

AI Reality Check

The 2026 B2B Commerce AI Benchmark

A custom research report produced by B2B Online Insights for OroCommerce

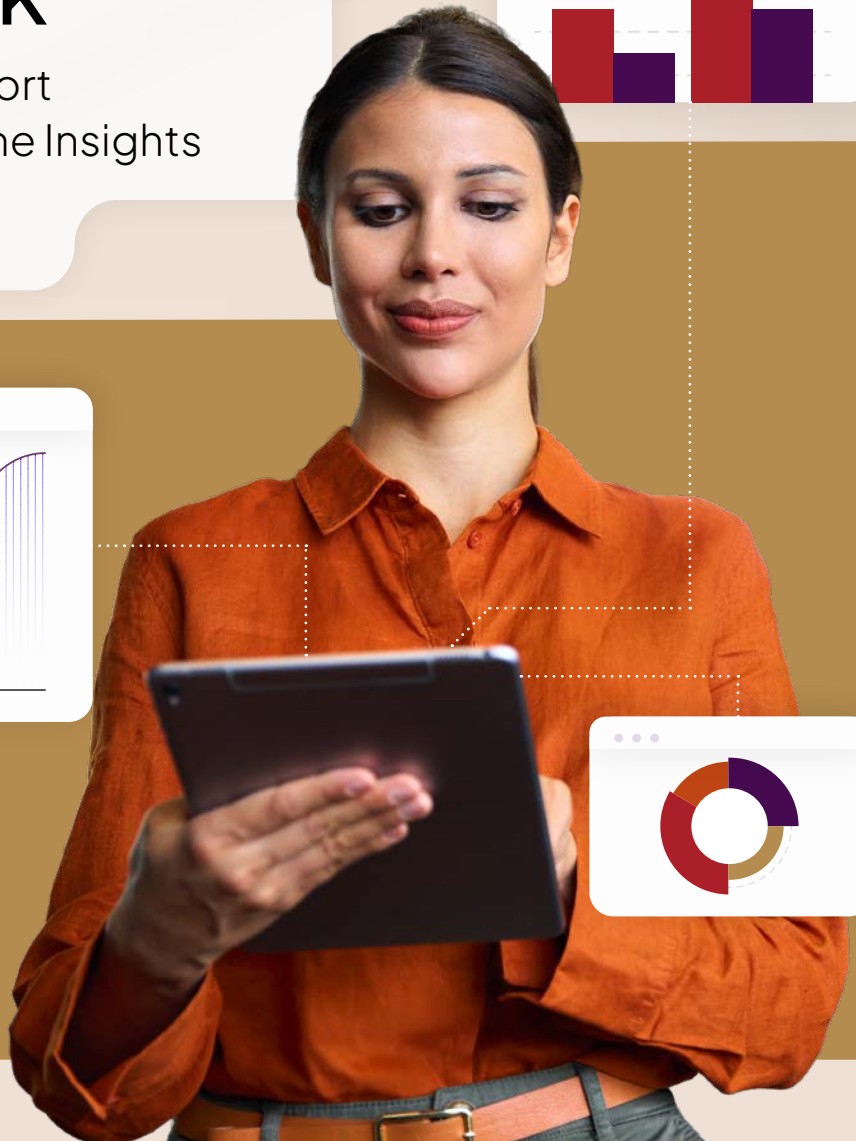
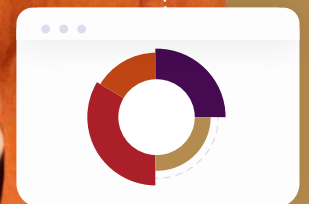
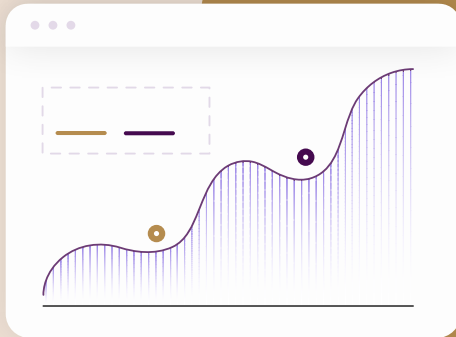
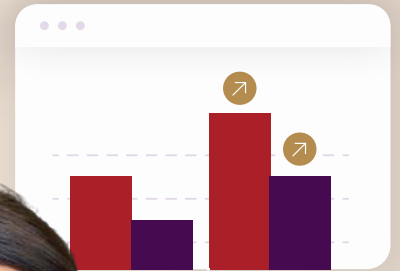


Table of Contents

- 2 Executive Summary
- 3 About the Respondents
- 4 Key Insights
- 5 Where AI Stands Today: Adoption and Maturity Among B2B Businesses
- 8 How AI Has Been Validated: Organizations Explore Customer Input and Measure Effectiveness
- 11 What Successful Companies Are Doing Differently
- 14 Differences in AI Sentiment: How Employees and Leaders Feel About Implementation
- 19 What's Holding AI Back: Poor Data Quality and Legacy Systems
- 21 Where AI Is Headed: Future Priorities and Investments
- 23 Conclusion: Grounding AI in Value and Efficacy
- 24 Key Suggestions
- 25 About the Authors



Executive Summary

AI has taken root across B2B commerce, but real-world results are far more nuanced than the excitement surrounding the technology might suggest. This report is based on a survey of 100 senior decision-makers at B2B manufacturers and distributors. It examines how organizations currently deploy AI, what value it is delivering, and where the biggest gaps remain between expectations and reality.

The findings paint a picture of an industry in the middle of AI maturity. Most organizations have moved past experimentation, with more than one-third reporting measurable results from multi-function AI deployments, and a similar portion reporting limited results.

Nonetheless, few organizations have achieved full integration across their commerce operations.

Where AI is working, the payoff is tangible. B2B leaders report improved customer satisfaction and better data quality, for example. However, a significant portion of the organizations surveyed say AI has not delivered the value they expected. For the most part, AI implementation has been positive, but it is not yet transformational.

The message from the field is that AI is a competitive necessity. The path to value now runs through clean data, realistic expectations, and process-first thinking.

About the Respondents

Researchers surveyed 100 leaders to generate the results featured in this report. The respondents are C-suite executives (11%), vice presidents (39%), department heads (10%), and directors (40%).



Every respondent in the study represents a company that is **currently using AI or planning to implement AI in some capacity.**

The respondents occupy roles in:



IT



eCommerce



Sales



Customer Experience



Digital Transformation



Marketing

The respondents represent **B2B manufacturers and distributors across industries.**

26%

B2B manufacturers

42%

Distributors

32%

Both



Most companies in the study (67%) make at least \$1 billion in annual revenue.

About one-fifth (21%) make \$100m to \$500m.

Key Insights



80% have deployed AI, including 8% who've fully implemented it.



81% are using AI for back-office automation and data entry, making it the most common application.



48% say AI is somewhat effective with positive but not transformational results; only 17% report significant ROI.



54% cite enhanced employee productivity as their top AI outcome.



55% name data quality as a top-three barrier to AI adoption in commerce operations.



Only 4% have comprehensive AI governance policies with clear approval processes.



57% believe guided buying and decision support will be AI's biggest CX impact over the next 24 months.

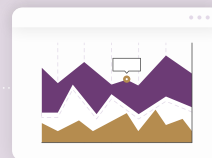


95% of companies that currently generate value from AI have at least basic AI governance in place.



Many companies that currently generate value from AI already use AI-driven capabilities embedded in existing systems, such as:

- Email sentiment analysis
- Real-time insights from data
- Personalized pricing engines
- Demand forecasting



Where AI Stands Today: Adoption and Maturity Among B2B Businesses

The B2B industry has moved decisively past the “should we use AI?” stage. Now, organizations are exploring how deep their adoption of the technology should go, where their AI tools are delivering the most value, and how they can integrate them in a way that empowers their workforce instead of overwhelming them.

Implementation Stage

Which of the following best describes your organization’s current stage of AI adoption in B2B commerce and customer experience?

We are in the research and planning phase.

1%

We are piloting AI solutions in limited areas.

19%

We have deployed AI in one or several functions with limited results.

35%

We have deployed AI in multiple functions with measurable results.

37%

AI is fully integrated across our B2B commerce operations.

8%

Most respondents have deployed AI in multiple functions with measurable results (37%) or have deployed it in one or several functions with limited results (35%). Only 8% have fully integrated AI across B2B commerce operations.

These numbers reveal an industry that has committed to AI but hasn’t yet cracked enterprise-wide deployment. The vast majority of organizations are somewhere between running AI in pockets, gathering evidence from pilots, and deciding where to go next.

Nonetheless, the fact that some of the respondents say they have fully integrated AI across their operations is promising. It demonstrates that the industry is likely headed in this direction, even if some organizations are taking their time on implementation.

As we will learn, those organizations that take a deliberate approach to AI adoption may even be in a better position.

Where AI Is Being Used

As for where AI is being implemented, back-office automation and data entry, as well as customer service support, are favored by a wide margin. Specifically, 81% of the respondents reported implementation in back-office functions, while 73% have implemented AI for customer service and support automation.

The areas where organizations are most likely to have partially implemented AI are in the realms of customer-facing chatbots or virtual assistants (68%), product discovery and search optimization (62%), and sales enablement and lead scoring (59%). About half of the respondents say they have implemented AI for reporting purposes (52%) and pricing optimization (51%).

Over the next 12 months, the areas that will see the greatest share of AI implementation are AI-native purchasing (43%), quote processing (43%), pricing optimization (34%), and fraud detection (34%).

Organizations have already started implementing AI where the risk is lowest and the ROI is most straightforward. These include back-office operations and pre-established customer-facing operations like support and virtual assistance.

Nonetheless, the emerging applications appear to have strong momentum. These categories signal that AI is moving beyond back-office automation into areas that directly affect revenue, risk, and sales performance.

For each of the following AI capabilities, please indicate your organization's current level of implementation.

- We've implemented this capability.
- We've partially implemented or are piloting this capability.
- We haven't implemented this capability, but we will in the next 12 months.
- We haven't implemented this capability and have no plans for the next 12 months.

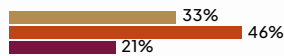
Back-office automation & data entry (e.g., order processing, PO digitization, invoice management)



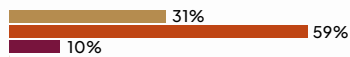
Customer service and support automation



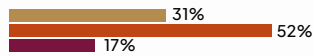
Inventory forecasting and demand planning



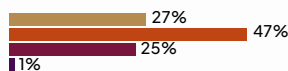
Sales enablement and lead scoring



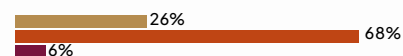
Reporting and Business Insights



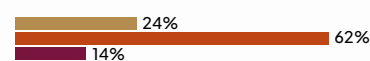
Product data enrichment and content generation



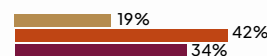
Customer-facing chatbots, virtual assistants, or recommendation engines



Product discovery and search optimization



Fraud detection and risk management



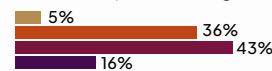
Pricing optimization



Quote processing



AI-native purchasing



In which of the following ways is AI currently being integrated into your business?

AI modules or add-ons embedded within existing enterprise software (e.g., ERP, PIM, CRM, commerce platforms)



AI capabilities included in productivity or collaboration suites (e.g., Microsoft Copilot, Google Workspace AI)



Custom, in-house developed AI tools supported by internal IT teams



Stand-alone AI point solutions integrated with existing systems (e.g., Canals.AI)



How AI Is Being Integrated

Organizations are taking varied approaches to bringing AI into their tech stacks.

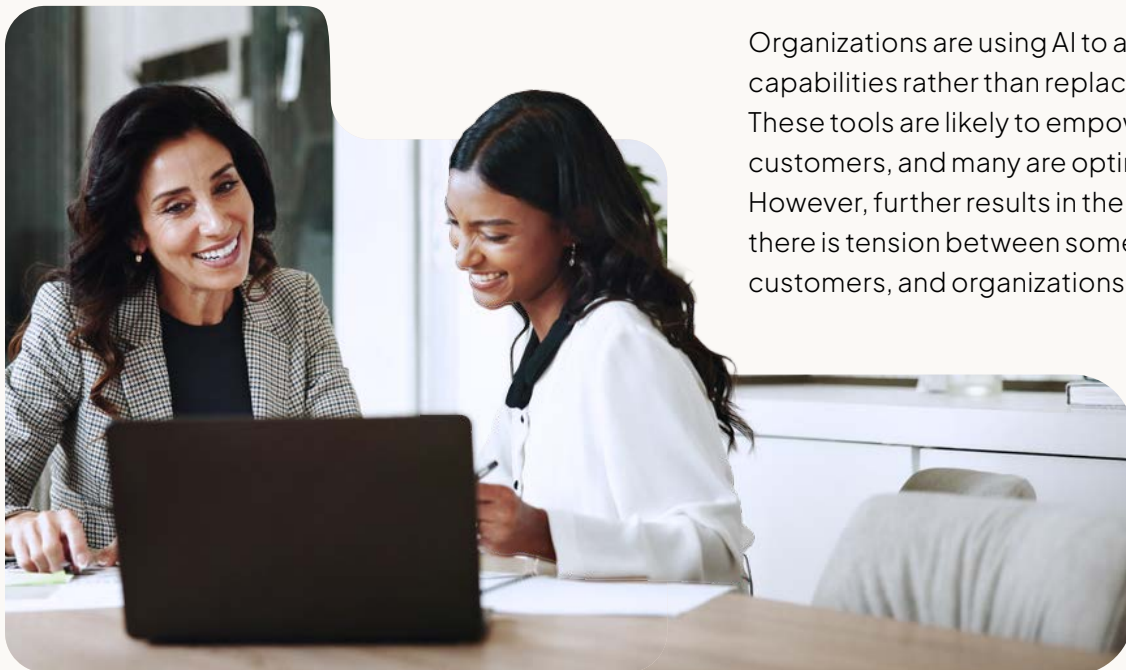
AI modules or add-ons embedded within existing enterprise software lead at 60%, followed by AI capabilities in productivity suites like Microsoft Copilot (40%), custom in-house developed AI tools (35%), and stand-alone AI point solutions (28%).

The dominance of embedded AI modules suggests that most B2B organizations prefer to add intelligence to systems they already run rather than replacing them with AI-native platforms.

Replacing core enterprise systems carries significant cost and risk. Most companies would likely prefer to layer AI into the infrastructure they've already built. That makes the quality and flexibility of existing ERP, CRM, and commerce platforms more attractive.

This finding also aligns with a broader industry pattern concerning AI implementations. The most successful tend to serve existing processes rather than impose new ones from the top down.

Organizations are using AI to augment current capabilities rather than replace entire processes. These tools are likely to empower employees and customers, and many are optimistic about them. However, further results in the study suggest that there is tension between some employees, some customers, and organizations' decisions about AI.



How AI Has Been Validated: Organizations Explore Customer Input and Measure Effectiveness

To what extent have you engaged with your customers in developing and piloting AI experiences, or to what extent are you planning to do so if AI is still in planning stages?

Actively co-developing and piloting AI with customers



Validating AI concepts with customers before building



AI initiatives are mostly internal so far



Most leaders recognize that AI integration is an internal issue. However, many organizations are increasingly involving their customers in shaping how AI-driven experiences are designed and delivered.

Most respondents (63%) are now validating AI concepts with customers before building AI customer experiences. Another 23% are already actively co-developing and piloting AI with their customers.

Rather than building AI features in a vacuum and hoping for adoption, B2B companies are treating their buyers as design partners.

In a sector where relationships and trust carry outsized weight, this approach makes strategic sense. This is particularly true for use cases like chatbot-driven product discovery, guided buying, and self-service experiences where the buyer's perspective is essential to getting it right.

The question that matters most is whether, past the adoption headlines, AI is actually delivering measurable value.



Overall Effectiveness

Nearly half (48%) say AI is somewhat effective with some positive results, but it has not been transformational. Meanwhile, 17% report that their AI deployments have been very effective with significant ROI.

However, 15% say AI has not delivered expected value at all, and 17% say it's too early to tell.

That 15% figure deserves attention. Among the respondents who say AI has fallen short, the reasons center on a handful of recurring themes, including:

- Teams that don't trust or use the recommendations.
- Use cases that are too narrow to drive results.
- Tools that require more manual oversight than expected.
- Data foundations that are too weak to support reliable outputs.

How effective has AI been at delivering measurable business value in your organization?

Very effective—we have seen significant ROI and business impact.

 17%

Somewhat effective—we have seen some positive results, but not transformational.

 48%

Not very effective—results have been minimal or difficult to measure.

 3%

Not effective at all—AI has not delivered the expected value.

 15%

Too early to tell—implementations are too new to assess.

 17%



My shop floor managers and senior sales reps simply do not believe the numbers the system gives them, so they ignore the AI recommendations entirely and just keep doing things the old-fashioned way.

C-level Executive, Marketing
B2B Manufacturer and Distributor



Despite the investment, the use cases we have rolled out are too narrow to move the needle in a meaningful way.

Vice President, Service/CX
B2B Manufacturer



Fundamentally, our data is not clean or consistent enough for AI to work the way the vendors promise, so the outputs have not been reliable.

Director, Service/CX, B2B Distributor

In other words, AI tools are only as good as the data, trust, and process readiness behind them. Organizations that skip foundational work like data standardization, workflow alignment, and change management are typically the ones reporting the weakest returns.

Top Business Outcomes

Among the organizations that say their AI deployments are at least somewhat effective, the top three business outcomes tell a focused story.

Enhanced employee productivity leads at 54%, followed by improved customer satisfaction scores at 51% and improved data quality and accessibility at 48%.

These are not transformational outcomes, but they are practical, measurable gains. Companies that can draw a direct line between their AI investments and time saved, customers served, and data made more usable can demonstrate ROI.

The fact that productivity tops the list reinforces the dominance of automation-oriented AI in B2B today.

The strong showing of customer satisfaction among these respondents confirms that buyer-facing applications are also delivering when well executed.

Since you indicated AI has been effective, which three (3) of the following business outcomes have you achieved through AI adoption?

Enhanced employee productivity **54%**

Improved customer satisfaction scores **51%**

Improved data quality and accessibility **48%**

Better pricing accuracy and margin protection **38%**

Increased revenue or conversion rates **37%**

Reduced operational costs and improved sales efficiency **32%**

Reduced error rates in manual processes **31%**

Faster time-to-market for new products or capabilities **9%**



What Successful Companies Are Doing Differently

Companies generating value from their AI deployment say they are experiencing improved data quality and customer satisfaction. A deeper analysis of responses from the 17% of respondents who say their AI implementations have been “very effective” at delivering measurable business value reveals **what they’ve done differently compared to organizations that struggle to generate value.**

They’re More Likely to Collaborate with Customers and Employees, and Establish Formal Governance

Almost half of successful companies (47%) are actively co-developing and piloting AI with their customers. That’s compared to just 23% of all respondents.

More successful companies are designing their AI-enhanced capabilities with customers in mind. They are asking them to provide input about experiences, so they can shape policies that reflect their needs.

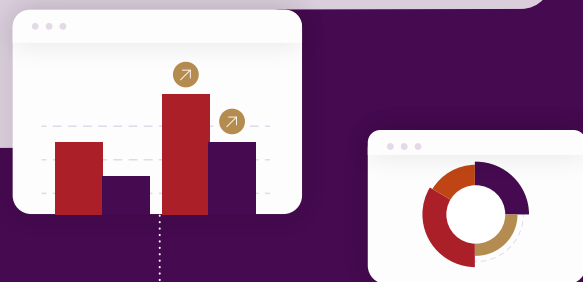
There are similar differences in the internal cultures between companies successful with AI and those that are unsuccessful.

While only 8% of all the respondents say their employees feel “very positive” about the AI tools in use in their organizations, 41% of successful companies say their employees feel very positive about them. Only 12% of successful companies say their employees are “neutral,” compared to 40% of all companies.

This suggests that successful organizations work directly with their employees on AI implementation, just as they do with their customers. By soliciting employee input and feedback, they can increase adoption rates and achieve faster speed to value.

Almost one-quarter of successful companies (24%) have comprehensive AI governance policies with clear approval processes in place, while another 71% have basic guidelines. Only 4% of all the companies represented in the study have comprehensive policies.

Formal governance reduces risk and enables departments to implement their AI capabilities according to pre-determined rules. Policies can also help individual employees make decisions about AI-generated insights and actions.



They Already Use Vendor Capabilities for Decision-Making, Pricing, and Customer Engagement

Successful companies describe specific capabilities from their vendors as drivers of success. For example, one respondent describes how their CRM's email sentiment analysis caught a problem their team missed entirely:

"It alerted me to a major account we were about to lose because of a shipping delay we had not even noticed."

Another highlights how AI has changed the pace of operational decisions:

"It provides insights and analysis in real time from our data, which enables us to make faster and more informed decisions."

Pricing and inventory management tell a similar story. Respondents describe platforms that adjust prices based on purchase volume,

forecast demand, and generate tailored pricing for individual accounts.

"Providers have enabled features wherein we can offer tailored pricing to clients based on previous business and bulk order preset requirements," says a respondent.

In the area of customer engagement, AI assistants are handling routine buyer queries on commerce platforms, while lead tracking tools are identifying high-priority prospects. One respondent says their lead conversations "are monitored actively using AI," which provides them with "reports on possible strong leads to focus on further personalization."



Providers have enabled features wherein we can offer tailored pricing to clients based on previous business and bulk order preset requirements.



They're Optimistic About Faster Insights, But Cautious About Risk and Relationships

Companies that have successfully leveraged AI express some optimism. However, that optimism is for specific use cases. When it comes to AI in general, they are more cautious.

For example, one respondent says, "What excites me is faster service and better data insights." Another is focused on the sales process:

"Speed is everything. I am optimistic that AI will eventually handle the request for quote process."

One leader sees potential beyond revenue, hoping AI can optimize their usage of materials "to significantly reduce waste, which is a huge win for our brand image."

The concerns are just as specific. Cybersecurity comes up repeatedly in their responses.

"A vast amount of information is used for AI features, and this does increase the risk of breach or misuse of data," one respondent warns. Data quality is another worry, as one respondent believes "AI is only as smart as the data it learns from. If the data is messy or wrong, the AI can make mistakes."

The concern that surfaces most pointedly is about trust and the customer relationship.

"I am skeptical about including too many AI features because B2B is all about building and maintaining trust with parties," one respondent writes. "If we rely too much on AI, client retention issues will increase."

For leaders confident in their AI programs, the goal seems to be keeping automation and human relationships working alongside each other.



I am skeptical about including too many AI features because B2B is all about building and maintaining trust with parties. If we rely too much on AI, client retention issues will increase.



Differences in AI Sentiment: How Employees and Leaders Feel About Implementation

How an organization's people feel about AI matters as much as how the tools perform. Without adoption by employees, technology goes unused, resulting in wasted spending.

The study asked respondents about the current sentiment of their employees regarding AI. It also asked them to share their own points of view, whether they were optimistic or skeptical.

How would you characterize your employees' overall sentiment toward AI tools in your organization?

Very positive—employees actively embrace and advocate for AI adoption.

8%

Somewhat positive—employees are mostly optimistic about AI.

51%

Neutral—employees are neither particularly supportive nor resistant.

40%

Somewhat negative—employees express concerns or reluctance about AI.

1%

How Employees Feel About AI

Employee sentiment toward AI is cautiously optimistic. About half (51%) say employees are somewhat positive, while 8% say employees are very positive. Most remaining respondents (40%) claim employees are neutral.

No respondent in the study reported that employees are very negative about AI, and only 1% say they are "somewhat negative." That's good news for AI champions within the organization.

The less encouraging finding is that strong enthusiasm remains rare. Most workers are likely waiting for tangible evidence that these tools help them rather than replace them or add to their workload. Re-orienting workflows to new tools also takes time, even if those tools promise to improve efficiency.

How Optimistic Leaders Feel About AI

When asked to describe their own feelings about AI in B2B commerce and customer experience, respondents' express both optimism and skepticism.

The most common themes in their responses provide a glimpse of what leaders like and dislike about their AI tools. Here's what the optimistic respondents had to say.

Operational Efficiency and Task Automation

The strongest source of optimism is AI's ability to eliminate manual, repetitive work. Leaders consistently point to order processing, data entry, lead scoring, chatbot support, and demand forecasting as areas where AI is delivering real-time savings.

Several respondents emphasize that the value is in freeing up people for higher-order work,

such as forming strategy, building relationships, and complex problem-solving. They see AI as an enabler rather than a technology that displaces headcount entirely.

Predictive Analytics and Proactive Decision-Making

Many leaders are excited about AI's potential to shift their organizations from reactive to proactive. Demand sensing, dynamic pricing, predictive maintenance, and competitor intelligence are all cited as high-value frontier applications.

Leaders want to be able to anticipate problems and opportunities, using data to act decisively.



I consider AI a co-pilot for our team. It provides recommendations while keeping human expertise at the center.

Director, eCommerce
B2B Manufacturer and Distributor



Automating the tedious tasks — like order entry and freight matching — is what keeps me hopeful about AI.

Director, IT
B2B Manufacturer and Distributor



Predictive capabilities are the holy grail for us. Being able to anticipate a spike in demand before the customer even knows they need a restock is where the real value lies.

C-level Executive, Marketing
B2B Manufacturer and Distributor



Since AI can assess competitor pricing, inventory, and demand in real time, I am optimistic about the results from automated pricing features.

Vice President, Digital Transformation
B2B Distributor

Personalization and Enhanced Customer Relationships

Another focus of the respondents' optimism centers on AI-powered personalization. Leaders are either already delivering, or eagerly anticipating the ability to deliver, tailored catalogs, custom pricing, and personalized product recommendations to customers.

Some hope to create buyer experiences that more closely resemble the best of consumer shopping. Several respondents connect this directly to relationship strength, noting that smarter personalization can deepen loyalty rather than feel impersonal.



My optimism stems from the personalization aspect. B2B buyers now expect a B2C-like experience, and AI is the only way we can offer custom pricing and tailored catalogs to thousands of distributors at once.

Director, Marketing
B2B Manufacturer



If customers are happy with our B2B commerce solution and its AI features, we can build lasting business relationships.

Vice President, Service/CX
B2B Distributor

How Skeptical Leaders Feel About AI

However, skepticism runs alongside optimism in the responses, and it clusters into equally recognizable patterns.

Some leaders are concerned about how AI unreliability and “hallucinations” could affect their strategic direction and the relationships they've built with customers. Others are hesitant due to implementation challenges and the risk of losing “the human touch.”

Implementation Complexity and Organizational Readiness

Leaders acknowledge that AI's potential is real, but many express frustrations with the difficulty of operationalizing it. Legacy system constraints, data silos, and keeping pace with innovation are challenges. At some organizations, there is a lack of readiness or a clear implementation roadmap.



AI shows promise operationally, but the complexity of our pricing, contracts, and workflows limits what it can actually do today.

Vice President, IT
B2B Manufacturer and Distributor



The pace of AI innovation excites me, but what worries me is how difficult it is to operationalize.

Department Head, eCommerce
B2B Distributor

Loss of Human Touch and Relationship Erosion

In an industry built on relationships, the concern that AI could erode the human element is persistent.

Respondents worry about over-automation making interactions feel impersonal, and they

question whether AI can handle the nuances of B2B relationship management. Success often depends on trust-building, empathy, and complex negotiations.



While I am enthusiastic about AI innovation, I worry that the human element will eventually be lost completely – after all, it is the human touch that defines many strong B2B relationships.

Vice President, Digital Transformation
B2B Distributor



Excessive levels of automation in customer-facing tools can make interactions feel impersonal, and that is not what we want in B2B commerce.

Director, Sales, B2B Distributor

Accuracy, Trust, and Reliability Concerns

Finally, leaders also recognize that AI outputs are only as trustworthy as the data and oversight behind them. Concerns about hallucinations, inaccurate forecasts, unexplainable decisions, and the risk of blind trust come up often.



AI is only as smart as the data it learns from. If the data is messy or wrong, the AI will make mistakes.

C-Level Executive, IT
B2B Manufacturer



I worry about scenarios where AI cuts off a long-term distributor because of a temporary dip in their credit score — and if I cannot explain why it happened, I have a PR nightmare on my hands.

Vice President, eCommerce
B2B Distributor



What's Holding AI Back: Poor Data Quality and Legacy Systems

The barriers to AI adoption in B2B commerce are not existential, as organizations are no longer debating whether AI belongs in their operations. They are struggling with the infrastructure, data, and organizational readiness required to make it work.

Top Barriers to Adoption

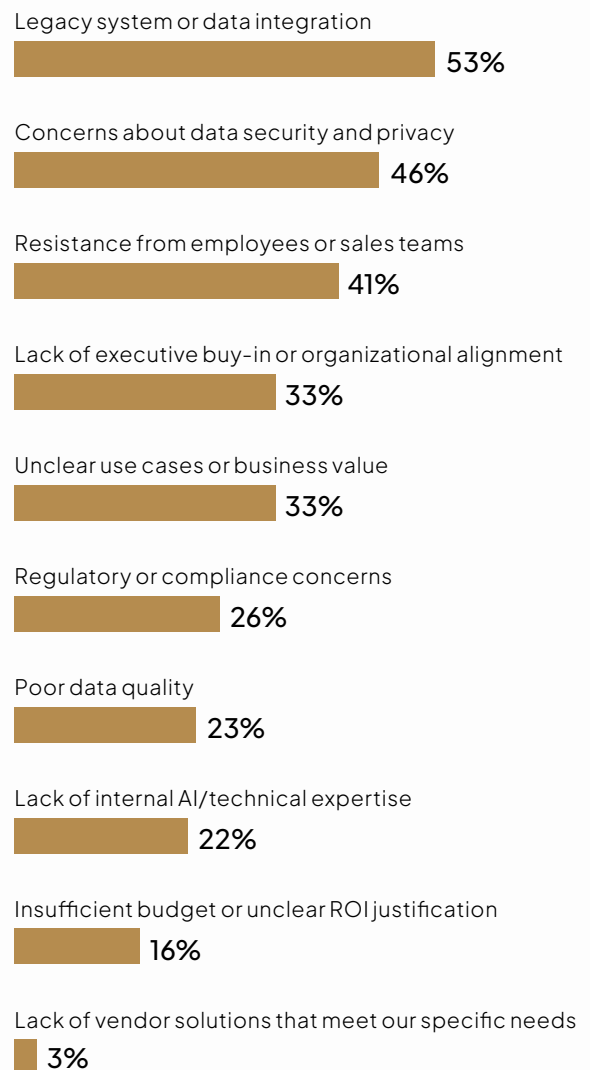
Most respondents (53%) rate legacy system or data integration as one of their top-three biggest barriers to AI adoption in their B2B commerce operations.

Organizations want AI embedded in their existing systems, but those same systems are the primary obstacle to making it work. For many, the path forward isn't a wholesale technology overhaul but a targeted effort to modernize the specific integrations and data pipelines that AI depends on the most.

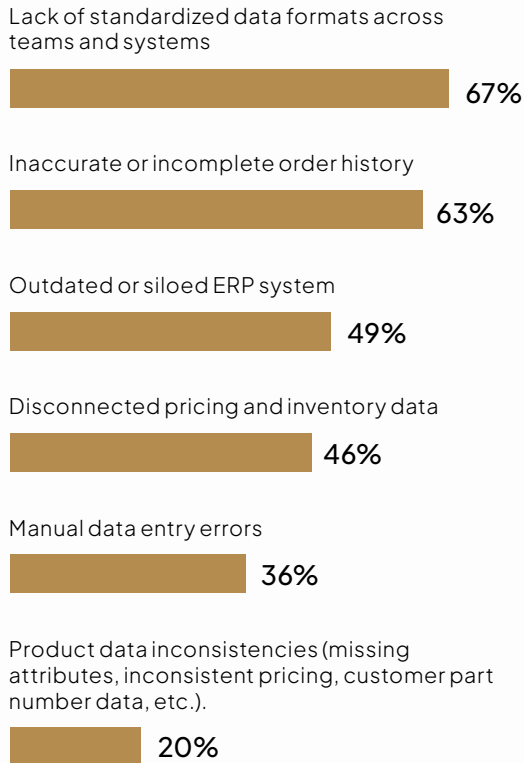
Concerns about data security and privacy (46%) and resistance from employees or sales teams (41%) round out the top obstacles. These concerns are evident across virtually all the companies in the study, including those that are successfully leveraging AI to generate value.

Adoption, specifically, has always been a challenge in B2B eCommerce. While AI can help lower the barrier, especially with natural language interfaces, it won't solve the issue on its own. A clear focus on education, along with defined guardrails and expectations, is still key to driving adoption and improving sentiment over time.

What are the three (3) biggest barriers preventing deeper AI adoption in your B2B commerce operations?



You cited either legacy system integration or poor data quality (or both) among your top barriers to deeper AI adoption. Where do you see the biggest gaps in your data that would need to be addressed before AI can be effectively used?



The concentration of barriers around data and systems is also significant. Instead of struggling with a lack of expertise, budget, or executive buy-in as some did in the past, most B2B organizations have strategic intent and leadership support for AI. What they lack is the foundational infrastructure to execute on it.

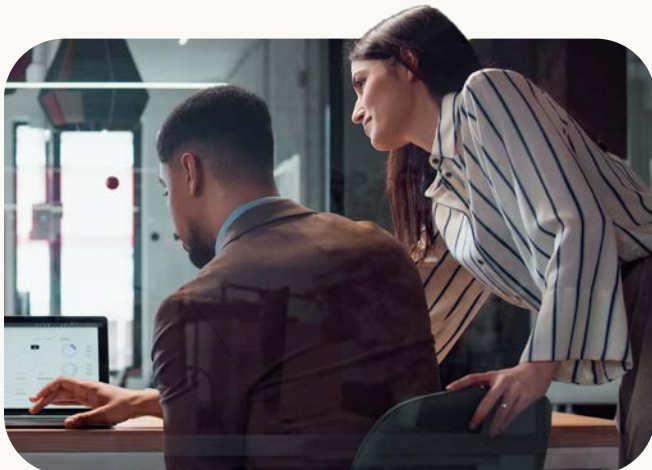
The Biggest Gaps in Data

The respondents who cite data quality, legacy system integration, or both as barriers also deliver some insights about where their data is lacking.

A majority of these respondents say their biggest gaps exist in a lack of standardized data formats across teams and systems (67%) and inaccurate or incomplete order history (63%). At 49%, about half of these respondents cite outdated or siloed ERP systems.

These are not anomalous problems but the everyday realities of B2B operations. Fragmented systems built up over decades, inconsistent data entry practices, and ERPs that were never designed to feed AI models can all contribute to the challenge of AI implementation.

Fixing them may require new data policies, changes in technology, and new forms of AI and data governance. However, these are prerequisites for every AI ambition that follows.



Governance and Risk — The Policy Gap

Indeed, as AI adoption accelerates, governance has not kept pace. The disconnect between how widely organizations deploy AI and how rigorously they oversee it creates significant risk.

Most organizations (62%) have some basic AI governance guidelines, but they are not fully formalized. Another 30% are currently developing policies. Only 4% have comprehensive AI governance policies with clear approval processes.

This means that 96% of B2B organizations are running AI without mature governance frameworks.

In a landscape where employees are using AI both at work and in their daily lives, the potential for unapproved or uncoordinated AI usage is significant. For an industry that handles sensitive pricing, customer-specific contracts, and complex supply chain data, this is a blind spot that demands attention.

Where AI Is Headed: Future Priorities and Investments

Despite the challenges, organizations are moving forward with their AI investments. They are doing so with a focus on applications that drive customer experience and operational intelligence.

Over the next 24 months, respondents believe AI will have the greatest impact on the B2B customer experience in three areas:

- Guided buying and decision support (57%)
- Predictive maintenance and reordering (49%)
- Dynamic pricing optimization (48%).

Does your organization have formal governance policies in place for AI usage?

Yes, we have comprehensive AI governance policies with clear approval processes.

4%

Yes, we have some basic guidelines, but they are not fully formalized.

62%

We are currently developing AI governance policies.

30%

No, but we plan to develop them in the next 12 months.

4%

In which three of the following areas do you believe AI will have the greatest impact on your B2B customer experience over the next 24 months?

Guided Buying & Decision Support 57%

Predictive Maintenance / Reordering 49%

Dynamic Pricing Optimization 48%

Intelligent Search & Discovery 45%

Sales & Account Intelligence 39%

Personalized Product Recommendations 28%

Automated Quote-to-Cash 20%

Customer Support & Post-Sale Service 10%

Notably, 45% of the respondents selected intelligent search and discovery as a top area of impact. These focus areas represent a shift away from back-office and customer support functions. Organizations are moving toward AI that directly shapes how buyers discover, evaluate, and purchase products.

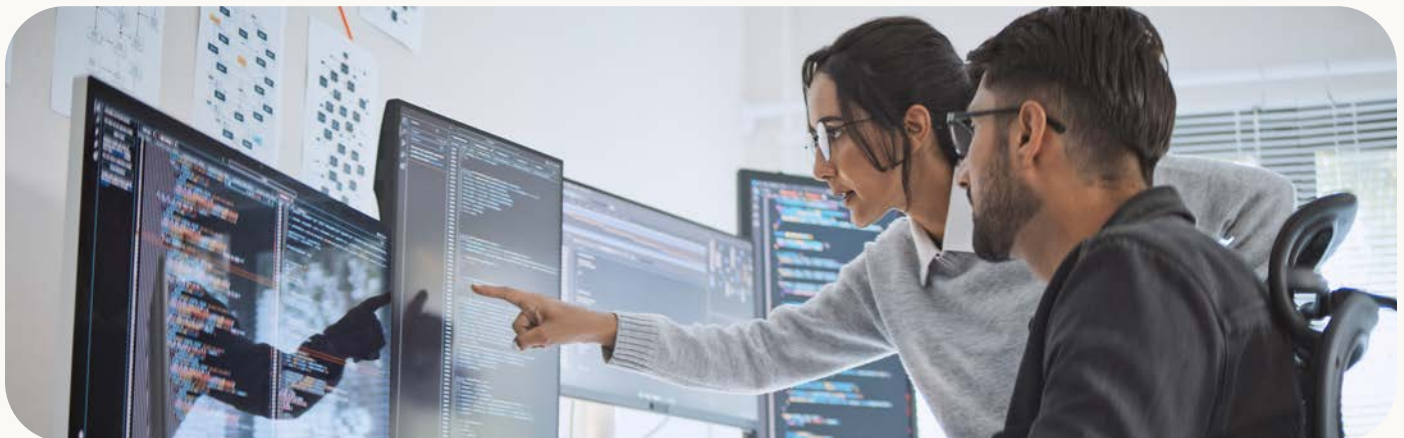
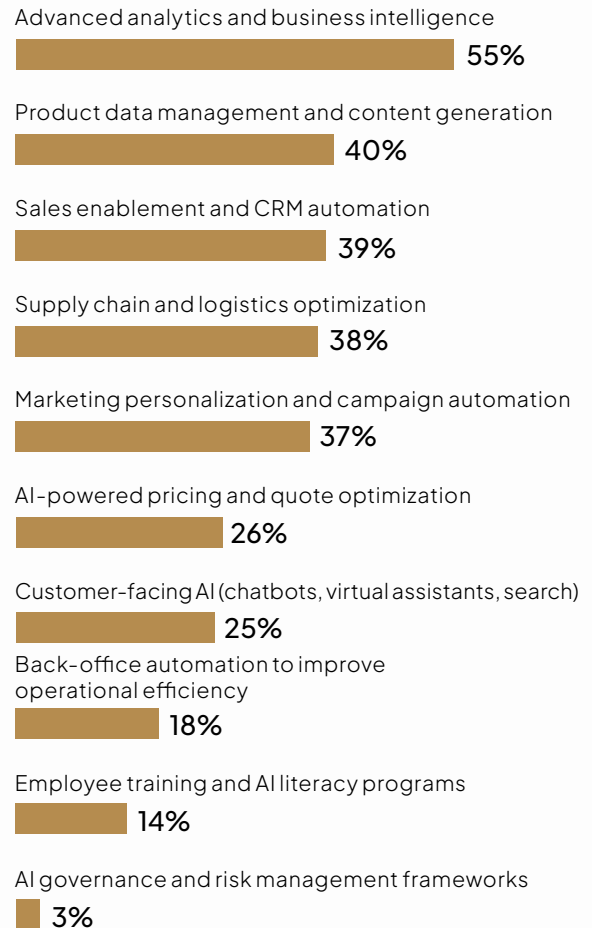
Planned AI Investments

In the near term, the three most common AI investments over the next 12 months will be advanced analytics and business intelligence (55%), product data management and content generation (40%), and sales enablement and CRM automation (39%).

More than one-third of the respondents also say supply chain logistics optimization (38%) and marketing personalization and campaign automation (37%) are among their top priorities.

These planned investments reinforce a consistent theme: Organizations are prioritizing practical, measurable AI applications over experimental ones. The top investment priority, advanced analytics, speaks to a desire for better visibility into what is already happening in the business before layering on more automation.

Which three of the following AI investment priorities is your organization planning to pursue in the next 12 months?



Conclusion: Grounding AI in Value and Efficacy

The state of AI in B2B commerce may not match the sweeping revolution the headlines promise, but a genuine transformation is underway. Successful AI deployments share a common thread: They target well-defined problems, are built on clean data, and are matched to realistic expectations.

This study suggests that the organizations best positioned to benefit from AI are those that resist the temptation to invest in and expand AI simply because of industry trends.

Instead, they should focus on strengthening their foundations. That means investing in data quality before investing in models. It means embedding AI into existing workflows rather than layering new AI tools on top of them.

Most importantly, it means putting the focus on people first. Educational initiatives for employees and customers can be critical to improving sentiment and making AI easier to adopt. Organizations must also treat AI governance, limits, and expectations as a prerequisite for trust, both internally and externally.

The B2B organizations most likely to realize value from AI are those that approach it with discipline. They must start where the returns are clearest, measure relentlessly, bring employees and customers into the conversation, and scale only what works. AI can be disruptive, but it works best when it's implemented as a practical tool, developed with the end-user and customer at the forefront.



Key Suggestions



Expect gradual AI implementation and expansion, not revolution.

While some organizations are seeing measurable, multi-function results, few have fully integrated the technology, and some have seen no value from their current deployments. Organizations should expect a gradual, iterative journey.



Start where AI is already proven to work, then work outward.

Back-office automation and customer service automation are where B2B organizations see the earliest and clearest wins.



Fix your data foundation before diving headfirst into AI implementation.

Data quality and legacy systems are the primary barriers. Among those facing data barriers, the most critical gaps are standardized formats and order history accuracy, so these are data types to focus on first.



Establish a governance model for approved and ethical AI use within the business.

With only 4% having comprehensive AI governance policies, organizations risk exposure from unapproved tools, inconsistent oversight, and spurious results.



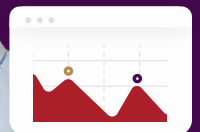
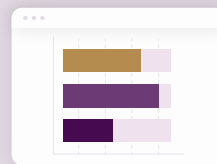
Focus on implementing practical, process-first AI before exploring experimental options.

Respondents recognize AI as a competitive necessity, but they intend to approach adoption pragmatically. Most believe AI should serve as an assistant that augments their employees' work rather than a technology that replaces human expertise, especially in complex B2B commerce scenarios.



Focus on education, as well as defined limits and expectations for use, to encourage AI adoption internally.

Adoption has always been a challenge in B2B eCommerce, and education is foundational to encouraging use and improving sentiment.



About the Authors



OroCommerce is the leading eCommerce platform purpose-built to master the operational complexity of B2B. It gives manufacturers and distributors one central place to manage all their brands, websites, and business units.

OroCommerce's clear, all-in-one license lets you grow without surprise costs by including a complete suite of enterprise-ready tools: a built-in CRM, embedded payments and invoicing portal, robust eCommerce, customizable workflows, marketplace functionality, and embedded AI with OrolQ. This integrated foundation is designed to handle sophisticated B2B2X scenarios and complex sales processes right out of the box.

This unmatched operational freedom is why leading global enterprises like Braskem, Gerdau, Interstate Batteries, Azelis, Lactalis, and DiversiTech deploy OroCommerce across their multiple markets and geographies to power their long-term growth.

For more information, please visit oroinc.com.



B2B Online Insights, the industry research and digital publishing arm of B2B Online, delivers cutting-edge data and analysis on trends, challenges, and opportunities in the B2B eCommerce and digital marketing sectors. Through comprehensive research reports, webinars, and thought leadership initiatives, we empower senior-level B2B leaders to make informed strategic decisions and stay ahead in the rapidly evolving digital landscape.

Our deep industry intelligence not only informs B2B leaders but also connects innovative solution providers with key decision-makers, fostering a dynamic ecosystem that drives the future of digital commerce in the B2B space.

For more information, please visit wbrinsights.com.