

Hey! What's New? 2024-142

Six Ways AI Changed Business in 2024

According to Randy Bean, who writes in a January 2, 2025 article in the *Harvard Business Review* that “for decades, companies have struggled to capture and integrate data into their decision-making. In spite of protracted efforts, the results have been decidedly mixed. Last year, just 37% of companies reported that efforts to improve data quality had been successful. But recently, something significant has changed: Generative AI has spurred greater interest and investment in data quality and broader data capabilities.”

This, he says, is the principal finding of the *2025 AI & Data Leadership Executive Survey*, an industry benchmark survey of Fortune 1000 and global business leaders that I first launched in 2012. This year’s survey was conducted by the educational Data & AI Leadership Exchange, in partnership with [DataIQ](#), a global community of data and AI leaders.

Bean notes that the survey responses “highlight the extent to which AI has come to drive corporate agendas across the board in just the past year. While most organizations (76.2%) report that they have been using earlier forms of AI, such as machine learning, for more than three years, it has been the arrival of generative AI that has fueled the rapid growth of AI utilization and adoption. This year’s survey findings suggest that we are experiencing a once-in-a-generation transformational moment, akin to the founding of the internet in the 1990s.”

Perhaps most surprising, though, he adds, “is the degree to which a spirit of techno optimism prevails in this year’s findings. Even with fears of disinformation, misinformation, potential job displacement, risk of ethical bias, and other concerns, 96.6% of organizations see the overall impact of AI as beneficial. In fact, this year seemed to convince many leaders that AI is, in fact, the real deal, with 89.0% reporting that AI is expected to be the most transformational technology in a generation, up from 64.2% in last year’s survey.”

According to Bean, these are the big takeaways of this year’s report.

Corporate investments in AI and data are growing: First, this year’s survey found that overall investments in corporate AI and data initiatives are rising almost universally. “This makes sense, as a growing percentage of organizations also reported that AI and data were top priorities: 98.4% of organizations said that they were increasing investments in AI and data, up from 82.2% last year. In addition, 90.5% say that AI and data investments are a top priority, up from 87.9%.”

Organizations are reporting business value from their AI investments: While AI initiatives are at an early stage for most Fortune 1000 companies, 93.7% report that they’ve seen some business value from their AI investment, meaning that they are seeing quantifiable business results, which can be measured by metrics including increased customer acquisition and retention, improved customer satisfaction and revenue and productivity improvements. “The source of this value is significant: 74.8% see it as coming from productivity gain and customer service improvement, notably through efficiencies resulting from the application of generative AI into traditional production processes.”

Transformation due to AI will be gradual for most organizations: Most organizations characterized their AI efforts to be at an early stage, with 76.1% in experimentation, testing and limited production. But a growing percentage of companies are moving more rapidly: 23.9% reported implementing AI in production at scale this year, up from just 4.9% last year. This represents a nearly 500% improvement in the past year.

Organizations are hiring chief AI officers as AI and data leadership roles evolve: Bean points out that this year's survey "also captured some significant sea changes. For one, AI and data leadership continues to be in high demand, with 84.3% of companies having hired a chief data and analytics officer, up from just 12.0% when the survey was first launched in 2012. This year marked the appearance of the chief AI officer as a rapidly emerging role, with 33.1% reporting having now filled this role, and 43.9% saying that a chief AI officer should be appointed at their organization."

AI and data leaders are joining the C-suite to drive business goals: There is, however, good news to be found. "An increasing percentage of companies (70.8%) see these roles as becoming permanent C-suite roles. A growing percentage of AI and data leaders (36.3%) now report to the most senior business leadership of their organization: the CEO, president, or COO. This signifies a recognition that reliance on data has become increasingly central to all aspects of corporate decision making."

For much more, go to [6 Ways AI Changed Business in 2024, According to Executives](#).