



Gen AI benchmark 2025 edition

July 2025

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We present our 2025 Gen AI Benchmark to accelerate value creation

At SparkOptimus, we've seen how Gen AI can unlock meaningful business value, driving efficiency, and enabling new ways of working. This year we have seen a significant increase in momentum: companies are running more pilots, setting clearer ambitions, and scaling their first use cases, while Agentic AI promises even more impact.

But while progress is undeniable, the rollout of Gen AI at scale remains difficult. Many organizations face common roadblocks: fragmented ownership, lack of integration into

core business processes, and unclear value metrics. As a result, efforts often remain siloed, with real impact still constrained to isolated teams or use cases.

This benchmark follows our 2024 benchmark to combine insights from our work with leading organizations and the voices of digital decision-makers across industries. I hope it helps you assess your own progress, spark ideas, and confidently shape your next steps.

Many thanks to all participants who shared their perspectives.

Matti van Engelen

Associate partner | Practice Lead Data & AI



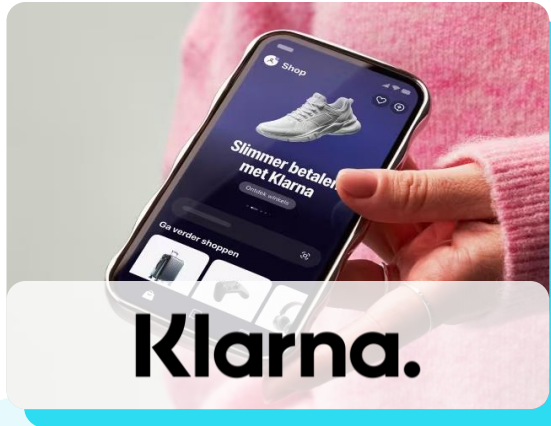
Sectors interviewed (50+ participants)



Executive summary

- **Gen AI is already delivering up to 70% impact** in leading industries and functions within companies
- This impact can only be achieved if **Gen AI is rolled out at scale and embedded in the core of the business**, based on best practice lessons from winners
- **Common barriers** to achieve value at scale are **underinvestment in people** and **focus on individual use cases instead of reinventing** proposition & operating model
- To achieve impact and scale while building capabilities, **SparkOptimus has a proven approach** based on 15 years of experience in digital, data, & Gen AI transformation

Huge impact is being realized across industries with Generative AI



... uses Gen AI to resolve customer inquiries, with **up to 82% faster issue resolution**



... uses Gen AI to produce new code, with **up to 25% reduction in development time**

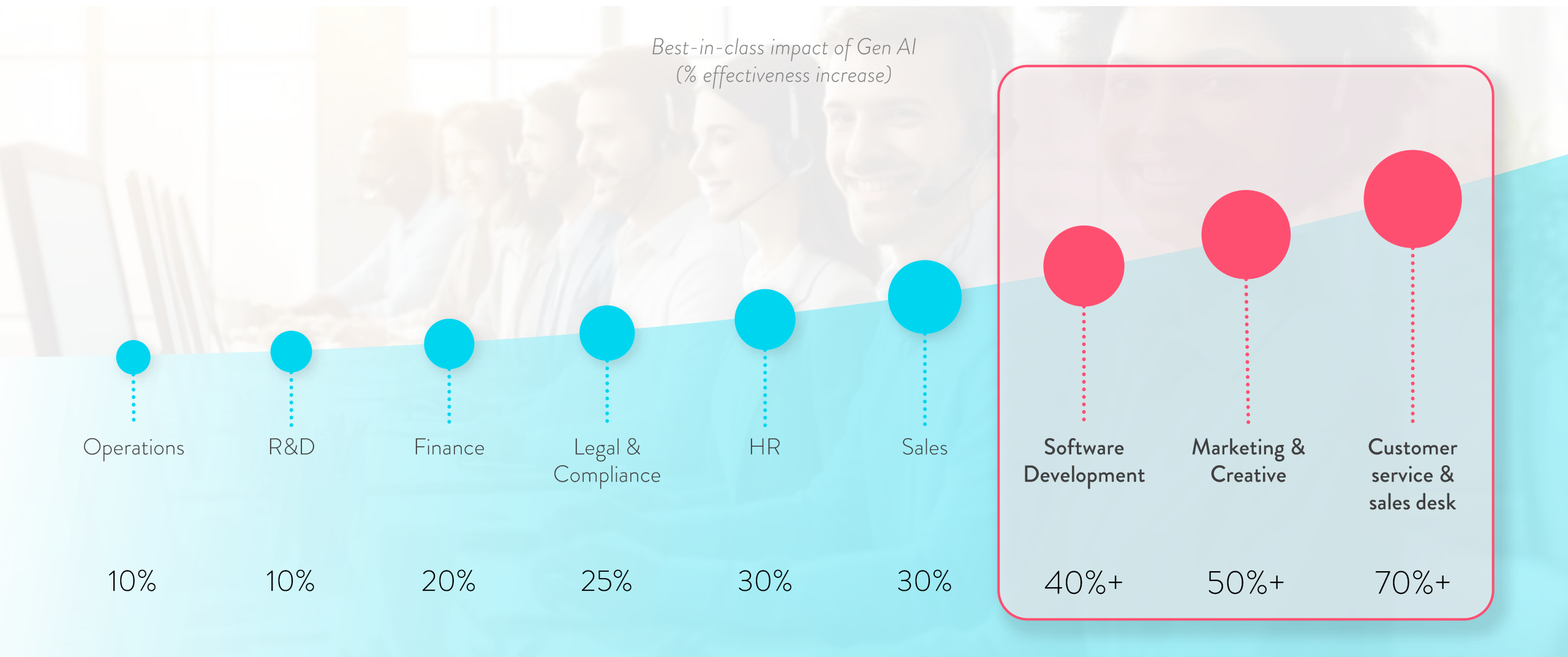


... uses Gen AI for marketing image creation, with **up to 50% cheaper production**



... uses Gen AI to increase industrial **repair & maintenance speed by 25%**

Gen AI is already delivering up to 70% impact in frontrunner functions...



... with new frontiers being explored, accelerated by agentic AI...

Department

Customer service & sales desk

Marketing & Creative

Software development

Sales

HR

Legal & compliance

Finance & controlling

R&D

Operations



Value creation at scale by frontrunners

AI chatbots & fully AI-supported internal operations

Content creation at scale & speed

Organization-wide adoption of Gen AI coding tools

Automated pitches, logging & follow-ups

L&D and core HR content creation

Ad hoc Gen AI usage for content creation & review

Financial and ESG reporting

Accelerated idea generation & prototyping

Improved knowledge management



The new frontier

Consumer- & customer-facing AI voice bots

Fully personalized marketing

Agent-first development

Hyper-personalization & conversion optimization

Personalized development & training

Automated legal & compliance analysis

Forecasting & scenario planning

Automated innovation discovery

Real-time autonomous operations

... yet common barriers remain for most companies to achieve value at scale...

Key challenge ...

Despite increased experimentation,
**most companies struggle to move
beyond pilots to impact at scale**



... common reasons



Companies do **not truly reinvent their customer proposition & operating model**, instead focusing on efficiency-driven individual use cases



Insufficient leadership from the top: limited GenAI knowledge & unclear priorities limit daily execution



Limited adoption into daily operations due to underinvestment in people & lack of targets, incentives, skills, and structures



AI tech & data infrastructure not in place to rapidly scale use cases once proven

... and even those who are creating impact at scale, now realize there is a fine balance between AI efficiency and delivering a sustainable, superior customer value proposition



“As cost unfortunately seems to have been a too predominant evaluation factor when organizing this, what you end up having is lower quality.”

CEO Klarna

Klarna.



“I do not see AI as replacing what our employees do. I see it as a tool to accelerate what we do, at the same or better level of quality.”

CEO Duolingo

duolingo



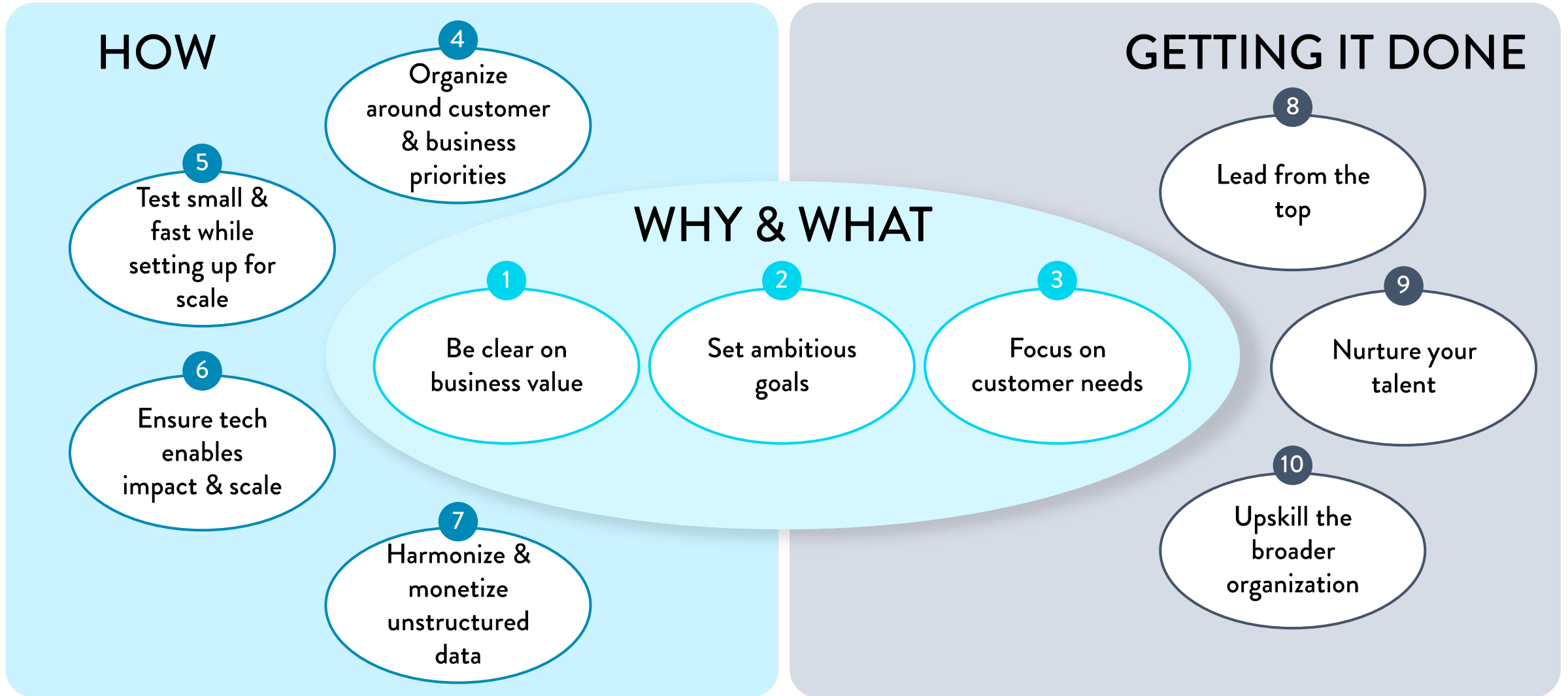
“Today, more than a quarter of all new code at Google is generated by AI, then reviewed and accepted by engineers. This helps our engineers do more and move faster.”

CEO Google

Google

Real impact requires scaling Gen AI across the business and embedding it at the core ...

SparkOptimus AI transformation framework



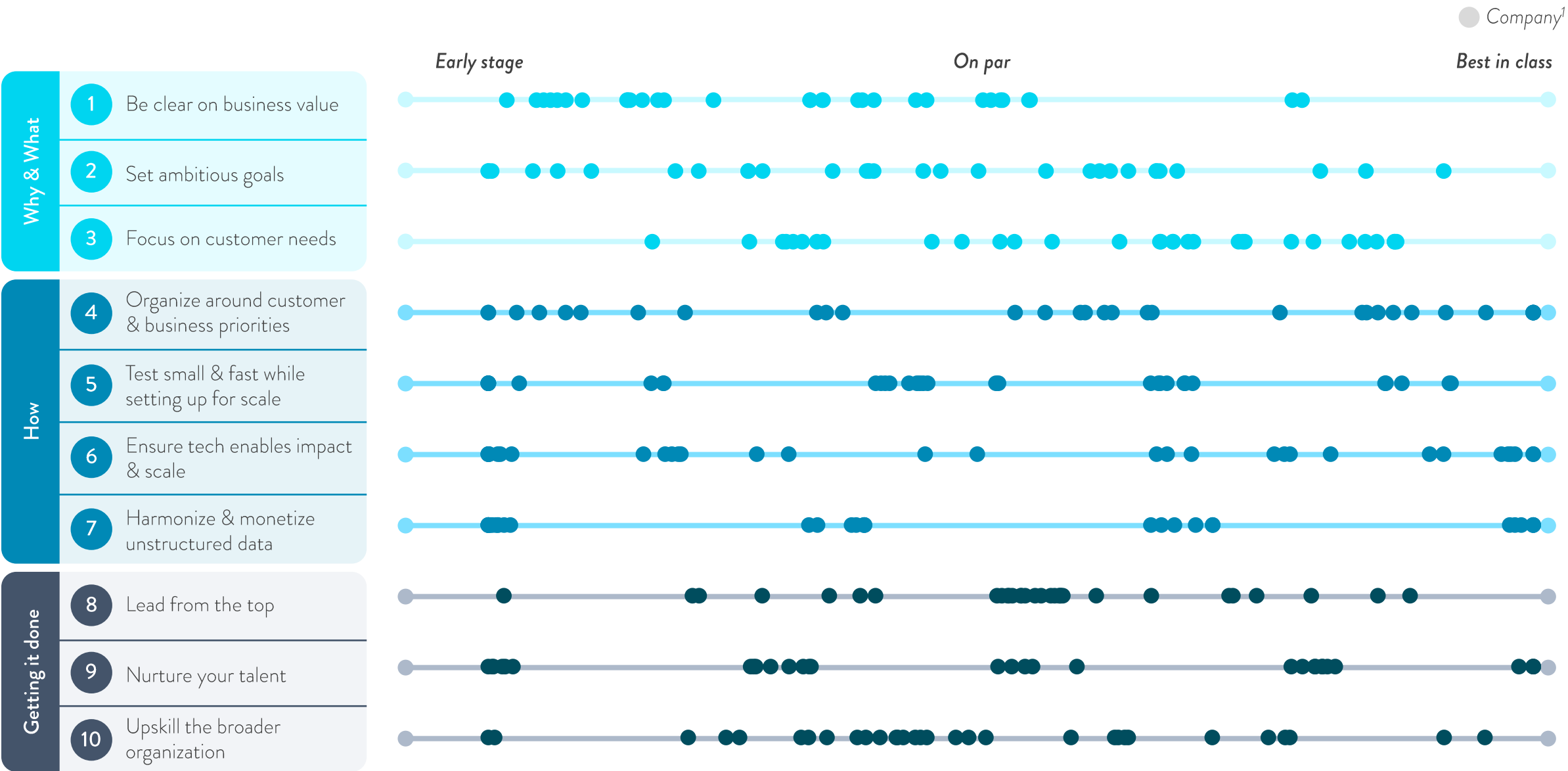
... based on lessons from winners who successfully created value at scale from AI & Digital

SparkOptimus expertise

Lesson

Why & What	1	Be clear on business value	Prioritize AI use cases addressing customer needs & barriers, based on expected value & feasibility
	2	Set ambitious goals	Set a bold 10+ year 'AI North Star' with an overarching, quantified ambition and underlying objectives
	3	Focus on customer needs	Start from user segments and their needs & barriers, and work backwards from there
How	4	Organize around customer & business priorities	Ensure biz-tech collaboration during use case ideation & implementation, to prevent tech-first solutions
	5	Test small & fast while setting up for scale	Test use cases in a low-risk, small-scale set-up, to prove value before investing in scale
	6	Ensure tech enables impact & scale	Build AI tech & data infrastructure in parallel with testing use cases, to rapidly scale use cases once proven
	7	Harmonize & monetize unstructured data	Understand which new & existing data is needed per use case, work backwards from there (e.g., <i>standardization</i>)
Getting it done	8	Lead from the top	Set AI priorities top-down & allocate resources accordingly; enable teams to determine the 'how' bottom-up
	9	Nurture your talent	Use existing development capacity instead of new talent; build AI collab-hub to share learnings & grow skill base
	10	Upskill the broader organization	Upskill the <i>entire</i> workforce to understand the opportunities, risks, limitations, and best-practices of using AI

Our Gen AI benchmark shows that some companies are already applying those lessons...



¹ Benchmarked with 50+ companies across Financial services, Retail, Energy & utilities, CPG, and industrials

... with frontrunners executing multiple pilots, building a more mature tech stack, and increasing adoption across the enterprise

2025 frontrunners

2024 frontrunners

Maturity

... **scattered pilots** without a clear strategic direction

Business ownership

... **tech-led use case development** with limited business involvement

Tech base

... **fragmented off-the-shelf tooling** limiting scalability

Adoption depth

... **limited use or understanding** among employees & management

... **majority of companies have a (Gen) AI strategy** with multiple pilots running

... **business increasingly involved** in ideating & testing use cases

... **centralized tech stacks & self-built solutions** driving scale, including with Agentic AI

... **most employees using Gen AI** and high board-level sponsorship

However, key challenges remain to realize value at scale for most organizations

Why & What	1	Be clear on business value
	2	Set ambitious goals
	3	Focus on customer needs
How	4	Organize around customer & business priorities
	5	Test small & fast while setting up for scale
	6	Ensure tech enables impact & scale
	7	Harmonize & monetize unstructured data
Getting it done	8	Lead from the top
	9	Nurture your talent
	10	Upskill the broader organization

Key challenges

70% of use cases are never piloted and **60% of piloted use cases are never scaled** across the business

75% do not have quantified ambitions to back up their strategic goals

75% have no view on how Gen AI impacts the core proposition, only focusing on internal efficiency gains

65% lead design & build of Gen AI solutions from IT instead of involving business everywhere

75% report a lack Gen AI skills, 50% a lack of management attention, and 40% unclear ROI as key blockers for scaling

50% have no centralized AI infrastructure in place to support Gen AI use case testing and scaling

55% have no strategy in place to manage quality of unstructured data limiting impact of many use cases

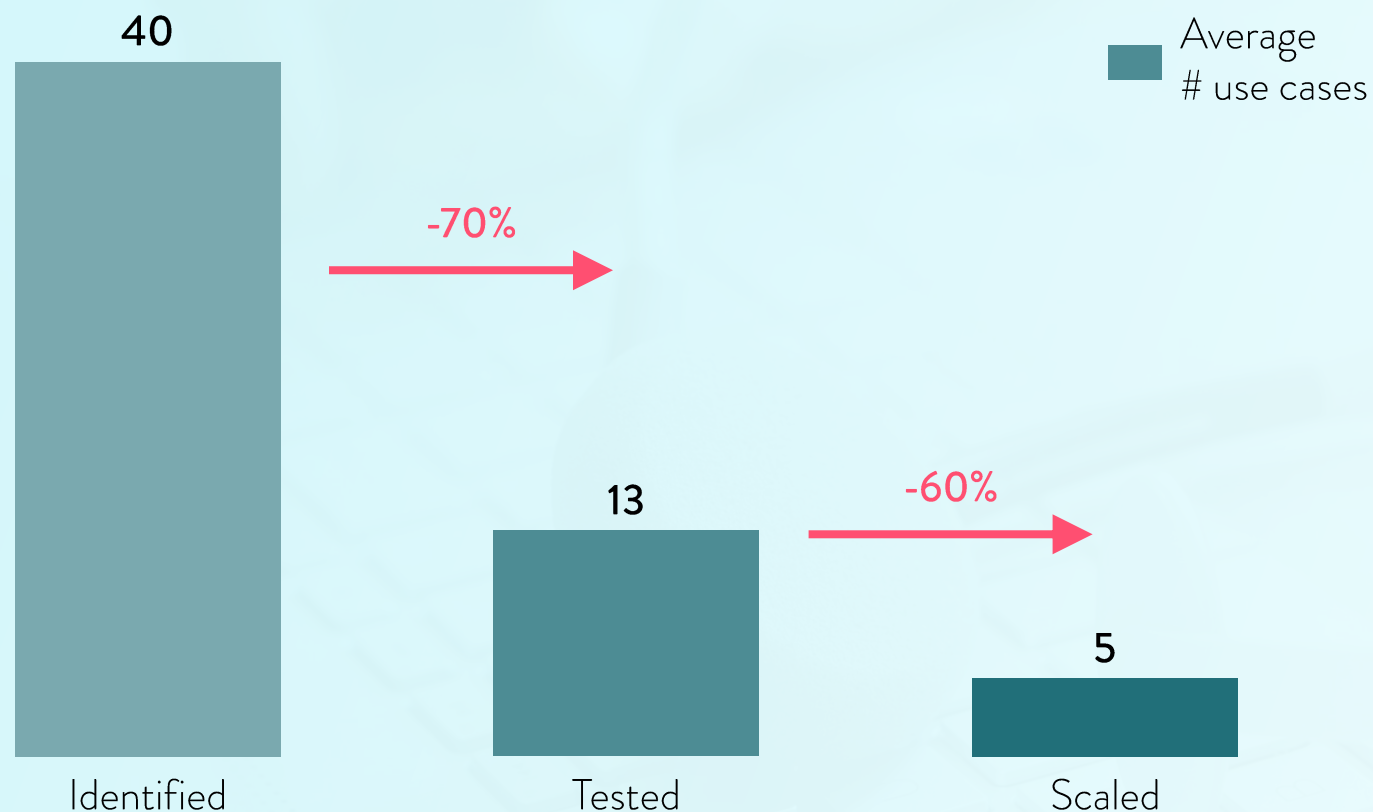
70% of executive sponsorship does not translate to daily execution and **80% lack incentives to drive adoption**

60% have no internal AI development capabilities and rely on slow & expensive outsourced capabilities

60% of employees have insufficient skill level and **80% of the workforce have not been upskilled** on Gen AI

01 | Many use cases are identified, but scaling remains a challenge

How many use cases have you identified, tested, and scaled?



What's new

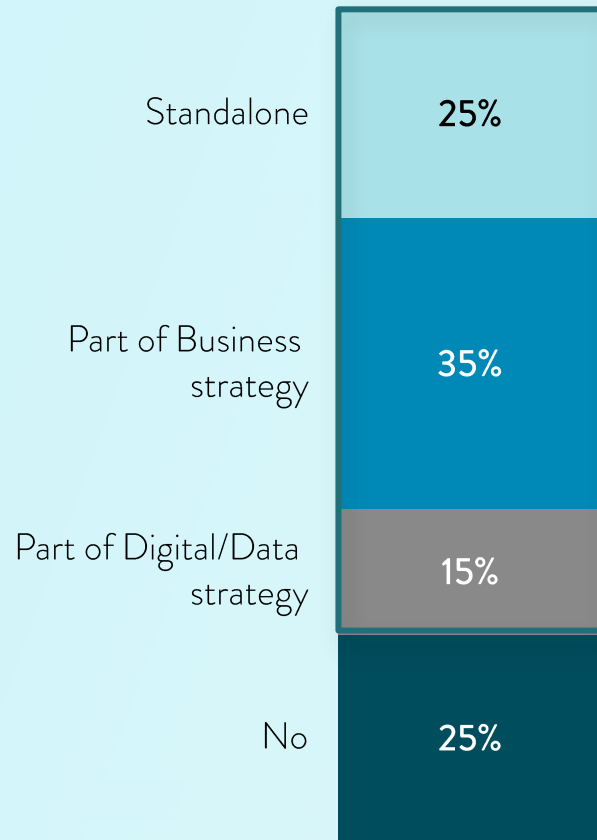
- NEW** Companies have a clear view on potential value-creating use cases across multiple departments, with companies commonly identifying 50+ use cases, vs. ~20 last year
- NEW** 99%+ of participants have at least 1 pilot running, with many running 10+, a large shift from last year, when many participants had not started piloting yet

Ongoing challenges

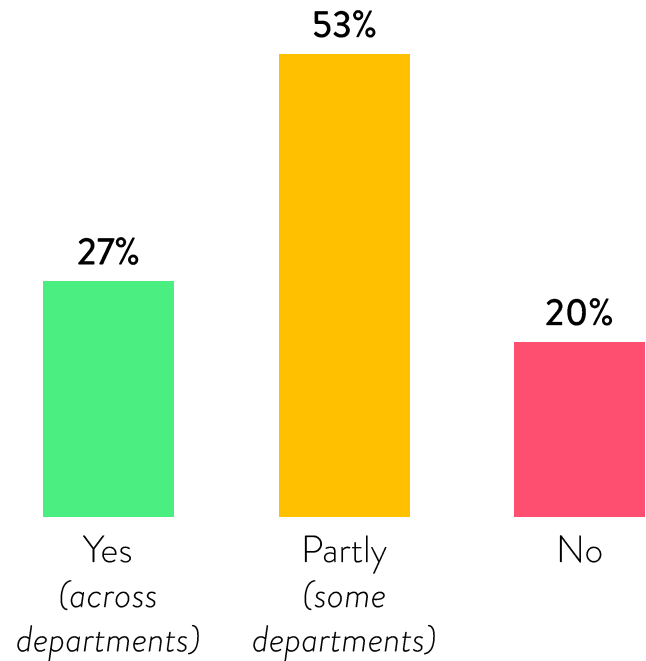
- 🎯** Effectively scaling Gen AI past the pilot phase remains difficult for most companies

02 | More and more companies have a Gen AI strategy, but typically lack quantified ambitions

Is there a (Gen) AI strategy?



Are there quantified ambitions for (Gen) AI across departments?



What's **new**

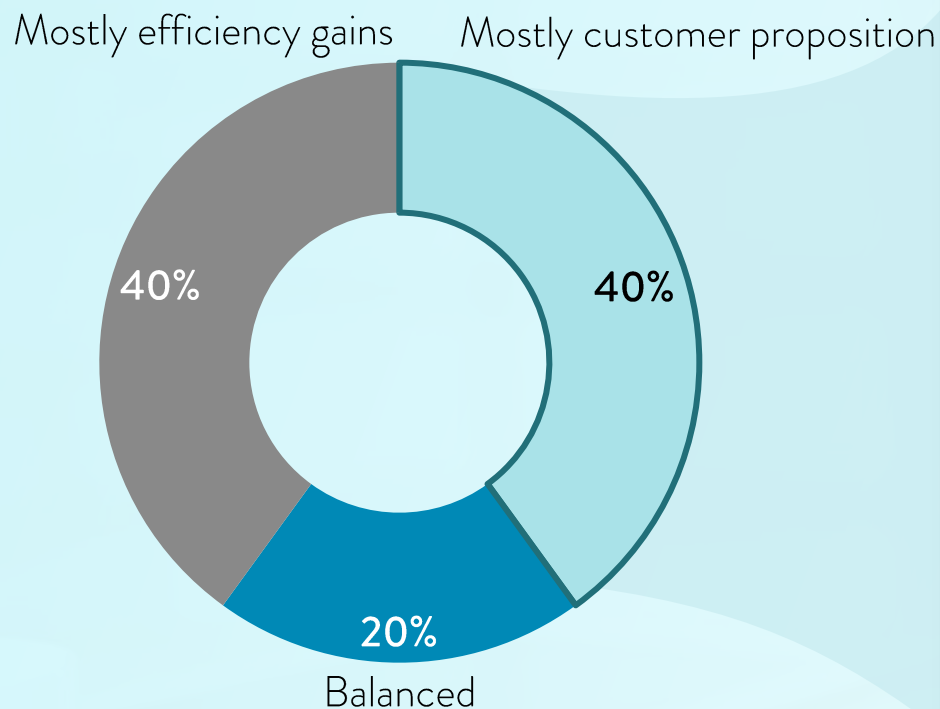
- NEW** 75% of companies now have a **Gen AI strategy**, a major improvement over last year's 40%
- NEW** Increasing number of participants now have a **standalone (Gen AI) strategy**, whereas last year this was true for <10% of participants

Ongoing **challenges**

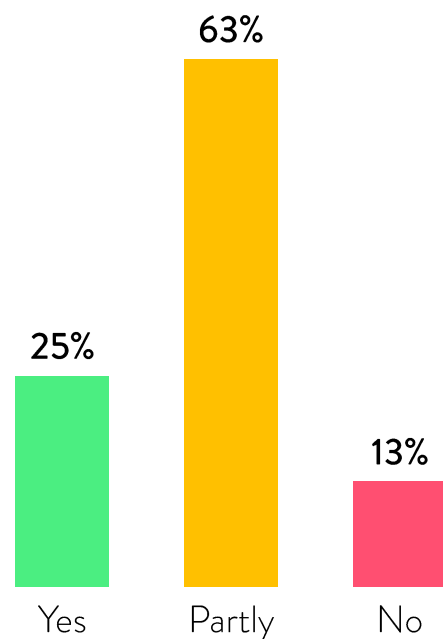
- 🎯** Only 25% of companies back up their **Gen AI strategy with quantified ambitions**, a similar proportion to last year, making it hard to measure progress towards Gen AI goals

03 | The majority of companies only have a partial or no view on Gen AI impact on customers

Are use cases typically focused on efficiency gains or on improving your core proposition?



Is there a clear view on Gen AI impact on your customer proposition?



What's **new**

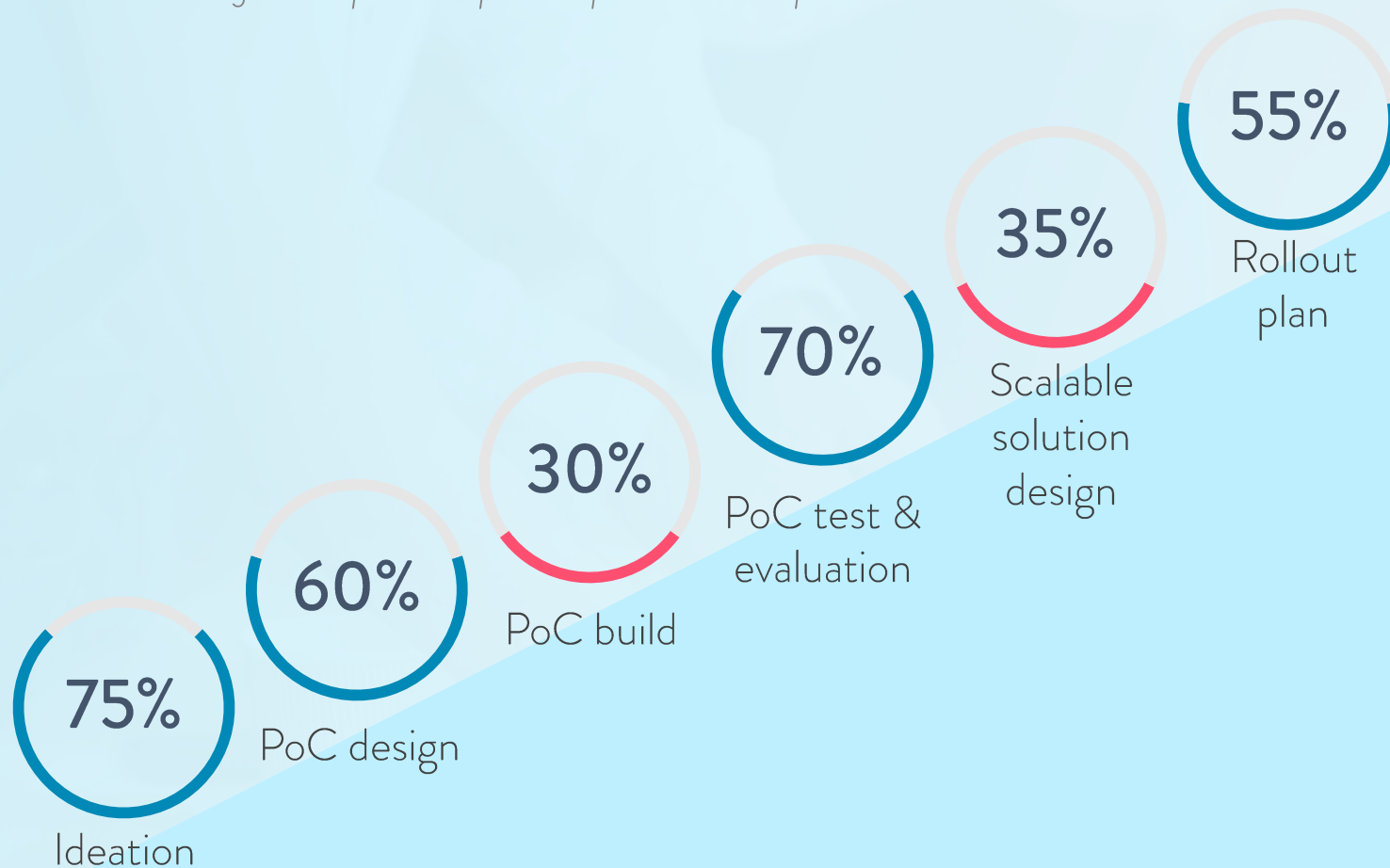
- NEW** Frontrunners are increasingly expanding their focus to improving the customer proposition instead of internal efficiency gains only

Ongoing **challenges**

- Most companies lack a strategic overview of where Gen AI will have the greatest impact on their customers and business
- 40% of companies still focus mainly on internal efficiency gains, risking disruption in the mid-term

04 | Most Gen AI ideas now come from the business, although involvement in scaling is limited

During which phases of the implementation process is the business involved?



What's **new**

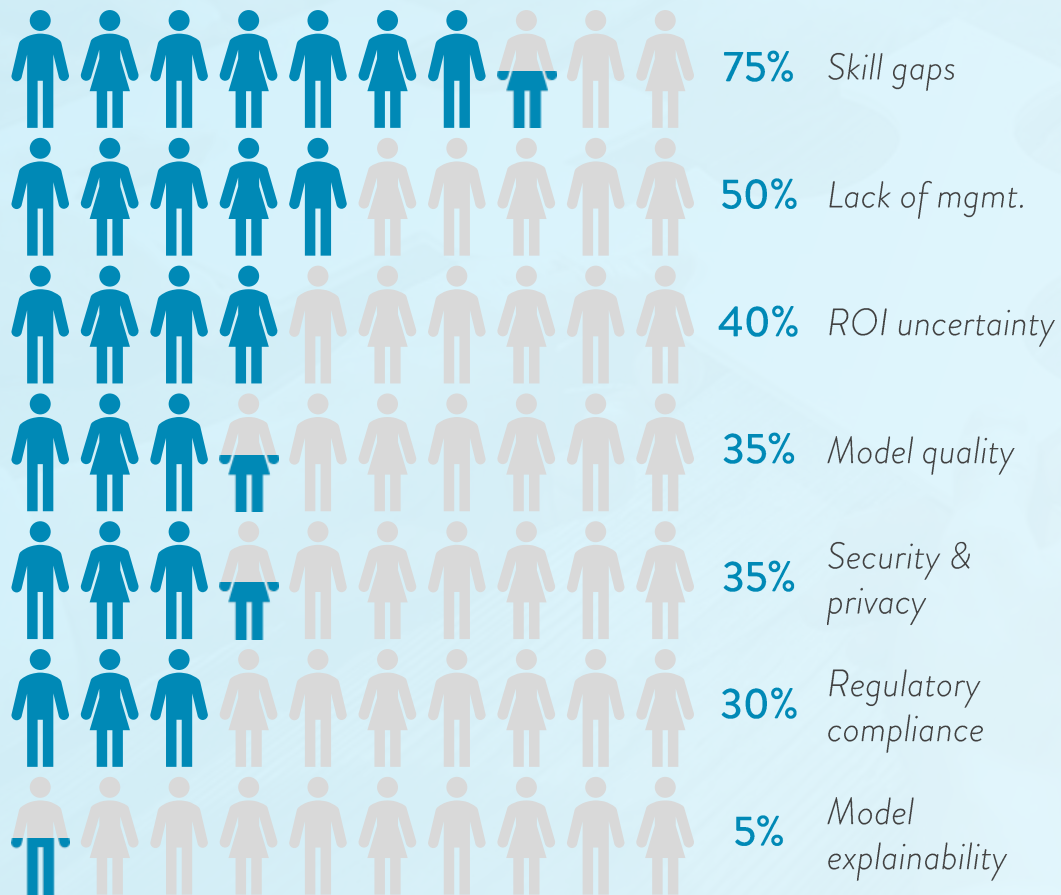
- NEW** The majority of Gen AI use cases now originate from the business, as knowledge on the topic grows

Ongoing **challenges**

- 🎯** Development of use cases is still isolated from the business, with only 30% of participants involving business in initial iteration and verification
- 🎯** In 65% of cases, business is not involved when scaling use cases, leading to blockers in eventual rollout

05 | Skill gaps, lack of management buy-in, ROI uncertainty, and model quality limit scaling speed

What are your main blockers towards scaling use cases?



50%

of respondents report that their **typical Gen AI pilot lasts longer than 3 months**

What's **new**

NEW 70% of companies have established clear compliance guidelines for the use and scaling of Gen AI, whereas last year this was <30%

Ongoing **challenges**

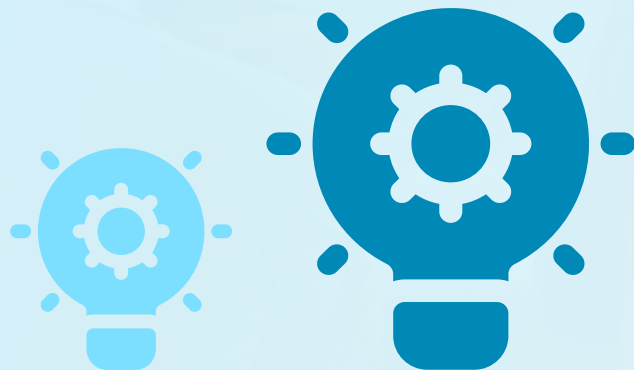
- 🎯 Half of the companies still struggle testing at speed**, with scaling decisions frequently taking 3+ months
- 🎯 75% of organizations lack the internal capabilities to manage pilots**, while foundational enablers such as security, compliance and ROI uncertainty reduce the potential for broader rollout

06 | Lack of mature Gen AI tech stack and focus on off-the-shelf solutions limit impact at scale

Are your Gen AI solutions mostly self-built?

+42%

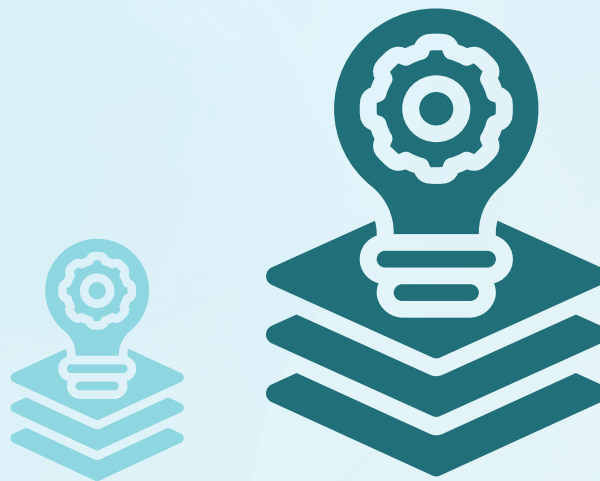
More use cases moved from idea to pilot for companies with mostly **self-built** Gen AI solutions



Is there a centralized Gen AI tech stack?

+73%

More use cases moved from pilot to **scale** for companies with a **centralized** Gen AI tech stack



What's **new**

- NEW** Technical maturity has improved, as 65% of respondents now have a centralized Gen AI tech stack
- NEW** Self-built Gen AI solutions and a centralized Gen AI tech stack massively increase volume of tested & scaled use cases, compared to only using off-the-shelf Gen AI solutions or having a fragmented tech landscape

Ongoing **challenges**

- 🎯** 50% of companies have no central Gen AI tech stack, limiting impact as focus is only on implementing off-the-shelf solutions like Copilot

07 | Data strategies are widespread, but quality of unstructured data remains too limited

Is there a formal data strategy & governance, and does it include unstructured data?

100%

All companies

75%

Formal data strategy

45%

Includes
unstructured
data

+19%

More use cases moved
from idea to pilot for
companies with a formal
data strategy

What's new

- NEW** Increased number of participants have a **formalized data strategy**, up +15% since last year – and having a data strategy tends to lead to a larger volume of tested use cases

Ongoing challenges

- 🎯 60% of organizations lack the tools to keep unstructured data up-to-date
- 🎯 Unstructured data has historically received less attention than structured data and most companies are still catching up, limiting value potential

08 | While management increasingly tries to show the way to AI impact, knowledge is lacking

Are there board-level sponsors for Gen AI and are there Gen AI incentives?

85%

Management
knowledge is lacking on
Gen AI



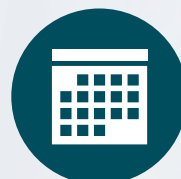
80%

There are **no incentives**
on Gen AI adoption



70%

Executive **buy-in** does
not translate to daily
execution



What's **new**

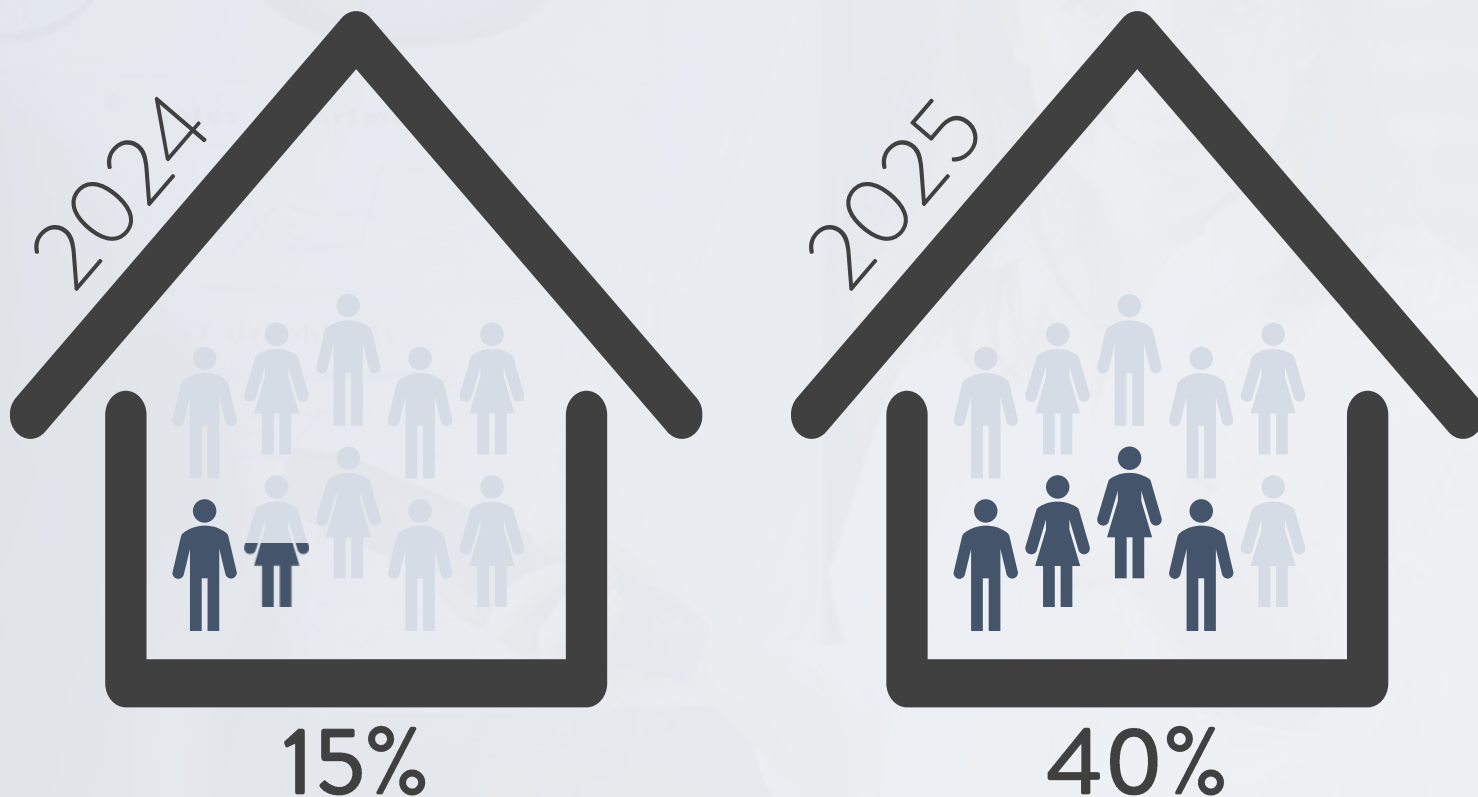
NEW Board-level sponsorship for Gen AI is now in place at most organizations, up 40% from last year

Ongoing **challenges**

-  Lack of knowledge on AI means executive buy-in does not translate into daily execution and momentum for 70% of participants
-  80% of organizations lack incentives to drive adoption

09 | Gen AI development is increasingly done in-house, but 80% don't offer developer upskilling

Are Gen AI developers in-housed?



What's **new**

NEW Gen AI development has become more **accessible** through an increasing number of off-the-shelf options on, e.g., knowledge search

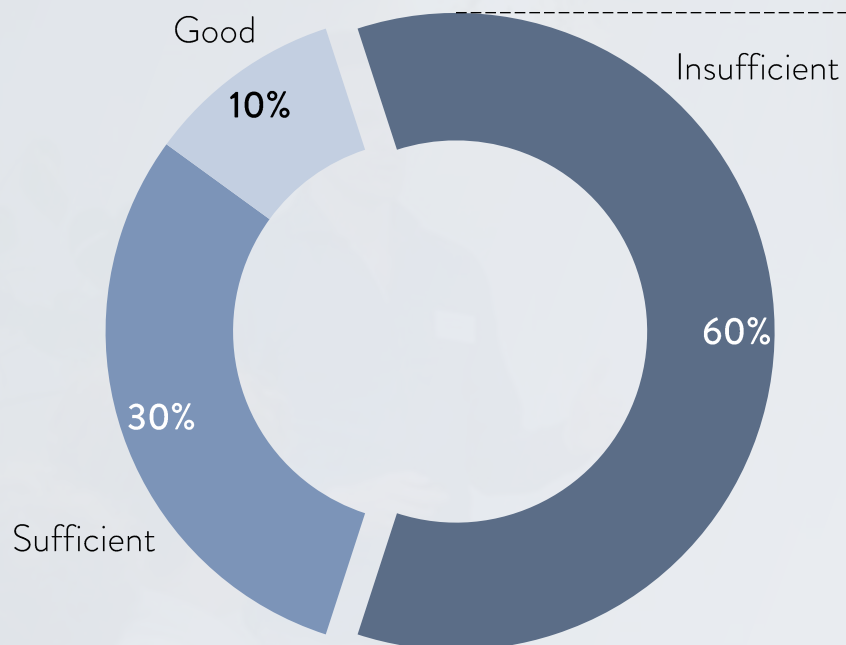
Ongoing **challenges**

- Continuous iteration on tooling and skills is required** to stay ahead of the fast-evolving Gen AI ecosystem, while 80% of organizations don't offer developer upskilling
- Nurturing in-house talent demands dedicated career paths, coaching, and practical experience**, not just tools

10 | Many employees have insufficient Gen AI skills, while only 20% are upskilled

How is your company's Gen AI skill level?

How often do your employees use Gen AI?



8%

Multiple times per day

25%

Multiple times per week

59%

A few times per month

8%

(Almost) never

What's new

NEW Training programs are starting to emerge, raising skill level at some organizations

NEW Almost everyone is now using Gen AI, compared to 60% last year

Ongoing challenges

🎯 Upskilling remains challenging as all employees need to be educated – with most only upskilling 20% of workforce, holding back adoption & impact

🎯 Gen AI use is typically still fragmented instead of being integrated in day-to-day work

SparkOptimus brings 15 years of experience in digital, data, and Gen AI transformations ...



... and a proven approach to achieve impact and scale, while building capabilities



➤ **Reinvent your customer proposition & operating model** enabled by GenAI

➤ **Prioritize high-impact Gen AI** use cases to bring focus

➤ **Implement step by step**, delivering measurable results early

➤ **Overinvest in people**, building capabilities & driving adoption

➤ **Focus on impact**, delivering measurable results along the way

Get in touch!



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