



2026 Tech Trends: What Business Leaders Need to Know

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By now, enterprise leaders understand how AI is reshaping work, customer decision-making, and competitive dynamics.

In 2026, the focus must shift to delivering practical, measurable impact while safeguarding trust, skills, and operational resilience.

This guide highlights the trends that matter most and provides actionable insights to help organisations act decisively in an AI-driven landscape.



#1 Skills & Culture Must Evolve Alongside AI

With AI taking on more tasks and decisions, employees risk over-reliance on credible-sounding AI outputs.

This can weaken critical thinking, structured judgement, and creativity. Leaders must intentionally design workflows where AI augments rather than replaces human expertise. Upskilling, reskilling, and fostering AI fluency across the workforce becomes essential. Enterprises that embed human judgement alongside AI will maintain quality, creativity, and contextual awareness.

AI can accelerate work; but only humans can maintain context, creativity, and judgement.

Darian Bird
Principal Advisor





#2 Risk, Trust & Compliance Are Enterprise-Wide Responsibilities

AI adoption introduces new operational, legal, and reputational risks. Leaders across all functions must collaborate to ensure AI outputs are auditable, secure, and free of bias.

This includes monitoring autonomous agents, controlling data access, and validating AI model outputs. Many organisations are formalising this responsibility in the C-suite with a Chief Trust Officer or by embedding trust governance across lines of business. Enterprises that take trust seriously gain a strategic advantage.

Trust is now a business differentiator, not just a technical requirement.

Sash Mukherjee
VP Industry Insights





#3 Small Wins Today, Scalable Impact Tomorrow

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The AI projects that deliver quickly are the ones that get scaled.

Simona Dimovski

Principal Advisor





#4 AI-Driven Workforce Planning Will Redefine HR Leadership

HR data — skills, performance, availability, context — will be critical for AI-driven workflows.

Autonomous AI agents can plan, prioritise, and execute workforce tasks, but only if CHROs ensure data quality and integration. AI enables predictive staffing, personalised learning, proactive engagement, and optimised workforce allocation. The CHRO's role expands beyond talent management to shaping how AI augments the enterprise workforce.

HR systems are no longer just administrative tools; they are the control plane for AI-driven operations.

Sash Mukherjee
VP Industry Insights





#5 Finance Leaders Must Shift from Cost Control to Value Measurement

CFOs will oversee AI investment outcomes, not just expenses. AI workloads — training, inference, agentic operations — carry cost spikes, and ROI must be measured per outcome.

Decisions on retiring legacy software or consolidating platforms can free budgets for high-value AI initiatives. CFOs must balance financial discipline with strategic adoption, monitoring outcomes in near real-time and aligning spend with business impact.

The narrative must shift from ‘cost of compute’ to ‘cost per outcome.’

Tim Sheedy
VP Research





#6 Marketing & Customer Experience Depend on Agentic Visibility

AI agents increasingly discover, evaluate, and transact independently.

Marketing effectiveness now hinges on machine-readable, trusted product data, reviews, and performance metrics. Brands that are invisible to AI agents risk losing relevance, even with strong human-led campaigns. Marketing leaders must ensure structured, accessible, and credible data to maintain visibility and drive customer acquisition in AI-driven marketplaces.

Agentic AI won't replace marketers; but it will ignore brands that can't be found, trusted, or parsed.

Gerald MacKenzie

Principal Advisor





#7 Operational Leaders Must Integrate AI Across Workflows

Modular, AI-enabled workflows are replacing traditional sequential hand-offs.

Operations leaders must embed AI agents into processes, ensuring human oversight where needed. Real-time orchestration, governance, auditability, and exception handling will be key to efficiency and resilience. COOs must rethink operational KPIs to include AI-driven outputs and outcomes rather than only traditional metrics.

Operations will be defined less by processes and more by the AI agents executing them.

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