – they're asking Copilot, ChatGPT or enterprise agents to find, summarise and act on information. This shift demands a new approach to content strategy. Organisations must optimise AI accessibility, not just human readability. That means structuring content semantically for machine parsing, using metadata and schema markup to enhance discoverability, and ensuring content is context-rich and action-oriented.

The implications are profound. AI agents will favour content that is authoritative, well-structured and aligned with user intent, not necessarily what ranks highest on online search engines like Google. As a result, marketing, documentation and knowledge management teams must rethink how they create and distribute information.

Microsoft is uniquely positioned to lead this transformation. Through its Copilot ecosystem, Azure AI services and agentic frameworks like

Agent Builder and Magentic-One, Microsoft is enabling organisations to build and deploy custom AI agents tailored to business needs, govern enterprise data to ensure safe and effective AI use, and accelerate adoption through change management and training.

As AI continues to evolve beyond the realms of generative and agentic AI, a new wave of specialised AI paradigms is emerging with unique capabilities and applications. AI comes in many forms: predictive, discriminative, casual, symbolic, embodied and neurosymbolic. While causal and neurosymbolic AI offer exciting possibilities for deeper reasoning and explainability, they are still in early stages of development. Embodied and agentic AI promise autonomy but face challenges in safety, cost and complexity. Ethical AI is essential but functions more as a framework than a standalone technology. Among these, predictive AI stands out as the most likely candidate to

Microsoft tools like Magentic-One, which features one loop for containing data and another loop for tracking tasks, are helping businesses to implement agentic AI

Photo: AdobeStock/Draen

achieve widespread, mainstream adoption in the near future. In contrast, predictive AI is already here and it's working. Its combination of maturity, utility and accessibility makes it the most likely to achieve full-scale adoption first.

Predictive AI is poised to lead the next wave of AI adoption because it strikes the perfect balance between technological maturity, practical utility and ease of implementation. Unlike more experimental or infrastructure-heavy AI types, predictive models are already delivering tangible value across industries, from forecasting customer behaviour in retail to anticipating equipment failures in manufacturing. The ability to integrate seamlessly into existing business systems makes predictive AI models highly accessible, while the abundance of available data enhances their accuracy and scalability. Moreover, predictive AI aligns well with regulatory expectations for transparency and accountability, making it a safer and more compliant choice for organisations navigating the evolving landscape of responsible AI. As a result, it offers a

low-risk, high-reward path to AI-driven transformation, positioning it as the most likely to achieve widespread, mainstream adoption in the near term.

We are at a pivotal moment. AI is no longer just a tool; it's becoming a collaborator. As agentic systems mature, they will redefine how we work, search and make decisions.

"AI is no longer just a tool; it's becoming a collaborator"

Organisations that embrace this shift – by preparing their content, processes and people – will gain a decisive advantage. Microsoft's roadmap offers a blueprint: empower employees, govern data and build agents that act with intelligence and autonomy. The future of work isn't just AI-assisted, it's AI-augmented and increasingly AI-driven. ■

Brian Barnes is chief product officer at Coretek

Casting a wider net with Dynamics 365

Melissa's Greg Brown explains how the firm works with system integrator SharpXRM to ensure organisations across industries have better access to accurate address data

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

How many organisations are using Microsoft Dynamics 365? It's difficult to put a number on it; Microsoft doesn't disclose the number of its customers regularly but if you look at other sources, you can build a picture. As of 2023, which are the latest stats available, over 58,313 global companies were using Dynamics as their enterprise resource planning tool, according to AI platform provider 6Sense. Plus, Microsoft states that 45,000 small and mid-sized businesses use Dynamics 365 Business Central. Combining these figures with the fact that Dynamics generated $5.44 billion in revenue in the year ending June 2023, it's clear that many customers can be reached by integrating tools with the platform.

"There is a wide range of industries that use Dynamics 365 Customer Engagement products," says Greg Brown, vice president of global marketing at Melissa. "Many of them often lack accurate address data in customer service scenarios. Integrating Melissa's address validation technology into Dynamics 365 and its underlying Microsoft Power Platform enables customers to correct previously saved data and implement mechanisms to ensure all incoming addresses are accurate."

To bring this capability to market, Melissa partnered with SharpXRM and integrated its tools into the Dynamics 365 environment. This enables its customers to accelerate time to market, standardise addresses, enhance data accuracy and generate more reliable reporting.

"Accurate address data has a trickle-down effect that improves nearly all aspects of a business's operations," says Brown. "These improvements include enhanced customer engagement through tailored marketing campaigns, full compliance

"Accurate address data has a trickle-down effect that improves nearly all aspects of a business's operations"

with legal requirements and reduced errors in shipping, billing and service delivery, which saves time and resources."

Building on this foundation, Melissa is deepening its collaboration with Microsoft to unlock new opportunities for customers, with SharpXRM playing a key role in integrating enhanced data quality tools into the Dynamics 365 ecosystem.

"We see significant untapped potential in leveraging the breadth and depth of Melissa solutions within the Microsoft Business Application space," says Brown. "As we move forwards, Melissa aims to strengthen our partnership with Microsoft by offering more services within our platform to meet the market's growing demand for accurate and enhanced contact data." ∎

Build a backbone

MATT MORSE: 3CLOUD

Intelligent platforms are the essential foundation for organisations looking to unlock the full potential of AI

For years, software as a service (SaaS) dominated the enterprise landscape. But according to Microsoft chairman and CEO Satya Nadella, the rise of agentic AI could upend that model. In a BG2 podcast, he predicted that AI agents will perform tasks like creating, updating and retrieving data across multiple systems, making backend structures irrelevant and shifting business logic from traditional SaaS apps to the AI tier. The subscription software model is therefore becoming obsolete. As AI agents take over tasks once handled by SaaS, businesses must rethink enterprise technology by embedding intelligence into their core operations. Staying competitive means evolving from software consumers into AI-enabled enterprises that continuously learn, adapt and automate at scale.

To support this shift, businesses need more than just smart tools; they need an intelligent platform that acts as the foundation of an AI-enabled enterprise. As a Microsoft Azure dedicated partner, 3Cloud helps organisations to make that leap. With more than 1,600 Azure engagements and 700 Azure experts, we bring both the technical depth and strategic insight needed to build scalable, secure and future-ready intelligent platforms.

An intelligent platform consolidates the tools, infrastructure and governance models required to operationalise AI effectively. It enables organisations to move beyond siloed pilots and adopt AI as a strategic capability that touches every aspect of the business, from operations and product development to customer experience and decision-making.

Businesses should envision an intelligent platform as constructed from four integrated layers, with each one offering increasing levels of sophistication and AI readiness. First, the foundation begins with a secure and compliant cloud environment. Built on Azure, this layer includes governance and compliance, identity and access management, and real-time monitoring of user activity. For some organisations, this layer alone provides the robust security and manageability they require. The next layer unlocks the value of data. It ensures businesses can access and integrate structured and unstructured data across systems. This is where much of the groundwork for AI begins, as businesses prepare their data estate for intelligent automation.

The third layer is enterprise integration, which connects disparate systems to support real-time communication and efficient workflows. Finally, at the top of the stack are advanced AI
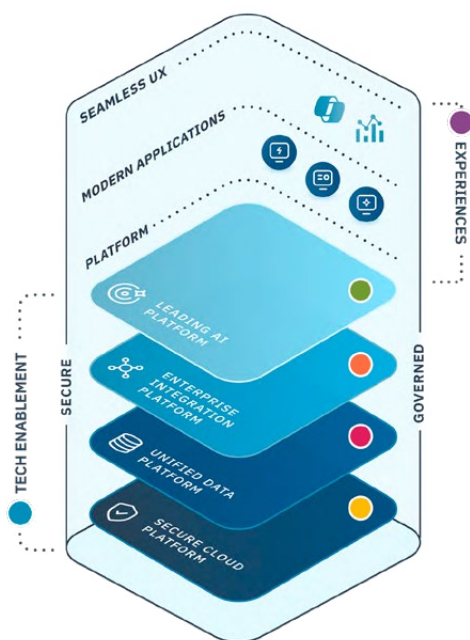
Intelligent platforms are made up from four integrated layers, beginning with a secure cloud platform

capabilities powered by Azure. From predictive analytics and traditional machine learning to generative AI and custom copilots, this layer enables businesses to apply intelligence in highly targeted ways. Whether it's using vision AI at the edge, or embedding generative AI in customer service channels, this is where businesses realise transformative impact.

While AI is undoubtedly revolutionary, its adoption is evolutionary. Integrating AI into core business processes takes time, change management and a thoughtful technology strategy. This slow but steady approach is essential because, despite growing urgency, the path to value is still difficult. According to Boston Consulting Group's *Where's the Value in AI?* report, 74 per cent of companies struggle to scale value from AI initiatives. However, those that succeed – AI-enabled enterprises – are achieving 1.5 times higher revenue growth than their peers. The takeaway is clear: AI pays off, but only for those who get the foundation right.

When it comes to building an intelligent platform, organisations often face a critical decision: whether to build a custom solution or buy an existing one. Building provides more control and flexibility, but it demands significant time, investment and expertise. Buying offers a quicker path to implementation with less maintenance but may involve trade-offs in customisability. 3Cloud works closely with clients to weigh these trade-offs and find the right approach.

We've found that one of the biggest challenges facing organisations is simply knowing where to start. Microsoft's ecosystem is rich with AI capabilities but navigating its tools, services and licensing options can be overwhelming. This is another area where 3Cloud adds value. With deep expertise across the Azure portfolio, we help clients understand what they've already purchased, what they truly need and how best to integrate it all into a cohesive intelligent platform. The result is a technology environment that is aligned with business goals, continuously delivering value and built to adapt as AI capabilities evolve.

"AI pays off, but only for those who get the foundation right"

The shift from traditional SaaS applications to AI-powered agents marks a turning point in enterprise technology. Businesses can no longer afford to treat AI as a bolt-on or a side project. Instead, they must treat it as a core capability, enabled by intelligent platforms that unify cloud, data, integration and AI services into one system. Those who make this transition will be positioned to thrive. Those who don't may find themselves left behind in an AI-driven economy that rewards agility, intelligence and innovation. ◼

Matt Morse is chief operating officer at 3Cloud

Partnering for simpler, smarter growth

SAP's partnership with Microsoft will deliver integrated solutions that empower enterprises of all sizes to simplify operations, boost productivity and unlock the full value of cloud AI

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

Across more than two decades, the digital landscape for businesses has grown exponentially in both size and complexity. In the early wave of enterprise resource planning (ERP) from 1995 to 2005, the integration of core business systems spurred a productivity boom with global output rising by 2.6 per cent annually, according to Jan Gilg, SAP's chief revenue officer for the Americas, who spoke at the firm's annual Sapphire event in June 2025.

But that momentum has slowed. Despite the explosion of software-as-a-service (SaaS) solutions and cloud-based tools, productivity growth between 2005 and 2025 fell to just 1.5 per cent, said Gilg. Why? Because more technology doesn't always mean better outcomes. The abundance of business platforms, solutions and applications has led to fragmentation, especially for small and mid-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often lack the resources to integrate complex IT ecosystems. The result? Broken processes, inefficiencies and missed opportunities with cloud and AI.

"Businesses are leaking value as employees lose close to five working weeks per year and experience cognitive fatigue faster due to disconnected workflows and switching between tools," said Santina Franchi, president of SAP's Corporate and GROW business. "Being able to integrate business processes and personal productivity tools helps users collapse the distance between insight and action, bringing business transformative value."

According to Microsoft, SMEs, the backbone of the global economy, generate over half of national income in high-income countries and account for more than 70 per cent of job growth.

That's why SAP and Microsoft have launched a joint initiative, the SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program with Microsoft Cloud, to help businesses, especially SMEs, move faster and work smarter with cloud and AI. While SAP is better known for serving large enterprises, the company also offers powerful solutions specifically designed to help mid-sized businesses scale with confidence and clarity, and 80 per cent of SAP's customers are SMEs.

At the heart of the new Acceleration Program is a promise to deliver faster time to value by empowering customers to harness the benefits of integrated AI tools like Joule and Microsoft Copilot. It makes it easier for companies to upgrade to cloud-based SAP software by combining SAP's business tools with Microsoft 365, Azure and Copilot. This enables smoother

> "Being able to integrate business processes and personal productivity tools helps users collapse the distance between insight and action"
>
> SANTINA FRANCHI, SAP

data flow between systems so users can access insights from SAP's generative AI solution Joule directly from Microsoft tools like Teams and Outlook.

"The integration between SAP Business Suite and Microsoft Cloud marks a significant milestone in innovation, where agentic AI is transforming the way businesses operate,"

said Ralph Haupter, president of global small, medium enterprises and channel at Microsoft. "Together, we are unlocking unparalleled possibilities for organisations of all sizes to drive efficiency, foster collaboration, and achieve groundbreaking advancements in their digital transformation journey."

The SAP Business Suite Acceleration Program builds on the momentum of earlier milestones including the 2024 integration of SAP Joule and Copilot – and this advancement is already reshaping how SAP customers experience productivity and collaboration.

SAP and Microsoft's shared vision for partner-led growth and innovation lies at the heart of this new initiative. Partners bring deep transformation expertise and industry insights that deliver faster time to value for customers eager to derive measurable business outcomes from their investments. They are more critical than ever to accelerating cloud and AI adoption for lasting customer success.

"At SAP, we are deeply committed to empowering our partner ecosystem through collaboration with Microsoft, our longtime partner," said Karl Fahrbach, chief partner officer of SAP. "By combining forces, we provide partners with proven frameworks, shared resources and scalable tools that address complex challenges. Together, we simplify operations, accelerate digital transformation and unlock new growth opportunities, helping ensure our partners can thrive in a

competitive and ever-evolving landscape."

This collaborative approach is not only enabling partners to deliver more value, but also ensuring customers experience the benefits of seamless integration across both platforms, and it is further strengthened by SAP and Microsoft's expansive partner ecosystem, which plays a crucial role in delivering regional expertise and industry-specific support.

SAP's chief partner officer Karl Fahrbach announced the firm's joint initiative with Microsoft at Sapphire 2025

"We provide partners with proven frameworks, shared resources and scalable tools that address complex challenges"

KARL FAHRBACH, SAP

By embedding AI into everyday tools and workflows, SAP and Microsoft are enabling organisations of all sizes to surface actionable insights and drive smarter decision-making across all areas of business.

The ability to unify data, simplify systems and make AI work in the flow of everyday tasks could be the key to restoring productivity growth. And for SMEs, that shift may be the difference between surviving disruption and building stronger, more resilient operations for the future. ■

Subscription commerce transformed

APOSTOLOS KARAKAXAS: INFITERRA

Infiterra empowers modern IT and telecommunications businesses to transform and grow with clarity, control and confidence

For IT distributors, managed services providers (MSPs) and telecommunication companies, subscription billing and channel operations have become an unsustainable balancing act. From fragmented billing systems and siloed reseller portals to manual quote management and limited visibility, the processes that once worked well are now slowing teams down and holding growth back.

Infiterra, built upon the heritage of the interworks.cloud platform, changes that.

More than a billing platform, Infiterra is a subscription commerce engine designed to address complexity and help modern IT businesses scale. With a unified system that connects operations, finance and partner management, the platform helps businesses eliminate the drag of disconnected tools and move with speed, accuracy and control.

When billing breaks down, margins erode, trust weakens and revenue goes uncollected. For enterprise-grade businesses operating across

markets, currencies and partner tiers, these challenges compound quickly.

Infiterra gets it right – by design. Our platform delivers 99.98 per cent billing accuracy across subscription types, pricing models, usage tiers and billing cycles. From usage-based licenses to bundled telecommunication packages, Infiterra ensures that what gets sold is what gets billed – on time, with zero surprises.

Integrated with your enterprise resource planning, customer relationship management (CRM) and professional services automation systems, the billing process becomes streamlined and precise. That means fewer disputes, faster collections and financial data you can rely on.

Too often, teams are forced to manage subscription commerce across a patchwork of tools; CRM here, pricing over there, provisioning in email and billing in spreadsheets. Infiterra brings it all together.

The platform unifies every critical function – including product catalogue, provisioning, reseller self-service, credit automation and reporting – into one system. With open APIs and native connectors, Infiterra integrates with your current infrastructure and scales with your business, not against it.
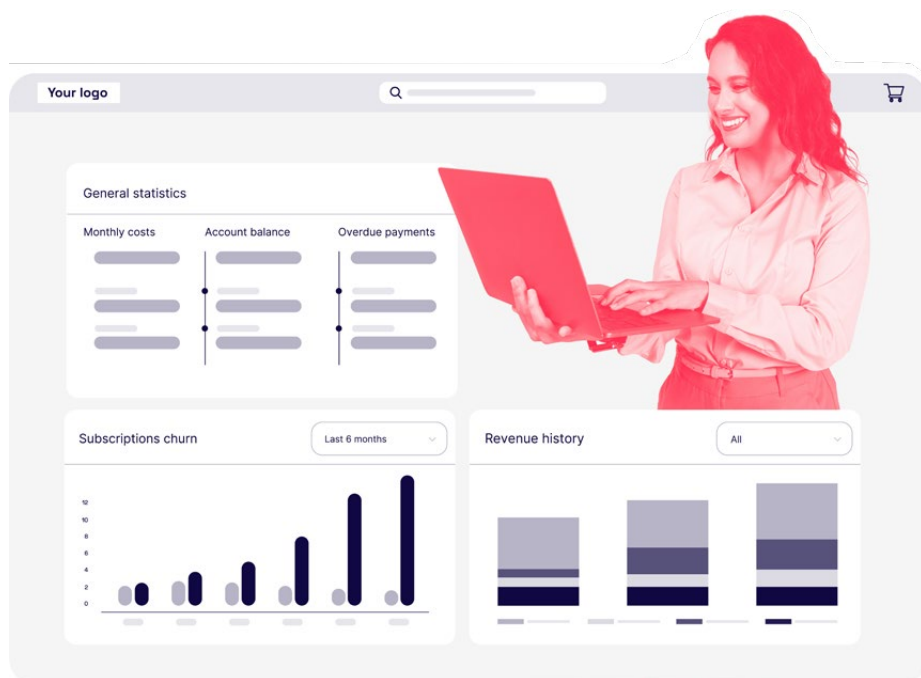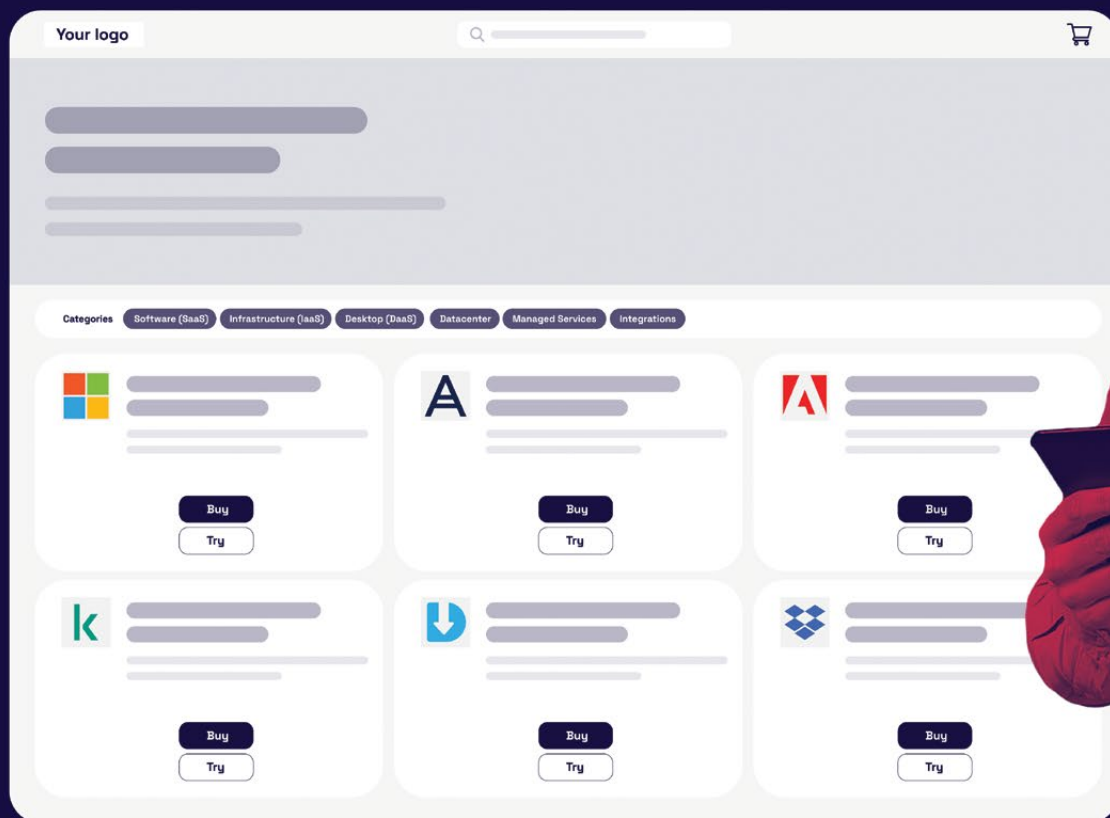
Operations become streamlined. Resellers gain self-service access. Sales cycles accelerate. And your teams regain the time to focus on growth, not troubleshooting.

The market won't wait. Channel leaders are under pressure to launch faster, scale smarter and compete globally. Infiterra is built to support this pace of change.

The platform enables you to roll out new vendors, launch custom

Real-time dashboards give you an insight into reseller behaviour, subscription performance and renewals. Smart alerts help reduce churn and support upsell motions – all while your core systems stay in sync.

Infiterra is more than a subscription commerce platform – it acts as an extension of its customers' teams.

With deep expertise in cloud solution provider programmes

across regions, Infiterra provides hands-on partnership every step of the way. This approach goes beyond technology, delivering the confidence that comes from knowing the platform is built to scale with the business, not stand in its way.

Infiterra is powering the next generation of subscription businesses – built for the needs of modern IT distributors, MSPs, and telcos. From onboarding new resellers in hours to reconciling millions in monthly usage data, the platform is designed to handle the complexity that defines your business.

If your team is tired of wrestling with spreadsheets, chasing down accurate invoices, or waiting on systems that don't talk to each other – Infiterra offers a better path. ■

"Infiterra is powering the next generation of subscription businesses"

bundles, apply flexible pricing strategies and configure partner terms – without long development cycles or IT bottlenecks. Whether you're managing 200 or 200,000 stock keeping units, the experience remains smooth, secure and scalable.

and cloud marketplaces, and a high-touch support model, Infiterra helps IT businesses make transformation achievable and sustainable. Whether migrating from legacy systems, launching new go-to-market strategies, or scaling

Apostolos Karakaxas is chief product officer and co-founder of Infiterra

Evolving e-invoicing

ALEX BAULF: AVALARA

Avalara's E-Invoicing and Live Reporting platform can help businesses navigate the different systems for e-invoicing across the world

For multinational organisations, managing electronic invoicing (e-invoicing) and live-reporting compliance is increasingly complex due to a fragmented regulatory landscape. Similar to how state-level sales tax systems vary, global e-invoicing mandates differ by country and often require businesses to interact with unique governmental systems, platforms and networks, using structured, machine-readable formats.

Countries have adopted a variety of e-invoicing frameworks – ranging from decentralised models using open exchange protocols to centralised, pre-clearance or real-time reporting models that mandate direct submission to local tax authorities.

These differences create significant challenges for international companies whose enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems and financial workflows are not inherently designed to format

"A scalable, cloud-native solution for managing global e-invoicing... is essential"

and transmit invoices per jurisdiction-specific schema or connectivity requirements.

Avalara E-Invoicing and Live Reporting (ELR) provides a unified, API-driven platform to address these challenges. It enables businesses to send and receive e-invoices and report transactions in real time, using a single integration point that abstracts country-specific compliance logic.

The ELR platform also integrates with Avalara for Microsoft Dynamics GP, Avalara for Dynamics 365 Finance and Avalara for Dynamics 365 Business Central. These connectors allow compliance workflows to be embedded directly within their ERP systems, eliminating the need for

custom development or middleware. Customers with these connectors and an ELR subscription can transmit e-invoices, adhering to country-specific requirements from their business system.

A few additional benefits of ELR include end-to-end automation, with invoice generation, validation, formatting, transmission and status handling all occurring within the Dynamics environment. ELR can also simplify exception handling and audit preparation with transaction-level logging and error reporting. Additionally, the platform is designed to handle high volumes of transactions across multiple jurisdictions concurrently. ELR supports Peppol, national platforms and networks (such as SDI in Italy, Chorus Pro in France, and MyInvois in Malaysia), and direct government APIs.

ELR supports real-time transmission of invoice and transaction data to tax authorities, ensuring continuous compliance with digital value-added tax/goods and services tax reporting mandates. This is critical for jurisdictions enforcing continuous transaction controls or requiring near-instantaneous validation of business-to-business invoices. In addition, ELR also supports inbound e-invoicing, receiving and processing purchase invoices from vendors from across networks or direct from tax authority platforms.

While more and more countries globally are implementing mandatory e-invoicing or digital reporting requirements, a scalable, cloud-native solution for managing global e-invoicing and tax reporting requirements through a single, standardised interface is essential. For technical teams, Avalara ELR simplifies system architecture, reduces the compliance surface area, and ensures that ERP-driven invoicing processes remain audit-ready and future-proof as mandates evolve. ∎

Alex Baulf is vice president of e-invoicing at Avalara

The three elements of modern work

BRAD HINTZE: CRESTRON

What's the key to seamless hybrid work? Content, collaboration and control

Modern work comes with many challenges owing to the blend of remote and in-office employees. The new reality requires companies to have more spaces with connectivity, the right unified communications solutions and the ability to achieve meeting equity for everyone.

It's a big undertaking. With employees often splitting their time working in office and at home, demand for everything from intelligent video to bring-your-own-device solutions is growing at a rapid pace. To tackle the problem, we've devised a way to tackle this by splitting it into smaller sets of challenges we can address. From our perspective, the systems that enable modern work – and improve the meeting experience – can be broken down into three distinct parts: content, collaboration and control.

"The right collaboration tools help to keep everyone engaged, maximising productivity"

Content – from the simplest Microsoft PowerPoint presentation to the most elaborate multimedia presentation – is the stuff that fuels communication, decision-making and innovation. The modern workplace demands that employees have intuitive and immediate access to content, regardless of their location or device. This requires organisations to have robust solutions for the effortless creation, sharing and display of that content.

Collaboration is equally crucial. Effective teamwork, whether in-person or remote, requires tools that facilitate communication and project management. Think of a meeting in which half the attendees are remote. Can everyone see and be seen, hear and be heard? The right collaboration tools help to keep everyone engaged, maximising productivity. Solutions like intelligent video, which can frame in-person meeting attendees so remote viewers can see every nonverbal cue, are a huge help in this regard.

Control unifies content and collaboration. When a presenter walks into a meeting space, they shouldn't have to worry about the technology that's going to drive that meeting, from lighting to climate to the elements mentioned above. Intuitive interfaces empower employees to manage technology, personalise workspaces and effortlessly transition between tasks, simplifying complex systems, sometimes with one touch or even no touch at all in a completely automated space.

All three of these categories are complementary but when they're all working in concert, that's when technology shines. The ultimate goal is to ensure this happens in such a seamless, intuitive manner that the technology driving the experience is nearly invisible. That's when you know hybrid work is actually working. ■

Brad Hintze is executive vice president of global marketing at Crestron

I can hear you loud and clear

TYLER TROUTMAN: SHURE

Low-quality audio and poor connections are preventing employees from communicating and collaborating effectively. How can Shure's AV technology help businesses overcome these challenges?

The modern workforce is currently in the age of instant gratification, where the need for seamless communication is more important than ever and the question "can you hear me now?" is the killer of any hybrid meeting.

Poor audio and lost connections can lead to a frustrating cycle that hampers productivity, diminishes collaboration and ultimately affects an organisation's overall bottom line.

The solution to this is investing in modern, high-quality technology for your business. This will not only facilitate reliable performance and remove barriers to clear communication but will also future-proof today's work environment.

One key piece of equipment for any meeting space is an audiovisual (AV) solution that provides equal coverage for every participant on the call so they can all hear, be heard, see and be seen, whether they are there in person or participating remotely. However, not everyone is an AV expert and many of us can struggle when choosing new technology offerings and set-ups. In addition, the right technology needs to be easy to install correctly and use confidently if businesses are to deliver the top-tier collaboration experiences.

To make selecting the right in-room technology easier, Shure offers four curated IntelliMix Room Kits, which are tailored for small, medium and large Microsoft Teams Rooms. Each Teams-certified kit includes a Windows-based compute with Shure IntelliMix Room DSP software pre-installed, a touch

Photo: Shure

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panel, one or two Microflex Advance MXA902 ceiling array microphones and loudspeakers, a Huddly camera (or multiple if opting for the multi-camera kits) and all the necessary connectivity and power accessories.

When developing these kits, we wanted to ensure they could be set up and used as easily as possible, so users can focus on the meeting itself. Therefore, the kits are designed to be ready to deploy, and all accessories auto-configure out of the box for a streamlined set-up experience. IT teams can monitor and manage the systems from anywhere with ShureCloud, Teams Admin Center and Teams Rooms Pro Management Portal.

Having the right AV solution in meeting spaces can not only streamline collaboration but also improve productivity within the workplace.

As the landscape of hybrid workspaces evolves, AI tools like Microsoft 365 Copilot are driving unprecedented advancements in work efficiency. However, the performance of these tools heavily depends on the information they are provided with.

For instance, Copilot in Microsoft Teams leverages the microphone technology in a meeting room to create transcripts, attribute content to speakers, generate summaries and provide real-time action points based on the audio captured. These features allow all participants to fully engage in the conversation and focus less on taking notes; however, the platform requires tight integration with high-quality AV technology to achieve optimal performance.

The Ceiling Arrays included in the Room Kits integrate seamlessly with Shure's onboard IntelliMix Room DSP to enhance speech and remove distracting sounds. This ensures every word is heard clearly and is transcribed accurately with Copilot in Teams.

Creating a positive employee experience is important for any business and employers should not underestimate the benefits the latest technology and AI-powered tools can provide. Removing the communication barriers within your teams will significantly improve the collaborative experience, drive employee motivation and make the frustration of "can you hear me now?" a thing of the past. ■

Tyler Troutman is manager of strategic market development at Shure

Shure's IntelliMix Room Kits facilitate engaging meeting experiences in small, medium and large meeting rooms

Taking a modular approach

As meeting spaces evolve, organisations must deploy technology that adapts to people wherever they work, says Huddly's Knut Helge Teppan

BY AMBER HICKMAN

Hybrid work has become the new normal for organisations around the world, with many employees embracing the ability to work from home when needed to improve their work-life balance.

According to a 2024 report from Cisco, 40 per cent of office interactions now involve remote participants. This flexibility means that an increasing number of virtual meetings are taking place daily, and delivering a positive user experience has become a key concern.

"If you're in a virtual meeting and you can't fully follow the flow of conversation, see people's reactions or understand who is speaking to who, you're not really part of the meeting," says Knut Helge Teppan, chief design officer at Huddly. "Misunderstandings will happen, engagement will drop and people will leave meetings more tired than they should."

According to Teppan, the key to building efficient spaces for virtual meetings lies in deploying modular audiovisual (AV) solutions with components and devices that can be added, removed and repositioned to cater for different rooms and scenarios.

"Having just one vantage point isn't enough anymore," says Teppan. "Meetings are dynamic, and the technology should be too."

Huddly's AI-driven multi-camera system, Huddly Crew, is designed to help organisations build a modular AV system. The kit comes with three cameras (with the option to add more if needed) that use AI to connect with each other and frame meeting participants from multiple angles.

"The cameras collaborate," explains Teppan. "They learn the room layout and participant positions dynamically. This is a foundational part of modularity; not just being able to plug and play but having the system understand what's happening and adapting accordingly."

Audio also plays a significant part in the user experience. In fact, during Huddly's testing processes, users indicated that the video experience felt worse if the audio quality was poor, compared to when AV was strong.

This led to Huddly developing the Huddly C1, a video bar that includes AI-powered microphones and high-quality stereo speakers, all integrated into one device.

"The Huddly C1 is designed to provide everything necessary for a small meeting space so users can set it up and use it efficiently," says Teppan. "However, it's also able to connect with the Huddly Crew and scale up. It's a complete

"Meetings are dynamic and the technology should be too"

Photo: Huddly

solution yet also provides the flexibility our customers need."

While having an efficient AV system can help to improve communication, a modular approach can also bring cost and sustainability benefits for an organisation.

"It's about having a limited number of hardware devices that users can mix and match as needed," says Teppan. "When a company reconfigures a space, they shouldn't have to rip out cabling or buy an entirely new AV setup. With Huddly, you can reposition existing cameras, add new ones and be back up and running in minutes."

Throughout its solution development process, Huddly closely follows evolving Microsoft standards to ensure that its products are fully certified for Microsoft Teams and optimised for use within Teams Rooms.

This evolution plays out in real-world scenarios at The Hive, Microsoft's experimental laboratory for prototyping hybrid work experiences. There, Teams Rooms setups are tested across a variety of room types, from huddle spaces to large, flexible meeting environments.

"We look at the kinds of experiences Microsoft is designing for, then ensure our technology can adapt to those dynamics and elevate the user experience," says Teppan.

In fact, when Microsoft set out to modernise its large meeting spaces at its Redmond campus in Washington, USA, it opted to use the Huddly Crew, citing its scalability, ease of deployment and ability to deliver AI-directed multi-use camera experiences that feel natural to both in-room and remote participants.

"The future of work depends on meeting spaces that are modular, intelligent and human-centric where technology supports presence, participation and equity for everyone," says Teppan.

Teppan believes that meeting spaces will continue to develop into the new social hubs of the modern office.

"For many organisations it's become important to create an atmosphere that fosters collaboration and a social, welcoming environment," he says. "We're seeing a lot of companies experimenting with different types of scenarios and room designs. Aside from the classic small, medium and large meeting rooms, we are seeing soft seating, creative rooms and flexible spaces where things can be moved around and that's where modularity becomes essential." ◼

Find out more about the Huddly C1 at: www.huddly.com/conference-cameras/c1

Organisations can use Huddly's C1 and Crew devices in a variety of different meeting room styles

The flexible future of meetings

As office spaces continue to change and evolve, employees need technology solutions that allow them to meet, collaborate and work effectively

The way we work is continually changing. Hybrid working has become increasingly common over the past few years, with organisations allowing employees to split their time between the office and their homes or other remote locations. However, one thing has remained constant: coworkers must be able to easily collaborate with one another to work productively and effectively, wherever they are located.

Organisations must provide well-designed meeting spaces equipped with video conferencing and unified communication solutions that facilitate meaningful interactions between both office-based and remote coworkers. Yet, many find it challenging to meet the growing demand for these solutions, citing issues with expanding and maintaining network infrastructure, keeping hardware and software up to date, and managing costs across various setups.

"Improving the meeting experience doesn't just benefit workers; ClickShare is designed to make the lives of IT managers easier too"

Barco, which has been developing advanced collaboration solutions for bring-your-own-device (BYOD) workspaces since 2012, can help organisations to bypass these hurdles. Its ClickShare solutions provide the tools they need to create intuitive meeting spaces as easily and cost-effectively as possible, regardless of their pre-existing setup.

ClickShare makes video meetings and content sharing wireless and simple. All the participant has to do is plug the ClickShare button into their laptop, or use the ClickShare app, and they will be connected to the audiovisual equipment in the room and able to start their presentation or meeting within seconds. Users can also opt to enable ConferenceView, which places both people and content in full view on screen, which boosts the feeling of equity between in-room and remote participants and makes meetings more interactive.

In addition, coworkers can use ClickShare to share content from laptops or other devices during in-person meetings, eliminating the need for them to huddle around one small screen. Participants, including external guests, can share this content from any laptop with the ClickShare button or app, so they do not need to find HDMI cables or use sign-in credentials.

Importantly, improving the meeting experience doesn't just benefit workers; ClickShare is designed to make the lives of IT managers easier too. The XMS Cloud Management Platform allows IT staff to maintain, manage and monitor the entire ClickShare fleet and access usage and performance analytics.

Barco drew on the expertise and knowledge it has developed in the BYOD space to debut a new solution for the room systems market in 2025. Designed to support hybrid meetings, the ClickShare Hub modular video conferencing room system has built-in features to enhance productivity and delivers AI-assisted experiences.

The hub is available in two models, both of which include a base unit and a control panel. Organisations with standard meeting spaces can implement ClickShare Hub Core, which offers all the essential features of a video conferencing room system with wireless presentation and has one next-generation ClickShare Button. Meanwhile, organisations with more advanced meeting room setups can deploy ClickShare Hub Pro, which has dual display support,

two next-generation ClickShare Buttons and expanded connectivity options.

ClickShare Hub Pro is the first modular Microsoft Teams Rooms device built on the Microsoft Device Ecosystem Platform (MDEP), Microsoft's Android-based operating system. The MDEP enables device manufacturers like Barco to leverage Microsoft's AI, manageability and security capabilities to build simple, yet innovative, enterprise collaboration solutions that deliver high-quality meeting experiences to every user. Barco, which joined the MDEP programme in June 2024, will continue to collaborate with Microsoft to improve the BYOD and room system experience for organisations around the globe.

Barco also took a multilayered approach to security when developing ClickShare Hub, incorporating both hardware-based attestation powered by Microsoft's key public infrastructure and Secure Boot by Barco.

Today's workplace is evolving quickly, with new room layouts, collaboration styles and complete

office redesigns appearing unexpectedly. That's why organisations need a system built not just for today, but for whatever comes next. Barco's goal is to create a uniform, yet flexible, solution that can be easily adapted, deployed, managed and used by any organisation to deliver high-quality collaboration experiences in meeting spaces of every type and size. ■

Barco's ClickShare solutions are designed to help organisations deliver easy video conferencing, collaboration and presentations

Creating a
more accessible workplace

Microsoft's Jenny Lay-Flurrie explains how organisations can use technologies such as AI, as well as insights from people with disabilities, to create more accessible and supportive workplaces for every individual

BY AMBER HICKMAN

Disability is part of being human, according to the World Health Organization. An estimated 1.3 billion people – about 16 per cent of the global population – currently lives with significant disability, including hearing or visual impairments, mobility issues, limb differences, neurodivergence, or chronic health conditions.

However, only 27 per cent of people with disabilities are currently employed globally, according to the United Nation's *Disability and Development Report 2024*. This can be attributed to multiple reasons: a lack in affordable and effective assistive technology, a shortage of support networks for people with disabilities or an absence of training for workplace inclusivity and accommodations.

According to Jenny Lay-Flurrie, chief accessibility officer at Microsoft, these hurdles have existed for decades.

"There are a multitude of factors that lower the ceiling of what is possible for people with disabilities," she says. "This can prevent individuals from bringing their full, authentic selves to the workplace or pursuing their desired opportunities, whether that's a new job or a promotion, because they're worried about their capabilities or the support they may receive."

Lay-Flurrie, who is deaf and disabled herself, believes embracing accessibility and supporting disabled employees is a "no brainer", and can only benefit an organisation.

"When you do have a key foundation of inclusivity in place and can support disabled people across the spectrum, it changes everything," she explains. "What we've found at Microsoft is that when we empower people with disabilities, it leads to innovation."

In 2015 Microsoft launched the Neurodiversity Program, which offers neurodivergent people the opportunity to apply for a career at Microsoft and showcase their skills in an environment that

"I want every piece of technology to be accessible from the get-go"

Microsoft has committed to empowering users with additional needs since 1995

accommodates their needs, while maintaining equal hiring assessment standards for every candidate. It is one of several efforts to expand access to opportunity and remove barriers for neurodivergent talent.

"One of the biggest things we learned about setting people up for success is that it all comes down to doing the simple things well," says Lay-Flurrie. "For instance, if you're holding a meeting, you should make sure there's an agenda, meeting notes and clear expectations for every participant. This doesn't just benefit people with disabilities, it benefits everyone."

Learning about accessibility and inclusivity is an ongoing journey and new

perspectives emerge continually. Microsoft, for example, has already been on this journey for 30 years and is continually adapting and improving its own operations and policies.

According to Lay-Flurrie, Microsoft's journey can be divided into "three key chapters", starting with the creation of its dedicated accessibility team in 1995.

This chapter was focused on creating technology to empower users with additional needs. The launch of Windows 95 was a major step in the right direction, with features for blind and low vision users, those that are deaf or hard-of-hearing and even neurodiverse people. Many of these features still exist today, such as Sticky Keys which was designed to help individuals with low mobility press multiple keys simultaneously.

The second chapter of Microsoft's accessibility and inclusivity journey started in 2015. "This was when we began to more carefully weave people into the process," says Lay-Flurrie. "So instead of thinking about accessibility as an engineering discipline, we thought about it as an ecosystem.

"I was chair of the employee disability group at

Microsoft by this point, so I could see the talent and expertise right in front of me and how that could be woven into the engineering process."

Thanks to this shift, the insights of employees and customers are now methodically integrated into how Microsoft develops its products and accessibility policies, and it has become a cultural practice with every employee requiring mandatory accessibility training.

The third, and current, chapter of Microsoft's accessibility journey is centred around exploring the potential of AI. One of Microsoft's first major uses of AI for accessibility was to provide descriptive AI, and create the Seeing AI app.

The app was developed in 2017 as part of a hackathon project and now supports blind and low vision individuals around the world with day-to-day tasks such as reading mail, identifying products and describing images using the camera on their mobile devices.

Over the past couple of years, Microsoft's rapid advancements in AI have been used to improve Seeing AI with more accurate image

As chair of Microsoft's employee disability group, Lay-Flurrie ensures employee and customer insights are considered when developing new products and accessibility policies

descriptions, the ability to identify personal objects and generate audio descriptions of moving images. The app also features an Ask Seeing AI chatbot, which allows users to ask questions about the object in view, such as items on a menu.

Generative AI, and Microsoft Copilot in particular, has also had a significant impact on accessibility in the workplace. For example, Copilot in Microsoft Teams is helping deaf and neurodivergent individuals by generating meeting notes and feedback, while Microsoft 365 Copilot is supporting people with daily tasks and workload.

"There are people on my team with muscular dystrophy who tell me they can now create a Microsoft PowerPoint deck in just three clicks, which is helping to reduce their workload and saving them valuable energy," says Lay-Flurrie.

During Microsoft's Ability Summit 2025, viewers saw real-life examples of how Copilot is helping people work across different industries and roles. For example, Cat Susch, principal technical architect at Microsoft,

outlined how she uses Copilot with her hearing aids in Microsoft Teams to generate transcripts quickly to save time. Meanwhile, Dylan Valic, lead marketing director at Spectrum Designs, spoke about how 65 per cent of the organisation's 77 employees are autistic and explained how Copilot helps him to manage different tasks and keep up with the pace of the day.

The assistive power of AI is also being seen with agentic AI, one of the newest tools to spark enterprise transformation. For Lay-Flurrie, joining a Teams call is a multi-click process to ensure that live captioning is turned on, her interpreter is in the right place and her meeting notes are in view. Using an AI agent can reduce this to a single press of a button, saving not only time, but energy too.

At the end of 2024, EY and Microsoft shared the results of a collaborative study that explored the impact of Microsoft 365 Copilot for neurodiverse individuals and people with disabilities in the workplace. The study involved over 300 employees that identify as neurodivergent or disabled from 17 organisations across seven sectors.

The results highlighted that Copilot was having a positive impact, with 91 per cent of respondents considering the tool as a helpful assistive technology. In addition, 85 per cent said Copilot has the potential to create a more accessible workplace and 76 per cent reported using the tool to help them thrive at work.

From left: Microsoft's Julian Duffy, general manager of packaging and content, Jenny Lay-Flurrie, chief accessibility officer, and Melanie Nakagawa, chief sustainability officer, at Microsoft's Ability Summit 2025

Photo: Tobii Dynavox

Tobii Dynavox is one of many Microsoft partners developing assistive technology that supports people with disabilities in the workplace

"We're now seeing companies start to allocate Copilot as an assistive technology and prioritising disabled employees when distributing licences," says Lay-Flurrie. "It's fascinating to see because designating something as an assistive technology is a multiyear process, and many technologies undergo massive amounts of development to reach that point. The fact that Copilot has already reached that status speaks volumes."

When identifying different accessibility use cases it is important for organisations to keep in mind that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to disability, so the accommodations needed will vary from person to person.

Driving progress in accessibility therefore requires collaboration. Microsoft integrates it into the development process for each product, website and tool it creates.

"Regulation is not the goal, because the evolution of technology is moving quicker than that, and so it is important to have the right communities working with us on advisory boards and design springs," says Lay-Flurrie, who gets most feedback from the Disability Answer Desk, which is where individuals can get assistance with accessibility in products across the Microsoft ecosystem.

"Once a product is out in the world, I get over one thousand calls a month from people asking for help, providing feedback and suggesting new features," she says. "It's a methodical process where we embed the insights of disabled people throughout. The goal is to simply deliver breakthrough, accessible experiences that empower everyone."

Microsoft also collaborates with its partner ecosystem to develop products and share knowledge or research. For example, when Microsoft created the Neurodiversity Program in 2015, it did so with the help of SAP, who came to the Microsoft campus and shared the knowledge it gained from launching its own Autism at Work programme in 2012.

In 2017, Microsoft, SAP, EY and JPMorgan Chase collaborated to create the Neurodiversity @ Work Employer Roundtable. The roundtable now includes over 50 employers across 10 industries that are committed to sharing best practices and learnings to provide more opportunities for neurodivergent employees.

There are also a variety of partners developing their own products and solutions that can integrate with the Microsoft ecosystem.

For instance, Tobii Dynavox provides communication solutions for people with cerebral palsy, autism, or any other condition that can cause a communication disability. The organisation has worked with Microsoft for several years, and its TD I-Series is an eye-controlled communication solution built on the Windows platform. The solution also comes

with TD Control, which allows users to control their computer using eye tracking and interact with emails, websites and applications naturally.

Tobii Dynavox has also worked with Microsoft to integrate Microsoft Neural Voice, which is part of Azure AI Speech, into its solutions. This will provide people using its assistive communication devices with more personal speech options.

"It's very important that we have this open ecosystem and that there are always third-party options available as they can often build on our existing offerings and design for more specific use cases," says Lay-Flurrie. "My team at Microsoft is very disability diverse, and the technology we use is vast and varied as everyone comes in with the solutions that works for them."

Developing accessible technology is only one piece of the puzzle, however. There are several other factors involved in creating a welcoming working environment for disabled people.

Firstly, it is important the organisations developing this technology ensure it is affordable, easily available and fits in with the surrounding environment.

"To be disabled is to be human," says Lay-Flurrie. "People should be able to sit next to their peer and use a device that meets their needs, blends in with the technology around them and doesn't make them feel othered."

Secondly, creating an environment where people are trained on inclusivity and provided with the right knowledge, language and etiquette is vital.

"People should feel comfortable to ask for what they need wherever they are in their work career," says Lay-Flurrie. "Employers should be able to listen, engage with and support their employees and do what they can to accommodate an individual's needs. They shouldn't be waiting around for the vital tools they need to be successful."

The long-term vision for Microsoft is to ultimately shift accessibility to the left and build inclusivity into product design from the moment development begins.

"When designing a building nowadays, it's become standard to include features such as ramps, elevators, hearing loop systems and braille signage from the very beginning," says Lay-Flurrie. "Likewise, I want every piece of technology to be accessible from the get-go.

"AI really is the catalyst here and it's going to speed up development and help us to create a world where everything we build is accessible by design. This will not just meet the needs of disabled people but will create innovation for the world. We want to empower every person and every organisation to achieve more, and accessibility is at the core of that." ■

Interpreter view, live captioning and AI-powered meeting summaries are just a few of the accessibility tools available in Microsoft Teams

Photo: Microsoft
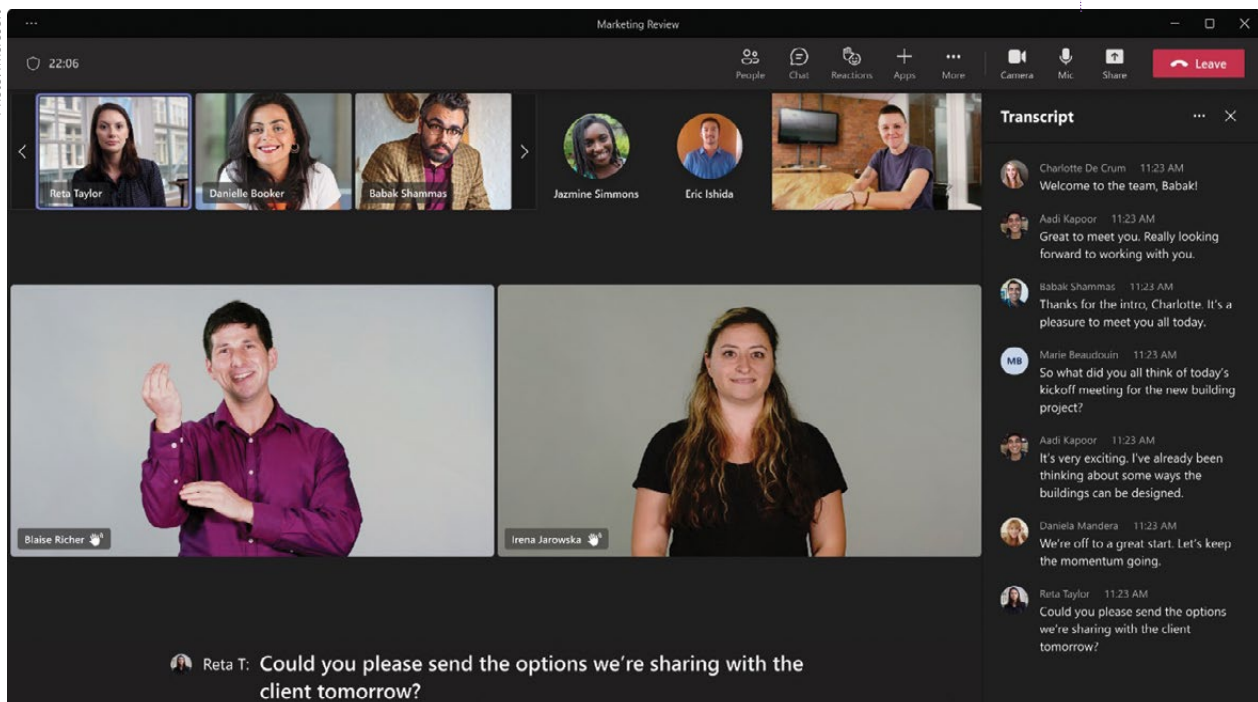
Partner perspectives

We asked selected Microsoft partners how they are embracing accessibility and encouraging a more inclusive workplace through new solutions or initiatives

"We've found that technologies such as intelligent video – a means of automatically framing and tracking meeting collaborators – can help level the field for those with hearing loss. They'll likely find conversations easier to follow when they are presented in this manner, especially when that technology is augmented with live subtitles. Working together, these solutions can deliver a much more inclusive meeting.

That's certainly been true for our own Joe Grassani, a senior email marketing manager with significant hearing loss. 'When I'm in a meeting remotely, I sometimes struggle to follow the flow of the conversation,' says Grassani. 'With this technology, I can pick up on who is speaking, their facial expressions and body language. This is much more difficult in a layout with one camera facing everyone.'"

Brad Hintze
*Executive Vice President,
Global Marketing, Crestron*

Photo: AdobeStock/as-artmedia

"At Coretek, accessibility is a fundamental design principle. Our Microsoft-enhanced solutions are developed with intuitive interfaces, screen reader compatibility and voice-command capabilities to ensure optimal usability for all. By exceeding industry standards, we foster an inclusive environment where diversity of thought and ability promotes robust collaboration and innovation."

Brian Barnes
*Chief Product Officer,
Coretek*

Photo: Pexels/cottonbro studio

"We embrace accessibility as a core part of our culture and operations at Kyndryl and we're committed to creating a workplace that supports our people to thrive in their career adventures. By launching global accessibility guidelines and improving our accommodation process, we foster an environment where everyone can contribute fully. With initiatives such as the global accessibility task force and our expanding digital accessibility training, we're ensuring that accessibility is part of our day-to-day workplace culture at Kyndryl. Our Kyndryl Inclusion Networks, which are our business resource groups, are critical in listening and learning directly from communities, allowing us to create a more accessible future for all."

Karima Bryant
Global Head, Kinship at Kyndryl

Photo: Pexels/Kampus Production

"Our knowledge work automation platform, M-Files, is designed with a user-centric approach, ensuring that our product's user interface is intuitive, accessible and inclusive for all users. We have implemented a unified visual identity across all M-Files products, enhancing accessibility through standardised layouts and familiar interactions with unified buttons, icons, colours and fonts. This design not only promotes ease of navigation but also reduces the learning curve, making our solutions more accessible to users with diverse needs.

Our commitment to accessibility is reflected in our guiding principles of 'Make it Happen, Help Others, and Love Customers'. These principles drive us to continuously improve our products, ensuring that we meet the needs of all our users and employees."

Samppa Lahtinen
Senior Manager, Industry Solutions, M-Files

Something seem off? AI noticed too

Microsoft's Chris Knox and Tyler Pichach explain how AI is enhancing regulatory compliance and enabling greater insight into risk management by empowering workers to confront the growing global risk of financial crime

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

Heather thought she was being cautious. When a helpful bank employee called to warn her of suspicious account activity, she listened carefully. As the caller shared details about her local branch and responded to her concerns with authority, Heather became reassured. What she didn't realise was that this helpful bank employee was in fact a fraudster – someone trained in manipulation and using social engineering tactics to gather her personal data and even record her voice. Before long, they had everything they needed to impersonate her and initiate unauthorised transactions.

Heather's story is one of countless examples of fraudsters accessing personal information and a sobering reminder of how exposed both individuals and institutions are to deception and financial harm. In today's hyper-connected digital world, cybercriminals are using advanced tools to exploit gaps in security and regulation.

There are many other types of scams targeting individuals and businesses alike. Fraud can scale dramatically, such as AI-generated deepfakes impersonating your boss on a video call to trick you into authorising multimillion-dollar company transactions.

"The ready availability of new generative AI tools can make deepfake videos, fictitious voices, and fictitious documents easily and cheaply available to bad actors," writes Deloitte in its *FSI Predictions 2024* report. "For audio deepfakes alone, the technology industry is behind in developing tools to identify fake content."

However, the financial services industry isn't standing still. It too is turning to AI-powered technologies to enhance compliance and risk management, and empower their teams to detect and prevent fraud before it can cause harm.

"AI enhances fraud detection by analysing vast amounts of transaction data to spot suspicious patterns, reducing financial crime risks," says Chris Knox, director of worldwide financial services at Microsoft. "Automation powered by AI streamlines compliance processes, ensuring continuous monitoring of regulatory requirements and minimising human error. In

Image: iStock/ajah-sireenut

an era where cyberthreats are increasingly sophisticated, AI-driven security solutions, such as behavioural analytics and automated incident response, provide financial institutions with the agility and intelligence needed to safeguard their systems. Leveraging AI is not just an advantage – it is essential for regulatory compliance and resilience."

"AI technologies, including machine learning, predictive analytics and now generative AI enables banks to analyse vast amounts of data, identifying patterns and anomalies that may indicate fraudulent activities or money laundering schemes," says Tyler Pichach, head of banking and payments strategy at Microsoft. "For instance, AI can detect unusual transaction patterns, flagging them for further investigation, which helps in early detection and prevention of financial crimes. Moreover, AI-driven systems can continuously learn and adapt to new fraud tactics, making them more effective over time. This dynamic capability allows banks to stay ahead of increasingly sophisticated fraudsters."

Deloitte's *FSI Predictions 2024* report references J.P. Morgan for example, as having incorporated large language models for email compromises and Mastercard's Decision Intelligence tool to predict if a transaction is genuine.

"While AI can manage large volumes of data and identify potential threats with high accuracy, human expertise is essential for interpreting complex cases and making nuanced decisions," says Pichach. "Banks can achieve this balance by implementing a hybrid approach where predictive AI systems handle routine and high-volume tasks, such as initial screening and flagging of suspicious activities.

AI tools, powered by Microsoft, are helping banks to protect against the growing risk of financial crime

"AI enhances fraud detection by analysing vast amounts of transaction data to spot suspicious patterns"

CHRIS KNOX, MICROSOFT

These transactions can then run through generative AI reasoning models like Microsoft Azure OpenAI o3 and o4-mini to refine those that are more likely to be fraud, which can then be passed to human analysts who can focus on complex investigations."

To ensure effective collaboration between AI and human oversight, banks should establish clear rules for when and how human intervention is required.

"Protocols should include setting thresholds for AI-generated alerts that necessitate human review and creating feedback loops where human analysts can provide input to improve AI models," says Pichach. "Additionally, ongoing training and development for human analysts are essential to keep them updated on the latest AI tools and techniques, enabling them to work effectively alongside technology."

As financial criminals develop new tactics, AI is also helping organisations to adapt to emerging threats in real time.

"AI-powered compliance solutions help financial institutions stay ahead of evolving financial crimes by enabling real-time threat detection, adaptive risk management and automated response mechanisms," says Knox. "Machine learning models analyse vast amounts of transaction data to identify suspicious patterns and anomalies that may indicate fraud, money laundering or other illicit activities. Unlike rule-based systems, AI continuously learns from new threats, improving its accuracy over time.

"Natural language processing (NLP) enhances screening processes by analysing unstructured data from various sources, such as news reports and regulatory updates, to identify emerging risks. Additionally, AI-driven automation reduces false positives, enabling compliance teams to focus on genuine threats more efficiently. By leveraging AI, financial institutions can strengthen their compliance frameworks, enhance resilience against financial crime and adapt swiftly to an ever-changing threat landscape."

To take advantage of AI, banks first need to ensure their data is in order.

"Our customers are leveraging AI to unify data for advanced risk calculations, increasing customer acquisition, reducing false positives and ensuring regulatory control management," says Pichach.

Portuguese bank Novobanco used Microsoft Fabric and Quantexa's entity resolution capabilities to unify its siloed data estate.

"Novobanco's obsession with being customer-first is amazing and the idea of using Microsoft Fabric plus the entity resolution capabilities of Quantexa allows Novobanco to have a single platform to build new products and capabilities, create efficiencies and do that at once," says Bill Borden, corporate vice president of worldwide financial services at Microsoft.

The collaboration between Microsoft and Quantexa brings together powerful data integration and advanced analytics, enabling Novobanco to unlock new insights across its banking operations.

"Microsoft Fabric provides this amazing gathering place for data," says Dan Higgins, chief product officer at Quantexa. "When you then bring Quantexa's scalability and accuracy

UBS has customised its own platform on Azure to support client advisors during customer interactions

> "The strategic use of AI can help banks differentiate themselves in a competitive market"
>
> TYLER PICHACH, MICROSOFT

of joining that data, you can drive customer growth, identify behaviours that might be indicative of financial crimes and then drive greater efficiency into the back office. It reduces the cost of inefficient infrastructure, redundant data storage and processing, and unlocks time and capital for further innovation."

The Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), which also struggled to harness information from its vast internal data, has enhanced compliance and efficiency by building a platform on Azure.

"The collaboration between UBS and Microsoft was driven by our need for flexibility and a robust technological roadmap," says Lukasz Opoka, head of analytics and sales platform of wealth management and personal and corporate banking at UBS. "Azure allowed us to customise our platform and significantly enhance our service offerings."

UBS built two domain-specific AI assistants, collectively known as UBS Red. They were developed using Azure AI Search and Azure OpenAI Service to provide support to client advisors during customer interactions.

"The internal information that we have, the financial expertise, the insights into financial markets, what's happening in the world, it's vast," says Michel Neuhaus, head of AI, data and analytics of personal and corporate banking

at UBS. "We have to find ways to make this content easily accessible to each and everyone in the bank, and Microsoft helps us with that."

UBS has digitised approximately 60,000 investment advice and product documents as a knowledge base. With these advancements, UBS is able to deliver AI-driven insights to risk professionals while addressing the complex regulatory landscape of the financial industry.

"Microsoft is helping financial services firms operationalise AI-driven compliance and risk management through secure, scalable solutions like Azure AI," says Knox. "Through partnerships with industry leaders, Microsoft integrates AI into compliance workflows, improving efficiency and accuracy. For example, collaborations with firms like PwC and Moody's leverage AI-powered analytics to enhance regulatory monitoring, operational resilience, and financial crime prevention."

The regulatory landscape evolves quickly. In 2025 alone, financial services firms need to comply to the European Union's Digital Operational Resilience Act, the Financial Stability Board's Format for Incident Reporting Exchange framework, anti-money laundering directives, the EU AI Act, the implementation of Basel 3.1 in the UK, the continuing impact of Markets in Crypto Assets Regulation, and expected updates

Novobanco in Portugal is working with Microsoft and Quantexa to unify its data, which in turn helps its employees to better serve customers

J.P. Morgan is using AI to detect when emails are compromised

to Payment Services Directive 3 and the Payment Services Regulation, to name just a few.

AI is fast becoming a critical tool in helping organisations meet both regulatory expectations and business demands.

"AI plays a critical role in helping financial services firms meet the stringent requirements of regulations by enhancing operational resilience and cybersecurity," says Knox.

"Advanced AI-driven analytics can scan regulatory updates across jurisdictions, identifying relevant changes and assessing their impact on business operations. This allows firms to adapt quickly and ensure ongoing compliance.

"Compliance tools, powered by AI, also streamline reporting by automating data collection, validation and submission, minimising human error and improving efficiency. Machine learning models can predict regulatory trends by analysing historical data and enforcement actions, allowing firms to anticipate changes and implement controls in advance. Additionally, AI-driven risk assessment tools enhance decision-making by continuously monitoring transactions and operational risks. By integrating AI into compliance strategies, financial institutions can not only meet regulatory demands but also build a more agile, future-proof compliance framework. With continuous innovation in responsible AI, cybersecurity and privacy-enhancing technologies, Microsoft empowers financial

services organisations to stay ahead of regulatory shifts, enhance transparency and streamline compliance."

These regulatory innovations are just one part of the broader AI transformation story across financial services.

"AI can enhance risk management by providing real-time insights into market conditions, liquidity risk, credit risk and operational risk," adds Pichach. "This allows banks to make informed decisions about their portfolios, optimise their risk exposure and improve overall financial performance. By demonstrating a proactive approach to risk management and customer service, banks can build trust and loyalty among their customers.

"In addition, generative AI – including AI agents – improves operational efficiency by automating routine processes, freeing up human resources to focus on higher-value activities," says Pichach. "This not only reduces costs but also enhances the customer experience by providing faster and more accurate services. The strategic use of AI can help banks differentiate themselves in a competitive market, fostering long-term customer relationships and driving business growth."

As fraudsters evolve, so too must the defences. With AI at the core of modern compliance and risk management strategies, financial institutions can not only detect and prevent threats more effectively, but also build trust, resilience and long-term value in an increasingly complex digital world. ◼

Partner perspectives

We asked selected Microsoft partners how they are using
Microsoft technology to support financial services organisations
in strengthening risk management and compliance

Image: iStock/Thapana Onphalai

"3Cloud leverages generative AI and intelligent
document processing to accelerate the ingestion
and standardisation of state-specific ACORD
forms, to land quality data into financial services
clients unified data platform within Microsoft
Azure. Advanced models then flag over/under
coverage scenarios and deliver actionable
insights through intuitive agent interfaces.
Agents can quickly identify gaps and potential
risks, protecting both agencies and clients from
unexpected exposures."

John Miroballi
*Vice President, Sales,
Financial Services, 3Cloud*

"Avalara leverages Microsoft
Dynamics 365 and GP integrations
to help organisations automate
electronic invoicing and tax reporting.
Through Avalara E-Invoicing and
Live Reporting, firms can embed
compliance workflows directly in their
enterprise resource planning systems,
enabling real-time invoice validation,
transmission and error handling.
This reduces manual effort, supports
jurisdiction-specific mandates like
continuous transaction controls and
ensures audit readiness, strengthening
risk management and compliance
across global operations."

Alex Baulf
*Vice President, E-Invoicing
and Live Reporting, Avalara*

Brian Barnes
Chief Product Officer, Coretek

"Coretek harnesses Microsoft's secure cloud infrastructure and AI-powered analytics to fortify risk management and regulatory compliance within the financial services sector. Our solutions monitor business critical systems in real time, detect anomalies and automate regulatory reporting processes. By integrating Microsoft Defender, Azure and tailored custom AI services, we enable organisations to safeguard assets, streamline operations and sustain market trust."

"By integrating with Azure's robust security and scalability, GEP provides financial services organisations a unified procurement platform that strengthens data integrity, improves visibility, enforces governance and supports operational resilience across global operations. With AI-powered analytics built on Azure OpenAI Service, organisations can optimise spend management, proactively detect emerging risks, spot compliance gaps and act faster. Our third-party risk management solution further enhances oversight by continuously monitoring supplier risks in real time, crucial to a highly regulated environment. Together, GEP and Microsoft enable financial services firms to reduce exposure and meet regulatory obligations with greater confidence."

Alex Zhong
Global Head, Product Marketing, GEP
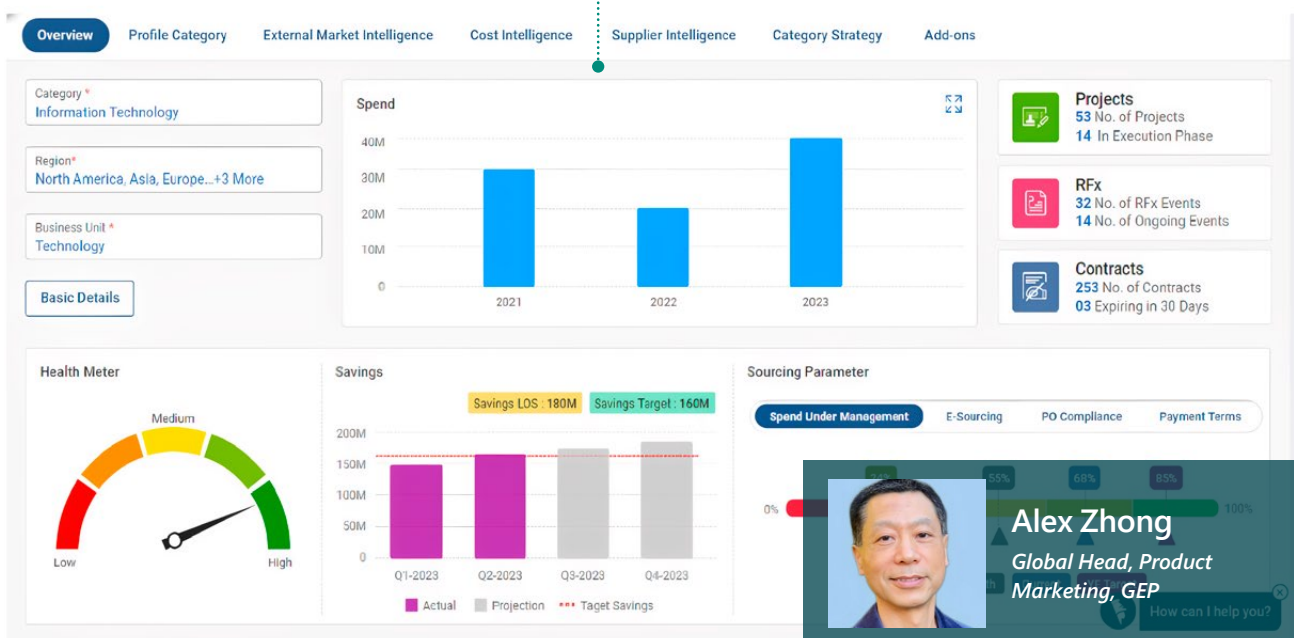
We have an ongoing commitment to meeting the evolving risk and compliance demands of the financial services industry. By leveraging GPT-4o alongside Azure's scalable, secure AI infrastructure to power several generative AI solutions, Moody's combines industry-leading innovation with its expansive data estate to deliver transformative tools across credit assessment, prospecting and growth strategy, reporting, KYC and portfolio monitoring with early warning signals. This purpose-built combination of cutting-edge technology with one of the most extensive and expertly maintained data and insights environments available, empowers decision-makers to with unmatched efficiency and confidence.

Cristina Pieretti
General Manager and Head of Generative AI Solutions, Moody's

"As financial crime evolves in sophistication, traditional siloed approaches to risk management are no longer sufficient. We help organisations see the complete picture by connecting all their scattered data sources. Quantexa transforms fragmented data into a single, trusted view that powers AI-enabled decision-making across fraud detection, anti-money laundering compliance, and sanctions screening.

With increasing regulatory scrutiny on both financial crime and AI deployment, available on Q Assist, institutions require transparent, explainable solutions that ensure compliance while maintaining operational efficiency. This approach enables the organisations we work with to make confident decisions at every level while building resilient defences against evolving threats in today's increasingly complex financial landscape."
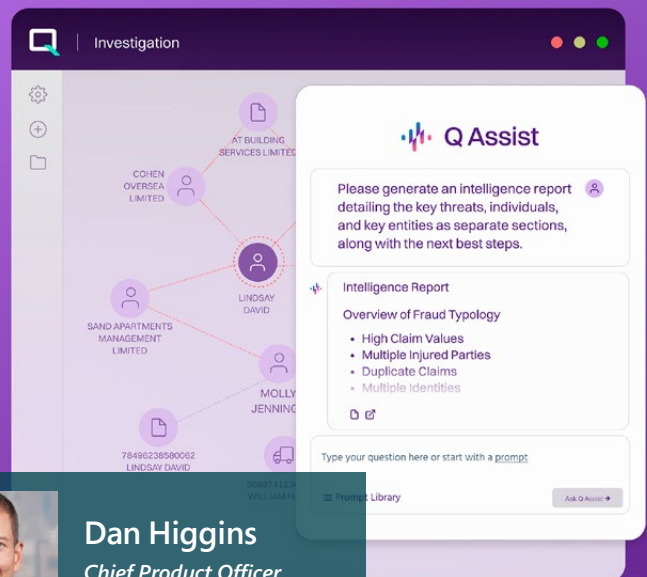
Dan Higgins
Chief Product Officer, Quantexa

Clay Westbay
Vice President, Delivery, Synergy Technical

"Financial services organisations face increasing pressure to manage risk and maintain compliance while delivering secure, efficient services. At Synergy Technical, we leverage Microsoft technologies to support these goals with tailored solutions. Using Microsoft Purview, we help implement data classification, labelling and protection to meet industry regulations and safeguard sensitive data. Microsoft Entra and Defender provide enhanced identity management and threat protection, while Microsoft 365 and Teams enable secure, compliant collaboration. By aligning Microsoft's robust security and compliance capabilities with our clients' specific needs, we empower financial institutions to strengthen risk management and maintain compliance without compromising productivity or customer trust."

From Research Assistant to agentic revolution

Moody's Cristina Pieretti highlights how agentic AI is transforming financial services with intelligent automation and decision-ready insights

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

When OpenAI's CEO Sam Altman tweeted about ChatGPT in November 2022, it sparked a global wave of experimentation with generative AI. For Cristina Pieretti, general manager and head of generative AI solutions at Moody's, it was a call to action.

"We immediately saw the potential," says Pieretti. "We knew generative AI could change how we work, especially in a data-rich, highly regulated environment like financial services."

That insight led to the creation of Moody's Research Assistant, which launched in December 2023. Built on Microsoft Azure OpenAI Service and grounded in Moody's proprietary data, the tool quickly became a game-changer. Thousands of users from over 115 customers across the world adopted it to quickly generate insights and streamline deep financial and thematic analysis, saving up to 30 per cent of their time.

But Research Assistant was just the beginning.

"This product had the fastest adoption rate of anything we have launched before," says Pieretti. "We quickly realised what a big impact generative AI was going to have on everything. We could see the benefits of its natural language capabilities and how it could be applied for many of the things we do both internally and externally. We knew we had to be ahead of the game with this."

Moody's generative AI evolution began with a focus on surfacing insights efficiently. By mid-2023, the team had launched beta trials and customer previews. By the end of that year, Research Assistant was live, offering natural language access to Moody's extensive data estate. In 2024, the platform expanded to include additional data sources such as news, annual reports and earnings transcripts, as well as advanced screening and insights beyond rated entities, eventually covering over 190,000 companies by May 2025.

Yet as adoption grew, so did ambition. "We realised that surfacing information wasn't enough," says Pieretti. "The next step was to automate the entire workflow. That's where agentic AI comes in."

Moody's Agentic Solutions represent a leap forward in AI-driven transformation. These aren't just tools, they're intelligent co-workers. Built on an agentic architecture, they replicate

> "It is better to be the disruptor than the disrupted"

the rigour and sequence of specialised analytical workflows, automating multi-step processes from discovery to delivery.

"Agentic AI is transformational," says Pieretti. "It's not just about saving time, it's about elevating the quality and consistency of decision-making."

Each solution is powered by a coordinated system of domain-specific agents that curate essential data from Moody's data estate, distil complex financial and market data into actionable intelligence, translate analysis into executive-ready narratives and package everything into clear, decision-ready outputs.

Together, these agents automate high-value workflows across credit assessment, portfolio monitoring and sales enablement. Traditionally, building a credit memo could take up to 40 hours. Now, Agentic Solutions can complete the task in a fraction of the time by providing quality consistency and comprehensive analytical depth.

"Agents gather financials, evaluate risk, and generate structured credit assessments with peer comparisons and visual summaries," says Pieretti. "It's consistent, fast and grounded in Moody's data."

For sales and marketing professionals, agents can identify prospects, analyse buying signals and prepare tailored intelligence briefs. For portfolio managers, they provide continuous early warning monitoring, surfacing emerging risks across large counterparty sets.

As efficiency mandates show no sign of easing in financial services, institutions are turning to AI solutions to scale decision-making without overburdening resources. As adoption accelerates, leaders are weighing the transformational possibilities within an environment of non-negotiable precision and the need for reliability and transparency in AI-generated outputs.

Pieretti addresses how grounding innovation in a foundation of curated, decision-grade data is the key to scaling with confidence: "The real potential of AI in financial services isn't unlocked by technological innovation alone – it's realised when outputs are anchored in a curated, expansive intelligence foundation. At Moody's we've grounded our agentic architecture in our data estate – encompassing decades of market, financial and proprietary insights – then include clear, linked sourcing to underpin transparency in every output."

Her advice? Lead the inevitable. "It is better to be the disruptor than the disrupted," says Pieretti.

Generative AI has already begun to change the game. Organisations that have implemented a solid foundation and are scaling with intent are realising real business impact. So, what began as a tweet has evolved into a full-scale transformation at Moody's. From the Research Assistant to today's Agentic Solutions, the journey reflects a bold vision: to empower decision-makers with AI that doesn't just inform, but acts.

"Agentic AI is the future of work," says Pieretti. "It's how we'll do more with less, with greater precision and impact than ever before." ■

Smarter finance

LSEG's Nej D'Jelal and Microsoft's Niall Archibald explain how LSEG and Microsoft's long-term partnership is reshaping productivity for financial institutions, especially with the LSEG Workspace Add-in for Excel and PowerPoint

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

Finance professionals, particularly in banking and wealth management roles, spend most of their days tracking markets and searching for news to understand what's driving price changes. The ability to quickly chart data trends and annotate them with relevant insights is often the foundation of client updates and critical investment decisions.

"A fundamental task is turning company data into a chart to tell a compelling story," says Nej D'Jelal, global head of Workspace and interim co-head of Workflows at LSEG. "To do this, bankers need to incorporate news and understand the context behind data movements. It may sound simple, but it can take hours, or even days, to get right."

However, the LSEG Workspace Add-in for Microsoft Excel and PowerPoint can automate and refine this once time-consuming task, allowing it to be completed within minutes instead. Powered by LSEG's data, Workspace helps financial services professionals quickly find the insights, news and analytics they need, based on their workflow. Available across different devices, it delivers AI-powered recommendations to support market monitoring and decision-making. The new add-in makes it easier for users to turn raw data into charts and slides, complete with insights from trusted news sources.

"One of the prominent banker workflows is to use Excel and an add-in from a data provider to discover, visualise, analyse and action financial data," says D'Jelal. "This is a very important set of tasks, but at the same time, it's very hard to comprehend. We worked with customers to target pain points like this in their workflow experiences. We crystallised how complex and cumbersome it is to collect data, analyse it and prepare the information for a client meeting by transferring data from a spreadsheet

to a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. By reimagining this experience, we can help bankers be more productive by delivering smarter, faster and more confident information to their clients."

LSEG's focus on solving real-world challenges has shaped how LSEG approaches solution development.

"Traditionally, stakeholders drive how solutions are built, but we work with our customers directly to understand the problems they're facing," says D'Jela. "We then build solutions that address those specific challenges, rather than just meeting a set of predefined requirements. This approach leads to more effective, user-focused outcomes."

This collaborative, customer-first approach is central to LSEG's strategic partnership with Microsoft. The teams work together to build specialised financial services solutions directly within the Microsoft tools customers already rely on.

"We have access to Microsoft 365 engineers," explains D'Jelal. "This means we can meet customers where they are in their chosen workflow. That's the anchoring point: our ecosystem offering adapts to whichever platform best fits the customer's needs."

> "Our ecosystem offering adapts to whichever platform best fits customer needs"
>
> NEJ D'JELAL, LSEG

LSEG is playing a crucial role in helping Microsoft to bridge the gap between general productivity tools and the specialised needs of
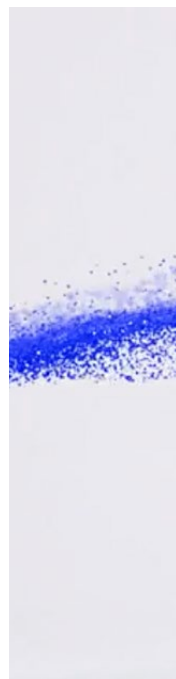
Workspace delivers financial insights, news and analytics – all powered by LSEG data and seamlessly integrated into Microsoft workflows

financial services industry, says Niall Archibald, senior director of financial services at Microsoft: "The LSEG partnership comes back to Microsoft's mission to empower every user and organisation to achieve more. We offer a powerful productivity suite that supports a wide range of users. But we can't tailor to the specific needs of every industry without integrations from partners like LSEG."

For instance, LSEG's Workspace solution has created a more user-friendly experience in Excel and PowerPoint. Now, instead of using a complex method to retrieve data, users can simply use a "dot function", which is a development of the Excel custom data types feature, to pull in LSEG data as easy-to-read entity cards.

"Finance professionals shouldn't have to work in two separate environments – one for

productivity, like organising their day and collaborating with colleagues, and another for carrying out business processes and accessing industry-specific data," says Archibald. "What excites me is how the interoperability between Microsoft 365 and Workspace brings these two solutions together into one seamless experience. It creates a whole new way of working.

"Users can start in Microsoft Teams, discover more data in LSEG Workspace, then seamlessly switch back to their Microsoft environment to conduct analysis and create actionable insights in Microsoft Excel. This reduces operational risk, with less manual transfer of data and content from one application paradigm to another. That's really important in an industry that has very little appetite for error and risk, and has regulatory constraints around that."

Currently, LSEG Workspace Add-in provides M&A data but it will be expanded in future. "This is the very beginning – more datasets will be added to Workspace as part of our partnership with Microsoft to make things even better than they are now," says D'Jelal.

Looking ahead, both executives agree that AI will play a key role in transforming how financial professionals work. D'Jelal believes AI should be seen as an enabler that supports organisations in solving real customer problems and achieving better outcomes. "It's ultimately about facilitating confident, actionable decision-making done more quickly than ever before," he says.

Natural language interfaces, personalised

insights and contextual push notifications are just some of the AI-driving capabilities that will reshape workflows. "AI expands the art of what's possible, but it also changes how we design and build solutions, and what roles are needed to do that," says D'Jelal. "At its core, AI helps accelerate our mission to empower our customers."

Archibald agrees, predicting that LSEG's data and workflows will continue to enrich every layer of Microsoft's comprehensive AI stack. "At the top of the stack is Microsoft Copilot, the UI for AI," he explains. "Underneath that, we've got tools for low-code and professional

> "The LSEG partnership comes back to Microsoft's mission to empower every user and organisation to do more"
>
> NIALL ARCHIBALD, MICROSOFT

developers, data platforms like Microsoft Fabric, and all of it is underpinned by trusted, secure and resilient cloud infrastructure.

"We already have a rich integration of LSEG through this stack, but we now have the opportunity to go even further by embedding AI more deeply across the solutions we offer to financial firms, which will contribute to improving the user experience and result in a better customer experience." ▪

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In collaboration with Microsoft, we are building next-generation data and analytics solutions using innovative technology. Together, we are reshaping the future of global finance.

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LSEG
Make more possible

The future of finance with agentic AI

NILOY SENGUPTA: KYNDRYL

Financial services organisations are preparing for a new era where agentic AI will drive digital transformation and redefine business operations

The financial services sector is often characterised by its rapid pace, wealth of data and demand for high-precision decision-making. The industry has long leveraged technological advancements to enhance efficiency, from early computational models to sophisticated algorithms.

Now, agentic AI is emerging as the latest disruptor for business operations, and it promises a future where intelligent systems operate in partnership with organisations to provide unprecedented autonomy and adaptability.

This technology goes beyond passive data retrieval and traditional automation, and moves towards autonomous, goal-orientated intelligence. Agentic AI systems are defined by their ability to perceive environments, reason through complex situations, create multistep plans and adapt independently to achieve objectives with minimal human supervision.

"Financial institutions that do not embrace Agentic AI risk falling behind competitors"

A vast number of potential use cases for agentic AI have already been identified across the financial services landscape, with key areas including efficiency, productivity and customer experience.

For instance, an increasing number of customers now expect personalised interactions with the services they use. Agentic AI can proactively analyse vast amounts of customer data – including spending patterns, life events and financial goals – to proactively recommend products and services when they are most relevant for the customer. This will not only prompt an increase in conversion rates, but also a reduction in customer support wait times.

The financial sector is inherently exposed to a range of risks such as fraud, which is where agentic AI can also help. Agents can be deployed to continuously monitor transaction patterns in real time, perform continuous credit risk assessments, autonomously monitor financial markets and carry out other tasks.

To successfully transition from the theoretical potential of agentic AI to practical implementation, organisations need to develop a structured, strategic approach. Ideally, the deployment will be carried out in phases to minimise potential risks and observe the return on investment in different areas.

The first three to six months should be the foundation stage where the basic infrastructure is established. Organisations need to align AI initiatives with their overall business strategy, which will help them to maintain a clear vision of their digital transformation rather than deploy technology for the sake of it. During this stage, they will also need to ensure that their data infrastructure is unified, up to date and accessible so the AI model can use it effectively.

In months six to 12, organisations can launch pilot tests to demonstrate the key areas of deployment. Once organisations are in the second year of implementation, they can shift

their focus towards scaling these solutions across the organisation, then concentrate on continuous improvement and innovation for the future.

It is important to note that organisations do not have to take an 'all or nothing' approach; a hybrid approach that blends traditional automation technology and agentic AI is just as effective. In this scenario, the traditional automation can handle predictable, repeatable tasks while agentic AI tackles the more dynamic and complex challenges. This allows for a less disruptive transition.

Regardless of which method an organisation chooses, it is important for them to remember that human oversight remains indispensable throughout the process. AI agents will not take over human activities, but will complement them by taking over some of the repetitive tasks that can be automated through AI-powered decision making. Therefore, employees should maintain oversight of critical AI decisions, especially in a high-risk sector such as financial services. Furthermore, organisations should invest in training and upskilling employees to ensure a seamless collaboration between

humans and machines and prevent employees from feeling displaced.

Organisations should also consider implementing an AI centre of excellence, which will act as a centralised knowledge group that guides and oversees the development of organisation-wide AI projects.

Gartner's October 2024 AI intelligence report states that by 2028, 33 per cent of enterprise software applications will include agentic AI, and 15 per cent of day-to-day work decisions will be made using agentic tools. This implies that financial institutions that do not embrace agentic AI risk falling behind their competitors. Consequently, the integration of agentic AI is not merely an option for organisations in the financial sector, but a strategic imperative for institutions aiming to thrive in a competitive landscape. It's no longer a distant future but a near-term reality that demands proactive engagement. ■

Niloy Sengupta is vice president and chief technology officer of US financial services at Kyndryl

Revolutionising wealth management with automation

YOHAN LOBO: M-FILES

Wealth management firms can unlock new insights and greater efficiency by embracing the power of automation and AI tools

The wealth management industry has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, driven by changing client expectations and powered by advancements in AI and automation. These technologies are not only streamlining operations but also enhancing client interactions and democratising financial advice, revolutionising the sector.

Wealth management firms are expected to fully embrace knowledge work automation platforms that enhance client information management and regulatory compliance by automating back-office processes such as document management

"AI enables wealth managers to offer proactive advice"

and data analysis. This shift will enable wealth managers to focus more on high-touch client interactions and advisory strategy development, significantly reducing the manual workload that currently hinders service and productivity. By enhancing operational workflows, wealth management firms can offer clients more timely and personalised advice while improving cost efficiency across their operations. This means clients will receive better service and more tailored financial guidance, ultimately leading to improved financial outcomes.

One key area where automation will make a significant impact is document management. Wealth management involves handling a vast amount of content, from client records to compliance documents. Automating processes like document classification or regulatory compliance will reduce the time wealth managers spend on non-advisory work, allowing them to dedicate more time to fulfilling clients' needs.

Data analysis is another critical aspect of wealth management that will benefit from automation. By leveraging AI-powered tools, wealth managers can analyse large datasets to identify trends, assess risks and make informed decisions. This capability will enable firms to provide clients with more tailored and timely advice, enhancing their overall experience.

Wealth management firms are also increasingly relying on AI to not just react to client needs but also predict them. By analysing past behaviours, market trends and financial goals, AI enables wealth managers to offer proactive advice on investment opportunities, portfolio adjustments and risk mitigation strategies. This predictive capability empowers advisors to anticipate market changes and advise clients on actions before those shifts occur. As a result, clients can make more informed decisions, potentially increasing their investment returns and

AI tools are enabling wealth managers to enhance workflows and offer more timely advice to their clients
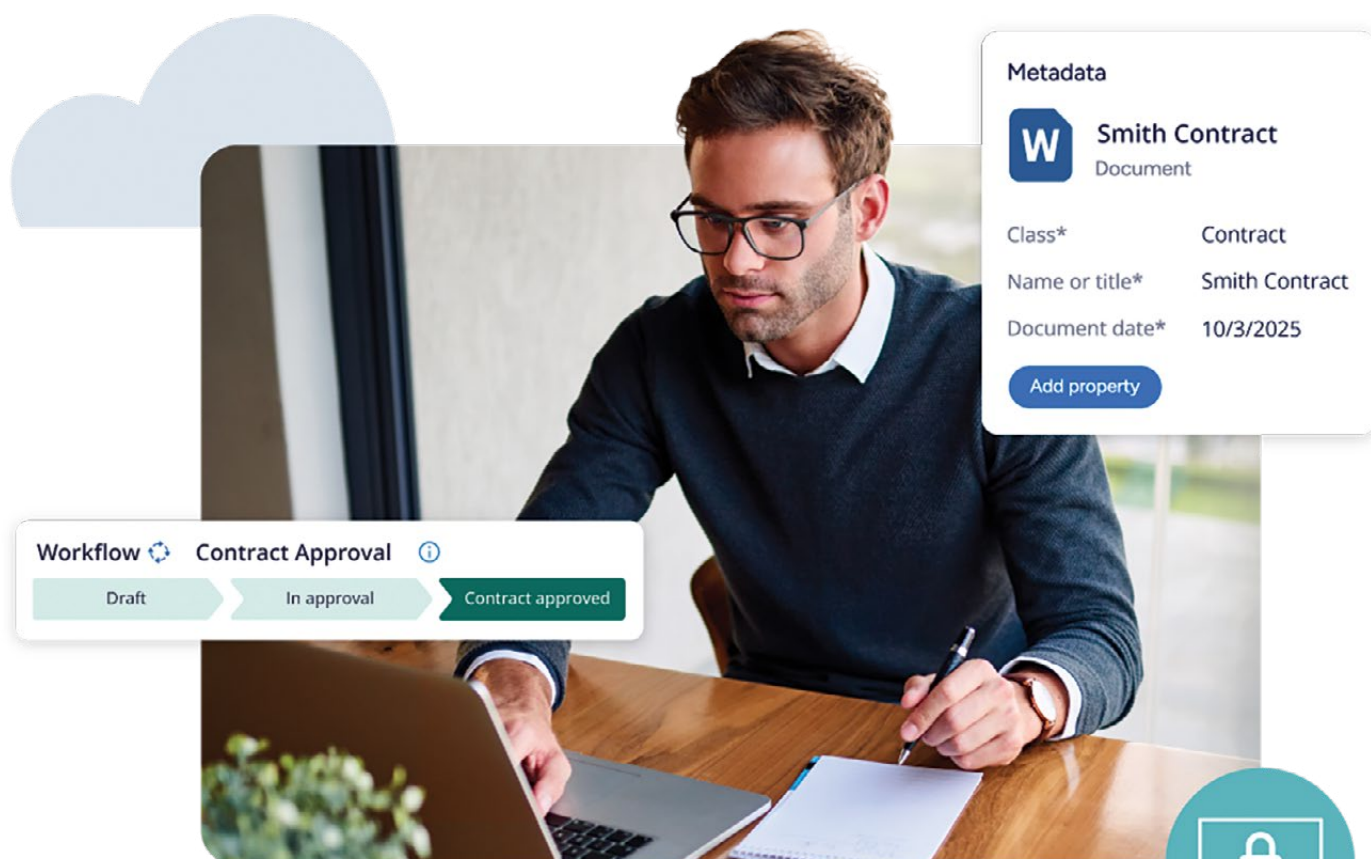
enabling them to achieve their financial goals more effectively.

In addition, AI and automation are making wealth management services more accessible to a broader audience. Traditionally, personalised financial advice was reserved for high-net-worth individuals due to the high costs associated with human advisors. However, AI-driven platforms can provide personalised advice at a fraction of the cost, making these services available to a wider range of clients.

Self-service capabilities are another area where AI is making a significant impact. Clients can now access their financial information, perform transactions and receive advice through user-friendly digital platforms. This level of accessibility empowers clients to take control of their financial futures and make informed decisions without the need for constant advisor intervention.

However, to see these benefits, firms must follow a careful, rigorous process when implementing AI and automation technologies. After the approval of the European Union's AI act – which requires regular incident reporting and testing of 'high-risk' models – it is crucial for AI solutions to be provably safe and reliable.

This level of precision can only be achieved by building on a foundation of accurate and well-structured data. Companies should therefore start their AI journey by organising data across all of their operations, providing a reliable source of information for a generative AI tool to use. In doing so, they will be protecting their customers while also delivering vital work automation that will increase efficiency and streamline processes for employees.

As AI continues to evolve, it will play an increasingly important role in helping wealth management firms deliver superior service and achieve better financial outcomes for their clients. Embracing AI and automation is not just a trend but a necessity for firms looking to stay competitive in the rapidly changing financial landscape. ■

Yohan Lobo is industry solutions manager for financial services at M-Files

Bringing frontline workers to the forefront

Digital and AI tools have the power to reshape frontline operations, says Microsoft's Parag Ladha. He shines a light on several companies, spanning three continents, that have adopted Microsoft's suite of products to make faster decisions, reduce downtime and enhance productivity

BY RICHARD HUMPHREYS

With the manufacturing and industrial sectors seeking greater efficiency, increased agility and resilience, the spotlight is turning to a sector of the workforce that has long been underserved by digital innovation: frontline workers.

"Frontline workers are the heartbeat of operations across industries – they keep factories running, supply chains moving, stores organised and serve as the first touchpoint for customers," says Parag Ladha, director of manufacturing industry marketing at Microsoft. "Equipping them with technology is essential not just for operational success but also to boost engagement and retention in a time of labour shortages and an ageing workforce."

Despite their importance, frontline workers often struggle to access the vital information they need to complete their daily tasks, leading to slow decision-making and negatively impacting productivity. Now, manufacturers and industrials are turning to AI to help them overcome these challenges. Amey, a UK-based engineering firm that manages infrastructure affecting 75 per cent of the UK population, faced this particular challenge. Its mobile workforce found it difficult to retrieve health and safety documentation when needed.

"To solve this, Amey turned to the Microsoft 365 Copilot ecosystem, deploying the SharePoint agent – a powerful AI assistant that puts answers just a chat away," says Ladha. "Now, 99 per cent of Amey's millions of documents are stored in SharePoint and can be accessed via a natural language chat – right from a mobile phone, in any language. This leads to faster decisions, safer workers and fewer delays."
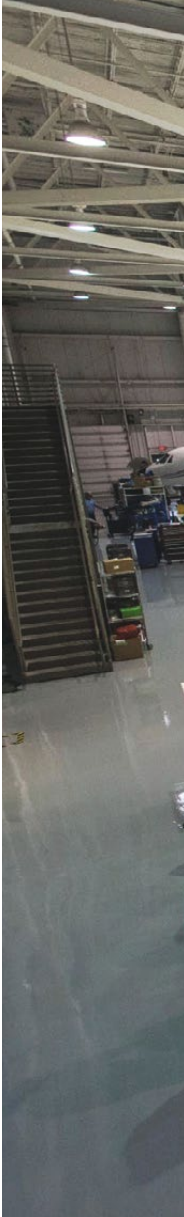
Photo: Textron Aviation

Ladha adds that Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat, an AI-powered assistant designed to enhance productivity by integrating natural language interactions with work data and web resources, is another digital tool that can be transformative for manufacturers: "It offers a unified system of engagement tailored to the needs of frontline workers. Agents in Copilot Chat can automate repetitive tasks, freeing up workers to focus on higher-value activities, encouraging growth and professional development."

Real-world examples continue to show how generative AI and digital tools are reshaping frontline roles.

A February 2025 white paper, *Putting Talent at the Centre*, from the World Economic Forum and McKinsey & Company highlights how Western Digital Storage Technologies (Thailand) revolutionised its frontline operations. Through industrial internet of things, AI-driven predictive maintenance and

touchless process control, the data storage firm boosted frontline worker productivity by 21 per cent and cut diagnostic time from two hours to just 10 seconds – with over 90 per cent accuracy. Nearly half of job roles were redefined, with 37 per cent of employees being upskilled into higher-level positions.

Textron Aviation, a major player in the general aviation industry, has deployed TAMI (Textron Aviation Maintenance Intelligence), an AI assistant built with Microsoft Azure OpenAI Service and Microsoft for Manufacturing. The tool has streamlined access to its 60,000 pages

Textron Aviation has streamlined operations with a new AI assistant built on Microsoft for Manufacturing and Azure OpenAI Service

"Frontline workers are the heartbeat of operations across industries "
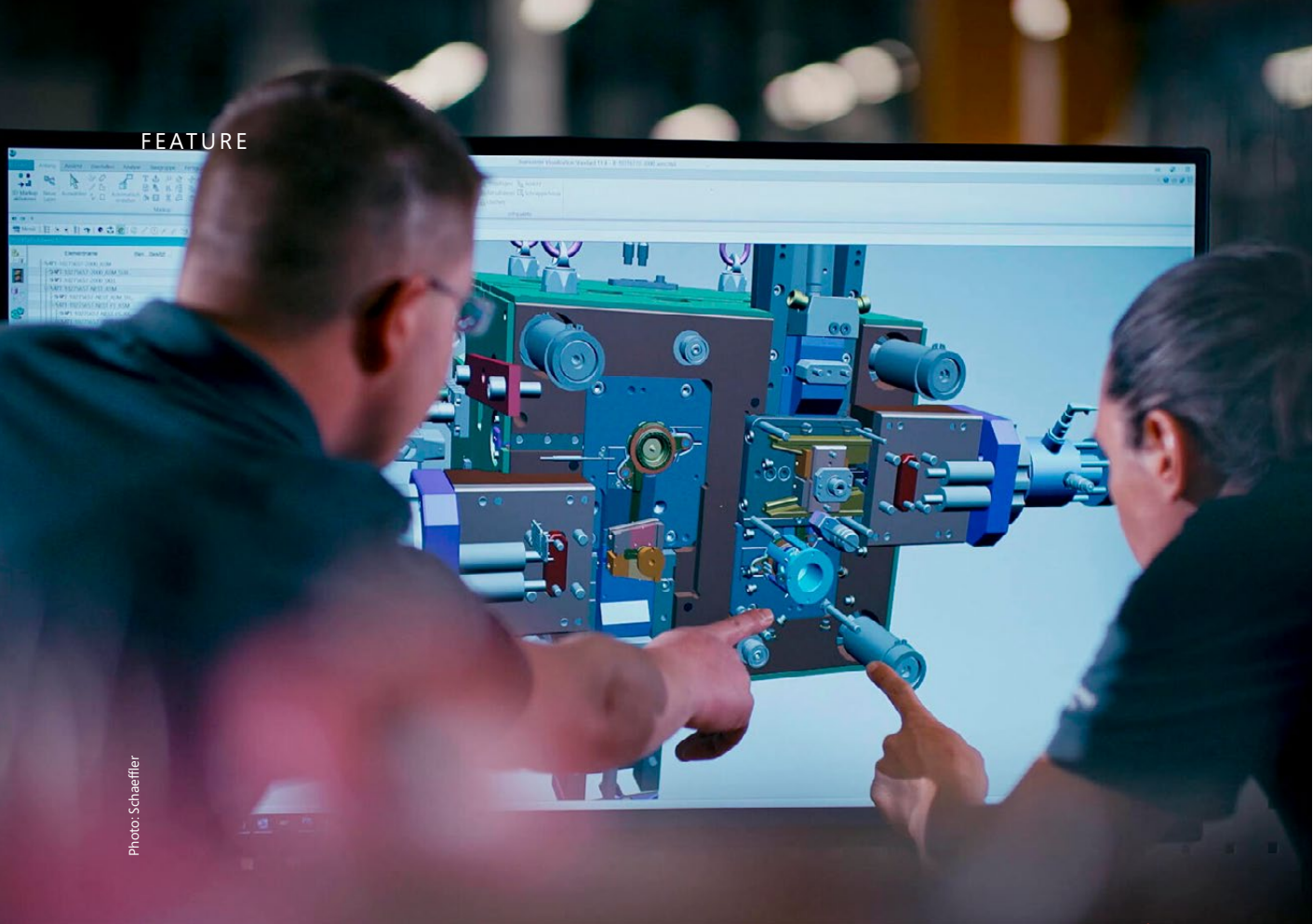
of technical documentation. "Troubleshooting time has dropped from 20 minutes to just one or two minutes, reducing aircraft downtime and improving service efficiency," says Ladha.

Similarly, Schaeffler, a Germany-based automotive and industrial manufacturer, has embraced factory-wide AI agents to empower engineers and plant managers. "Now they can ask questions like, 'What caused downtime on line three yesterday?' and receive immediate, detailed responses," says Ladha. "This real-time insight has significantly increased operational uptime and productivity on the shopfloor. Schaeffler's pilot demonstrated how generative AI empowers factory workers with actionable intelligence in near-real time, making them more agile and self-sufficient when solving problems."

While an increasing number of manufacturing organisations are reporting measurable operational improvements after implementing AI, the majority are yet to equip their frontline workers with these tools. According to Gallup's October 2024 report *AI in the Workplace*, 81 per cent of employees surveyed in production and frontline roles never use AI in their work. This statistic doesn't surprise Ladha. "Many frontline

environments still operate with fragmented systems and paper-based processes, limiting real-time visibility and collaboration," he says. "A major solution lies in leveraging AI-powered digital tools, which not only address challenges like employee engagement by fostering connectivity and empowerment but also enhance operational agility and efficiency through streamlined processes and real-time data-driven insights.

"Security and compliance concerns also hold companies back, especially in regulated industries like manufacturing, healthcare and energy, where mobile device policies and data governance restrict frontline access to critical systems. There's also a disconnect between corporate IT strategies and the practical needs of frontline teams, resulting in low technology adoption or tools that don't integrate with daily operations."

This gap leads to disconnection and disengagement. "It can be challenging for frontline workers to feel connected to the corporate mission or even coworkers on the same shift," explains Ladha. "To solve this, we're evolving our unified platform to make connecting as simple and intuitive as possible"

Role-specific, secure tools like Microsoft

Generative AI has empowered factory workers at Schaeffler with real-time data and insights

Photo: Tulip Interfaces
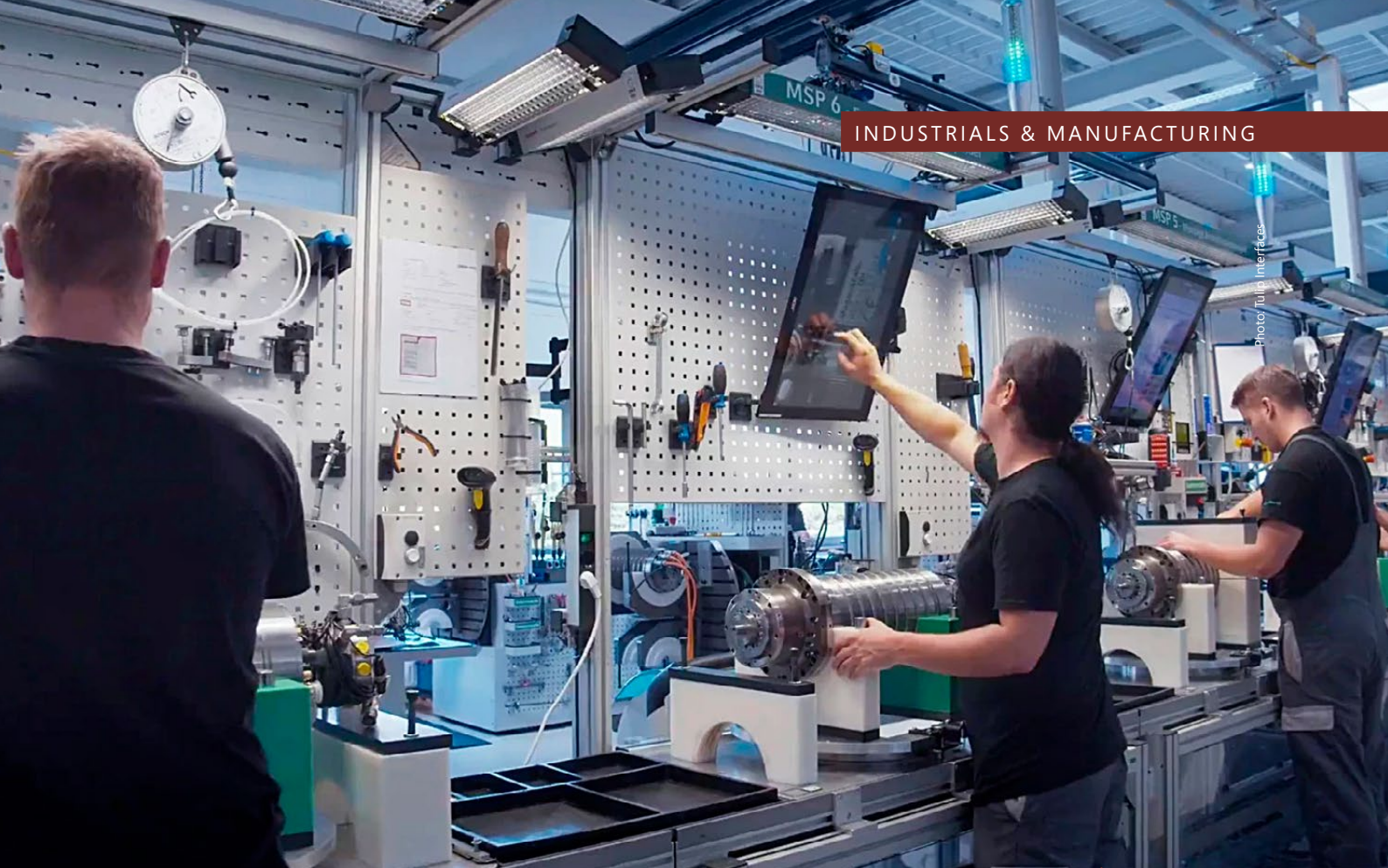
365 F1/F3 (subscription plans designed specifically for frontline workers and include communication, collaboration, and productivity tools) and Copilot Chat are built to overcome these barriers by providing frontline workers with intuitive access to critical data. "They need a wealth of information at their fingertips to make better decisions in the moment, but that information isn't always so easy to find," says Ladha. "Microsoft's role is to provide frontline workers with the right tools to keep data secure, regardless of their role, device type or organisation size."

Microsoft is working with multiple partners to develop AI solutions, two of which are technology companies, Tulip Interfaces and Sight Machine.

Tulip uses Microsoft Azure and Microsoft Fabric to power a no-code platform that digitises shopfloor workflows, connects machinery and provides real-time operator guidance – leading to improved accuracy and reduced downtime. Meanwhile, Sight Machine's Manufacturing Data Platform, integrated with Azure and Fabric, analyses the entire production line as a system. With tools like Factory Copilot, a natural language AI assistant, frontline workers can query production data in

real time, facilitating quicker decision-making and operational efficiency.

For instance, global packaging and protective solutions company Intertape Polymer Group implemented Factory Copilot, achieving a 50 per cent reduction in Sight Machine onboarding time and a 25 per cent increase in weekly system usage.

"These advancements are proof that AI and cloud platforms can transform manufacturing operations and empower workers at scale," says Ladha.

"Microsoft's role is to provide frontline workers with the right tools to keep data secure"

From predictive maintenance and documentation access to real-time diagnostics and decision-making, AI is proving its value on the frontline. The tools exist, but the challenge is adoption. By bridging the digital divide with role-specific tools and secure platforms, manufacturers can unlock the full potential of their frontline workforce and unlock new levels of operational efficiency and agility. ■

DMG Mori, a manufacturer of high-precision machine tools, has integrated Tulip Interfaces' no-code platform to empower frontline workers, streamline processes and enhance operational efficiency

Partner perspectives

We asked selected Microsoft partners how they are using Microsoft Cloud for Manufacturing, Copilot, Microsoft 365 and Dynamics 365 to empower frontline manufacturing workers to be more connected, efficient and effective

"As manufacturers face unprecedented disruptions, frontline workers need instant access to self-serve insights from raw materials to retail if they are to achieve the goals of reducing waste, conserving energy and improving overall responsiveness and sustainability across their plants. AVEVA's market-leading manufacturing execution system (MES) now enables manufacturing teams to leverage hybrid cloud functionality together with on-premises solutions. By breaking down barriers to sharing production data securely and enabling real-time collaboration across the supply chain, AVEVA MES offers full traceability, built-in AI-infused analytics and cloud flexibility. Manufacturers gain the visibility and control needed to deliver quality at scale, cut costs and stay competitive in a connected world."

Sree Hameed
Consumer Products Industry Strategist, AVEVA

"Coretek modernises the manufacturing sector with solutions based on Microsoft Cloud for Manufacturing, Copilot, Microsoft 365 and Dynamics 365. Our integrated systems provide frontline workers with reliable real-time data, streamlined processes and advanced collaboration tools. This interconnected digital framework reduces operational downtime and enhances overall efficiency, enabling manufacturers to meet Industry 4.0 standards."
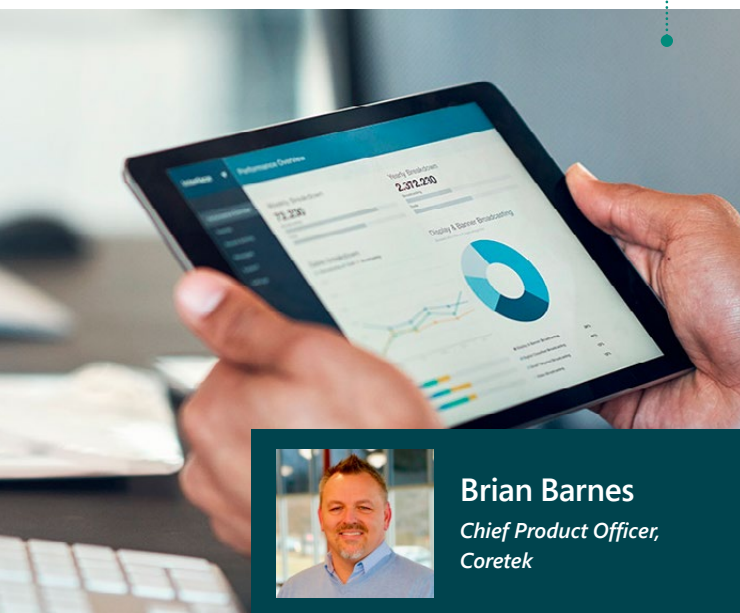
Brian Barnes
Chief Product Officer, Coretek

Julie Pratt
Director of Microsoft Business Development, Cognite

"Cognite and Microsoft Azure for Manufacturing empower frontline workers by unifying IT, engineering, and operational technology data into a single, intuitive experience. Using Cognite Data Fusion as the backbone, our solution enables seamless access to critical operational insights via Microsoft Fabric. This unified data layer expands industrial use cases, improving decision-making and efficiency on the shopfloor. With integrated reporting and visualisation through Microsoft Power BI and Microsoft 365, frontline teams gain real-time, actionable insights. Together, Cognite and Microsoft deliver a 360-degree view of operations – boosting connectivity, collaboration and effectiveness across manufacturing environments."
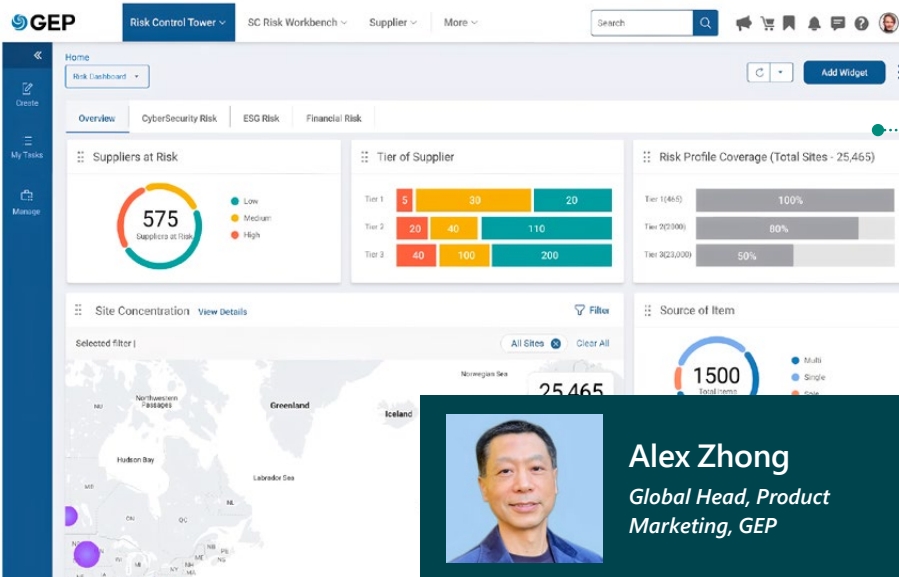
"Integrating GEP with Microsoft's AI-driven solutions enables seamless collaboration between procurement and supply chain organisations, enhancing operational efficiency and empowering frontline manufacturing workers with real-time insights, streamlined workflows and intelligent automation. By working with Microsoft Cloud solutions, GEP offers workers comprehensive visibility and instant access to critical data, simplifying tasks like inventory management and maintenance scheduling, and enabling smarter, faster decisions. This collaboration supports a more connected, efficient and responsive manufacturing environment, aligning with GEP's commitment to driving innovation."

Alex Zhong
Global Head, Product Marketing, GEP

"M-Files creates a holistic view of all relevant enterprise information across systems and data repositories, allowing users to work within Microsoft applications, including Copilot, and access the enterprise information through M-Files.

By providing frontline workers with the best collaboration tools and real-time access to all relevant business data, we enhance their connectivity, efficiency and effectiveness. These solutions streamline operations and improve communication and quality, ultimately driving better business outcomes for manufacturing companies."

Samppa Lahtinen
Senior Manager, Industry Solutions, M-Files

Roey Mechrez
Head of Ecosystem, General Manager for EMEA, Tulip Interfaces
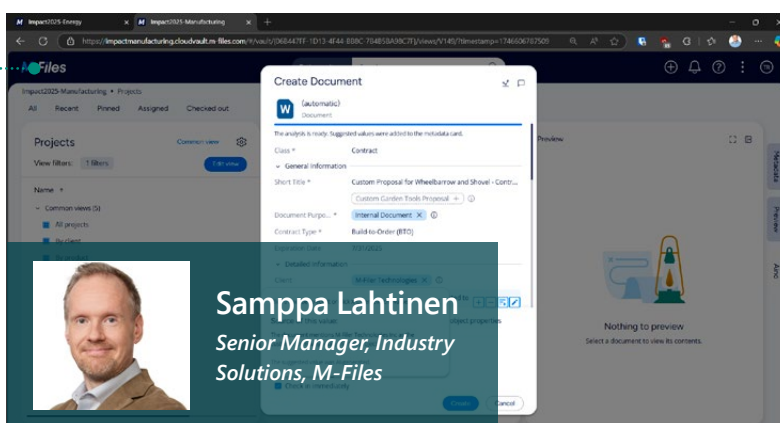
"Tulip Interfaces' no-code platform empowers frontline manufacturing teams by making it easy to build applications for their specific needs. Designed for the realities of the shopfloor, Tulip Interfaces operates within an open ecosystem – customers can readily connect with Microsoft tools like Fabric for advanced data analysis, or integrate with Azure AI services, including Copilot, to provide intelligent guidance directly within worker applications. This flexibility helps manufacturers create a more connected, efficient and effective workforce by combining our operational agility with the power of Microsoft Cloud."

"The Vicinity Software solution is designed for batch manufacturing and seamlessly integrates with Dynamics 365 to keep inventory quantities up to date. Our solution enhances Dynamics 365 with tools that allow distribution personnel to quickly assess order status. We also leverage Dynamics 365's capabilities to import and export data while maintaining persistent connections, ensuring analysis tools can be easily refreshed, empowering frontline workers with real-time insights.

By digitising batch manufacturing operations with Dynamics 365, frontline workers are better equipped to handle increasing production demands, stricter compliance requirements and market expansion."

Jamey Kirsch
Account and Sales Manager, Vicinity Software

New architecture for industrial intelligence

AI will radically change how workers and businesses in the industrials and manufacturing sectors operate, but the technology must be implemented in a structured way to drive success, says Jim Chappell of AVEVA

BY REBECCA GIBSON

Manufacturing organisations integrating AI technology into their operations will gain a significant competitive advantage over those that do not, according to 93 per cent of senior manufacturing AI leaders surveyed in KPMG International's *Intelligent Manufacturing – A BluePrint for creating value through AI Driven transformation* report.

KMPG found that 96 per cent of the respondents recorded operational and efficiency improvements since implementing AI, with a total of 77 per cent saying the technology has had the greatest impact in IT and R&D. In addition, 70 per cent noted significant operational improvements across the value chain once AI has become embedded into core functions. To achieve these benefits, however, manufacturing and industrial organisations must first develop a well-structured AI adoption plan. Jim Chappell, global head of AI and advanced analytics at AVEVA, explains what steps organisations should take to ensure success.

The promise of AI is real, but organisations can only capitalise on it if their data estate is ready. What can they do to prepare to scale up their AI use?
It starts with data hygiene – every time. Companies must get their data in order before investing in AI, which means building a consolidated, accessible and governed data estate. They should ensure information is catalogued and visible within a single pane of glass, so that analytics and machine learning can be confidently applied on top of it.

Businesses should also prepare themselves to be nimble. AI strategy should not be tied to any one model or vendor. New technologies will continue to emerge – generative AI with massive language models, agentic AI, immersive interfaces – and companies require agility to pivot with the times.

Can you tell us what factors are driving the success of enterprise-wide AI initiatives?
The best performing initiatives are powered by three essentials: the right foundation, the right people, and the right mindset. Fundamentally, it's about having structured, governed data and access to multiple platforms which unify operational, customer relationship management and enterprise resource management data. When information is visible in one place, it becomes actionable.

Cross-functional collaboration is also essential. All stakeholders – from frontline operators to data scientists and business leaders – need to be fully engaged. This is because AI adoption isn't just a technical upgrade, it's a cultural shift. Users need to be part of the process design, so the solutions get optimally used in practice to support both workers and business goals.

Finally, innovation must be responsibly managed. Layered safeguards, clear objectives and continuous improvement cycles are non-negotiables.

How are AVEVA and Microsoft working together to empower employees through AI?
At AVEVA, we've always believed AI should augment people – not replace them. Our collaboration with Microsoft strengthens that vision. Through platforms like CONNECT and Microsoft Azure, we're embedding AI into day-to-day workflows in a way that simplifies and streamlines tasks.

Take generative AI as an example. It allows all users to interact with data through natural language. Employees no longer need to be data engineers to get insights, which opens the door for everyone to participate in decision-making.

Agentic AI is the next step in the journey towards task simplification. Microsoft's work with tools like 365 Copilot and GitHub Copilot is inspiring – it has created agents that handle IT tasks, generate reports, or retrieve data across platforms.

We're applying that same thinking to the industrial space. We want to create an asset monitoring agent, a safety

agent and a data hierarchy agent that can all coordinate to resolve a field issue in real time. But the key is human oversight. AI frees teams to focus on innovation, creativity and higher-value contributions.

Can you share an insight into how agentic AI might evolve the traditional software-as-a-service model?
Agentic AI refers to a system of autonomous agents that can work independently or together to perform specific tasks within a defined workflow. Think of it as an ecosystem of intelligent assistants – each focused on one area, such as monitoring, compliance or optimisation – that collectively deliver end-to-end automation.

For example, one agent might forecast equipment failures, another could analyse maintenance logs, and a third may handle spare part orders – all with minimal human intervention but governed oversight. This marks a major shift from passive analytics to proactive decision-making.

In contrast, traditional software-as-a-service (SaaS) offered centralised applications with standardised workflows, often requiring users to adapt their processes to the software. Agentic AI turns that model on its head. It brings a more intuitive, customised face that adapts to

users, not the other way around. Agentic AI is not replacing SaaS, it is evolving it. The next generation of SaaS will be modular, context-aware and integrated with enterprise data.

What pressures will SaaS companies face as agentic AI becomes more mainstream?
The pressure is twofold: personalisation and performance. Firstly, SaaS providers must offer far more tailored, adaptive user experiences or risk becoming obsolete. Users increasingly expect the software to respond in natural language, automate repetitive tasks and learn from behaviour. Static, one-size-fits-all applications just won't cut it.

Secondly, SaaS companies must rethink how they handle data. Agentic AI thrives on clean, accessible, governed data. SaaS platforms must become interoperable with other data environments and adhere to strong governance models. Companies that can't, or won't, evolve in these areas will lag behind their competition. ■

Manufacturing firms can use agentic AI to automate processes and provide workers with the information they need to complete their daily tasks

"AI adoption isn't just a technical upgrade, it's a cultural shift"

Modern meetings with minimal fuss

Crestron's audio and video solutions are future-proofing meeting spaces of all sizes, including those at the new office of a Vietnamese oil and gas manufacturer

PetroVietnam Ca Mau Fertilizer Joint Stock Company (PVCFC), a member of the Vietnam Oil and Gas Group, has a lot of sites and subsidiaries, which means it relies on online meetings to enable seamless collaboration. It was critical for the organisation to meet this demand when it set out to build new office premises.

"As a company that values collaboration, we needed versatile meeting spaces to facilitate seamless communication within our organisation, as well as with our subsidiaries and customers nationwide," says Van Tien Thanh, general director of PVCFC.

PVCFC turned to Dandelion Saigon Group and Crestron to equip 17 collaboration spaces – which vary from small, six-person meeting rooms to a large, 150-person conference room – with high-quality audio and video.

Crestron's DM NVX AV-over-IP technology delivers flexibility, high-quality performance and streamlined management across PVCFC's meeting spaces. Centralised in the server room, the DM NVX platform transmits images directly to the meeting rooms over the network. This approach was key to meeting the aesthetic requirements set by PVCFC as the technology

provides high-resolution video transmission over long distances, eliminating the need for additional equipment in each room and removing extra clutter from wires.

"Crestron's platform stood out for its contemporary design, superior connectivity and synchronisation capabilities compared to other brands," says Vo Chanh Ngu, head of the IT department at PVCFC. "This advanced AV-over-IP setup with Crestron DM NVX meets PVCFC's current needs and prepares us for future growth and innovation, ensuring ongoing satisfaction and operational efficiency."

Crestron AirMedia wireless presentation and conferencing systems, and the Crestron Flex platform are also being used for in-person and hybrid meetings at PVCFC. The user-friendly nature Crestron system has eliminated the need for IT support during meetings, significantly reducing personnel costs for PVCFC.

"Backed by the DM NVX platform, PVCFC perfectly balanced a network-based system and user experience by integrating the right Crestron technology that could achieve what was needed for these meetings while prioritising ease of use and efficiency," says Nguyen Kim Huyen, director at Dandelion Saigon. ■

Vietnamese oil and gas manufacturer PVCFC is better connecting its teams with Crestron audio and video solutions

Sweet success

Vicinity Software's ERP solution has helped Classic Desserts to improve efficiency, save time and meet industry requirements

Classic Desserts is a UK-based manufacturer that creates traditional, luxury and bespoke desserts for the food service sector.

As a British Retail Consortium (BRC) certified food manufacturer, Classic Desserts has to comply with stringent audit requirements, which means it must have a comprehensive and accurate record of operations. However, the organisation's accounting software lacked manufacturing-specific features, which led to complex manual processes for scheduling, inventory tracking and lot tracing. In addition, it also faced significant inventory management challenges, struggled with tracking raw materials and ingredient consumption, and often relied on estimates for supply orders, which led to excess inventory.

To tackle these issues, Classic Desserts adopted VicinityFood, an enterprise resource planning solution designed by Vicinity Software specifically for the food manufacturing industry.

The solution has benefited the organisation in multiple ways. For example, it previously took around four hours and a lot of resources to generate lot traceability reports for BRC audits. Since adopting VicinityFood, it has been able to generate these reports within minutes.

The software also provides the manufacturer with real-time tracking that has reduced working capital investment by 40 per cent and helped to cut down on excess stock and expired goods.

In addition, Classic Desserts was able to replace its manual batch ticket creation process with automated manufacturing resource planning, which saves hours of work each day.

Seeing an opportunity for further growth, Classic Desserts migrated from its previous platform to Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central, which is compatible with VicinityFood. The solution provides the organisation with new features such as advanced accounting, deeper data access and better integration with Microsoft Power BI and barcode scanning.

The combined power of the two solutions has helped Classic Desserts to streamline processes, enhance inventory control and improve batch manufacturing efficiency. The organisation has grown by 80 per cent as a result and is now poised for further expansion, with plans to enhance production scheduling, implement more quality assurance measures and explore new markets. ■

Read the full case study at: bit.ly/3XyjaAS

Classic Desserts has cut down on excess goods and expired stock following adoption of VicinityFood

A new era for the mining industry

Mines of the future will be digitally enabled, automated and centrally controlled, predicts Glenn Kerkhoff of AVEVA

BY REBECCA GIBSON

The mining industry is under pressure to increase critical minerals production to support the global energy transition, while trying to improve productivity and reduce costs. The sector also faces growing environmental and regulatory constraints, as well as a generalised talent shortage.

Amid this landscape, companies are turning to real-time operations data, advanced analytics, production optimisation, predictive maintenance, energy management and automation to boost productivity, reduce risk and attract the next generation of engineering and operations workforce, says Glenn Kerkhoff, global industry principal for mining, metals and minerals at AVEVA.

How is real-time data changing the way mining teams monitor performance and respond to issues on the ground?

Companies that have access to live data with advanced analytics and operational insights will be able to monitor and optimise mobile fleet performance, plant throughput, equipment health and energy consumption to make faster and more informed decisions.

Instead of waiting for end-of-month production reports, management teams and supervisors can see problems as they emerge – such as a shovel underperforming or a mine operating below target – and respond immediately. This shift helps reduce downtime, increase utilisation and productivity, maintain product quality and improve collaboration, while helping operators to meet production targets.

What role do predictive analytics and AI play in modern maintenance strategies across the mining value chain?

Mining operations depend on large, mobile equipment and fixed plants, where minimising unplanned downtime and optimising spare parts inventory is essential for maximising availability, maintaining productivity and ensuring continuous uninterrupted operation.

However, many companies struggle to implement consistent maintenance practices

"Microsoft's and AVEVA's combined solutions work to support more connected, data-driven teams"

across their global operations. Adopting a centralised, digitally integrated approach enables remote oversight and a shift from reactive to predictive maintenance. By monitoring trends in sensor data, teams can detect early warning signs of failure. These analytical models allow operations to plan interventions, extend equipment life and improve safety.

How can firms move from spreadsheet-based reporting to proactive, automated insights?
Organisations can begin this shift by collecting and managing operational data in centralised systems like AVEVA PI System and building automated visualisations with platforms like Microsoft Power BI. This setup enables real-time performance tracking, continuous analytics, standardised key performance indicators (KPIs), and faster problem detection and root cause analysis.

In the mining industry, where decisions are often delayed by data silos and manual reporting, automation transforms reporting from a retrospective task into a continuous improvement tool – informing both site-level and corporate decision makers.

What are the key steps involved in implementing digital dashboards?
For mining operators, dashboards should be designed with simplicity and usability in mind. Visual tools – such as red-yellow-green indicators – help frontline teams quickly interpret asset status or production targets without needing advanced analytics skills.

Mobility is also a key issue. Many supervisors work out in the field and need a mobile platform to keep in touch with equipment health and performance, as well as to track production against target.

Why is workforce buy-in essential for digital transformation, and how can it be cultivated?
Technology will not benefit businesses if it's not being used. This means mining companies should involve management, operators and engineers early in the process through gathering input and requirements, making tailored adjustments and offering clear training.

Beginning with small, focused use cases helps demonstrate value, builds trust and reduces resistance. Aligning digital tools and solutions with real operational problems is important for long-term adoption. Digital access empowers the entire workforce by leveraging data insights to transform operations.

How are mining companies adapting their talent strategies for a more data-driven future?
Mining companies are embracing a hybrid approach; they are upskilling experienced workers who know the processes and equipment, while also hiring new talent skilled

Photo: iStock/Alfio Manciagli

in data science and AI. Existing employees can offer important operational context and experience, while fresh talent can bring in technical know-how and innovative thinking.

What role do Microsoft platforms play in digital transformation across mining operations?
Microsoft's ecosystem is helping mining companies bridge the historic divide between IT and OT. Azure provides the cloud backbone to aggregate vast volumes of operational data, while Power BI turns that data into actionable insights for both the control room and boardroom. Integrated with AVEVA's industrial platforms, these tools enable continuous monitoring of asset health, energy usage and plant performance across multiple sites.

Take Agnico Eagle, the world's third-largest gold producer. Faced with fragmented systems and limited access to critical datasets, the company turned to Azure, Power BI and Databricks to centralise and contextualise its operations data. The result? Streamlined analytics, faster insights and a scalable foundation for AI-enabled decision-making across its global mines network.

Agnico Eagle's integrated operations centres now serve as digital control hubs, supporting proactive responses and vast gains in efficiency, safety, and sustainability. Early pilot results show three per cent efficiency gain in truck performance and cost reductions from improved operator practices and asset health.

Similarly, American copper producer Asarco has completed a major digital transformation, supported by systems integration from Casne Engineering and advanced digital tools from Microsoft and AVEVA.

Historically, all of Asarco's processing plants operated in silos. There was little interdepartmental communication, leading to repeated failures and missed production targets. To address these issues, the company implemented AVEVA PI Vision, AVEVA PI System, and Power BI to gain visibility into real-time plant performance.

Casne, known for its expertise in IT and operational technology integration, infrastructure monitoring and advanced analytics, helped Asarco implement standardised key performance indicator reporting and centralised data pipelines – creating a more responsive and predictive operational model across its mining sites.

The improvements have been immense. Supervisors can act early. Predictive analytics catches major issues before they happen – like identifying a lube pump malfunction through a minor temperature rise.

Microsoft's and AVEVA's combined solutions work to support more connected, data-driven teams. These are essential attributes in geographically dispersed and operationally intense industries like mining. ∎

To learn more, watch the case study webinar at: bit.ly/45vQQ6Y

Where content meets corporate

The smartest media companies are uniting enterprise and creative workflows, according to Microsoft's Simon Crownshaw. With Microsoft as a technology partner, they're gaining clearer insights into their content to drive better storytelling. Maybe other industries should take note

BY ALICE CHAMBERS

Photo: Disney/Unsplash/Surface

Has the media industry landscape become highly fragmented? The sector has undergone rapid transformation in recent years, driven by shifting consumer behaviours, emerging platforms, and evolving production and distribution models. With so many moving parts – from creative workflows to cloud infrastructure and data analytics – many industry stakeholders see the landscape as increasingly complex. But does Microsoft's Simon Crownshaw agree?

Pausing with a thoughtful glint in his eye, Crownshaw lets out a knowing laugh and a smile spreads across his face as he replies "Oh yes", clearly familiar with the complexities behind the question.

Much of this fragmentation is driven by long-standing legacy systems that trap data in siloes, a reluctance to disrupt existing business models and a shortage of in-house expertise to implement and manage the technologies needed for change.

"The media sector is the poster child for amazing experiences and technology," says Crownshaw, worldwide lead for media and entertainment at Microsoft. "We like to pioneer new innovations,

but we don't adopt them very well. Adoption of new technology is poor because workflows have existed for up 25 years and been dealt with in real time. There are also not enough employees with the skills to implement new technology, so media organisations rely on partners to help fund or deliver that innovation. That's why you see Microsoft form great partnerships with media organisations around those very same things."

In fact, decisions made in the next 12-18 months will impact media workflows for the next 10-15 years, according to Devoncroft's white paper *AI Technology in Media*. As the pressure to modernise intensifies, many forward-thinking organisations are turning to partners like Microsoft to lay the groundwork for scalable, cloud-based infrastructure.

One example is Microsoft's five-year partnership with The Walt Disney Studios. Central to this collaboration is StudioLAB, Disney's technology hub which is focused on advancing the future of storytelling. The division is developing new AI-powered

workflows for content creation, production and distribution, all powered by Microsoft Azure.

This kind of innovation depends on a strong foundation. "Successful AI implementations in media require cloud-based technology as cloud environments provide the infrastructure to access and manage data," notes the Devoncroft paper. It's exactly this cloud infrastructure that underpins StudioLAB's use of advanced AI tools.

"As part of our Diseny StudioLAB partnershp, we evalutate a variety of technical innovations," says Crownshaw. "We've used model components to run asset analyses and explore ways to better understand Disney's metadata related to content to enable faster asset search and analysis."

Content Understanding is an AI-powered Azure service that helps extract structure, meaning and insights from unstructured content like text, images, documents and video. It is being designed to help businesses gain real-time insights and manage digital assets more effectively. While the tool shows strong potential, it's currently part of a broader

Media platform providers are using AI to personalise advertisements for shows, such as Doctor Who on Disney+

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Doctor Who also exemplifies how the media industry is embracing more visual, data-driven storytelling to reach larger audiences

experimentation phase with multiple customers around the world.

Microsoft and StudioLAB are also collaborating with media technology provider Avid to demonstrate how high-performance workflows – including collaborative editing, content archiving and backup – can be securely deployed in the cloud. Tools such as Avid MediaCentral, Cloud UX and Media Composer are already helping Disney to streamline its operations.

Expanding on the challenges and opportunities in content marketing and production, Crownshaw highlights how AI-powered tools are accelerating traditionally time-intensive processes.

"Media professionals can use AI to identify which commercials to run without needing to review each one individually," he says. "Plus, the time it takes to produce a movie (typically one to two years) can be influenced by AI-powered rendering tools. For example, while traditional frame rendering can take several minutes per frame, AI-enhancements to such workflows can reduce the time for each frame. Even saving a couple of minutes per frame across thousands of frames could have a meaningful impact on production timelines."

And this is just the beginning – audio and video editing are expected to be among the areas most impacted by AI in the next two to three years, according to Devoncroft. However, media professionals will need to act fast to catch up and adapt if they want to capitalise on the potential of AI. To do so, they can look to other industries that have already overcome similar transformational challenges.

"Other industries have more resources than media to move faster and spin solutions to meet their individual needs," says Crownshaw. "The media industry is fragmented by design but it's important to take a step back and learn from other sectors."

Financial services, for instance, is an industry experienced in managing security at scale, with lessons that media companies can readily apply to rights management.

"From an industry perspective, we don't manage security or rights management as well as we should," admits Crownshaw. "AI can be used as a rights management engine that enables us to make sure we're automating protection of content and controlling who can use it. That means sports leagues, for example, aren't having their content pirated.

"As part of the content creation process, we also need to know who owns the rights to a song or video and who can use it at any given time. However, firms are often using rights engines with poor data, so they aren't sure what they can and can't distribute. This means they take a risk-averse approach and just don't put content out to avoid getting into trouble or giving out royalties. That's why you see more media firms investing in AI to building their own rights engines to deal with those issues."

Crownshaw suggests the media industry could accelerate this progress by learning from how other sectors handle complex, data-driven challenges. "Healthcare manages the storage of personal data amazingly," he says. "The media industry can also learn from telecommunication providers on how to better distribute content through 5G or IP connectivity."

By acknowledging their own operational gaps and becoming more

open to learning from other industries, media firms can improve workflows and operate more cost effectively. Other sectors have much to gain from the media industry's creative and content-driven expertise too, says Crownshaw.

"Media has proved that speed, personalisation and platform agility are not luxuries," he says. "They are the new cost of relevance in the industry – and not just for our sector but for others too. If you can tailor content experiences to millions of individuals, it's incredibly meaningful. Personalisation is key to success. The industry has gone from producing content that just goes to the movie theatre to publishing it on platforms where it can be watched anywhere. However, this has meant that media firms have had to embrace data-driven storytelling and cloud-native production. Many platforms – like Amazon Prime, Disney+ and Netflix – use AI for personalisation to make sure the right content is served to viewers."

In order to provide personalised content experiences at scale, platform providers need to optimise their data by using Azure as a "creative engine room", says Crownshaw. They can also use Microsoft Fabric to bring data into one platform and Copilot to turn that unified data into actionable insights.

"Whether you're a creator or marketer, the ability to generate localised content faster than ever, and by yourself without needing to rely on a vendor, is really powerful," says Crownshaw. "This is enabling the industry to overcome its fragmented history. The understanding of not just what content to make, but also which audiences are going to experience that content, is fundamentally different. Multiplatform publishing is a critical element in the media and entertainment industry. At least 70 per cent of the content from a movie is also being driven by short-form content. Firms use AI to tell different narratives to get the message in front of different customers to achieve goals such as increasing box office sales."

This shift in content strategy is also reshaping who creates media and how it's being used across industries.

"More than 90 per cent of content today doesn't just come from traditional media organisations, it is seen across every industry in one form or another," explains Crownshaw. "The media industry has done really well at taking the elements of creativity where AI and data come

together to demonstrate new types of content. The healthcare sector has followed our lead to create a wealth of video content that explains medical procedures and processes – and there's no reason other industries couldn't do the same to educate, engage and inspire their audiences too."

This evolution in content creation goes hand in hand with a broader shift in how media companies integrate enterprise systems to drive smarter, more connected workflows.

"The smartest media companies don't treat enterprise or media as separate worlds, they unify them," says Crownshaw. "If enterprise systems can connect with content workflows, organisations will be able to truly understand what's going on. They will be able to optimise advert inventory, search for new talent or reduce production costs. If I were to summarise what I've seen over the past six months, it would be that enterprise is not just for those internal decision makers anymore – it is helping to fuel storytelling, audience strategy, personalised experiences and more. When you're in such a competitive industry, every dollar counts, so enterprise systems need to be more integrated with the content workflow." ∎

"The smartest media companies don't treat enterprise or media as separate worlds, they unify them"

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Breaking new frontiers with AI

Governments around the world are facing a myriad of challenges that are overburdening employees and making it difficult for them to deliver high-quality services to the public. Microsoft's Kirk Arthur explains why he believes AI has the power to transform how they operate

BY REBECCA GIBSON

Microsoft 365 Copilot could save every civil servant working for the UK Government almost two weeks per year, according to findings from the 2025 *Microsoft 365 Copilot Experiment: Cross-Government Findings Report*.

During a trial involving 20,000 civil servants between September and December 2024, the government found that each individual using the AI tool to assist with administrative tasks such as drafting documents, updating records and preparing reports saved an average of 26 minutes per day. Over the course of a year, that's nearly two weeks saved per person, as well as significant cost savings. In fact, the UK Government believes it can save £45 billion ($61 billion) by investing in more generative AI technology to automate the delivery of services across the public sector, migrate service processing to cheaper online channels, and reduce fraud and error with digital compliance solutions.

"Generative and agentic AI technology is ideal for empowering employees to work more productively and efficiently, all while cutting costs and improving service delivery," says Kirk Arthur,

> "AI is rewriting the rules of business and driving a seismic shift in the way we work"

worldwide government solutions lead at Microsoft. "Government organisations worldwide are facing geopolitical instability, increasing bureaucracy, economic austerity, staff shortages and many other challenges, so AI is quickly becoming the solution they need to continue delivering high-quality health, social care, law enforcement, transportation and other services to the public."

Governments have many opportunities to automate administrative tasks that staff currently do manually, says Arthur.

"Tasks such as finding information, analysing data, organising Microsoft Teams meetings, transcribing notes and writing emails, presentations, surveys, reports, policy documents, training materials and other pieces of content are essential but tedious, time consuming and difficult for some individuals," says Arthur. "Today, employees spend hours on these tasks, which prevents them from

concentrating on higher-value work that urgently needs their attention. This causes employee dissatisfaction and burnout, and it negatively impacts service delivery and the citizen experience. However, using AI tools like Microsoft Copilot to automate part or all of these tasks is a game-changer."

Employees of Somerset Council in the UK, for instance, are saving an average of 10 hours per week by using Microsoft 365 Copilot for administrative tasks. This has not only boosted productivity and efficiency but has also improved the quality and consistency of employees' work and freed them up to carry out more in-depth tasks. Consequently, the council can now deliver better services to the public, even as it navigates operational challenges from reduced funding and policy changes.

The Australian Government reported similar benefits following a six-month whole-of-government trial of Microsoft 365 Copilot.

Axon's Draft One solution uses AI to transcribe audio from police officers' body-worn cameras into a draft incident report

Participants estimated they saved up to one hour when summarising information, drafting documents or searching for information, with 40 per cent of them saying they were able to reallocate time to higher-value activities like staff engagement and strategic planning. In addition, 40 per cent of managers perceived uplifts in efficiency and quality in their teams.

Government-led organisations elsewhere in the world are using solutions powered by Microsoft Azure OpenAI Service to alleviate the administrative burden on employees. "Many of our partners, such as Axon Enterprise (Axon), Esri and SAS, are embedding capabilities from Azure AI Foundry into their solutions to create new tools and solutions that are transforming how we work," says Arthur.

Axon, for example, has used Azure OpenAI Service to develop Draft One, which automatically transcribes audio from police officers' body-worn cameras and writes a draft incident report within minutes. The AI model is calibrated to strictly follow the audio to prevent embellishments or speculation, but officers are required to edit text in places and must approve the report to ensure accuracy.

According to Axon, most police officers using Draft One have halved the time it takes to write reports, with some agencies recording up to an 67 per cent decrease in time spent on this task. Draft One has also increased job satisfaction and boosted recruitment rates. In addition, in a double-blind study, 24 independent evaluators concluded that reports written with the help of Draft One performed equally well as those written solely by officers in three of five categories, and better in two.

"Law enforcement officers in the USA spend up to 40 per cent of their shifts drafting reports, but using AI to automate the administrative aspects of this work frees them up to carry out higher-impact tasks, such as engaging with the public or conducting investigations," says Arthur.

US-based Microsoft partner Geographic Solutions has used Azure OpenAI Service to develop Virtual OneStop (VOS) Sapphire AI, which rapidly generates high-quality job descriptions, customises interview questions based on applicants' resumes and creates accurate case management notes on prospective candidates. The Georgia Department of Labor adopted VOS Sapphire AI in December 2024 and has since recorded a significant increase in

employee productivity and a 65 per cent rise in the number of AI-generated records.

Applicants can also use VOS Sapphire AI to write resumes and cover letters tailored to specific job openings within minutes, potentially saving them hours of work. It has produced more than 2,300 new resumes and enhanced 3,100 others since it was rolled out in the State of Texas in April 2025. This has led to a 70 per cent upsurge in the number of resumes being submitted, as well as a 74 per cent increase in the quality of these documents across the two US states. "VOS Sapphire AI is making it easier than ever for labour departments to quickly find the right candidates for the available roles, which is getting people into work more quickly and having a positive socioeconomic impact," says Arthur.

Other government-led organisations are capitalising on Azure OpenAI Service to provide self-service chatbots and virtual assistants that can provide 24/7 help to the public. The City of Burlington in Ontario,

"AI is the technology zeitgeist of our era"

Canada, has collaborated with Microsoft partner MNP Digital to develop an assistant that expedites the building permit process to address high housing demand. The MyFiles portal has cut the average time to process permit approvals from 15 weeks to between five and seven weeks, and also enables citizens to easily track the status of their applications.

"AI chatbots can answer questions, provide information and guide the public through application forms to ensure they are completed correctly," says Arthur. "The public no longer need to wait in long phone queues or make in-person appointments to complete tasks like renewing their driving licence or applying for financial aid, which is quicker and more convenient for them. Plus, employees only need to get involved in complex conversations or to review and approve applications, which reduces their workload significantly."

Meanwhile, in Argentina, Buenos Aires City and Pi Data Strategy & Consulting have used Azure OpenAI Service to evolve its existing chatbot, Boti, which manages two million queries per month without human intervention.
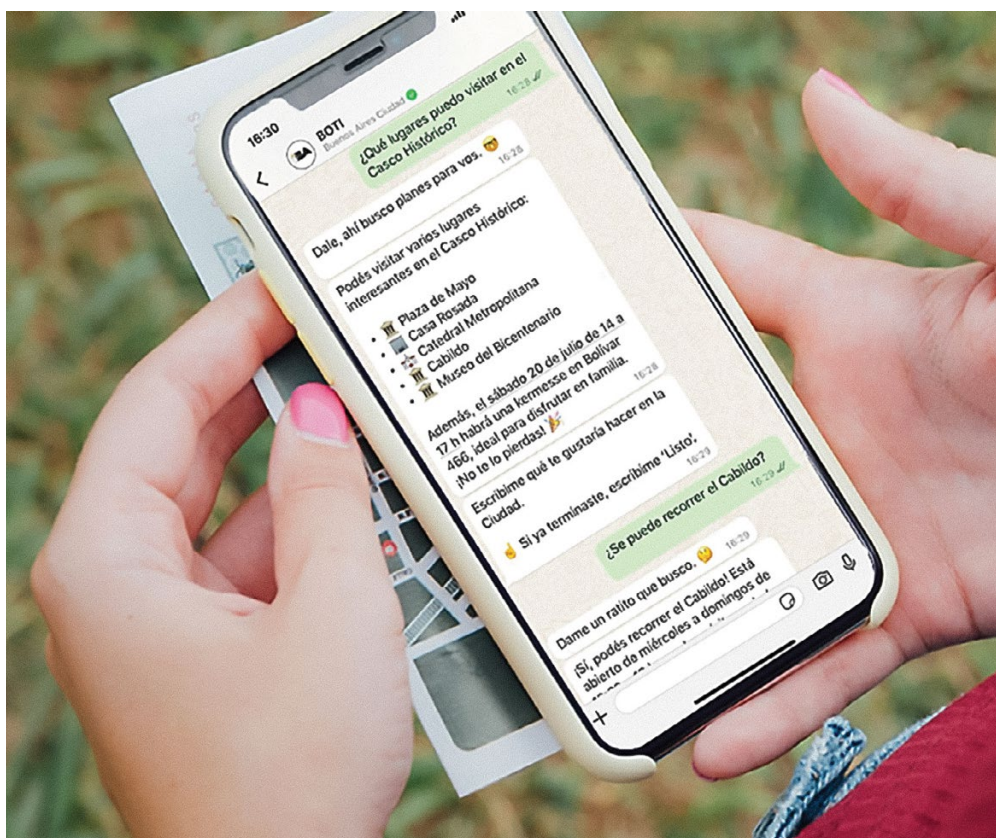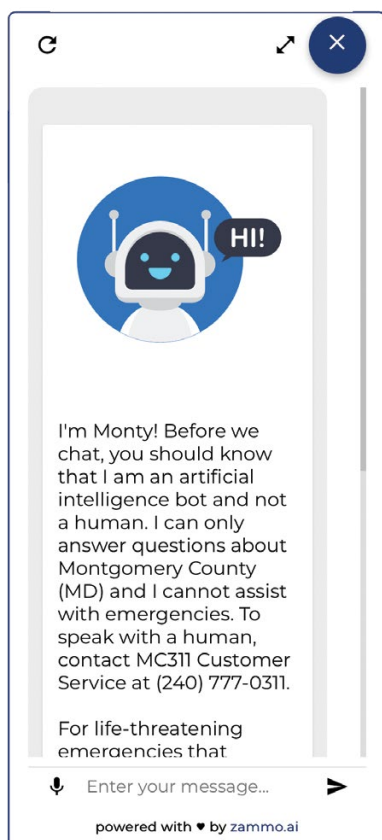
The upgraded Boti with ChatGPT chatbot personalises interactions in real time and can respond in both Spanish and English. To date, it has managed more than 17,000 queries autonomously, which has halved the operational workload for government employees.

Similarly, Montgomery County in Maryland, USA, worked with Microsoft partner Zammo.ai to introduce an AI agent built on Azure OpenAI Service that can conduct multi-turn conversations on more than 3,000 topics in 140 languages. Monty 2.0 also uses Montgomery County's geographic information system to provide personalised responses based on the user's address. Since it launched in late 2024, Monty 2.0 has facilitated more than 20,000 constituent conversations, achieving a 50 per cent customer satisfaction rate and reducing unanswered queries from between 35 and 45 per cent to just 10 to 15 per cent.

"Immigrants or members of the public who don't speak the government's official language fluently are often excluded from accessing the services and support they need," says Arthur. "However, chatbots powered by generative AI can translate both speech and text in real time, so everyone can communicate effectively in their preferred language. This eliminates communication barriers and increases service accessibility and equity."

To reap the benefits of these AI tools, government organisations must carefully plan their adoption strategy. "They can start by defining the business outcomes they would like to achieve and building a dedicated team of internal stakeholders that can develop and implement a strategy for using AI to fulfil these goals," advises Arthur. "Next, they must clean up their existing data and use grounding and retrieval augmented generation to ensure the AI tool can pull real-time data from multiple sources to deliver the most accurate and relevant responses."

Crucially, organisations must set parameters to guarantee the AI tool can only access specific data that aligns to their governance policies to prevent security breaches, adds Arthur. "It's essential to implement robust security measures to safeguard systems and data," he says. "By putting Zero Trust principles at the core of their cybersecurity strategy, organisations can ensure everything is locked down by default, which stops employees from accidentally – or maliciously

The public can use AI-powered chatbots like Montgomery County's Monty 2.0 and Buenos Aires City's Boti with ChatGPT app to get immediate answers to their questions

– creating vulnerabilities that will enable hackers to attack critical systems and steal data."

In addition, organisations should establish clear guidelines to govern how employees interact with data and AI tools. Arthur recommends following the principles and best practices outlined in Microsoft's AI governance framework, Responsible AI Standard and its Secure Future Initiative. "Microsoft is working with AI experts and policymakers around the world to help shape and share effective implementation practices to ensure our customers use AI ethically and compliantly," he says. "We make all of this information available publicly – for example in our online Microsoft Trust Center – to help governmental organisations navigate the ever-changing regulatory landscape and protect their systems, employees and the public. All of Microsoft's AI solutions have been designed following these standards, so they have built-in data security,

governance and sovereignty capabilities to combat ever-evolving threats."

Microsoft is also developing new cloud sovereignty solutions to alleviate organisations' concerns about data security and privacy when introducing AI solutions. In June 2025, for example, it expanded the Microsoft Cloud for Sovereignty with the new Sovereign Public Cloud and Sovereign Private Cloud, which will be available to all European customers in all existing European data centre regions. This will ensure customer data stays in Europe, governed by European Law, with operations, access and encryption controlled by European personnel.

"The Sovereign Private Cloud is designed specifically for governments, critical industries and regulated sectors that need to meet the highest standards of data residency, operational autonomy and disconnected access," says Arthur. "This is just one example of how Microsoft is working to increase digital

The results of a pilot study in the UK suggests civil servants could save two hours per week every year by using Microsoft 365 Copilot to assist with basic administrative tasks

sovereignty for governmental organisations and allay their fears about data protection so they can reap the benefits of AI."

To further alleviate their concerns about the potential misuse of AI, governmental organisations can develop best practices to control how its employees and partners develop, implement and use such tools. Microsoft, for example, follows six key principles when developing its AI technology: inclusiveness, fairness, accountability, transparency, reliability and safety, and privacy and security.

"By following these core values, we can design, build and operate AI solutions that are trustworthy, secure, reliable and deliver accurate, non-biased results that uphold societal and ethical principles," says Arthur. "Organisations should take a similar approach and also develop ethical decision-making frameworks to ensure they retain human oversight over their AI tools and comply with legal, ethical and regulatory requirements."

Training employees how to use AI tools and follow responsible use principles is vital. "Governments can't assume everyone will happily adopt AI solutions or instantly know how to use them," says Arthur. "Instead, they must explain how AI will benefit individuals in their specific role and train them to use it properly, for example by teaching them how to write effective prompts so they get the result they want. This will encourage widespread adoption and ensure organisations maximise their AI investments. We always advocate for humans to be kept in the loop whenever AI is deployed too."

The Public Investment Corporation (PIC), an asset management firm fully owned by the South African government that mainly serves public sector entities, took this approach when it deployed Copilot. The organisation initially rolled out Microsoft 365 Copilot to 50 users, who reported that, on average, they were able to rapidly analyse high volumes of documents to process and approve investment opportunities in six months rather than 12. To drive adoption, PIC built a 'champions' network' and used its knowledge platform, Tech Lounge, to share Copilot insights and success stories from business users. Since then, PIC has experienced a 1,000 per cent surge in demand for Copilot licences.

"Microsoft offers various training courses and resources – such as the Public Sector Center of Expertise and Digital Skills – to help governments teach their employees how to optimise their AI investments," says Arthur.

Microsoft's *2025 Work Trend Index Annual Report* indicates that 80 per cent of the global workforce currently lacks the time or energy to do their jobs, not least because they are interrupted by a meeting, email or notification every two minutes. To overcome this issue, 82 per cent of leaders expect to use digital labour to expand and support their workforce in the next 12 to 18 months, and 46 per cent of organisations are already using agents to fully automate workstreams or business processes. In addition, the report suggests there is a new type of organisation emerging – the Frontier Firm, which is built around intelligence on tap and human-agent teams. Currently, 71 per cent of workers at these firms say that their company is thriving.

"AI is rewriting the rules of business and driving a seismic shift in the way we work," says Arthur. "Many people have used AI in their personal lives and they're excited by what it can do, so they want to use it at work too. If governments don't equip employees with AI tools, they will likely use commercially available AI tools that may unintentionally expose sensitive personally identifiable information – not out of malice, but just because they are trying to do their jobs better. It's incumbent on them to find a way to introduce secure enterprise AI tools to support their employees to work more productively and free them up to focus on the main reason they joined the public sector – making a real difference to the lives of others.

"Digital transformation has been a buzzword for at least the last decade, but the growing number of successful AI implementations worldwide shows the technology is fundamentally altering how organisations operate. AI is the technology zeitgeist of our era. We're not just talking about it in the technology and business worlds; we're seeing it referenced on TV and in movies, talking about it with friends, and using it in our daily lives. Not only is AI boosting employee productivity and satisfaction, but it is also empowering governments to reimagine their processes, develop services that would previously have been impossible and improve the lives of their citizens." ■

Partner perspectives

We asked selected Microsoft partners how they are using Microsoft technology to help government employees boost their productivity, collaborate effectively and deliver high-quality services to the public

"Smart cities thrive on a connected, informed citizenry. In response, infrastructure players are now linking up previously siloed domains to make better use of finite resources for everyone's benefit. By exchanging electricity and water data, for example, both operators gain better situational awareness, enabling them to anticipate and address residents' needs ahead of potential emergency events. AVEVA's Unified Operations Center for Smart Cities consistently improves agility and operational resilience, empowering workers to make rapid decisions in crisis conditions. In the Indian city of Nava Raipur, the solution increased visibility and reduced response times by 60 per cent, in turn reducing waste and improving urban resilience to enhance liveability."

Gary Wong
Global Segment Leader of Power, Utilities and Infrastructure, AVEVA

"We help public safety organisations tackle their biggest challenges. Our newest solution, Axon Assistant, is an AI voice companion built into Axon Body 4 to offer an eyes-up experience and a range of capabilities for officers in the field. For example, Real-Time Translation works with more than 50 languages, helping officers to communicate clearly during traffic stops and calls for service. Policy Chat on mobile, desktop and voice lets officers ask policy questions and get clear, verifiable answers anytime, anywhere. Powered by a range of Microsoft tools, Axon Assistant capabilities let officers stay focused, get quick answers to everyday questions – whether about agencies policies or general knowledge from the internet – and work more efficiently to keep communities safe."

Ran Mokady
General Manager, Axon Assistant, Axon Enterprise

"Coretek leverages Microsoft 365 and Dynamics 365 to develop secure, cloud-based solutions tailored for the public sector. Our technology enhances real-time collaboration, efficient workflow management, and the delivery of high-quality services regardless of location. These digital transformation initiatives not only elevate productivity but also reinforce transparency and accountability in public service delivery."

Brian Barnes
Chief Product Officer, Coretek

"Esri's geographic information system (GIS) technology is implemented by 95 per cent of national governments and 80 per cent of the largest cities worldwide. Spatial analytics is crucial to governments' work, whether they are preparing for and responding to natural disasters, managing critical assets, ensuring effective service delivery, or designing flourishing communities. Delivering world-leading GIS requires world-class geo-enabled cloud infrastructure and business productivity tools. Esri leverages both through our partnership with Microsoft. From Azure to Fabric, Microsoft technology helps to power Esri's government solutions. These capabilities enable leaders worldwide to make better-informed decisions, improve resilience and public safety, and plan more prosperous and sustainable communities."

Christian Carlson
Senior Director, Global Business Development for State, Local and Provincial Government, Esri

"Our collaboration with Microsoft empowers government employees to use both SAS and Microsoft open APIs for seamless integration. Microsoft Graph API, Power Automate and Azure Generative AI complement our own government solutions. Microsoft Teams, Outlook and SharePoint can be integrated into our intelligence solutions for accessibility, increased collaboration and efficiency across departments. SAS Law Enforcement Intelligence, SAS Payment Integrity for Procurement and SAS Tax Compliance all benefit from this collaboration."

Gordon Mullin
Head of Government R&D, SAS

"The Tackling Organised Exploitation (TOEX) programme teamed up with Microsoft solutions partner Simpson Associates to leverage Microsoft Azure to deliver secure, scalable and innovative tools that enhance collaboration and productivity across UK policing.

The TOEX Capabilities Environment saves significant time and money during criminal investigations by enabling direct access to advanced investigative tools, such as translation and transcription applications that utilise Microsoft Cognitive Services. To date, this has resulted in savings of over £16 million for UK police forces and enhanced opportunities across complex investigations.

The TOEX Data Platform integrates local, regional and national datasets, enabling cloud-based analytics and bespoke visualisations to support safeguarding teams and frontline officers to uncover hidden harms and concentrate resources.

These Microsoft-powered solutions support evidence-based decision-making, reduce manual workloads and improve safeguarding outcomes, empowering public sector teams to deliver high-quality and efficient citizen services."

Giles Horwood
CEO, Simpson Associates

Pat Thompson
Detective Inspector and TOEX Technical Lead

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AI: a unifying force for healthcare efficiency

SALLY ANN FRANK: MICROSOFT

Startups are using AI to transform healthcare operations – from automating administrative processes and analysing remote patient data, to streamlining revenue cycle management and simplifying complex claims

Precision and timeliness can be a matter of life or death. That's why the healthcare sector faces the dual challenge of improving operational efficiency while driving down costs. Organisations run on slim margins, increasing their need to use AI to find cost savings and revenue opportunities.

Four startups – Humata Health, Octagos, Outbound.ai and Raapid AI – are all helping healthcare providers and payers overcome these specific challenges. Each company brings a unique approach to using AI and agents for improving efficiency and reducing costs, and together they represent a promising vision for the future of healthcare management.

Humata Health seeks to automate the preauthorisation process for providers and payers, reducing the time spent waiting for approval and ensuring patients receive faster access to necessary treatments. Delivering completely 'touchless' authorisations, clinicians can use Humata Health solutions by simply entering an order for a procedure into an electronic health record (EHR) and receive prior authorisation from payers without any other human intervention.

Humata Health's AI system integrates seamlessly with existing healthcare systems, analysing documentation and payer requirements to generate preauthorisation requests and decisions. This not only enhances efficiency for both providers and payers, but also improves the patient experience, enabling care delivery to proceed without unnecessary delays. By addressing one of the most time-consuming aspects of healthcare administration, Humata Health exemplifies how AI can transform cumbersome processes into streamlined interactions.

Meanwhile, Octagos helps healthcare organisations enhance both operational and financial efficiency. The volume of data generated by remote patient monitoring, such as patients wearing implantable and wearable cardiac devices, has created significant operational and financial strain. Most transmissions are non-actionable, requiring time-consuming manual triage, which adds to the administrative workload and delays clinical care. Octagos addresses this challenge through an AI-powered platform that combines high-accuracy data analysis with expert clinical validation. Its machine learning engine identifies meaningful cardiac events with over 94 per cent accuracy, significantly reducing unnecessary data review. Certified

> "Healthcare organisations run on slim margins, increasing their need to use AI to find cost savings and revenue opportunities"

cardiac specialists then validate the findings, ensuring both clinical efficiency and diagnostic integrity.

For high-risk populations, such as heart failure patients, Octagos enables near-real-time transmission review, supporting proactive care strategies that can prevent hospitalisation and reduce costs. By aligning clinical efficiency with financial sustainability, Octagos exemplifies how targeted AI integration can advance both quality care and cost-effective operations.

Outbound.ai, on the other hand, is on a mission to improve the human work experienced in healthcare. Its AI

Octagos eases the administrative burden of tracking data from wearable medical devices by automating it in an AI-powered platform

agents for revenue cycle management (RCM) transforms how administrative work gets done for healthcare providers. Built on a cloud-based Applied AI platform, Outbound.ai delivers integrated, use-case specific voice AI and integrated workflow software that augment human staff to increase productivity, reduce costs and add scalable capacity.

Outbound.ai's initial suite of AI services is focused on backend RCM, offering pretrained AI agents, software and a powerful applied AI platform that relieves medical billing teams of tedious payer phone calls, portal queries and fax related tasks that typically consume up to two-thirds of their day. With Outbound AI's scalable capacity, customers can dramatically reduce labour cost and dependency, improve staff productivity and increase collections.

In addition, Raapid AI is helping healthcare providers to navigate complex claims processes and ensure compliance with evolving regulations. The startup has emerged as a leader in this domain, offering a solution that harnesses the power of AI to predict, identify and mitigate risks before they can escalate into costly problems.

Raapid AI's platform analyses vast unstructured and structured datasets to uncover patterns and anomalies that may signal areas of concern and opportunity, whether related to care quality gaps, patient safety, claims inaccuracies or compliance risks. By providing actionable insights in real time, it enables healthcare stakeholders to take initiative-taking measures, reducing costly interventions and minimising liabilities.

While each of these startups addresses distinct challenges within the healthcare ecosystem, their shared reliance on AI highlights a common thread: the ability to transform inefficiency into innovation. By applying AI to areas like preauthorisation, remote monitoring, revenue management and risk mitigation, Humata Health, Octagos, Outbound.ai and Raapid AI demonstrate the far-reaching potential of technology to save money and improve outcomes. These solutions don't just benefit healthcare providers and payers – they serve patients, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively and care is delivered promptly. ■

Sally Ann Frank is global lead for health and life sciences at Microsoft for Startups

Driving operational excellence in times of uncertainty

Global retailers and consumer goods organisations are operating in turbulent times that have made supply chain disruptions the new norm. Those who develop an agile, AI-powered supply chain will come out on top, predicts Microsoft's Felice Miller

BY AMBER HICKMAN

Retail and consumer goods organisations around the world must have an efficient supply chain to achieve financial success and drive customer satisfaction, and right now they are identifying new technologies and tools that can help them achieve this.

Recent 2024 research from analyst firm IDC shows that retailers are responding by investing heavily in supply chain modernisation. In fact, it's now one of the fastest growing areas of digital transformation in retail, with annual spending in the Americas rising by about 22 per cent. Why? Because an intelligent supply chain can cushion the business against external shocks, acting as a safeguard against wider economic fluctuations. Those who leverage the latest technologies to reinvent their strategies stand to gain a significant competitive edge.

According to Felice Miller, business strategy lead for retail and consumer goods at Microsoft, "a resilient and optimised supply chain is no longer a competitive advantage, it's a necessity".

"The pandemic exposed the fragility of global supply chains, and now retail and consumer goods organisations are navigating a landscape shaped by tariff volatility, shifting trade policies and macroeconomic uncertainty," she explains. "International trade policies are in flux and the impact of these trade uncertainties on the retail and consumer goods industry is substantial. Rising import tariffs drive up costs for raw materials and finished goods, driving margin compression. Supply chain teams must constantly re-optimise their logistics and sourcing strategies to adapt."

Simply put, agility is paramount in this new normal of continuous disruption as Miller emphasises. Organisations can no longer rely on static forecasts and single-source suppliers. Instead, they must build flexible networks, diversify sourcing and balance efficiency with resilience.

To survive and thrive, retail and consumer goods organisations are pivoting from traditional, reactive supply chain management to data-driven intelligence and real-time planning. The days of fixed spreadsheets and manual, after-the-fact adjustments are fading. In their place, advanced analytics and AI are enabling companies to anticipate changes and respond swiftly.

This shift is well underway and many use cases for generative AI have already been established worldwide. Digital intelligence offers opportunities to optimise and streamline operations, enhance cost-effectiveness by reducing expenses and improve decision-making with better data and insights for informed choices. Agility and adaptability are crucial for creating a supply chain that can respond quickly to changes in the environment.

"Generative AI can produce insights, forecasts or content from large data patterns and has proven especially powerful in tackling supply chain volatility," says Miller. "For example, generative models can simulate demand scenarios based on historical data and external variables such as weather or social trends, enabling more accurate planning.

For instance, Japanese fresh food supplier Super Hosokawa recently used AI to tackle the perennial challenge of overstock and waste in grocery stores. As part of a 2024 government-backed project, Super Hosokawa worked with forecast model developer Imamura Shoji, supermarket cooperative Kyushu CGC and

"Organisations should focus on three pillars: data readiness, ecosystem collaboration and workforce enablement"

the Japan Research Institute to link data across its supply chain and apply advanced demand forecasting models.

Using Microsoft Azure cloud tools and AI algorithms, the system analysed point-of-sale data and even generated customer personas to predict buying patterns. The first notable find of the trial was that people made far fewer mistakes – 31.8 per cent fewer – when they used the demand forecast model to place shop orders, compared to when they ordered on their own.

The improved accuracy also helped to reduce food waste. Before the trial, overall food waste across Super Hosokawa's different product sections was recorded at 0.52 per cent. This dropped to between 0.13 and 0.20 per cent after using the demand forecasting model. These improvements translate to cost savings and more efficient operations, directly addressing pain points exacerbated by supply uncertainty,

Many retailers are also looking to go beyond generative AI and move towards a truly intelligent, autonomous supply chain.

"Agentic AI represents a shift from passive analytics to proactive decision-making systems," says Miller. "Unlike traditional analytics or even generative AI, agentic AI is designed to act towards defined goals. These agents don't just predict outcomes, they can dynamically adapt plans and execute decisions with minimal human oversight, all while pursuing objectives like cost minimisation or service maximisation."

Agentic AI is revolutionising supply chains by enabling faster and more efficient decision making through goal-based optimisations. Enhanced automation allows AI agents to autonomously manage routine activities, reducing manual labour and minimising errors. Proactive decision-making with advanced predictive analytics helps anticipate disruptions and recommend pre-emptive actions. Real-time monitoring and visibility ensure immediate response to anomalies, reducing downtime.

In practical terms, agentic AI could autonomously manage many routing supply chain activities and constantly optimise them. For instance, an AI agent might automatically reroute shipments, adjust inventory levels or negotiate supplier orders in response to real-time changes without waiting for human approval. This is a leap towards goal-driven automation. Such agents use advanced predictive analytics and then trigger proactive

adjustments to keep the supply chain on track. They also offer real-time monitoring and visibility, alerting stakeholders immediately to anomalies and handling many issues instantly so that disruptions cause minimal downtime.

"The combined power of generative and agentic AI will redefine strategic value and productivity derived from technology, incorporating more advanced decision-making processes with greater accuracy and speed," says Miller. "In a world of constant uncertainty, having an autonomous, self-adjusting supply chain is a game changer. The new mantra is proactive adaptability: rather than just responding faster to each crisis, let the AI anticipate and navigate around many issues entirely. It's a vision of the future where agility and resilience are built-in features of operations, not heroic efforts every time something goes wrong."

As with any organisational change, retailers must consider several key factors to successfully transition to these AI technologies.

"Organisations should focus on three pillars: data readiness, ecosystem collaboration and workforce enablement," says Miller. "Most importantly, organisations must foster a culture of continuous learning to empower employees to work alongside AI."

"The combined power of generative and agentic AI will redefine strategic value and productivity derived from technology"

Furthermore, efficient use of generative and agentic AI requires thorough preparation which, according to Miller, involves "unifying siloed data sources and investing in scalable cloud platforms".

To achieve this, Miller suggests retailers use Microsoft's Azure OpenAI Service combined with solutions from a partner such as Blue Yonder. Taking this approach will allow companies to embed generative AI into their supply chain workflows and enhance everything from inventory planning to supplier collaboration.

Blue Yonder has launched new AI-driven cognitive solutions on the Blue Yonder Platform,

including five domain-specific AI agents to help businesses improve supply chain efficiency in key areas: inventory, logistics, warehouses, networks and shelf operations. These agents are designed to help retail and consumer goods organisations minimise and respond to disruptions, while uncovering new opportunities for growth amidst a turbulent landscape.

Various other Microsoft partners are also developing solutions to help organisations solve specific supply chain challenges.

For example, Avanade's new Tariff Navigator solution is helping businesses to adapt quickly to changing regulatory environments, ensuring compliance while minimising operational friction. Meanwhile, Neudesic's Inventory Control Tower allows organisations to monitor inventory positioning and predictive insights into demand and supply fluctuations in real-time with embedded agentic AI and enable adjustments and automated replenishment.

In addition to implementing these solutions, retail and consumer goods organisations must implement robust security solutions to reap the full benefits of an intelligent supply chain. A cyberattack can halt production lines, empty store shelves or expose sensitive information, all of which can be catastrophic for a business.

"Focusing purely on speed and efficiency is not enough," says Miller. "If security is neglected, a single disruption or breach can unravel any progress made. A truly optimised supply chain must also be secure and resilient, ensuring that operations can continue smoothly despite cyberthreats or other risks.

"Modern supply chains are highly digital and interconnected, often spanning hundreds of supplies and partners. This interdependence brings agility and efficiency, but it also expands the attack surface. In essence, you're only as secure as the weakest link in your supply chain."

While it may be daunting to take the leap and invest in an AI-powered supply chain, if done correctly it has the potential to create a ripple effect of benefits that spread across the entire business.

"An intelligent supply chain has the potential to improve forecasting, which can reduce excess inventory and free up capital for innovation," says Miller. "It can also provide enhanced visibility into supplier performance to support environmental, social and governance goals. Plus, having faster and more accurate fulfilment can boost customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

"Moreover, AI insights can inform marketing, product development and finance, creating a more connected and responsive organisation. This cross-functional value is why AI is central to digital transformation strategies." ■

Partner perspectives

We asked selected Microsoft partners how they are working with Microsoft to develop solutions that allow retail organisations to establish intelligent supply chains

Photo: iStock/Edwin Tan

"Coretek collaborates with Microsoft to develop intelligent supply chain solutions that transform retail operations. Our advanced systems integrate AI-driven insights, cloud analytics and real-time data to optimise inventory management, accurately forecast demand and streamline logistics. This methodology minimises inefficiencies and fosters a resilient supply chain, ensuring sustainable competitive advantage in a dynamic marketplace."

Brian Barnes
Chief Product Officer, Coretek

Photo: iStock/B4LLS

"Powered by Azure, GEP delivers intelligent procurement and supply chain solutions that help retail organisations improve profitability, resilience and agility in a dynamic market. These solutions provide comprehensive real-time visibility and empower data-driven decision-making across complex retail operations that address key challenges for retail. They include reducing indirect spend and managing costs strategically while optimising margin performance for goods for resale and private label products. With an advanced source-to-pay solution, category management and AI-driven risk management, GEP and Microsoft are redefining what's possible for retail supply chains."

Alex Zhong
Global Head, Product Marketing, GEP
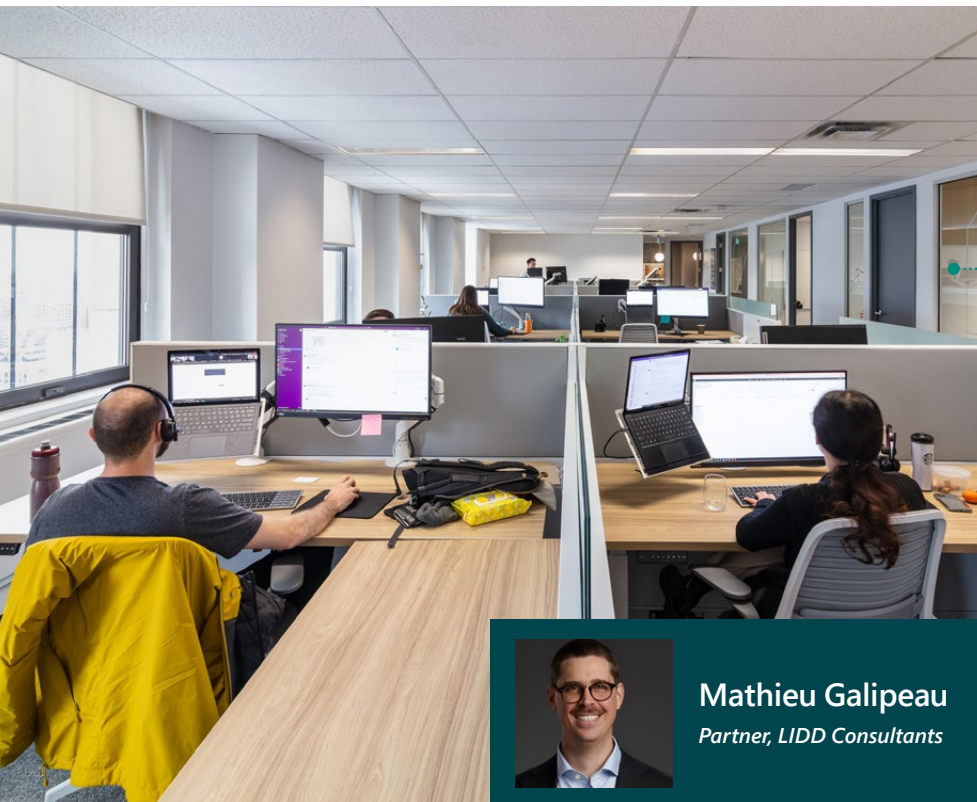
Mathieu Galipeau
Partner, LIDD Consultants

"We're helping retailers modernise their operations by integrating LS Central, built on Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central, with point-of-sale and e-commerce platforms like Shopify. This creates a unified, intelligent supply chain where the enterprise resource planning platform acts as the single source of truth for inventory, orders and fulfilment. Customers can begin their journey online and complete it in-store, with Dynamics 365 Customer Service ensuring seamless support. These Microsoft-powered solutions are designed for small and mid-sized retailers, enabling them to deliver enterprise-grade experiences and compete more effectively across all channels with intelligent order management and real-time visibility."

"Neudesic is working closely with Microsoft to develop industry-specific supply chain solutions in areas such as demand forecasting and inventory management.
  For example, we launched a retail inventory management control tower solution powered by Microsoft data platforms and AI capabilities. It changes the game by providing end-to-end visibility, AI-powered decision-making and automation capabilities to optimise retail operations, without adding or replacing a costly software platform. With the ability to sense, analyse, predict, solve and execute, this advanced system empowers businesses to make smarter, faster decisions."

Shannon Wu-Lebron
Global Vice President, Strategic Growth for Retail and Consumer Industries, Neudesic

Automate and adapt

As organisations seek resilience in a changing world, Kyndryl's Rafa Mercado reveals the new rhythm for global supply chains

BY AMBER HICKMAN

Global disruptions and increasing trade tensions from tariffs and conflict have made resilience the new priority for supply chains across a variety of sectors.

According to Rafa Mercado, vice president, consumer and travel market leader at Kyndryl, "supply chains once optimised purely for cost and speed are now being redesigned for flexibility and security, balancing efficiency with risk management amid sanctions, cyberthreats and political instability."

As part of this new era of supply chain transformation, AI-powered tools are helping businesses to automate operations.

"AI-driven analytics predict demand and optimise inventory with greater accuracy, augmenting human decision-making at scale," says Mercado. "Meanwhile, agentic AI systems can dynamically reroute shipments or adjust orders with minimal human intervention, enabling businesses to inch towards a 'self-healing' supply chain that adapts in real time."

Organisations should consider three key steps when developing an intelligent supply chain, starting with a clear digital strategy.

"A transformation must be anchored to business goals from day one," says Mercado. "It's critical to define what value a new supply chain model should deliver and get input across the organisation. This vision guides all other decisions and prevents aimless technology experimentation."

Second, firms need to unify their data to ensure that any intelligent solutions can operate efficiently.

"Siloed projects and poor data governance are common stumbling blocks in supply chain overhauls," says Mercado. "Adopting flexible, cloud-based architectures such as a hybrid Microsoft Azure setup that spans cloud and local sites can help unify data across channels and geographies, enabling real-time visibility."

Then, as organisations progress through the transformation process, it is vital that they maintain the human-technology balance.

"Keeping a human in the loop is critical as AI is adopted," says Mercado. "While AI can automate and accelerate processes, humans provide judgement, intuition and ethical oversight. In fact, experts emphasise that humans act as a safety net, catching issues or anomalies that algorithms might miss and ensuring AI outcomes align with business values.

"Furthermore, maintaining a human-technology balance also contributes to workforce engagement and trust. Involving employees in the AI rollout helps to demystify the technology and reduce fears. This collaborative mindset ultimately yields a more innovative and adaptive organisation."

"Tapping into an ecosystem ensures you're using best of breed tools and knowledge"

Kyndryl and Microsoft are currently working together to accelerate digital transformation for enterprises by enabling hybrid cloud models.

"Kyndryl has expanded its distributed cloud services to leverage Microsoft's Azure Arc and Azure Local platforms, which bridge

on-premises environments with the Azure public cloud," says Mercado. "This means organisations can run their applications and data wherever it makes most sense.

"The Kyndryl-Microsoft team helps set up this hybrid cloud fabric so that supply chain applications can move fluidly between edge computing environments and the cloud, improving interoperability along with the return on investment."

Mercado's advice for organisations looking to transform their models and create customisable value chains is to build an adaptive technology foundation and start by ensuring the infrastructure is agile.

"Embracing a hybrid cloud strategy, for example using Microsoft's adaptive cloud approach with Azure Arc and Azure Local, can give you the flexibility to run processes wherever they operate best," he says. "Such a setup lets you reconfigure parts of your value chain quickly in response to market changes."

Once this foundation has been established, organisations can leverage advanced analytics to further drive customisation.

"Tools like demand sensing and digital twin simulation allow you to anticipate shifts and test 'what if' scenarios in a risk-free way," explains Mercado. "For instance, you can model

how a spike in fuel prices or a sudden change in consumer preferences would impact your network, then prepare accordingly."

Finally, organisations should treat the transformation process as a team sport and collaborate with strategic partners to accelerate the journey.

"This could mean collaborating with technology providers or consulting firms," says Mercado. "A partner like Kyndryl, working closely with Microsoft, can bring in specialised expertise, ready-made solution frameworks and even co-innovation opportunities. Tapping into an ecosystem ensures you're using best of breed tools and knowledge, and it can help to bridge any skill or resource gaps your organisation might have.

"True transformation lies not in the technology itself, but in how we wield it, blending data, insight and human courage to turn challenge into advantage. As AI and agentic systems emerge, managing platforms and infrastructure will only grow more complex, making purposeful leadership, adaptability and trusted partnerships more essential than ever." ◼

Find out more about Kyndryl and Microsoft's recent collaborations:https://bit.ly/4eMQtrj

Scroll-stopping retail

SAURABH SRIVASTAVA: FRACTAL

Retailers can boost customer loyalty, trust and return on attention by using microstimuli and AI-powered hyperpersonalisation

Customer attention has become one of the scarcest and most valuable resources in today's crowded digital landscape. Yet many traditional personalisation strategies continue to treat it as a commodity, something to be bought with impressions and clickbait, rather than the dynamic, cognitive resource it truly is. As a result, marketing leaders are facing mounting pressure to optimise one-to-one engagement and prove return on investment in a market defined by ever-shrinking attention span and fleeting loyalty.

Fractal's recent study, *MicroStimuli: Communication Revolution*, paints a revealing picture of this new reality. While consumers use their smartphones for several hours each day, the vast majority of these interactions are 'revolving door sessions' that promote short bursts of attention, often under 10 seconds. Less than one per cent of digital interactions last longer than that. For marketers, this translates into significant business challenges: digital advertising spend is rising yet click-through rates are falling. Even when marketers successfully drive customers to a site, 73 per cent of online shopping baskets are abandoned. Of the purchases that are completed, 17 per cent are returned, a figure far higher than in physical retail stores.

Marketers today face a dual challenge; not only must they capture attention in an oversaturated digital world, but they must also deliver experiences that create lasting emotional resonance, especially with the non-conscious mind that drives much of human decision-making. This is where hyperpersonalisation becomes a game-changer.

Fractal is pioneering a new approach that integrates predictive analytics, generative AI and microstimuli through finely tuned, context-aware interactions designed to activate specific emotional and neural responses. Leveraging the Microsoft Azure OpenAI Service and supported by the broader Azure platform, Fractal's Cogentiq, its agentic AI platform, enables retailers to craft custom messages tailored to individual consumers based on their purchasing behaviours and location. These microstimuli are tailored in real time to factors such as circadian rhythms, digital signals, and behavioural context. By engaging customers at their most receptive moments – through subtle cues like colour, tone and message framing – brands can create emotionally resonant experiences that foster trust, strengthen relationships and build lasting loyalty. This deeper connection translates into improved customer retention and stronger return on investment.

True hyperpersonalisation, however, goes beyond smart recommendations or targeted discounts. It requires retailers and e-commerce sites to adopt a holistic strategy that includes real-time data aggregation from multiple touchpoints, transparent governance,

NOTE FROM MICROSOFT

"Microsoft's partnership with Fractal exemplifies our commitment to innovation and customer success in the retail industry. By combining our strengths in AI and analytics, we deliver transformative solutions that empower our retail customers to achieve more."

Kimberley McKinley
Director, Retail Industry Strategist, Microsoft
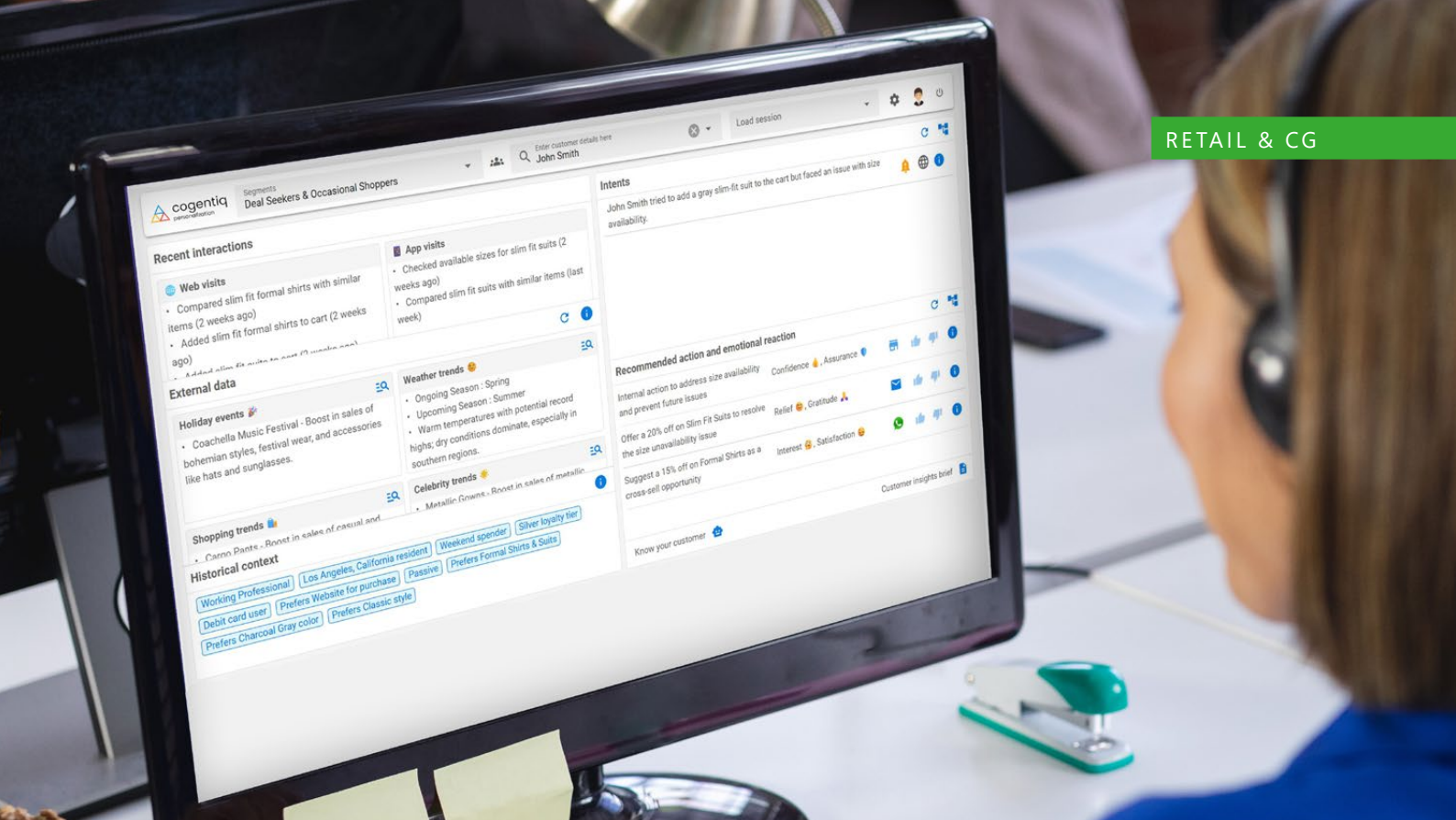
responsible AI and advanced measurement tools that track return on attention (ROA) through engagement duration, emotional sentiment and conversion outcomes.

Retailers are already beginning to see the benefits of this approach. Microstimuli can be used to trigger real-time discounts when a customer hesitates at checkout. Generative AI can co-create experiences, such as offering virtual try-ons or personalised product bundles. These are not just gimmicks; they are critical tools in capturing attention and driving conversion in a market where every second counts.

Hyperpersonalisation is not simply the next evolution in marketing. It represents a paradigm shift in how businesses connect with their audiences. By blending neuroscience, contextual intelligence and generative AI, organisations can maximise the ROA and build the kind of emotionally resonant experiences that lead to long-term loyalty.

Fractal's Cogentiq Personalize is helping business-to-consumer marketers bring this vision to life through AI-powered hyperpersonalisation, while Cogentiq Personalize Sales Assist provides B2B sales teams with AI-driven account intelligence. Both solutions unify and enrich customer profiles by aggregating behaviours, preferences, context and intent. This, in turn enables
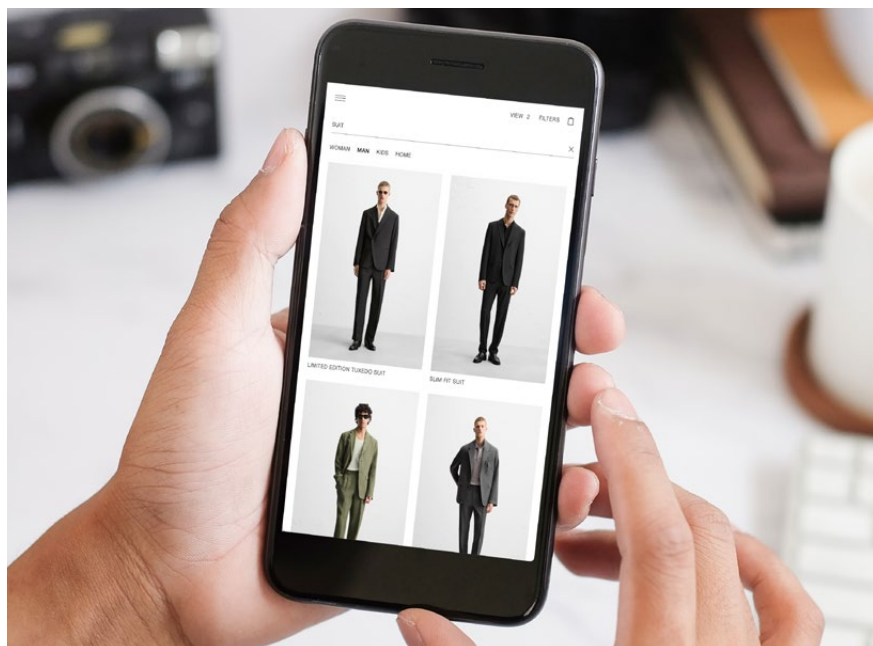
smarter decisions, deeper personalisation and improved customer retention.

In a world where attention is fleeting and competition is fierce, the brands that succeed will be those treating every interaction as an opportunity – not just to sell, but to connect with every customer. ◼

Saurabh Srivastava is practice head of retail at Fractal

Fractal's Cogentiq is an AI platform that retailers can use to better engage with their customers to encourage them, for example, to buy that suit that they've been looking at online over the past few weeks

Smarter shopping

Albert Heijn, a 138-year-old Dutch grocery chain with five million weekly customers, has used Microsoft Azure AI Foundry to build an AI assistant that reduces the time spent on food shopping and meal planning

When customers open the Albert Heijn app today, they're greeted by a helpful AI assistant named Steijn. Built using Microsoft Azure AI Foundry and powered by Azure OpenAI in Foundry Models, Steijn is more than a chatbot; it is a smart cooking and shopping companion.

Steijn has access to over 20,000 Albert Heijn recipes, complete with nutritional information and cooking tips like how to cut an avocado, and is designed to offer tailored suggestions to customers. The assistant can also recommend meals based on photos of the ingredients customers already have at home, helping them to reduce waste by cooking more creatively.

This innovative solution is the latest digital step forward for Albert Heijn, a 138-year-old Dutch grocery chain that operates 1,200 stores and serves five million weekly customers across the Netherlands.

The retailer wanted to offer customers an experience that went beyond shopping with a digital helper that could support their daily meal decisions in a fast and personalised way. The aim was to seamlessly integrate the AI assistant into the existing Albert Heijn app so customers could rely on it to reduce stress, save time and support healthier habits.

"Throughout the entire food chain at Albert Heijn, we want to reduce food waste by 50 per cent by 2030," says Sjoerd Holleman, senior vice president of strategy, product and analytics at Albert Heijn. "We're doing everything we can to achieve that."

The implementation of the AI assistant presented both technical and creative challenges. The foundation for Steijn came from *Allderhande* – Albert Heijn's long-running food magazine – which provided an archive of recipes to inform the AI.

Customers can use Steijn to take photos of the interior of their fridge and the AI assistant suggests recipes based on the contents it can recognise

"The tools of Microsoft gave us the opportunity to really build Steijn with a small team in a short amount of time," says Norman van Ameyden, a product manager at Albert Heijn who focuses on digital product innovation.

Using the chat playground in the Azure AI Foundry portal, Van Ameyden's team rapidly tested different versions of the assistant. Azure AI Foundry is a platform designed to help developers and businesses create, customise and manage AI applications and agents at scale with relative ease.

"We wanted to make sure we can do quick proofs of concept and experiments, and that really helped us, because we did a lot of testing just before we went to production," says Van Ameyden. "And Azure AI Foundry was perfect for that."

Security was another essential part of the implementation. All information exchanged with Steijn is anonymised and deleted every 30 days. The app also uses Azure AI Content Safety to monitor for harmful or inappropriate content, helping ensure a safe and trustworthy experience for users.

By taking this approach, Albert Heijn has delivered a unique blend of convenience, customisation and care.

"We developed Steijn to answer that key question, 'What is for dinner tonight?'," says Holleman. "If you have two friends coming over who eat gluten-free, or you want to eat vegetarian, and you don't want to be in the kitchen more than 20 minutes. Steijn will give you multiple recipe suggestions and really help you with answering that question."

The app now supports over five million users, many of whom also use it in-store via the built-in scanner function. Shoppers can scan items as they go, then check out using self-service pay stations so no waiting in line required.

"We developed Steijn to answer that key question, 'What is for dinner tonight?'"

JOERD HOLLEMAN, ALBERT HEIJN

By combining AI-powered meal planning with smart in-store convenience, Albert Heijn's app is saving customers an estimated 90 minutes to two hours a week. Steijn not only reduces time spent on shopping and planning, but also encourages healthier and more diverse eating habits, demonstrating how impactful a thoughtfully designed AI assistant can be. ∎

Norman van Ameyden, left in foreground, with the team that built Steijn

Technology Record

Welcome to the featured partners section of *Technology Record*. Our intention is to highlight a selection of Microsoft partners and provide information on the innovative solutions and services they are delivering to help meet your enterprise technology needs. We hope that you find this a valuable insight into the Microsoft partner community and look forward to spotlighting more partners in future editions.

Please visit www.technologyrecord.com for a comprehensive partner directory and the latest news and views from hundreds of Microsoft partners across all business sectors.

3Cloud

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3Cloud is a Microsoft Azure partner specialising in top-tier infrastructure, advanced AI, robust data and analytics, and innovative application development. Its digital platform solutions support the full AI lifecycle, integrating essential tools and platforms to transform AI into a strategic asset. With deep Azure expertise, proven delivery tools and custom accelerators, 3Cloud helps clients achieve rapid time to value and scalable business outcomes.

Armor Defense

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Armor specialises in cloud security, with purpose-built solutions that stop breaches and accelerate compliance. Trusted by over 1,500 organisations in over 40 countries, Armor combines agentic AI with Microsoft technologies to reduce decision time by up to 95 per cent, mirroring the precision of human-led investigations. The firm's Nexus portal gives customers complete visibility into every threat response.

Armor was founded in 2009 after a customer of Armor's CEO's previous company was breached. For Armor, cybersecurity is personal. It protects critical workloads so organisations can focus on what matters most: delivering innovative products and services, driving growth and running their businesses.

Atech and Iomart

hello@atech.cloud
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Atech and Iomart have joined forces to deliver secure, high-performance cloud and managed services, combining Iomart's infrastructure with Atech's deep Microsoft expertise.

Iomart is a UK-based provider of secure cloud managed services and operates 12 data centres in the UK as well as a 24/7 Security Operations Centre. Iomart delivers public, private and hybrid cloud solutions that help businesses connect, protect and grow. Atech is an accredited Microsoft partner that specialises in Azure, modern work and security. The firm has a dedicated team of Microsoft experts that deliver cloud transformation and managed services, ensuring businesses remain at the forefront of Microsoft technologies.

Avalara

Brenda Connell, Strategic Partner Director for Microsoft

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Avalara makes tax compliance faster, easier, more accurate and more reliable for over 41,000 business and government customers in over 75 countries. Tax compliance automation software solutions from Avalara leverage over 1,200 signed partner integrations across e-commerce, enterprise resource planning and other billing systems to power tax calculations, document management, tax return filing and tax content access.

AVEVA

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AVEVA is a global leader in industrial software, sparking ingenuity to drive responsible use of the world's resources. The company's secure cloud platform helps businesses harness information and improve collaboration with customers, suppliers and partners. Over 20,000 enterprises in more than 100 countries rely on AVEVA to help them deliver life's essentials: safe and reliable energy, food, medicines, infrastructure and more. By connecting people with trusted information and AI-enriched insights, AVEVA enables efficient engineering and optimised operations, driving growth and sustainability.

Named as one of the world's most innovative companies, AVEVA supports customers with open solutions and the expertise of more than 6,400 employees, 5,000 partners and 5,700 certified developers. Headquartered in Cambridge, UK, AVEVA operates globally.

Barco

www.barco.com/clickshare

Barco, headquartered in Belgium, is a global company focused on visualisation, networking and collaboration technology. Its solutions drive advancements in the healthcare, enterprise and entertainment markets. At the heart of Barco's success are over 3,000 dedicated "visioneers", each passionately contributing to driving change through technology.

ClickShare is Barco's award-winning wireless meeting room system for easy video conferencing, collaboration and presentation. Users can start a meeting with just one click on the ClickShare Button, App or Control Panel. ClickShare's modular and all-in-one solutions bring flexibility to IT administrators and suits companies with high security, sustainability and network integration standards.

BlinkOps

Zion Zatlavi, Co-Founder and Chief Business Officer

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BlinkOps is the industry's first agentic security automation platform. It lets security teams build an army of AI agents, each assigned to specific detection, investigation, containment and coordination tasks. These agents execute deterministic workflows, make autonomous decisions within defined parameters and collaborate with peers or human stakeholders as needed. By distributing responsibility across a scalable agent workforce, BlinkOps helps teams eliminate manual work, respond faster to emerging threats and maintain full operational control.

CallCabinet

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CallCabinet, a Smarsh company, delivers comprehensive and customisable compliant call recording and analytics solutions to enterprises using platforms such as Microsoft Teams. Uniquely equipped with AI-driven conversation analytics, call quality management tools and custom business intelligence reporting, the platform meets end-to-end compliance needs for any calling, conferencing, and contact centre environment. CallCabinet serves various industries, including financial services, healthcare, retail, manufacturing and government.

CallCabinet provides solutions that enhance operational effectiveness, efficiency and regulatory compliance, making it a go-to choice for organisations seeking high-performance, compliance call recording and powerful analytics technology.

Connection

Kris Caron, Director, Microsoft Alliance

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Connection – a Fortune 1000 company also known as CNXN – calms the confusion of IT by delivering customers technology solutions that aim to enhance growth, elevate productivity and empower innovation. Its dedicated specialists are focused on exceptional service and customised offerings tailored to unique needs of customers. Since 1982, Connection's culture of simplifying technology for people has contributed to new standards for customer service in IT, earning the industry's highest accolades. Connection holds hundreds of certifications with vendors – including Microsoft Azure Expert MSP status – and offers expertise across multiple technology areas including AI, cybersecurity, data centres, digital workspace, multicloud and technology services. Connection's GlobalServe offering delivers procurement solutions through a network of 500 suppliers in 174 countries.

Coretek

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Coretek is a Microsoft AI Cloud Provider, renowned for solving complex business challenges through high-performance consulting, managed services, security and AI driven innovation.

Coretek helps organisations to leverage AI to broaden their competitive edge. However, those that are slow to act are burdened with higher costs and slipping relevance and will find it hard to catch up. The firm believes that choosing the right partner and building a well-defined AI plan that includes security, a solid data foundation and agile cloud infrastructure is a critical priority. Coretek and Microsoft work together to help businesses reduce risks, accelerate adoption and drive innovation.

Denodo

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Denodo specialises in data management. The award-winning Denodo Platform transforms data into trustworthy insights and outcomes for all data-related initiatives across the enterprise, including AI and self-service. Denodo's customers in all industries all over the world have delivered trusted AI-ready and business-ready data in a third of the time and with 10 times better performance than with lakehouses and other mainstream data platforms alone.

Ferranti

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Ferranti is a cloud-first, customer-centric organisation specialising exclusively in the energy and utilities sector. Ferranti develops MECOMS 365, a powerful business application platform built on Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Microsoft Azure Services, enhanced with industry-specific capabilities. MECOMS 365 is an end-to-end solution that supports critical business operations such as: customer engagement and customer information management; metre data management; field service; finance and operations; and process orchestration and integration. With over 45 years of industry experience, Ferranti has established a proven track record of delivering innovative and reliable solutions tailored to the unique needs of energy and utility providers.

Fractal

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Fractal is a global provider of AI and advanced analytics to Fortune 500 companies. As a Microsoft Solutions Partner, Fractal offers solutions for consumer goods, retail, manufacturing, financial services, healthcare, technology, media and telecommunications with more than 5,000 data and AI experts across 18 global locations.

The firm brings an AI-engineering-design approach to digital transformation. It does this by creating algorithms that match and exceed human performance and by designing solutions that yield impact. Fractal's client-centricity, domain expertise and technology foundation creates value for its clients, and has earned leadership recognitions with Everest, Forrester, Gartner and ISG.

GEP

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GEP is a provider of AI-powered procurement and supply chain software, strategy and managed services. Trusted by Fortune 500 and Global 2000 companies, GEP helps enterprises drive efficiency, agility and resilience. Its unified platforms, GEP SMART and GEP NEXXE, deliver end-to-end capabilities for procurement, sourcing, contract management, supply chain planning and logistics. Recognised as a global leader by industry analysts, GEP partners with clients to transform their procurement and supply chain operations, create sustainable competitive advantage and maximise value.

Huddly

www.huddly.com

Huddly is committed to pushing technology to empower hybrid team collaboration. Leveraging high-performance AI onboard connected Ethernet devices, it creates AI-driven multi-camera solutions that scale across spaces and meetings. Huddly's camera and video bar portfolio delivers high-quality video and audio, along with engaging experiences on all major platforms including Microsoft Teams. Durable, flexible and software-upgradable, Huddly helps organisations seeking future-ready, sustainable technology designed for people. Founded in 2013, Huddly is headquartered in Oslo, Norway, with presence in the US and EMEA, and with global distribution.

Infiterra

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Infiterra is a global subscription commerce platform that helps IT distributors and MSPs transform and grow through automation, scalability, and seamless integration. Serving over 80,000 users across 75 markets and supporting 400 published marketplaces with over one million invoices processed annually, Infiterra is committed to driving innovation and empowering businesses in the subscription economy.

Kyndryl

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Kyndryl is a provider of mission-critical enterprise technology services offering advisory, implementation and managed service capabilities to thousands of customers in more than 60 countries. As the world's largest IT infrastructure services provider, the company designs, builds, manages and modernises the complex information systems that the world depends on every day.

Together, Kyndryl and Microsoft bring to market advanced solutions built on the Microsoft Cloud that accelerate hybrid cloud adoption with responsible enterprise-grade AI, modernise applications and processes, support mission-critical workloads and further enable modern work experiences for customers.

Lenovo

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Lenovo is a $57 billion revenue global technology powerhouse that is ranked 248 in the Fortune Global 500 and serves millions of customers every day in 180 markets. Focused on a bold vision to deliver smarter technology for all, Lenovo has built on its success as the world's largest PC company with a full-stack portfolio of AI-enabled, AI-ready and AI-optimised devices (PCs, workstations, smartphones, tablets), infrastructure (server, storage, edge, high-performance computing and software defined infrastructure), software, solutions and services. Lenovo is committed to building a more equitable, trustworthy and smarter future for everyone, everywhere. Lenovo is listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange under Lenovo Group Limited.

Lighthouse

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For more than 25 years, Lighthouse has provided global security and compliance advisory solutions that combine decades of industry experience and best practices with technology-driven approaches to help organisations to confidently achieve scalable, practical success.

Lighthouse's Microsoft award-winning solutions showcase its unique security, compliance and legal expertise, as well as its deep knowledge of Microsoft 365, Purview, Copilot and Priva. Its solution innovators ensure cost-efficient secure productivity frameworks for enterprise customers and specialise in working with complex environments and highly regulated industries.

LSEG

www.lseg.com

LSEG (London Stock Exchange Group) is a leading global financial markets infrastructure and data provider, playing a vital social and economic role in the world's financial system.

With its open approach, trusted expertise and global scale, it enables the sustainable growth and stability of its customers and their communities. The group is a dedicated partner with extensive experience, deep knowledge and a worldwide presence in data and analytics; indices; capital formation; and trade execution, clearing and risk management across multiple asset classes.

LSEG is headquartered in the United Kingdom, with significant operations in 65 countries across EMEA, North America, Latin America and Asia Pacific. We employ over 26,000 people globally, more than half located in Asia Pacific.

Melissa

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With AI-enabled contact data quality tools, Melissa is advancing the narrative on address data intelligence to slash costs, boost engagement and skyrocket revenue. It validates billions of addresses, phone numbers and email addresses daily and its 40 years of deep domain expertise spans software, reference data and data services. Melissa's APIs and integrations for Microsoft Azure, Dynamics 365 and Office 365 help thousands of Microsoft professionals synthesise holistic insights and analysis, grow business and strengthen customer relationships.

M-Files

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M-Files specialises in knowledge work automation. With the M-Files platform, knowledge workers can find information faster, work smarter and achieve more. Via its integration with Microsoft products, the M-Files knowledge work automation platform helps organisations optimise investments in Microsoft 365 by providing complementary capabilities for business processes and information governance. M-Files makes Microsoft 365 the single point of access for all enterprise data, regardless of its storage repository, through Microsoft 365 user interfaces. For more information, learn about the M-Files solution in the Microsoft Azure Marketplace.

Miro

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Miro is the Innovation Workspace that enables teams of any size to build the next big thing. The platform's infinite canvas enables teams to quickly move from idea to outcome. Miro is co-headquartered in San Francisco, USA, and Amsterdam, Netherlands, and serves more than 80 million users worldwide. Miro was founded in 2011 and currently has more than 1,500 employees in 12 hubs around the world.

Moody's

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Moody's Corporation is a global leader delivering solutions, data, analytics and insights that empower organisations to better understand markets, manage risk and make informed decisions. With more than 115 years of experience, Moody's combines deep analytical capabilities, expansive data resources and advanced technologies, including AI, to offer comprehensive perspectives and integrated solutions. Operating in over 40 countries and supported by a workforce of approximately 16,000 employees, Moody's enables business and financial leaders to navigate complexity, uncover opportunities and drive growth at scale.

Rencore

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Rencore was founded by two SharePoint consultants who were facing the same challenge throughout all their projects: standards and quality of coded customisations in SharePoint wildly varied. Their solution, a SharePoint Code Analysis Tool, laid the foundation for Rencore, where its mission is to keep the code clean and pure to prevent issues.

Now that organisations are prioritising cloud solutions, Rencore is providing its code governance tool with a Microsoft 365 governance software-as-a-service. Today, Rencore Governance is the only tool on the market covering all major Microsoft 365 services, providing a single management layer and enabling its users to simplify and scale their governance approach.

SAP

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Founded in 1972, SAP has grown from a small, five-person endeavour to a multinational enterprise headquartered in Walldorf, Germany, with more than 105,000 employees worldwide. With the introduction of its original SAP R/2 and SAP R/3 software, SAP established the global standard for enterprise resource planning (ERP) software. Now, SAP S/4HANA takes ERP to the next level by using the power of in-memory computing to process data and support advanced technologies such as AI and machine learning.

The company's integrated applications connect all parts of a business into an intelligent suite on a fully digital platform, thereby replacing the process-driven, legacy platform. Today, SAP has more than 230 million cloud users, more than 100 solutions covering all business functions, and the largest cloud portfolio of any provider.

SHURE

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For 100 years Shure has been making people sound extraordinary and has excelled with a wide range of modern audio solutions for all professional environments. For conferencing spaces, Shure offers products that guarantee superior audio clarity, confidentiality, ease of use, straightforward installation and seamless integration with leading audiovisual (AV) and video conferencing platforms, and AI productivity tools. Shure's focus on collaboration, reliability, advanced technology and enhanced security has made it a trusted partner for IT and AV professionals, driving high-quality, efficient communication and collaboration for business, corporate and educational organisations.

Synergy Technical

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Synergy Technical is a Microsoft Gold Partner with project experience in all 50 US states and in over 70 countries. The firm offers expertise in every aspect of cloud and IT strategy including providing licencing, managed services, technology assessments, cloud migrations and more. Recognised as an expert in Microsoft technologies, Synergy Technical was named the Microsoft 20/20 M365 Security Partner of the Year in 2023. As a FastTrack Ready Partner, certified Cloud Solutions Provider, member of the EMS Elite Partner Program and Microsoft Modern Desktop Partner Advisory Council member, Synergy Technical is well positioned to provide technology implementation services.

VICINITY
Complex Formulas. Simple Solutions.

Vicinity Software
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Vicinity Software helps formula-based manufacturers manage limitless recipes, improve inventory visibility and control, enhance quality assurance, eliminate redundancies and reduce costs. It is committed to providing a valuable, feature-rich solution at an affordable price.

With Vicinity, manufacturers can pinpoint specific problems and opportunities within product lines, manufacturing processes, distribution networks and marketplaces. Users will know more precisely which customers and markets to serve, which products to make, and how to make them more efficiently and profitably with the confidence that their product is up to customer and regulatory specifications.

ZEBRA

Zebra Technologies

www.zebra.com

Zebra Technologies empowers organisations to thrive in the on-demand economy by making every frontline worker and asset at the edge visible, connected and fully optimised. With an ecosystem of more than 10,000 partners across more than 100 countries, Zebra serves customers of all sizes with an award-winning portfolio of hardware, software, services and solutions that digitise and automate workflows. Supply chains are more dynamic, customers and patients are better served, and workers are more engaged when they utilise Zebra innovations that help them sense, analyse and act in real time.

The new era of AI

AI agents are collaborating with workers to automate complex tasks and transform the way we work

BY ALEX SMITH

Thanks to rapid developments in the reasoning of AI models, we're now entering a new era of AI agents. Agentic AI, which involves the use of AI agents to perform automated tasks without the intervention of humans, is quickly becoming a key priority for organisations as they plan for the future.

The key difference AI agents can make is their ability to automate more complicated tasks. Whereas a rules-based system can break down if faced by a situation that hasn't been predicted by its designers, an AI agent can adapt to deal with an unlikely scenario. What's more, it could be directed to solve these problems using natural language, rather than computer code, making it far easier for employees to work collaboratively with the agent.

"In 2023, an AI bot could support call centre representatives by… suggest[ing] responses," said McKinsey in its *Superagency in the workplace: Empowering people to unlock AI's full potential* report. "In 2025, an AI agent can converse with a customer and plan the actions it will take afterwards."

Gartner identified agentic AI as its top technology trend for 2025, predicting that by 2028, at least 15 per cent of day-to-day work decisions will be made through agentic AI. Though this could raise concerns about the threat such technology could pose to workers, AI agents will instead prove to be an enhancement to employee capabilities, suggests Tom Coshow, senior director analyst at Gartner.

"Agentic AI has the potential to significantly empower workers," says Coshow. "It'll enable them to develop and manage complicated, technical projects – whether microautomations or larger projects – through natural language."

This dramatic shift in the way we work is already taking place. For example, Fujitsu leveraged Microsoft Azure AI Agent Service to develop an intelligent, scalable AI agent for sales automation. The agent boosted productivity of sales teams by 67 per cent, allowing teams to shift from time-intensive tasks to strategic planning and customer relationship building, while also supporting new hires with product information and strategic guidance.

"There is immense potential for agents to drive AI-first differentiation for organisations everywhere, especially when combined with Microsoft Copilot and human ambition," said Judson Althoff, executive vice president and chief commercial officer at Microsoft. ■

AI agents can perform a range of complex tasks to help employees work more effectively

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