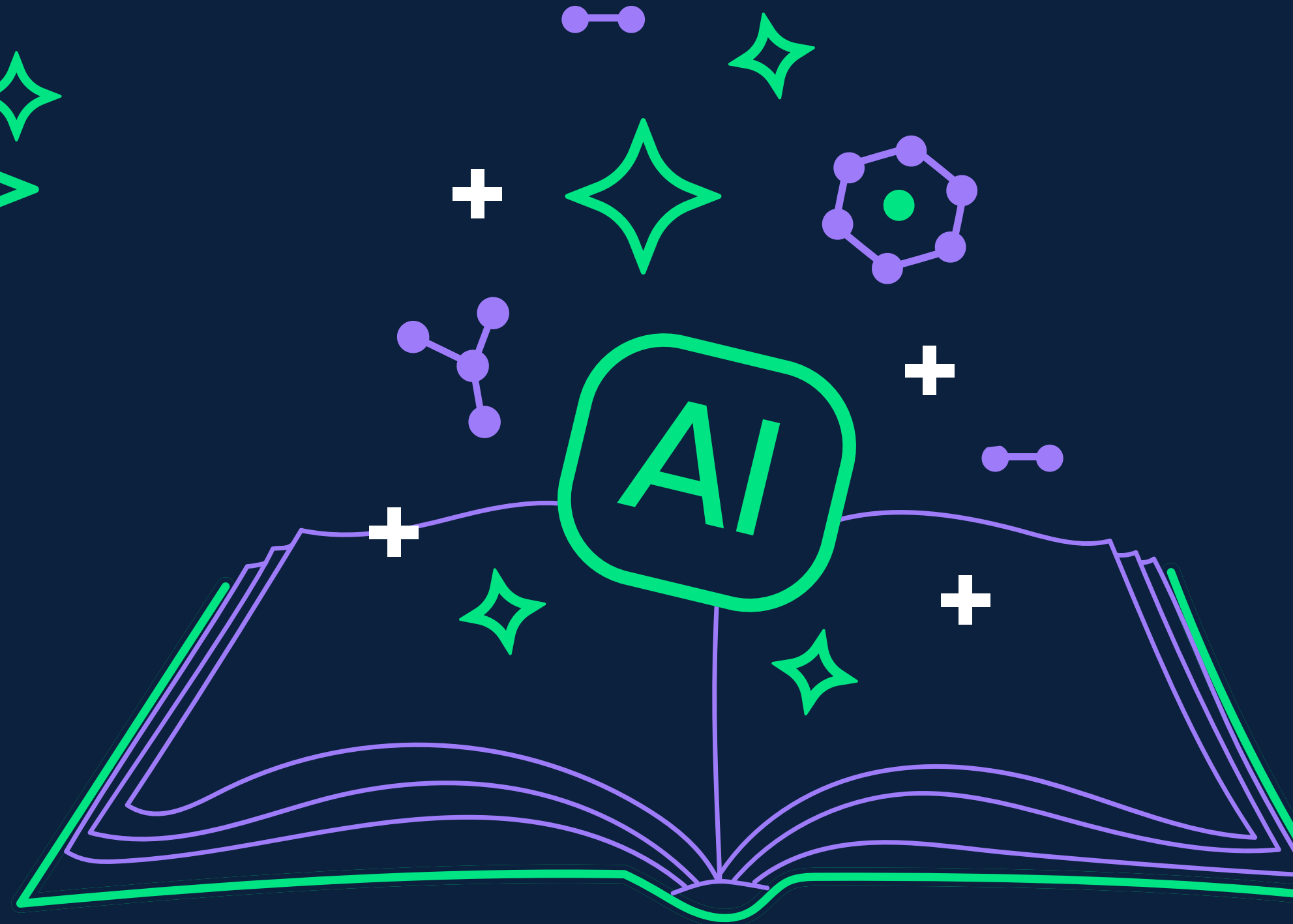# tangent

The AI Diaries:

Assessing the state of AI
→ *in Digital Transformation*

Harnessing insights from industry leaders to spotlight the future of AI and digital transformation.

A *note* from our CTO

As widespread and all-consuming as AI seems to have become, it's not a stretch to say that even some of the most advanced brands are still figuring out how to fully harness this burgeoning tech. Some, on the other hand, are more advanced than you may ever truly know from the outside looking in...

I've found that there's plenty of content and material being produced around AI right now, but not much that is giving a voice to the various experts and practitioners grappling with the tech every day. So, we decided to take action and as such, I had the pleasure of sitting down (virtually) with four industry experts from four unique brands, each united by a remit around artificial intelligence.

Overleaf you will find our roundup of the insights from each interview, dissected and collated to intuit the most common trends among AI specialists right now, with a corresponding view upon its future – we hope you find it useful.

What is the current state of AI and where is this complex landscape going? We're here to shed some light direct from the horse's mouth...
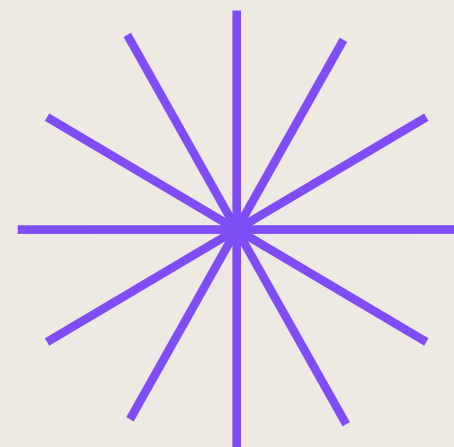
If these insights stimulate any thinking about how you take the next step in tackling your own AI agenda, technical or otherwise, please don't hesitate to reach out to me.

Many thanks,
Andy Eva-Dale,
CTO
andy.eva-dale@tangent.co
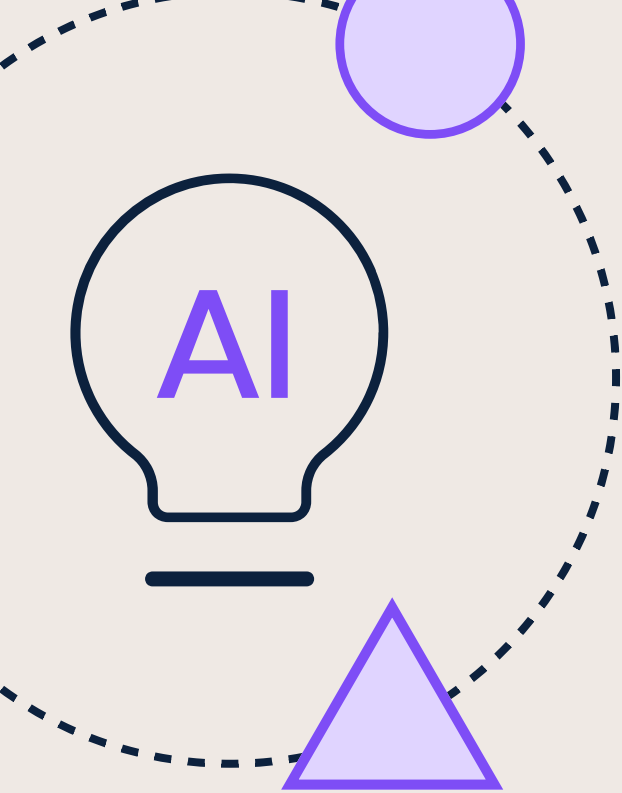
AI: the *future* of digital?

Artificial Intelligence has become the driving force behind innovation in a broad spectrum of industries, from manufacturing and supply chain optimisation through to wellness, finance and beyond.

Organisations are increasingly relying on AI to streamline operations, solve complex problems, and meet evolving customer expectations. In fact, in <u>our recent report</u> pertaining to the current landscape of sustainability in digital, when asked about the future of digital, many cited AI as the answer.

"More AI to *enable* change and innovation."

"AI driven, highly *automated* and regulated policies with many feedback/control loops and *real time* visibility of all essential processes and variables"

"The future looks *promising* with potential advancement in AI for sustainability, sustainable hardware, *renewable* energy sources and much more."

"AI leading the way with major *efficiency gains* and strategic optimisation."

Please be 👏 *upstanding* for our experts...

Despite this apparent faith in AI to transform the future of digital, illuminated in **our last report,** the journey to AI implementation for the vast majority is neither linear nor without barriers and challenges. To understand how AI is being integrated into business practices today, we spoke with four industry experts who are navigating the complexities of AI in their respective fields.

→

Juergen Weichenberger

Vice President, AI Strategy & Innovation

Schneider Electric

Dr. Amy Awad

AI Principal Director

Lenovo

Founder & CTO

LEAN IN WELLNESS

Mark Parr

Head of Technology

Buzzacott

Tarun Rana

ex- Head of Data & Analytics, now Managing Partner and Co-founder

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The five top *trends* in AI right now

By synthesising the perspectives of our experts, we have been able to uncover the common challenges, opportunities, and future trends shaping the AI landscape today. At top level, several overarching themes emerged:
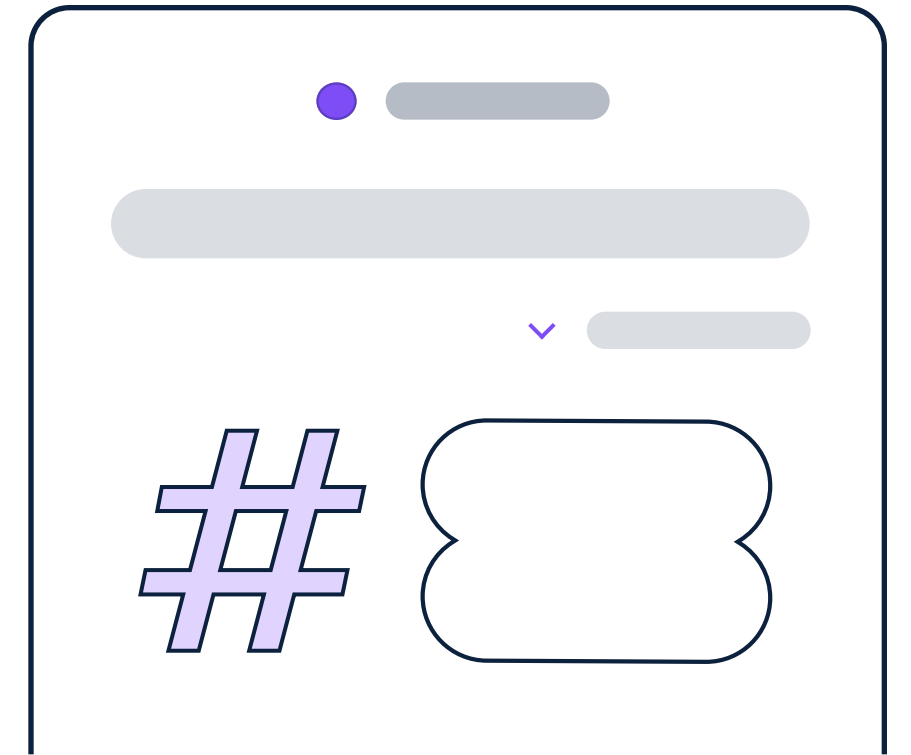
01
AI as a catalyst for efficiency and innovation
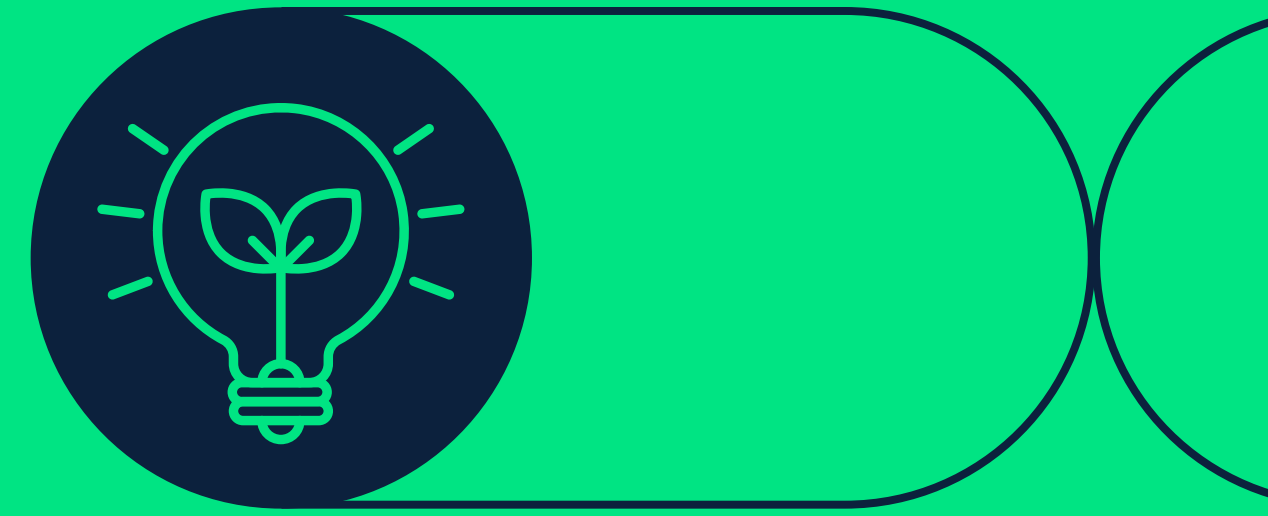
02
Data: the foundation of AI success

03
Navigating the challenges of AI adoption

04
AI for sustainability: a growing priority

05
The future of AI: specialised models and human collaboration

01

AI as a *catalyst* for efficiency and innovation

AI as a *catalyst* for efficiency and innovation

Across industries, one of the most consistent themes is the use of AI to enhance operational efficiency. From automating repetitive tasks to optimising large-scale systems, AI is transforming how companies function.

Mark Parr's experience at Buzzacott highlights how AI is deployed to eliminate manual tasks, allowing employees to focus on strategic work. AI-driven automation through tools like Robotic Process Automation (RPA) has made daily operations smoother and more efficient.

"AI has allowed us to move beyond the grind of day-to-day admin, and it's not just a small step forward—it's a quantum leap. With Robotic Process Automation (RPA), tasks like creating standard letters and repetitive contract agreements, which would normally take hours, are now automated. We've developed a system where AI generates these documents with minimal input from the user, and the time savings are immense. It's not just about efficiency—it frees up brainpower for our teams to tackle more complex challenges and be more creative. We've eliminated the churn that bogged us down, and that's allowing us to focus on things that actually grow the business."
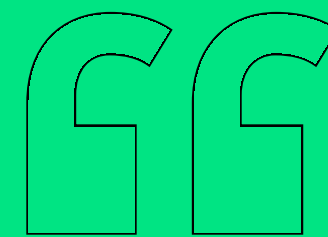
Mark Parr
Head of Technology

Buzzacott

AI as a *catalyst* for efficiency and innovation

Similarly, Tarun Rana explains that AI plays a pivotal role in automating supply chain and manufacturing processes. AI has been leveraged to streamline everything from inventory management to energy use, creating a more resilient and responsive operation.

"In recent years, factories started shifting towards AI-powered insights that were previously unimaginable. By integrating sensors and energy meters across operations, digitalisation effectively became the factory's nervous system. It went beyond simple monitoring—enabling real-time, data-driven decision-making. If adjustments in production speed were required or resources needed to be managed differently, AI facilitated instant, informed decisions. This evolution has shifted operations from a reactive model to a predictive one, fundamentally transforming production and supply chain management."

Tarun Rana
ex- Head of Data & Analytics, now Managing Partner and Co-founder

AMSTERDAM DATA LABS

# AI as a *catalyst* for efficiency and innovation

This alignment between automation and operational efficiency is echoed by Juergen Weichenberger from Schneider Electric, where AI is integrated into product testing and quality assurance processes. Schneider Electric uses AI to ensure that products meet rigorous standards, especially in high-risk environments such as electrical manufacturing.

"In the electrical industry, a product malfunction isn't just inconvenient—it's life-threatening. We've harnessed AI not just to spot failures but to predict and prevent them. Our AI models analyse immense datasets collected during product development and testing, and they flag potential weaknesses that human eyes might miss. For example, we test products in extreme conditions—whether it's temperature fluctuations, voltage stress, or physical pressure. AI processes this data at lightning speed and identifies where improvements need to be made before the product ever hits the market. It's no exaggeration to say that AI is helping save lives, while also making our processes faster and more reliable. That's the kind of efficiency AI brings—it's about doing things better and smarter, at scale."

Juergen Weichenberger
Vice President,
AI Strategy & Innovation

Schneider Electric
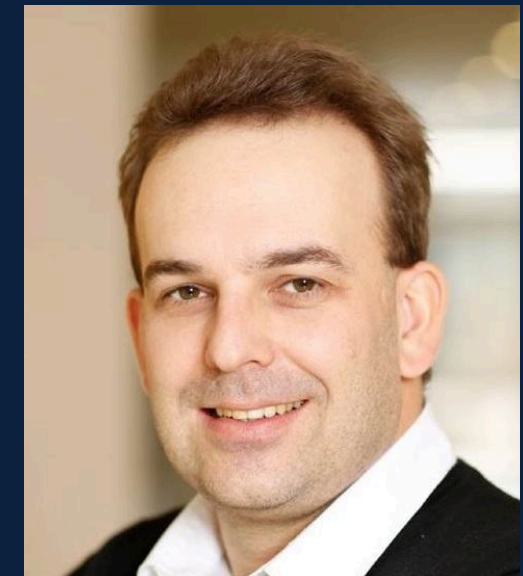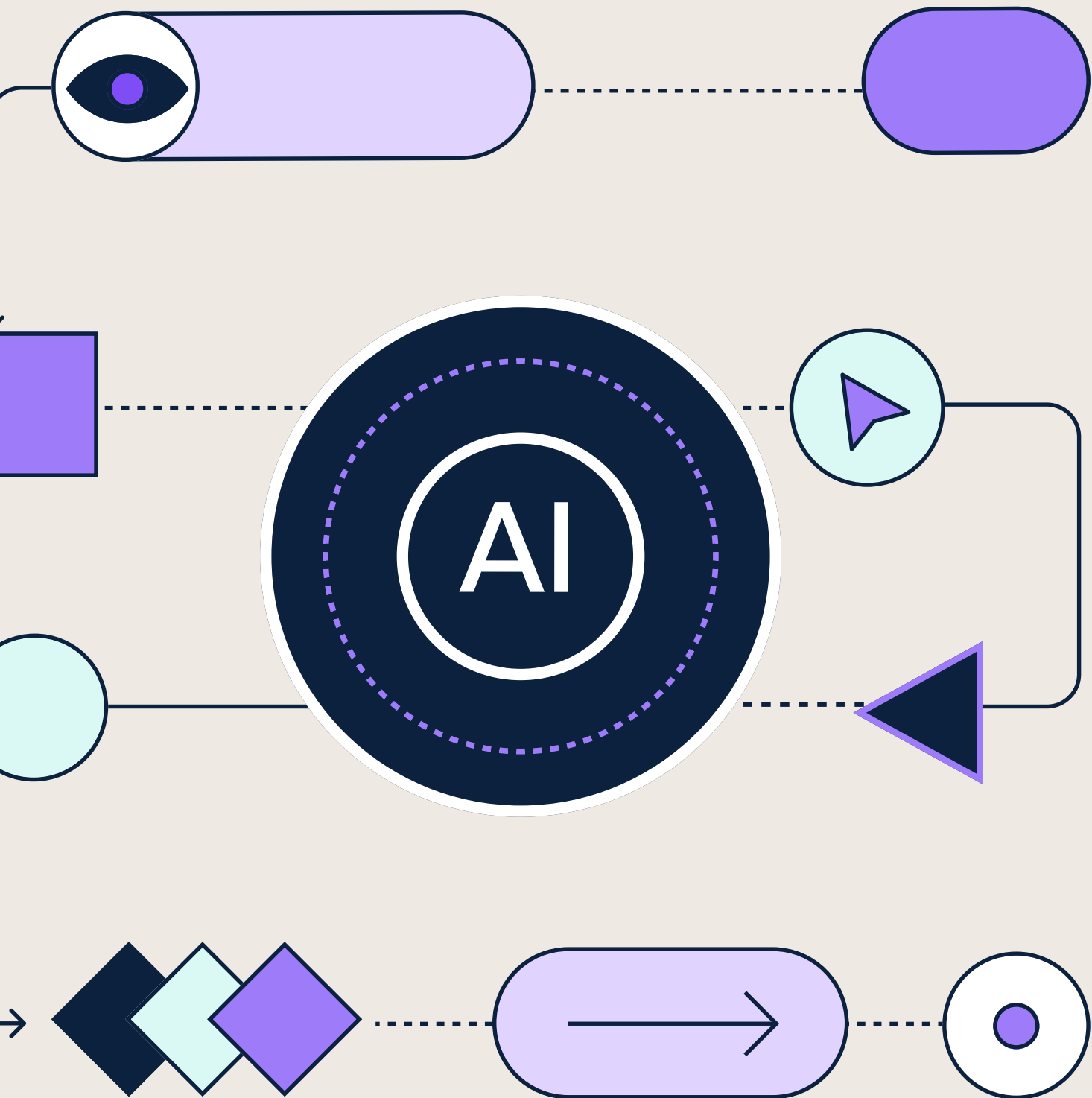
Our *conclusion*...

These insights underscore a common realisation: AI isn't just about automating isolated tasks—it's about creating smarter, more efficient systems that allow businesses to operate at a higher level of productivity and resilience.

AI is not just a tool for small-scale improvements. It's fundamentally reshaping how businesses operate by eliminating inefficiencies, enhancing quality, and providing real-time insights that allow companies to be more responsive and innovative. For businesses looking to stay competitive, integrating AI-driven automation into their workflows is no longer a choice—it's a necessity.

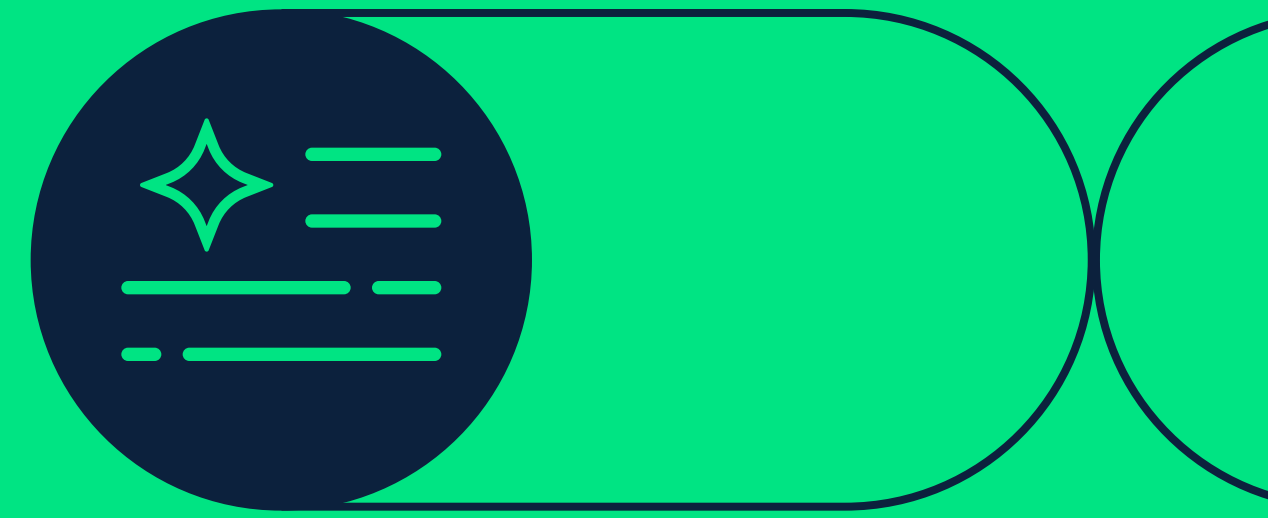## THIS WAY FOR SMARTER, MORE EFFICIENT SYSTEMS
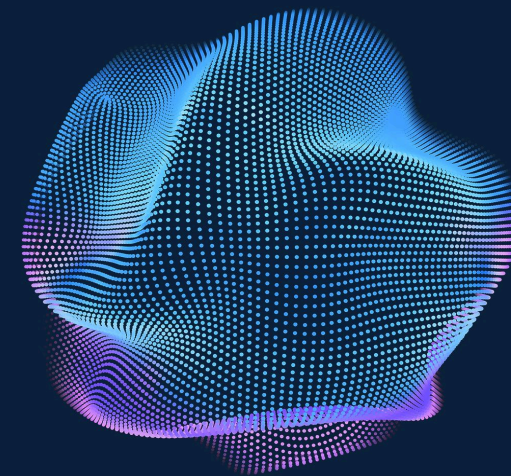
Looking to stay competitive? Of course you are! But it's easier said than done when navigating the modern day phenomenon that is AI.

We're here to help you get beyond the hype, learn more about our approach to AI projects here.

02

Data: the *foundation* of AI success

Data: the *foundation* of AI success

While AI's potential is immense... well, obviously it is, given how much we're all talking about it! Its success hinges on one critical factor: data.

Across all interviews, experts agreed that without well-structured, high-quality data, AI initiatives cannot thrive. The first step for any organisation aiming to leverage AI is establishing a strong data foundation. As Tarun Rana points out, much of the AI implementation in his business experience to date has involved building a centralised data platform that could support real-time insights.

"Reflecting on past projects, data is fundamental to the effective use of AI. At the start of this journey, a key challenge was centralising and structuring data from multiple factories and departments globally. The complexity was immense—different systems, various data formats, and a lack of standardisation created substantial hurdles. Establishing a centralised platform was essential; once implemented, it allowed data to flow seamlessly, ensuring consistency, accuracy, and accessibility. With this foundation, AI could then generate insights to optimise energy use, reduce downtime, and manage resources more effectively. It was not only about collecting data but also about setting up processes to make that data continuously usable and reliable."

Tarun Rana
ex- Head of Data & Analytics, now Managing Partner and Co-founder

AMSTERDAM DATA LABS

Data: the *foundation* of AI success

This consensus on the importance of data is also reflected in Dr. Amy Awad's work, where data is key to shaping the AI-driven wellness app she's developing. The AI in her wellness app adapts to individual user data, making personal recommendations that evolve over time. But, you guessed it, it all hinges on quality data.

"Let's be real, real change starts by understanding the human condition at their core; how we think, how we act, what we need, and how we react and adapt to our ever-changing dynamic environments. As a scientist of human cognition, realising and understanding how we operate, how we perceive ourself and our surroundings, how we reason and make a decision, how we perceive the world and if we truly and effectively change is what drives me to innovate. Personalisation AI is not only a tool but a revolutionary force, specifically designed to consistently evolve with each individual. By aligning with their unique needs, preferences, lifestyles and objectives to achieve meaningful changes by not only empowering them but enabling them also."

Dr. Amy Awad
AI Principal Director
Lenovo

Founder & CTO
LEAN IN WELLNESS

Data: the *foundation* of AI success

Mark Parr at Buzzacott also stresses the importance of data maturity. Without mature data systems, AI projects can easily fall short of their potential.

"We realised early on that even the best AI systems are useless if your data isn't clean and structured. At Buzzacott, we hit roadblocks because our data wasn't mature enough—it was scattered, unorganised, and in some cases, outdated. We had to go back to basics, invest in cleaning up our data, and develop systems that would ensure data accuracy going forward. It was a painful process, but without that groundwork, the AI tools we wanted to use wouldn't have delivered any real value. Data has to be the first step in any AI project. You need to get it right from the start, or everything else will collapse."
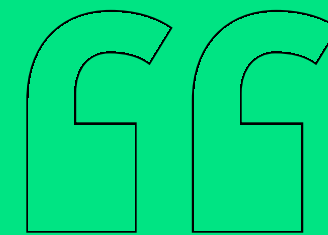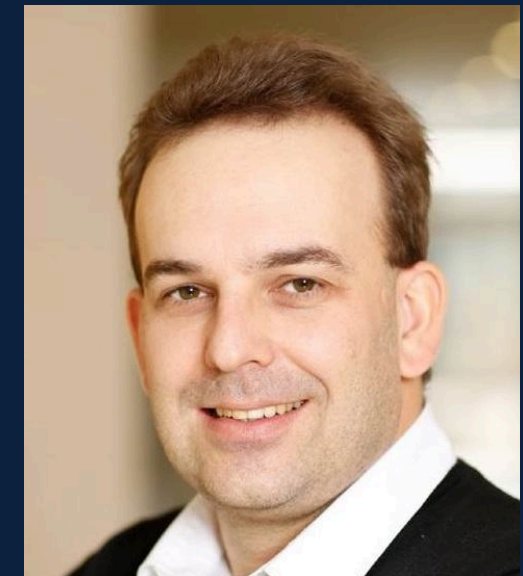
Mark Parr
Head of Technology

Buzzacott

Data: the *foundation* of AI success

Juergen Weichenberger takes it a step further, explaining how Schneider Electric uses its vast volumes of product and manufacturing data to fuel AI-driven insights. One of the company's biggest advantages is its ability to leverage in-house data, avoiding the common hurdle of relying on external datasets.

"One of our biggest strengths at Schneider is that we don't have to beg for data—we generate it ourselves. We have vast amounts of data from our own factories and from our product development processes. Every switch we design, every circuit breaker we manufacture is tested and retested, with data collected at every stage of the process. This proprietary data allows us to build highly accurate AI models that predict product durability, pinpoint potential failure points, and ensure quality before a product even hits the market. We don't need to rely on external datasets, which means we have full control over the accuracy and reliability of our insights."

Juergen Weichenberger
Vice President,
AI Strategy & Innovation

Schneider Electric

Our *conclusion...*

Collectively, these experts reinforce a fundamental truth: data is the lifeblood of AI. Without robust data management, AI tools cannot deliver the insights, efficiencies, or innovations they promise.

Companies that invest in building robust data foundations will reap the benefits of AI far more effectively than those that don't. For businesses, the "so what" here is the critical importance of prioritising data management and governance. Without a well-managed data infrastructure, AI's full potential cannot be realised.

So, time to ask yourself, how clean and effective is your data?

HARNESSING THE VALUE OF YOUR BUSINESS DATA

IWG The Global Workspace Leader

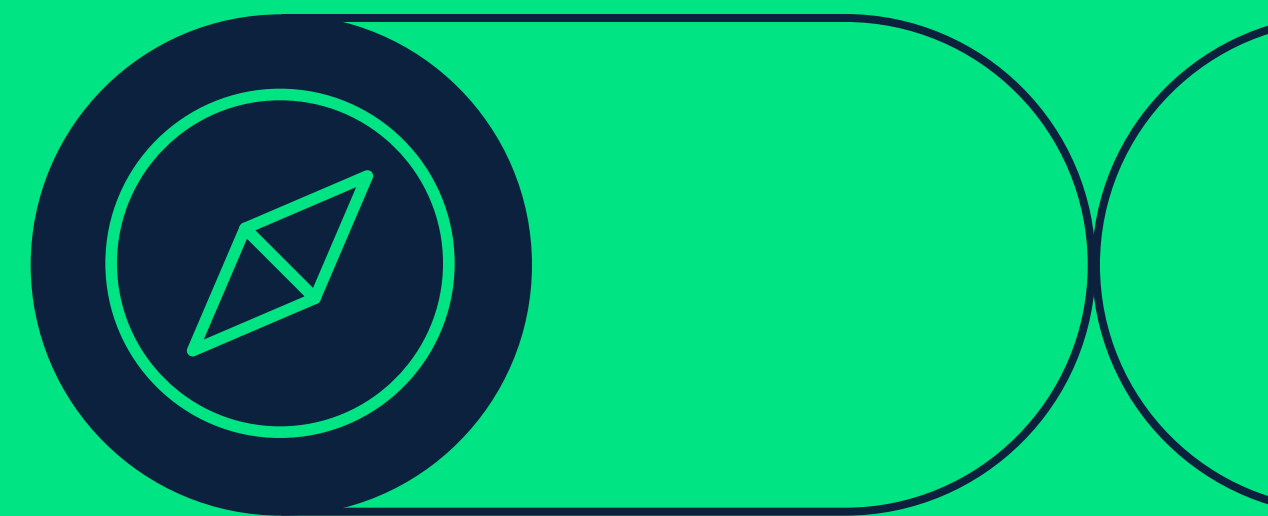**UK Power Networks**

We streamline and secure your data processes to enhance efficiency and unlock new business opportunities. Whether it's data architecture, analysis, pipelines or platforms you're in need of, we've harnessed the power of data for UK Power Networks and IWG. Learn how **here.**

03 Navigating the *challenges* of AI adoption

Navigating the *challenges* of AI adoption

Although AI offers numerous opportunities, organisations face significant challenges when adopting AI, particularly regarding regulatory concerns, data quality, and internal buy-in. A recurring issue across all industries is the lack of clarity in regulations surrounding AI, as well as the fear of reliance on AI systems without proper human oversight.

Dr. Amy Awad articulates these concerns well, pointing out that regulatory frameworks for AI often focus too much on the technology itself and not enough on the people responsible for creating and using it.

"The problem with most AI regulations is that they focus on the technology itself rather than the people who create and use it. AI is a tool—just like a car. You wouldn't regulate the car; you'd regulate the driver. The same should be true for AI. We need to hold the developers, the owners, and the users accountable for how AI is used. The danger isn't in AI itself—it's in the people who misuse it or fail to understand its limitations. In my work, especially when developing wellness solutions, we have to think about how AI will be used by individuals, how it can adapt to their needs responsibly, and how we protect their privacy and data in the process. That's where the real regulatory focus should be—not on the technology, but on the people behind it."

Dr. Amy Awad
AI Principal Director   Founder & CTO

Lenovo   **LEAN IN** WELLNESS

Navigating the *challenges* of AI adoption

Juergen Weichenberger shares similar reservations, especially in terms of trust in AI systems. At Schneider Electric, they still rely on human expertise to oversee AI processes, particularly when the risks involve human safety, such as in electrical manufacturing.

"There's a lot of excitement around the idea of fully autonomous AI systems, but the reality is, we're not there yet. In industries like ours, where we're dealing with electrical systems that could pose life-threatening risks, it's critical that humans remain in the loop. Yes, AI can identify that something is out of calibration, but it can't fix the problem on its own. In many cases, you need human expertise to interpret the data, understand the context, and make adjustments. We're not aiming to remove humans from the process—we're aiming to enhance human decision-making with AI. It's a partnership, not a replacement. And in our line of work, that partnership is vital for ensuring safety and reliability."
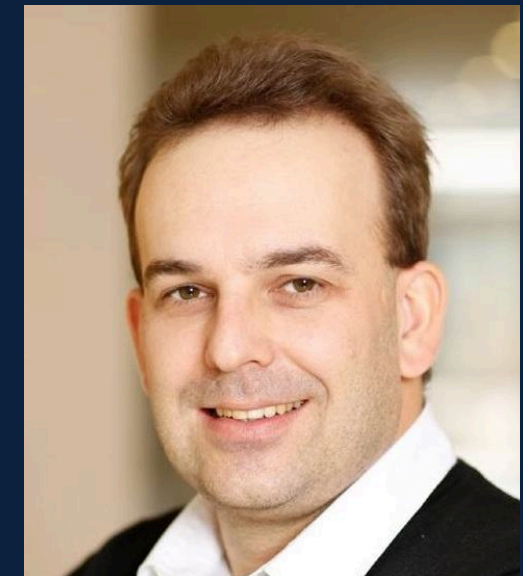
Juergen Weichenberger
Vice President,
AI Strategy & Innovation

Schneider Electric

Navigating the *challenges* of AI adoption

Mark Parr and Tarun Rana both touched on the internal challenges of getting teams on board with AI projects. At Buzzacott, data maturity delays AI's potential impact, and for Tarun, the cultural shift required to adopt AI-driven decision-making has been significant. Tarun states:

"Looking back, I saw firsthand how overwhelming it can be for people to adapt to AI integration. At one point, we had more than 1000 dashboards in use, which underscores the sheer volume of data involved. Introducing AI into a company's operations isn't just a technical endeavour—it's a cultural shift. People often resist change, especially if there's a perception that technology might replace their roles. We invested heavily in education and training to reassure teams that AI was there to support, not supplant, their work. Addressing concerns, building trust, and demonstrating AI's potential to enhance rather than replace jobs were vital steps. It was a gradual process, but essential for achieving genuine buy-in across the organisation."

Tarun Rana
ex- Head of Data & Analytics, now Managing Partner and Co-founder

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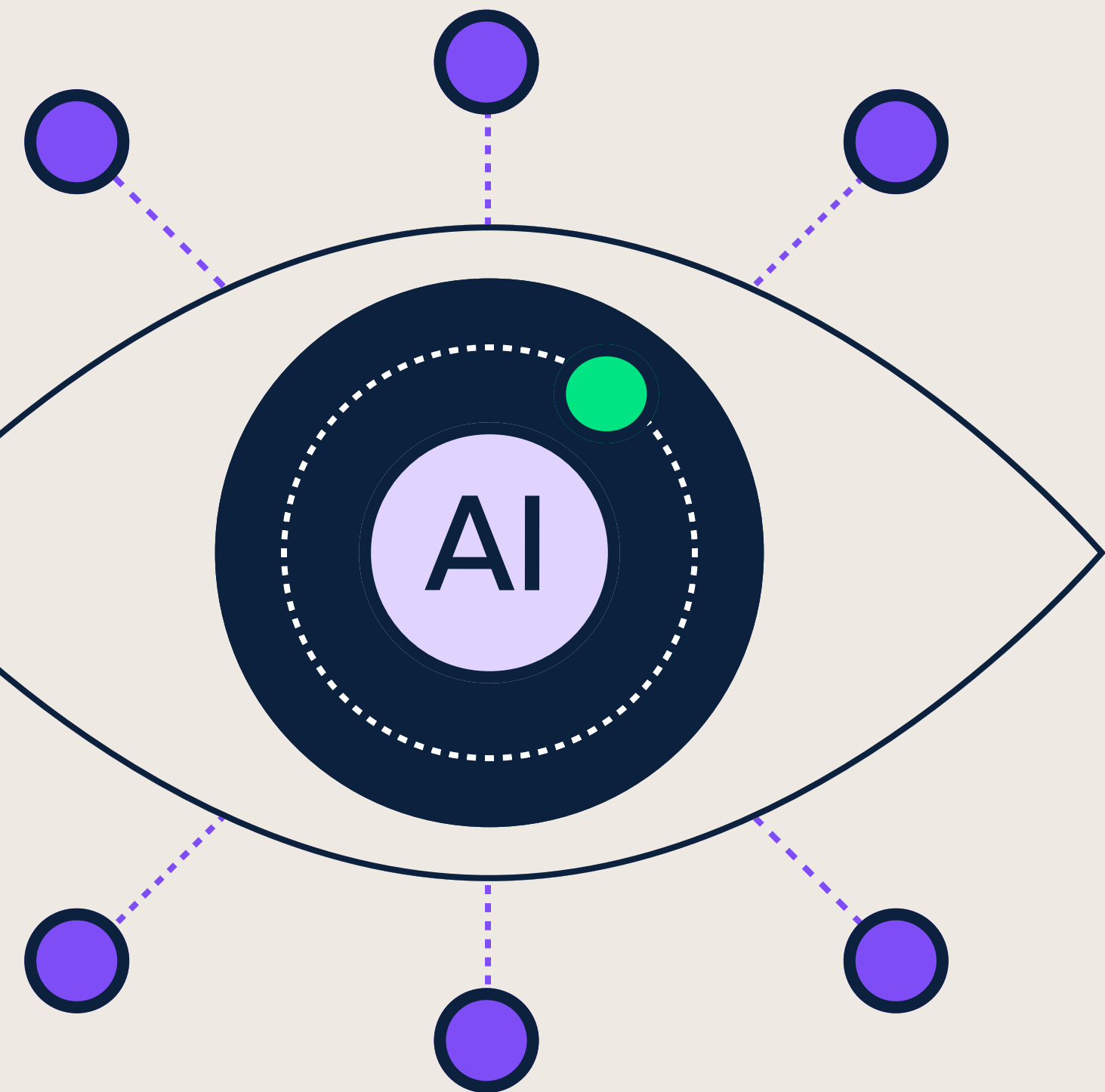
Our *conclusion...*

These perspectives highlight the ongoing challenges that companies face in fully adopting AI. While the technology is ready, the human and regulatory frameworks often lag behind, creating barriers to seamless implementation.

The major takeaway here is that AI adoption isn't just about technology; it's about people. Trust in AI systems, especially in high-stakes industries, cannot be built overnight. Organisations must foster a culture where AI is seen as an enabler, not a replacement, and must work to build the regulatory frameworks that focus on human accountability. For companies, the challenge lies not just in integrating AI but in ensuring that human oversight, ethical considerations, and internal buy-in are firmly in place.

IS YOUR BUSINESS'S OPERATING MODEL THE BIGGEST HURDLE TO AI ADOPTION?
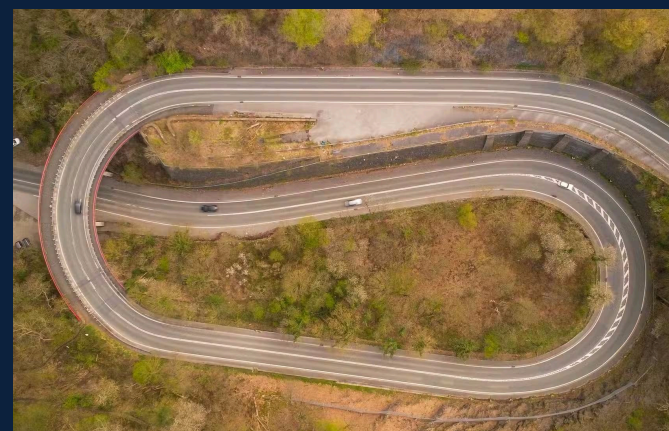
Our Head of Consulting, James Scott-Flanagan, has been sharing insights on how to navigate the adoption of AI at scale in a business setting. In his opinion, it's not overstepping to suggest that a business' operating model may be the biggest hurdle to adoption. Read the article **here.**

The Drum

04

AI for *sustainability*: a growing priority

AI for *sustainability*: a growing priority

As companies look to the future, one of the most exciting developments in AI is its potential to drive sustainability efforts. From energy optimisation to carbon reduction, AI is playing a crucial role in helping organisations meet their sustainability targets.

For Tarun Rana, AI has been instrumental in optimising energy use in factories, helping his last company prepare to meet its ambitious goal of becoming climate positive by 2030.

"From past initiatives, I've seen how AI can drive sustainability efforts forward. For instance, we set ambitious climate goals, including becoming climate-positive by 2030, and AI played a pivotal role in progressing toward those targets. By implementing real-time energy monitoring and optimisation, we significantly reduced energy waste and lowered carbon emissions across operations. AI provided precise insights into energy usage, highlighted areas for adjustment, and helped ensure maximum efficiency. This approach went beyond simply meeting targets—AI was instrumental in embedding sustainability as a core part of operations."

Tarun Rana
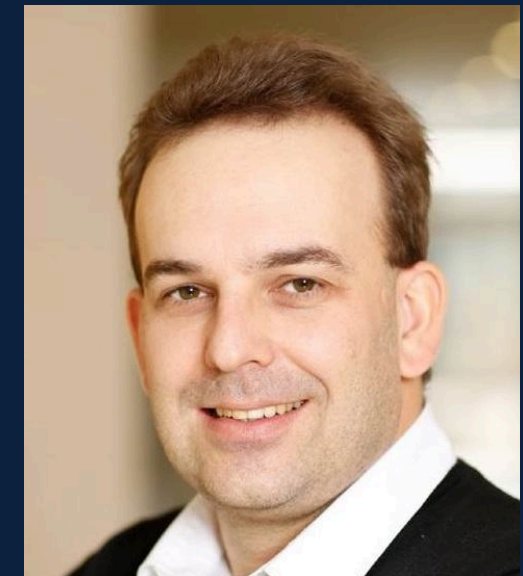ex- Head of Data & Analytics, now Managing Partner and Co-founder

AMSTERDAM DATA LABS

AI for *sustainability*: a growing priority

Schneider Electric has also embraced AI for sustainability, using it to improve energy efficiency and manage the carbon output of its operations. As Juergen Weichenberger explains, AI helps Schneider monitor energy markets and make real-time decisions about when to consume or store energy, all while staying carbon-neutral.

"Sustainability is a major focus for us at Schneider, and AI is one of the most powerful tools we have to achieve our goals. We use AI to monitor energy markets, predict pricing trends, and make real-time decisions about when to consume or store energy. This allows us to reduce our reliance on the grid during peak times and lower our overall carbon output. But it's not just about reducing emissions—it's also about doing it in a way that's cost-effective. AI helps us stay carbon-neutral while ensuring that we're not sacrificing profitability. It's a win-win."

Juergen Weichenberger

Vice President,
AI Strategy & Innovation

Schneider
Electric

AI for *sustainability*: a growing priority

Even at startup level, there is room for a sustainability mindset, albeit on a more personal scale. Dr. Amy Awad's work in creating LeanIn Wellness emphasises the importance of holistic well-being, which is intertwined with sustainability on an individual level.

"When people think about sustainability, they often focus on the environmental side of things, but there's also a personal sustainability aspect to consider. AI can help people make better choices for their own wellbeing —whether it's managing stress, improving sleep, or adopting healthier habits. In the long run, this creates a ripple effect where healthier individuals contribute to a healthier planet. It's about sustainability on a personal level, and AI helps make those choices easier and more accessible."

Dr. Amy Awad
AI Principal Director   Founder & CTO

Lenovo   **LEAN IN** WELLNESS
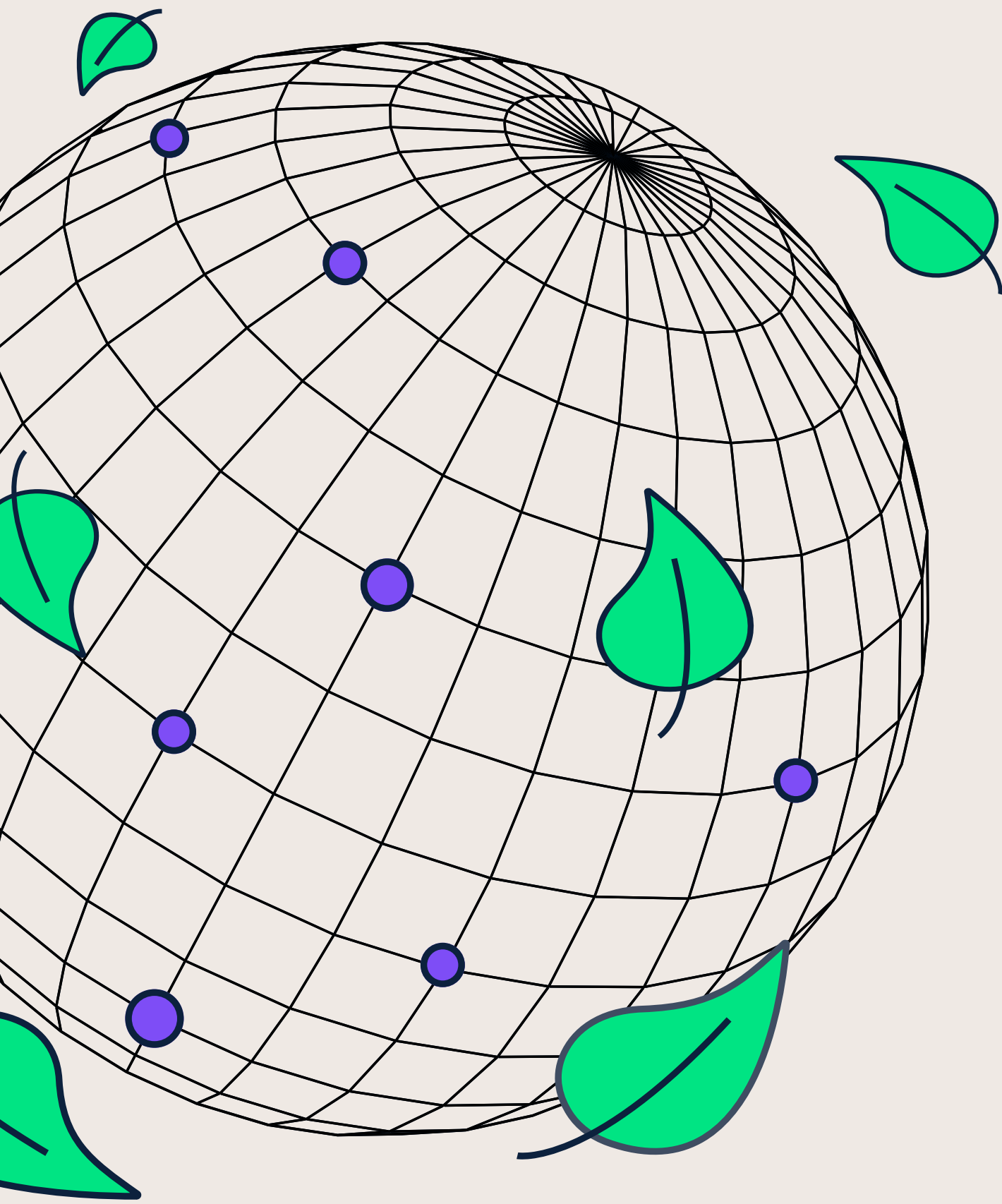
Our *conclusion*...

These examples demonstrate that AI is not only a tool for efficiency and cost savings, but also a powerful force for driving sustainability, making it an increasingly indispensable part of corporate strategy. That said, all our experts also acknowledged that carbon emissions are, nevertheless, on the rise despite these efficiencies. Quite simply, as our reliance on AI grows, so too does our use of data centres and other emission-heavy tech.

For companies, the "so what" here is that AI can (in theory) help achieve sustainability goals without compromising profitability. But is it possible to truly balance the scales (or even fully tip them!) in favour of environmentally friendly tech and AI practices?

As regulatory pressures around the environment grow and consumers increasingly demand greener practices, AI will become an indispensable tool for finding an equilibrium between environmental responsibility and business success. It's our belief that much of this hinges on the "how" behind AI's use and adoption. The possibilities for creating efficiencies around traditional processes are vast, but doing so in a way that consciously accounts for the full environmental journey is paramount to truly moving the dial on sustainability.

WANT TO GET CLOSER TO A GREENER DIGITAL PRACTICE?

As mentioned above, an earlier report from Tangent sought to expose the "digital sustainability gap" – evidencing the theory that there is high recognition and awareness of the need for change, but not that much concrete action yet. If you are keen to learn more about sustainable system design, AI practices and UX principles, read our white paper **here**.

05

The *future* of AI: specialised models and human collaboration

The *future* of AI: specialised models and human collaboration

As AI technologies evolve, the focus is shifting from generalised models to more specialised AI systems tailored to specific industries and use cases. The rise of Generative AI and Large Language Models (LLMs) has dominated recent discourse, but experts (including most of those interviewed for this report) believe that specialised, domain-specific models are the future.

Dr. Amy Awad, for example, sees the potential for Gen AI to revolutionise wellness and mental health support by providing highly personalised, real-time interactions that adapt to individual needs.

"Generative AI is going to change everything about how we interact with technology. Imagine a world where you can speak to an AI system, and it gives you personalised recommendations on how to manage stress, improve your mental health, or even make better decisions about your physical well-being. We're just scratching the surface of what's possible. In the next few years, I see AI becoming an even more integrated part of our daily lives—something that helps us in ways we can't even fully imagine yet. The future of AI isn't just about big data or machine learning—it's about human collaboration. It's about creating systems that adapt to us, learn from us, and help us grow."

Dr. Amy Awad
AI Principal Director
Lenovo

Founder & CTO
LEAN IN WELLNESS

The *future* of AI: specialised models and human collaboration

At Schneider Electric, Juergen Weichenberger is already exploring the possibilities of smaller, more targeted AI models. These specialised models allow Schneider to reduce the overhead costs of running AI systems while still delivering high-impact results.

"The future of AI isn't in these massive, generalised models—it's in specialisation. At Schneider, we're looking at how we can scale down AI models so they can run on more affordable hardware, like CPUs instead of GPUs. That not only makes AI more accessible, but it also reduces the energy consumption associated with running these models. We're building AI solutions that are tailored to our specific needs—whether it's optimising energy use, improving product durability, or ensuring safety in our manufacturing processes. Smaller, specialised models are going to be key to making AI more efficient and cost-effective in the future."
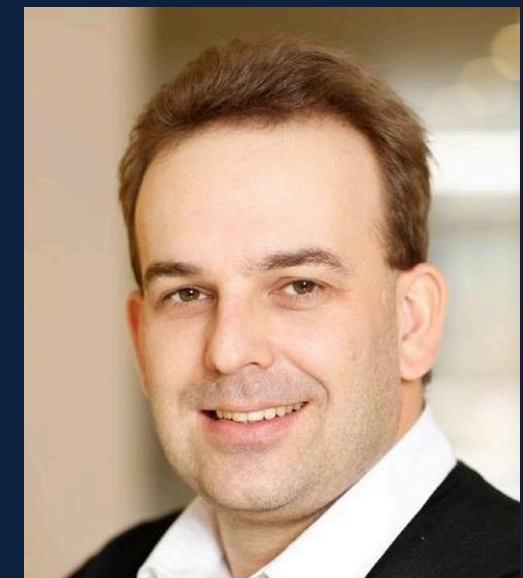
Juergen Weichenberger
Vice President,
AI Strategy & Innovation

Schneider Electric

The *future* of AI: specialised models and human collaboration

Mark Parr also predicts that AI in accountancy will follow this path, with specialised AI tools enhancing the work of accountants rather than replacing them.

"The idea that AI will replace human workers is a myth. AI is a tool that enhances what we do—it doesn't replace us. In industries like accountancy, AI can take over the repetitive tasks, but when it comes to making complex decisions or providing strategic insights, that's where human expertise comes in. The future isn't about choosing between AI or humans—it's about bringing the two together to create something more powerful."
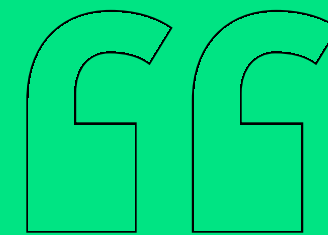
Mark Parr
Head of Technology

Buzzacott

Our *conclusion*...

It seems clear that the future of AI lies in specialisation and collaboration. According to our experts, businesses should focus on developing AI models that are tailored to their specific needs, rather than relying on one-size-fits-all solutions. Moreover, human-AI collaboration will be key to unlocking the full potential of these technologies. Companies that embrace this approach will be able to leverage AI to drive innovation, reduce costs, improve sustainability credentials and even streamline decision-making, while still relying on human expertise for strategic oversight.

So, whilst we encourage big ambitions when it comes to AI, maybe something smaller and more specialised is better to suited to your business?

FROM POC TO OWNED IP...

For any stage of your AI journey, from developing POC through to building your own IP, it's never too early or late to talk things through with the experts.

To find out more about our AI services, head **here.**

More AI thinking from tangent

Interested in hearing a little more from us around the current landscape of AI? We've been sharing our thoughts on everything from adopting the perfect language model to finding the best partner for your AI ambitions. Read more here:

→

(01) How to find a large language model match made in heaven

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(02) Implementing AI 'quick wins' might be the best tech strategy right now

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(03) Humanizing AI is an ethical conundrum. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it

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(04) How to stand out in the AI market

CLICK TO LISTEN

(05) AI for the everyday user: isn't that what it's all about?

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(06) Beware the AI charlatans: 5 questions you should ask potential partners

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Take the *next* *step* on your AI journey

Get in touch →

AI is no longer a distant dream—it's an essential part of today's business landscape. From optimising operations to driving sustainability, AI is transforming how companies operate, innovate, and compete. However, as the expert opinions captured in this anthology have demonstrated, successful AI adoption is about more than just technology. It requires a strong data foundation, a culture of trust and collaboration, and a focus on sustainability and specialisation.

For businesses, the path forward is clear: those that invest in AI will be better positioned to thrive in an increasingly competitive market. But success in AI isn't just about implementing new tools—it's about integrating the correct AI into the very fabric of the organisation, ensuring that humans and machines work together to drive innovation, efficiency, and long-term success.

We'd love to help you take the next step on your AI journey, feel free to get in touch.

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