Digital Services

Artificial Intelligence

From promise to value

orange™ Business

Editorial

A bubble has burst — the bubble of illusions. Generative AI, like any other technology, is not magical. Let's move past the idea of spontaneous value generation. Creating value at scale and sustainably is the real goal for every organization leveraging artificial intelligence. The trajectory hasn't changed. What may have changed, however, are the methods and means being used to reach that value. Today, companies stand at a crossroads with AI. How will they turn this technology and its promises into tangible, measurable gains? By assessing opportunities and risks with discernment — and most importantly, by adopting a mindset that combines realism, pragmatism, and a healthy dose of enthusiasm.

What does that actually mean? The simplest way to answer is through real-world proof: by sharing the many use cases already in production today, and by giving the floor to decision-makers and experts who have successfully transformed promise into value.
Enjoy the read!

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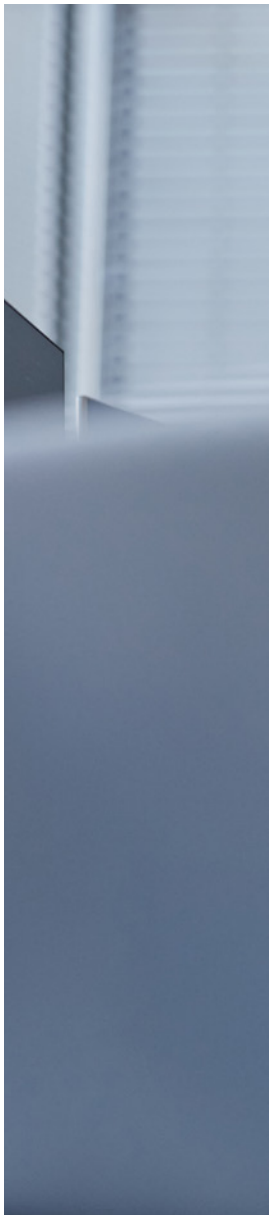


Two years after the launch of ChatGPT, AI has made a major technological leap. In business, it stands at a turning point. The technology is full of promise, but has yet to consistently deliver long-term value. The key challenge now is turning those promises into value — at scale.

1 million

active users in 5 days, 100 million in 2 months, and more than 300 million by early 2025.

The rise of ChatGPT has been unprecedented. No technology has ever been adopted so quickly, or evolved so fast. Bursting into the enterprise world with impact, generative AI now demands a more realistic, pragmatic approach to unlock its full value.

ChatGPT, OpenAI's conversational AI, marked two years on the market in November 2024. By then, it had reached over 200 million weekly active users. "No technology has ever been adopted this fast by both the public and businesses," observes Mick Levy, Director of Strategy & Innovation at Orange Business France. The numbers speak for themselves: 1 million active users in 5 days, 100 million in 2 months, and more than 300 million by early 2025. And in this short period, AI has continued to make "explosive progress."

The lightning speed of AI at a crossroads in business

AI now enables fully generated videos — particularly relevant for sectors like advertising. In image generation too, progress is striking in realism and the reduction of common hallucinations.

"AI can also speak to us thanks to multimodal capabilities," adds Mick Levy, "allowing direct interaction through synthetic human voices that are astonishing-

ly realistic — although sometimes at the expense of intellectual property rights." These rapid advances have brought AI to a strategic crossroads for companies. After many tests and small-scale pilots, the next step is scaling to real, sustainable value. Because while AI offers massive potential, "not all companies have unlocked it yet." The hardest part may be what comes next: turning that powerful, attention-grabbing technology into scaled, long-lasting value.
That's also the view of Aliette Mousnier-Lompré, CEO of Orange Business. She draws a parallel to the early days of the internet. Could generative AI be a new tech bubble?

The underlying issue is ROI — and how companies will extract real value from the technology.

Consider OpenAI's case: $6 billion raised in 2024, a valuation over $150 billion, and profitability expected no earlier than 2029 — the comparison with the dot-com bubble is tempting. "It's natural to raise questions," acknowledges Aliette Mousnier-Lompré. The underlying issue is ROI — and how companies will extract real value from the technology.

“We aim to help you turn the potential of AI and technology into real value—tangible, concrete, and measurable. We do this through our field experience, our ESN expertise, our end-to-end solutions, and our commitment to building trust,”

Aliette Mousnier-Lompré
Executive Director,
CEO Orange Business

Enthusiasm, realism, and pragmatism to secure ROI

“Can we turn this incredible technology into euros? The potential is huge. The promises are real, as shown by many use cases. But at the same time, some valuations are disconnected from economic fundamentals, with ROI still uncertain in many cases,” she explains.
Amara’s Law offers one insight: we tend to overestimate the short-term impact of a technology and underestimate its long-term impact. This law applied to the internet, where it took 10 years for viable business models to emerge.
For the CEO of Orange Business, it’s essential for leaders and organizations to “weigh both opportunities and risks, approaching AI with enthusiasm, realism, and pragmatism.”
Yes, a revolution is underway. And yes, it’s a major opportunity. But decision-makers must recognize that value creation is neither automatic nor instant. Key prerequisites must be met: solid data governance, the right use cases, scalable infrastructure, and effective training.
Pragmatism is also critical to AI adoption: “By experimenting, exploring, and iterating, businesses gain maturity and control. Only then can they tackle core issues like data quality and the human side of change management,” says Aliette Mousnier-Lompré.
Another certainty: doing nothing invites Shadow AI. According to an Ifop survey, 68% of employees using generative AI at work do so without informing their manager.

Governing AI: People, Data, Sustainability, and Infrastructure

"If companies don't structure their AI efforts, they leave the door open to uncontrolled use," warns the CEO of Orange Business. Action is needed to harness and steer AI's value potential. The challenge is complex and multidimensional. Five key variables must be addressed:

1 Data

While generative tools come with basic knowledge, the true value of use cases lies within the company's own data. Leveraging this asset requires having the right data, in the right quality—ensuring that generative AI usage respects data classification policies and access rights.

2 Change management

AI is transforming ways of working and business processes. Such transformations must be supported, including for solutions that are directly used by end users.

3 Cost

The market is still evolving, and pricing models vary. Lessons from the cloud show the risks of vendor lock-in and losing control over spending.

4 Carbon impact

Different models exist, each with varying environmental impacts. Choosing the right model for a given use case should also factor in sustainability.

5 Infrastructure

AI requires infrastructure resources, which scale based on the needs of the deployed application. At Orange Business, the 3Cs—Connectivity, Cloud, and Cybersecurity—are at the core of these challenges.

"Orange Business has all the expertise needed to support organizations across these five decision-making variables, enabling sustainable value creation through artificial intelligence.

As a digital services company (ESN), it places trust at the core of its model: trust in its comprehensive offerings, trust through guiding the responsible adoption of AI, and trust by integrating environmental considerations.

Well-established AI use cases and emerging promises

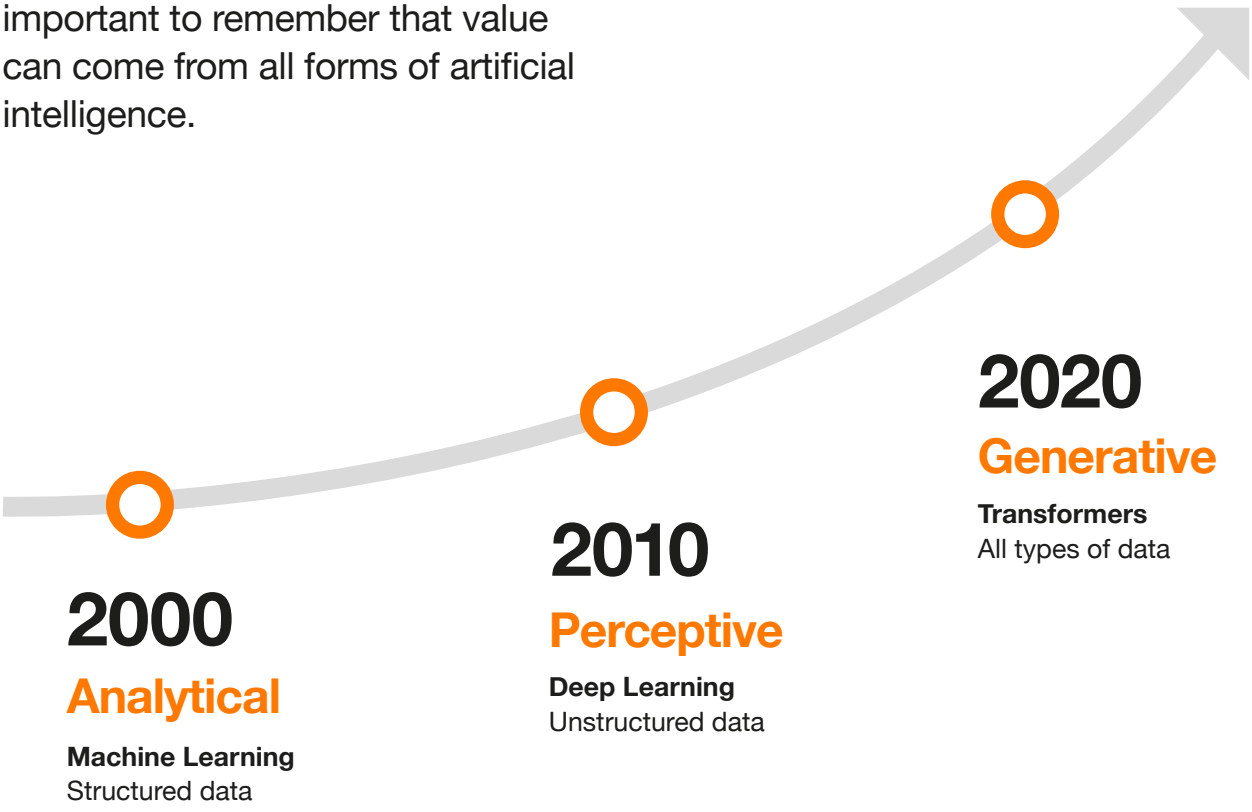
Companies are heavily investing to turn the promises of generative AI into reality. But that doesn't mean they're abandoning other forms of AI, such as Machine Learning and Deep Learning. Regardless of the AI type, there are many high-value use cases. Let's take a closer look.

"It's been 20 years since the AI revolution began. For two decades, pioneering companies have been developing AI algorithms and integrating them into their core processes,"

Mick Levy,
Director of Strategy & Innovation
at Orange Business France

AI: What are the use cases?

Generative AI is more recent. But it's important to remember that value can come from all forms of artificial intelligence.



Proven benefits of Machine Learning & Deep Learning

For an industrial client, Orange Business leveraged real-time IoT sensor data to predict failures in a critical piece of equipment. The project helped the company save several million euros and achieve ROI within the first year. Product categorization, particularly in e-commerce, is another relevant use case for this type of AI. In this field, accurate categorization is essential to boost sales. A major e-commerce company benefits greatly from its marketplace, which indexes hundreds of thousands of products. However, it found that sellers often misclassify products. As Aurélie Gonçalves, Manager of Strategy & Innovation at Orange Business France, explains, "A poorly categorized product can result in 20 to 30% fewer sales."

By deploying a dedicated Deep Learning algorithm, the company was able to categorize 85% of its catalog. The AI uses all product listing information to assign the most appropriate category. This project underwent multiple iterations, showcasing how complementary different AI approaches can be. The Deep Learning approach was later enhanced with generative AI, which helped categorize the remaining 15% of the catalog. Ultimately, the e-commerce company used results from generative AI to retrain its Deep Learning model, increasing its native performance. Buoyed by this success, and by combining AI techniques, the marketplace is now developing a new version of the solution aimed at giving sellers tools to optimize all elements of their product listings.

"A poorly categorized product can result in 20 to 30% fewer sales."

Aurélie Gonçalves
Manager of Strategy & Innovation at Orange Business France

AI: The right model for the right use case

Predictive AI also delivers value, either on its own or combined with other models. For example, it can be used to forecast sales across a retail chain's network of stores. Once the predictions are reliable, they enable action across the company's entire value chain—purchasing, manufacturing, and supply chain. Through such projects, Orange Business has, for instance, helped a leading retail brand double the revenue of its top-performing store and optimize its end-to-end value chain, achieving ROI in just a few months.

In another example—this time in banking—a recommendation engine powered by predictive AI suggests, in real time, the most relevant offers to customer service agents directly on their screens. As a result, the bank's contact center increased cross-selling rates by 35%.

While AI is increasingly scrutinized for its environmental impact, it can also support more sustainable digital practices. At Orange, an algorithm is used to categorize mobile antennas based on their energy consumption patterns. This analysis helps identify antennas with abnormal consumption for targeted actions (replacement, reconfiguration, maintenance…). The company's researchers estimate energy savings of up to 15%. Even the first version of this use case—simple yet highly effective—achieved a 5% energy reduction.

While AI is increasingly scrutinized for its environmental impact, it can also support more sustainable digital practices.

A second wave of AI has followed predictive models. For about a decade, businesses have had access to perceptive AI systems, also based on Deep Learning (such as Computer Vision), used for recognition tasks. One pharmaceutical group, for instance, installed cameras on its production lines to automate quality control and accelerate vaccine production.

Generative AI: expanding possibilities and combining approaches

The third wave of AI—the most recent—is that of generative AI, which unlocks new possibilities for use cases.

One bank, for example, is using this category of models to translate its legacy applications, originally programmed in Cobol, into a more modern and easier-to-maintain language. This project, which has been a strategic priority for the bank's IT department for several years, has only recently become realistic—thanks to generative AI.
Google, the Silicon Valley giant, is also leveraging generative AI solutions for software development. Sundar Pichai, CEO of the group, recently announced that 25% of the company's new code is now generated by AI.
Chatbots, callbots, content generation for marketing…The potential of LLMs (Large Language Models) is enriching the AI use case portfolio across industries. A good example in the energy sector is shared by Didier Gaultier, Head of AI France at Orange Business.

The potential of LLMs is enriching the AI use case portfolio across industries.

An energy provider carrying out maintenance at client sites operates in a highly technical environment. Their field technicians use tablets to access technical knowledge bases and to write intervention reports. However, these features often fall short of expectations. Technicians struggle to access information, and the reports they produce are often of low quality.
To simplify access to relevant knowledge, Orange Business deployed a generative AI that interacts with technicians to help them find the best solution to the issues they face. It also automatically generates a clear and intelligible summary of the interventions and the situation, producing a structured report that meets the company's quality standards.
Predictive, perceptive, generative—AI in business takes multiple forms, which can also be combined. The toolbox of AI application designers continues to expand year after year.

“We quickly started using predictive AI to make the best use of our data—to take it out of the fridge”

“We quickly started using predictive AI to make the best use of our data—to take it out of the fridge,” says the CDO. BPCE applies AI algorithms to its data to improve operational efficiency—processing documents, verifying information, or extracting and integrating data into its systems.
In the area of risk management, AI is used to assign a score to each transaction. This determines whether an operation can be executed or flagged for suspicion, notably in cases of potential fraud.
Customer relationship management is another key area for AI development. The goal here is to harness customer insights to personalize both communications and offers. BPCE has shifted its approach from being product-centric to becoming more customer-focused.
By detecting customer events, the bank has improved its conversion rate—generating over 10 million new opportunities in 2024. Subscription and cross-selling rates have also risen significantly.

How Banque Populaire – Caisse d’Épargne (BPCE), Pierre Fabre, and the Île-de-France Region are embracing AI

Today, organizations can adopt different AI technologies to address business and customer pain points—aligned with their strategy and priorities. A major player in the European banking sector, the Banque Populaire – Caisse d’Épargne (BPCE) group has already reached a certain level of maturity in AI deployment. This maturity is largely due to BPCE’s rich data assets and its experience in Big Data. As Luc Barnaud, Group Chief Data & AI Officer, explains, the bank processes 11 billion transactions per year. Its websites and mobile apps record nearly 3 billion visits. BPCE also manages millions of documents. In short, there are many operations to automate and a vast amount of data to leverage!

“Prediction is at the heart of our strategy. The second focus is on deploying generative AI for employees.”

AI across all business verticals at Pierre Fabre

At Pierre Fabre Group, data holds value across all business lines, according to Clara Thibault, Chief AI, Data & Analytics Officer. In 2024, the company focused on use cases that deliver measurable value.

“Prediction is at the heart of our strategy. The second focus is on deploying generative AI for employees.” Within six months of launching Playground GPT (a private ChatGPT environment), it was adopted by 50% of employees, with over 100,000 conversations recorded. Following the same path are MaIA at BPCE and GénIAI at the Île-de-France Region. These generative AI tools aim to boost employee productivity and introduce new ways of working.

Pierre Fabre used predictive AI during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games to optimize pharmacy stocking and plan promotional activities at the point of sale. In production, predictive AI and sensor data are used to prevent machine failures. Given that production downtime can cost hundreds of thousands of euros, every avoided failure is a major win.

The public sector is also AI-ready

Private companies such as BPCE and Pierre Fabre are at the forefront of AI adoption. As for the public sector—often criticized for lagging behind in technology—the Île-de-France Region is proving otherwise.

Its journey is still recent, beginning in 2022, as acknowledged by Antoine Carette, its Chief Data Officer. The region's move into AI was largely driven by the rise of publicly available generative AI. Since then, it has embraced the technology to design secure and tailored use cases, particularly in support of innovation and economic development. The regional authority also places strong emphasis on sovereignty. That's why it develops all its AI applications on Cloud Avenue, Orange Business's cloud offering. With infrastructure natively designed for AI and generative AI engines developed in Europe, this solution aligns perfectly with the region's ambitions while providing a secure and trustworthy environment.

"Our first area of interest was how to transform the relationship with users. Generative AI allows us to reverse the dynamic. We're no longer just a catalog of public services," explains Antoine Carette. The technology allows the region to rephrase an entrepreneur's project in their own words and translate it into formal administrative documents. The authority also maintains a backlog of around one hundred use cases, including a "Tech Assistant"—a conversational robot designed to assist internal staff by improving IT support through easier access to information stored in knowledge bases.

To scale the use of generative AI, the Île-de-France Region has also launched GénIAl, an in-house, sovereign solution that is now moving into the industrialization phase. At the same time, the authority is testing market solutions, including Microsoft Copilot, which is currently being piloted with 15% of its agents. A first evaluation is planned for 2025 before a potential full rollout. Pierre Fabre is following a similar path with Copilot, involving a pool of 300 beta testers. An assessment is underway, with broader deployment expected later this year.

In conclusion, Mick Levy emphasizes the importance of reconciling two trajectories: improving individual performance through everyday AI assistants, and "identifying high-potential use cases that enable transformation and value at scale."

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Business benefits

Individual performance

Value at scale

Building the foundations of an industrial and responsible AI strategy

The future of AI is already taking shape with agent-based AI and multimodal capabilities. To prepare for what's ahead and generate sustainable value, companies must adopt the right strategy today.

Generative AI has already gone through its first wave. The next one is just around the corner, marking another major step in AI transformation over the next three to five years. According to Mick Levy, two key topics will dominate the agendas of decision-makers in the years to come: multimodality and agents.

Agents and multimodality: a glimpse into the future of AI

Two major trends are already taking shape. The first, omnimodality or multimodality, refers to how users interact with AI models. Today, interaction is still largely done through prompts—text written in natural language. The output is usually text as well, but increasingly also includes images and video. Step by step, AI systems are beginning to support other input types: still text, but also voice and video. With these additional data sources, AI gains a richer understanding of context.

"Multimodality will be a key factor in broader AI adoption, both among the general public and in how we experience machines, thanks to new interaction interfaces," forecasts Mick Levy.
The second emerging trend is agentic AI. This is the era of AI agents—systems capable of performing actions autonomously. While generative AI creates content, agents can execute complex, end-to-end tasks. To act, the human provides a goal, and an orchestration AI takes charge of achieving it by coordinating and distributing tasks across multiple other AI systems.
"This future could materialize quite soon. Some components are already enabling it, such as orchestrator AIs and LAMs (Large Action Models), designed to manage actions—not just content generation."

Product approach, governance, green, AI Act…

To embrace these new technologies, companies must begin now by learning to make the most of existing AI solutions. Both private and public actors—such as BPCE, Pierre Fabre, and the Île-de-France Region—are working to reconcile large-scale AI adoption with responsible implementation.

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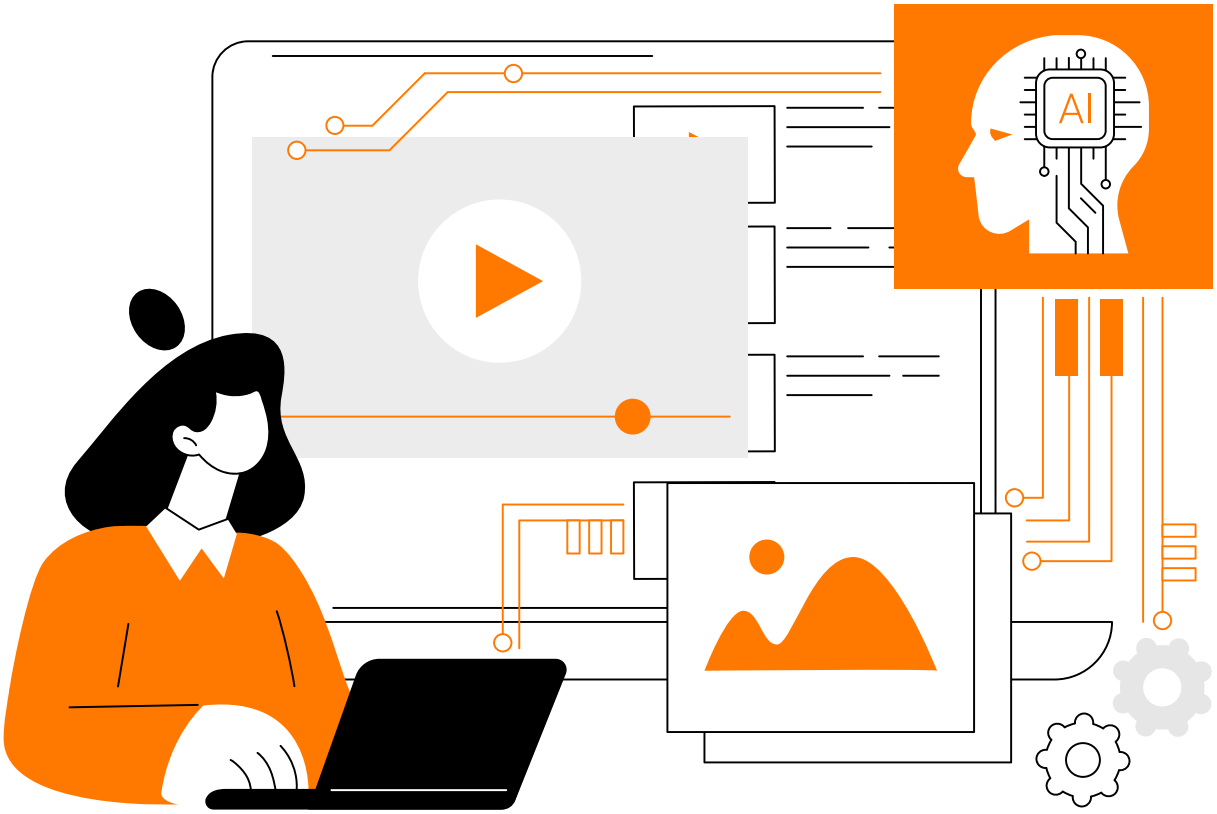

“AI for everyone is about technology, but it’s first and foremost 70 to 80% about people and change,”

For the BPCE group, AI systems represent the third wave of digital transformation in banking, following the eras of the Internet and smartphones. AI is expected to become a standard, but its rollout and integration into employees’ daily tools must be carefully supported, stresses Luc Barnaud, Group Chief Data & AI Officer.

In the AI space, the banking group follows two key directions: AI for everyone—to improve individual performance—and transformational AI, which impacts business processes. Achieving this requires a shift from previous methods of AI integration.

“AI for everyone is about technology, but it’s first and foremost 70 to 80% about people and change,” warns the CDO. IT, business, and data expertise are not enough; “we need to bring other stakeholders to the table.” This includes HR, organizational design teams, transformation leaders, and others. “It’s absolutely essential to expand our project teams to bring together all the necessary skills. Developing AI solutions also requires a product-oriented mindset, action on the quality of documentation bases—not just structured data—and a strong focus on training and raising awareness. BPCE has expanded the range of modules available in its Data & AI Academy. “Humans must maintain their discernment. We still have a brain—and it’s a powerful complement to everything technology can offer,” emphasizes Luc Barnaud.

Business ambassadors and the issue of sovereignty

The Data & AI Office, a cross-functional structure, must also be able to rely on the business units, which are responsible for organizing their own deployment. BPCE's Payments division, for example, has set up a dedicated program and appointed around fifty ambassadors — key contacts embedded within the business.
Antoine Carette, Chief Data Officer for the Île-de-France Region, supports these best practices. "It's important to develop a product-driven mindset and build a relationship of trust between product, tech, and business teams to design effective and reliable solutions," he says.
He also stresses the importance of data governance: "Useful AI is based on clean, certified, and well-managed data." Yet governance is still often seen primarily as a cost center. "At the Region, it's gaining traction with business teams," says Antoine Carette with satisfaction. The use cases initiated by the business play a major role in this growing support.
Clara Thibault, Chief AI, Data & Analytics Officer at Pierre Fabre Group, is also riding the generative AI wave. "For CDOs, it's the perfect opportunity to bring new energy to the narrative around data."
This belief is central to her strategy. To take the emotion out of internal debates, she also relies on regular assessments of Data & AI maturity. The company evaluates each of its Business units using the six-dimension strategy model (Use Cases, Culture, Governance, Responsibility, Technology, Execution) developed by Orange Business.

"Useful AI is based on clean, certified, and well-managed data."

Define your AI strategy

AI Act compliance and environmental impact reduction

Beyond maturity, other levers also influence AI strategies within organizations — including growing awareness of societal issues. For the Île-de-France Region, sovereignty is a key consideration, alongside with compliance. “Regulation is a driver,” says Antoine Carette. And this is nothing new. The GDPR already served as a catalyst for data governance. The AI Act now plays a similar role for AI. “Regulation gives us a framework to work on our use cases, qualify them, assess risks, and so on.” When it comes to sovereignty, the Île-de-France Region has opted for sovereign models with LightOn and sovereign hosting via Orange Business. Compliance is also a non-negotiable requirement for regulated sectors like banking. Luc Barnaud notes that the first milestone of the AI Act is already approaching in 2025, aiming to ban certain high-risk uses. “Of course, we didn’t wait for the regulation to start working on model robustness. Existing regulations already required us

“Regulation gives us a framework to work on our use cases, qualify them, assess risks, and so on.”

“The environmental dimension of AI and managing its impacts will undoubtedly become central topics in the years ahead,

to review models used in sensitive areas, such as credit approval,” he adds.
The group now plans to expand its expertise to all models. “We’re finalizing an inventory of all our systems. We’ll map and classify them, and for each category defined by the AI Act, we’ll apply the corresponding obligations.”
BPCE claims a responsible approach that goes beyond mere compliance.
Responsible AI also means frugal AI.
Pierre Fabre, a company certified as a responsible digital player, also emphasizes the frugality of both technologies and deployment practices.
The company’s labs have already taken steps to reduce environmental impact. Their internal conversational assistant, Playground, includes an eco-mode in which user queries are processed by low-consumption LLMs. In addition to reducing resource use, the eco-mode also helps raise awareness among employees. Pierre Fabre is also testing tools to assess the environmental impact of its AI applications.
“The environmental dimension of AI and managing its impacts will undoubtedly become central topics in the years ahead,” concludes Mick Levy. “They must be at the heart of organizations’ AI strategies.”

Contributors

Orange Business

- **Aliette Mousnier-Lompré:** Executive Director, CEO Orange Business
- **Mick Levy:** Director of Strategy & Innovation at Orange Business France
- **Aurélie Gonçalves:** Manager of Strategy & Innovation at Orange Business France

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Do you have any further questions?

Or, if you'd like to learn more about using AI to create business value from your company's data, feel free to get in touch.

Digital Services

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Orange Business
Digital Services
Avenue du Bourget 3,
1140 Brussels
Belgium
marketing@bd-orange.com

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