SOLUTION BUILDERS®

2026 EDITION

An eBook on the Evolving enterprise

RISE · E is for Evolving

The AI Advantage.

How agents, copilots, and a little bit of nerve turn the same team into a faster, sharper, more profitable one. A field guide to working in the new era of intelligence.

INSIDE THE GUIDE

01 / A short, fun history of AI

02 / What AI does for your business today

03 / Choosing your AI stack, compared

04 / The future, and a peek at quantum

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RESILIENT · INTEGRATED · SECURE · EVOLVING

Your technology partner for what comes next

WHAT'S INSIDE

Four chapters, built to be useful.

No fluff, no jargon for its own sake. We start with how we got here, show you exactly what AI can do across your business, compare the tools you have already heard of, then look down the road at where this is all going.

01 A short history of AI — PAGE 03

From a 1950s summer workshop to the agents on your desktop. The story, the leaps, and why it suddenly feels different.

02 What AI does for business now — PAGE 06

The real work AI handles today, department by department, plus the rise of agents that act, not just answer.

03 Choosing your AI stack — PAGE 09

Copilot, ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and friends, compared head to head, plus a real case study of hours and revenue.

04 The future, and quantum — PAGE 13

Where AI heads next, the no AI versus AI growth gap, and a friendly introduction to quantum computing.

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CHAPTER 01

01

Where it all began.

AI is not new. It is a seventy year old idea that spent decades waiting for the world to catch up. Then, almost overnight, the data, the chips, and the math all showed up at the same party. Here is the quick version of how a research curiosity became the most useful tool on your team.

1956
The summer the term artificial intelligence was coined

70 yrs
From research lab idea to everyday business tool

3
Big leaps got us here: rules, learning, language

2022
The year AI walked out of the lab and into the office

01 / THE STORY SO FAR

Seventy years in seven beats.

Each beat below unlocked something the last one could not do. Notice the gaps get shorter. That acceleration is the whole point.

1950s

The dream and the dare

Alan Turing asks if machines can think. A 1956 workshop names the field. Optimism is sky high, computers are room sized, and patience runs out fast.

1980s

Rules, and then a winter

Expert systems hard code human know how into if then rules. Useful, but brittle. When the hype outruns reality, funding freezes. The field learns humility.

1997

Machines start to win

IBM's Deep Blue beats world champion Garry Kasparov at chess. Proof that, given the right problem, a machine can outplay the very best of us.

2012

Deep learning clicks

Neural networks plus graphics chips plus oceans of data teach computers to see. Image recognition leaps forward and the modern AI boom quietly begins.

2017

The transformer arrives

A research paper titled Attention Is All You Need introduces the transformer, the architecture behind every modern chatbot. This is the spark for everything next.

2022

AI meets everyone

ChatGPT launches and reaches a hundred million users faster than any product in history. Suddenly your accountant, your marketer, and your kid are all using AI.

Today

The age of agents

AI stops just answering and starts doing. Agents draft, research, book, reconcile, and follow up on their own. That is the chapter your business gets to write.

01 / WHY IT FEELS DIFFERENT

From rules, to learning, to reasoning.

For decades AI could only follow rules a human wrote. Today it learns patterns from data and reasons through problems in plain language. Three forces finally lined up to make that leap real.

What finally changed

A

An ocean of data

Every email, document, and click became training fuel. AI got something to learn from at a scale no human could match.

B

Cheaper compute

Graphics chips made the heavy math affordable. Work that needed a supercomputer now runs in a browser tab.

C

A smarter design

The transformer let models understand context, not just keywords. That is why AI can now hold a real conversation.

Three eras at a glance

THEN

Rule based

If this, then that. A human writes every rule. Powerful inside a box, lost the moment reality steps outside it.

→

RECENT

Machine learning

Show it thousands of examples and it learns the pattern. Great at prediction, but narrow and hungry for labeled data.

→

NOW

Generative and agentic

It writes, reasons, and acts in plain language across almost any task. One tool, a thousand jobs, ready on day one.

Where this fits in RISE

AI is the **E in RISE, Evolving**. It sits on top of a foundation that is Resilient, Integrated, and Secure. Get those right and AI becomes a force multiplier. Skip them and it becomes a fast way to make expensive mistakes.

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CHAPTER 02

02

What AI does for you now.

Forget the science fiction. The useful version of AI is already sitting in your inbox, your spreadsheets, and your support queue. This chapter is a tour of the real work it handles today, plus the leap from tools that answer to agents that act.

60 sec
From blank page to a solid first draft

24/7
Agents work nights and weekends without overtime

9 of 10
Knowledge tasks now have an AI assist available

Day 1
Value starts the moment your team logs in

02 / AROUND THE BUSINESS

Every team has a job AI can lighten.

AI is not one feature for one department. It is a layer of help across the whole company. Here is where it earns its keep first, by giving each team back the hours they spend on the repetitive stuff.

Sales

Drafts tailored outreach, summarizes every call, updates the CRM, and surfaces the next best account to call before you ask.

Marketing

Turns one idea into a campaign, blog, and ten social posts in your voice, then reads the analytics and tells you what to do next.

Finance

Reconciles transactions, flags odd invoices, builds the first pass of a forecast, and explains the variance in plain English.

Operations

Writes standard procedures, triages tickets, schedules work, and turns a messy email thread into a clean action list in seconds.

Customer support

Answers common questions instantly, drafts replies for tricky ones, and hands the human a full summary so nobody repeats themselves.

People and IT

Onboards new hires, answers policy questions, drafts job posts, and writes the help desk article before the same ticket lands twice.

The pattern under all of it

Look closely and every example is the same move: take a task that is repetitive, text heavy, or research heavy, and let AI do the first ninety percent so your people spend their time on the last ten that actually needs them.

02 / THE BIG SHIFT

From chatbot to coworker.

A chatbot answers a question and waits. An agent takes a goal, makes a plan, uses your tools, checks its own work, and comes back when the job is done. That difference is the whole story of the next few years.

How an agent actually works

1 **Understand** — Takes a goal in plain language

→

2 **Plan** — Breaks it into ordered steps

→

3 **Act** — Uses your apps and data

→

4 **Check** — Reviews and corrects itself

→

5 **Deliver** — Hands back finished work

And the loop repeats, because a good agent keeps a human in the seat for approvals that matter ↻

What turns a tool into a teammate

⚡

It can act

Connected to your email, files, and line of business apps, so it does the task, not just describe it.

🧠

It can reason

Handles many steps and changing conditions without a human scripting every branch in advance.

🔒

It stays in bounds

Works inside the guardrails and permissions you set, so Secure stays Secure while it works.

AGENTS ALREADY ON THE JOB

- Inbox triage
- Meeting notes and follow ups
- Invoice matching
- Lead research
- Ticket resolution
- Report generation
- Onboarding checklists
- Data cleanup

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CHAPTER 03

03

Choosing your AI stack.

Copilot, ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, and a growing crowd behind them. They overlap, but each has a sweet spot. This chapter compares them side by side, shows which tool fits which job, then puts real numbers on the hours and revenue at stake.

5
Serious tools worth knowing by name

1
Already lives inside your Microsoft 365

~1.5 hr
Freed per person each week, per Forrester

4.5x
Three year ROI reported for small business

03 / THE CONTENDERS

The big four, plus one, side by side.

No single tool wins everything. If your business runs on Microsoft 365, Copilot has a real home field advantage because it works inside the apps you already use and is grounded in your own data. Here is the honest lay of the land.

TOOL	BEST FOR	WHERE IT LIVES	STANDOUT STRENGTH	KEEP IN MIND
Microsoft 365 Copilot TOP PICK FOR M365	Teams that run on Microsoft 365 every day	Inside Word, Excel, Outlook, Teams, and PowerPoint	Grounded in your own company data through Microsoft Graph	Needs a base license and tidy file permissions to shine
ChatGPT OpenAI	General drafting, brainstorming, and quick answers	Web, mobile app, and a large developer ecosystem	Huge ecosystem with custom GPTs, images, and voice	Sits outside your company data unless you connect it
Claude Anthropic	Long documents, careful reasoning, and coding	Web, app, API, and built into tools like this one	Large context window and thoughtful, on brand writing	A smaller plug in ecosystem than ChatGPT today
Gemini Google	Teams that live in Google Workspace and research	Inside Gmail, Docs, Sheets, and Google Search	Deep Google integration and very large context	Best payoff if Workspace is your home base, not M365
Perplexity	Fast research you can actually trust and verify	Web and mobile app	Answers come with clickable sources attached	A focused research tool, not a full work suite

Why we lean Copilot for most clients

If your business already pays for Microsoft 365, Copilot meets your team where they work, respects the permissions you already set, and answers using your real files and emails. That home field advantage is hard to beat.

What it tends to cost

Microsoft 365 Copilot for businesses under three hundred users runs about **18 to 21 dollars per user each month** on top of a base Microsoft 365 license. The enterprise add on is about **30 dollars per user**. List pricing moves, so confirm current rates before you budget.

Tool strengths reflect each vendor's public positioning as of mid 2026. Pricing per Microsoft list rates, mid 2026. Always verify current pricing.

03 / RIGHT TOOL, RIGHT JOB

Which AI for which job.

Match the tool to the task and the value jumps. The dots below show where each one is a best fit, a solid option, or just okay. Notice Copilot owns the work that lives inside Microsoft 365.

THE JOB TO BE DONE	COPILOT	CHATGPT	CLAUDE	GEMINI	PERPLEXITY
Drafting in Word and Outlook	●●●	●●○	●●○	●●○	○○○
Crunching data in Excel	●●●	●●○	●●○	●●○	○○○
Reading long documents	●●○	●●○	●●●	●●●	●○○
Deep research with sources	●●○	●●○	●●○	●●○	●●●
Coding and automation	●●○	●●●	●●●	●●○	○○○
Meeting notes and follow ups	●●●	●○○	●●○	●●○	○○○
Creative and brand voice	●●○	●●●	●●●	●●○	○○○
Working with your own company data	●●●	●○○	●○○	●●○	○○○

●●● Best fit ●●○ Solid option ●○○ Just okay

The rule of thumb we give clients

Start with Copilot for the everyday work that lives in Microsoft 365, because it is grounded in your data and your team is already in those apps. Reach for a specialist when the job calls for it: Claude or ChatGPT for heavy writing and code, Gemini if you live in Google, and Perplexity when you need sources you can click. One stack, the right tool for each task.

03 / THE PAYOFF IN NUMBERS

A case study in hours and dollars.

Meet a fifty person professional services firm. Same people, same clients, now with AI in the daily workflow. Research on Microsoft 365 Copilot for small business points to roughly ninety minutes freed per person each week. Here is what that adds up to across the whole team.

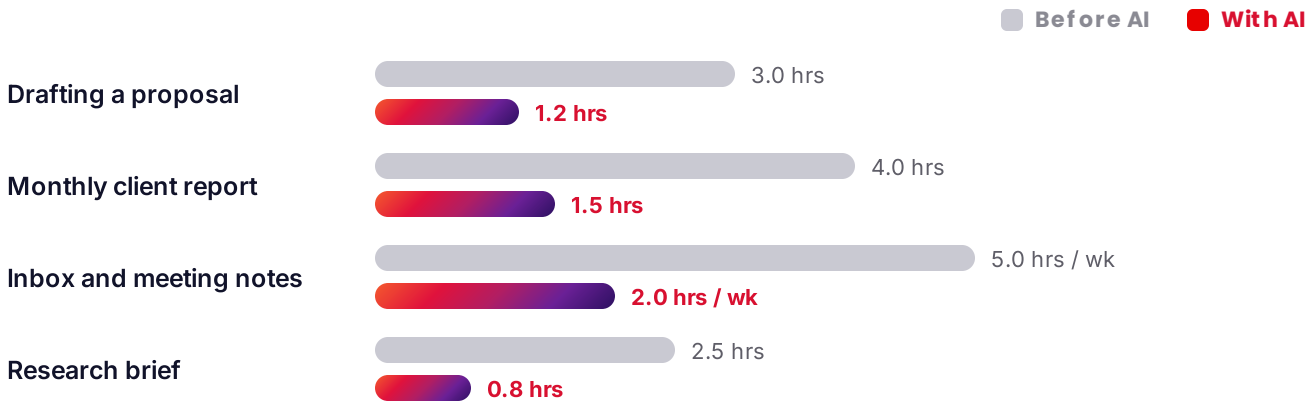
1.5 hrs
Freed per person, every single week

3,750
Hours reclaimed across the team each year

~$280K
Capacity unlocked at a blended rate of 75 dollars

4.5x
Three year return reported for small business

Where the time comes back



Hours are not the prize. What you do with them is.

Those reclaimed hours are not about working less. They are capacity. The same fifty people can take on more clients, answer faster, and chase the work that actually grows revenue, without adding a single headcount. That is how a cost becomes an investment.

Per person time saved based on Forrester Total Economic Impact research on Microsoft 365 Copilot for small business. Firm level figures are an illustrative model for a fifty person team, not a guarantee.

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CHAPTER 04

04

The road ahead.

AI is not finished. It is barely warmed up. In this last chapter we look at where it heads next, put the no AI versus AI growth gap on a chart, and take a friendly first look at quantum computing, the technology waiting just over the horizon.

Agentic
AI that pursues goals, not just prompts

Multimodal
It sees, hears, and speaks, not only text

Personal
Tuned to your business, your data, your voice

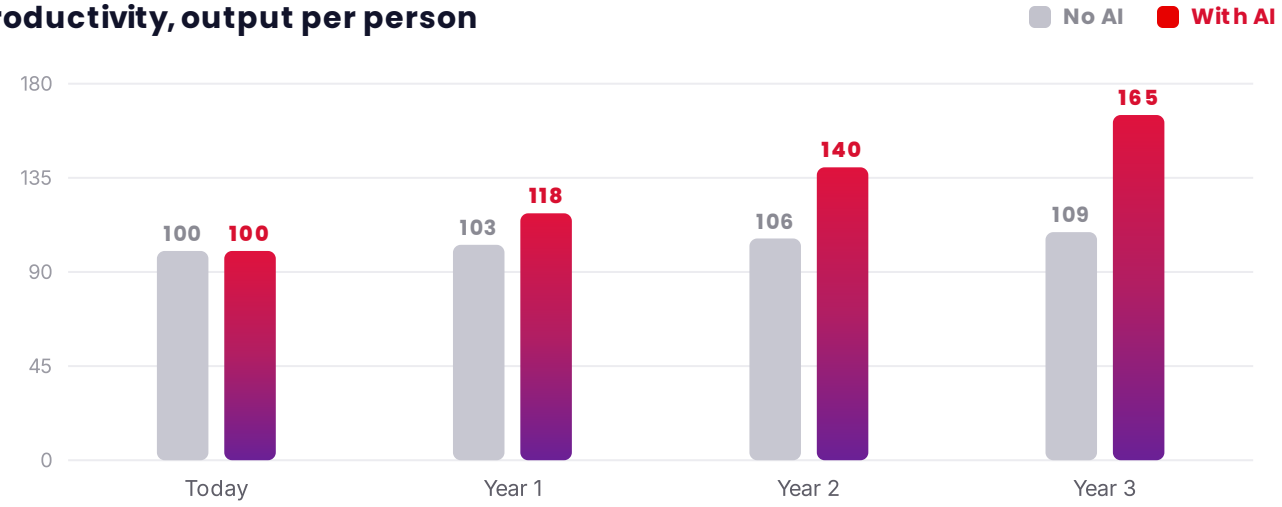
Quantum
The next leap in raw computing power

04 / THE GROWTH GAP

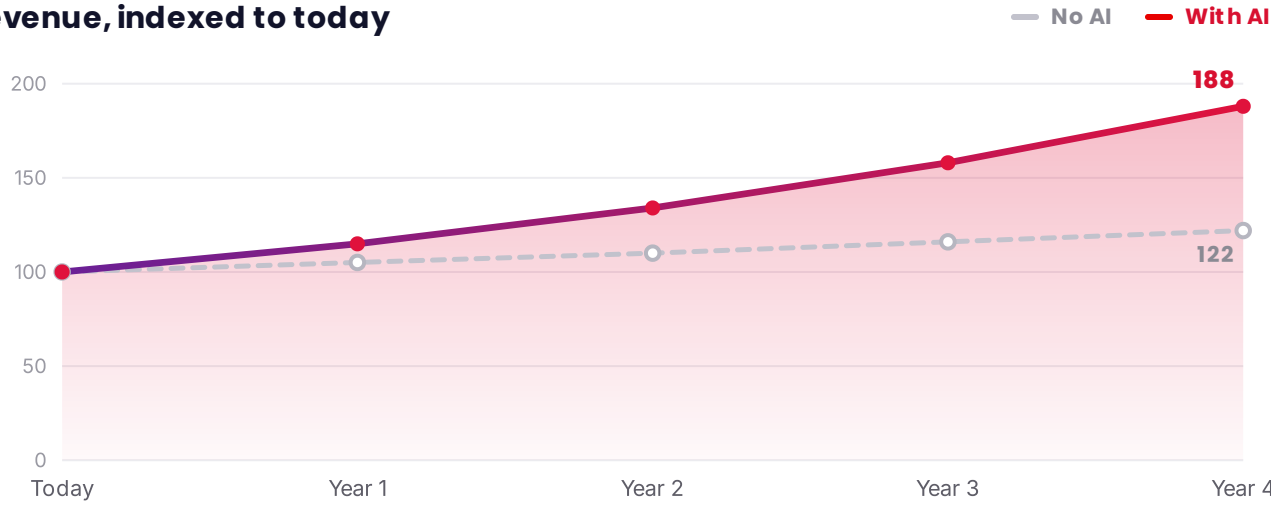
No AI versus AI, over time.

Standing still is not staying even, it is falling behind. The teams that adopt AI compound their advantage year after year while everyone else inches along. Here is that gap, for both productivity and revenue.

Productivity, output per person



Revenue, indexed to today



Illustrative model indexed to 100 at year zero. Curves show the compounding effect of sustained AI adoption versus none. Your results depend on adoption, data quality, and use case.

04 / OVER THE HORIZON

A quick word on quantum.

Quantum computing is the next big leap, and it is easier to grasp than the headlines suggest. A normal computer thinks in bits that are either on or off. A quantum computer uses qubits that can be both at once, which lets it explore a staggering number of possibilities in parallel.

TODAY'S COMPUTERS

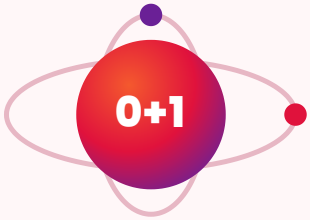
The bit, on or off

0 or 1

One definite answer at a time. Add bits and you add steps. Hard problems can take longer than the age of the universe.

QUANTUM COMPUTERS

The qubit, both at once



A blend of both states, called superposition. Many qubits explore countless paths together, then collapse to the best answer.

What it means for you

🚀

It could unlock

Breakthroughs in materials, drug discovery, logistics, and the kind of optimization that is simply out of reach today.

🔒

It touches Secure

One day quantum could crack today's encryption. Planning the move to quantum safe security now is simple, smart hygiene.

⏳

When to care

Useful business machines are still years out. No panic, no rush. Stay curious, keep your data tidy, and watch the space.

AI and quantum, better together

The exciting part is the pairing. Quantum could one day train AI models that are impossible today, while AI helps tame the finicky job of running quantum hardware. For now, the smart move is to master AI, the leap you can use this quarter.

RISE · E is for Evolving

Let's build your AI advantage.

AI rewards the teams that start. Not with a giant leap, but with one workflow, one agent, one win, then the next. The tools are ready, the gap is real, and the best time to move is now. We would love to help you do it the Solution Builders way: Resilient, Integrated, Secure, and most of all, Evolving.

01

Find the quick wins

We map the tasks where AI saves the most hours first.

02

Roll out safely

Copilot and agents, set up inside your guardrails.

03

Measure and grow

Track the hours saved, then scale what works.

START THE CONVERSATION

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