

# Predictions for AI in 2026



## Unify Consulting's Latest Views on AI

As the AI management consulting firm of choice, we get asked a lot of questions about AI. But the questions we hear the most this time of year? How is AI going to evolve, and what should we do as a company right now to get the most value from whatever is coming next? **Here are our four predictions we think everyone should be thinking about this year.**

1

### PREDICTION

The revival of the bold human touch.

AI is great for automation and efficiency. But when everyone uses the same tools—all based on existing data—the results can be a little bland. Generic outputs aren't going to cut it for most companies who want their experiences to feel authentic. To break out of the algorithmic uniformity and create solutions that are memorable, companies are going to need humans to add creativity and strategy.

**Our prediction:** Whether it's using consultants to make an AI solution more bespoke or a writer to work alongside prompt engineers, human-AI collaboration will be essential to keep customers connected and coming back. From a tech standpoint, companies should use their own data to get the right perspective.

2

### PREDICTION

Program management will be a key to value.

As most companies embrace AI, the focus is shifting to disciplined implementation and how to derive measurable value. The key? Strategic program management from the start. This helps companies stay ahead of adoption challenges, privacy and security issues, and integration woes, as well as reduce any cultural resistance.

Program management combines technological implementation with business strategy, change management, governance, and coordination across functions.

**Our prediction:** Organizations that treat AI not as a cost-cutting tool but as an enabler of better program management will succeed from improved agility, better risk control, and overall stronger portfolio performance.

3

### PREDICTION

Your newest coworker will be an AI agent.

They don't take breaks or cook fish in the office. But they can handle complexity and accelerate decision-making. An AI agent is an autonomous system that uses AI to perform tasks. They are proactive, goal-oriented, and can learn and adapt.

From customer support automation, data analysis, and decision-making, to automating repetitive tasks and more – agents are coming fast. We estimate that about 2/3 of companies are planning on adding them next year.

**Our prediction:** In the rush to get agents, many will move too fast and not think through the steps and their stack. To truly get maximum value and operationalize Agentic AI, companies need to consider everything from infrastructure, data, applications, to governance, security, and more.

4

### PREDICTION

AI infrastructure will be everyone's focus.

Building AI-driven data centers is and will be the #1 capital priority for the world's largest corporations. While the global race to deploy AI infrastructure is reshaping data center demand and economics, it's going to surface challenges, such as exploding compute demand that traditional cooling and power architectures can't keep up with. Sustainable pressures, integration woes, new data governance requirements, and to top it off there will be a talent shortage to get it all done.

**Our prediction:** Overcoming these challenges will take the right partner. AI data center consultants will be imperative to guide planning and strategy, engineering leads, and operations teams through the unprecedented complexity.

# Thinking about adding an AI agent to your business? Get stacked.

There are key technological layers required to build, run, and manage a modern enterprise-level software system, with a strong emphasis on integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI). Here are the layers you need to think of before you operationalize Agentic AI:

- **Infrastructure:** The foundational hardware and cloud services where everything runs (e.g., AWS, Azure, Kubernetes).
- **Data:** The layer for storing and processing all forms of data, including traditional data warehouses and specialized vector databases for AI.
- **AI/ML Platform:** The tools and platforms used to build, train, and serve machine learning models (e.g., SageMaker, MLflow).
- **Applications:** The actual software that end-users interact with, like websites and backend APIs (e.g., React, Python Flask).
- **Agent Frameworks:** A specific layer for building sophisticated AI agents using Large Language Models (LLMs) and tools like LangChain or Autogen.
- **Governance & Security:** The overarching layer that ensures the entire stack is secure, monitored, and compliant (e.g., identity management, logging).

## The most important factor of Agentic success is not technical. It's human.

Even the most intelligent AI agent still needs human oversight. Why? AI can't replace human intelligence or ethical judgment. Instead, AI needs to be augmented with human feedback loops to achieve optimal and reliable results. Here's how we see the powerful synergy working:

**Strategic Direction & Vision:** AI handles the heavy lifting of processing. Humans provide the strategic direction and define the overarching objectives and key performance indicators.

**Handling Anomalies & Edge Cases:** AI is powerful, but it's not infallible. There will always be complex scenarios that require nuanced human judgment, ensuring the robustness and reliability of solutions.

**Data Governance & Ethics:** A human must be responsible for establishing and maintaining ethical data use, ensuring privacy, and upholding the highest quality standards and ensuring compliance with all regulations.



**Model Validation & Trust:** Human review and validation of AI-generated insights and model performance are critical to catch potential biases, confirm accuracy, and ensures the models are performing as expected in real-world scenarios.

**Approve Actions & Drive Impact:** Evaluating critical business actions and strategies based on AI-driven recommendations ensures that while AI provides powerful recommendations, human expertise maintain control over the final decision-making.

**Unify Consulting is the AI management consulting firm of choice**—a flexible and integrated alternative to big global consultancies. We understand the realities of enterprise delivery and infuse deep expertise into every engagement. As our clients increasingly prioritize AI-driven change and business transformation, we are ready. We have a proven track record of partnering with high-impact leaders to deliver lasting success.