GLG

FINDING YOUR PLACE *IN AN AI-DRIVEN FUTURE*

Unlocking the Potential of AI in Your Business

By a subject matter expert and GLG Network Member

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the market's focus on generative AI continues to increase, business and IT leaders are under pressure to determine whether this potentially transformative technology can improve their firms' efficiency and productivity. Yet these leaders lack key information they need to decide how and at what rate to adopt generative AI and AI technologies in general. This survey of senior AI decision-makers and influencers reveals that adoption of generative AI in particular may be inhibited by uncertainty around the required investment, costs, and skills needed to obtain value from the technology, and by fundamental confusion over what AI can and should be in different industry contexts.

> Leaders are asking how they can ensure they are using common language around generative AI with their peers and vendors, how to identify the most relevant use cases for the technology, and whether they are taking the right steps to ensure successful deployments and mitigate risks.

Findings from the survey suggest that these leaders are eager to hear from industry experts and peers who have real-world experience implementing generative AI, and are looking for meaningful case studies relevant to their use cases and industries. By learning from the experiences of early adopters, these leaders can gain the clarity they need to confidently deploy this technology internally and in customer-facing applications.

The survey revealed that:

59% of respondents believe that there is no common definition of generative AI used throughout their industry

78% of respondents are uncertain how to find expert advice on the costs and investment required to support generative AI projects

87% of respondents were most likely to trust the advice of industry experts on generative AI

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

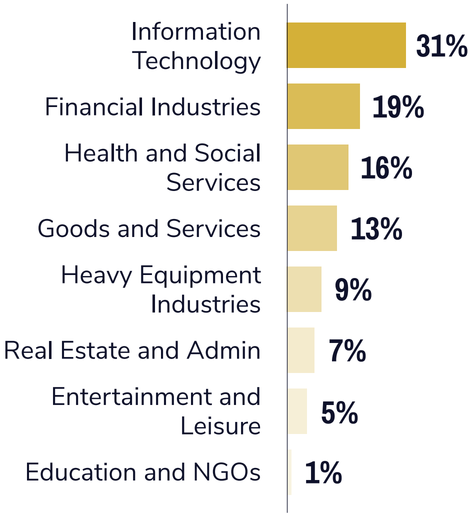
GLG brings decision-makers the insight it takes to get ahead, providing meaningful connections through our network of approximately 1 million experts, the world's largest and most varied source of first-hand expertise. In June-July 2024, GLG conducted an online survey of 201 senior leaders in the United States and Canada with decision-making authority or significant influence over AI investments for their company.

The study revealed that most respondents:

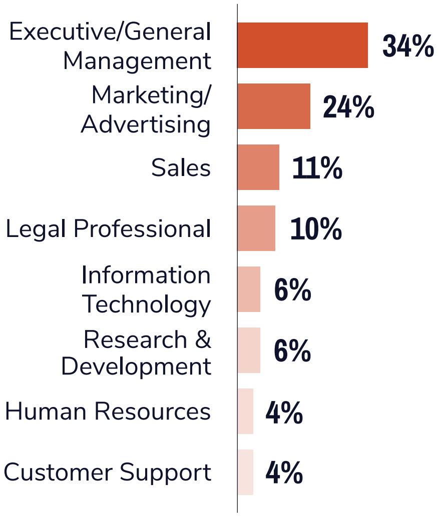
- Are enthusiastic about generative AI, and expect to find many new use cases for the technology
- Believe that their industry lacks consensus on the definition of generative AI, its uses, and its value propositions
- Are uncertain where to obtain advice on key aspects of generative AI implementations, such as required costs and investment, which may inhibit the pace of their adoption of this technology
- Are most likely to trust the advice of industry experts and peers with real-world experience over the recommendations of vendors when planning generative AI investments

The figures below indicate respondents' level of seniority, their roles, and the distribution of their companies by annual revenue and industry.

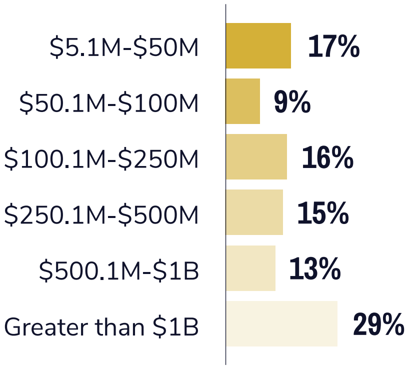
Industry



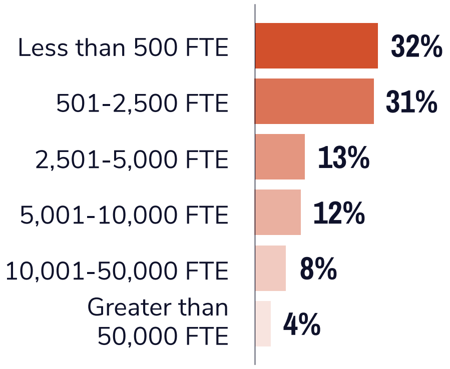
Job Function



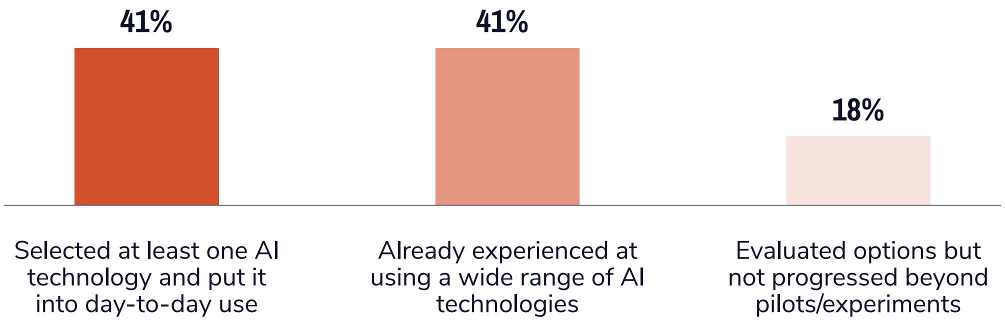
Annual Revenue



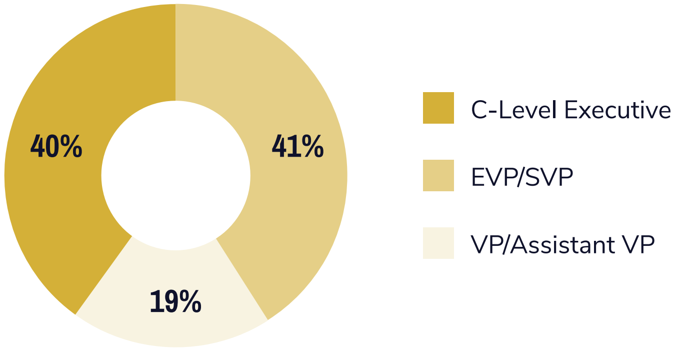
Company Size



Investments Made in AI Technology



Role



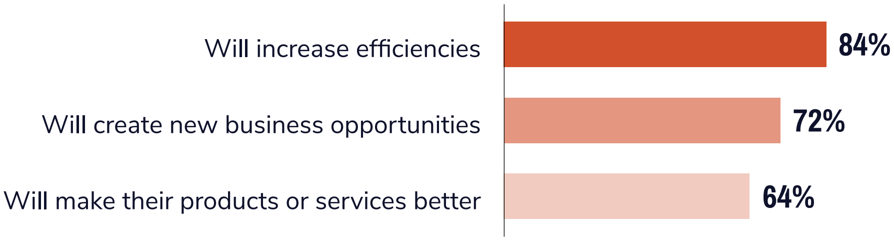
SURVEY INSIGHTS

High Enthusiasm for AI

Despite lack of clarity identified in many areas of the survey, respondents were consistently optimistic that AI technologies could address key business needs, with 84% indicating their belief that AI could help increase efficiency and 72% suggesting that it will create new business opportunities. This suggests that rates of adoption of AI technologies could be even higher if key information gaps were addressed.

Opinion of AI

% Among Total Respondents



73%

of respondents consider rapid summarization of information as one of the key requirements of their job function

Key Job Requirements Could Benefit from AI

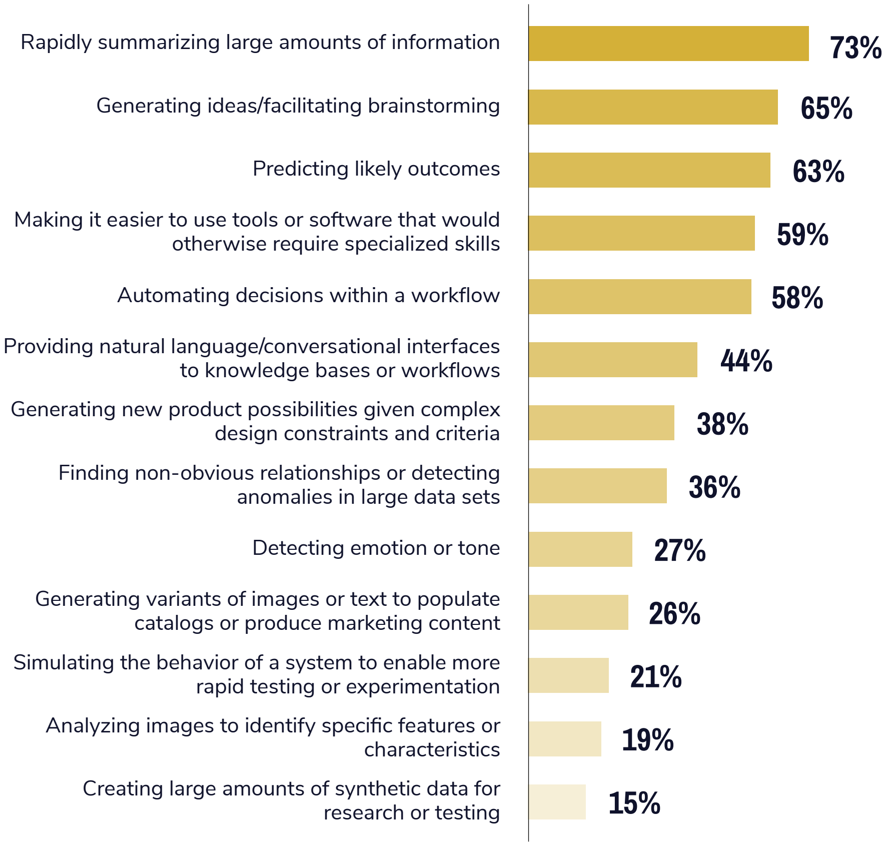
One of the reasons for high enthusiasm around AI technologies may be that business and IT leaders consider AI technologies an optimal solution for some of their key job requirements. Survey respondents were asked to consider a list of common business activities, and to identify whether these activities represented a key part of their jobs. Some of these tasks were cited very commonly by respondents as being part of their key job requirements, such as rapid summarization of information (73%), generating ideas (65%), predicting likely outcomes (63%), making it easier for others to use tools (59%), and automating decision-making (58%).

For tasks considered important to their jobs, respondents were asked to identify whether AI would be an appropriate tool to use, and whether it was the best tool to use, in accomplishing such tasks. Among these responses, generative AI was most strongly identified as a solution for rapid summarization of information, with 97% of respondents who identified it as a core business requirement indicating that they perceived generative AI to be an appropriate tool for this purpose, and 87% indicating that it would be the ideal tool. Given how common these key job requirements were across the pool of respondents, the implication is that AI is perceived as an accelerator to some of their firms' most frequent and foundational tasks.

In some cases, the gap between respondents' perception that generative AI could be used for a particular purpose and that it was ideally suited for that purpose was larger. For example, while 83% of respondents with the key business requirement of generating ideas thought that generative AI was an appropriate tool for this purpose, only 36% indicated that it would be the ideal tool. Similar gaps were found for use cases such as making it easier to use tools or software that require specialized skills and automating decisions within a workflow. These gaps may reflect both the availability of proven technologies with greater traction in the marketplace for these purposes, or the lack of availability of optimized models or applications showcasing the capacity of generative AI to address these needs. IT decision-makers typically look to peers and industry success stories to determine whether an emerging technology is relevant for a particular use case, and more evidence may be needed in these areas to assure firms that generative AI makes sense for these needs.

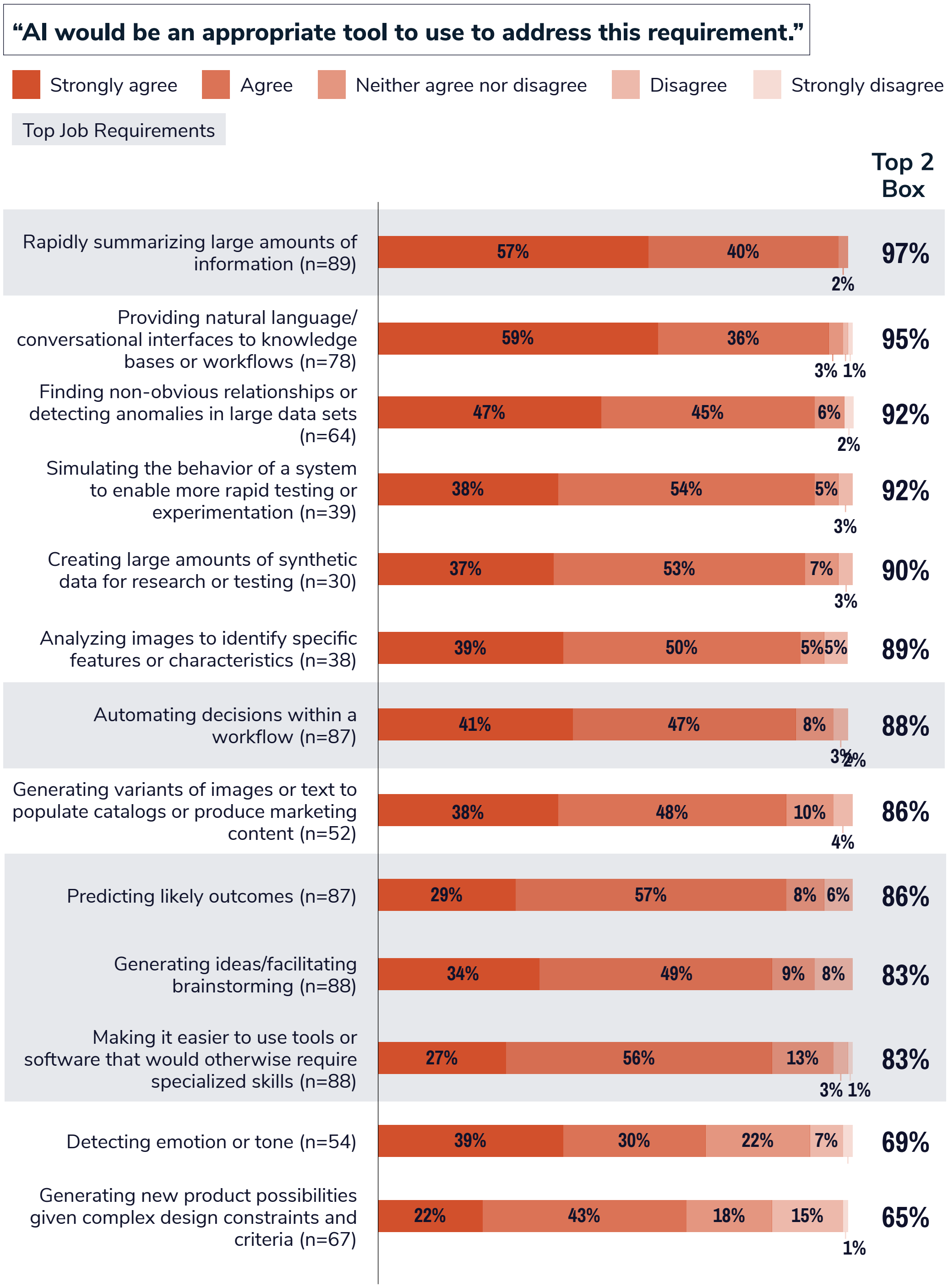
Key Job Function Requirements

% Among Total Respondents, n=201



AI Statement Agreement Relating to Job Function Requirements

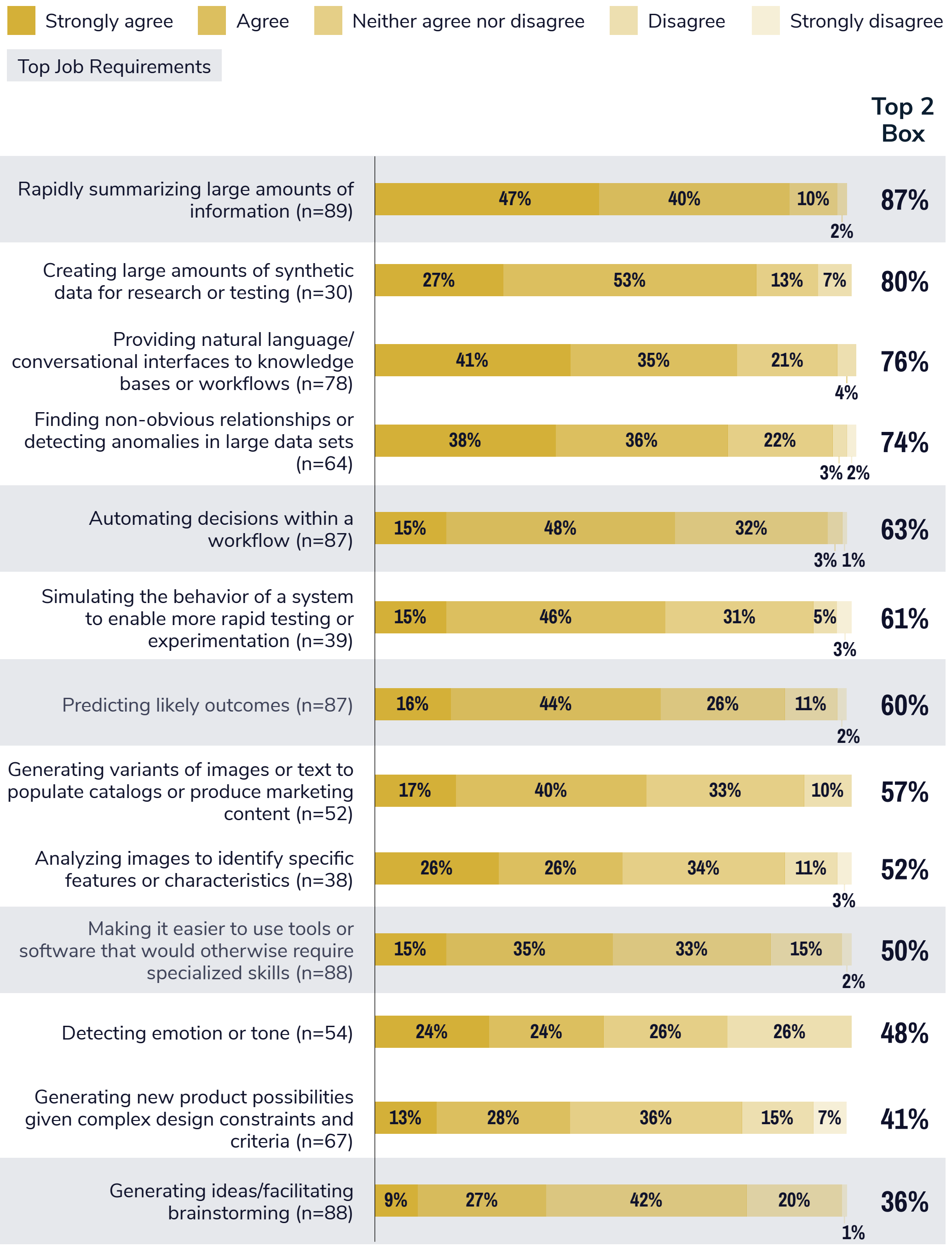
% Among Respondents Indicating Requirement as Key to Their Job Function



AI Statement Agreement Relating to Job Function Requirements

% Among Respondents Indicating Requirement as Key to Their Job Function

"AI is the best tool to use to address this requirement."

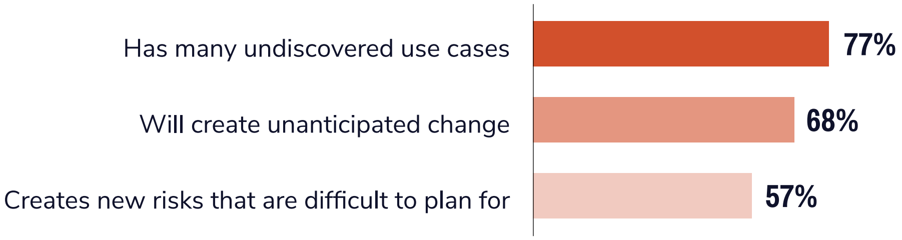


AI Has Unknown Potential… and Risks

One of the most striking findings, given the overall enthusiasm for generative AI, was that respondents thought that many of the possible benefits of AI were still unknown. Seventy-seven percent of respondents believed that AI had many undiscovered use cases, meaning that many firms were uncertain how broadly generative AI could be usefully deployed across the business. Respondents also raised uncertainty around the risks of adopting generative AI: 68% thought that AI would lead to unanticipated change, and 57% expressed concern that AI could create new risks that would be difficult to plan for. Even when firms might be excited to explore the possibilities of AI, significant unknowns could make it difficult to secure required budget, provide adequate resourcing, or even derail projects underway. Improving clarity in these areas by seeking expert guidance or learning from the successes of peers could reduce these inhibitors and make it possible for firms to move forward more quickly in their adoption of the technology.

Opinion of AI

% Among Total Respondents

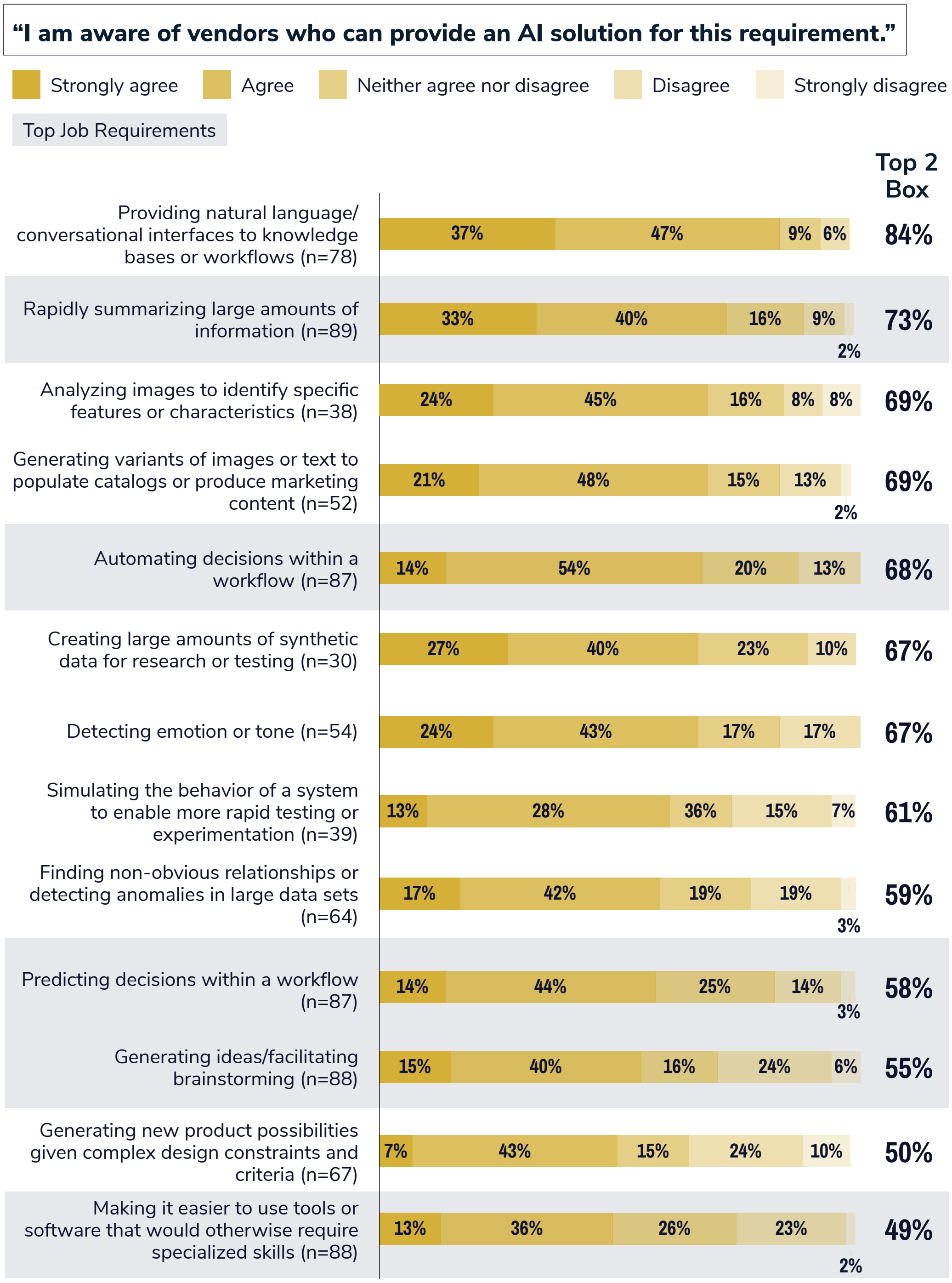


Deployment Lags Awareness of Opportunity

The survey provided substantial evidence that uncertainty around how to effectively deploy generative AI and how to anticipate costs and risks was slowing firms' adoption of generative AI. As shown above, many respondents considered AI an optimal tool for accomplishing multiple key job requirements, but when asked to what degree they had implemented technology, and whether they knew of vendors capable of assisting them in an implementation, responses were significantly lower. On average, only 63% of respondents who had identified AI as relevant to accomplishing a key requirement of their job knew of vendors who could assist them in implementing the technology, and only 46% of respondents had already implemented solutions for these requirements. The magnitude of this gap was observed to differ between use cases: while 84% of respondents could identify a vendor that could provide a generative AI tool to make knowledge bases available through natural language interfaces, and 67% had implemented an AI tool for this purpose, only half (50%) could identify a vendor that provided a generative AI tool for generating new product ideas, and only 28% of respondents had implemented an AI technology to do so. The differences in these gaps in awareness suggest that public conversation around generative AI emphasizes only a narrow range of common use cases, leaving leaders who are seeking to apply the technology to more specialized needs or to industry-specific requirements in the dark about potential pathways forward and the obstacles they might face.

AI Statement Agreement Relating to Job Function Requirements

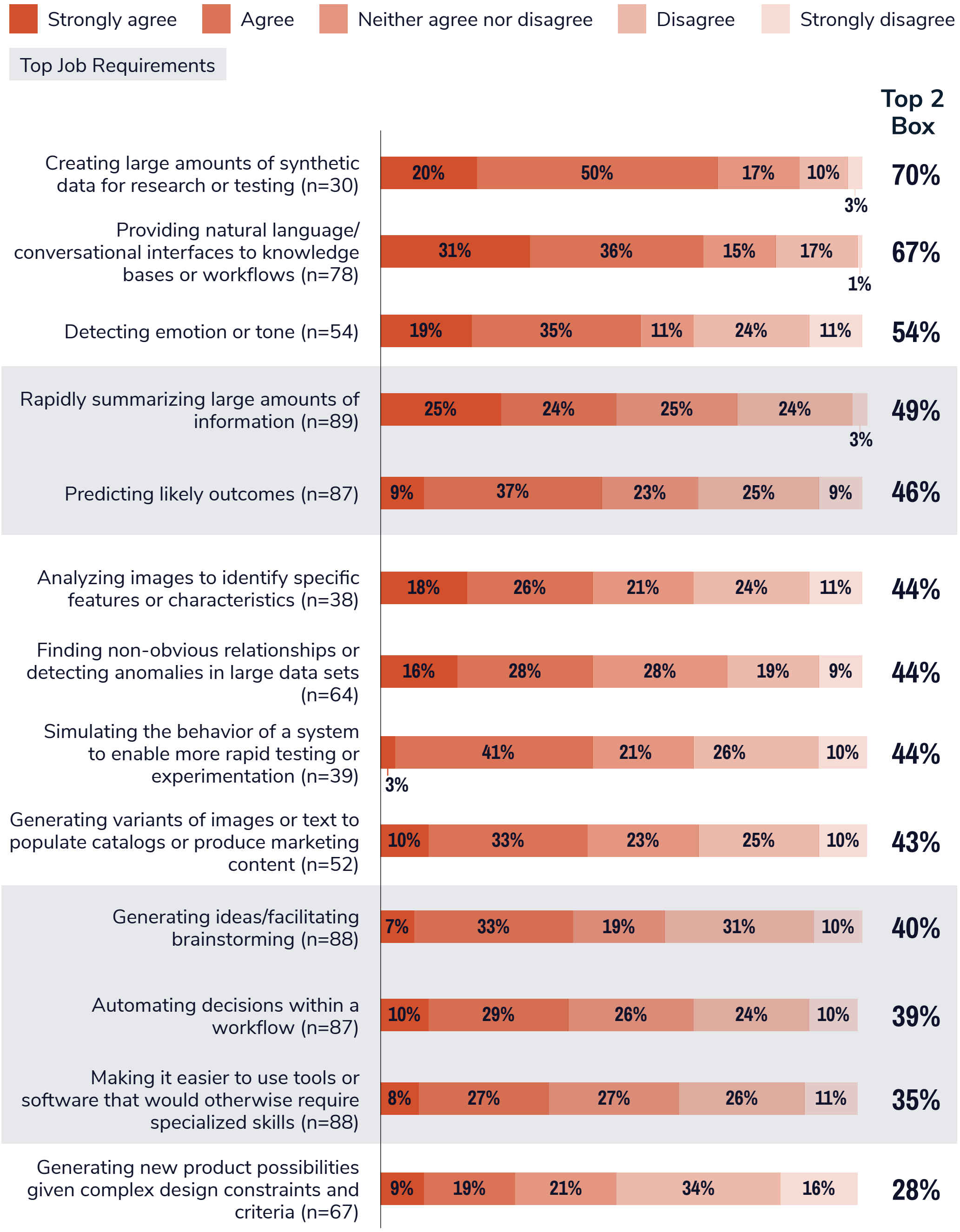
% Among Respondents Indicating Requirement as Key to Their Job Function



AI Statement Agreement Relating to Job Function Requirements

% Among Respondents Indicating Requirement as Key to Their Job Function

"My organization has deployed AI to address this requirement."



87%

of respondents believe that generative AI is the best available tool for rapid summarization of information

Uncertainty about Risks of AI Inhibits Deployments

Implementing any emerging technology opens a range of questions around how to mitigate potential risks, predict costs and resource requirements, and deal with new security considerations. Respondents were asked to consider whether they had access to the information they needed to determine whether they were adequately protected from risks commonly associated with AI; respondents indicated that they lacked insight into security, implementation costs, reliability of outputs, and the ability to mitigate bias associated with models and training data. An inability to address these questions can make it difficult for business and IT leaders to obtain approval for business cases or secure internal support needed to move forward with a pilot or implementation.

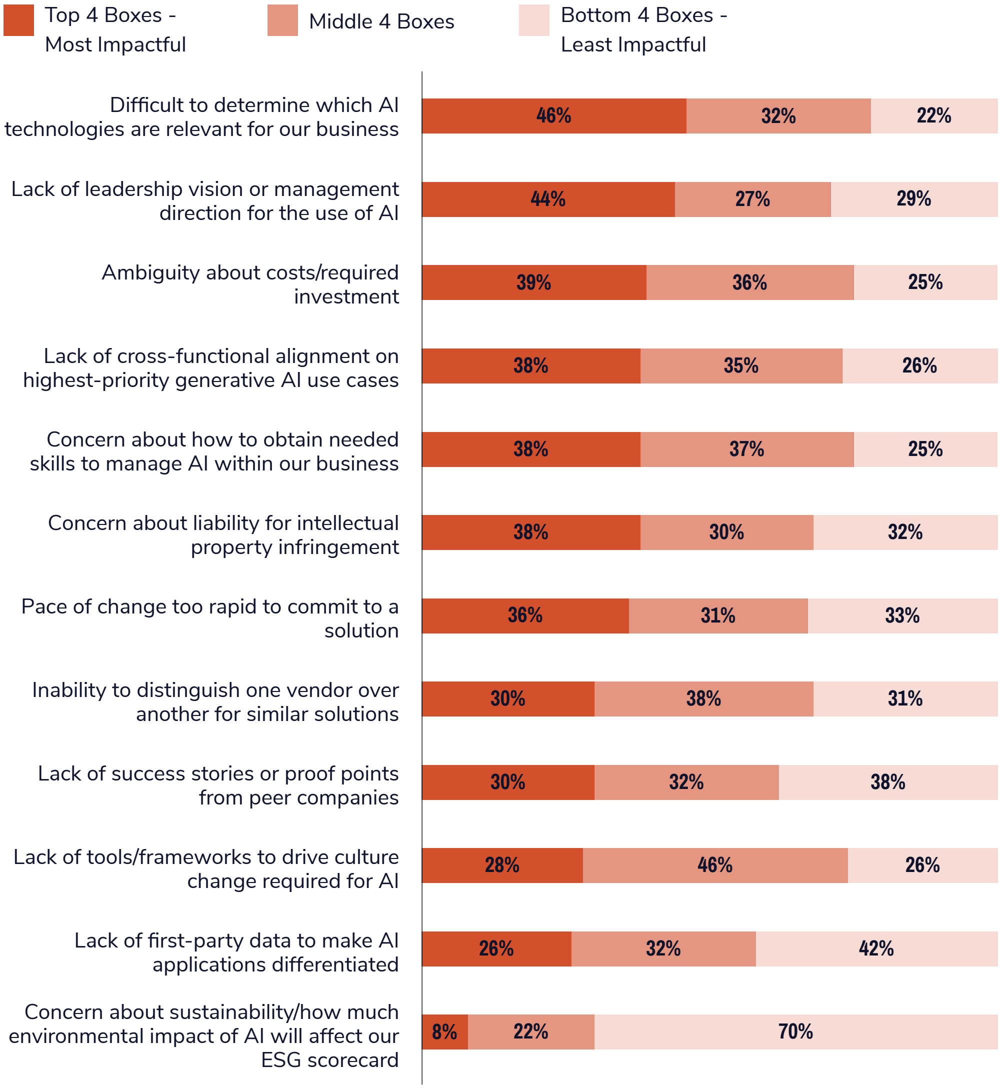
	Key Business Requirements					
Potential Risks	Rapidly summarizing large amounts of information (n=87)	Generating ideas/facilitating brainstorming (n=73)	Predicting likely outcomes (n=75)	Making it easier to use tools or software that would otherwise require specialized skills (n=73)	Automating decisions within a workflow (n=77)	Providing natural language/ conversational interfaces to knowledge bases or workflows (n=74)
Compatibility with existing tools and workflows	66%	64%	63%	52%	56%	65%
Costs/required investment	56%	53%	57%	48%	55%	64%
Explainability or transparency of decisions made by AI	49%	40%	48%	47%	40%	49%
Reliability/ consistency of the output	57%	48%	59%	55%	49%	62%
Bias associated with models/ training data	44%	33%	48%	48%	38%	55%
Environmental impact/ sustainability	45%	34%	49%	51%	49%	36%
Risks associated with security	43%	34%	51%	40%	39%	57%
Risks associated with intellectual property	46%	38%	51%	49%	44%	58%
Need for new skills	62%	58%	68%	59%	69%	66%
Impacts on existing labor force	67%	58%	60%	62%	68%	62%

% Among Respondents Indicating They Have the Information Needed to Mitigate Risk

While conversations about generative AI frequently focus on technical inhibitors such as the availability and quality of training data or the performance of particular models, findings from the survey suggest that uncertainty around key business considerations was a more important inhibitor of generative AI adoption. When asked to rank how significantly different factors inhibited their firms' willingness to implement generative AI technologies, respondents identified difficulty in determining which technologies were relevant to their particular business, lack of leadership vision, and ambiguity about potential costs and required investment as more significant inhibitors than technical factors such as a lack of data. When asked to articulate what specific information was lacking that might help reduce these inhibitors, respondents identified issues such as an inability to predict or quantify potential negative impacts and uncertainty about how to find expertise in addressing these issues and in locating needed skills.

Investment Inhibitors

% Among Total Respondents



52%

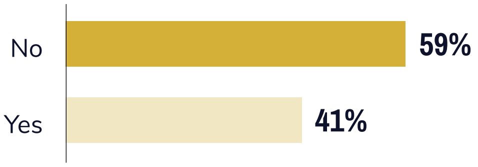
of respondents use third-party vendors to provide commercial generative AI technology solutions

Generative AI Challenging to Implement without Support

When asked how they planned to pursue generative AI investments specifically, respondents indicated a high dependence on generative AI technology available from third-party vendors, with 52% relying on commercial solutions compared to 45% considering partnerships for co-creation of solutions or in-house development. While the high costs of training new generative models may explain part of this response, in the context of other survey responses this finding may indicate that firms are relying on vendors to reduce uncertainty and simplify the path to adopting this technology. One of the clearest signals of ambiguity around generative AI is that 59% of respondents indicated that no common definition exists for what generative AI actually is within the context of their industry, meaning that a consistent set of use cases and best practices have yet to be established in this area.

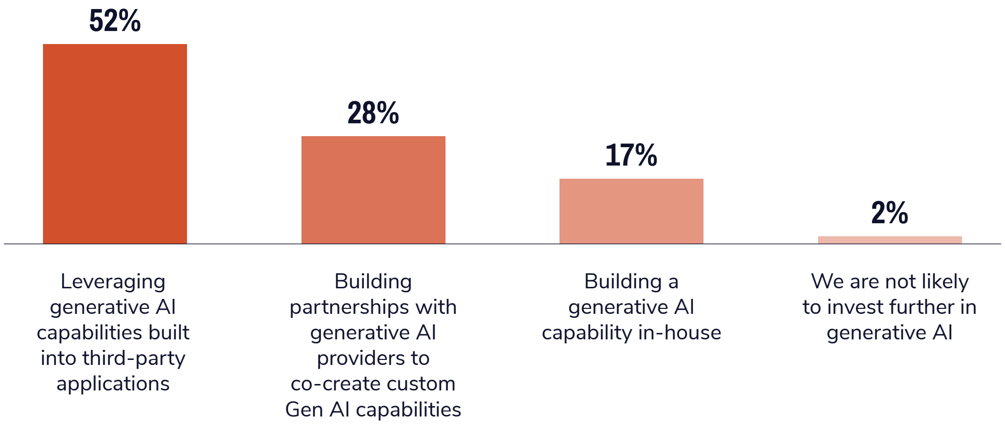
Common Industry Definition of Generative AI

% Among Total Respondents, n=201



Anticipated Investment in the Next Three Years

% Among Total Respondents, n=201



Ingredients of Successful AI Implementations Coming into Focus

Despite lack of clear consensus on best practices, firms beginning to put AI solutions in place are finding that certain types of resources are essential to successful implementations. Among the most commonly identified requirements was proven expertise in where to best apply effort — including expertise in identifying the problems that could be effectively solved with generative AI (47%) and expertise on how to identify use cases for generative AI (42%) — which significantly outranked responses for fundamental technical requirements such as the need for high-quality data to train a model.

> Firms value strategic knowledge about how to allocate resources and plan an implementation more highly than specific technical capabilities.

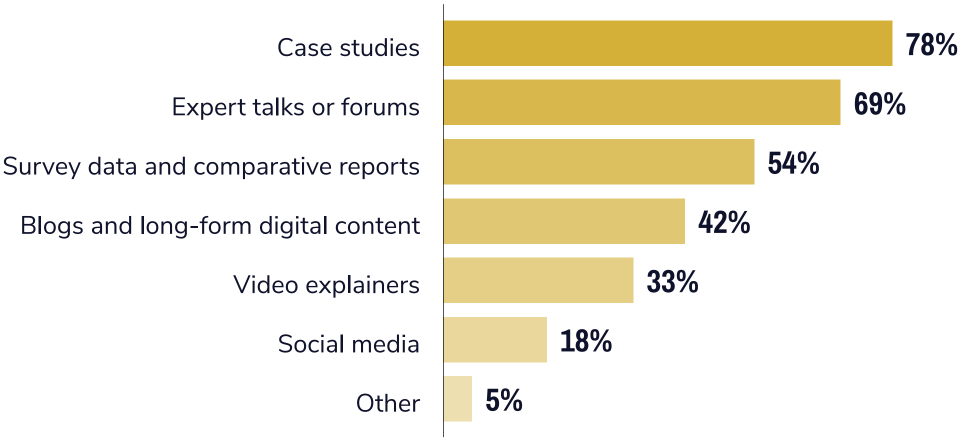
Firms Turn to Industry Experts and Case Studies

In attempting to close the gaps in their knowledge, firms are most likely to seek out case studies (78%) or expert talks or forums led by people who have already successfully accomplished similar projects (69%), indicating a strong desire to learn from real-world experience rather than consume more conceptual or hypothetical content.

When asked which sources they were most likely to trust for information on generative AI in particular, a similar pattern was observed, with respondents ranking industry experts highest (87%) followed by peers who had already tested the technology (85%).

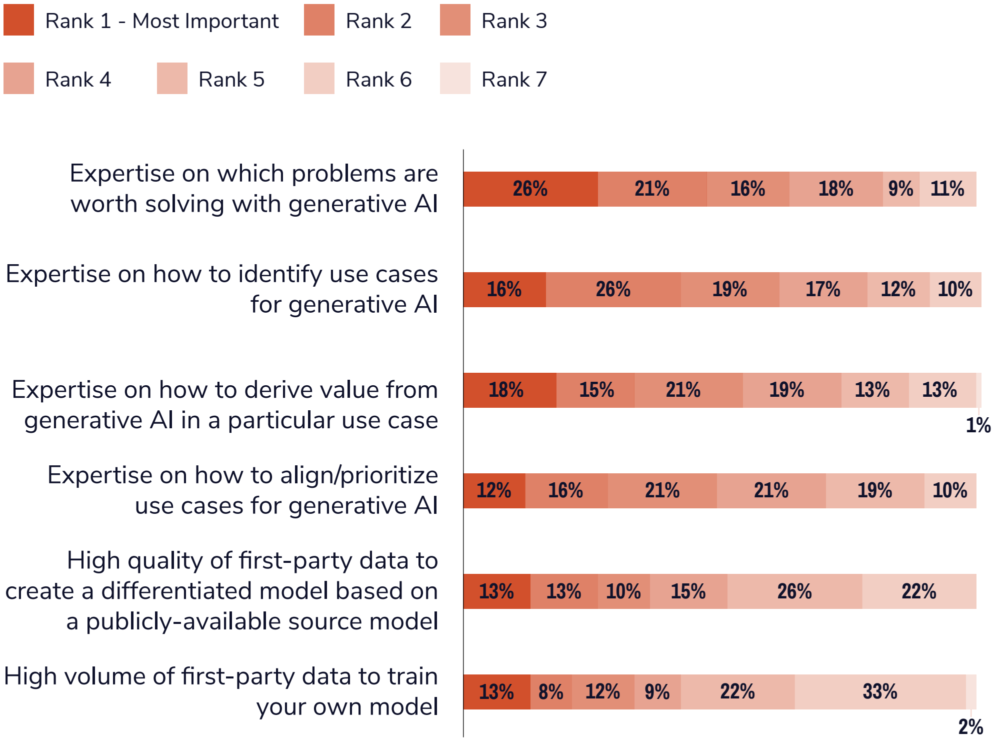
Information Channels on Generative AI

% Among Total Respondents, n=201



Essential Characteristics for Successful Implementation of Generative AI

% Among Total Respondents



CONCLUSION

GLG's survey of AI decision-makers and influencers highlights the gap between enthusiasm for emerging generative AI technologies and the availability of real-world expertise in how to obtain value from them. Firms interested in making generative AI investments may be holding back due to lack of real-world examples relevant to their industries and use cases, or may be moving forward without a clear path to value. Improving clarity around how costs and risks associated with generative AI can be managed can improve the rate at which firms adopt the technology, reduce the likelihood of failed implementations or excessive costs, and increase the confidence with which firms can embrace the potential of new use cases. Accessing a network of experts or peers who have already found paths forward with generative AI is one of the best steps firms can take to be sure they are making the best choices for their budgets, their teams, and their customers.

Interested in the full survey results?

Get in touch to access.

The survey and interview research and analysis contained in this document has been conducted by a consultant engaged by GLG through Gerson Lehrman Group's network of independent consultants and subject matter experts ("Network Members"). Network Member survey respondents and interviewees were compensated for their participation in the research. All information from June 27, 2024, to July 10, 2024, is for informational purposes, and does not constitute legal, accounting, tax, investment, or other professional advice. No representations or warranties (express or implied) are made regarding this document. Neither GLG nor any Network Member shall have any liability whatsoever in connection with the use of this document.