

IBM Study: CEOs Double Down on AI While Navigating Enterprise Hurdles

- CEO respondents say they expect the growth rate of AI investments will more than double over the next two years
- 50% of surveyed CEOs report that rapid investment has resulted in disconnected technology within their organization



ARMONK, N.Y., May 6, 2025 – A new global study by the IBM (NYSE:IBM) Institute for Business Value found that surveyed CEOs are committed to advancing AI solutions across their organization even as they face challenges from accelerating technology adoption.

The [IBM CEO study](#),* which surveyed 2,000 CEOs globally, revealed that executive respondents expect the growth rate of AI investments to more than double in the next two years, and 61% confirm they are actively adopting AI agents today and preparing to implement them at scale.

According to the findings, 68% of surveyed CEOs identify integrated enterprise-wide data architecture as critical for cross-functional collaboration, and 72% view their organization's proprietary data as key to unlocking the value of generative AI. However, the research indicates organizations may be struggling to cultivate an effective data environment: half (50%) of respondents acknowledge that the pace of recent investments has left their organization with disconnected, piecemeal technology.

In the foreword of the study, **IBM Vice Chairman Gary Cohn** writes, "As AI adoption accelerates creating greater efficiency, and productivity gains, the ultimate pay-off will only come to CEOs with the courage to embrace risk as opportunity. Meaning, focusing on what you can control, especially when there is so much you can't. When the business environment is uncertain, using AI and your enterprise data to identify where you have leverage is a competitive advantage. At this point, leaders who aren't leveraging AI and their own data to move forward are making a conscious business decision not to compete."

"CEOs are balancing the pressures of short-term ROI and investing in long-term innovation when it comes to adopting AI," said **Mohamad Ali, Senior Vice President and Head of IBM Consulting** "But we know that organizations that keep innovating, especially during periods of uncertainty, will emerge stronger and be better positioned to capitalize on new opportunities."

Other key findings include:

CEOs face competing pressures of short-term ROI and long-term innovation

- Surveyed CEOs report that only 25% of AI initiatives have delivered expected ROI over the last few years, and only 16% have scaled enterprise wide.
- To accelerate progress, two-thirds (65%) of CEO respondents say their organization is leaning into AI use cases based on ROI, with 68% reporting that their organization has clear metrics to measure innovation ROI effectively.
- Just over half (52%) of CEO respondents say their organization is realizing value from generative AI investments beyond cost reduction.
- 64% of CEOs surveyed acknowledge that the risk of falling behind drives investment in some technologies before they have a clear understanding of the value they bring to the organization, but only 37% say it's better to be "fast and wrong" than "right and slow" when it comes to technology adoption.
- 59% of surveyed CEOs admit their organization struggles to balance funding for existing operations and investment in innovation when unexpected change occurs, as 67% say more budget flexibility is needed to capitalize on digital opportunities that drive long-term growth and innovation.
- By 2027, 85% of surveyed CEOs expect their investments in scaled AI efficiency and cost savings to have returned a positive ROI, while 77% expect to see a positive return from their investments in scaled AI growth and expansion.

CEOs see strategic leadership and specialized talent as essential to unlocking AI value, amid expertise and skills gaps

- 69% of CEO respondents say their organization's success is directly tied to maintaining a broad group of leaders with a deep understanding of strategy and the authority to make critical decisions.
- 67% of CEOs surveyed say that differentiation depends on having the right expertise in the right positions with the right incentives.
- CEOs cite lack of collaboration across organizational silos, aversion to risk and disruption, and lack of expertise and knowledge as top barriers to innovation in their organization.
- Surveyed CEOs say roughly one-third (31%) of the workforce will require retraining and/or reskilling over the next three years, while 65% say their organization will use automation to address skill gaps.
- 54% of CEO respondents say they are hiring for roles related to AI that did not exist a year ago.

To view the full study, visit: <https://www.ibm.com/thought-leadership/institute-business-value/en-us/c-suite-study/ceo>

***Study Methodology**

The IBM Institute for Business Value, in cooperation with Oxford Economics, surveyed 2,000 CEOs from 33 countries and 24 industries between February and April 2025. Survey questions covered several key areas, including organizational performance, strategic priorities and innovation challenges. The survey also explored how companies manage change, adopt technology like AI, make decisions, leadership approaches, talent strategies, cultural readiness for transformation, collaboration efforts and regulatory concerns.

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