

## What It Takes to Win with AI

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I speak to hundreds of executives each year. In 2024, AI, and particularly GenAI, came up in nearly every conversation. So it was unsurprising that, in a recent global survey conducted by BCG X across 19 markets and a wide range of sectors, three-quarters of executives said AI was a top-three strategic priority for their companies. They believe in the [transformative potential of AI](#).

So do I.

At the same time, these executives are experiencing the realities of what it takes to put AI and GenAI to productive use. Bringing AI to scale is a business and organizational challenge more than a technological one, demanding discipline, commitment, and hard work. That's why, the survey found, only 25% of executives are satisfied with the value created by their AI initiatives.

The three most important words in AI over the next year will be focus, focus, and focus.

- Leading companies invest in a few high-value initiatives—prioritizing just 3.5 use cases on average, compared with the 6.1 pursued by their peers.
- They invest more than 80% of their AI budgets in reshaping core functions and inventing new offerings rather than achieving important but incremental productivity gains.
- Critically they embrace the 10-20-70 principle: dedicating 10% of their effort to algorithms, 20% to data and technology, and 70% to people, processes, incentives,

leadership, and culture. In other words, they address the way their organizations actually work, which often proves harder than the technological advancements themselves.

As business executives, we need a disciplined approach to managing this fast-evolving technology.

**Go deep rather than wide.** Prioritize a few strategic opportunities with clear ROI potential. Leading companies generate more than twice the return on AI investments by focusing.

**Upskill at scale.** Commit to building a [workforce that's comfortable with AI](#). Less than one-third of companies have trained even one-quarter of their employees. That's more than a year ago, but still too low.

**Manage AI as a high-stakes transformation.** Treat AI as integral to your broader transformation agenda—rigorously track both operational outcomes (e.g., adoption by relevant parts of the workforce) and financial outcomes (e.g., revenue increase or cost reduction in specific functions).

**Anticipate and manage risk and regulation.** The survey found that three-quarters of executives say their companies' AI cybersecurity measures need further improvement. On top of that, they need to navigate thickets of regulation and law, such as the EU AI Act.

AI will continue to evolve rapidly. The next area of focus is likely to be [AI agents](#). Two-thirds of companies surveyed are already exploring their use. These systems can perceive, plan, and act autonomously, but their true value emerges when they are embedded into workflows, enabling companies to be more efficient and innovative.

AI agents may be the latest development in the field but certainly not the last. By focusing on disciplined execution and investing in people, companies can generate sustainable, AI-driven growth.

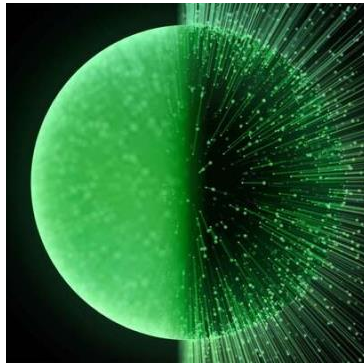
Until next time,



**Christoph Schweizer**  
Chief Executive Officer

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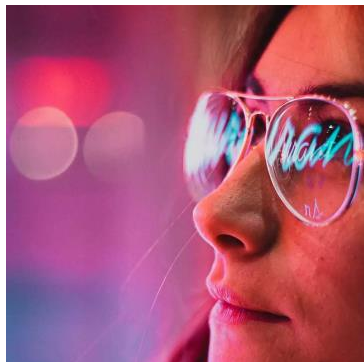
## Further Insights



### **From Potential to Profit: Closing the AI Impact Gap**

AI remains a top priority for business leaders worldwide in 2025, with a strong focus on generating tangible results, according to BCG's survey of C-suite executives.

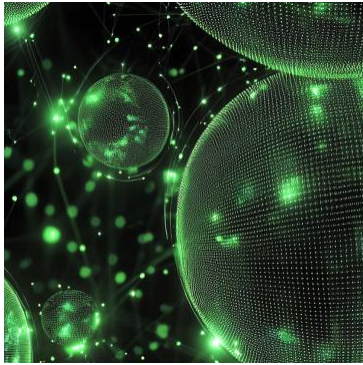
**FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS**



### **Five Must-Haves for Effective AI Upskilling**

The most effective way for a company to help its workforce adopt AI skills is to take a five-step approach that includes assessing what's needed and preparing people for change.

**SUCCESS DEPENDS ON YOUR PEOPLE**



## AI Agents

From automating repetitive tasks to revolutionizing complex workflows, AI agents are redefining productivity and innovation.

**THE NEXT NEW THING**