



# AI for Enterprise: Building an AI Strategy to Delight Customers



**A seamless customer experience** has quickly emerged as a critical differentiator for businesses across all industries.<sup>1</sup> And the bar is set high – using artificial intelligence (AI) to deliver touches like personalization, gamification and around-the-clock customer support has become an all but everyday expectation for a large number of consumers.<sup>2</sup>

But while the majority of enterprise organizations recognizes the value of AI in the customer experience, many struggle to make progress with creating an AI strategy that works for their organization. More often than not, it's because of a pervasive belief that technology and people are separate, when in reality, the most effective AI strategy combines the two. In fact, McKinsey & Company found that companies adopting AI across the organization are investing as much in people and processes as in technology.<sup>3</sup>

## Creating Customer-Centric Products and Experiences

"AI is not an add-on to a customer experience strategy; it's a complete organizational change," says former senior data scientist at Coursera and senior data scientist at Pinterest. "An effective AI strategy allows people to understand the possibilities of technology and apply them to the customer experience. Ultimately, it enables organizations to be agile in response to ongoing changes in customer behavior."



Source: [CRO Box](#)



Here are the five foundations that organizations can use to create the in-demand, customer-centric experiences consumers have come to expect:

## Creating an Enterprise AI Strategy

- 1** Define what it means to have a data-driven culture
- 2** Assess and organize your data infrastructure
- 3** Agree on a common vocabulary
- 4** Get C-suite buy-in
- 5** Map out a talent strategy

# Define what it means to have a data-driven culture

The first obstacle to creating a holistic AI strategy within an organization is creating alignment around the ultimate goal. What does it mean, exactly, to have a data-driven culture? For some organizations, that might mean implementing AI technology into operations like marketing or customer service. For others, it means a top-to-bottom integration of how data and AI can be used in all roles within an organization. Success lies in agreeing on a common definition and setting shared goals.



The best way to arrive at this answer is to decide how your organization wants to use data to create a more customer-centric experience. For example, organizations like Salesforce use AI to help their customers more easily understand and engage their audience with real-time decisioning, predictive analysis, conversational assistants, and more. Within seconds, AI processes take into account hundreds of thousands of data points such as when their audience logged on and the most recent interaction with a Salesforce agent to recommend the best next step for the Salesforce agent.<sup>5</sup>

“Because AI is still new, a lot of talent that works outside the technology space, like product or marketing, doesn’t have as much experience with it,” says Bakthavachalam. “As a result, there can be a communication gap that must be bridged with a common language so that you can productively work together. Everyone within an organization needs to know enough about AI to be able to take what the data scientists are doing and incorporate it into their roadmap.”

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**Seeing results from an AI strategy requires employees to have an openness to trying and failing things, a real innovation mindset. If that ecosystem is not created, it could be a real roadblock to implementing AI in an effective way.”**

**FLORIAN QUARRÉ**  
Chief Strategy Officer at Exponential AI

# Assess and organize your data infrastructure

Before an organization can make great strides in using AI to develop a customer-centric experience, it will need to do a complete assessment of its current data infrastructure. What kind of existing technology, tools, workflows and customer data sets are already available?

The conversation often focuses on big data, but Florian Quarré, chief strategy officer at Exponential AI, notes that customer-centricity most often relies on large data sets filled with many small data points about consumers, in general, and customers, in particular. In order for an AI strategy to have the maximum impact, we believe it must be built up around an ecosystem where AI can piece together all of the behavioral signals coming from customers that pertain to a business.

"Regardless of the industry you're looking at, the area where AI plays the most dramatic role in helping better understand customers is when it can take an organization's massive data set of volumetric, small



data points and piece together the complexity to quickly sift through and identify patterns more quickly and more accurately," said Quarré. "Once an organization has access to all of its data, AI can paint a very nuanced picture of the customers that pertain to the business and the industry in which organization operates, acting as a true force multiplier."

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**Machine learning, natural-language understanding and natural-language processing can help analyze customer sentiment and customer feedback at scale, precision and speed not achievable through humans.”**

JESSICA EKHOLM  
VP Analyst at Gartner<sup>6</sup>

# Agree on a common vocabulary

Terms like “data-driven culture” and “AI strategy” are broad terms and may be difficult to grasp in practical ways – and it can get even more confusing as employees come into contact with more specific and technical language related to AI technology. It’s important to contextualize these terms for employees so that everyone is working from the same vocabulary, whether they’re engineers with more practical AI knowledge or marketing teams that need to understand the possibilities and limits of the technology.

“Everyone needs to be able to speak the same language and communicate with one another,” says Bakthavachalam. “It’s not helpful if people are using terms or thinking about things in a way that isn’t able to be translated to someone else. No one expects executives or product managers to become data scientists, but it’s helpful to have a high-level understanding of the terminology.”

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**When organizations take the time to educate their existing workforce about AI, they’re able to capture and achieve so much more. The broad up-leveling of the finance or marketing team acts as a rising tide that lifts all boats – the extent to which the entire organization can take advantage of the potential of AI rises at an order of magnitude.”**

**ASHLEY NICOL**  
Account Manager at Coursera

## Get C-suite buy-in



Creating buy-in for an AI strategy is critical and, more often than not, that will start with the C-suite. Not only does the executive leadership of a company set and reinforce the organization's overall vision, but their support of AI will make or break the investment. In fact, about 71% of companies surveyed indicated that the C-suite owns AI projects because they're the only ones who can bring together various departments' leaders to work through the application of AI.<sup>7</sup>

According to Quarré, one of the most effective ways to drive C-suite buy-in is to start with small applications of AI that are likely to demonstrate the value and purpose of AI. From there, you can use that success story to gain momentum within the company to complete a third and fourth project, and so on.

"Once you've shown AI can have a real impact within your organization, the department-wide transformation spreads into an enterprise-wide transformation," says Quarré. "The champions that have gone through the effort feel empowered to apply the AI mentality to anything that might bring transformation to the organization."

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**ML and AI are broadly accepted as impactful business technologies. The question individual companies struggle with is, ‘How do we have an AI strategy for ourselves?’ Executives must balance many priorities at once. The only way building an AI strategy will rise to the top is if the potential business results on customer experience are crystal clear.”**

VINOD BAKTHAVACHALAM  
Former Senior Data Scientist at Coursera  
and Senior Data Scientist at Pinterest

# Map out a talent strategy

Putting a clear AI strategy into place will quickly reveal the skill set gaps in an organization's workforce, and organizations will need to bring in new talent for most technical roles that support AI.

In fact, in one study of 12,000 firms, 64% of leaders say they have already benefited from reskilling programs, and 93% are actively building the skills of their workers or have plans to.<sup>8</sup> "Working with Coursera, eight different companies were able to expand employee skill sets and value such that the companies expected to achieve a return on investment of approximately 700% over the course of three years."<sup>9</sup> Reskilling and upskilling will only become more important as time goes on and organizations realize it can be up to six times more expensive to hire technical talent externally than to build those skills internally.<sup>10</sup>



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**When a company has access to an elastic data infrastructure as well as talent that understands how to use AI as a framework, it is empowered to create that differentiated, tailored and personalized customer experience that is in demand today. And when applied and leveraged adequately, that's how AI brings the accelerator and force multiplier that we've only been able to dance around in the past.”**

**FLORIAN QUARRÉ**

Chief Strategy Officer at Exponential AI

**Coursera’s approach to professional development<sup>11</sup>**

- Identify gaps in the workforce
- Curate and build custom content
- Launch learning program and drive adoption
- Transform the workforce to capitalize on the organization's greatest opportunities

It's no secret that AI is a powerful tool organizations can harness to deliver a customer-centric experience. But many organizations are still piecing together what an AI strategy might look like for their organization. Organizations that want to remain competitive will adopt AI to create customer-centric experiences, and they'll start by making sure their existing workforce has the knowledge, resources and tools it needs to do so.



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