AI6?

Our world in 2026

S4 CAPITAL

How far can AI take us

If 2023 was the year that AI broke out and showed its potential to the world, and 2024 was the year that tech platforms invested billions of dollars in making that vision reality, then 2025 showed it will take an external catalyst for many of the world's biggest corporations to commit to AI transformation wholeheartedly.

Will 2026 be an accelerator year?

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Now what?

by Sir Martin Sorrell

The world entered 2026 posing something of a paradox: tumultuous events – geopolitical, economic and technological – masked a relatively benign short-term outlook for business, with expectations of growing profits, falling interest rates and subdued inflation in the year ahead.

President Trump's first 12 months have unleashed unprecedented tariffs, upturned the world order with interventions including Venezuela and Iran, and unsettled political orthodoxies far beyond the shores of the US. ▶

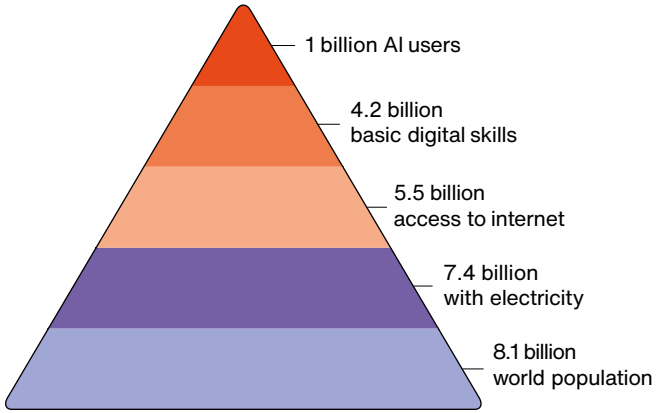
Now what? continued

10 things we know now

1. The world is now changing from the 40 years since Professor Ted Levitt's 'Globalization of Markets' was published in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1983.
2. GDP growth will be slower, inflation higher and interest rates higher than before.
3. US/China relations, Russia's ambitions in Ukraine and beyond, Iran's aspirations in the Middle East, along with North Korea's volatility, all mean increased instability and fragmentation.
4. In this new world, two trends are particularly important for our clients and us, accelerated and underlined by President Trump's tariff moves. First, pick your geographic markets more carefully, mainly in the Americas, the Middle East and Asia Pacific. The BRICs, Next 11 or Global South will become more powerful. Second, efficiency becomes more important. AI, the Metaverse, Blockchain and quantum computing will drive this efficiency gain everywhere, but particularly in lower-growth Europe and volatile Africa.
5. In this new world, clients have to focus on three things: agility; taking back control of their marketing; and first-party data.
6. Digital will continue to dominate media spend from more than 75% in 2025 to 80% by 2030.
7. The six major platforms – Alphabet, Meta, Amazon, Alibaba, Tencent and ByteDance – will continue to dominate digital media, also driven by the capital needs of AI. Apple, Microsoft, NVIDIA and Musk will increase their power and leverage in the AI-dominated world – accelerating as a result of required capital expenditure now totalling over $600 billion in 2026.
8. Clients will continue to focus on short-term results, so lower and mid-funnel activation, performance and measurement have become ever more important.
9. AI will drive major changes in visualisation and copywriting, in hyper-personalisation, in media planning and buying, in client efficiency and in the democratisation of knowledge. As a result, companies will have flatter organisational structures and become more efficient.
10. Connected TV: retail advertising will become more and more important as linear TV remains under pressure.

As we go to press (April 2026), business is riding the rollercoaster and the worst predictions of catastrophe have not come to pass. All while the most significant new technology to arrive since the dawn of the internet – or even the Industrial Revolution – threatens to transform how virtually every sphere of human activity is carried out. While the equilibrium continues, there is little pressure on businesses to undergo their own transformation. However, it can only be a matter of time before we encounter the next significant disruption to the economic system, and only when that happens are we going to see a true acceleration in the adoption of AI and other new technologies. ▶

The global building blocks of AI



Note: World population compared to the share of the population with access to electricity, individuals using the internet in 2024, and internet users with basic information and data literacy skills.
Source: AI Diffusion Report, November 2025

Now what? continued

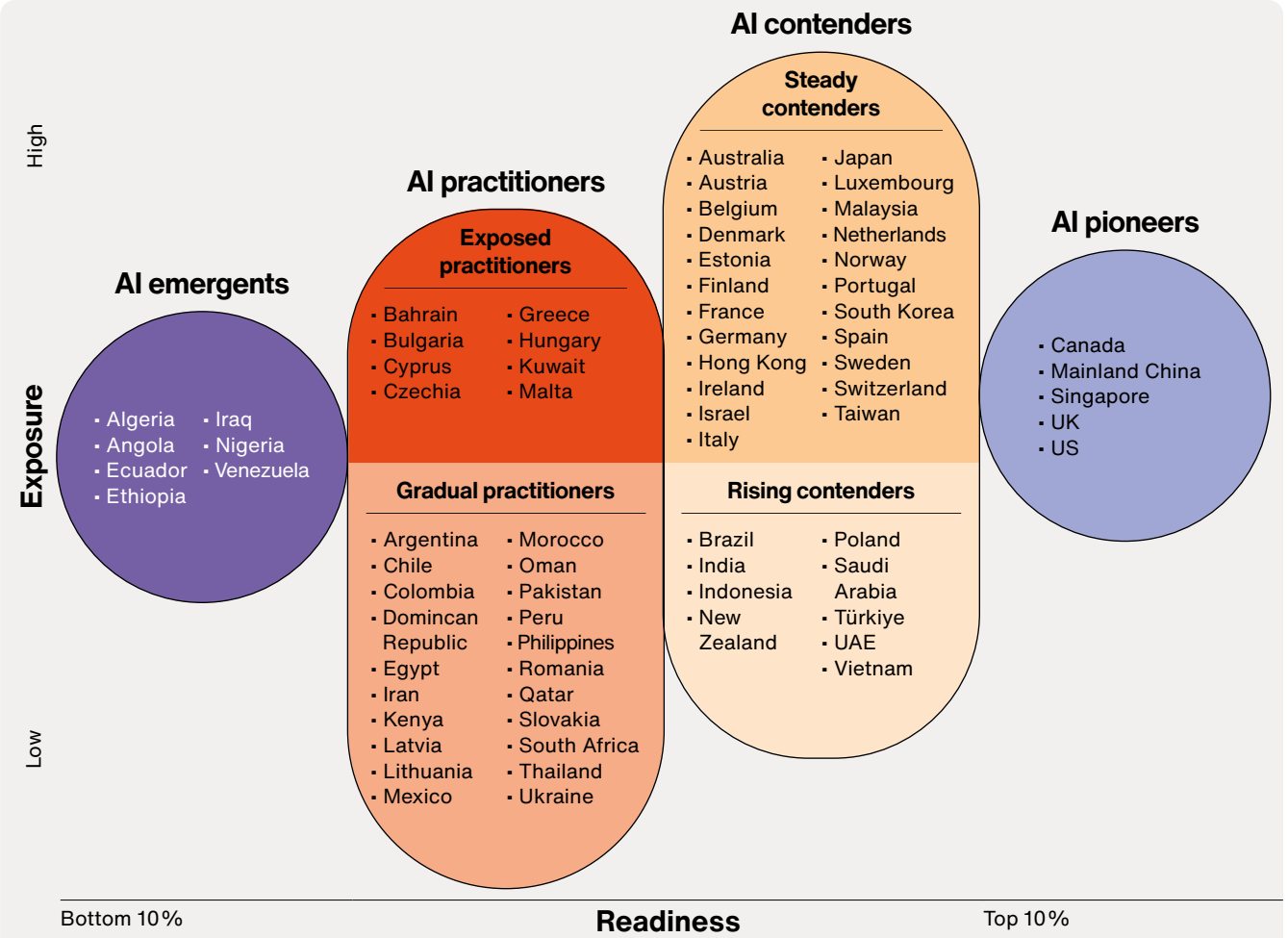
The hype was checked; many companies who dipped their toe in the water found financial returns more elusive than expected and chatter began to surface of an AI investment bubble. But while that reined in some of the more extravagant claims being made on behalf of AI, there's no shortage of appetite from the major players to double down on their investment. According to Goldman Sachs, in the third quarter of last year, Wall Street analysts upgraded their forecast of 2026 capital spending by AI hyperscalers from $465 billion to $527 billion.

The irony is that it is consumers rather than businesses that have been adopting AI most readily, especially in applications like online search and shopping. Among businesses the two sectors that have proved the exception, in our experience, are automakers and financial services. The common thread: both face an external pressure that has forced them to act. In the case of automakers, that is the threat posed by markets being flooded with cheap Chinese EVs; with financial services it is the superior agility and response that fintech companies can offer compared to traditional banks. There are also some savings: the consumer package-goods companies are beginning to embrace AI at scale, as they are unable to increase prices further post-Covid as commodity prices rise further. And that, according to a very senior executive of one of the biggest banks, is because until companies face an economic squeeze, they are not going to make the changes required.

This is not about technological change. It's about change management and that only happens when there's a good economic reason for it to do so. ▶

> "Consumers rather than businesses have been adopting AI most readily"

Distribution of economies across the archetypes of AI adoption



Note: Within each archetype, economies appear in alphabetical order.
Sources: BCG Center for Public Economics; BCG analysis

Now what? continued

Bubble concerns are inflated

Is there an AI bubble? I don't think so. It's tempting to reach that conclusion when you look at the massive sums that have been poured into investing in AI infrastructure and development over the last couple of years, and the huge inflation in the values of the leading players, including the likes of Alphabet, Meta, NVIDIA, Apple and Amazon. But the counter argument is that these investments create tangible revenue streams and they are being made by companies with huge profitability.

There have been some stretch valuations – and Oracle is the main example because it is more leveraged. Its shares fell mainly because of fears about the debt it has incurred in building data centres and maybe the pledge around the Warner Brothers Discovery/Paramount deal. Beyond that, the reason people think that there's not a bubble is that capital expenditure as a proportion of cash flow or a proportion of revenue is lower than it was in the dotcom era of the late 1990s, and I tend to agree. Even if some valuations come down along the way, the AI revolution is still going to happen and we will have an enormous amount of infrastructure built in the meantime.

AI driving expansion

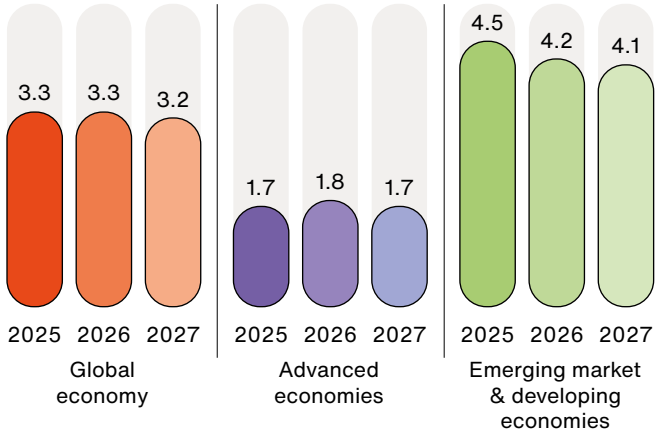
The WTO noted last October that AI-related goods (including semiconductors, servers and telecommunications equipment) drove nearly half of the overall trade expansion in the first half of 2025, rising 20% year on year in value terms. Trade growth spanned the digital value chain, from raw silicon and specialty gases to devices powering cloud platforms and AI applications.

Prepare for a soft landing

Prior to the Iran conflict, 2026 showed every sign of being a positive year. Company earnings looked strong. Goldman Sachs forecast the EPS of the S&P would be up 12%; earnings in Asia up 16%. GDP globally was forecast to be up 2.8%, with the US growing 2.6%, China 4.8% and Europe lagging at 1.2%. The US, China and Asia in general were all expected to be strong. Those forecasts are all subject to revision pending the outcome of the Iran war. In the US there are massive tax rebates on the way stemming from Trump's One Big Beautiful Act that could see $100–$150 billion refunded to households and will provide significant economic stimulus. Interest rate cuts slated for the US and UK in 2026 could be delayed as a result of the Iran conflict, while inflation – which was edging down towards the target rates set by central banks – may take longer to get there. Interestingly, the unprecedented – in recent times – wave of tariffs introduced in 2025 by Trump has not had the effect of stoking inflation that many predicted. While it has caused shifts in trading patterns, and squeezed supply chains, it has not converted into ▶

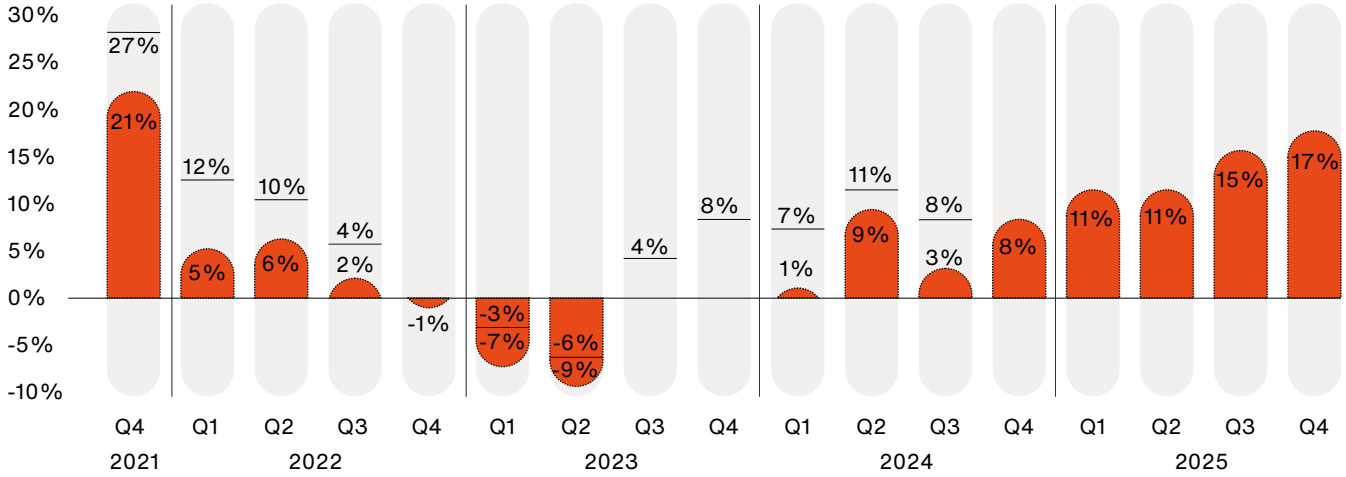
World economic outlook growth projections

Real GDP% change



Source: IMF, January 2026

S&P 500 quarterly year/year EPS growth relative to consensus expectations



Source: Goldman Sachs Global Investment Research, January 2025

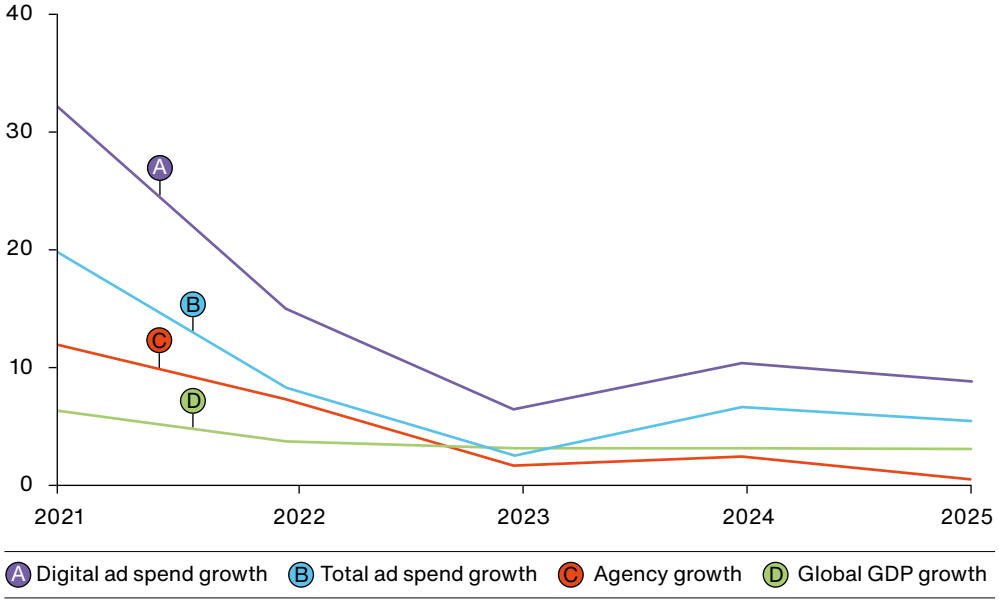
Now what? continued

higher prices, especially in the US. And the stock market can look forward to a marquee event: the IPO of Space X, which is forecast to come to the market with a value in excess of $1.5 trillion, placing it immediately in the same league as some of the biggest tech companies.

The agency conundrum

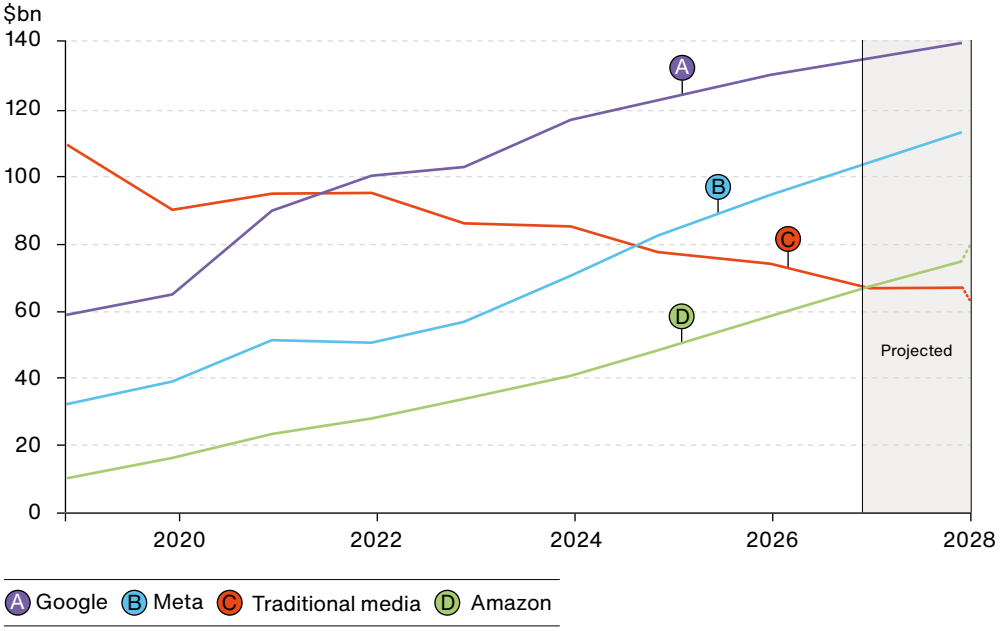
Global advertising spend was around $1.17 trillion in 2025, according to WARC, reflecting a growth of 7.4% on the previous year. Digital will probably be about $800 billion of that and is growing faster at 10–15%; while traditional is the other $300 billion and is shrinking. The real conundrum is why, in that context, aren't advertising agencies doing better? Among the big holding companies, Publicis has seen some modest growth; Omnicom is flat as a pancake and is taking over a company in IPG that is even flatter; Dentsu is in trouble outside Japan; WPP is struggling and subject of takeover speculation. Throughout my working life, it has been the case that if corporates are doing well they make profits, and they spend more on advertising. So, there is a disconnect. Part of the answer may be that the bulk of their business is in the $300 billion that isn't growing, while 70% of the $800 billion that is growing is accounted for by small and medium-sized businesses who don't tend to use agencies. There's also the possibility that the platforms are getting closer to the clients and disintermediating agencies to some extent. But what's clear is that the traditional agencies are hampered by over-complicated structures, which is reflected in their relatively feeble valuations, and the fact that nobody is rushing in to buy them. Our model: unitary brand, digital only, data driven, and faster, better, cheaper and more is clearly still the only way to go, and I expect to see the holding companies trying to move in the same direction. ▶

Global ad spend and agency revenue growth %



Sources: Dentsu, Havas, Publicis, IPG, Omnicom (revenue), Stagwell, WPP, company reports; IMF, March 2026

Traditional media ad spend vs. digital platforms' ad revenue $ billion



Source: EMARKETER

Now what? continued

Wanted: a media validator

I was on BBC radio recently with a PR association spokesperson who said that media is becoming more fragmented. My response: no, it's becoming less fragmented. From our perspective, there are six platforms that between them account for more than 70% of the $800 billion digital ad spend. That's Alphabet, Meta, Amazon, ByteDance, Apple and Microsoft. In a sense, that has made the job of the CMO much simpler, but at the same time, just as no advertiser would hand over their credit card to Rupert Murdoch, CMOs still need to know how well their money is being spent. So, we have a role at the very least to be the validator of the algorithm that decides how the money is spent. Clients could, of course, take that role in-house but they need someone to be doing it.

Trade faces more Balkanisation

The fragmentation of the world's markets, and the reversal of the longstanding globalisation paradigm has continued apace in 2025. Trump's tariffs, announced on 'Liberation Day' last April crystallised a process that had been already steadily underway, and forced countries to re-appraise their trading partners, and companies to think about where they plant their flag. The most striking example is between the US and China: the US has imposed an average tariff of 47.5% on Chinese goods and the tariff regime covers all Chinese goods. China's reciprocal tariff on US exports averages 31.9%. Last year, Trump threatened India with 50% tariffs unless it stopped buying Russian oil. Tariffs have become Washington's weapon of choice to enforce its own brand of diplomacy around the world.

But while tariffs have forced a number of countries to look for new markets then so far, at least, they don't seem to have dampened global trade in the way some thought they would – just diverted it.

China, in particular, reported a record trade surplus of $1 trillion in the first 11 months of 2025, showing that it had simply found new markets for its products. Exports to South-East Asia, China's backyard, have grown at twice the rate of the last four years, according to the *Financial Times*. South-East Asian exports to the US have gone up in spite of tariffs, reflecting the much lower cost there.

In Europe, the US easing of support for NATO has led to re-energisation of the continent's defence industry and could see further development of alternatives to US products. CMOs now have to think more carefully where to focus their effort and their investment and how to ally that with their supply chain. The old order is dead.

"Tariffs have become Washington's weapon of choice to enforce its own brand of diplomacy around the world"

The return of the Great Powers

Of the three big geopolitical challenges in the world, Iran has clearly come to the fore in 2026. Donald Trump's espousal of his new 'Donroe Doctrine', witnessed in the enforced regime change in Venezuela, is the most forceful evidence to date of a global politics that divides the world into spheres of influence dominated by regional powers. Russia/Ukraine, Iran and China all remain intractable problems to varying degrees.

In the first of these, momentum has clearly swung towards Russia and while President Trump seeks to engineer a peace deal that is likely to be in Moscow's favour, Europe is left struggling for a response. With Iran, it remains to be seen what the outcome of the war instigated by the US and Israel will be: Iran will certainly be weakened militarily but whether its threat disappears is another matter. China and the US have reached temporary accommodation over tariffs, but any sign of a rapprochement between the two superpowers seems as far away as ever.

If anything, Trump's actions over Venezuela and threats over Greenland will reinforce the regional hegemony of the other power players, China and Russia. On the three big issues, I don't see any sign of resolution, I see continuing fracturing and fragmentation. The NATO alliance, meanwhile, is damaged, and only time will tell whether that is repairable. So the competition that has long existed between Europe and America can no longer be set against an easy assumption of political alliance. We are in uncharted territory. ▶

Now what? continued

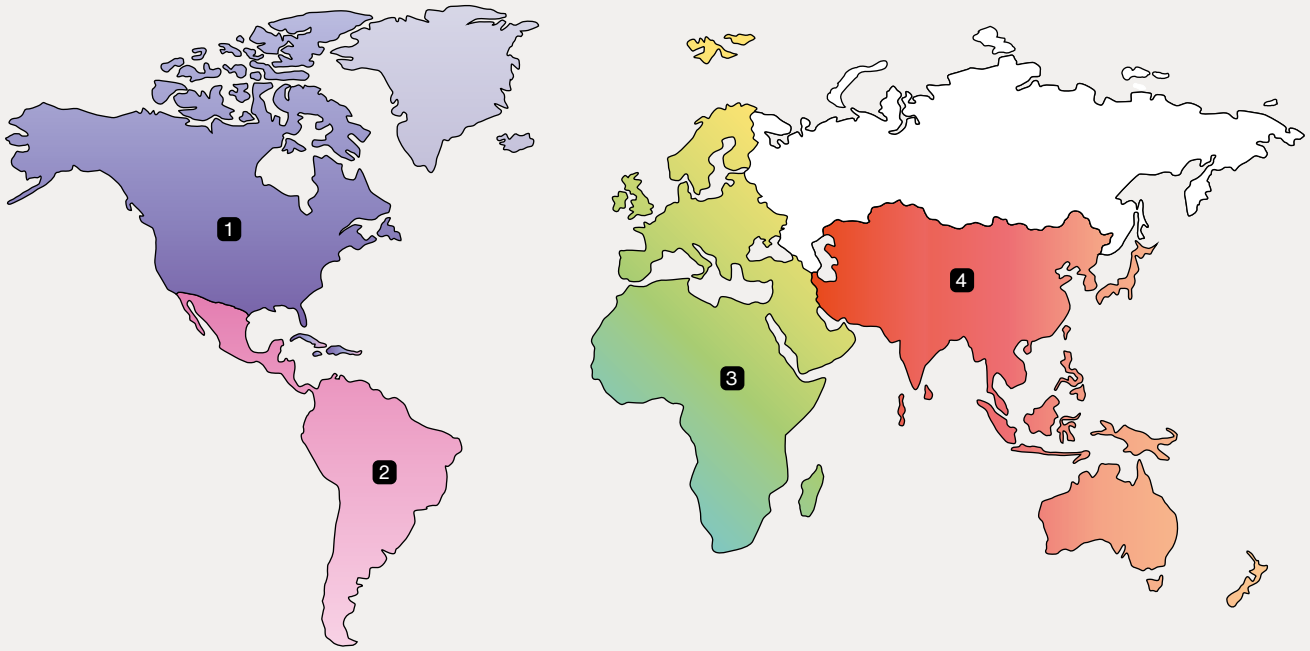
AI evolves

Where AI goes next is a big question. Some people have speculated that agentic advertising will replace the ad agency. Well, that's not going to happen in the short to medium term, although it's increasingly the case that we are using agentic as a tool to take more of the workload and create campaigns in the most efficient way possible. Agentic is tied up with the question of whether machines will eventually become more intelligent and powerful than human beings. We are a long way from that yet.

One obvious area where AI is evolving is the increasing use of Large Language Models (LLMs), which are already being widely used and have the potential to replace online search. For example, I asked Gemini to book somewhere for Sunday lunch. It came back with the best restaurants but told me they were all booked up! However, it gave me the telephone numbers. LLMs mean that consumers will be interacting less with websites as that will be the job of the LLM to trawl on their behalf. What it means for brand owners is that the objective will be to get as much content as you possibly can out there, about the brand, about what you do, so it can be found and evaluated. That's not going to disintermediate agencies because they will need to produce the content. ▶

> "People have speculated that agentic advertising will replace the agency...we are a long way from that yet"

AI for campaign personalisation and optimisation as most impactful trend %

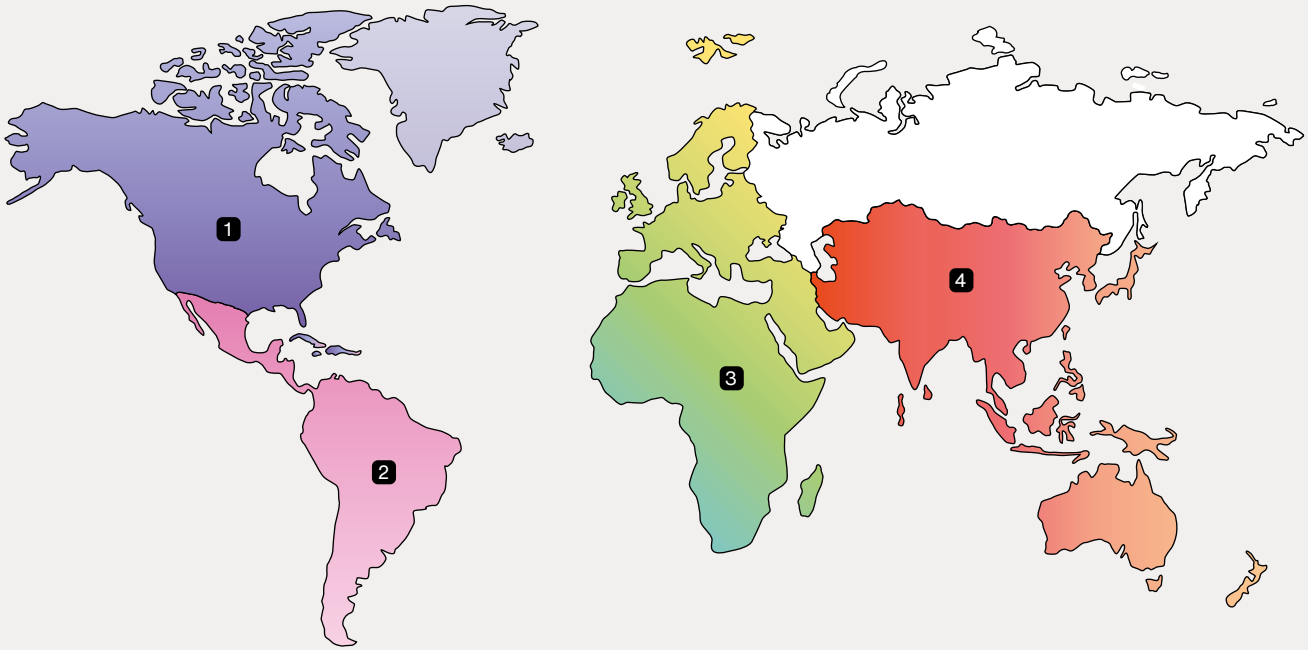


1 North America	2 Latin America	3 Europe	4 Asia Pacific
60%	63%	50%	62%

Note: Data from the 2025 Nielsen Global Annual Marketing Survey.
Source: Nielsen

Now what? continued

AI used in marketing measurement %



1 North America	2 Latin America	3 Europe	4 Asia Pacific
85%	85%	65%	84%

Notes: Figures represent the combined percentage of companies reporting 'Significantly' or 'Very much' use of AI in marketing measurement. No AI use at all: 1% globally.
Source: Nielsen

In the right place for growth

Monks' client base is about 45% tech companies and clearly they have been spending less as they focused on investment in AI. But we now see signs of that advertising spend bottoming out and expect it to rise. And I prefer that we have more weighting with tech clients rather than less. We've also diversified with clients like General Mills, SC Johnson and T-Mobile. Tech services has been under pressure but is coming back. All the tech services companies – Accenture, EPAM Endava, CNIT – have experienced that, and it's the same as with AI adoption: if the demand for efficiency rises because of economic pressure, then clients will want those services. Ideally, we'd like to get to a position where we are 50% content, 25% data and digital media, 25% tech services.
We've reduced our net debt sharply. We are working to reduce our staff costs as a proportion to net revenue to 65%, which will improve our margins – we are currently around 75%. And we want to focus on topline growth.
We do need to shift the remuneration model from one that's hours-based to one that's outcome-based, because using all the tools at our fingertips we can produce a film very cheaply. At the moment procurement departments are reluctant to go down that road because it's something new. But we have made some progress; our work with GM is a retainer based on full-time people plus output. We have started the conversation, but it will take time.

The knowns and the unknowns

It's not easy running a company right now. But in a way it's comfortable: there is decent growth, if not as much as we would like. Inflation is shrinking, interest rates are coming down, albeit not to where they were before. There's no reason to make a serious move. What will change that? Maybe more people becoming unemployed, in which case interest rates come down faster, or the emergence of an AI bubble, or even a war in Europe, heaven forbid. Or a black swan – one of the unknown unknowns. Either way, that will be a catalyst for change – and at S4Capital we are ready.

AI as a creative catalyst

Wesley ter Haar

Co-Founder of Monks
Chief AI Officer

Q A

Where does AI truly excel creatively?

AI can meaningfully contribute across copy, visuals and campaign ideas, although excelling often still depends on a combination of context and the people in the lead or in the loop.
In 2026 we'll see a lot more scaled and (semi-) autonomous agentic workflows, and we'll start finding out where, if at all, these systems top out in terms of excellence.

Q A

Can AI break creative blocks?

The cost and speed of creation have collapsed, and will continue to do so, meaning it's never been easier to make and iterate. I do wonder if that will prove to be as big an unlock as many people expect, or if the bigger barrier is willingness to experiment and the ability for brands to run a test and to learn cadence. ▶

AI as a creative catalyst continued

Rick Eiserman

President, Google Global Lead

Q How do AI insights shape creative decisions?

A By turning intuition into precision engineering. AI acts as a foundation for imagination, processing the infinite complexities of human behaviour to reveal patterns that might otherwise go undiscovered. In many ways, it navigates probability, freeing the creative mind to maximise the possibilities.

Q Where do humans still reign?

A In the glitch. AI chases optimisation, relentlessly hunting the most probable token or the smoothest pixel. It craves the logical path. But breakthrough creative is often allergic to perfection; it lives in friction. The ideas that stick with us, long after our first impression, are most often ones that defy logic or any expectation.

The 'human vs machine' race is a fiction we have already moved on from. Our goal isn't to outrun the algorithm, but rather to let it extend our stride...propelling us beyond the limits of our own imagination.

PUMA

An AI first in the ad world

We partnered with NVIDIA for an experimental campaign for PUMA that redefined the marketing pipeline. By integrating Monks.Flow with NVIDIA Omniverse and NIM™ microservices, we deployed AI agents to manage the end-to-end production of a 30-second hero film. This pilot demonstrated the potential to reduce production costs by up to 75% and delivered a 50% reduction in the production timeline compared to the standard process.

"Our goal isn't to outrun the algorithm, but rather to let it extend our stride"

Tamara Brown

EVP, Global Account Management

Q How does AI free the creative spirit?

A AI has revolutionised the creative process. It is a great creative assistant to speed up tasks that were either mundane, tedious or took a lot of time to craft. It frees up our beautiful minds to ideate, think and create, and helps us get to the sharing and selling of ideas faster.

Q Which ethics guardrails matter most in creative AI use?

A The ethical spectrum is quite broad – from privacy concerns to job displacement to misinformation to population bias. We can't absolve ourselves from the due diligence that has always gone into our work, we take on the accountability of ensuring the content we are using is fair, accurate and free from harm. ▶

AI as a creative catalyst continued

T-Mobile

Winning in the social space

Monks is helping T-Mobile shift from being a challenger to a champion brand that stands apart from the telco category. We elevated the brand's cultural cachet and connection to members through a social-first strategy. We transformed the definition of 'social-first' to a multi-dimensional brand experience spanning platforms, products and moments in culture.

With the launch of the new strategy, we increased engagement by 139% and continue to build the brand's presence in real time.

+139%
brand engagement

Henry Cowling

Chief Innovation Officer

Q A

Can AI ever think strategically?

The distance to a truly strategic role for AI isn't measured in years, but in leadership's willingness to abandon 20th-century ways of working. The tech is ready; humans are the bottleneck. A year ago, sceptics questioned whether AI could match human craft. That debate is now over. The real shift in 2025 wasn't visual fidelity, but that reasoning models surpassed 90% on graduate-level benchmarks, effectively ending the question of whether AI can 'think'. I believe 2026 will provide advertising's Move 37 (a legendary, highly creative move made by the AI system AlphaGo): a moment of unexpected conceptual ingenuity that redefines AI as a creative and strategic partner. We're already seeing this at Monks. The race is on, but only for those running toward the future and not clinging to nostalgia.

Q A

How is AI rewriting agency-client dynamics?

AI is a burning platform for marketers to rethink how the work gets done. That means removing 20th-century cost and installing 21st-century intelligence. Agencies must align fully with this mission, even when it disrupts legacy models. To do so, three things must change. First, mindset: shift from making ads to building the systems that produce them. Ontology is the new creativity. Second, capabilities: systems integration, change management and custom tech must complement strategy and creativity as we move toward agentic marketing. Third, the business model: from time-and-materials to talent-and-machines, decoupling hours from output in favour of managed outcomes. In 2025, Monks made real progress on all three. Clients are ready. The question is whether the rest of our industry is. ■

> "The distance to a truly strategic role for AI isn't measured in years, but in leadership's willingness to abandon 20th-century ways of working"

Scaling hyper-personalisation with AI

Dave Carey

Global EVP, Studio and Embedded Solutions

Q A

How do you power rapid content production?

One of the features of Monks.Flow is a tool called Asset Planner. This allows for rapid versioning of content. It allows you to resize, translate and personalise assets in minutes. For personalisation we use AI from a visual and copy perspective. We have tools that help to identify the audiences so we can tailor the ads to them. We change the backgrounds, individuals and copy so the content resonates more with the individual audiences. We still need cultural experts in market to ensure the content is going to resonate with the audience, but the process is definitely faster with AI.

Q A

What does AI reveal about customer behaviour?

We have tools in Monks.Flow that help us with this. The insight engine allows us to rapidly gather insights about customers. We have agents that can take these insights and execute a campaign right from the briefing process to the delivery. And Persona is a tool that creates AI audiences to gather local insights and consumer behaviours, and to test creative campaigns prior to execution. ▶

Scaling hyper-personalisation with AI continued

Headspace

Less stress, more joy

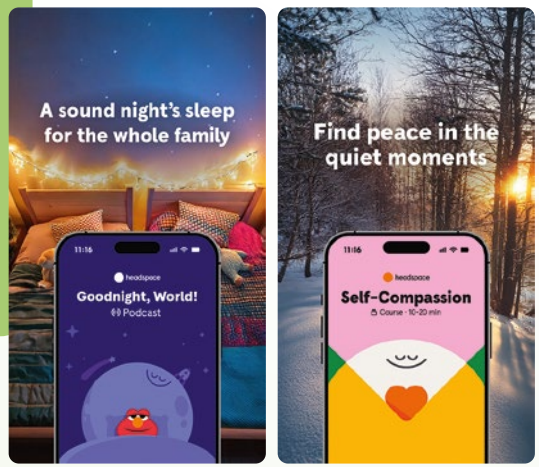
With over 460 original ad assets designed from scratch for personalised testing, we helped Headspace, a leading provider of digital resources for mental health and wellness, work smarter, not harder, using generative AI. By combining multiple tools – from our proprietary Monks.Flow and Firefly generative technology from Adobe – with the expertise to steer the ad delivery algorithms by feeding campaigns the right asset fuel, Headspace is able to get even more people access to mental health resources, helping them lead more stress-free, joyful lives.

62%
higher CVR

Reduced time
by two-thirds for production

Multiple awards won
for 'Best Use of AI'

Find out how generative AI gets the right message to the right user at the right time



Will Kelly
EVP, Monks.Flow

"AI transforms hero narratives into market-ready variations, streamlining transcreation and localisation, while ensuring local relevance"

Q How does AI better inform our understanding of audience preferences?

A AI transforms static audience segmentation into a living intelligence system. By synthesizing raw data into dynamic, behaviourally rich segments and personas that can adapt in real time, it allows brand teams to understand not just who customers are, but how they think, feel, and decide. This moves strategy from reactive analysis to predictive foresight, revealing the 'unsaid why' behind audience motivations. We view this as a core competency moving forward and we have built this into our core AI suite. Monks.Flow leverages our IQ data system enabling the crafting of narratives that resonate deeply before content is even published – which allows brands to drive impact in real time.

Q Can personalisation scale without losing brand integrity?

A Our AI suite, Monks.Flow, orchestrates the balance between scale and governance through intelligent automation and deployment of AI. It transforms hero narratives into market-ready variations, streamlining transcreation and localisation, while ensuring local relevance. Simultaneously, the platform weaves enterprise-grade 'Governed Creativity' directly into the workflow, running real-time validation on text and visuals. This ensures every asset is 'born compliant' and aligns with brand guidelines, allowing teams to deliver hyper-personalised stories at speed without ever compromising brand integrity. ▶

Scaling hyper-personalisation with AI continued

Pixel EMEA

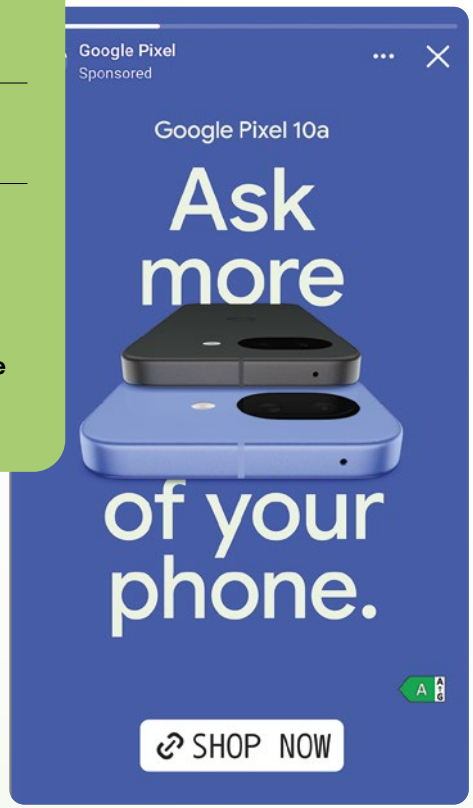
Cutting timelines and costs with agentic AI

By embedding automation and agentic workflows, Monks has transformed Pixel production into the model for AI-driven creative delivery across Google, delivering faster, smarter and more cost-efficient AI marketing at scale. In 2026 we are doubling down on agentic AI to free up time for higher-value creative work.

28%
cost reduction via AI

28%
faster delivery via AI

Read more about accelerating creative workflows and fuelling cost savings with agentic AI



Bonnie Preece
EVP, Group Account Director

Q How can AI deliver hyper-personalisation at scale without sacrificing quality?

A At Monks, AI enables hyper-personalised content at scale across three pillars of our work: Storytelling, Architecture, and Orchestration. In Storytelling, AI supports strategy and creative teams by pressure-testing narratives and persona-based insights and strengthening ideas without replacing human judgment. In Architecture, strategy agents help distil complex campaign briefs into clear, actionable creative tasks, improving focus and consistency. In Orchestration, AI automates mid- and lower-funnel creative production and transcreation across regions and business units. This integrated approach combines human creativity with AI-driven efficiency, allowing us to scale personalisation across our clients' businesses while maintaining quality.

Q Which metrics best show the impact of AI personalisation?

A Personalisation is embedded within the creative variation process, using structured templates as the foundation for scalable orchestration. We are partnering with our clients to define success metrics across real-time ad performance (from engagement to conversion) and the depth of audience sub-segmentation. We also continue to track creative acceptance rates and operational efficiency to ensure AI-driven personalisation delivers both performance impact and cost-effective execution.

Intelligent media planning and buying

Chris Wilhelmi

EVP, Head of Global Data & Media

Q How is AI reshaping media investment decisions?

A AI elevates pre-campaign planning using advanced Marketing Mix Modelling to predict the optimal media investment. AI ties performance forecasting directly to media decisioning, allowing for rapid re-optimisation as market conditions change. Instead of static plans, clients benefit from dynamic strategies that evolve based on forecasted outcomes.

For our business, this precision reduces waste and accelerates strategic cycles. By aligning investment with anticipated results, we help clients capture market share more efficiently, while ensuring their investment is always deployed where it will have the greatest measurable impact. ▶

> “Instead of static plans, clients benefit from dynamic strategies that evolve based on forecasted outcomes”

Intelligent media planning and buying continued

Q A Can AI finally deliver seamless cross-channel optimisation?

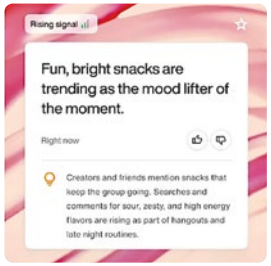
AI connects cross-channel insights with unprecedented depth, a necessity as major platforms deploy their own competing AI algorithms. In this increasingly complex environment, our AI acts as a unifying layer. By grounding strategy in connected data – enabled by unified taxonomy, automated trafficking and budget reconciliation – we can drive true real-time optimisation across the entire ecosystem. This integrated approach ensures that media investment remains agile and effective despite platform fragmentation. For clients, this means superior performance and efficiency; for our business, it establishes a scalable technical advantage that thrives in a complex digital market.

> "By grounding strategy in connected data – enabled by unified taxonomy, automated trafficking and budget reconciliation – we can drive true real-time optimisation across the entire ecosystem"

Q A Is AI rewriting the rules of measurement?

We combine traditional Marketing Mix Modelling with cutting-edge AI to provide a single, grounded source of truth for performance. Our machine-learning engine seamlessly integrates overarching modelling results with granular, cookie-less multi-touch attribution across digital channels. This connection allows us to determine holistic optimisations and accurately forecast impact. Crucially, the system learns and improves through iterative cycles within each campaign, making measurement increasingly precise in real time. Clients receive transparent, actionable reporting that bridges the gap between high-level business goals and daily execution, ensuring their long-term growth is data-validated and continuously refined.

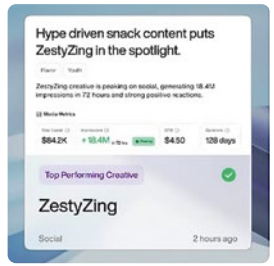
Compress time, cost and complexity, all in one flow



Plan
Instant Strategy AI Agents turn cultural trends into actionable briefs instantly. Monks.Flow scans real-time data to find the 'Big Idea' without the weeks of manual research.

Create
Virtual Production Generative AI creates studio-quality visuals without the photoshoot. Monks.Flow produces high-fidelity fragrance assets at a fraction of the cost and time of traditional production.

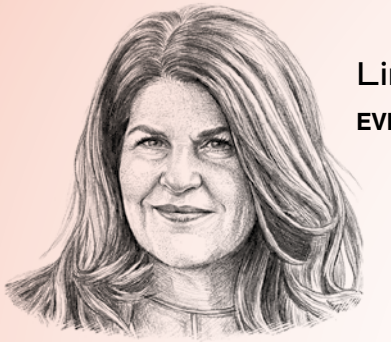
Scale
Automated Adaptation Intelligent workflows resize, translate, and version assets overnight. Asset Planner and Translation Agents automate the heavy lifting of adapting 500 assets for every local market.



Deliver
AI Guardianship Automated QA validates every single asset before it goes live. Sentinel checks every file against specific market rules to ensure 100% compliance and brand safety.

Monks.Flow unifies the marketing process into intelligent, connected workflows powered by agents that learn the brand, goals and guardrails.

Intelligent media planning and buying continued



Linda Cronin

EVP, Head of Media

Q How can AI most improve targeting accuracy?

A AI takes the guesswork out of defining who our clients' customers are. Instead of relying on static demographics like age or zip code, our AI tools analyse millions of behavioural data points to predict user intent.

We can now build 'dynamic segments' that update in real time, instantly identifying people who are showing buying signals right now. This allows us to move beyond broad targeting to find high-fidelity 'lookalikes' – new prospects who act exactly like our best existing customers – ensuring our media reaches the people most likely to convert.

Q Does AI enable smarter bidding?

A In the split-second auctions of digital advertising, speed is everything. AI gives us a massive advantage by analysing bid opportunities in milliseconds – faster than any human trader could. It uses historical data and live signals to calculate the precise value of every impression, allowing us to bid smarter, not harder. We stop overpaying for low-value placements and win the premium inventory that actually drives results. This intelligent automation constantly adjusts our bids to maximise returns, ensuring every dollar competes effectively in the market.

Q How does AI optimise spend and performance?

A AI drives efficiency by uncovering complex data correlations impossible for humans to track, letting us focus on why prospects act, not just who they are. It sharpens our defence by building high-fidelity exclusionary audiences to block spend on non-converters. Additionally, it predicts when creative assets are fatiguing, automatically shifting budget to top-performing ads before results dip. By systematically eliminating this non-performing spend – whether from weak targeting or stale creative – we maximise the return on every dollar.

"AI drives efficiency by uncovering complex data correlations impossible for humans to track, letting us focus on why prospects act, not just who they are"

Powering our clients' marketing ambitions

Karan Chetal

Chief Growth Officer, Technology Services

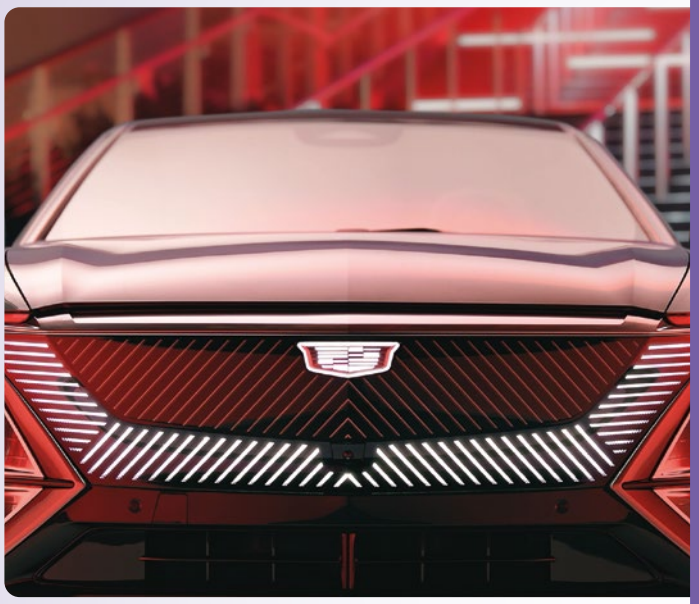
Q What should clients focus on when adopting AI?

A Clients should start with clear business outcomes, not cool tools. Identify a small number of high-impact use cases – such as content personalisation, media optimisation or customer support – where AI can measurably improve performance. Ensure data foundations are in place: quality, access, governance and privacy. Design simple guardrails around brand safety, transparency and responsible AI. Start with pilots that are easy to test and learn from, then scale what works. Finally, align stakeholders early so marketing, product, IT and legal are working from a shared roadmap and success metrics.

Q How do you strike the right balance between AI and humans?

A We treat AI as a co-pilot, not a replacement. Automation handles high-volume, repeatable tasks – drafts, optimisation, tagging, experimentation – while humans own judgment, storytelling and brand stewardship. We define 'human-in-the-loop' checkpoints where specialists review, refine and approve AI outputs, especially for creative and strategic decisions. Clear accountability frameworks ensure people, not models, are responsible for outcomes. We also continuously measure AI performance against human baselines to understand where automation truly adds value. The goal is to free talent from manual work so they can focus on creativity, insight and innovation. ▶

Powering our clients' marketing ambitions continued



Q A What helps teams adopt AI with confidence?

Upskilling starts with demystifying AI – explaining use cases in plain language, not technical jargon. We focus on hands-on learning: live workshops, playbooks and 'office hours' where teams work on their own briefs using AI tools. Role-specific training helps creatives, strategists, media and data teams understand how AI augments their day-to-day work. We establish simple principles on prompting, quality review, data security and responsible use. Finally, we create internal champions within client teams who can coach peers, share best practices and keep experimentation moving after the initial rollout. ▶

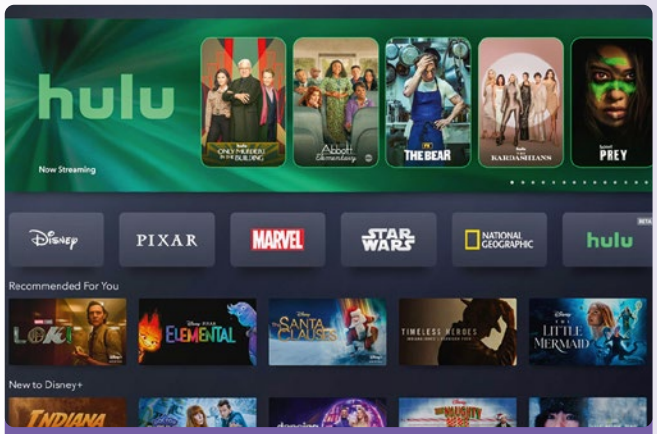
General Motors

AI-driven orchestration transforms the complexity of modern content operations

As GM's Orchestration Partner, we helped the brand redesign its content supply chain to align talent and technology through streamlined collaborative workflows. This unified orchestration model delivered content at speed, scale and efficiency that matched the ambitions of a global leader, all while upholding creative excellence and brand integrity. By transforming how GM produces and delivers content, we enabled the brand to stay ahead in a fast-evolving marketing landscape – proving that orchestration can unlock new value, adaptability and relevance at every step of the content journey.

Learn how GM and Monks are driving innovation and efficiency in automotive marketing

"Role-specific training helps creatives, strategists, media and data teams understand how AI augments their day-to-day work"



Hulu

AI-powered editing, human-led storytelling

Monks has partnered with Hulu to drive subscriber growth for its platform, generating over 70,000 assets across 620 campaigns. We built a custom AI tool, Edit.Flow, to 'search' through Hulu's content and find the optimal clips for editing. Edit.Flow can also take a first pass at an edit, which a human can then refine to ensure maximum impact. Edit.Flow speeds up the edit process by 60%, reducing time spent on the tedious and time-consuming tasks, enabling the editorial talent to focus on what they do best – powerful storytelling.

60%
reduction in editing time

Powering our clients' marketing ambitions continued

Google Fi

AI-native approach increases site visitors by 90%

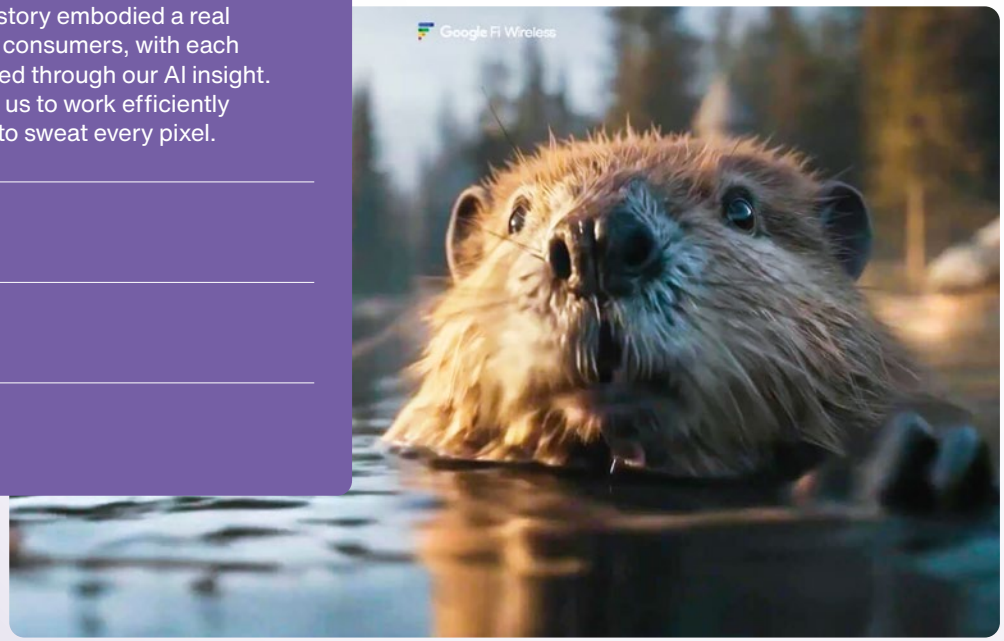
Monks was briefed by Google Fi Wireless to launch an impact-driving brand campaign in just six weeks – an unimaginable feat for most traditional agencies. By tapping into Monks.Flow, we dissolved silos between data, strategy, media, creative and production into a single team to turn 1% awareness into 90% more web traffic.

Introducing the Google Fi Spokesanimals, a trio of entertaining characters who transformed key benefits into natural instincts. Each story embodied a real problem faced by everyday consumers, with each persona tested and optimised through our AI insight. This feedback loop allowed us to work efficiently – giving us more time back to sweat every pixel.

+90%
new website visitors

+16%
growth in sign ups

+13%
growth in activations



Nikki Gifford

COO, Technology Services

Q A

What are the biggest roadblocks to AI adoption?

While many organisations are eager to adopt AI, most struggle to translate ambition into measurable business value. Common obstacles include fragmented AI deployments limited to point tools (eg, copilots or code editors), legacy IT and data architectures that cannot support AI at scale, unclear ownership and governance, and concerns around IP, brand and security risk.

Monks addresses these challenges by transforming AI from isolated tools into an integrated operating model. Through our AI Transformation (Unitary) Model, we connect technology, data, content and media into secure, governed AI agent workflows that are embedded directly into enterprise delivery platforms.

Q A

How do you scale AI from pilot to enterprise?

We enable enterprise-wide adoption by industrialising AI across the whole value chain rather than deploying individual tools in isolation.

A clear example is LiveVision, which uses AI to act on real-time video data in high-stakes environments. In sports officiating, LiveVision enables referee calls to be verified in seconds rather than minutes, demonstrating how AI can move from proof of concept to operational capability. This same model is being applied across live events, broadcast and media workflows.

AI across the globe

Scott Spirit
Chief Growth Officer

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A

Where are the AI growth opportunities?

In the next 1–3 years, we see AI adoption by clients continuing to shift from proof of concept to full-scale implementation. We are already seeing this happen on a global scale with clients like Google, Amazon, General Motors and others. There will also be more specific opportunities based on more discriminate regional adoption and use cases.

- **In the Americas, performance precision**
  This region is leading the shift from human-led marketing to Agentic. We're seeing a massive opportunity in autonomous 'Agentic' systems that handle planning, activation, and real-time optimisation.
- **In APAC, social and video commerce**
  With the fastest regional growth, the opportunity lies in AI-generated video ads and shoppable media. AI is bridging the gap between social discovery and instant purchase.
- **In EMEA, privacy-native innovation**
  Stricter regulations are a growth catalyst. We see the biggest potential in predictive measurement – using AI to model attribution without violating GDPR. ▶

"We transcreate at scale, ensuring clients' AI-driven creative resonates as deeply in Tokyo as it does in Toronto"

AI across the globe continued

Q How do you balance global AI strategy with the need for regional nuance?

A We employ a 'Glocal' Framework: a centralised intelligence core fuelled by hyper-local execution. Monks.Flow maintains a global backbone for data architecture and ethical guardrails, ensuring brand consistency and efficiency. However, 'one-size-fits-all' does not work. We overlay this with regional intelligence layers – tuning LLMs to grasp local idioms, cultural taboo and specific consumer behaviours. We also supplement our global partnerships with the likes of Google with local partners such as MiniMax in China. We don't just translate; we create and transcreate at scale, ensuring clients' AI-driven creative resonates as deeply in Tokyo as it does in Toronto.

Q What skills does EMEA need to accelerate AI maturity?

All industry sectors in EMEA are under pressure to get the right skills in place. Successful partners to brands will be agents of change, advisers of the future. If individuals are to excel in this new reality, they need to be comfortable with change and have the ability to learn fast and adapt.

Critical skills will be flexible thinking; being able to move confidently between strategy, technology, creativity and innovation; and the ability to identify overlaps and opportunities. ▶

HUMAIN Chat

The world's most advanced Arabic-first AI model

HUMAIN is a Saudi Arabian AI company established under the Public Investment Fund to help drive the Kingdom's AI strategy. Monks has supported several of its product launches with bespoke content, including HUMAIN Chat, an Arabic-first large language model proudly built in Saudi Arabia for the world. The model enables millions to create, learn, and connect in their own language, culture and context.

AI across the globe continued

Q How are brands using AI to stand out in saturated markets like North America?

A AI is forcing the integration of strategic, creative and media decision making within marketing organisations. Diversity of creative expression is the new media targeting. Brands are best served by giving media platform algorithms contextually insightful creative content and a clear behavioural signal vs the traditional demographic buying. The distance that used to exist between strategy, idea, production, media buy and measurement has collapsed. So those differentiating themselves best are using AI-enabled workflows that encourage collaboration and accelerate to new data insight creation.

Q What will drive North America's next big investment wave?

A The investment in AI has already surpassed any recent innovative technology I can recall. So too have the stakes behind AI-enabled workflows proving effective. I anticipate the emphasis will need to shift to measuring efficacy. The true test of AI will not be how much cheaper and faster it makes marketing, but rather how it improves people's experience of the brands and products that we bring to market. Right now, we are all grading our own homework – I suspect the next wave of investment will be in verifying the returns we can expect from AI transformation on brand lift and business growth.

James Stephens

EVP, Head of North America

> "The true test of AI will not be how much cheaper and faster it makes marketing, but rather how it improves people's experience"

Kenny Griffiths

EVP, Head of Asia Pacific

Q What can we learn from AI-leading markets like China, South Korea and Singapore?

A China shows that AI-driven LLM works best when ads, payments and logistics are fused into one agentic journey, where media directly triggers in interface purchase, not a click-through. South Korea proves that vertical, culturally-tuned LLMs outperform generic models for conversion, making local language, norms and commerce data core to media effectiveness. Singapore demonstrates how clear but pro-innovation regulation accelerates enterprise AI deployment, turning the market into a live sandbox for advanced agentic, workflow level campaigns before rolling out across stricter APAC markets.

Q Which APAC markets are hotspots for AI innovation?

A India is becoming the testbed for intent-based, predictive marketing off rich payments data, moving budgets from keyword bidding to audience and propensity scoring. Vietnam's mobile-first, social commerce culture makes it ideal for scaling AI-generated creative and short-form video, with fast multivariate testing across platforms. Indonesia, via super apps, is where brands can trial full funnel AI agents that compress discovery to checkout into a single interface. Australia is emerging as the regional hub for AI engineering and governance, ideal for work on clean data, GAO-ready assets and brand 'source of truth' structuring for global models. ▶

AI across the globe continued

Sol de Janeiro

GenAI tempts new buyers

A leading beauty and fragrance brand, Sol de Janeiro looked to drive growth by educating consumers about wider offerings beyond its traditional hero products. Monks' testing showed that ads featuring scent notes and similar product descriptors converted effectively, so we set out to make tailored scent-led video concepts for the season's priority SKUs. We used generative AI to create thumb-stopping ads from existing product assets, streamlining creative costs and time-to-market. Our performance-first design process included fit-for-format efficiencies, diversified tooling and funnel-specific messaging. With an AI-powered performance-first creative process, we succeeded at nurturing non-brand searchers on Amazon into buyers of high-priority SKUs outside of the brand's classic 'heroes', using only existing product assets.

4.5x
higher purchase rate

3.7x
more PDP views per ad click

Sebastián Caramés

EVP, Head of Latin America

Q

How is AI reshaping marketing in Latin America?

First, transformation. LatAm is fully embracing the shift from seasonal pushes to continuous (data-driven) cycles. Marketing insights, media planning and buying, creative production and testing: everything is happening at the speed of light, with times to market never seen before. AI (with change management initiatives at its core) plays a key role in each of the stages. Second, consolidation. The most efficient way to transform and gain the needed scale to implement comprehensive AI solutions is by consolidating partners, managing bigger scopes, and bringing bigger optimisation and efficiencies.

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Q

What's powering – or blocking – AI adoption across LatAm?

Maybe I'm too optimistic, but I only see enablers. Regions like LatAm are the perfect place for global firms to rapidly test solutions that eventually can go worldwide or go to Tier 1 markets where entry barriers are higher. On the other hand, AI solutions can solve budget constraints, allowing companies to implement ambitious creative solutions at a speed never seen before, and with personalisation at scale.

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> "Regions like LatAm are the perfect place for global firms to rapidly test solutions that eventually can go worldwide"

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FSC® C022913

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