# AI adoption shifts from hype to execution as UK firms seek value-driven partnerships



For UK businesses, the question is no longer whether to adopt artificial intelligence—but how to extract real value from it. With 71% of firms already using generative AI and more than three-quarters deploying AI in at least one business function, the focus is rapidly moving from experimentation to enterprise-wide execution.

As global AI investment heads toward $600 billion by 2028, the UK—home to a £21 billion AI market—faces a strategic inflection point. Success now hinges on selecting the right AI partners: not just tool vendors, but organisations capable of reengineering workflows, embedding governance, and delivering measurable results.

McKinsey’s 2025 survey found that high-impact AI adopters are those who redesign how work is done and engage senior leadership in AI governance. Effective partners prioritise process before technology, using workflow mapping to determine the best fit—whether machine learning, retrieval models or rule-based automation. Generative AI, while powerful, is not always the optimal solution.

Security and compliance are increasingly critical as regulations tighten. With the UK’s AI Security Institute advancing domestic standards and the EU AI Act introducing phased legal obligations, partners must provide clear frameworks for data governance, model robustness and human-in-the-loop oversight.

Measuring AI success requires a shift in mindset. Beyond time savings, firms should look at reductions in error rates, mitigation of risk, and EBIT contribution. Many UK companies are yet to see scaled returns from generative AI alone, reinforcing the value of hybrid approaches and incremental deployments.

AI agents—tools that automate multi-step tasks—offer significant promise but require cautious piloting. Sigli, a European AI operator, advocates blending multiple technologies and embedding robust controls, warning against an over-reliance on large language models. Their Innovantage podcast highlights that successful integration depends on practical implementation, not hype.

Adoption remains uneven. While the IT and legal sectors lead uptake and larger firms report quicker ROI, only a minority of UK businesses have fully scaled AI agents. Meanwhile, informal employee use of AI tools signals latent demand but also a gap in leadership and strategy.

With Windows 10 support ending in 2025, many organisations face a critical window to modernise IT and formalise AI strategy. Early movers gain competitive advantage by building internal data assets and evaluation pipelines—difficult for latecomers to replicate.

B2B revenue teams are already seeing returns within a year, with UK staff reporting higher job satisfaction when AI is deployed thoughtfully. But capturing these gains requires discipline, not just ambition.

As AI maturity grows, the UK’s leadership will depend on strategic partnerships that centre on workflow, compliance and impact. For forward-looking firms, now is the moment to act—ensuring AI becomes a true engine for long-term, sustainable value.

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.londondaily.news/beyond-the-hype-how-to-choose-an-ai-partner-and-why-the-smart-money-is-moving-now/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ai-activity-in-uk-businesses/ai-activity-in-uk-businesses-executive-summary> - In 2023, 9% of UK firms adopted artificial intelligence (AI), with projections indicating an increase to 22% by 2024. Larger companies are more likely to adopt AI, with 68% of large firms, 34% of medium-sized firms, and 15% of small firms having incorporated at least one AI technology. The most commonly adopted AI solutions include data management and analysis (9%), natural language processing and generation (8%), and machine learning (7%).
3. <https://www.forbes.com/uk/advisor/business/software/uk-artificial-intelligence-ai-statistics/> - The UK AI market is valued at over £21 billion and is expected to grow to £1 trillion by 2035. Over the past decade, the number of UK AI companies has increased by more than 600%. Approximately one in six UK organisations, equating to 432,000 businesses, have adopted at least one AI technology. The IT and telecommunications sector has the highest AI adoption rate at 29.5%, followed by the legal sector at 29.2%.
4. <https://www.itpro.com/technology/artificial-intelligence/ai-adoption-is-finally-driving-roi-for-b2b-teams-in-the-uk-and-eu> - A recent report reveals that nearly two-thirds of B2B revenue leaders in the UK and EU are achieving ROI from AI adoption within the first year. The study highlights that 78% of UK organisations are increasing tech investment, with 51% planning or piloting AI use in revenue functions. UK bid teams also report higher job satisfaction (86%) compared to their EU counterparts (52%).
5. <https://www.techradar.com/pro/ai-agents-are-set-to-offer-usd450-billion-in-value-but-uk-businesses-are-positioned-to-miss-out> - A recent Capgemini report forecasts that AI agents could generate up to $450 billion in economic value by 2028 through cost savings and revenue increases. However, only a small percentage of businesses are positioned to fully benefit—just 2% globally and only 1% in the UK have fully scaled their AI agent deployments. UK businesses are lagging, despite 93% of them agreeing that scaling AI agents could offer a competitive edge.
6. <https://www.kiplinger.com/investing/stocks/tech-stocks/604842/smart-artificial-intelligence-ai-stocks-to-buy> - Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming industries and gaining significant interest from investors. Global AI spending is projected to climb from $235 billion in 2024 to $630 billion by 2028, driven by widespread adoption and advances in generative AI. Companies like Salesforce, ServiceNow, Microsoft, Snowflake, and Meta Platforms are especially well-positioned to capitalize on this trend.
7. <https://www.techradar.com/pro/ai-is-already-working-for-your-people-now-its-time-to-make-it-work-for-the-business> - The article emphasizes that artificial intelligence (AI) is already being used by employees to improve efficiency, with 72% of UK users reporting time savings, often through informal and unsupported methods. However, many businesses lack formal AI strategies, leading to a leadership gap where grassroots adoption isn't matched by organizational planning. The upcoming end of Windows 10 support in 2025 is highlighted as a strategic moment to modernize IT infrastructure and integrate AI intentionally.