salesforce

The Three Things CIOs Really Want from AI

Avoid costly DIY failures and neverending AI pilots that don't scale.
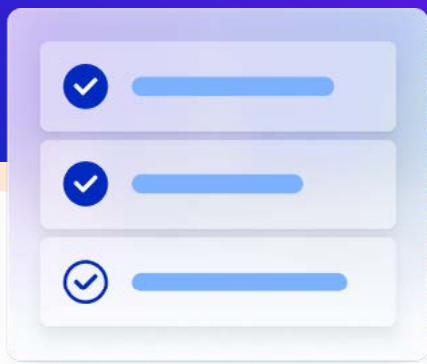
Introduction

Two years since ChatGPT took the world by storm, the breakneck pace of AI innovation shows no signs of slowing down. The rise of digital labor promises a near-future of unprecedented productivity, with 84% of CIOs reporting that AI will be as significant to their business as the internet. But 9 out of 10 enterprises are yet to scale with the technology.

So, what gives? According to a recent survey of 150 CIOs, an array of technical and organizational challenges are hampering AI implementation efforts – exposing the pitfalls of DIY initiatives and underscoring the need for a trusted solution.
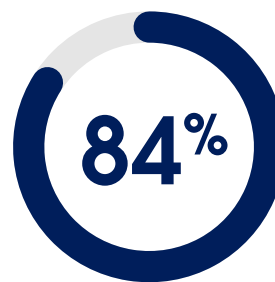
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As we enter the agentic AI era, defined by systems capable of taking action without human intervention, the cost of getting AI wrong can be steep, both financially and reputationally. From AI-powered bots that make false promises, to copilots that potentially leak sensitive corporate data, the delta between expectation and reality remains an understandable dealbreaker for many enterprises. Indeed, Salesforce research shows that among executives, concerns over data security directly correlate to lower AI usage at work.

But for organizations that manage to overcome these hurdles, the results speak for themselves. At Wiley, a global educational publishing and research company, Agentforce forms the backbone of a customer service operation serving countless students and institutions. Agentforce is able to autonomously resolve common issues, like order and payment changes, while seamlessly handing off more complex cases to human agents. Since deploying Agentforce, Wiley has seen a 213% return on investment and $230,000 in cost savings.

For celebrated luxury retailer Saks, Agentforce helps connect customers to products they'll love, providing curated shopping recommendations grounded in historical customer data, and delivering bespoke ecommerce experiences at scale. The company believes its AI service agents will eventually become full-fledged stylists.

These are real-life AI success stories, with new ones unfolding each day as companies across every industry continue to experiment with the limitless potential of this gamechanging technology. But these outcomes aren't cobbled together with point solutions or built from scratch (DIY AI) by training your own model. They depend on a deeply integrated platform that knows your entire enterprise and can securely leverage existing infrastructure and business logic.

In this guide, we'll explore the three things CIOs really want from AI, and how Agentforce helps companies succeed with digital labor.

WILEY

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AI that knows your company (and customers)

...without compromising sensitive data or incurring the cost of building proprietary infrastructure.

Data is the lifeblood of AI, but also the source of its greatest conundrum. To accurately perform real-world business tasks, an LLM needs comprehensive (and highly sensitive) data about your company and customers. But for obvious reasons, that's precisely the sort of information an off-the-shelf LLM doesn't have access to. The first question for businesses then becomes, "how do I get my data into the LLM?"

This is usually where the conversation veers off on a troubling tangent: training your own proprietary LLM. Make no mistake – this never works out the way you hope. Even for companies willing to absorb the enormous cost and engineering complexity of developing and maintaining a custom AI model, there's no avoiding the intractable challenges of data recency and governance.

Thinking of DIYing your AI?

First, consider that without constant retraining, your shiny new LLM will be stale the day it comes online. It won't know when a customer, for instance, places a new order, so it won't know to proactively reach out with service or upsell offers.

Second, LLM training sets lack the structured schemas of a conventional database. For customers working directly with LLM providers, that means that when your data is "learned" by the model, the underlying permissions aren't carried over, creating a security, compliance, and auditing nightmare.
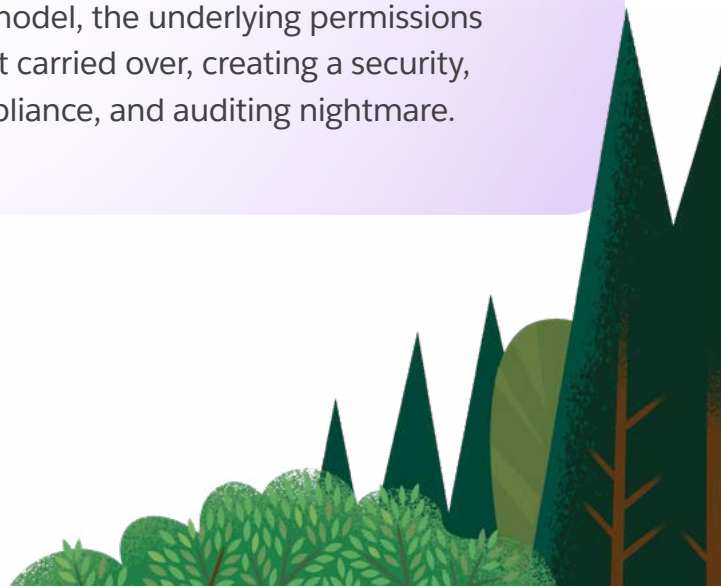
To sidestep these problems, most enterprises adopt [Retrieval Augmented Generation (RAG)](#) to ensure their LLM has access to relevant and up-to-date information. But here, too, the specter of DIY rears its ugly head. Sure, stringing together a vector database with some open-source tools sounds straightforward enough, and for a pilot, it usually is. But at scale, few organizations anticipate the complexity of processing documents in every conceivable format from every conceivable source, mitigating hallucinations, integrating legacy systems, ensuring security and compliance, and a laundry list of other concerns. And don't forget the recurring costs of vector database hosting, model inferencing, monitoring, and so on.

With Agentforce, you can abstract away most of that complexity because it's natively built on the Salesforce platform. RAG can easily be baked into every prompt thanks to a built-in hyperscale data engine, and BYOM allows organizations to choose from a wide range of LLMs without having to worry about model lock-in. Why spend time and resources building out infrastructure that will quickly become a commodity, when you could be building new products for your customers instead?

Steps

✓ Choose Typ

✓ Review Topic

✓ Enter Details

④ Select Date

Select Data

Select Library

Create new library ✕

Configure New Library

Select Data Space

Create new library ▾

Library Label

Dealer Articles and Policy Docs

Knowledge (1)   Files Upload (6)

Upload Files

File   Size   Uploaded on   Uploaded by

AI that delivers value fast and can adapt as your company scales

...without disrupting your business.

The journey from pilot to scale is always winding and full of unexpected twists and turns, but the path is especially treacherous when it comes to AI pilots. Why do so many promising AI projects fizzle out before they can reach scale? The truth is, launching an AI agent in isolation and setting it off to go work on some siloed business task is relatively easy. So easy, in fact, that a veritable cottage industry of agentic AI startups has sprung up practically overnight, selling all manner of copilots, virtual sales reps, and AI service desks.

But the vast majority of these solutions don't have the necessary infrastructure to integrate with your existing systems, processes, data, and business logic. To make them work, vendors essentially subsidize the cost of integration through professional services. That approach might work when you're launching your first agent, but what happens when you need to add a new capability or even make a minor change? What happens when you're ready to scale from one agentic use case to 10, or when you need multiple agents to work together in one orchestrated workflow?

If your end goal for agentic AI is a pipeline of limitless digital labor that can tackle any task and accommodate changes in demand, then the platform you invest in should be scalable. Avoid vendors who promise the world but can only deliver custom-built, one-off infrastructure, siloed AI applications, and a procode user experience. This road only leads to more technical debt and an IT team mired in bug fixes, support tickets, and new documentation.

With Agentforce, you get AI that works out of the box, with modular elements that can be composed with clicks, not code. Businesses can leverage a deeply integrated agentic platform that seamlessly connects to your existing infrastructure and is context-aware of your business policies and most valuable processes for working with customers. By reusing the processes and business logic you've already built, Agentforce vastly reduces time to value.

AI that integrates across the enterprise

...without brittle point solutions.

Most of us have come to know generative AI through the confines of a chat window. Ask a question, get an AI-generated answer. This conversational UX makes it easy to start working with LLMs and get a broad sense of what they're capable of. But when it comes to actually applying AI to real-world business tasks, this Q&A format isn't always necessary or efficient. What if you need your AI to do something proactively, or to engage with customers across a mix of different channels?

Let's take a look at one of the killer use cases for Agentforce early adopters: sales coaching. Imagine your company needs to quickly scale up its sales team to meet a seasonal spike in demand. Before putting your new AEs on the phone with prospective customers, you need to make sure they can pitch your products and services in a way that's on-brand and will resonate with savvy buyers. But how do you get so many new workers up to speed on such a short timeline? By crunching unstructured data from across the enterprise, Agentforce can build an agent grounded in your company's messaging to act as an internal sales coach. As your new reps learn the ropes, they'll be able to rehearse every customer call and get helpful tips to refine their presentation skills – automating a knowledge transfer process that used to take weeks and many people.

The modularity and flexibility of Agentforce is what allows your AI agents to not only operate across any channel, but to show up in a consistent way, armed with the relevant context and knowledge to perform virtually any task. If a customer engages with an AI agent on a marketing webpage, that agent will also have the context of any prior service cases. Likewise, a customer support agent can be enabled to upsell new products and services.

With Agentforce, all of this works right out of theb ox. Whether it's embedded AI apps or AI agents, the secret sauce that makes these tools so powerful is their ability to seamlessly and securely access your entire enterprise. The number of point solutions you'd need to DIY something comparable would be immense.

Conclusion

It's easy to get caught up in the whirlwind of AI excitement dominating the current business landscape, but to truly harness the potential of this transformative technology, companies need to bear in mind one important constant: AI is only as powerful as the platform it sits on top of. Without trusted access to corporate data, AI is bland and unhelpful. Without native integration with your infrastructure, AI doesn't scale. Without modularity and extensibility, AI is trapped inside a chat window.

Agentforce might be new, but it's designed from the ground up to leverage the past 25 years of cutting-edge innovation on the Salesforce platform. It is the most capable agentic solution on the market not because we built the biggest LLM, but because we never lost sight of what matters most to our customers: trust and safety, time to value, ease of integration. Without these, AI is little more than an expensive distraction.

**Learn more at
agentforce.com**