AI Quarterly
Pulse Survey:
Q3 2025

September 2025

Key Takeaways

Agentic deployment increases as effective risk management increasingly becomes a priority

- **42% of organizations have now deployed at least some agents**. The majority of organizations are past the experimentation phase while 55% are now piloting agents.

- When it comes to challenges in deploying agents, the **complexity of agentic systems** nearly doubled. Meanwhile workforce resistance to change decreased by more than half.

- Companies are **shifting towards practical implementation**, prioritizing the integration of GenAI with existing systems and focusing on **effective risk management**

  - **Data quality and cybersecurity** remain biggest hurdles to achieving GenAI goals and are expected to persist as a major challenge - **underscoring the urgency of investing in robust data foundations and well-governed strategies.**

Strategic GenAI investments on a rise as leaders reimagine the best approach to measuring ROI

- With **the majority of leaders acknowledging that traditional business metrics are becoming insufficient** for measuring AI's impact, we're witnessing a fundamental shift in how organizations need to think about technology returns and points to a recognition that AI operates differently from conventional investments.

- GenAI investments rose to **US$130 mn in Q3'25**, marking the **year's peak.** Top investment areas include data and analytics, research and development, and purchasing GenAI technology and solutions.

- As leaders reconsider how to properly measure ROI for AI, 57% anticipate **measurable ROI** in the next 12 months.

Workforce gears up for hands-on AI agent training and AI driven hiring strategies

- Organizations are **enhancing hands-on training and experiential learning with AI agents through sandbox environments and "AI agent shadowing"** programs to build employee understanding.

- As AI and agent integration progresses, organizations are experiencing varied levels impact to their workforce, **including the creation of new roles, changing of performance metrics and new AI collaboration competencies.**

  However, many companies **expect rapid changes to their entry-level hiring strategy within the next year**, further emphasizing critical skills like adaptability, industry-specific knowledge, technical expertise, and analytical capabilities to succeed in an AI-driven environment.

Investment and ROI

Projected GenAI investment accelerates in Q3'25:

12-month GenAI investment projections rose to **US$130 million in Q3'25**, an increase from **US$114 million** in Q1'25, with top investment areas like data and analytics, R&D, and purchasing GenAI technology.

The top categories to measure and demonstrate ROI currently have remained steady quarter-over-quarter:

Improved productivity	**97%, compared to 98% last quarter**
Improved profitability	**94%, compared to 95% last quarter**
Improved performance or higher quality of work delivered by employees	**91%, compared to 94% last quarter**

57% expect to achieve measurable ROI in 12 months.

Greatest risks and barriers to successfully meeting the goals of your GenAI strategy:

- **Quality of organizational data** (82% up from 56%)
- **Cybersecurity** (78% up from 68%)
- **Data privacy concerns** (62% down from 69%)
- **Lack of risk and governance processes** (35% up from 30%)
- **Regulatory uncertainty** (43% down from 55%)

Value of ROI

78% agree or strongly agree that **traditional business metrics are becoming insufficient** in measuring AI's impact.

78% of leaders say **pressures to demonstrate value to investors or their board is a critical factor** influencing their GenAI strategies in the next 6 months.

AI Agents

Organizations increasingly move towards deployment:

Since Q1'25, organizations have shifted from exploring AI agents to actively deploying them, with deployment increasing from 11% (Q1) to 33% (Q2) to 42% by Q3'25, while exploration decreased from 25% to 2% since the first quarter of the year. Organizations piloting agents has changed from 65% in Q1 to 57% in Q2 to 55% in Q3.

Complexity and infrastructure barriers are the biggest challenges to deploying AI agents in Q3:

In Q3'25, complexity of agentic systems (71%) and technical skills gaps (55%) remain key challenges. Meanwhile, workforce resistance dropped from 47% in Q2'25 to 21% Q3'25.

Notably, a lack of leadership trust and buy-in and budget constraints have consistently been the least cited challenges quarter-over-quarter, at 8% and 14% in Q3, respectively.

Hybrid deployment emerges as a preferred strategy:

57% of organizations favored the hybrid strategy of building and buying AI agents, solidifying its position as the preferred deployment approach, up from 51% in Q2'25. Another 41% will buy a pre-built solution.

Rise in risk mitigation strategies for AI agent deployment:

- We are not yet comfortable with autonomous agents and will require human-in-the-loop oversight (61% from 45% last quarter)

- We are not allowing AI agents access to sensitive data without human oversight (63% from 45% last quarter)

- We are taking a "human-in-the-loop" approach where a human validates outputs but does not oversee each agentic action or decision (42% from 25%)

- We are looking to deploy agents developed by trusted tech providers (74% from 55%)

Functional deployment of AI agents into workflows as of Q3' 25:

- Technology or IT (software engineers, IT specialists) – **95%**

- Human Resources (recruiters, employee relations) – **2%**

- Finance (analysts, accountants, controllers) – **45%**

- Risk (risk analysts, compliance officers, fraud prevention specialists) – **66%**

- Marketing and Sales (marketing managers, sales representatives, market research representatives) – **18%**

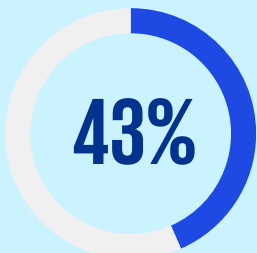- Operations (operation managers, quality assurance experts) – **89%**

Workforce readiness

Organizations are utilizing the following tactics to train employees to be ready to work with AI agents:

49% **52%**

Creating agent-specific sandbox environments where employees can practice interacting with AI agents

41% **57%**

Implementing "AI agent shadowing" programs where employees observe experts working with agents

69% **85%**

Teaching prompt skills to maximize AI agent effectiveness

25% **40%**

Fostering a "partnership mindset" through workshops on human-AI agent collaboration

Q2 Q3

Expectations for AI agent-human collaboration in the workplace over the next 2 to 3 years

76% Humans will primarily manage and direct AI agents

0% AI agents will take lead roles in managing specific projects with human team members

9% Collaboration will be more peer-to-peer, with neither consistently managing the other

15% No significant change in current human-AI collaboration practices

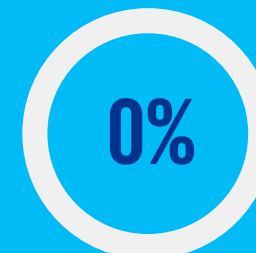# How AI agents have been received by employees

43%

Mixed Response — employee response varies with some embracing and others resisting AI agents
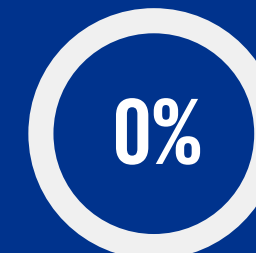
45%
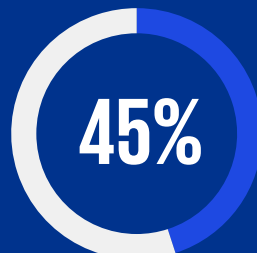
Slight Adoption — employees are beginning to accept and integrate AI agents into their work

10%

Significant Adoption — employees enthusiastically adopted AI agents and are fully integrating them into workflows
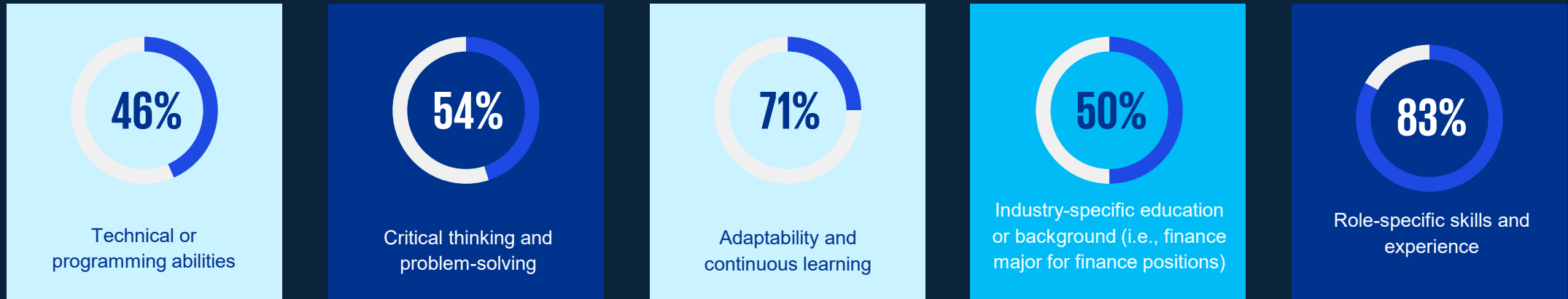
0%

Significant Resistance — employees have significantly resisted or pushed back again AI agents

0%

Slight Resistance — employees show a small degree of resistance, showing low adoption and engagement

Workforce readiness

Top skills of importance for future entry-level employees as it relates to working with AI agents:

46%	**54%**	**71%**	**50%**	**83%**
Technical or programming abilities	Critical thinking and problem-solving	Adaptability and continuous learning	Industry-specific education or background (i.e., finance major for finance positions)	Role-specific skills and experience

Hiring of entry-level employee dynamics evolve amid AI agent adoption:

56% anticipate **changes to hiring** strategies in 12 months

25% Expect changes in 24 months or later

18% believe AI agents have **already changed** their approach to hiring entry-level talent

Expected emerging roles as a result of AI agents

69% AI Prompt Engineer - Designs and optimizes prompts for AI systems to produce better outputs

50% AI Ethics Officer - Ensures AI systems are developed and deployed responsibly

54% AI Trainer or Data Curator - Manages training datasets, labels data, and fine-tune AI models for specific use cases

48% AI Product Manager - Manages AI-powered products, understanding both technical capabilities and business applications

32% AI Governance Specialist - Develops policies and frameworks for AI use within organizations

Trust and the future of AI

- Tariffs continued to drive focus on AI efficiency and optimization (76%).

- Concerns about AI misuse have risen to 45% from 38% quarter-over-quarter, reinforcing it as a top societal challenge. Trust in the accuracy and fairness of AI outputs is 28% this quarter, dipping slightly from 37%.

AGI(a) to reach human-level intelligence projections:

58% believe that AGI will match or surpass human capabilities across all cognitive tasks in & or more years

38% believe that AI will not match human-level thinking and reasoning capabilities

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