Enterprise AI Realised: A Decade of Adoption, Scaling, and Transformation

> Celebrating 10 years of The AI Summit Series and reflecting on how AI has evolved from emerging innovation to real-world enterprise transformation, delivering impact across industries, functions, and business models.

Scroll »

When The AI Summit Series began, artificial intelligence was at a pivotal moment. While AI was gaining traction in research circles and among early adopters, for most organisations it remained more promise than practice. Over the decade that followed, that changed dramatically.

AI adoption grew by 270% in just four years, rising from 10% of organisations in 2015 to 37% in 2019. What was once relatively rare in the enterprise quickly became a mainstream strategic priority.

As the World AI Cannes Festival opens its sixth edition, and its first as part of The AI Summit Series, this report reflects on some of the defining developments that have shaped the AI landscape since then, and how enterprise priorities have evolved from experimentation to implementation, ROI, governance, trust, and responsible scale.

For the past decade, The AI Summit Series has brought together leaders, technical teams, and decision-makers to explore what it takes to turn AI ambition into real-world impact. WAICF now brings that conversation to Cannes, with a European lens. This report celebrates that journey and looks ahead to the next chapter.

SO, HERE'S A BRIEF LOOK BACK AT A DECADE OF AI INNOVATION:

2016-2018	The Breakthrough Years: Milestones That Reshaped AI
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10 Years That Changed Enterprise AI

The Breakthrough Years:
Milestones That Reshaped AI

2016-2018

2016 AlphaGo Defeats Lee Sedol

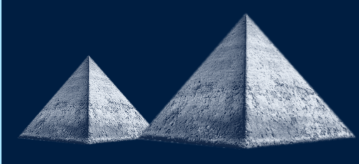
In 2016, Google DeepMind's AlphaGo defeated 'Go' (a complex board game) world champion Lee Sedol, in one of the most widely recognised AI breakthroughs of the decade. More than a technical achievement, it was a moment that captured global attention and showed how far AI had advanced in handling complexity, strategy, and decision-making.

For the business world, AlphaGo helped shift AI from an abstract concept into something more tangible. It sparked broader executive awareness and reinforced the sense that AI was moving beyond specialist research environments and into a new phase of real-world relevance.

Transformers Redefine the Future of AI **2017**

The publication of 'Attention Is All You Need' introduced the Transformer architecture, a breakthrough that would underpin many of the most important AI developments to follow. Transformers transformed natural language processing and laid the foundations for large language models and many of today's generative AI tools.

This moment was especially significant because it accelerated AI's ability to process language, context, and sequence at scale, opening the door to more practical business applications in automation, search, translation, customer support, knowledge management, and content generation.



2018 BERT Improves Language Understanding

BERT

BIDIRECTIONAL ENCODER REPRESENTATIONS FROM TRANSFORMERS

In 2018, Google's BERT gave AI a far deeper understanding of context in language, improving search, translation, and question answering. It showed that Transformers could power practical tools businesses use every day.

The same year, Europe put data and trust at the heart of its digital future. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force in May, and the European Commission published its first strategy on artificial intelligence, an early signal that innovation and trust would go together.

It was against this backdrop that The AI Summit Series grew. From the beginning, it provided a dedicated platform for exploring the business of AI, convening researchers, enterprise leaders, and innovators to debate both the promise and the practical challenges of the technology.

Those early editions reflected the mood of the time: a mix of excitement, uncertainty, experimentation, and scepticism. Through pilot case studies and forward-looking discussions, the Series helped create one of the earliest business forums where serious AI strategies began to take shape.

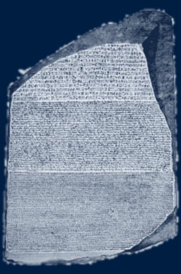
AI Expands Its Reach:
From Language Models to Real-World Impact

2019-2021

2019 GPT-2 Signals the Power of Large Language Models

OpenAI's release of GPT-2 demonstrated just how capable large language models were becoming in generating coherent, contextually relevant text. It gave a clearer glimpse into a future where machines could support not just analysis, but also human communication, ideation, and creative output.

This was an important step in shifting the AI conversation from narrow-use models to more general-purpose systems. For businesses, it hinted at new possibilities in productivity, content support, customer interaction, and automation – while also raising early questions around misuse, trust, and governance.



AI Accelerates Scientific Discovery 2020

In 2020, AI played a visible role in accelerating scientific and healthcare progress, including in drug discovery and protein structure prediction. Then came the shock of COVID-19. The pandemic stress-tested global systems and accelerated digital adoption almost overnight, pushing AI into an even more critical role. It helped model virus spread, supported vaccine research, and assisted businesses in stabilising disrupted supply chains. With pressure to reduce in-person headcount, customer service centres also leaned heavily on AI chatbots, while automation became a vital operational lifeline.

This period highlighted how AI could contribute not just to efficiency, but to high-value problem-solving in areas with major societal and commercial importance. The significance for enterprise leaders was clear: AI was no longer just about optimisation. It was also becoming a tool for discovery, resilience, innovation, and strategic advantage in sectors where speed, precision, and insight could create significant competitive value.

2021 Multimodal AI and Code Generation Expand the Possibilities

With the arrival of models such as DALL·E and Codex, AI began to demonstrate broader multimodal and generative capabilities. Text-to-image generation captured the public imagination, while code generation tools pointed to new ways AI could support developers and technical teams.

This broadened the business case for AI considerably. Enterprises began to see that AI could influence a much wider range of workflows, from software development and product design to creativity, prototyping, and operational efficiency.

Prompt
Generate

Europe Proposes the First AI Law 2021

In April, the European Commission proposed the AI Act, the world's first comprehensive, risk-based framework for artificial intelligence.

EU AI Act

PROPOSED · APRIL 2021

AI Becomes a Business Imperative

2022-2024

2022 ChatGPT Brings Generative AI into the Mainstream

The launch of ChatGPT marked a turning point in public and enterprise awareness of AI. Generative AI moved rapidly from a developing area of interest to a mainstream business priority, prompting organisations across sectors to explore its potential for productivity, customer service, content creation, knowledge access, and innovation.

When OpenAI launched ChatGPT in November 2022, AI became more immediate, accessible, and tangible for business leaders. It was no longer confined to technical teams or research environments; it had become something leaders could test and experience directly. At the same time, tools such as Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, and Runway expanded awareness of generative AI beyond text, while enterprise platforms including Microsoft Copilot, Salesforce Einstein GPT, and Adobe Firefly began integrating these capabilities into everyday workflows.

For many organisations, 2022 was the year AI became impossible to ignore. It drove a surge in experimentation and investment, while also highlighting the need for stronger governance, clearer use cases, and more disciplined approaches to deployment.

The World AI Cannes Festival Is Born 2022

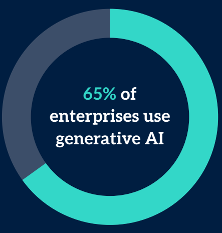
In Cannes, 2022 also saw the first edition of the World AI Cannes Festival, held from 14 to 16 April at the Palais des Festivals et des Congrès.

WAICF
FEBRUARY 13-15, 2025 CANNES, FRANCE
WORLD ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE CANNES FESTIVAL

GPT-4 and Enterprise Adoption Gather Pace 2023

By 2023, generative AI had moved deeper into enterprise planning. More advanced models and multimodal capabilities widened the scope of potential applications, while organisations began to shift focus from curiosity to implementation.

This was also the point at which the gap between experimentation and execution became more visible. Many businesses had launched pilots, but fewer had successfully embedded AI into core workflows at scale. The conversation began to mature, with greater emphasis on integration, risk, ownership, and measurable outcomes.



2024 AI in Autonomous Vehicles

In 2024, AI-powered autonomous vehicles moved further into real-world urban deployment. As self-driving services expanded beyond trials and into public use, they offered one of the clearest examples of AI operating in complex, high-stakes environments and moving closer to commercial reality.

At the same time, AI became more deeply embedded in everyday digital experiences. Google's rollout of AI Overviews in search reflected a wider shift: AI was no longer just a standalone tool, but an integrated layer within the products and platforms people used every day. For business leaders, this marked another turning point, reinforcing AI's role not only in efficiency, but in shaping strategy, customer experience, and competitive edge.

The EU AI Act Enters into Force 2024

On 1 August, the EU AI Act entered into force as the world's first comprehensive AI law, with obligations

1 Aug 2024

EU AI ACT ENTERS INTO FORCE

phased in over the following years.

Omdia reported that global cloud infrastructure spending reached $110.9 billion in Q4 2025, up 29% year on year, as enterprise AI demand moved from experimentation toward production deployment.

The message is clear: AI maturity is no longer just about model capability, but about the infrastructure, orchestration, and governance needed to run AI reliably at scale.

From Capability to Control:
The Next Chapter of Enterprise AI

2025 - Beyond

AI-Powered Healthcare Diagnostics 2025

By 2025, AI had become a more visible and valuable force in healthcare diagnostics, particularly in areas such as medical imaging, early detection, and clinical decision support. More than a story of technical progress, this shift reflected AI's growing role in real healthcare settings, helping clinicians analyse information more quickly, identify potential issues earlier, and support more informed decision-making.

It also marked a broader turning point for enterprise AI, showing how intelligent systems were becoming embedded in high-impact, highly regulated environments where accuracy, trust, and practical value mattered most.

2025 Regulation Becomes Reality

20%

OF EU ENTERPRISES USE AI (EUROSTAT, 2025)

In February 2025, the AI Act's first prohibitions began to apply and Paris hosted the AI Action Summit. By the end of the year, one in five EU enterprises was using AI (Eurostat).

2026-2028 Enterprise AI Enters a New Phase of Maturity

The AI conversation has moved beyond breakthrough models to a more practical question: how can increasingly capable systems be deployed safely, responsibly, and at scale? Agentic AI is now a defining theme, as organisations explore systems able to plan, reason, and execute tasks with greater autonomy.

At the same time, concerns around hallucinations, governance, security, and human oversight remain central, making trust, control, and accountability just as important as capability. The result is a more mature phase of enterprise AI, shaped less by hype and more by the realities of implementation, while advances in quantum AI, low-code tools, and API-driven intelligence continue to broaden what is possible.

WAICF Joins The AI Summit Series 2027

In February 2027, the World AI Cannes Festival opens its sixth edition as part of The AI Summit Series, bringing 7,500+ attendees and 200+ speakers to the Palais des Festivals to shape what comes next for AI in Europe.

The Next Decade Redefined 2029-Beyond

If the last decade was defined by breakthrough innovation and rapid acceleration, the next decade will be shaped by maturity, accountability, and transformation at scale.

The conversation is now moving beyond efficiency alone. The next decade of AI will redefine creativity, reshape industry structures, and influence global competitiveness in profound ways.

Whatever way it does unfold, one thing is clear after a decade of progress: AI is not slowing down. For enterprises, the challenge is no longer whether AI will transform their industry, but how quickly, and on whose terms.

60+ COUNTRIES PUSHING NATIONAL AI STRATEGIES

Omdia's forecast that agentic AI could account for 31% of the generative AI market by 2030 reflects how quickly enterprise priorities are moving toward workflow automation, orchestration, and action-oriented AI.

Get the AI Advantage

Subscribe to **The Beyond the Summit** newsletter for the latest AI news and insights for the global tech community, from The AI Summit Series.

THE NEXT ERA: REFLECTING ON A DECADE OF AI EVOLUTION — AND LOOKING AHEAD

> Over the past decade, AI has evolved from research curiosity to strategic business priority. From landmark breakthroughs to real-world enterprise adoption, the pace of change has been extraordinary, and it continues to accelerate.
>
> The AI Summit Series has grown alongside that transformation. For 10 years, it has brought together the AI community to explore emerging ideas, challenge assumptions, and shape the conversations that matter most to business and technology leaders.
>
> Now, as the World AI Cannes Festival opens its sixth edition as part of the Series, this is more than a reflection on the past. It is a moment to look ahead, to connect with those shaping the future of AI in Europe and to leave with the insight, perspective, and practical thinking that will define the next chapter.
>
> **10–11 February 2027 · Palais des Festivals et des Congrès, Cannes**

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