

Business Leaders: 4 On-ramps to the AI Highway

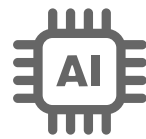


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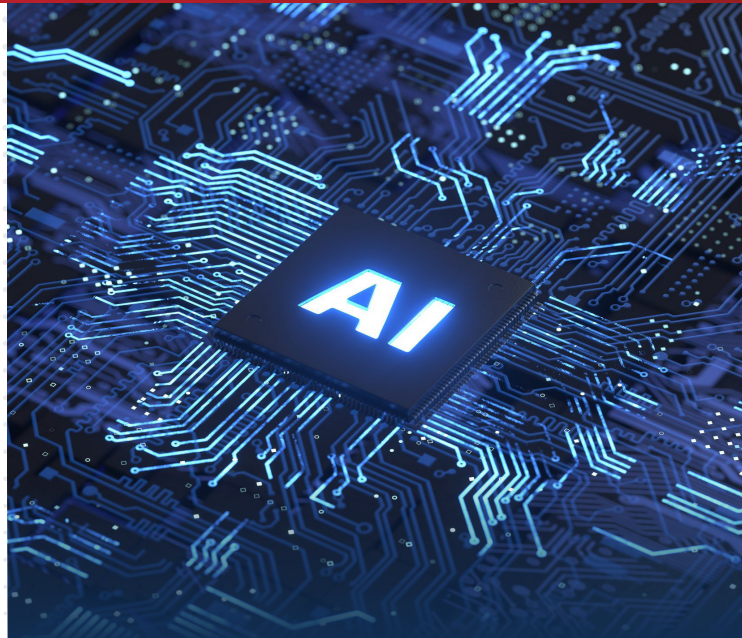
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Introduction

Generative AI (genAI) is nothing if not a new direction. It's already easy to see its potential to impact functions such as IT, customer service, sales and marketing, and product development. But every function—indeed every industry — can expect to be reshaped by AI, and soon.

The pace of the genAI evolution and its potential use cases are pushing business leaders globally to better understand the technology and how they can incorporate it into their organizations. Yet, within all that excitement, organizations face challenges when it comes to implementing and scaling genAI technologies. According to Gartner's 2022 [AI Use-Case ROI survey](#), the main barriers preventing implementation of AI are hard-to-measure value and lack of understanding AI benefits and uses.

Throughout this eBook, we clarify the confusion. We've used the analogy of an on-ramp as a pathway or entry point that facilitates the adoption of AI within an organization. For each of our on-ramps, we provide a use case, or targeted application of AI, that meets a specific business challenge and results in one or more measurable outcomes.



“The first year (of AI) was full of excitement and experimentation, giving all of us a glimpse into the powerful potential of AI to revolutionize experiences for customers, improve employee productivity, and ignite a sense of wonder. The focus this year is on implementation, realizing value, and discovering where AI can take your organization.”



Jessica Hawk,
Microsoft Corporate
Vice President
Data and AI

Planning your Route

Before heading down the highway, you'll need a strategy, or an atlas, to help navigate what can, but doesn't have to be, a rocky road. AI needs to be implemented strategically, rather than just for the sake of it. It's essential to align AI initiatives with your business strategy and focus on the value it can bring to the organization like increasing operational efficiency, reducing human error, and providing cost savings.

But how do you do that? AI is not a specific tool but an approach that can be embedded into any number of processes.

An organization's edge is its ability to find the best way to integrate AI into that process. You can start by analyzing a process, its scalability, the hours currently spent on it and the nature of the data available to support it.

For example, look at opportunities across the business to leverage the same solution or approach multiple times so you can scale any proof of concept that is successful. If you use AI only in isolated instances, you'll get only limited value. Instead, prioritize "patterns" that can scale.

The 2023 Gartner® report Survey Analysis: "AI-First Strategy Leads to Increasing Returns" found that 77 percent of mature organizations adopt an AI-first strategy, systematically considering AI for every use case.

Gartner®



Breaking it Down: Find, Update, Fix

At Hitachi Solutions our Advisory practice thinks about creating AI business value in three distinct categories—find, update, and fix. “That’s how we think about solutioning with AI,” said Vice President Advisory Services Greg Gant. “Do you want to find, update or fix, or a combination of the three? We categorize those three business functions and start to dig in. We often call them areas of excavation.”



Finding Data

GenAI makes it quite simple to take large amounts of data and find relevant information in that data. Gant explained: “One of the biggest search issues we get into is first call resolution or call resolution time. How long does a customer service agent have someone on the phone? How can we resolve the call or escalate? GenAI can handle that, giving agents everything they need in a matter of seconds to move the process along quickly and efficiently for the customer as well as the business.”



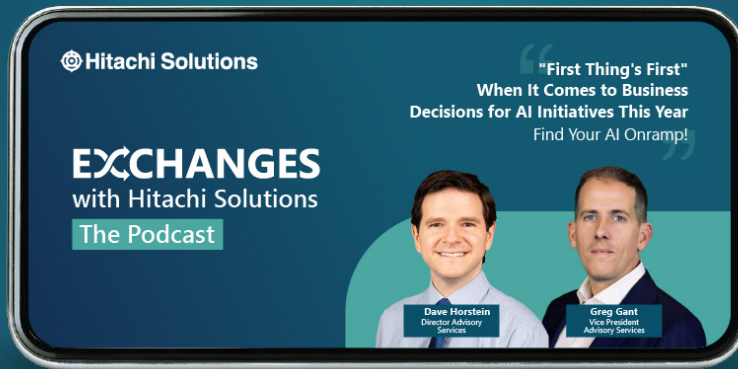
Updating Data

GenAI can make it simple to update information very quickly, sometimes even automatically. “When we think about making complex business processes more efficient, it’s by finding data and updating it faster,” Gant said. Typically, one of the big holdups in a business process is waiting for someone to update a process and move it to the next person in the hierarchy. So, consider how genAI can be used to shorten that window.



Fixing Data

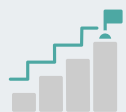
Using the outputs of genAI can actually help companies fix data and the processes that are causing bottlenecks or inaccuracies. For example, organizations could improve internal performance using AI-infused chatbots or process navigation that helps employees maneuver through the organization and its workflows more efficiently. Gant explained, “Maybe it’s understanding how to navigate CRM systems faster to complete quotes. Can we use genAI to help and assist with that?”



Hear first-hand from Greg Gant on how Hitachi Solutions' Advisory Team approaches AI use case and value creation for its customers.

[Listen Now](#)

The right AI use case may live at the intersection of multiple functional teams, and finding that intersection is most effective when approached through collaboration. As a result, the chosen use cases will be comprehensive, cater to different perspectives, and maximize success across the organization while involving all stakeholders in the change management process. If you have a use case that can make a real difference, people will align and support it.



Steps to Take:

- Get familiar with genAI
- Assess the number of business units and processes in your organization to reveal patterns that may point to opportunities
- Develop a systematic process to consider AI for every use case
- Consider how roles and functions can evolve alongside genAI, creating opportunities for reinvention



On-ramp 1:

Modernizing your Means of Transport

The AI revolution is often described primarily as a data revolution: without the untapped power of data, there wouldn't be a need for AI. And a modern data platform is crucial for enterprises to harness the power of genAI, because AI tools need high-quality data to support the training and running of AI models, including large language models (LLMs).

GenAI solutions are most effective when they have both structured and unstructured, internal and external data to process. Thus, many data platform providers have shifted to modernized, [lake house architectures](#), which help meet the challenges of handling large, varied data types and formats in a way that is both scalable and efficient. This evolution also caters to the growing complexity and volume of data in nearly every industry.

Microsoft recently expanded its data platform capabilities by integrating AI into [Fabric](#), its comprehensive analytics solution. The Fabric suite includes a range of services including a data lake, data engineering and data integration, all centralized in one location and primed for developing AI models on a single foundation without having to move data from platform to platform.



In 2024, companies will focus on data platform development to maximize the value of their internal and external data, which includes feeding new AI and analytic workloads, internal and external LLMs, and improving data delivery speed to the business with strong data governance, quality and lineage.

— [Tech Target](#)

From a fully managed modern data platform to a 100 percent in-house data architecture, Hitachi Solutions has the modern data estate solutions that get you where you need to be, and primed for a world where AI can be easily built into whatever you need to do. You can read more about how we're helping our customers modernize their data estates with made-to-order solutions [here](#).

Win with a Modern Data Ecosystem



Supports any Data Source



Highly Scalable and Available



Supports a Machine Learning environment



Provides Insights from Dashboards in Real-time



Steps to Take:

- Determine whether to buy, modernize, or build applications
- Assess whether you have the infrastructure for AI applications to access data securely
- Ensure your cloud infrastructure is built to run large AI workloads and deliver reliability and performance at scale



USE CASE: Sleek Data Platform Primes Customer for Enhanced Decision Making with AI

Lee Company was at an inflection point with its legacy ERP systems and the systems' inability to keep up with the velocity of change in a digital economy. The limitations—siloe data and the failure to scale—couldn't be masked with patches and workarounds. The company also wanted a foundation that would allow them to use genAI and IoT technologies to help drive efficiency and ultimately, ROI. Hitachi Solutions worked with Lee company to implement a sleek, new data platform that unifies data across all the company's business units. Along with that, the solution can scale broadly, allowing for sustainable growth in the future.

Lee Company executives said the data platform transformation set the stage for the company to leverage AI and IoT as core technologies that will become the cornerstone that allows Lee Company to optimize operations, reduce costs, and make more informed decisions. "We're excited about what we can do, and how we can use our scale combined with good data and AI analytics in order to drive ROI," said CFO Rob Ivy. "It's changing our mindset from being limited by technology to a mindset of exploring and being excited about the possibilities of technology."

You can read the entire Lee Company platform modernization story [here](#).

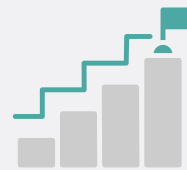


On-ramp 2:

Clean Fuel is Clean Data

Just as gas powers vehicles on a highway, data is the fuel that powers any genAI effort. You need a clean, quality supply; it needs to be the right type and you need easy access to it. Without clean, centralized data, companies will have trouble conducting effective data analysis and will be ill-prepared for advanced applications like genAI and machine learning (ML). Simply put, clean data is crucial, and a data cleansing effort is a necessary precursor to engaging in an AI effort.

Once data is clean, and trusted, you'll need to decide if it's sufficient to support the AI use cases you are considering. You may need additional data from external or internal sources to be able to derive actual value from the use case. When you have all the necessary data in the right format and in a modern architecture, you can do some amazing things with genAI. Ideally, your genAI use cases will become more powerful and efficient as more data becomes available to drive them.



Steps to Take:

- Inventory your data to identify discrepancies and remove them
- Expose data to business users to help identify data that's inaccurate or out of date
- Verify the type and source of the data needed to support the use case
- Make the dataset available by creating a pipeline in your data environment



USE CASE: AI + Good Data Superpowers Efficiency

A Hitachi Solutions manufacturing customer was struggling under the data deluge of evaluating and classifying customer requirements into a standard engineering format. The company's clients were providing requirements as unstructured text in Word, Excel, and other formats, and employees had to scour through huge documents, some as large as 2,000 pages, to identify specifications and enter them in Excel.

Using [Azure Open AI](#) services, Hitachi Solutions deployed a Large Language Model enabling the identification of requirements from structured and unstructured text. The model tagged requirements based on the organization's engineering criteria, and prepared the data using a vector database designed to help teams find information based on the characteristics of data rather than an exact text search.

The result: a huge time savings and improved efficiency. A 2,000 page specification that would manually take 12-14 hours to review, was completed using genAI in 21 minutes.

On-ramp 3:

Can this Vehicle Drive Itself?

Everyone is carrying digital weight: the inflow of data, emails, meetings, and notifications has outpaced humans' ability to process it all. Along with the deluge of information, most organizations are still struggling with manual, routine processes or legacy, hard-coded workflows that require extensive manpower and don't provide any insight.

And the pace of work is only intensifying. Everything feels important, so employees spend much of their workdays trying to get out of the red. In fact, 60 percent say they don't have enough uninterrupted focus time during the workday. In all these situations, genAI presents an opportunity for new flavors of automation. Replacing hard-coded workflows with smarter AI-powered

processes gives everyone the capacity to scale up their work volume and efficiency.

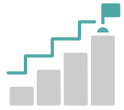
For example, [CarMax](#), a used car retailer, used GPT-3, a large language model, and Microsoft's Azure OpenAI Service to analyze the specifications and details of various cars. The model then generated 5,000 easy-to-read summaries for potential buyers, enhancing the car buying experience without adding any manual work for employees.

As companies strive to identify the junction of genAI and automation, Hitachi Solutions has been using [process mining](#) to give customers visibility and insights into how their organizations work and identify inefficiencies. Then we can incorporate genAI into automation processes to make them more adaptable to the way that we work today.



GenAI and other technologies have the potential to automate work activities that absorb 60 to 70 percent of employees' time today.

— [*The economic Potential of Generative AI, McKinsey*](#)



Steps to Take:

- Focus on tasks most frequently completed by domains like customer service, sales and marketing, and product design
- Define the steps within the process which can be automated and quantify the value of the possible automation
- Identify whether gen AI could deliver value through automation and consider process mining efforts to identify inefficiencies



USE CASE: Build Better Proposals Faster Powered By AI

Our client, an international construction services company, was struggling under the weight of creating 130 to 180 proposals a year, some as long as 800 pages. Manual, repetitive effort was the name of the game. Enter genAI. To drive the automated innovation, Hitachi Solutions implemented an Azure and Databricks foundation to create a pipeline and vector database of historical project and proposal information. We used Azure AI Search to create indexes that were incorporated into prompts to provide more contextual, grounded and relevant responses.

Then, using an AI-infused chatbot and Power Apps interface, employees can request and access information via interactive chat and have the information they need in seconds. The project reduced the effort needed by proposal team members to access and distill historical information because an estimated 60 percent of the proposal content is now generated automatically. This time savings will allow employees to focus on quality control and other revenue-generating activities.



On-ramp 4:

What Kind of Mileage am I Getting?

Have you ever estimated the mileage for a road trip? Estimating mileage for a road trip involves considering various factors such as distance, terrain, and potential obstacles. But you can't account for what you don't know, for instance, the weather. It's not any different than a manufacturer who is trying to predict what the best supply chain route will be. While supply chain forecasting and estimating road trip mileage both provide valuable insights, they are not perfect and almost always require adjustments based on real-time conditions.

That's the intersection between predictive analytics and genAI: genAI can analyze a company's historical data, identify patterns in the data and synthesize it along with external data in real-time. Based on the predictive output, AI can automate actions not only saving time, but also ensuring accuracy due to the immediacy of the data.

Predictive analytics has widespread use across nearly every industry sector. The healthcare industry can use it for disease prediction and prevention. Retailers can use predictive analytics to understand buying behaviors and better manage inventory. In the finance sector, it's used for credit scoring and fraud detection. Even the public sector uses predictive analytics to understand public sentiment and needs to make better forecasts and business decisions.



Steps to Take:

- Identify the areas where genAI could deliver value through prediction
- Identify the external data sources necessary to improve the predictions
- Determine if architectural changes are necessary to support the effort
- Consider the automation necessary to take real-time action based on the predictive output



USE CASE: The Power of Predictive Analytics and Weather Data

Hitachi Solutions' data experts recently worked with a customer that wanted to improve decision-making by better understanding how weather conditions were impacting sales and operations. We implemented an Azure-based architecture that allowed for ingestion of AccuWeather data into an Azure Databricks lakehouse and workspace.

With the architecture in place, we used an AI model to combine external weather data and a company's internal planning data. The output gave the organization clear, valuable insights into how weather can impact sales, operations, and their supply chain. The company is now better able to anticipate changes in product demand due to weather patterns and react appropriately by adjusting stock levels, optimizing transportation routes, and timing marketing campaigns.



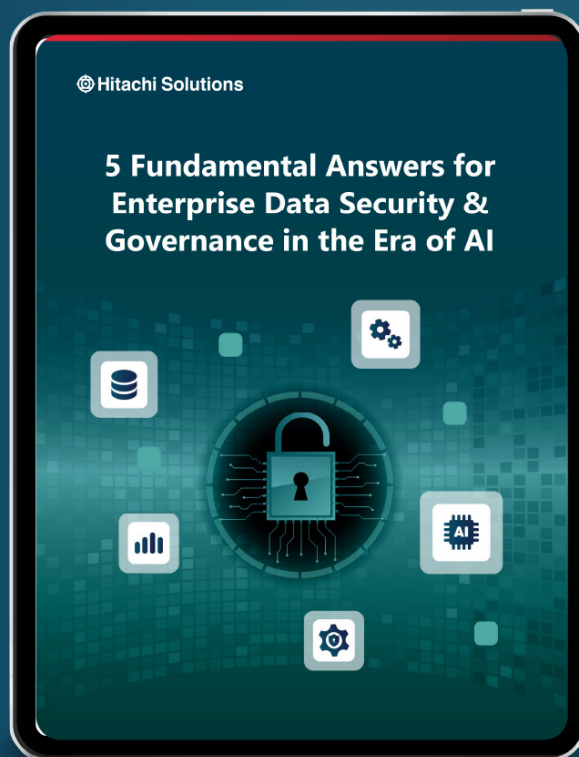
Responsible AI: Safety First

As a premier Microsoft partner, Hitachi Solutions adheres to Microsoft's established approach for responsible AI. We approach AI from an ethical and responsible position internally in our own practices, and bring that knowledge and experience to our customers who are looking to explore the value and benefits of AI.

For any genAI use case, consider the mechanisms that may be required to govern the use of genAI, and how that may affect your data privacy and security policies. You'll want to ensure that your data is protected end-to-end, from platform to applications to users.

Download the complete eBook, "5 Fundamental Answers for Enterprise Data Security & Governance in the Era of AI," for an in-depth look at how AI, and specifically genAI, are creating both promise and security risk for organization leaders.

[Download Now](#)



Copilot: Embedding AI for a Seamless User Experience



Successful use of AI treats **genAI as a copilot** rather than a self-contained solution. For instance, rather than sending an AI-generated email without reading it, it's far more effective to use it to speed up the crafting of a personalized response while you're working within an email platform like Outlook. GenAI tools can generate the bulk of the content, but the sender is the one who makes it personal and practical.

Hence, the name for Microsoft's AI-based product offerings: Copilot. Copilot is designed to function as an assistant that will help everyone work smarter, be more productive, boost creativity, and stay

connected. What Microsoft has done is embed genAI functionality into the products we know and love: Microsoft Teams, Word, Excel, PowerPoint, and Outlook. A recent [Forrester report](#) predicts that 6.9 million US knowledge workers — around 8 percent of the total — will be using Microsoft 365 Copilot by the end of 2024.

For ERP and CRM users, [Copilot](#) now functions as a virtual assistant in the Dynamics 365 platform, in products like Dynamics 365 Sales, Service and Power Platform. The beauty of it is users can work within the interfaces they use daily but work faster and more accurately using Copilot.

Getting Started Now

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Because every organization is unique, it is important to start by asking the right questions early on. Data quality, infrastructure, operational procedures, and change management are just a few factors that will determine the success of an AI project.



GenAI will be a key enabler of most future enterprise applications, so experimenting with internal use cases and building your AI muscles should be on everyone's to-do list in 2024. For most business stakeholders, the journey of finding the first AI use case isn't a straight path, it may change direction as you take on-ramps and off-ramps during the journey. Yet, the potentials of genAI are huge. And more often than not, a trusted partner is needed to help you uncover the perspective needed to design your path forward to gaining tangible benefits with Copilot and genAI.

OFFER

Generative AI & Microsoft Copilot Workshop
Unlock Your Potential



Hitachi Solutions can partner with you to demystify the potential value of Microsoft Copilot and genAI and [help you to build use-case scenarios](#) where genAI can solve pain points across your enterprise.



Why Hitachi Solutions

Hitachi Solutions is a leading global systems integrator who specializes in Microsoft technologies. Powered by nearly two decades of experience, we deliver end-to-end business transformation through advisory services, industry and technology expertise, and implementation excellence. Our goal is to support and accelerate data and business modernization initiatives that drive value for our customers.



Contact us Today

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