

The state of AI Adoption

IN THE ENTERPRISE

2 0 2 6

Introduction

AI is no longer emerging; it's inescapable. Every company needs to have an AI plan, and everyone from the CEO down has a role in implementing that plan.

Now in its third year, DataCamp's State of Data & AI Literacy Report examines **how 500+ US and UK business leaders are scaling data and AI skills.**

In this special edition, we spotlight AI usage within the enterprise, tackling **three questions:**

1. Which departments have the deepest adoption of AI tools?
2. How are organizations measuring and realizing ROI from AI?
3. How do organizations approach building custom AI solutions?

The way to get people to adopt these systems doesn't change. Build systems that people want to use, and that have trust and responsibility and appropriate data handling. If you build those things first, then people will adopt them. We rolled out an AI system that was available for 300,000 people. In the first year, we had 299,242 on the system. It worked out pretty well!



John Thompson

Senior VP & Principal of GenAI Program & AI Products at The Hackett Group

 [Watch Here](#)

AI adoption race: Technical teams are winning

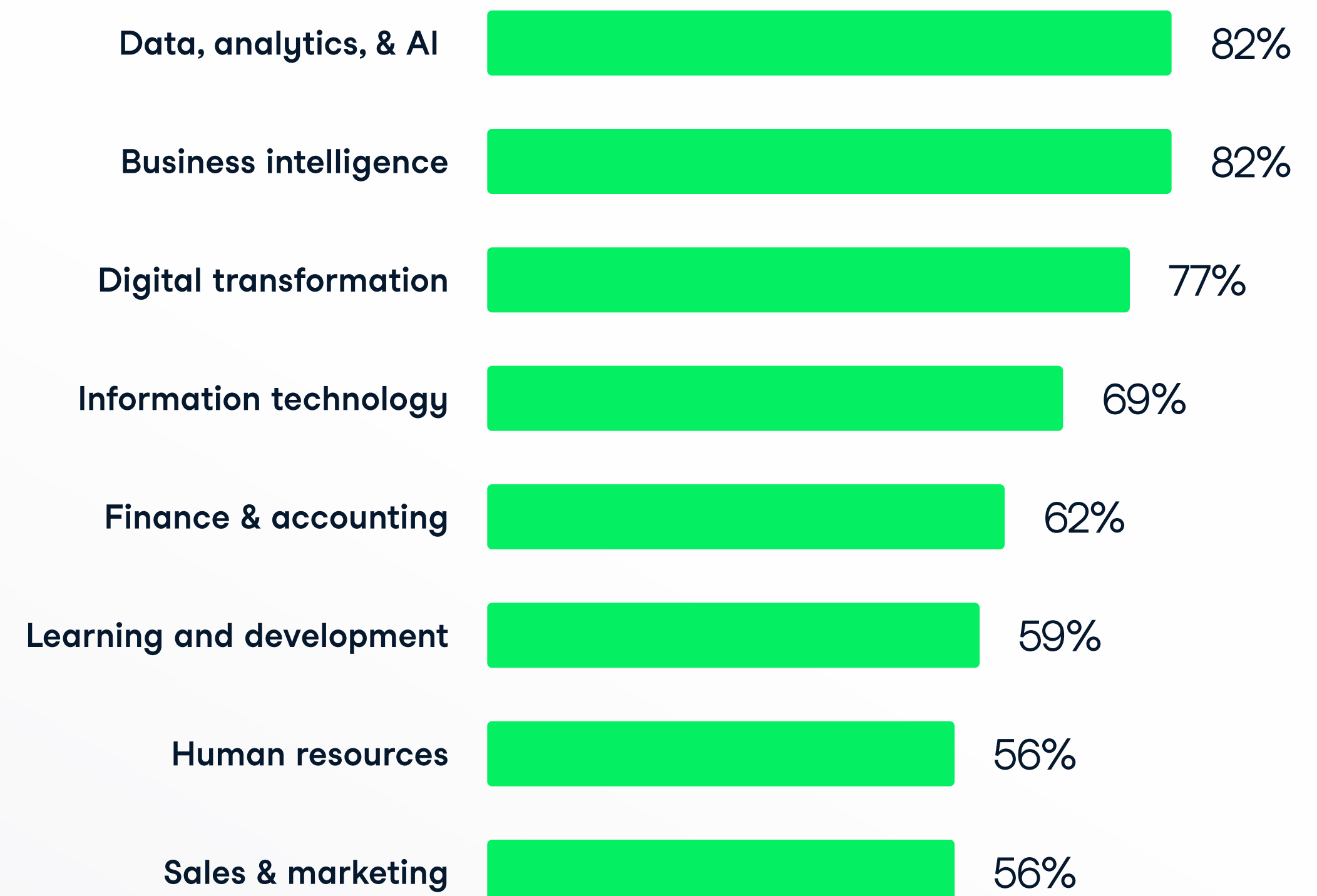
The data revealed some striking patterns in AI adoption:

- **91%** of leaders reported that AI is being used in their organization
- **82%** stated that AI is used at least once a week in their teams
- **39%** stated that AI is used daily

But not all teams adopt at the same pace. Digging into the data, technical teams (perhaps unsurprisingly) lead in AI adoption levels:

- Data, analytics, and AI teams (**82%**)
- Business intelligence teams (**82%**)

DATA, ANALYTICS AND BI TEAMS HAVE THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF AI ADOPTION, WHILE HR, SALES, AND MARKETING LAG BEHIND.



Data, analytics, and BI teams have the highest levels of AI adoption, while HR, Sales, and Marketing lag behind.

How do non-technical teams compare?

At the other end of the spectrum, several teams that stand to gain significantly from AI have yet to fully embrace it.

Human Resources (56%) and **Sales & Marketing (56%)** show the lowest adoption levels, highlighting a major opportunity for automation, personalization, and productivity gains in people- and customer-facing functions.

“We’ve used AI for many years across the entire marketing department. Today we have agents up and running for competitor analysis, for content creation, for customer interviews. We’re talking to our data. I haven’t looked at a dashboard in months! Agents are a complete game changer in terms of time saving.”



Denise Persson

CMO at Snowflake

[▶ Watch Here](#)

Literally everybody is using AI coding assistance these days. If you ask any engineer at a tech company, they’re all using Cursor, Windsurf and other AI coding assistants.



Jerry Liu

CEO at LlamaIndex

[▶ Watch Here](#)

“I’ve been trying out an AI agent for data science. It can program in SQL, in Python. It will walk you through the steps to get to the conclusion. It even makes recommendations of insights that can be applied to the business.”



Christina Stathopoulos

Founder at Dare to Data

[▶ Watch Here](#)

MIT's report: 95% AI failure isn't good enough (or sustainable)

The initial wave of experimentation with generative AI was largely driven by excitement, curiosity, and perhaps a fear of missing out. **Three years later, playtime is over, and results are being demanded.** All the latest AI trends—reasoning AI, multimodal AI, agentic AI—cost substantially more than text chatbots.

As the costs rise, so do the stakes, and you need to be more mindful than ever about the path to positive ROI.

In July 2025, a group from MIT released a report on The State of AI in Business that claimed 95% of businesses were getting zero return on investment from pilot initiatives.

Pilot studies are necessarily speculative and not designed to be ROI-positive, but the failure rate is high enough to cause worry.




So, is ROI as bad as the MIT report suggested?

We wanted to challenge the MIT report. **Here’s what we found:**


- **86%** of respondents have made at least one AI investment.
- Of those who both invested **and** evaluated ROI (**78%** of respondents), **79%** reported a positive return.

That’s a **dramatic contrast** to MIT’s finding that only **5%** of businesses saw success—though the measurement methods differ.

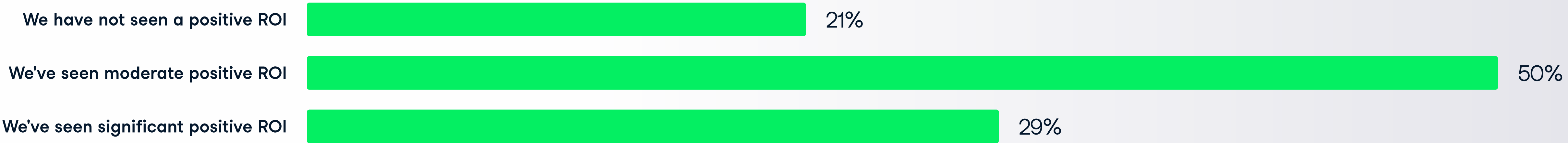
“The first question you should be asking is "How is using it going to create value for our customers?" The point of a stove is not to heat food, it's to deliver a dish. To measure ROI, you have to think of outcomes: can you use AI to deliver the outcome better or to deliver an outcome that wasn't possible before?"



Vin Vashishta
Founder at V-Squared



ALMOST FOUR OUT OF FIVE LEADERS FOUND A POSITIVE ROI FROM THEIR AI INVESTMENTS



*What would best describe the state of AI investments within your organization?
Results limited to those who had invested and calculated ROI.*

Are leaders using GenAI to save money?

A popular narrative suggests that generative AI initiatives are primarily about cutting costs.

As the data shows, while efficiency leads, most organizations are **pursuing AI for growth and customer impact, not just savings.**

My clients want to go from a heavy data entry or phone call centric process to AI data capture in scheduling, billing, and logistics. They want to reduce their operating costs by aggressive margins, 25% to 40%. And reduce the turnaround time from weeks to hours. And ensure they have high quality, less errors. And get a 10% or even 20% improvement in customer satisfaction.



Keri McCrensky
VP of Digital Transformation in
Healthcare at EXL

 Watch Here

THE MOST COMMON MEASURE OF SUCCESS FOR AI INVESTMENTS IS IMPROVED EFFICIENCY OR PRODUCTIVITY



What are the top metrics you currently look at when using quantitative metrics to define the success of AI initiatives?

How much enterprise work can we automate?

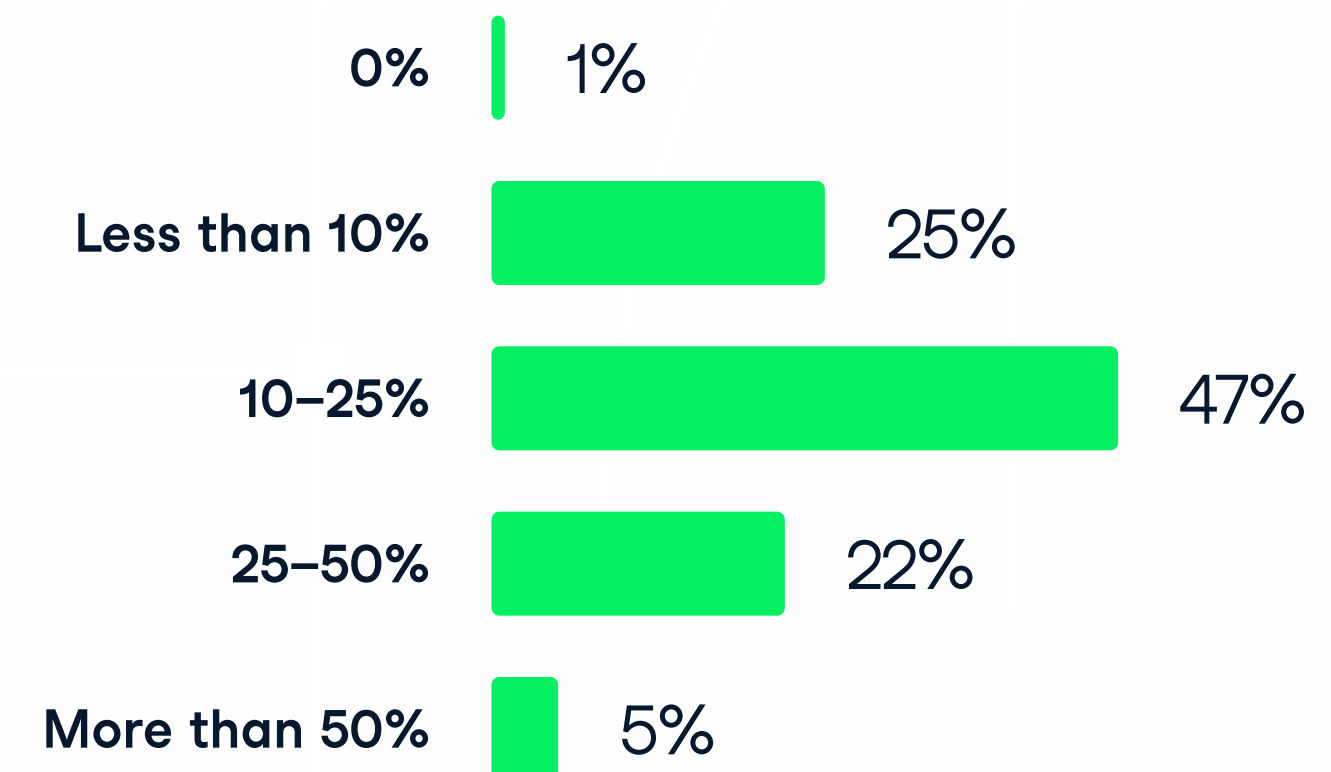
With efficiency and productivity emerging as the top success metrics, process automation remains one of AI's most powerful use cases.

So how much work can actually be automated?

- The most common estimate: **10–25%** of roles could be partially or fully automated
- **22%** of leaders believe **25–50%** of roles could be automated
- A bullish **5%** believe **more than half** of their team's roles could be automated

Encouragingly, **84%** of leaders say AI tools have **already improved team productivity**—proof that automation isn't a distant goal, but a present-day advantage.

THE MOST COMMON MEASURE OF SUCCESS FOR AI INVESTMENTS IS IMPROVED EFFICIENCY OR PRODUCTIVITY



What percentage of your team's roles involve tasks that AI tools can partially or fully automate?



Steve Lucas
CEO at Boomi

“If you're that business that believes that you can operate successfully, without agents or non-deterministic agentic processes, are wrong. You will be the Blockbuster video of the modern era.”

[Watch Here](#)

The question facing leaders: To build or buy

The AI software ecosystem has exploded in the last three years. Leaders now face a choice: buy ready-made solutions for specific business needs or build custom systems from lower-level tooling.

We asked respondents whether they were considering custom generative AI use cases:

- **37%** are already actively building custom solutions
- **45%** are exploring the potential
- Only **18%** have no plans for custom development

The trade-off: Buying accelerates time-to-value, while building offers control and differentiation—making this one of the most strategic decisions in enterprise AI today.

OVER ONE THIRD OF LEADERS ARE ACTIVELY BUILDING CUSTOM GENERATIVE AI USE CASES



Which statement best describes your organization's approach to custom generative AI use cases?

Choosing your AI stack: Open vs. closed source

An important design choice for AI teams is between commercial APIs based on closed-source models (OpenAI, Anthropic, Google) that offer convenience and scalability, and open-source solutions (Meta Llama, Mistral) that provide greater customizability and data privacy.

The takeaway: most enterprises are opting for a hybrid model—balancing ease of deployment with control over data and customization.

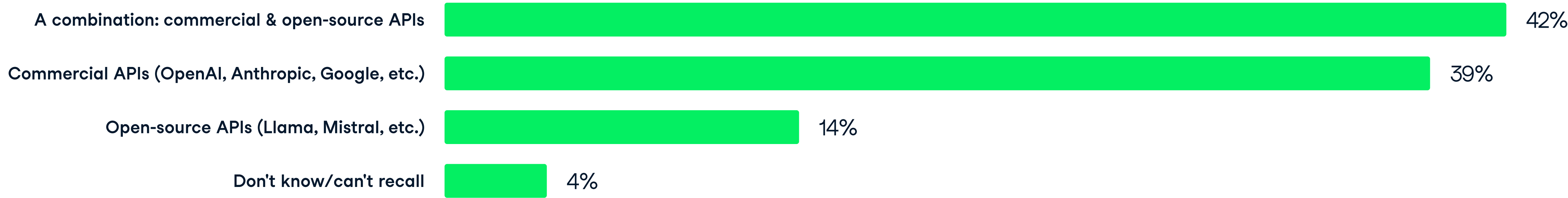
I think that models should be open source. The thing that's interesting about the models is not the model itself, but what you do with the models, right? So you don't regulate. You don't regulate technology, you regulate applications of technology. That's what the government really should be focused on.



Will Falcon
CEO at Lightning AI

 [Listen Here](#)

MOST CUSTOM SOLUTIONS USE COMMERCIAL APIS OR A MIX OF COMMERCIAL AND OPEN SOURCE APIS



If you are building custom generative AI use cases, which solutions are you using?

What’s holding back enterprise AI?

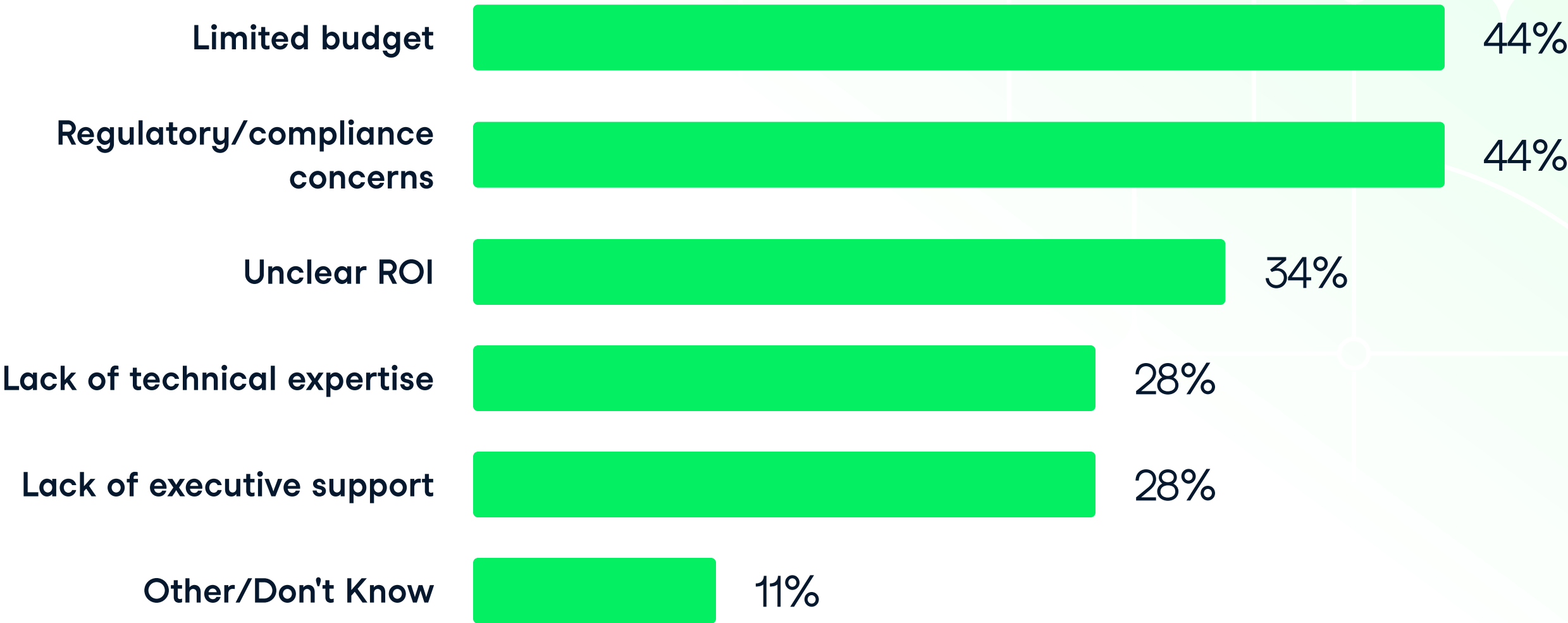
Building custom AI solutions presents its own set of challenges, ranging from internal constraints to external pressures.

Leaders identified their top obstacles as:

- Limited budget (44%)
- Regulatory and compliance concerns (44%)

Together, these barriers highlight the tension between **ambition and capacity**. Many organizations see the opportunity to build, but struggle to fund, govern, and staff it effectively.

BUDGET AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE ARE THE TOP CHALLENGES TO BUILDING CUSTOM AI SOLUTIONS.



What are the challenges, if any, to building custom AI solutions in your organization?

Connecting an LLM to your enterprise data is challenging to do in a way that preserves privacy. Enterprise AI needs to be private AI. That means open source models plus your enterprise data running in an environment that you can fully control like your data center or a cloud virtual PC.



Manasi Vartak
Chief AI Architect at Cloudera

[▶ Watch Here](#)

Conclusion: Building the enterprise AI advantage

The last three years have seen extraordinary progress; however, enterprise AI adoption is still in its early stages.

The data shows that while AI is nearly universal, value realization depends on focus: where to automate, how to measure ROI, and whether to build or buy.

As leaders head into 2026, one pattern is clear:

- **Buy when speed and proven ROI matter** most, especially for standardized, high-frequency use cases
- **Build when differentiation, data control, or domain expertise** creates a competitive advantage
- **In most enterprises, a hybrid approach** will deliver the best balance of agility, governance, and innovation.

AI transformation isn't a single leap; it's an organizational capability built over time. The leaders winning today are those investing not just in tools, but in the skills and fluency that let their people use them effectively.

At DataCamp, we're proud to partner with organizations worldwide to develop those capabilities, empowering teams to build, adapt, and lead in the AI era.

If you're looking to equip your workforce with the skills needed to thrive in the AI era, speak to our team today.

[Schedule a Personalised Demo](#)

“100% of our employees have received some AI enablement. We have seen a productivity uplift in the teams with high AI adoption. We have seen faster decision cycles. Most importantly, we've seen a cultural impact in terms of employee curiosity and confidence.”



Prajith Nair

FPT Software Vice President and Head of Learning and Innovation at FPT Corporation

[Watch Here](#)