BCG

Executive Perspectives





### AI-Enabled Engineering Excellence Transformation

April 2025

In this BCG Executive Perspective, we articulate the potential of AI-enabled engineering excellence



### Introduction – AI's potential in the software development lifecycle and the need for engineering excellence

We studied the current state and sentiment of how generative AI (GenAI) is transforming the software development lifecycle (SDLC) – through engagements with CIOs and CTOs, and through a market survey<sup>12</sup>.

While everyone is experimenting, most organizations struggle to realize impact.

**To unlock full value, GenAI must go beyond code copilot tool deployments:** It must be embedded into core engineering strategies. This means tackling platform, tooling, process, and talent bottlenecks, not just deploying tools.

**The opportunity:** Treat GenAI as a catalyst for a broader engineering transformation – to boost productivity, accelerate delivery, and reinvent developer workflows.

#### Key questions for leaders:

- Are you seeing measurable impact from GenAI across the SDLC?
- Are you solving core bottlenecks -- or just layering on another tool?
- Are you evolving fast enough to keep up with GenAI's rapid advancements?

### This document provides a practical roadmap for CIOs and CTOs to cut through the hype and focus on what drives real value – today and tomorrow.

60% CIO; 23% CTO; 12% Senior Leadership; 5% others, survey conducted January 2025
 27% SW Engineers; 24% IT Leadership; 16% ML Engineers; 14% other Engineers; 19% others, survey conducted January 2025

## **Executive summary** AI-enabled engineering excellence – from hype to 2X capacity

Current state	<ul> <li>Industry turning point: &gt;80% of companies now use GenAI for coding, yielding early gains (~5–10% cost savings, ~15% performance boost). However, value remains spotty and limited to pockets</li> <li>Not a silver bullet: GenAI isn't plug-and-play. Six challenges – a) the "toil paradox" (AI automates fun tasks but leaves grind work), b) low adoption, c) unclear ROI, d) tech debt, e) rapid tool churn, and f) org resistance – are holding back full value</li> </ul>
Proposed approach	<ul> <li>Holistic transformation needed: The promise is real, but leaders must elevate their strategy beyond deploying tools. A holistic GenAI-driven engineering transformation is required to unlock the full potential</li> <li>Target weakest links: Use GenAI gains as a laser focus on bottlenecks – e.g., modernize platforms, streamline processes, address talent gaps. By boosting the weakest areas, organizations can approach 2x engineering capacity</li> </ul>
Path forward	<b>From rollout to excellence:</b> Shifting mindset from a one-off "GenAI rollout" to an ongoing <b>"AI-enabled</b> <b>engineering excellence"</b> journey requires getting <b>five things right (5Rs)</b> – ways of working, tech stack, org setup, workforce skills, and continuous improvement loops

### Industry sentiment | AI in engineering – widespread adoption, shallow impact

GenAl code generation tool is increasingly becoming "table stakes"				Nowever, most companies are still early in the journey to drive adoption		Key hurdles are unclear ROI, lack of trust, and general inertia		Security, testing, & reqs gathering are promising areas for GenAl beyond coding	
>80%	of companies have <b>paid / enterprise</b> <b>GenAl code</b> <b>generation</b> tool beyond POC stage	5-10% 15-20%	typical <b>cost savings</b> for CIOs thanks to GenAI adoption <sup>1</sup> improvement in	20%	only ~ <b>20%</b> of companies have widespread adoption (>75% developer access)	50%	of CIOs see <b>unclear ROI</b> as a top three challenge for GenAI adoption	10%	of engineers state that security and compliance, testing, and reqs. gathering create most friction
>75%	of companies using GenAl to <b>write new</b> code	13-20% 2x	velocity, quality, and developer satisfaction ambition for future impact of GenAl in	>6 mos.	~80% of slower- adopting companies will take <b>another 6+</b> <b>months</b> to achieve 75% adoption	40%	of engineers see hallucination & lack of trust in output as a top three challenge	>33%	across SDLC of engineers desire a solution in <b>testing /</b> <b>debugging</b> if they could fix one area with
			next 3 years <sup>1</sup>			60%	of CIOs and engineers see general inertia to change as a top three challenge	>60%	GenAl of CIOs are at minimum exploring <b>GenAl agents</b> – many beyond coding

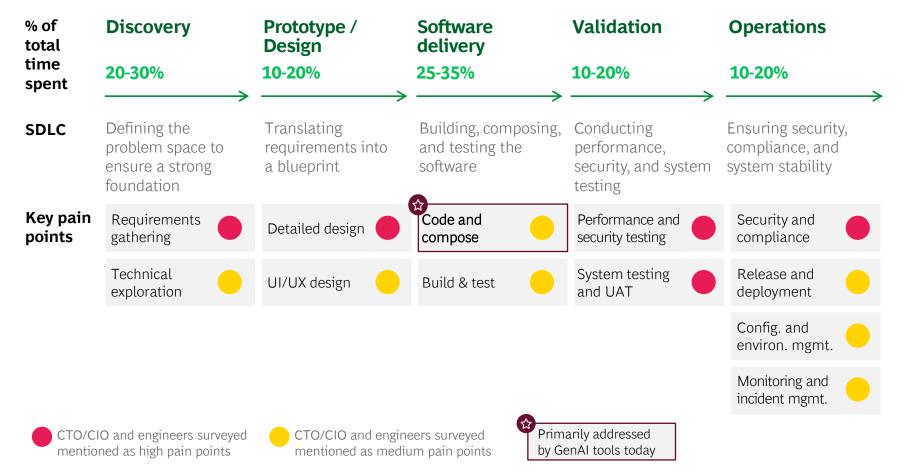
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### **Challenges** | AI value blockers – 6 challenges to overcome now

a	The "toil paradox"	<b>GenAl automates "fun" coding tasks</b> but leaves testing, security, and requirements as bottlenecks – limiting productivity gains. Unlocking its full potential requires both fresh innovation and a mindset shift
b	Adoption lags	<b>Only 20% of enterprises report &gt;75% adoption.</b> Many treat GenAI as a tool rollout vs. new way of working – resulting in poor sustained uptake. A multi-pronged change approach is required
С	Unclear path to measuring value	<b>50% of CIOs struggle to quantify GenAI's impact</b> , reinforcing the imperative for end-to-end value tracking
d	Tech debt dilemma	<b>Outdated systems and poor DevOps severely dampen GenAI's impact.</b> Modern practices are needed to realize gains, and GenAI can help with the modernization
е	Keeping up with speed of innovation	GenAI tools evolve rapidly. Engineers get change fatigue with "tool churn" unless a <b>stable</b> adoption flywheel is in place
f	Uncertainty in organizational structure	<b>Traditional roles and team set-ups don't fit an AI-assisted world.</b> Leaders are uncertain how to reorganize for GenAI – but preparation must start now

# **Pain points** | AI mostly tackles the "fun" coding tasks, but leaves critical steps as major bottlenecks – demanding innovation and a mindset shift

#### Engineering pain points: GenAI needs to evolve across the SDLC



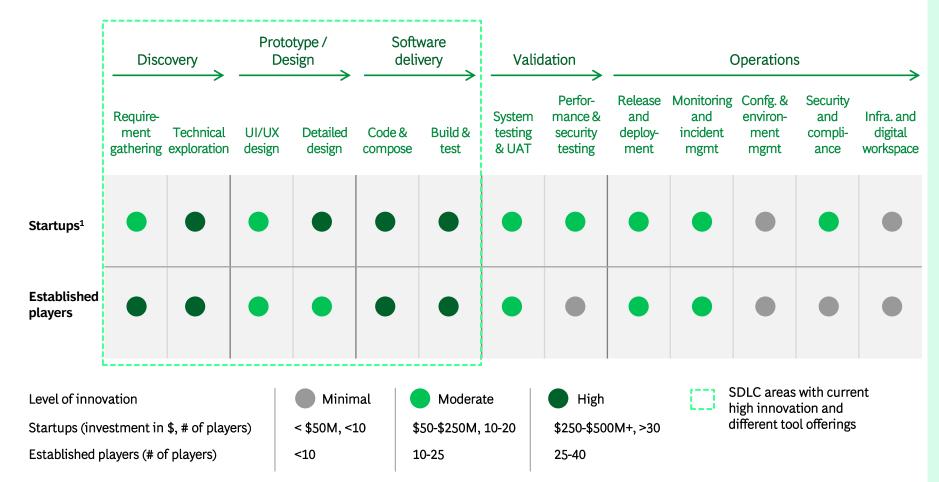
Source: State of GenAl Across Engineering Survey (N=100 CIOs/CTOs and 300 engineers), January 2025 Note: Pain point allocation based on survey question "We would like to understand which phases of the software development lifecycle create the most and least friction for your enterprise"

#### Engineers also need to evolve how they think of their role

- Engineers today find joy in writing code, but mental models need to evolve to enjoy the thinking part and let GenAI write the code."
- An engineer's greatest skill now is knowing when to let the GenAI do the heavy lifting—and when to step in."

**85%** of companies expect GenAl to impact engineering jobs

### **Investments** | Innovation hotspots: design, code, test – AI everywhere



**Code co-pilots are the hottest area of innovation** revolutionizing how developers write and review code

**Code co-pilots are expanding upstream actively (incl. via agents)** - integrating into planning, design, and agentdriven automation

**Downstream expansion is slower** - opportunities are in the space of testing and security

Too early days to pick winners - in some cases, enterprises that picked established solutions are now considering emerging solutions

Not all stacks are equal existing tech stack (code repo, etc.) impacts efficacy of GenAl solutions

Source: BCG analysis as of Nov '24

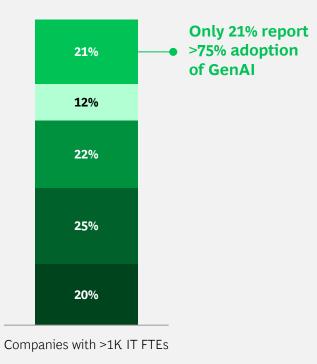
Note: Effort is measured as # of companies and/or amount of investment flowing to companies addressing each SDLC area

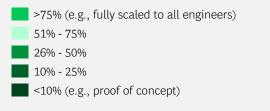
1. Considering only privately held companies with fewer than 500 employees and less than \$1B in revenue. Additionally, for funding, we are considering only last financing round if happened in the last 2 years. If a startup raised \$100M and covered 4 different SDLC areas, the \$100M is split between them, with \$25M attributed to each phase

# Adoption conundrum | Adoption remains uneven, with only 20% of teams reporting >75% uptake – current change efforts don't lead to stickiness

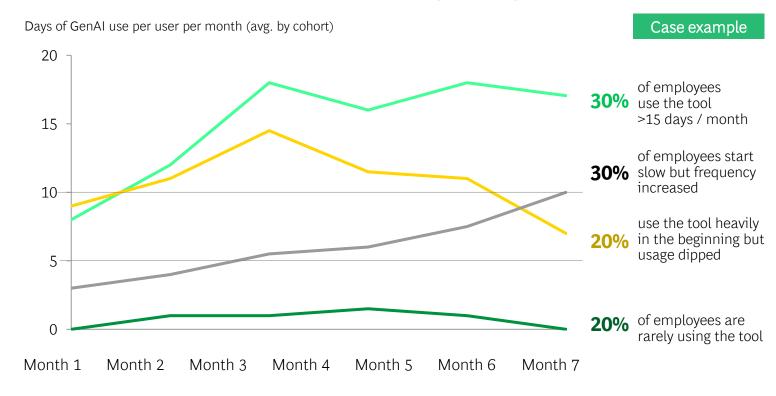
#### Level of GenAI adoption

% of CIO & engineers by FTE size, N=257





Why is adoption hard? | Looking under the hood reveals pockets of adoption and a lack of stickiness despite change management efforts



#### GenAI adoption is not just a technology shift – it's a behavior shift

Sustained impact requires structured enablement, ongoing reinforcement, and a programmatic approach to drive consistent usage and long-term change

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# Learning curve | Instead of simply rolling out tools, establish a continuous learning process that actively guides engineers up the learning curve

Learning curve of GenAl user adoption



Has heard the hype but skeptical about GenAIpowered coding



The Curious Experimenter

Dabbles in GenAI assistance but still prefers manual control 3

The Frequent User

Embraces GenAI-driven coding as a core part of workflow



The Automator

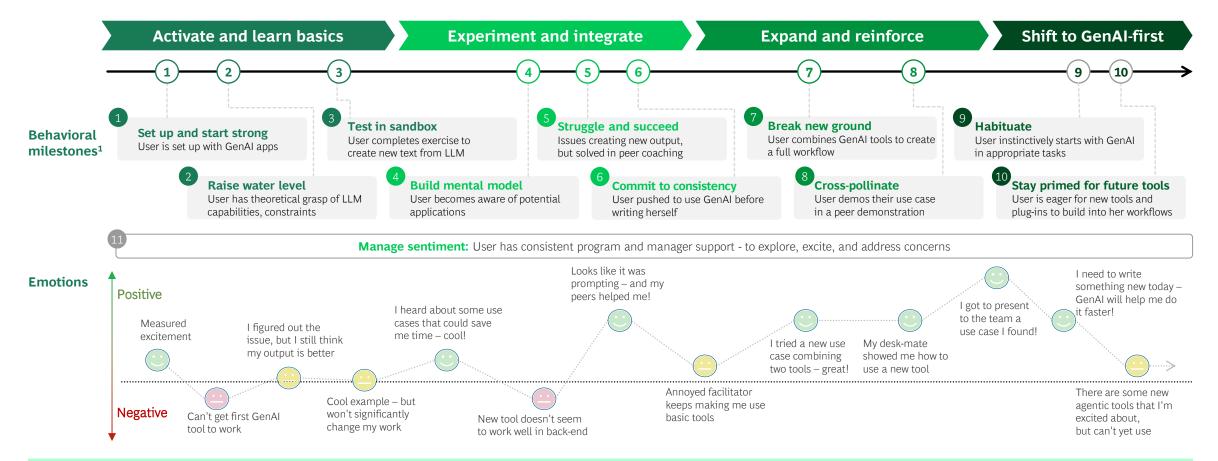
Uses GenAl to generate, refine, and optimize code at scale 5 EFFE The GenAl Orchestrator

Leverages AI agents for complex tasks with minimal intervention

Occasionally uses chat, but avoids GenAl-generated code; prefers traditional coding methods and sees GenAl as a supplementary suggestion tool rather than an assistant **Uses code suggestions** but manually pastes GenAlgenerated code; prefers GenAl assistance on short code snippets over full-code generation

**No longer manually writes most code;** accepts GenAIgenerated code with light modifications; sees GenAI as a productivity booster, using it for rapid iteration and development Uses **GenAl to edit and** optimize multiple files in a repository; leverages prompting to generate entire modules or refactor large sections of code Shifts to agent lead with human support, where **GenAl agents drive test** writing, test, and debug code without manuals edits; emphasizes prompt curation instead of direct code generation Copyright © 2025 by Boston Consulting Group. All rights reserved

## **Learning journey** | Sustained AI use requires intentional behavioral interventions across the learning journey



Several other personas (e.g., senior leaders, team leads) also critical to orchestrating change journey

Source: State of GenAl Across Engineering Survey (N=100 CIOs/CTOs and 300 engineers), January 2025 1. Behavioral milestones are not necessarily sequential 1b

### Holistic change program | A holistic change program requires multiple levers to drive adoption and sustain impact

(%)	Measurements and tracking	<b>Adoption</b> Measure number of users at each level of GenAI proficiency (e.g., beginner vs. frequent user)		plift in individual output .te) & attribute / link to	<b>Quality</b> Measure accuracy and us of output (e.g., number c		<b>Developer satisfaction</b> Measure user sentiment with the tools	
	Communications	<b>Strong mandate from C-suite</b> Reinforce GenAl as an urgent competitive need, not just an experiment		<b>Accountability</b> Link and communicate GenAI adoption metrics with team OKRs and budget		<b>Change ambassadors</b> Identify "micro-influencers" to share success stories and approach		
and purpose	<b>Communication cascade</b> Coordinate series of messages across channels to reinforce sense of purpose		<b>AB testing</b> Continuously test and refine effective approaches to reinforce adoption		<b>Nudges</b> Deploy frequent (e.g., 3x weekly) nudges to encourage habit building & share useful tips			
	Education and	<b>GenAl acceleration sprints</b> Intensive, multi-week program to apply GenAl to real workload & ingrain new habits		<b>Learning paths</b> Provide structured training paths, from beginner use cases to advanced agentic AI		Enable inte	<b>Scalable "train the trainer" model</b> Enable internal experts to become AI advocates running future workshops	
🛣 enablement	<b>Hackathons</b> Teams to try new tools, way of work & share knowledge while solving real problems		<b>GenAl knowledge hub</b> Build central repository with best practices, how- to guides, troubleshooting resources		<b>Community support</b> Form mentorship program and community channels (e.g., Slack) for knowledge sharing			
<b>P</b> •	Incentives	<b>Manager targets</b> Tie funding and business performance targets to GenAl adoption & impact	<b>incentive</b> Make GenA	al contributor Al adoption part of review; tial bonuses for top users	<b>Team gamification</b> Introduce GenAI adoption leaderboards and friend competition between tea	on ly	<b>Scarcity</b> Reduce engineering budgets or headcounts to incentivize GenAl usage	

#### Successful GenAI adoption requires a multi-faceted approach, integrating measurement, communication, enablement, and incentives

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**Measuring value** | Value tracking is a major hurdle to AI adoption – exemplars deploy an end-to-end value steering and capture framework



of CIO/CTOs see unclear ROI as key hurdle to GenAI adoption in their enterprise

~50%
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of respondents report redeploying capacity gains

What are we doing with 30% time savings? At this point nothing - our devs are just finishing work 30% sooner." E2E value tracking and steering framework

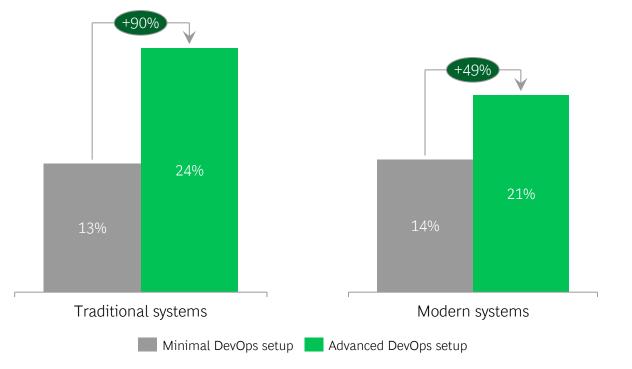
(%)	Balanced scorecards	Balancing adoption, productivity, quality, and developer satisfaction
	Adoption maturity levels	Definition and measurement of AI maturity by cohort (vs. tool usage)
	Business case with lineage to metrics	Alignment on metrics and ROI by each "using" division
	Handshake (and targets) by divisions	ROI method backed by metrics (e.g., hard to measure % of time coding - commonly used in business cases)
\$	Link to budget process	Mechanisms to identify and capture value (e.g., reduce current and/or open roles, clear additional backlog, and commit to faster time-to-delivery)
Ä	Incentives and rewards	Monetary and non-monetary nudges to align behaviors

Source: State of GenAl Across Engineering Survey (N=100 CIOs/CTOs and 300 engineers), January 2025

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# Tech debt dilemma | AI in code development with mature DevOps significantly enhances velocity and capacity savings

**GenAl velocity gains** based on DevOps maturity<sup>1</sup> in **traditional tech stack**  **GenAl velocity gains** based on DevOps maturity<sup>1</sup> in **modern tech stack** 



Source: State of GenAl Across Engineering Survey (N=100 CIOs/CTOs and 300 engineers), January 2025 1. At least two DevOps automations utilized (e.g., automated testing, CI/CD tools)



### GenAl-ready tech stacks and ecosystems maximize gains

#### **GenAl-ready codebases**,

e.g., standardized coding practices, modular design, and trunk-based branching strategy

**Robust DevSecOps,** e.g., testing with AI-generated artifact scans and vulnerability detection

**Platform & data simplification and modernization,** e.g., unified infrastructure and streamlined release pipelines 1d

# Adoption flywheel | To drive adoption and faster innovation loop – establish a central engineering enablement team

Exemplars are creating a central engineering enablement team to orchestrate the adoption flywheel to:

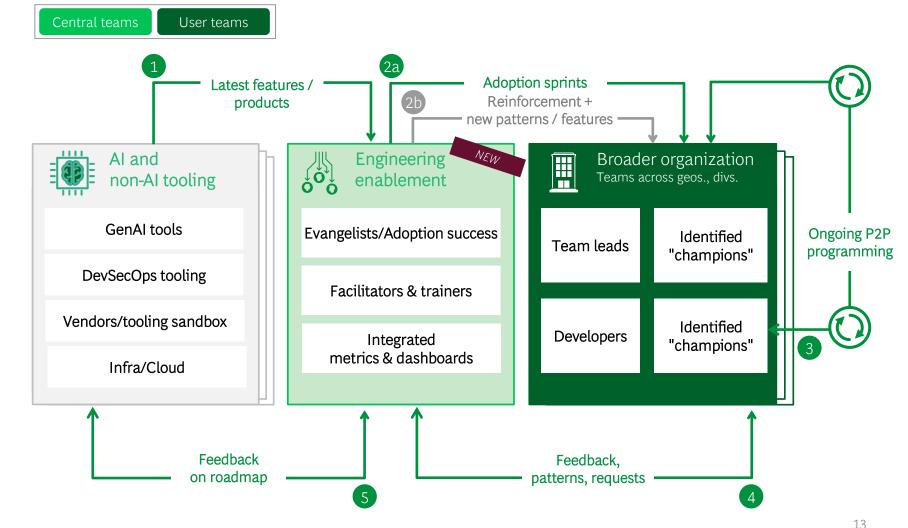
Take a user-centric vs. toolcentric approach to adoption

Build a robust measurement and tracking approach

Drive behavioral change for 1000s of engineers in a scalable and cost-efficient manner

Rapidly enable tool evolution through a tight product-to-user feedback loop

Promote continuous upskilling in response to evolving tooling



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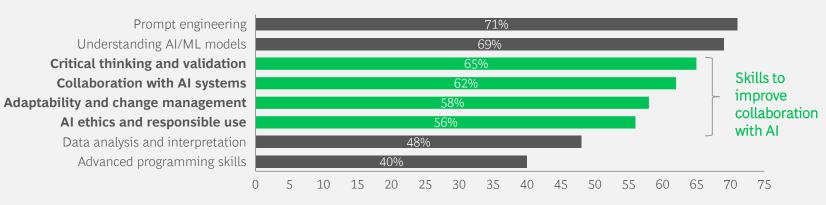
# **Upskilling** | AI will reshape the engineering function, eliminating some roles, creating new ones, and redefining skill sets – upskilling is essential

### >**85%**<sup>1</sup>

#### of CIO/CTOs and engineers expect AI will impact jobs

	<b>43%</b> <sup>2</sup> new required skills and competencies	<b>27%</b> <sup>2</sup> elimination or reduction of existing roles	<b>20%</b> <sup>2</sup> emergence of new roles
Type of impact by Al	<ul> <li>Increase demand for skills in AI tool proficiency, prompt engineering, ethics, and critical thinking</li> </ul>	• Eliminate or reduce roles associated with repetitive, low- value tasks such as junior developers and testers	• Create new roles focused on AI integration, governance, and interdependencies.
Example skills required/roles impacted	<ul> <li>AI literacy</li> <li>AI ethics and governance</li> <li>Analysis of AI output and oversight</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Junior/entry level developers</li> <li>Traditional developer roles (focused solely on coding)</li> <li>Testers</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Prompt engineers</li> <li>AI governance and ethics specialists</li> <li>AI-augmented developers</li> </ul>

#### Expectations to learn new technical skills, but also "softer" ways of work



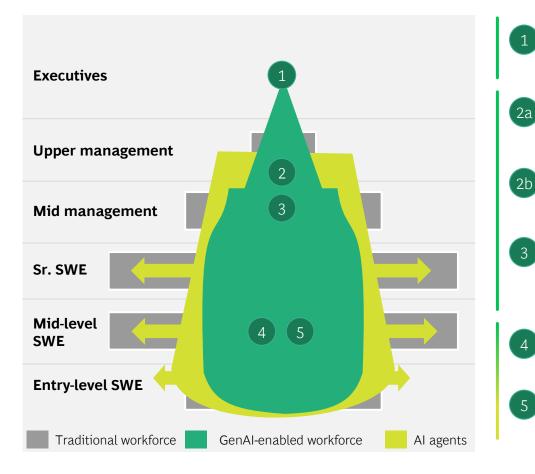
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#### Source: State of GenAl Across Engineering Survey (N=100 ClOs/CTOs and 300 engineers), January 2025 1. % of survey responses by ClO/CTOs and engineers if they expect a GenAl impact on jobs; 2. % of survey responses on specific impact of Al on jobs

# **Future state** | Al will reshape development organization structure – flatter hierarchies, faster ramp-up, fewer silos

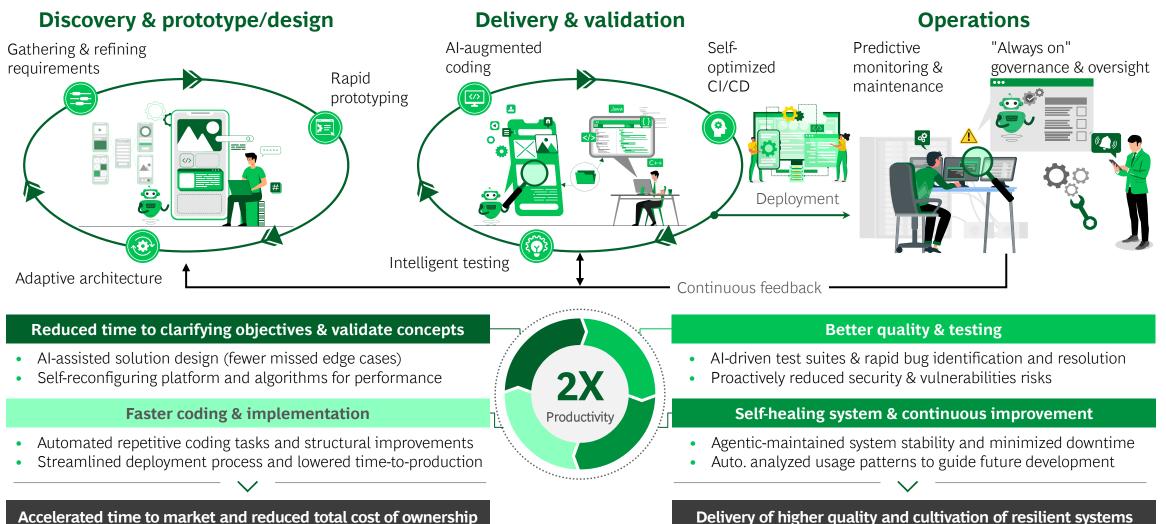
#### **Future state of software Dev Org**



#### Key implications of GenAI on software Dev Org structure

- **Leaner, high-velocity organizations:** AI boosts productivity across the board. Fewer layers, faster releases, leaner headcount
- **Skills shift less coding, more critical thinking**: Development work moves up the stack. Success now depends on system design, AI collaboration, and problem framing
- New roles reshape the organization: AI creates demand for roles like AI stack architects, prompt engineers, agent orchestrators, and ethics/governance leads
- Middle management thins out: "Democratization of knowledge" AI reduces the need for hand-holding. Less time spent guiding juniors, more time on strategy
- **Entry-levels level up faster:** Juniors ramp-up quicker, focus on logic and product thinking Al handles boilerplate & testing
- **QA & support roles shrink or vanish**: Agents absorb traditional testing, documentation, and some DevOps reducing adjacent team needs

### Imagine a world | Human-AI collaboration doubles SDLC productivity



esilient systems

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## How to get it right | Full AI value requires holistic engineering transformation



### Singular roll-out of code-generating AI tools

**Off-the-shelf tools** provide **easy access to AI capabilities** but **long-term transformation potential limited to 30%** as outdated practices can largely eliminate impact from deploying GenAI



### GenAI-enabled engineering excellence transformation

A holistic approach that fundamentally rethinks how teams build, ship, and maintain software (including GenAI, agents, traditional DevOps, and underlying technology modernization)



#### Most commonly followed approach today ...

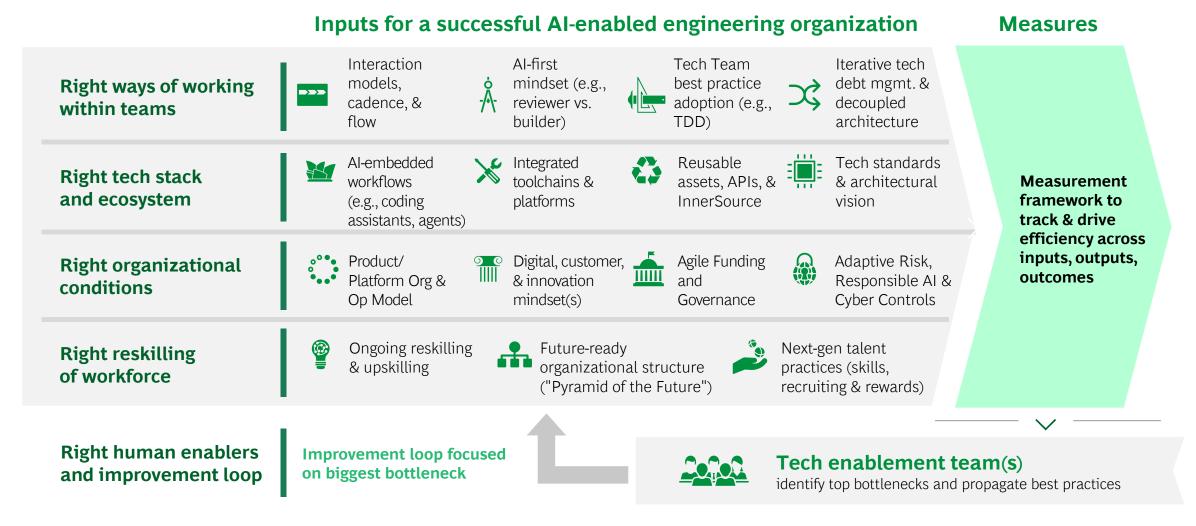
... recommended way forward

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Source: State of GenAI Across Engineering Survey (N=100 CIOs/CTOs and 300 engineers), January 2025 1. 30% from maximizing use AI code generation tools, 20% impact from extending tools to other non-coding stages (including via agents) and 2x from impact if working on a modern tech stack with modern ways of working

# What is required | Key requirements for a holistic AI-enabled engineering transformation



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## What is required | Short-term actions and long-term initiatives drive end-to-end transformation

Chart taxma actions

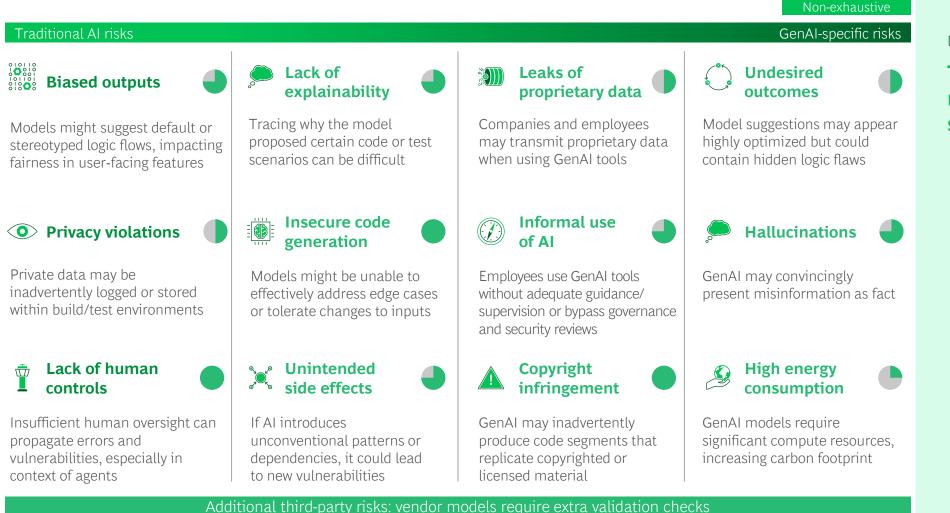
	Short-term actions	Long-term initiatives
<ul> <li>Right ways of working</li> <li>within teams</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Train developers on effective prompting techniques</li> <li>Implement AI-assisted code review processes</li> <li>Pilot test-driven development (TDD) with GenAI</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Standardize AI-augmented SDLC workflows with clear guidelines for AI-human collaboration</li> <li>Embed AI into agile sprint planning</li> </ul>
<b>Right tech stack</b> and ecosystem	<ul> <li>Deploy AI coding assistants in IDEs</li> <li>Fix gaps in testing, CI/CD, and security scans</li> <li>Integrate AI into collaboration &amp; DevOps tools</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Build a scalable AI-ready development toolchain</li> <li>Establish AI-embedded workflows (e.g., agents)</li> <li>Form strategic AI vendor partnerships</li> </ul>
• Right organizational conditions	<ul> <li>Define a clear AI operating model</li> <li>Identify &amp; address cultural AI adoption barriers</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Optimize team structures for AI collaboration</li> <li>Refine funding model to capture gains</li> </ul>
Right reskilling of workforce	<ul> <li>Introduce prompt-engineering workshops, learning sprints</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Develop role-specific AI training programs</li> <li>Integrate AI skills into career development</li> <li>Conduct long-term skills &amp; workforce planning</li> </ul>
Right human enablers and improvement loop	<ul> <li>Form an AI enablement team and establish tight feedback loop</li> <li>Establish monitoring and measurement</li> </ul>	• Establish an engineering excellence function (including driving adoption of AI solutions)

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Long to you initiatives

# **Risks** | As companies explore AI, understanding and mitigating risks are critical for responsible adoption



max

Level of urgency and impact for organizations integrating GenAl in the SDLC

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To mitigate these risks, companies should implement:

- A holistic change program
- An engineering enablement team
- Identify all risks, assess mitigations, and create a solid plan to implement mitigations
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A company can be in more then one category

	Cur	rent tech state	Transformation approach	<b>Value</b> <sup>1</sup>	Description
Workforce gravity	in-house dominant		<b>Three-speed approach:</b> accelerate adoption, strengthen foundations, enable future innovation	***	<ul> <li>Immediately pilot GenAI coding tools within agile teams to boost productivity</li> <li>Invest in foundational capabilities (e.g., training, infrastructure) to scale rapidly</li> <li>Build readiness for future AI-driven innovation by integrating GenAI deeply into developer workflows</li> </ul>
gravity		Vendor-driven / Outsourced	Define clear GenAI standards and expectations with vendors	**	<ul> <li>Set explicit AI-driven standards for code quality, security, and collaboration in vendor contracts</li> <li>Execute joint GenAI pilots to align vendors and capture shared productivity gains</li> </ul>
Technology estate		Legacy systems / DevOps maturity	Modernize foundations with targeted GenAl investments	***	<ul> <li>Focus initial GenAI use cases on addressing tech debt, legacy refactoring, and automating foundational DevOps tasks</li> <li>Establish a stable, modernized base to fully unlock future GenAI value</li> </ul>
		SaaS / Platform-driven	Maximize GenAI features from leading SaaS providers	*	<ul> <li>Prioritize SaaS providers proactively advancing GenAI capabilities aligned to your needs</li> <li>Quickly integrate proven, pre-built GenAI solutions into existing processes for rapid wins</li> </ul>

Low  $\bigstar$  Medium  $\bigstar \bigstar$  High  $\bigstar \bigstar \bigstar$ 

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## **Getting started** | CIOs/CTOs can take these practical next steps to prepare for their AI SDLC transformation

1	Activate your engineers	<ul> <li>Develop a clear understanding of SDLC pain points while recognizing the differing priorities of CTO/CIO and engineers (e.g., testing, requirements analysis)</li> <li>Identify a team of skilled and motivated engineers to lead the group and act as change agents</li> </ul>
2	Build a holistic ~3 year roadmap across the ~5Rs <sup>1</sup>	<ul> <li>Develop a comprehensive transformation roadmap that integrates the core principles of the 5-R<sup>1</sup> framework for engineering excellence</li> <li>Create a measurement framework to track and drive efficiency across inputs, outputs, and outcomes</li> </ul>
S	Start building a central enablement and orchestration function	<ul> <li>Establish a centralized team to orchestrate drive tooling standardization, AI adoption, developer productivity, security compliance, and cross-team alignment to ensure scalability and efficiency</li> <li>Elevate workforce planning by rethinking roles, updating capabilities, and aligning skills with the future of software engineering</li> </ul>
4	Establish beacons of success	<ul> <li>Identify pilot areas to prove the new normal in action – exemplars start with teams, but then expand to deliver a large project in an AI-first</li> <li>Make an informed, strategic choice between buying and building solutions</li> </ul>

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### **BCG experts** | Key contacts for AI transformation



#### EMESA

