

Implementor's Guide to AI

A guide to AI adoption, maturity and transformation
in manufacturing, auto and energy enterprises



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Foreword by Salesforce

We've only just begun scratching the surface of what's possible with AI. Already, autonomous AI agents are transforming how businesses serve customers and support employees. These trusted digital assistants can work 24/7 to answer queries, troubleshoot issues, schedule meetings, summarise calls, recommend next best actions, and much more.

For Indian businesses, the real challenge lies in moving from AI experimentation to large-scale execution. One in seven businesses is stuck in a “strategy paralysis” – they're aware of AI's value, but are unclear on how to operationalise it.

Here's how to realise the potential of agentic AI

- **Unify data:**

A single, real-time view of customer data and other relevant information gives AI agents the context they need to act intelligently.

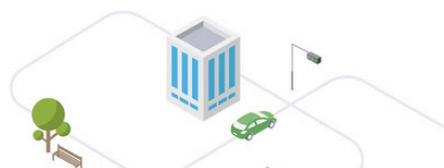
- **Prioritise AI governance:**

Proper guardrails such as data masking, zero retention, and toxicity detection help ensure that AI agents operate ethically and responsibly.

- **Move up the agentic maturity scale:**

Scaling agentic AI effectively across the business requires a thoughtful, phased approach that typically unfolds across five levels:

- **Level 0: Early stage AI agents like chatbots and co-pilots** automate repetitive tasks, but lack reasoning or learning capabilities.
- **Level 1: Information retrieval agents** assist humans by retrieving information and recommending actions. For example an agent can check corporate policy documentation to let an employee know how much they're allowed to spend and even remind them to create an expense entry for the dinner.
- **Level 2: Simple orchestration, single domain** - Building on capabilities of Level 1, a Level 2 agent has the ability to act on the data it finds and autonomously execute low-complexity tasks such as summarizing an account record, or cancelling a flight.



- **Level 3: Complex orchestration, multiple domain** - A Level 3 agent delivers concierge-level service, orchestrating end-to-end workflows with harmonized data across multiple domains. Example - An agent dynamically “triggers” a seat upgrade action based on the customer’s unique CRM data and then straddles multiple systems, including billing, to complete the transaction
- **Level 4: Multi-agent orchestration** - The future state of agentic AI where a bustling ecosystem of AI agents seamlessly connect to other agents across disparate tech stacks. Example - Imagine a future where the airline booking agent automatically connects to a ride share company’s agent to meet the traveler upon arrival, or even connect to the hotel agent to make sure their room is ready for check-in.

The path from simple automation to multi-agent orchestration shows how far AI can evolve. Now is India’s moment to lead with AI – not just by adopting the technology, but by doing so in a way that inspires trust.



Sridhar Hariharasubramanian

Senior Director, Salesforce



Executive summary

AI adoption in Manufacturing, Auto, and ENU has shifted from optional to essential, but enterprise-wide scaling is still rare. Based on 400+ survey responses and 5 expert interviews, this report explores adoption maturity, business priorities, barriers, and proven practices shaping the sector's AI journey
mainstream adoption, limited scale: Six in ten organisations already use AI for efficiency and automation, but only one in ten have scaled successfully.

- **Efficiency before growth**

Early deployments target downtime reduction, waste minimisation, and quality control, with leaders now expanding to demand forecasting, pricing, and customer personalisation.

- **The pilot trap**

22% remain stuck in pilots, slowed by integration costs, data silos, compliance concerns, and cultural barriers.

- **Readiness illusion**

Infrastructure is strong, but governance and responsible AI practices are underdeveloped, leaving firms exposed to bias, hallucinations, and compliance risks.

- **Proven impact today**

AI is delivering results in predictive maintenance, IT-OT integration, AI-driven quality control, digital twins, and immersive product experiences.

- **Future-forward outlook**

Smart factories, generative design, sustainable AI, and hyper-personalised customer journeys will define the next wave of transformation.

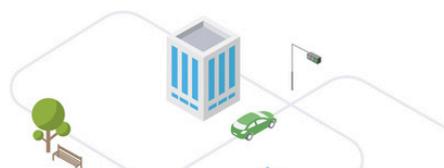
For industry leaders, breaking the pilot trap and embedding responsible AI will be the keys to scaling impact.



Santosh Abraham

CEO and Founder

Research **NXT**



Approach and methodology

400+

Survey responses

MFG/Auto/ENU leaders provided insights on the current scenario of AI adoption.

5

Expert interviews

Leaders provided key insights from real-world AI practices.

Implementer's Guide to AI

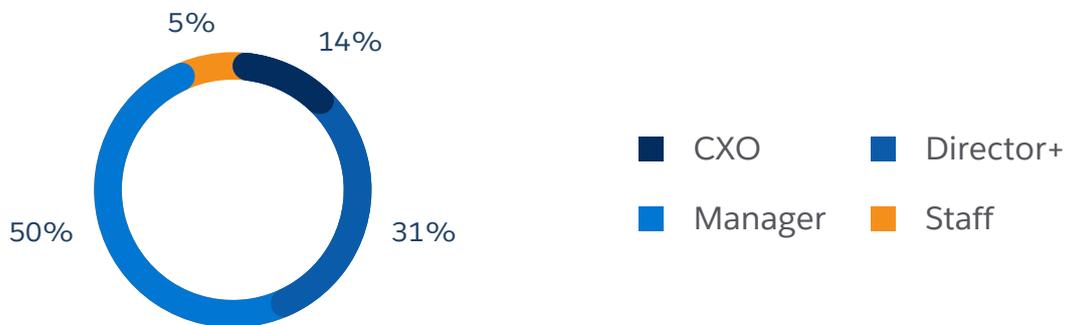
Survey Demographics

Department



Source: Research NXT's 2025 AI Implementation Survey

Level

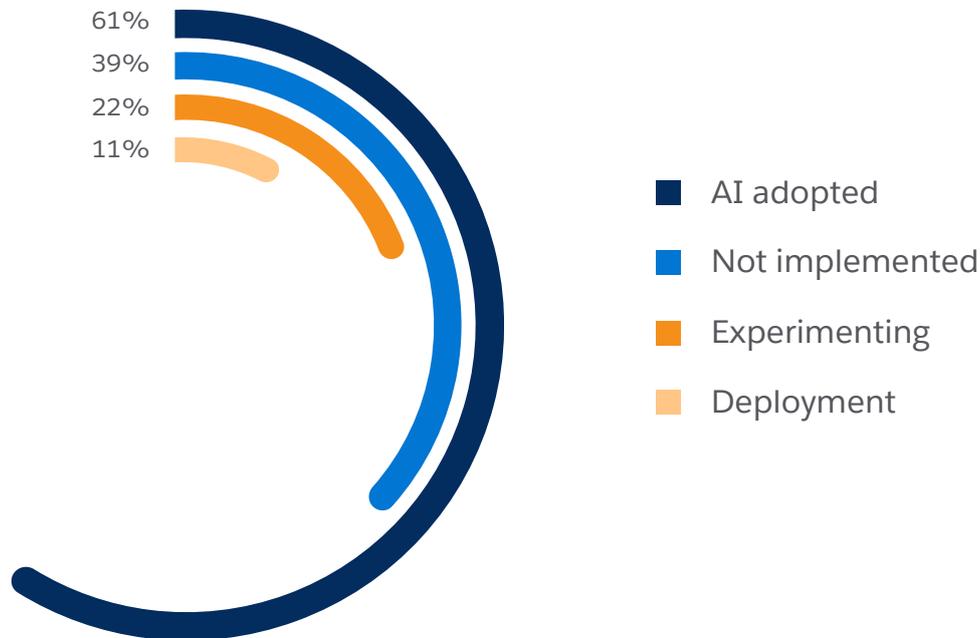


Source: Research NXT's 2025 AI Implementation Survey



AI in manufacturing, auto & ENU: Widely adopted, rarely scaled

AI maturity distribution



Source: Research NXT's 2025 AI Implementation Survey

AI has shifted from optional to essential

6 in 10 organisations in Mfg/Auto/ENU already use AI for efficiency, automation, and decision-making.

Scale is the missing link

Only 1 in 10 have successfully deployed AI at scale, signalling execution and integration barriers.

The PoC trap

22% are stuck in pilot mode – showing intent but lacking momentum for enterprise-wide rollout.

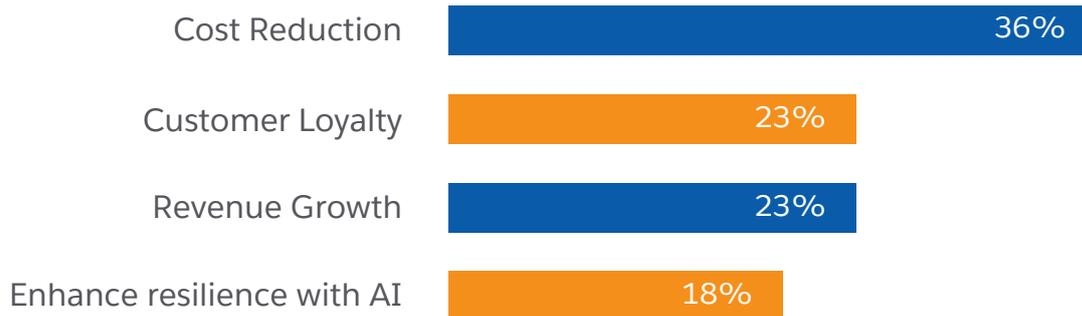
Maturity is uneven

High cost of integration with legacy systems and workforce preparedness are unique industry hurdles slowing full adoption.



Efficiency before growth: Business priorities - why AI, why now

Primary goal of leveraging AI



Source: Research NXT's 2025 AI Implementation Survey

Efficiency as the foundation

AI is being deployed first to cut downtime, reduce waste, and optimise processes – making factories smarter and operations leaner.

Revenue through smarter decisions

From demand forecasting to intelligent pricing, AI is helping leaders unlock new revenue streams by making decisions faster and more precisely.

Customer loyalty redefined

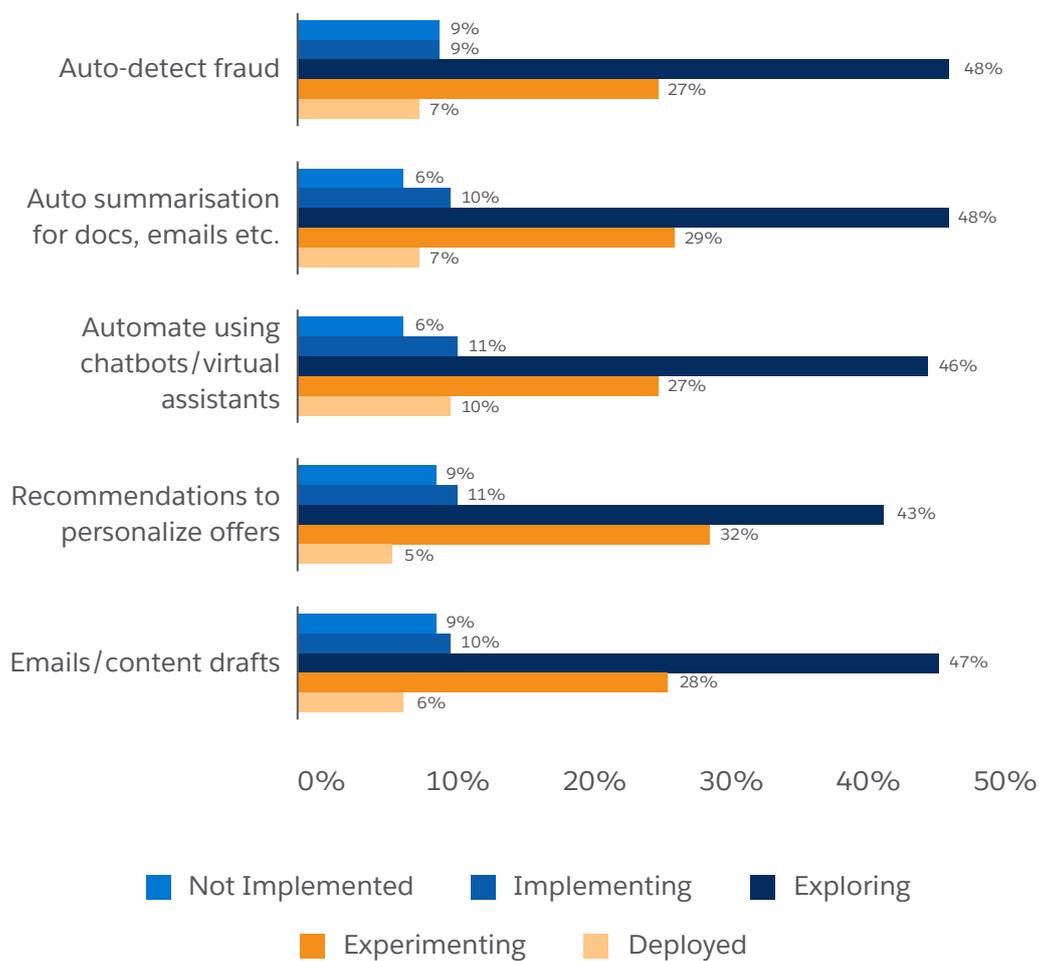
In sectors where customer touchpoints were traditionally weak, AI enables hyper-personalised products, service reliability, and faster response times, directly boosting trust and retention.

AI is driving cost reduction today and competitive advantage tomorrow. Companies are shifting from survival mode to strategic transformations.



PoC ceiling: Bold ideas, cautious commitments

Organisational levels of AI adoption across use cases



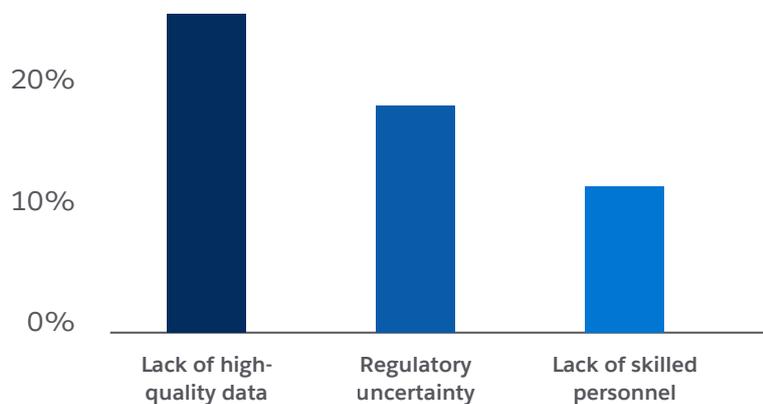
Source: Research NXT's 2025 AI Implementation Survey

The shift from experimenting to operationalising AI requires more than intent. It demands robust data infrastructure, cross-functional alignment, and business-wide trust in outcomes.



Why AI is still stuck in pilots?

Barriers to scale



Source: Research NXT's 2025 AI Implementation Survey

- **Data is the achilles heel** - Industrial companies are rich in machines and processes but poor in usable, unified data. Fragmented data silos directly limit AI effectiveness.
- **Compliance overhang** - As AI touches safety, production standards, and energy regulations, compliance concerns are becoming a major adoption brake. Companies fear moving fast without governance clarity.
- **Skills gap is real** - AI can't scale without skilled talent. A shortage of workers trained in both industrial processes and AI models is keeping many projects at the pilot stage.
- **The hidden paradox** - Even firms with strong infra investments remain unable to scale AI because culture, regulation, and data quality drag them down.

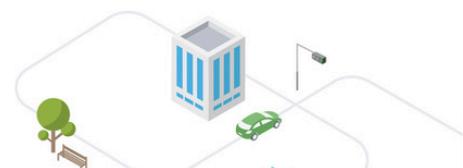


The speed at which companies can scale AI-driven solutions depends on overcoming key challenges like data quality, infrastructure investment, and workforce upskilling.

Hansveen Kaur

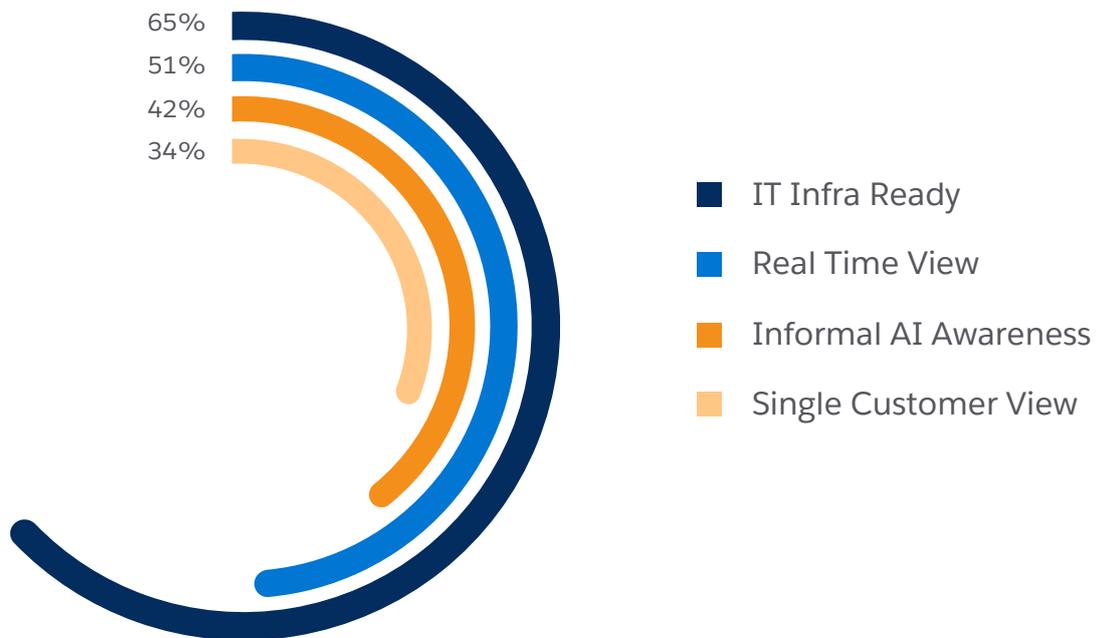
Head of Brand Management & Digital Marketing
Voltas Beko

[Read the full interview](#)



Readiness gaps: Strong infrastructure, weak governance

AI readiness distribution



Source: Research NXT's 2025 AI Implementation Survey

The readiness illusion: Infra without governance won't scale AI

Two-thirds of companies claim their infrastructure is AI-ready – but readiness in hardware and networks is meaningless without governance, data discipline, and risk frameworks.

Ethics: The missing layer:

Infrastructure without governance is a liability. Few have responsible AI frameworks in place – leading to unaddressed risks like bias, LLM hallucinations, and regulatory blind spots.

Built a risk framework before models. Responsible AI isn't optional- it is critical for compliance and credibility



Real-world impact: **Operational excellence**

AI in action: From factory floor to customer touchpoints

Predictive maintenance & operational efficiency

- AI-driven condition-based monitoring identifies potential failures before they occur. Reduces unplanned downtime, lowers maintenance costs, and extends asset life.
- Combined with IT-OT automation, it streamlines workflows and optimises energy use, ensuring plants run leaner and more sustainably.

AI-Enabled quality control

- AI-powered defect detection ensures precision and consistency in production.
- Minimises waste, enhances reliability, and ensures compliance with stringent quality standards.

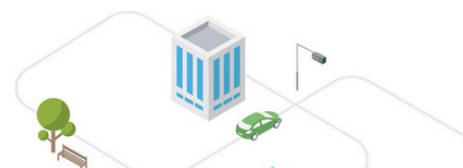
Conversational AI & customer experience

AI chatbots and WhatsApp assistants capture requirements instantly, provide personalised responses, and hand off to design or sales teams with context.

- Shortens inquiry-to-quote cycles, boosts responsiveness, and enhances customer trust.
- Predictive service models further improve post-sale reliability, strengthening brand loyalty

AR/VR visualisation & marketing innovation

- AI-powered tools create high-quality 3D product images and immersive visualisations in minutes instead of days.
- Helps customers explore options virtually, accelerating purchase decisions.
- Paired with AI-driven campaign optimisation, marketing teams deliver personalised content and offers at scale, increasing conversion impact.





AI offers a solution to one of our biggest challenges: streamlining product visualisation. By adopting AI-powered tools, we can generate high-quality product images in minutes instead of days, making our product presentations more efficient and enhancing the overall customer experience.

Nimish Thaker

Head of Marketing
Spacewood

[Read the full interview](#)



AI-powered predictive maintenance is a game-changer, enabling manufacturers to detect potential failures in advance, reduce downtime, and improve overall operational efficiency.

Madhav Vemuri

[Read the full interview](#)



AI is transforming engineering and infrastructure, but for true impact, companies must integrate vast engineering databases and ensure responsible implementation.

Manish Kumar

Deputy General Manager
Engineers India Ltd

[Read the full interview](#)



Operational excellence in Mfg/Auto/ENU is the strongest AI success story today. Companies aren't chasing experiments – they are cutting downtime, improving quality, and optimising resources. Leaders agree: the priority is practical, problem-first AI that delivers measurable gains



Real-World impact: Supply chain, workforce & distribution

AI for resilient ecosystems and smarter customer channels

Digital twins & supply chain optimisation

AI-powered simulations create digital replicas of plants and supply chains.

- Help test new workflows, optimise layouts, and predict bottlenecks before physical changes are made.
- AI enhances procurement analytics, route optimisation, and demand forecasting. Reduces waste, lowers logistics costs, and ensures just-in-time delivery of materials.

Workforce augmentation & safety

AI-powered AR/VR training provides immersive on-the-job learning.

- Prepares employees for hazardous environments, reduces errors, and improves safety.
- Positions human workers as collaborators with AI, supporting higher productivity and confidence on the shop floor.

Dealer & partner network intelligence

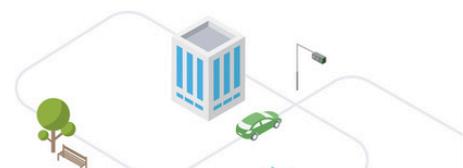
AI integrates sales, stock, and logistics data across dealer and partner networks.

- Improves visibility of in-transit goods, inbound quality, and stock levels.
- Enables proactive replenishment and stronger partner collaboration, ensuring consistent product availability at the customer end.

Distribution & customer channel efficiency

AI-powered tools enhance forecasting, automate order routing, and personalise downstream interactions.

- Helps distribution networks meet customer demand faster, minimises stock-outs, and ensures reliability.
- Product visualisation and faster SKU presentation shorten consideration cycles, improving customer experience in retail and dealership contexts.



Best practices for scaling AI

From pilots to enterprise scale: What works

Start with the business problem, not the tech

- Identify specific operational or supply chain challenges.
- AI must be applied where ROI is tangible – downtime, defect rates, or energy use.

Seamless IT-OT integration

- True value emerges when AI systems connect enterprise IT with factory-floor OT.
- Break silos so data flows across plants, supply chains, and decision systems.

Invest in people, not just platforms

- Workforce training is non-negotiable.
- AR/VR-based learning, upskilling programs, and governance training ensure AI adoption sticks.

Governance and explainability first

- Build trust by ensuring models are interpretable, bias-free, and auditable.
- Responsible AI must be embedded into industrial compliance processes.

Measure what matters

- Track ROI through clear metrics: cost savings, defect reduction, efficiency gains, and workforce safety improvements.
- Scaling AI without measurement leads to “innovation theatre.”



Start with the problem to be solved, not the technology to be applied. Choose mature AI solutions over speculative trends.

Sanjiv Kumar Jain

Group CIO
Krishna Maruti Group

[Read the full interview](#)



Future-forward AI in Mfg/Auto/ENU

From autonomous factories to intelligent customer journeys

AI-IoT smart factories

AI-powered IoT sensors will create fully autonomous, self-correcting production environments.

- Real-time monitoring will drive efficiency, resilience, and predictive control of industrial processes.
- Leaders emphasised the need to connect vast engineering databases to make this vision practical and impactful.

Generative AI for design & prototyping

Generative tools will accelerate product development cycles by simulating multiple design iterations in hours, not weeks.

- Cuts time-to-market and expands innovation pipelines.
- Mature, problem-first solutions are critical for scaling – experimentation must translate into business-ready applications.

Sustainable AI & green operations

AI will increasingly optimise energy consumption, reduce waste, and align with ESG mandates.

- Factories of the future will be measured not just by throughput but by carbon efficiency.
- Interviewees stressed that governance and compliance frameworks must catch up, ensuring responsible scaling of sustainability-driven AI.

Hyper-personalisation & customer journeys

AI will enable mass customisation of products and experiences at scale.

- AR/VR and generative tools will let customers visualise products in minutes instead of days, accelerating purchase cycles.
- Marketing teams will rely on predictive analytics, sentiment analysis, and real-time optimisation to deliver next-best offers and hyper-personalised campaigns.



Agentforce

Build and deploy AI agents at scale on the world's #1 digital labour platform

Agentforce brings digital labour to every employee, department, and business process to augment employees and improve customer experiences. Agentforce works with your existing apps, data, and business logic and can take action across your entire enterprise. Plus, it's built on the trusted Salesforce platform, so your data always stays safe.



Agentforce is powered by an open ecosystem...

- Connect any data, bring your own AI, and run Salesforce on different clouds
- Get pre-built actions and templates from 200+ partners for faster deployment on AgentExchange, a marketplace for trusted AI agents

Zero Copy Data

LLMs

Infrastructure

AppExchange

AgentExchange

...And takes action across any business workflow

- Agentforce works across every team and workflow
- It can take action outside of CRM, too, through Mulesoft integrations

Take action in Salesforce

- 👑 Qualify leads
- 📅 Schedule field service appointments
- 📢 Create campaigns
- 🛒 Manage inventory
- 📊 Update data visualizations
- 🔍 Search Slack
- + any custom action

Take any action anywhere

Process refund	Get order details	Restock inventory	Provide user access
Analyze & suggest	Inform customer	Onboard customer	Add product
Reprocess orders	Report defect	Check stock overview	Purchase order
Find anomalies	Enable subscription	Sign contract	Process invoice
Process payments	Access credentials	Support case routing	Resolve issues faster

Agentforce also helps manage, optimise, and scale your hybrid workforce at enterprise scale...

The Agentforce Command Center gives you real-time visibility into agent activity and its impact on human productivity – so, you can drive positive outcomes, ensure accountability, and scale with confidence.

- Uncover patterns across interactions to optimise your agents
- Track agent health and intervene in real time
- Understand what's working and where to improve
- Build and test agents fast with AI-assisted development tools

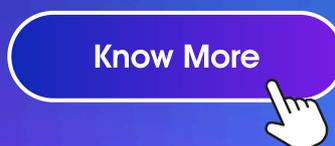


Speed time to value with 200+ prebuilt industry actions

Discover practical, custom use cases across industries, so you can tailor agents to your business and customer needs.



OR



Credits & Disclaimer

See the full list of survey & interview participants

[Click here](#)

Research **NXT**

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We are a boutique market research firm that provides custom research solutions for strategic business growth initiatives. Our services include - Bespoke GTM, Strategy Research, Market Insights, Account Intelligence, Competitor Intelligence and End-to-end Research-Based Marketing Campaigns. Over the last seven years, we have successfully assisted 50+ Tech Services and Product organisations in gaining and maintaining a leader's position in their respective domains.

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A background image of two hands shaking, symbolizing a partnership or agreement. The hands are in the center, with the left hand on the left and the right hand on the right. The background is a gradient of blue and purple.

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The Salesforce logo, which consists of the word "salesforce" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, centered within a light blue, cloud-like shape.

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