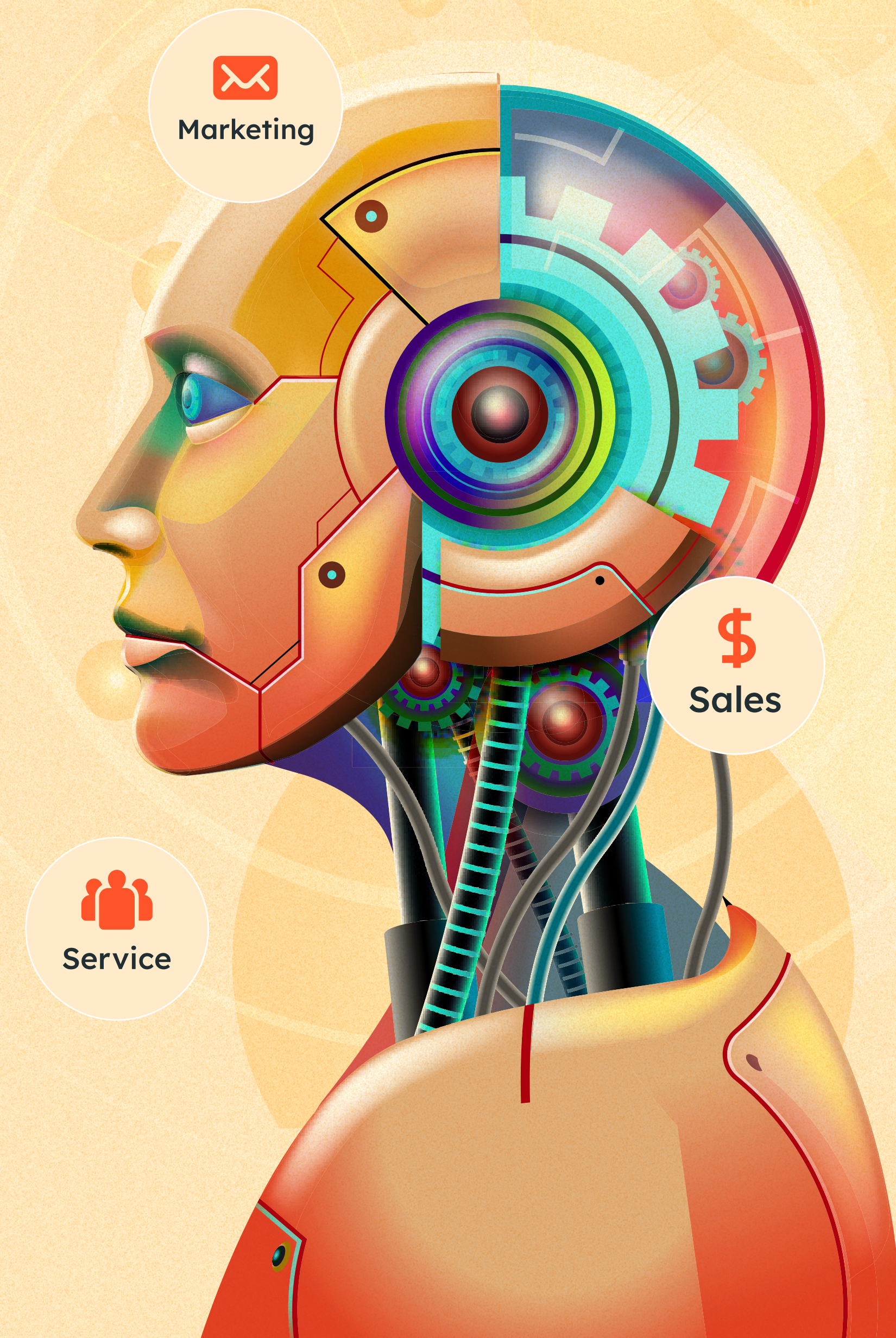


HubSpot for Startups

How AI is Redefining Startup GTM Strategy

Exploring new research on how AI is impacting startup growth in marketing, sales, and customer service.

2024



HOW AI IS REDEFINING STARTUP GTM STRATEGY

What We'll Cover



INTRODUCTION

There's An AI for That



STRATEGY

How AI is Changing Startup
Go-to-Market Strategies

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TOOLS & BEST PRACTICES

Most Popular AI Tools for GTM
& Best Practices for Scaling

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SCALABILITY & INNOVATION

AI is Driving Startup Scalability
& Drawing Investor Attention

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CLOSING

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INTRODUCTION

There's an AI for That

Will startups harnessing AI in go-to-market strategy turn around the tech slowdown of the past few years?



A NOTE FROM LEADERSHIP

The Odds are Turning Towards Startups' Favor With AI

[Building a startup in recent years](#) has been hard. Investors have become more conservative — they're looking for sustainable profits, not unvalidated ideas. But today, founders and early stage startup teams have a secret weapon for growth at their fingertips that they can access from anywhere in the world, on any device, for free — artificial intelligence (AI).

Startups are realizing the opportunities to use AI, machine learning (ML), and large language models (LLMs) to scale faster and build personalized experiences — it's an AI gold rush. But the question now is, how exactly are startups **successfully** incorporating AI into their go-to-market (GTM) strategies to drive repeatable business?

To find out how AI is playing a part in startups' go-to-market plans, we surveyed over 1,000 early stage startup founders. Nearly all respondents say they've found value in AI — 86% of founders said the use of AI has had a positive impact on their company's GTM strategy. Not only that, but the highest-growth startups and those with the most funding were the most likely to have a designated AI team and attribute their growth to AI.

With AI, founders can do more with less. The age of the lean, mean AI-powered startup machine is here. We hope this report inspires you and helps you shape agile GTM strategies that fuel sustainable growth.

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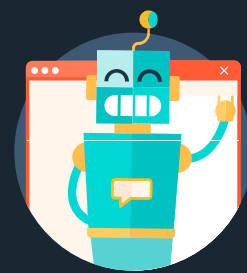
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AI IS THE NEW AUTOMATION

AI is the Hottest Tech Since Automation Entered the Chat

AI swiftly entered the zeitgeist when ChatGPT launched in the fall of 2022. Since then, the AI revolution has spawned more than ten thousand new AI tools that can do virtually anything, and anything virtually — from AI browser tab management to stock market analysis. Remember the Apple campaign “there’s an app for that”? Today, [there’s an AI for that](#). Over the past few years, startups to enterprise orgs have gone from rapidly adopting integrations and automation to seeing where they can add AI and machine learning (ML) into every workflow to grow more efficiently and effectively.

Let’s get into the data.

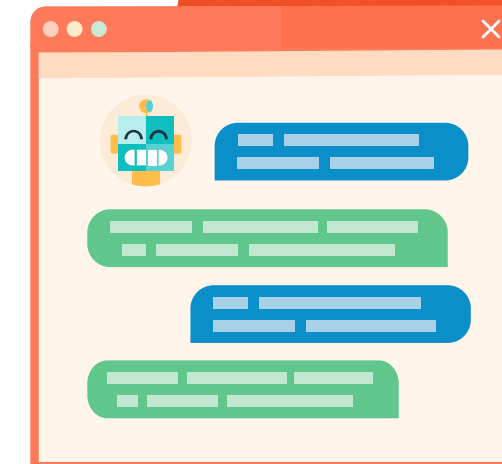
THE AUDIENCE

1,000+ startup founders

Global founders at companies from seed to Series B.

THE GOAL

To better understand how early stage startups are using AI tools, features, and models to scale their GTM strategies, we ran a survey in January 2024 and talked with startup founders and investors.



How do you Teach AI Curiosity?

As startups begin to adopt AI tools throughout their business strategies, one of the first hurdles is getting the team comfortable with a completely new type of technology and thinking. Ashley Groves, founder of [Deaglo](#), a global fintech startup, shared, “Everyone’s embraced AI at different speeds. We’ve created a safe space for people to try it out. When they see the value for themselves, even from a personal perspective, they’re on board.” Bringing on AI tools as part of the go-to-market (GTM) strategy is more than just a shift in tech stack or budget, it’s a complete change in mindset that’s setting smart, agile startup teams apart from the rest of the herd. And investors are interested in these intelligent, agile startups.

59%

of early stage startup founders feel that AI has helped them reach qualified prospects.



66%

of respondents plan to hire employees with AI experience in the next year and nearly 80% believe AI will play a role in their expansion.



So Far, AI’s Benefits Outweigh the Risks and Savvy Founders are Jumping In

Founders that have dipped their toes into the AI pool are finding success and making big investments in AI tools and employees with AI expertise. 71% of founders we surveyed said they already have a designated individual or team specializing in the acquisition or utilization of AI in their GTM strategy. Deaglo founder Groves had an “aha!” moment when he saw [HubSpot co-founder] [Dharmesh Shah’s INBOUND keynote showcasing ChatSpot](#). Rather than trying to manually help customers understand the complex financial data that could unlock international growth, he saw a way to build a conversational AI model that didn’t do things *for* users, but *with* them. It’s completely changed their business model and trajectory.

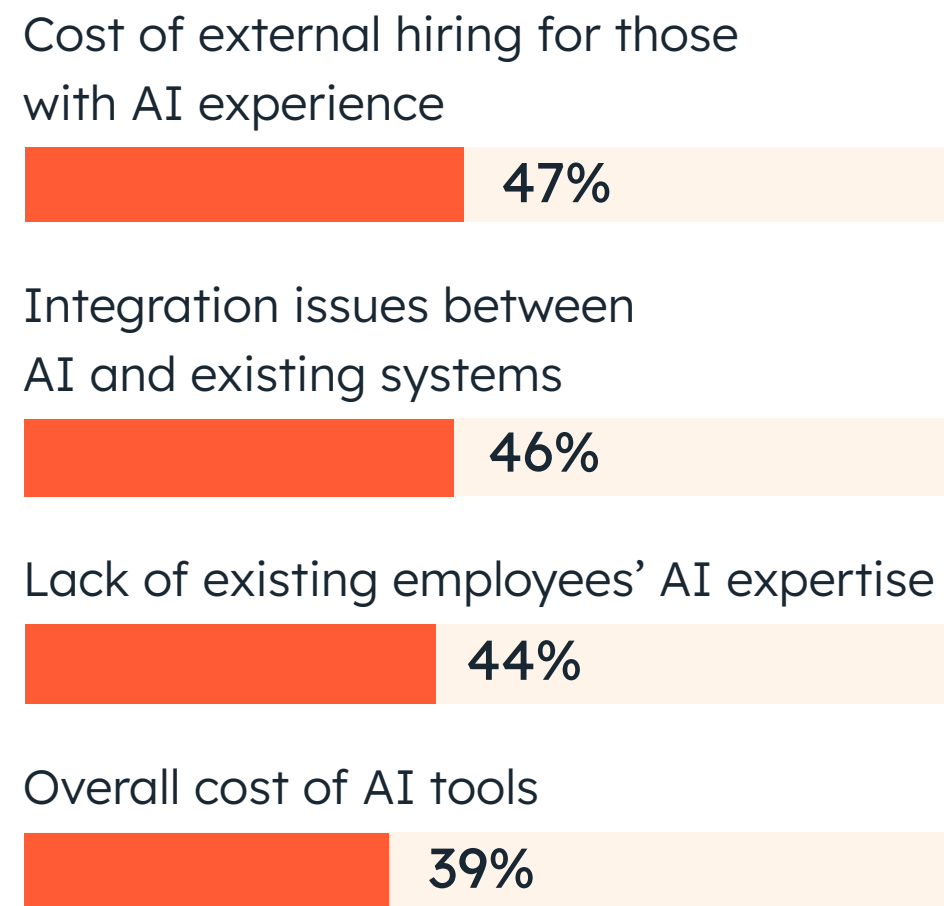
And many other founders are reaching the same mindset shift in every aspect of business growth. For founders, the biggest challenges around adopting AI are finding talent with AI experience and integrating AI into existing systems, and the biggest concerns are around data privacy and ethics. But it’s evident that the opportunities are more than worth it. Two-thirds of founders plan to hire AI specialists in the next year and 78% believe that AI tools will help increase their company’s growth this year.

Startup Founder Sentiments on AI in GTM Strategy



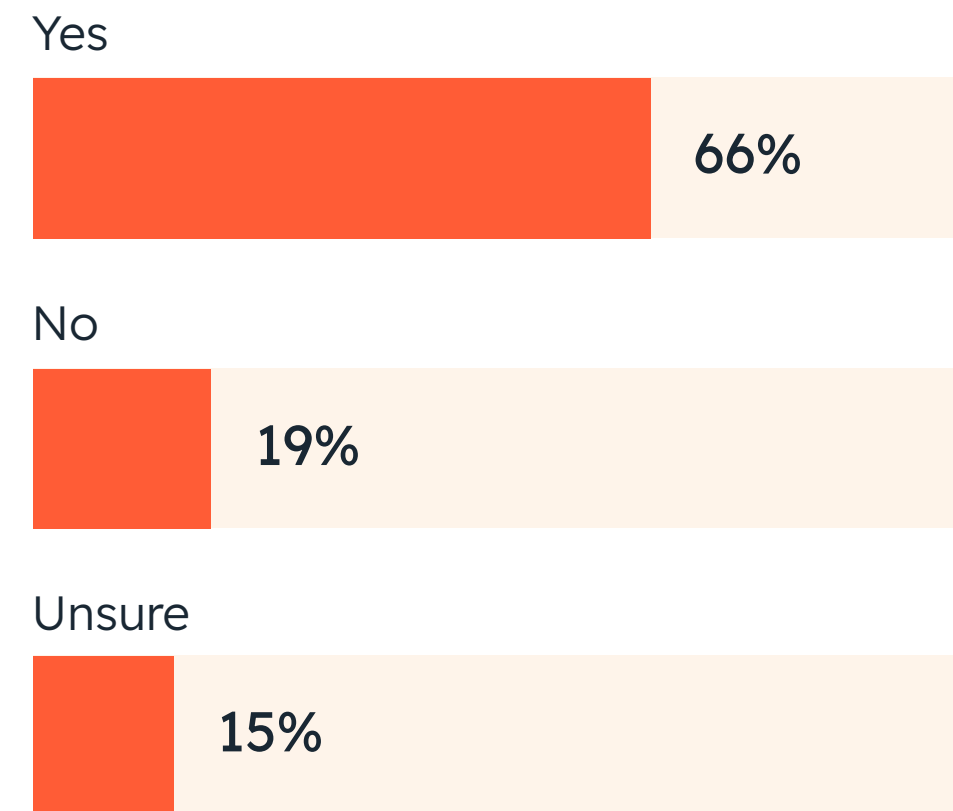
Challenges

What challenges has your company faced when implementing AI tools into your GTM strategy?



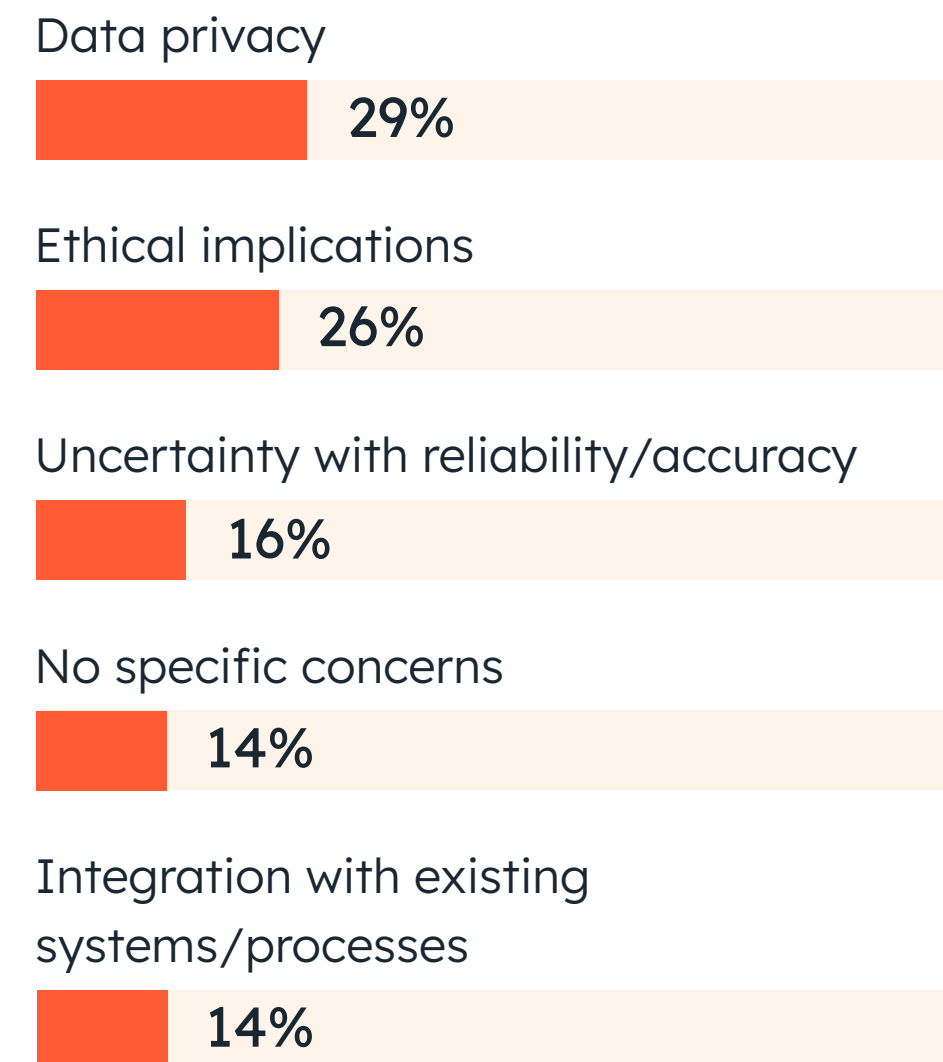
Opportunities

Do you expect to hire more employees with expertise in deploying AI tools in the next year?



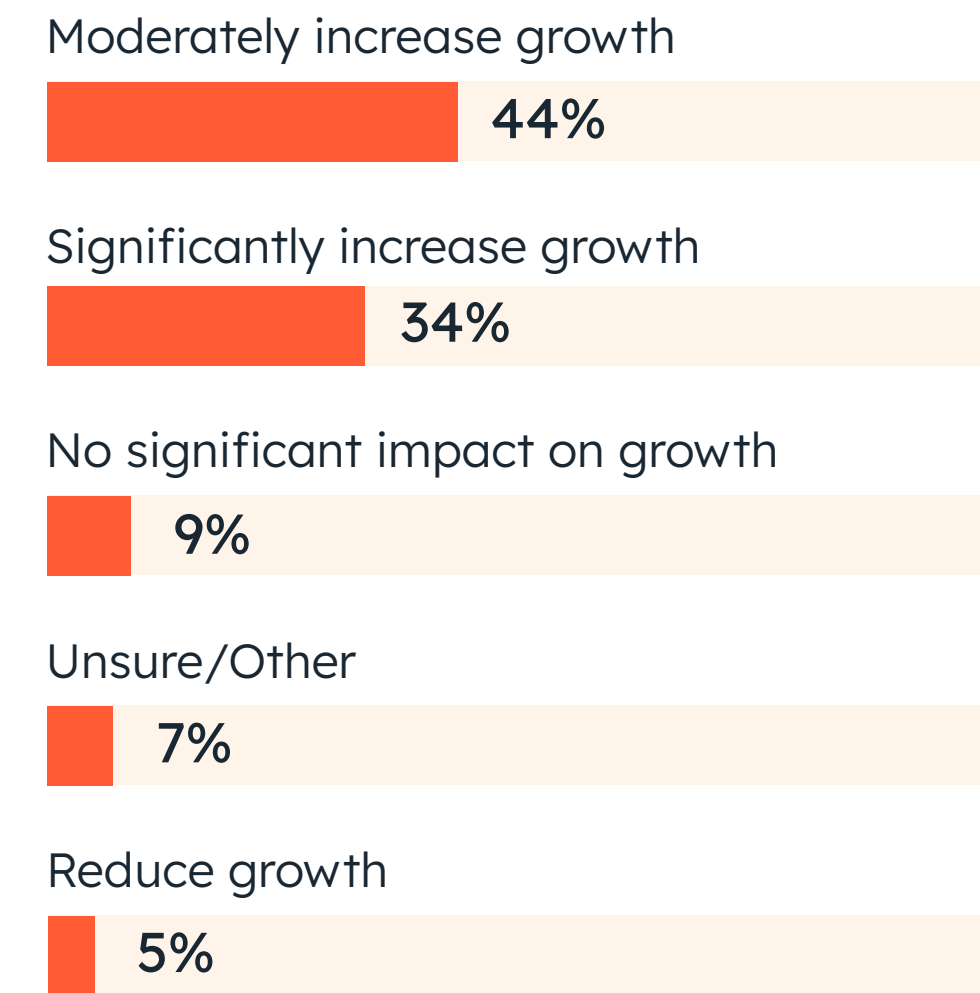
Concerns

Does your company have concerns about incorporation or usage of AI tools?



Outlook

How do you think AI tools will contribute to your company's growth in the next year?



STRATEGY

How AI is Changing Startup Go-to-Market Strategies



Startups are bringing on AI as a smart assistant to personalize the customer experience, analyze data, and generate new business.

HubSpot for Startups



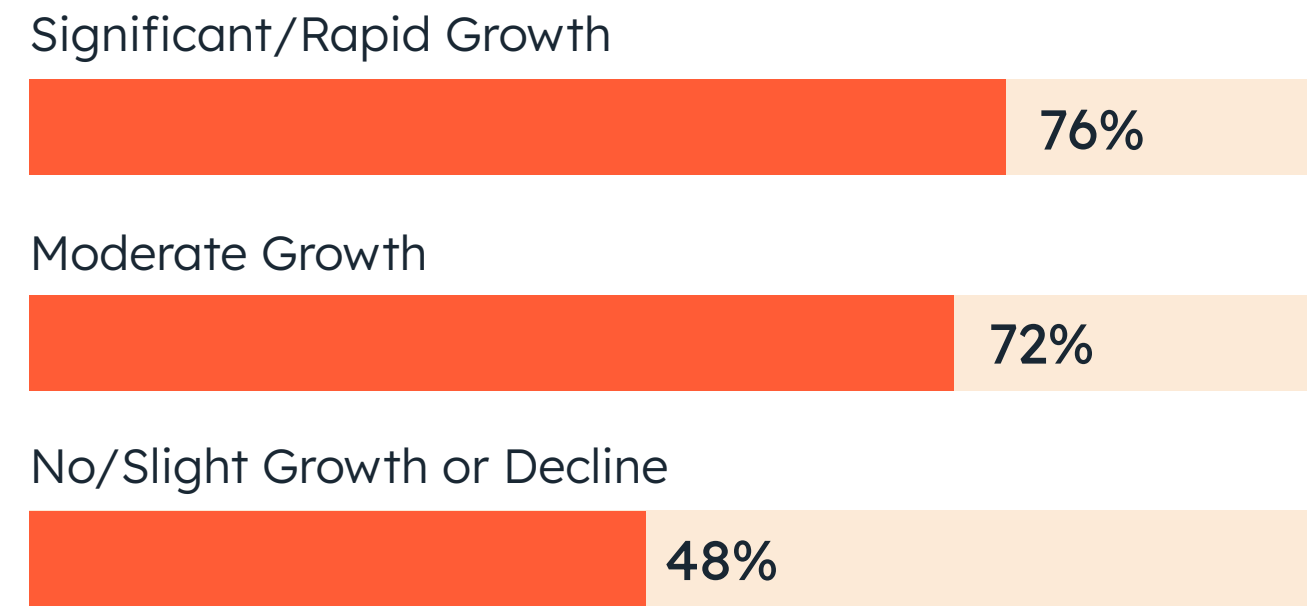
AI in GTM is Helping Startups Leap Ahead, with Humanity

Entrepreneurship attracts innovators that want to stake their claim in the new frontier. Today's startup pioneers are hurtling forward into a future where intelligent bots and sophisticated deep learning algorithms are key members of the team. Now that this technology, previously reserved for the IBMs and Microsofts of Silicon Valley, is accessible to anyone, founders are navigating the most impactful places to leverage it. And incorporating AI into GTM models is already showing promise.

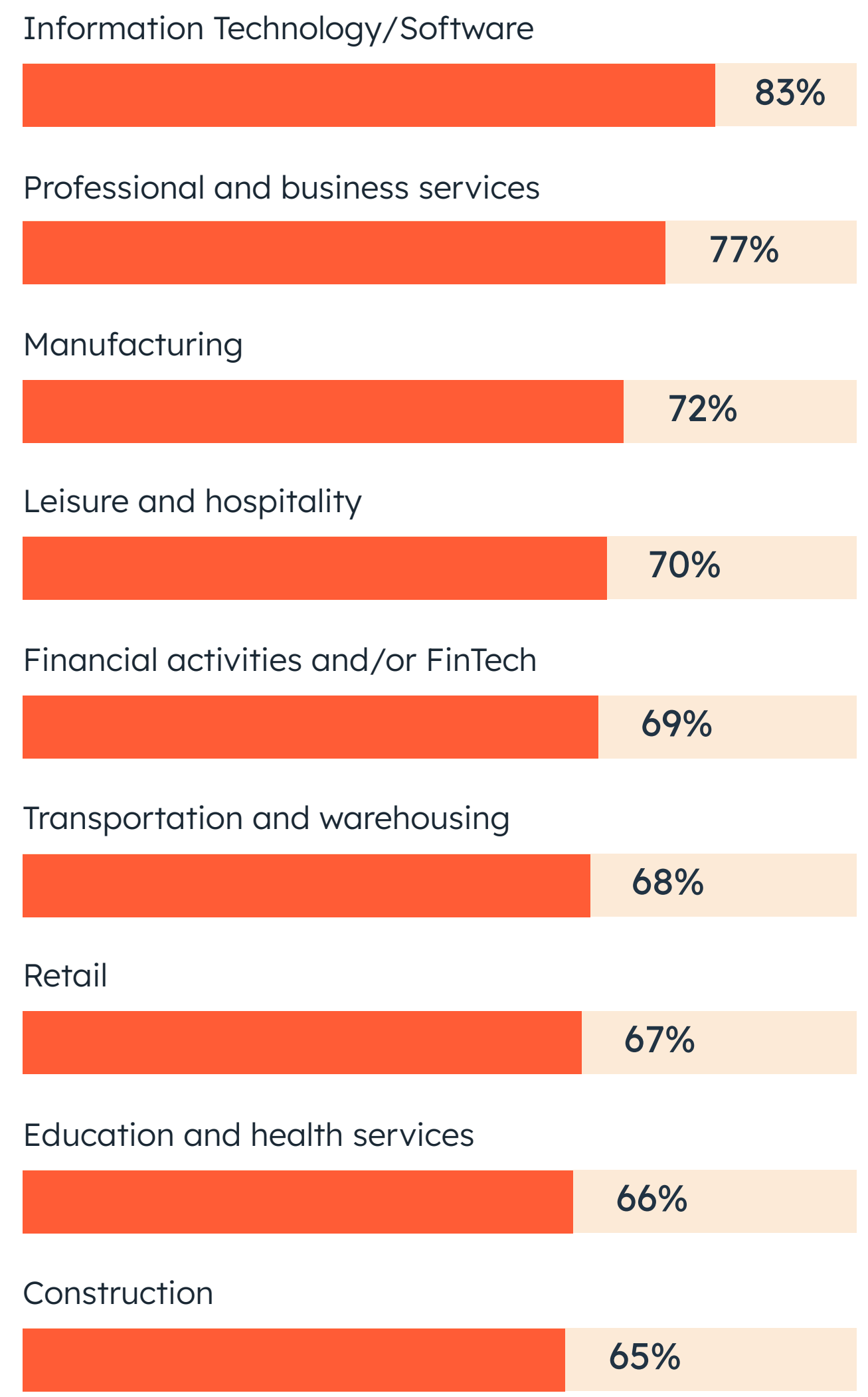


AI is particularly helping high-growth B2B and B2C startups in tech-forward industries improve conversion rates, increase customer engagement, and up the quality of incoming leads.

Startups With Designated AI Teams by 5-Year Growth Rate



Which types of startups, in which industries, are investing the most in AI?

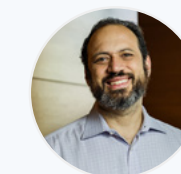


Where Startups Are Bringing AI Into Business Processes

Most professionals have, at the minimum, played around with ChatGPT and realized the sheer power of AI technology. But startups are adopting AI across the entire business development process — from writing emails to staff, to ideation, product development, go-to-market, ongoing operations, and customer service. [AI innovation researcher Ethan Mollick predicts that AI will become the new cofounder](#), and with AI opening up the talent pool to anywhere in the world, the global competition among startups will grow even fiercer in a short period of time.



[With AI] there is a fundamental rethinking of process — how we approach entrepreneurship, from the ground up.



ETHAN MOLLICK

Associate Professor, University of Pennsylvania

[From the MIT Trust the Process Podcast](#)

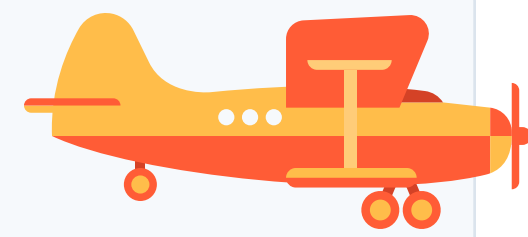


Daniela Amodei, founder of [Anthropic](#), one of the leading AI labs partnering with Google and AWS, believes that AI will make business more human. “As we’re working on these powerful generative AI tools that are interacting with the world, [we want to] make sure humans are still at the center of that story. We hope people use Claude as a partner and collaborator that helps humans do the things they want to do and live the lives they want to live,” [Daniela shared](#).

[Watch the keynote from Jared Kaplan, Cofounder & Chief Scientist of Anthropic, at the HubSpot for Startups 2023 Gen AI Summit](#) →

AI in Product Development

Building & Testing the Plane While You're Flying Forward



34% of founders report using AI in product development for quality control and defect detection through AI algorithms. Startups are using AI to move faster, test, and iterate as they expand or improve product offerings. In the saturated world of software development, product teams need to align with GTM teams from the start and as they update the product roadmap and launch new products and features more quickly.

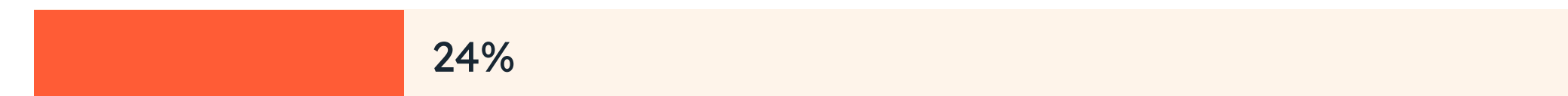
◆ See AI in action

At Fulfilld, a logistics startup, the team ships code quickly and they were struggling with keeping documentation organized. The [product team adopted Swimm](#), an AI-powered integrated development environment (IDE) that guides developers through the code and surfaces relevant information. With AI, they've slashed onboarding time by 26-50%, saved 4.5 hours per week per developer, and improved the culture of documentation on their team.

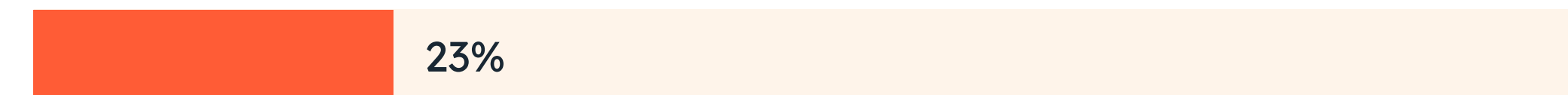


Which option best describes the primary way in which your company incorporates AI tools for customer targeting, segmentation, and marketing?

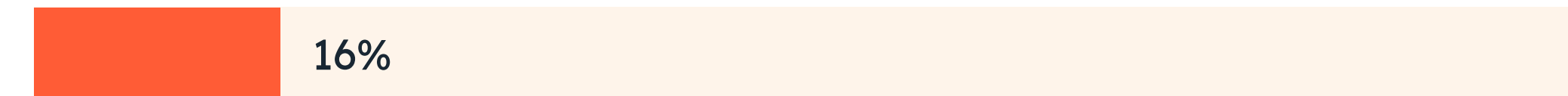
Predictive analytics for customer behavior forecasting



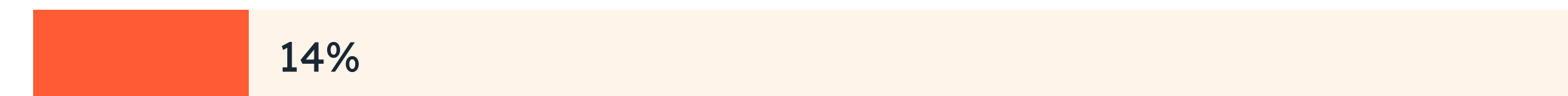
Personalized content recommendation algorithms



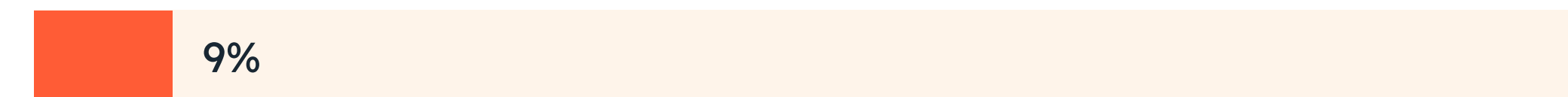
Real-time customer targeting based on AI insights



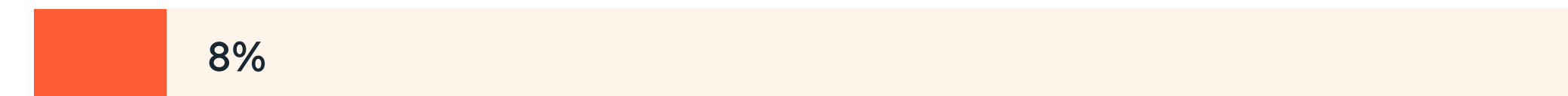
Dynamic customer profiling through machine learning



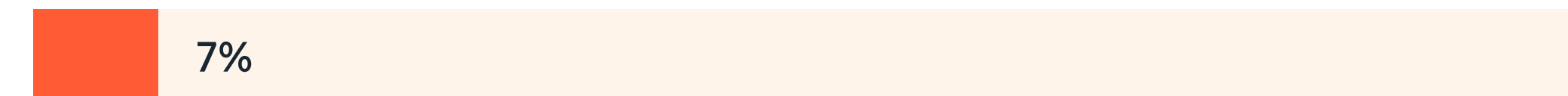
AI-driven segmentation strategies



Other/Does not use in customer targeting



AI-driven omnichannel marketing strategies



AI in Customer Targeting, Segmentation, and Marketing

Going Beyond Strategic Segmentation to Predicting What Website Visitors Want

The most common ways startups use AI in customer marketing and segmentation are customer behavior forecasting (24%) and personalized content recommendation algorithms (23%).

◆ See AI in action

NØIE, a scaling, series A D2C skincare company, is using AI to better understand customer feedback, provide more personalized recommendations for their users, and cut customer response time by 89%.



AI in Pricing Strategy and Optimization



Developing Intelligent Pricing Models That Cater To Prospects In The Moment

For pricing, 42% of startup founders use AI to support personalized pricing strategies using customer behavior insights. Companies like Airbnb have had [Smart Pricing](#) as an option for hosts for some time, and [Uber uses dynamic pricing](#). Now, startups can use AI-informed pricing to adjust to the needs of every prospect and customer — driving more of whatever is the key goal for GTM — whether that's more new customers, or more high-value customer sales, upsells, cross-sells, or referrals.

◆ See AI in action

Intelligent, data-driven pricing tools automatically adjust for every user, and overall, [Accenture's dynamic pricing users](#) are increasing revenue by up to 15%, growing margins up to 5%, and cutting promotional spend by up to 40%.



AI in Customer Experience

Providing Better, More Personalized Customer Experiences At Any Scale

In customer experience, 38% of founders say they use AI-powered chatbots or virtual assistants to provide instant customer support. Smaller startups without a customer success team can now implement chatbots and train models like Intercom on their help libraries using retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) and large language models (LLMs).

◆ See AI in action

Frame.io experienced massive growth and grew 11X since 2016. They've brought on [Intercom's AI bots](#) to make support more conversational and proactive, and now they have a 96% customer satisfaction score. The Frame.io customer service team has also reduced first-response time by 87.5%.



AI in Supply Chain or Logistics Optimization

Working At 100% Efficiency & Predicting Problems Before They Arise

22% of founders report using AI for automated decision-making for warehouse and inventory operations, and 22% say they use AI for demand forecasting for more efficient inventory management.

◆ See AI in action

Using AI to manage supply chain and logistics is a win-win-win for companies, shipping services, and end customers. [Beddy's, a bedding ecommerce startup](#), used [Sifted, an AI shipping optimization tool](#), to save almost \$500K in shipping fees, cut down on transit days, and keep an extra \$15.31 per package by swapping out shipment types.



 [Join the waitlist for HubSpot's new AI chatbot](#) →

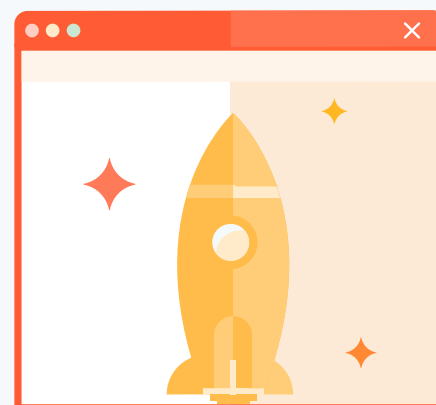
AI ACROSS GTM TEAMS

Ways AI is Impacting Startup Go-To-Market

A combined 86% of respondents say that the use of AI has had a positive impact on their company's GTM strategy, and 59% say it has impacted their ability to reach qualified prospects. 62% of founders have used AI in marketing and customer experience, compared to 54% in sales. But when looking at impact, marketing is the most effective so far.

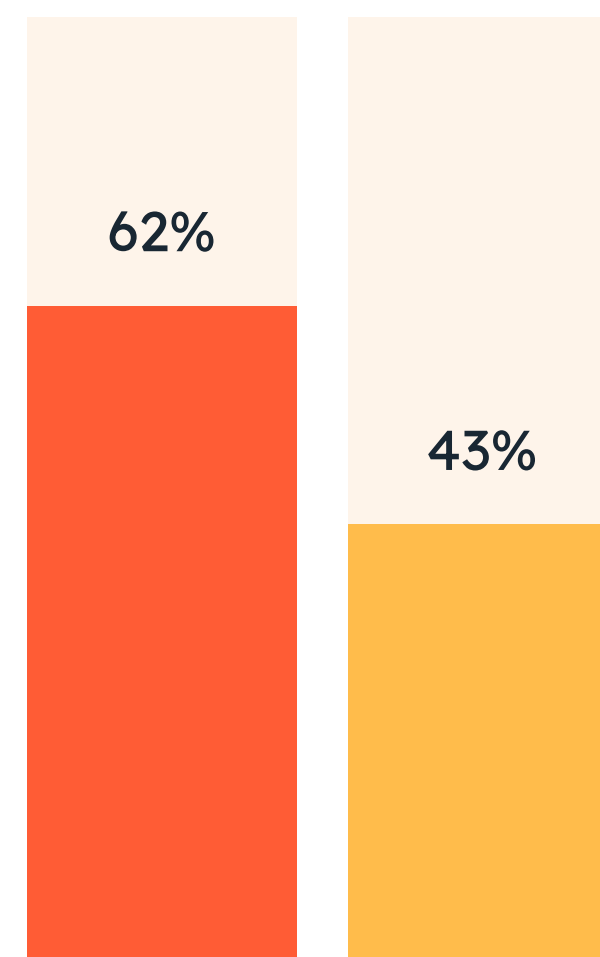
43%

of startup founders surveyed have found AI tools to be the most impactful in marketing within GTM.

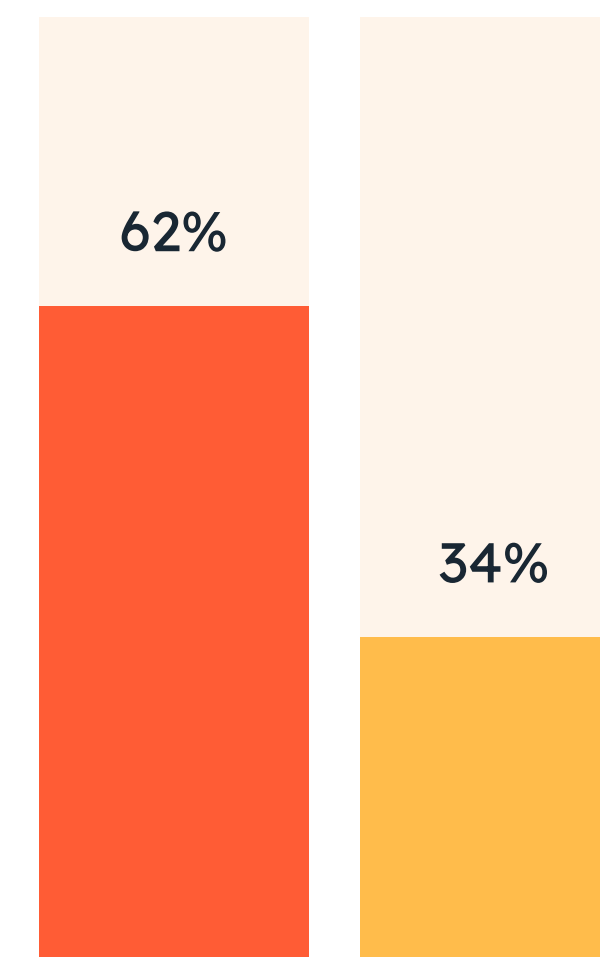


Which go-to-market teams are using AI tools, and for which teams have AI tools been the most impactful?

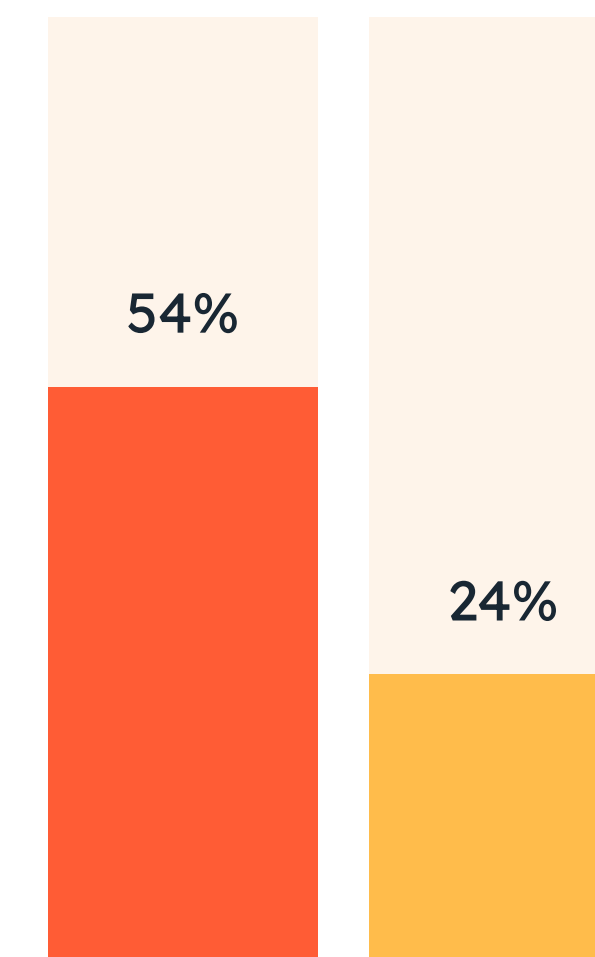
● Using ● Most impactful



Marketing



Customer experience/ success



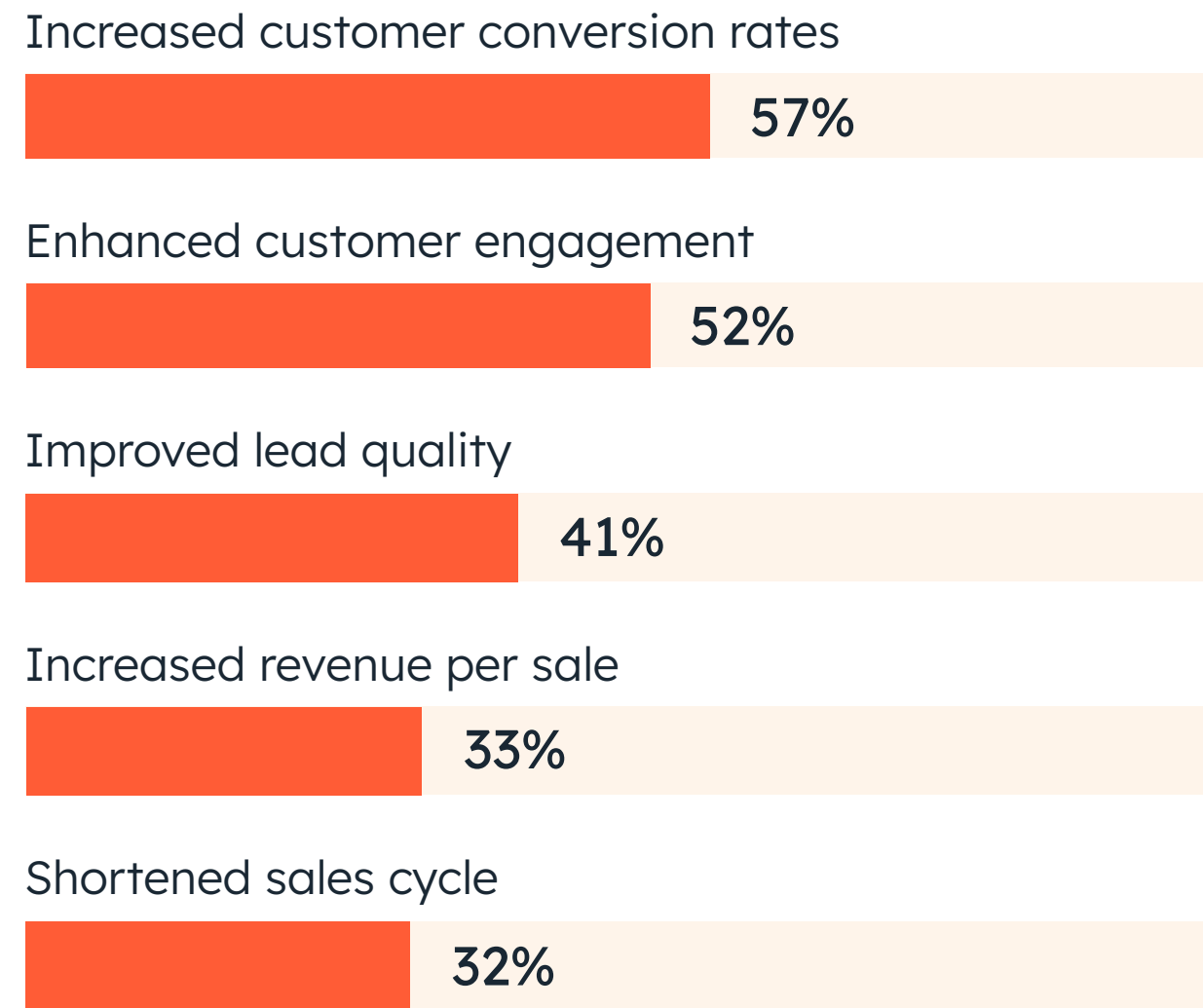
Sales



Where AI is Accelerating Go-to-Market Strategies for Startups

The biggest benefit startup founders are seeing from using AI in GTM strategy is increased customer conversion rates, followed by better connections between brands and their audiences. More than 50% of respondents said AI has helped them enhance customer engagement. Like Daniela Amodei predicted, AI is helping startup teams build better relationships with their audiences, while also driving revenue more efficiently.

What benefits has your company experienced from using AI in your overall go-to-market strategy?



How does your company utilize AI in your go-to-market strategy?



Which use of AI tools has had the most significant impact on your company's go-to-market strategy?

Customer targeting and segmentation

20%

Improving customer experience/success

15%

Personalization of marketing content

15%

Predictive analytics for sales forecasting

12%

Product development and/or production

10%

Better understanding customer journey

9%

Pricing strategy and optimization

9%

Supply chain and/or logistics optimization

5%

Administrative task automation

4%

Other/Does not use for this

2%

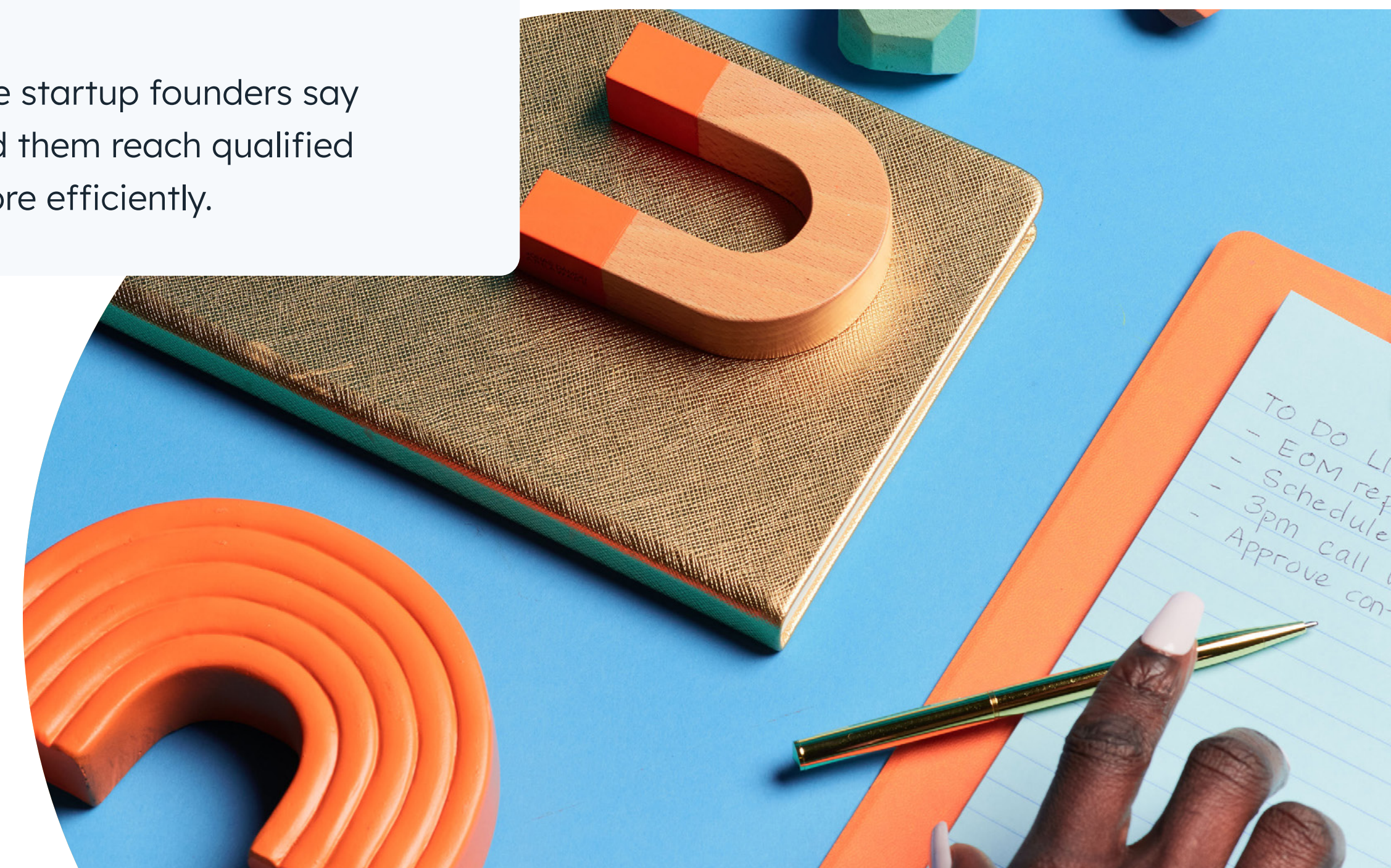
AI in Startup Sales

AI is directly contributing to better lead quality — **one of the top challenges in sales today**. Sales teams are more than ready to bring on AI assistants to personalize outreach, research prospects, and decide which leads are the highest priority.

The two most common ways startups are using AI in sales are to better understand the customer journey (39%) and in predictive analysis for sales forecasting (38%). Other emerging use cases for AI in startup sales include pricing strategy and optimization and administrative tasks. 44% of founders are hesitant about the lack of employees' AI expertise, so investing in education and training to upskill existing employees may open more doors for growth. Here's a course taught by a former HubSpotter, Sam Mallikarjunan — LinkedIn Learning's [Generative AI for Sales and Services Professionals](#).

59%

of early-stage startup founders say AI has helped them reach qualified prospects more efficiently.



AI in Startup Marketing

In our recent report, [The State of AI in Marketing](#), we found that 68% of business leaders felt that if AI and automation were fully implemented in their business, they'd see unprecedented growth. That theory's now being tested, and the early results are in. Marketers are using AI to create content, analyze and report on data, learn new skills, and conduct research, while saving 12.5 hours per week. Across startup GTM teams, AI has been the most beneficial in marketing, and founders plan to invest the most in AI in marketing this year. About half of surveyed founders are using AI for customer targeting, segmentation, and personalization and to better understand the customer journey, which overlaps between marketing and sales. More than one-third of founders say they're making sure AI in GTM aligns with company values by collaborating with cross-functional teams to evaluate AI usage.

1 in 5 founders

cite customer targeting and segmentation as the most impactful way they've used AI in marketing.

[Arduino used Twilio Segment and CustomerAI to increase the accuracy of their audience segments by 70% and now they predict customers' shopping intent using data from their 10+ websites. For both marketing and sales, they've seen overwhelmingly positive results like stronger brand affinity and better customer satisfaction.](#)



AI in Startup Service

At startups, the support team is often the success team and customer marketing. Service reps struggle with the volume of requests and having enough time, but custom chatbots are available 24/7 to field questions that don't actually require a human.

Top 3 Benefits of AI for Customer Service Professionals

#1	Making customer service available 24/7
#2	Saving time/automating manual tasks
#3	Reduce response times

[HubSpot State of AI in Service](#)

Improving the customer experience is the second-most popular way that startups are seeing success with AI, but improved customer satisfaction isn't quite the top benefit founders can point to yet. 16% of founders report that they're uncertain about the reliability and accuracy of AI tools and 29% worry about data privacy, which could be contributing to a slower rollout of AI customer service platforms and conversational support bots.

Global Differences in GTM Strategies, AI Adoption, and Startup Innovation

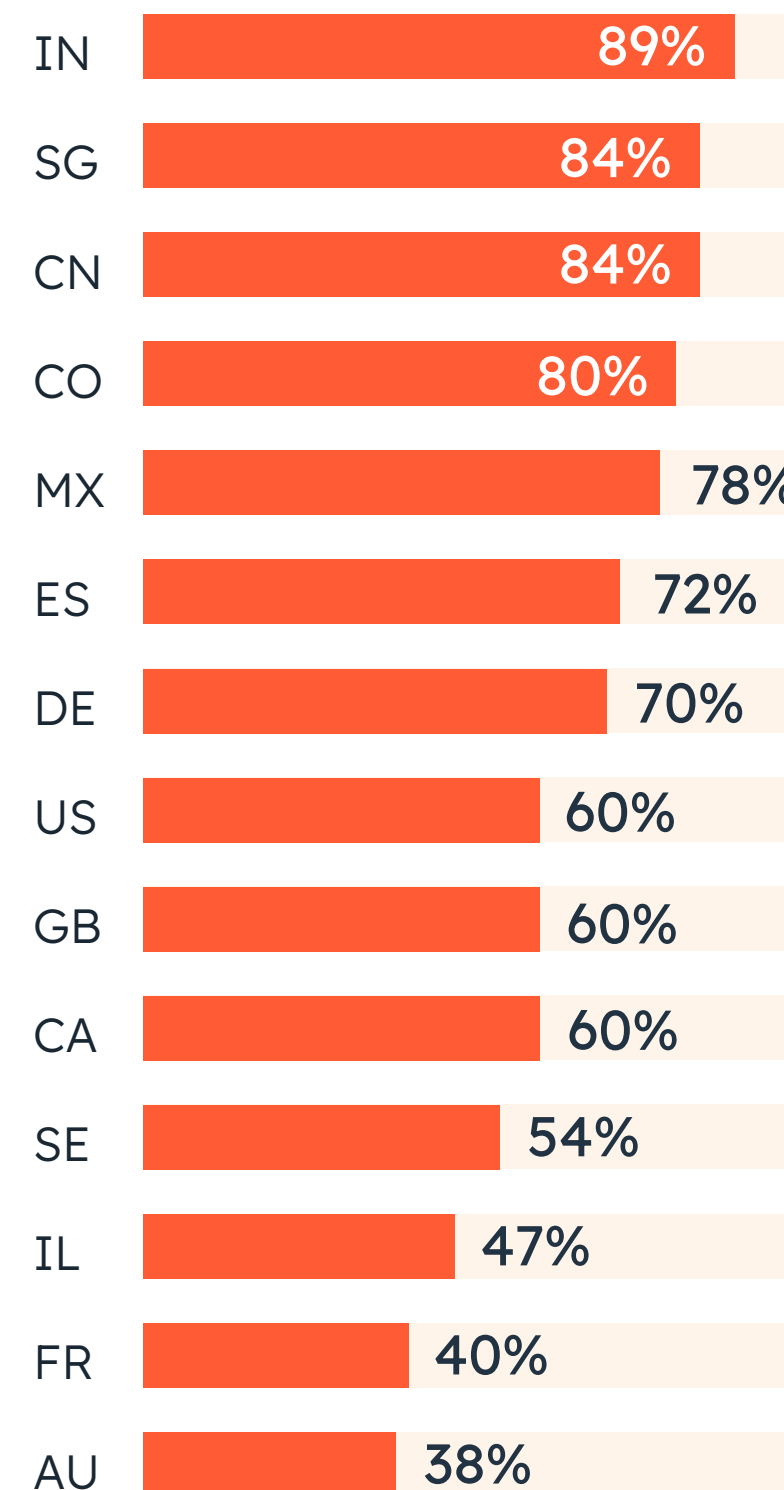
Global startup growth has, until now, been advancing at different paces in different regions, but with access to instant translations and international payments, startup teams can now work together from anywhere. As we reported in our [State of Global Unicorn Startups report](#), the countries producing the most billion-dollar startups were the United States, China, India, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Our most recent data from this founder survey aligns, and revealed that startups in Asia, South America, and the United Kingdom are the most likely to say AI tools have led to substantial growth, and founders in Asia and South America are more likely to plan on hiring new AI-focused employees.

How is AI helping startups go global and localize content, while addressing cultural differences?

While AI is making it possible to translate content into any language, instantly, that doesn't mean that direct translations will be accurate, culturally sensitive, or convey the right messages. Tools like Qloo, ["The Cultural AI,"](#) have deep learning algorithms that can answer more nuanced questions about different populations worldwide. And [Akorbi's Machine Translation](#) is smarter than traditional translation tools; it uses machine learning to speed up translations and improve accuracy.

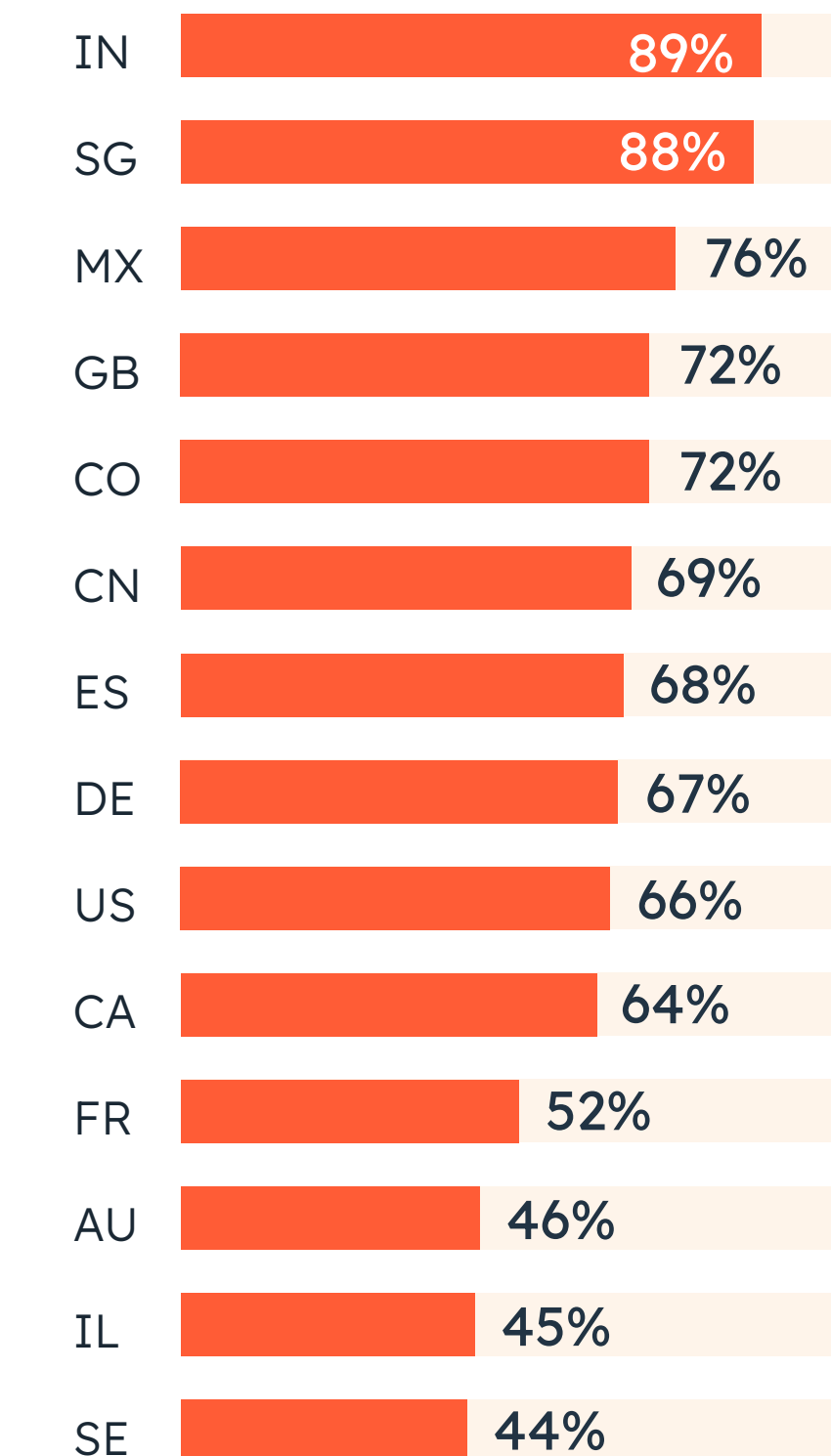
Startups Planning to Hire More Employees with AI Expertise

By country



Startups Reporting AI Contributed to Growth

By country



TOOLS & BEST PRACTICES

Most Popular AI Tools for GTM & Best Practices for Scaling

How founders are bringing AI into the startup tech stack to grow, plus guidelines to using AI ethically, accurately, and strategically.

[Read on ↓](#)



What's in an AI-Charged Startup Tech Stack?

Startup founders are eager to add AI to the tech stack through dedicated AI tools and features within the platforms they already use; but they're concerned about data privacy, integrating AI into their existing tech stack, and finding people with the right expertise to properly execute. It tracks that the top way founders find AI tools is through their professional networks, followed by online publications, and industry events.

So, which tools are founders choosing? ChatGPT is the most popular AI tool for startups across the board — and it's been the most impactful tool in startups' GTM strategy, with 45% of founders reporting positive outcomes. Other popular AI apps startups are using include HubSpot's AI tools, GitHub Copilot, Jasper.ai, ClickUp, Otter.ai, and GrammarlyGO. And as of 2024, **AI tools most commonly make up between 25-50% of a startup's tech stack.** And startups we surveyed most commonly dedicate between 10-25% of their company's budget to AI for use in their GTM strategy.

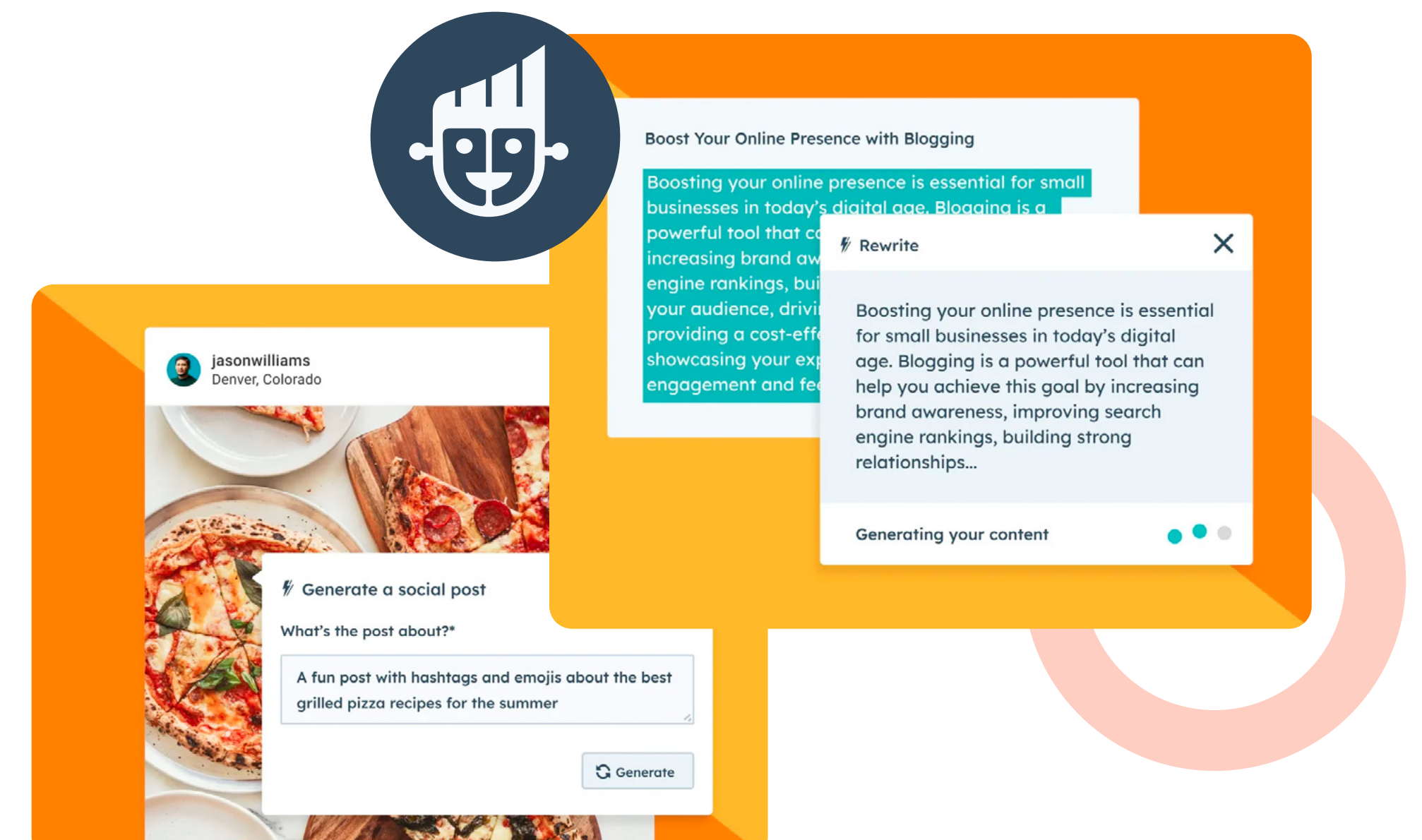
Barriers to AI Adoption

The biggest challenges companies face when incorporating AI into their GTM strategy is the cost of hiring those with AI expertise (47%) followed closely by integrating AI with existing systems (46%). But, like we mentioned before — there's an AI for that. [Crosschq, for example, is a Talent Intelligence platform](#) that helps companies speed up recruitment and boost retention, while eliminating bias from the hiring process.

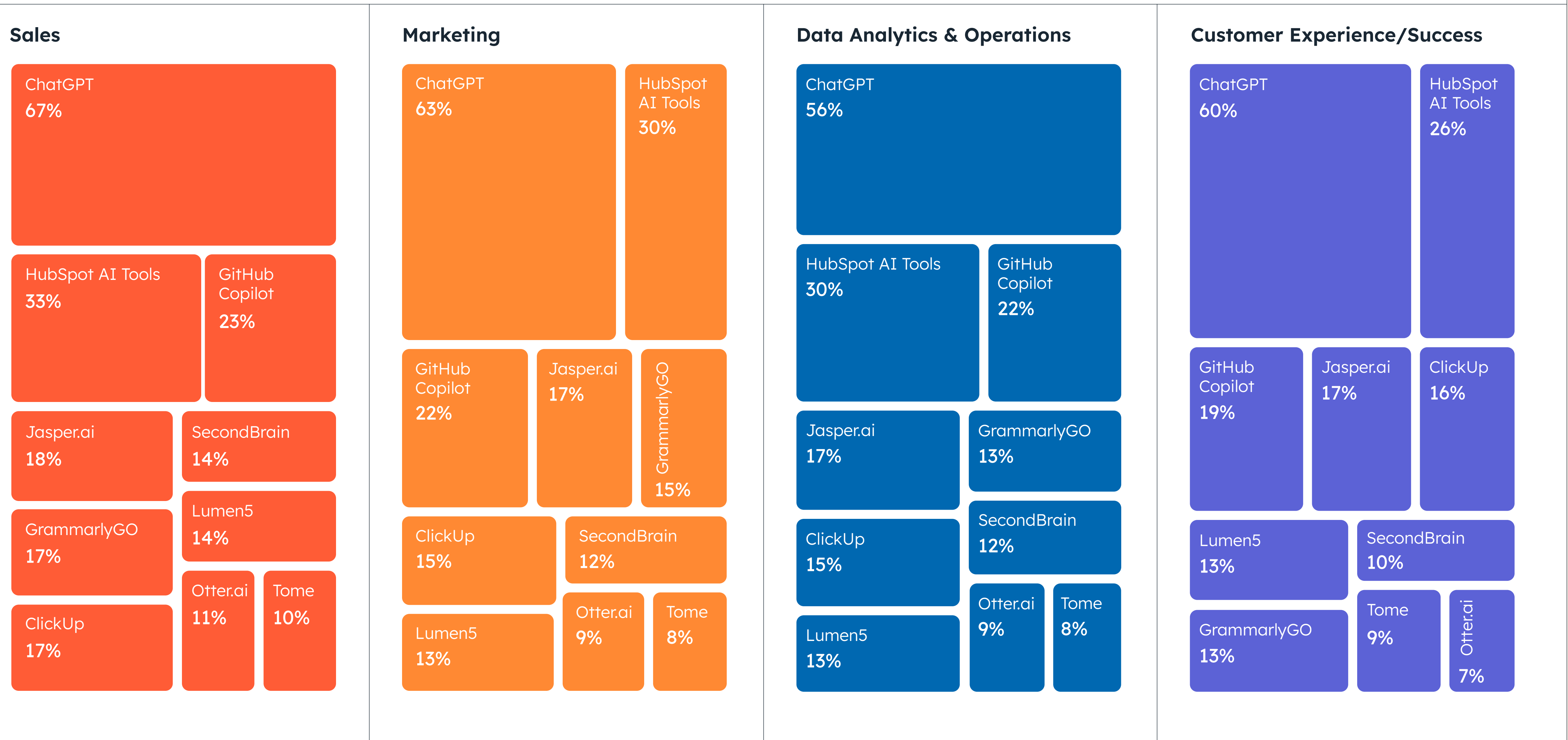
Supercharge Your Startup With HubSpot AI

15% of startup founders surveyed feel that HubSpot AI tools have been the most impactful in their company's GTM strategy. Grow your startup smarter and see how HubSpot's AI GTM tools can help.

[Try HubSpot AI Tools](#) →



Most Popular AI Tools Startups Use in GTM Strategy



Best Practices for Startups Using AI Tools to Scale GTM Processes

To ensure that AI aligns with their companies' GTM strategy and company values, 37% of respondents said they collaborate cross-functionally to evaluate AI usage and 31% regularly assess AI's impact. Founders we surveyed plan to use customer satisfaction surveys and other KPIs to monitor the effects of AI. The majority of startups in our research already have an individual or team solely dedicated to AI for GTM, and most are planning to hire more AI experts this year — this could be related to concerns around data privacy and integrations, and wanting to be sure that whoever is responsible for AI has guardrails against misinformation, ethical risks, and misuse, company-wide. To govern the use of AI at small, agile startups, invest in a dedicated AI team and create an [AI policy](#) for employees using AI in their roles.

66%

of startup founders plan to hire additional employees with AI expertise within the next year.

71%

of founders surveyed say their company has a designated individual or team specializing in acquiring or using AI in their GTM strategy.

A Data-Backed Framework for Evaluating New AI Technologies

Jorge Peñalva, CEO and founder of Lang.ai, partnered with GTM Fund to build a [framework for other founders to implement AI on their GTM teams](#). This framework offers an algorithm-based methodology for choosing cloud or LLM providers like AWS or Anthropic, vertical leaders with AI capabilities like Gong, and enterprise AI startups like Scale AI.

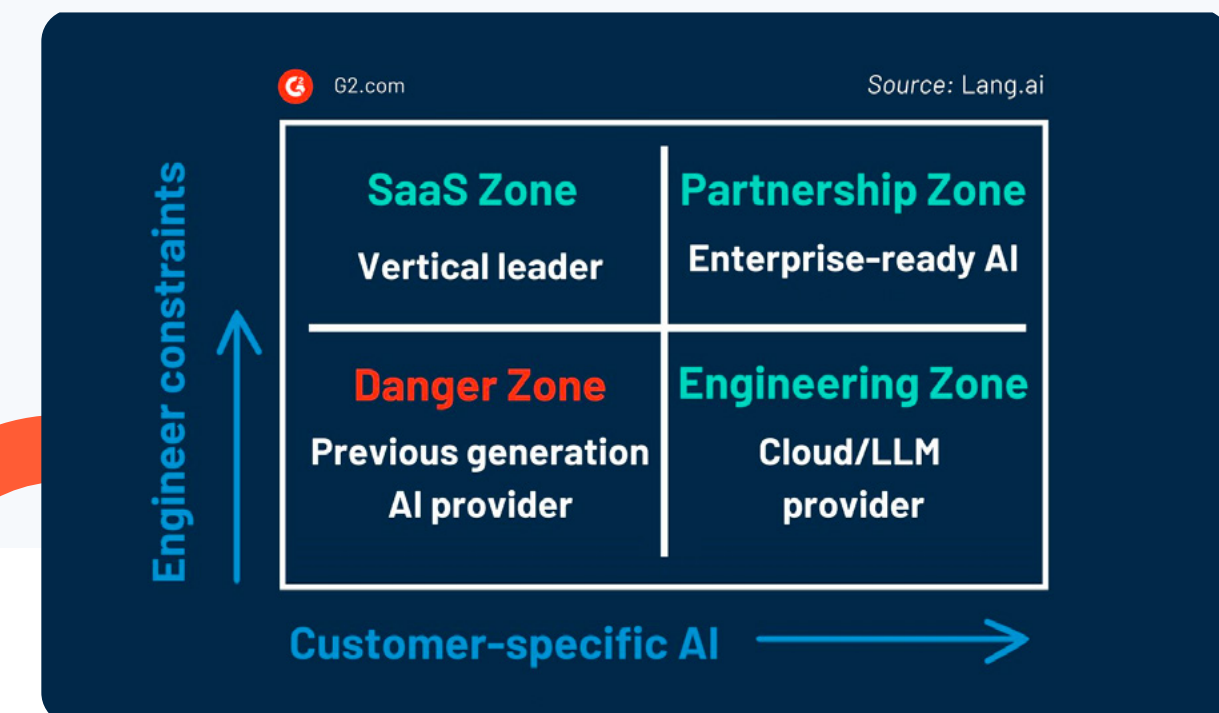


The danger zone is where companies can find themselves if they don't adapt to the exponential change of AI that's happened in the past year.



JORGE PEÑALVA

CEO and Founder, Lang.ai

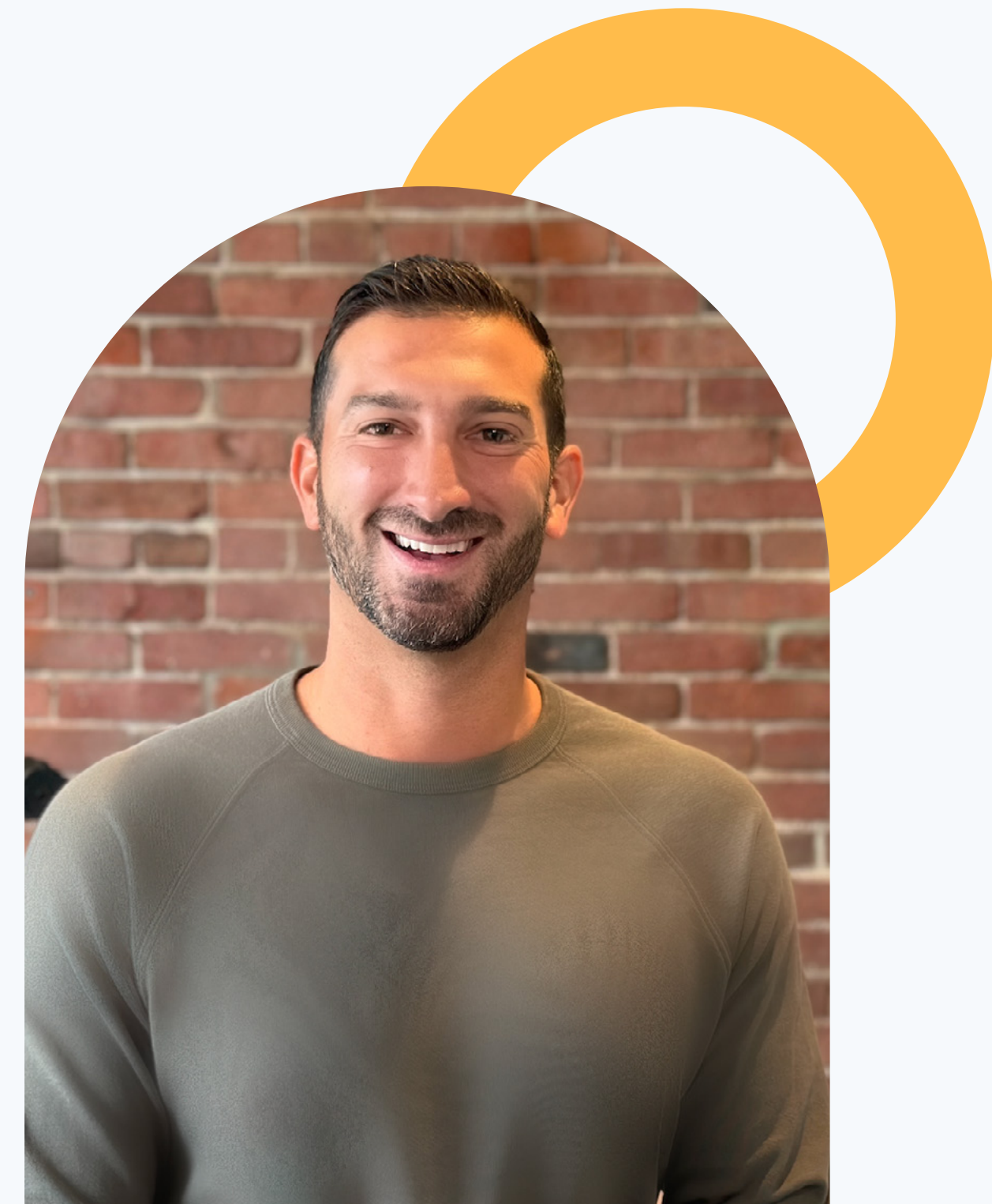




There's no doubt in my mind that AI will help us rewrite the current GTM playbook.

MAX ALTSCHULER

GP, GTM Fund



SCALABILITY & INNOVATION

AI is Driving Startup Scalability & Drawing Investor Attention

Early insights and examples of how AI is helping startups grow and scale faster to exceed goals and gain funding.

[Read on ↓](#)

HubSpot for Startups

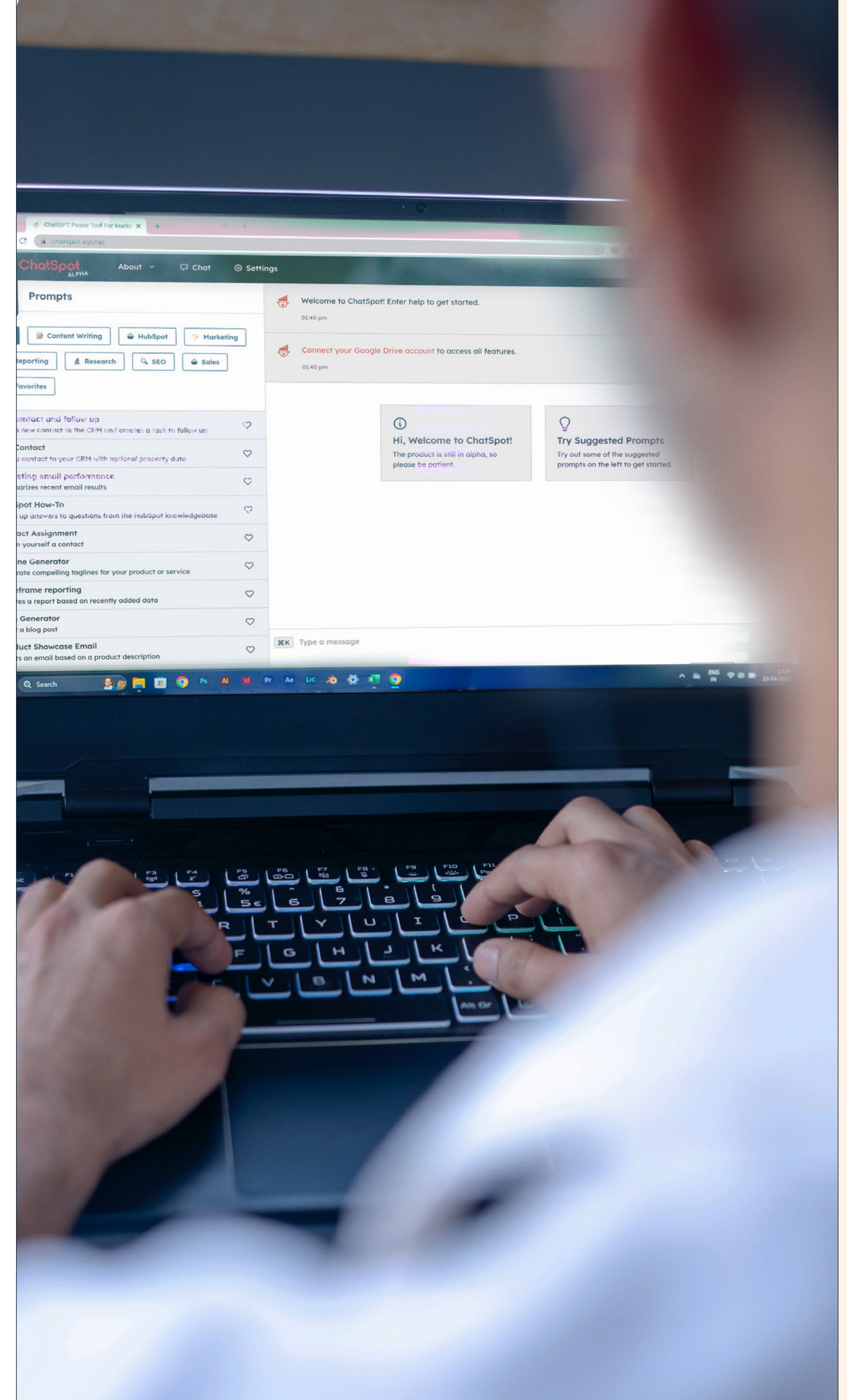


AI is Making Startup Teams More Productive, Scalable, and Attractive to Investors

Founders report that the response to rolling out AI strategically in the GTM playbook has been positive for internal operations, the customer experience, profitability, and for securing funding.

86% of founders say that AI has had a positive impact on their company's GTM strategy, and more than a third even said it was "very positive." More than half of respondents (57%) say their company has experienced increased customer conversion rates from using AI in their GTM strategy, followed by enhanced customer engagement (52%), and improved lead quality (41%).

Startups using AI can attract more customers and maintain a great customer relationship because they're spending their time improving the product and identifying areas for improvement. The companies succeeding in scaling with AI have entrusted the AI and ML work to dedicated employees and are using AI in many different functions. They've adjusted their mindset to do every business activity (and for many, personal, too) smarter, better, and faster.



AI Impact at Startups on the People Side and the Business Side

The People Side

83%

of founders have discovered that AI has had a positive impact on employee productivity.

81%

of founders agree that AI has had a positive impact on employee satisfaction.

The Business Side

83%

of founders feel that AI has had a positive impact on customer targeting, segmentation, and marketing.

80%

of founders agree that AI has had a positive impact on customer experience and success.

59%

of founders believe that AI has increased their ability to reach qualified prospects.

77%

of founders report that AI has had a positive impact on pricing strategy and optimization.

74%

of founders say that AI has positively impacted their ability to upsell or cross-sell.

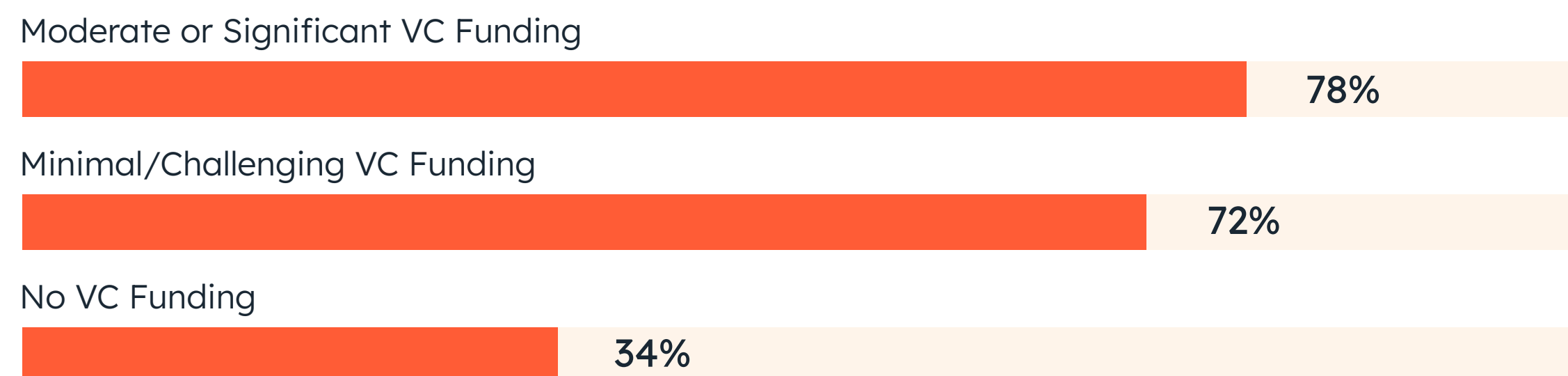
Tech Giants, Watch Out for AI-Driven Startups and AI Startups

AI startups and AI-driven startups are both attracting investor attention. Lean international teams, like Deaglo, are reimagining what it means to be “scrappy,” translating information between team members who speak different languages using ChatGPT and pivoting as AI developed before their eyes. They’re also VC-backed.

Our research found that companies that have raised moderate or significant VC funding over the past five years or the past year, and companies that have experienced significant growth (10-20% YoY) are more likely to have a designated AI team, and attribute their current and future growth, in part, to AI.

On the other side from Deaglo, an AI-driven company, [Tofu is an AI startup that’s raised \\$5M](#) for their AI tech to help B2B marketing teams scale content.

Companies that Have a Dedicated AI Team By VC Funding



Fastest-Growing AI Startups & What They Solve

Apollo AI — Series D (\$100M from Bain), Unicorn, valued at \$1.6B

Apollo AI is an AI sales assistant that helps sales and marketing teams improve the outreach process by generating personalized emails, follow-ups, and sales outreach plans based on their database of 275M+ contacts and interactions.

Monumental — Series A (\$25M from Hummingbird and Plural)

Monumental, founded by a team of AI veterans and industry leaders, recently emerged from stealth mode with a \$25M round to address the labor shortage with AI-assisted bricklaying and construction optimization robots.

Robin AI — Series B (\$26M from Temasek)

Robin AI is a legal AI startup founded by a lawyer and machine learning scientist duo that uses generative AI to automate and expedite the contract drafting and negotiation process. Robin AI is a partner of Anthropic and uses the conversational AI bot, Claude, in their platform.



We are seeing startups aggressively adopt AI tooling to accelerate both product development, as well as GTM. The boost in productivity and speed is real and quantifiable—smaller nimbler teams getting much more done than ever before. This lean-in stance towards adoption of AI makes these companies more attractive investments given their capital efficiency.



GURU CHAHAL

Partner, Lightspeed Venture Partners

CASE STUDY

AI-Powered Workflows Are Helping Startup GTM Teams Do 10X More

[Read the full case study →](#)



THE CHALLENGE

Today's Startups Are Leaner And Smarter Than Ever

In the current economy, [investors are looking for](#) “investments that provide yield and companies that have quality cashflows and realistic earnings goals”. One tool helping founders and early-stage startup teams automate integrated workflows to accelerate results is [Bardeen](#).



THE PROCESS

AI Success Starts With Experimenting & Finding The Value

At Bardeen, the team uses AI to identify new leads from LinkedIn, conduct prospect research, and build out personalized outreach at scale. “We’ve taken personalization that previously required hours of manual work and automated at scale with AI.”



THE RESULTS

Startup GTM Teams Are Moving Faster & Achieving Better Results With AI

Over 200,000 users are simplifying their work and saving time so they can do more, like reach more qualified prospects and answer more questions from potential customers. [SDRs at EasyDMARC save 15 hours per week](#) by automating lead management workflows with Bardeen and HubSpot.



Startup teams can achieve 10X more growth with a lean team if they leverage AI effectively.



PASCAL WEINBERGER

CEO & Co-Founder, Bardeen

CLOSING

The Future of AI in GTM

AI is democratizing the startup market and changing what it means to be investment-worthy, while spurring innovation.

[Read on ↓](#)

HubSpot for Startups



The Startup Landscape is Quickly Becoming Anyone's Game

VCs evaluating potential startups look for specific traits, and being strategic about GTM workflows is quickly becoming a must-have to be [venture-backable](#). Startups using antiquated systems like manual customer support or code QA will be overlooked in comparison to teams using a fraction of the resources and achieving better results with AI tools.

[Entrepreneur and investor Nick Grouf](#) says he looks for founders with “a thoughtful and pragmatic tolerance for risk,” and he often returns to the “core of the business model” — which today, simply needs to involve AI. Over a third of founders we surveyed plan to implement more AI tools or use them in new ways and add AI to their own products this year. And startups are focusing their GTM efforts on expanding AI in marketing, particularly for customer targeting and segmentation and personalization of marketing content.

What are your company's plans for AI in the next year?

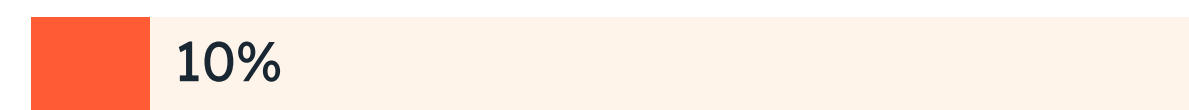
Implement new AI tools/expand usage



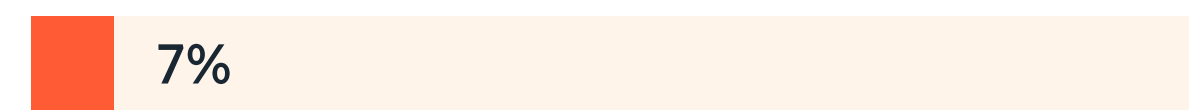
Add AI features to own product(s)



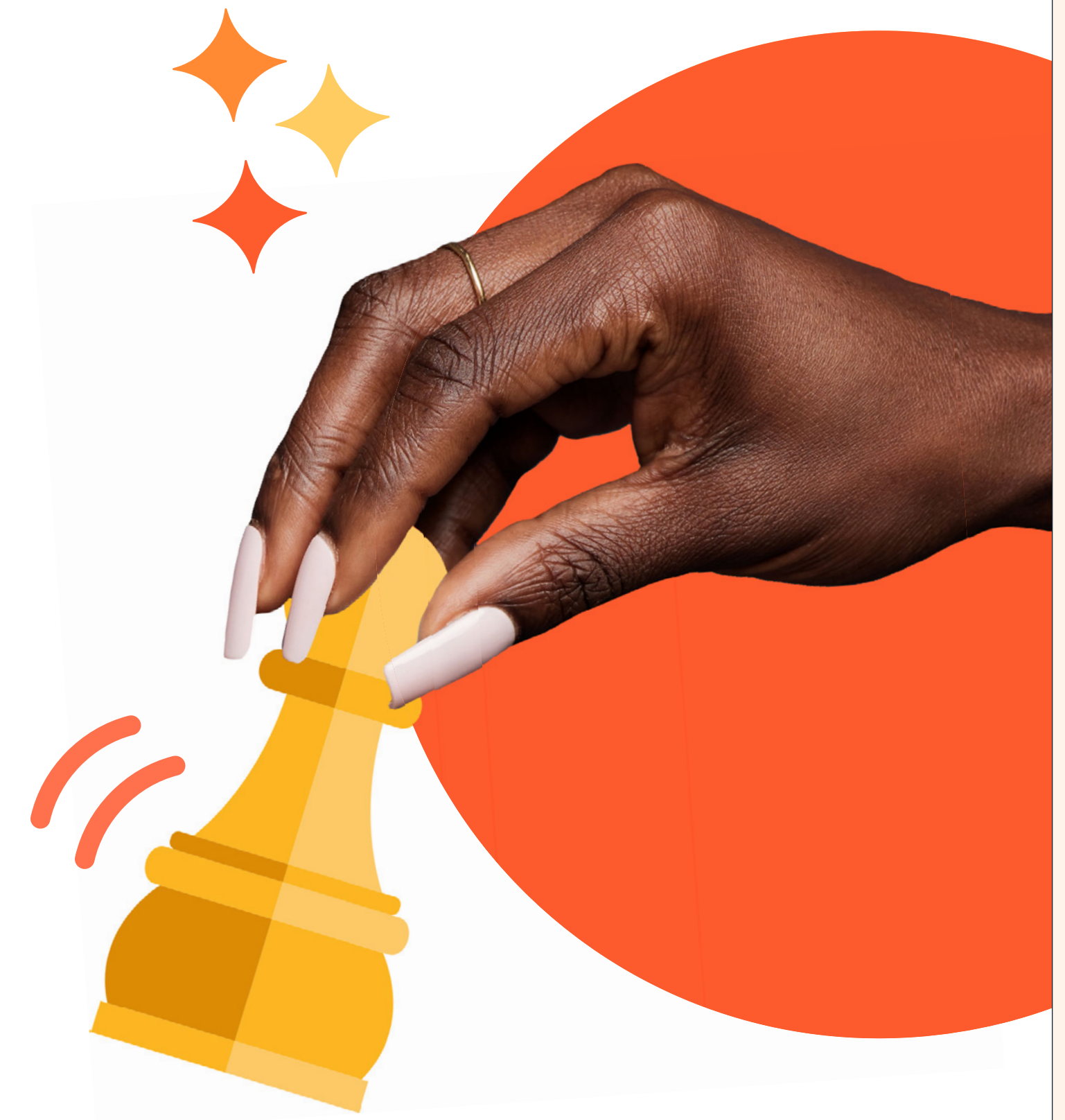
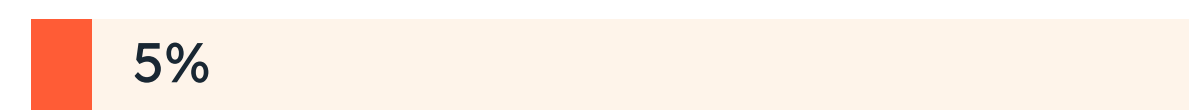
No plans to adopt/expand AI use



Planning to reduce AI tools



Unsure/Other



Here are the key takeaways for ambitious founders and startup teams

Our research has shown that startups using AI are, on the whole, more productive. They're providing more responsive customer service and more delightful customer experiences. They're growing faster and converting more leads. To be successful with AI in GTM, startups need to:

- 1 Segment contacts more strategically for marketing, sales, and service
- 2 Personalize everything — from web content, to email, to SMS messaging
- 3 Empower employees to experiment with AI however they feel comfortable, then guide them with company-approved tools and resources
- 4 Invest in AI-trained employees or upskill current team members

What's next for AI in startup GTM strategy?

Startups that have added AI to their tech stacks are finding positive results across all business areas, and they're confident that they'll grow using AI. Here's what we predict for the year ahead:

- 1 Founders will build niche AI tools for every use case and industry
- 2 AI-powered startups will scale faster and bring in more investor attention
- 3 Startups not using AI will lose out to their competitors
- 4 The customer experience will become even more important as a differentiator

CLOSING

AI is Resetting the Playing Field for Startups

Just as the internet made it possible for anyone to access information, search made it possible to find it, mobile made it possible to access it wherever you were, generative AI is making new levels of intelligence accessible to the world.

This disruptive shift gives a new advantage to startups and the SMB market — bringing a technology that was previously only accessible to those with deep machine learning talent and expensive computation requirements to anyone.

This changes the game. It makes markets that were more difficult to enter for startups possible, and it completely resets the playing field.

Those that learn and act quickly from the rapidly-evolving market, get products to market quickly and iterate, think about how to protect customer trust, make it approachable to customize and train models in a human way, and ultimately, stay focused on delivering customer value, will pull ahead.



KAREN NG

SVP of Product at HubSpot, Machine Learning Researcher at MIT & Former Head of Product and ML at Series B Startup

HubSpot for Startups

Explore Founder Growth Resources & Exclusive Startup Offers

We've compiled the most useful templates, articles, guides, and reports specifically for startups. And our partners, like Dropbox, AWS for Startups, Apollo, Asana, and more have some incredible offers for our users. Get free resources and join our community of startups.

[Take a look at the Startup Tech Stack Guide](#)

 Collaboration

 Marketing

 Sales



HubSpot for Startups

Methodology

We conducted a survey in partnership with CXD Studio via Pollfish in January 2024 with a total of 1,000+ early-stage startup founders (seed to Series B) across industries to gain these data points.



Countries represented

Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Colombia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, India, Israel, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom, and the United States.



Industries represented

Construction, Education and Health Services, Energy and/or Utilities, Financial Activities and/or FinTech, Information Technology/Software, Leisure and Hospitality, Manufacturing, Natural Resources and Mining, Professional and Business Services, Retail, Transportation and Warehousing, and Wholesale Trade.

Report created in collaboration with CXD Studio.

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