



Generative AI AND THE **B2B** Marketplace



How Groundbreaking
Artificial Intelligence
Technology is Transforming
B2B Sales and Marketing

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How Groundbreaking Artificial Intelligence Technology is Transforming B2B Sales and Marketing



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Executive Summary

This report sheds light on the increasingly pivotal role that generative AI plays in shaping the future of B2B marketing, sales, and search and discovery processes.

With 81% of B2B companies already harnessing the power of generative AI (GenAI), and a striking 79% expecting to ramp up their investment in the technology, the findings underscore a transformative shift towards more efficient, precise, and personalized B2B experiences.

The anticipated benefits of generative AI, from enhanced accuracy and efficiency in search processes to groundbreaking improvements in marketing and sales strategies, signal a future where B2B interactions are deeply informed by data-driven insights and automation.

However, this optimistic outlook is tempered by concerns over potential biases, misinformation, and job insecurity. Companies must strike a balance between leveraging generative AI's vast capabilities and mitigating its associated risks to redefine their competitive edge in the B2B landscape.

About the Respondents

The WBR Insights research team surveyed 100 leaders from B2B manufacturers and distributors to generate the results featured in this report.

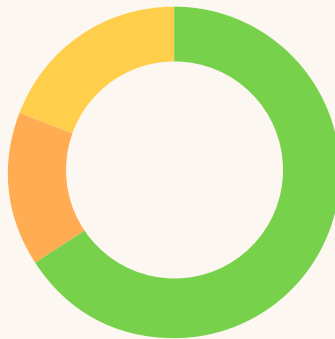
At 66%, most of the respondents are from B2B manufacturers. The remaining respondents are from B2B distributors (15%) or companies that both manufacture and distribute (19%).

More than one-third of the respondents (34%) are from companies that make more than \$10 billion in annual revenue.

The respondents occupy roles in business (17%), sales (16%), marketing (14%), digital (14%), strategy (14%), IT (14%), and eCommerce (11%).

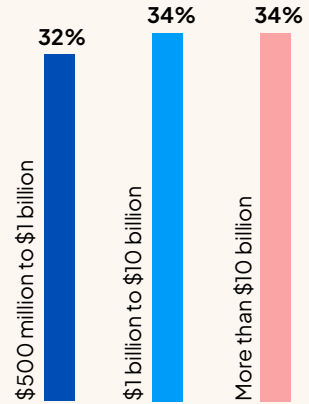
At 67%, most of the respondents are directors. The remaining respondents are either vice presidents (20%) or department heads (13%).

What type of company do you represent?

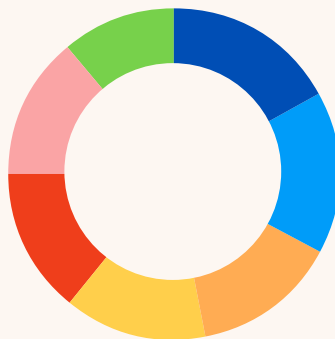


- 66% B2B manufacturer
- 15% B2B distributor
- 19% Both B2B manufacturer and distributor

What is your company's annual revenue?

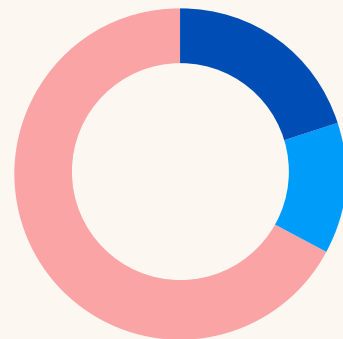


What is your role?



- 17% Business
- 16% Sales
- 14% Marketing
- 14% Digital
- 14% Strategy
- 14% IT
- 11% eCommerce

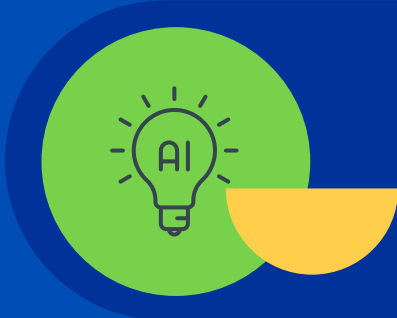
What is your seniority?



- 20% Vice President
- 13% Head
- 67% Director



Key Insights



Among the respondents:

81%
currently use
generative AI.

93%
believe their
implementations of
generative AI are at
least somewhat mature.

57%
allocate at least
21% of their current
technology budgets to
generative AI.

79%
expect their investments
in generative AI to increase
at least somewhat over
the next year.

74%
say ensuring data privacy
and security is a very
significant challenge of
using generative AI.



69%
believe AI will make the search
and discovery process better.



57%
say overcoming
resistance to change
among employees is a
very significant challenge
of using generative AI.

84%
say it is at least somewhat
likely that their companies'
search and discovery
departments will use AI
more in the next 12 months.

74%
are concerned about the potential for errors or bias in AI-generated
content, and 68% are concerned about ethical or data privacy
concerns given the widespread adoption of generative AI.

The most important use cases for generative AI in B2B marketing and sales are:

- Automating repetitive tasks (**77%**)
- Analyzing data (**75%**)
- Enhancing decision-making (**66%**)
- Generating internal communications (**54%**)

B2B Businesses Are Making Significant Investments in Generative AI

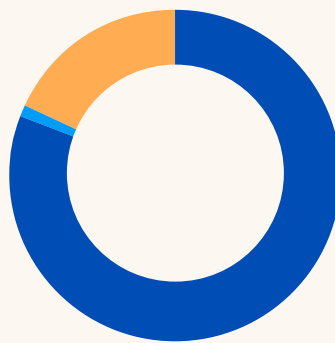
Generative artificial intelligence represents a groundbreaking advancement, utilizing algorithms to create content, solutions, or predictions based on the data inputs it receives.

This part of the report delves into the current state of GenAI adoption across B2B businesses, highlighting its wide-ranging utilization, perceived maturity levels among users, and the strategic investments being made despite prevailing concerns.

Most respondents (81%) currently use generative artificial intelligence in some capacity. This result is a testament to the widespread adoption and application of GenAI in various industries, including B2B business.

One of the main reasons for this surge in adoption is the availability of user-friendly tools and platforms that make it easier for businesses to incorporate GenAI into their operations. These tools range from low-code or no-code platforms that require minimal coding experience, to advanced machine learning libraries and frameworks that allow for highly complex and customized solutions.

Does your organization currently use generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in any capacity?

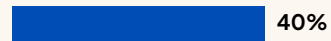


- 81% Yes
- 1% No, but we are planning to do so in the future.
- 18% No, and we have no plans to do so in the future.

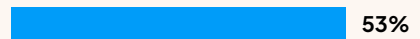
Most respondents (81%) currently use generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in some capacity.

Since you said, "Yes," how mature is your current implementation of generative AI compared to your competitors?

Very mature—we lead our industry in the use of generative AI.



Somewhat mature—we are ahead of some of our competitors in our use of generative AI.



Not very mature—we use generative AI but are not as advanced as our competitors.



B2B Businesses Are Making Significant Investments in Generative AI

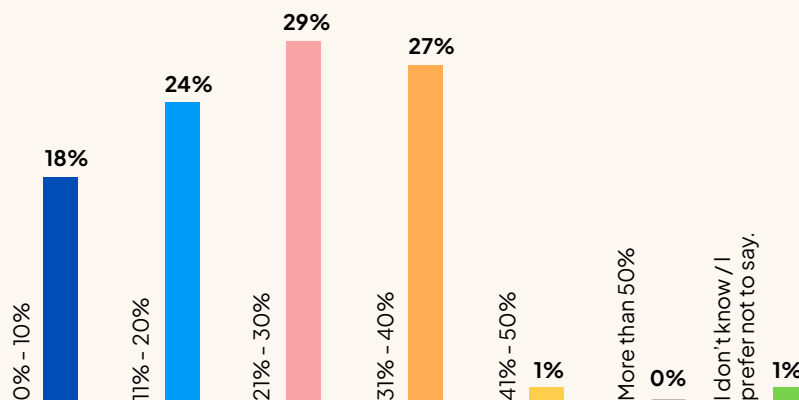
Among only the respondents who currently use AI, most consider their current implementations somewhat mature (53%). They are ahead of some of their competitors in their use of generative AI.

Another 40% believe their current implementations are very mature. These respondents believe they lead their industry in their use of generative AI.

Because generative AI is still relatively new, maturity can be difficult to measure. However, it is likely that most of the respondents currently using AI have been able to achieve real business outcomes due to their implementations.

Although only 19% of the respondents do not currently use generative AI, this includes 18% who say they have no plans to invest in generative AI in the future. Researchers asked these organizations why they are forgoing investment into the technology.

How much of your current technology budget is allocated to generative AI?

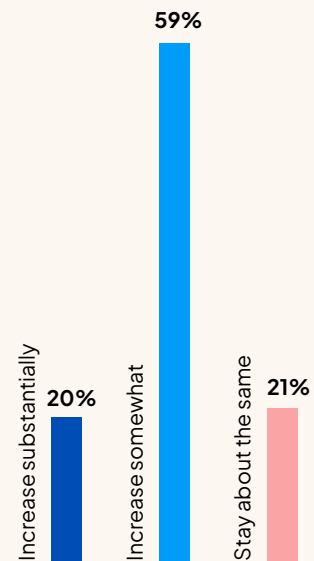


Many of these respondents bring up some of the common concerns about AI proliferation, some of which will be revealed and analyzed later in their report.

For example, reluctant respondents say they are concerned about issues of bias, a lack of use cases, high implementation costs, and the impact of generative AI on their workforce. According to one vice president, they don't want to invest because "talk of generative AI is having a negative impact on team morale."

Other respondents have doubts about the technology because they don't believe it has the potential to significantly transform how they do business. They also lack a clear vision of how to monetize generative AI and demonstrate a return on investment.

How will your investments in generative AI change over the next 12 months?



Despite these concerns, most of the respondents are investing significant portions of their technology budgets into generative AI. A total of 57% of the respondents are allocating at least 21% of their current technology budgets to the technology.

Furthermore, 20% of the respondents say their investments in generative AI will increase substantially over the next 12 months, while 59% say they will increase somewhat.

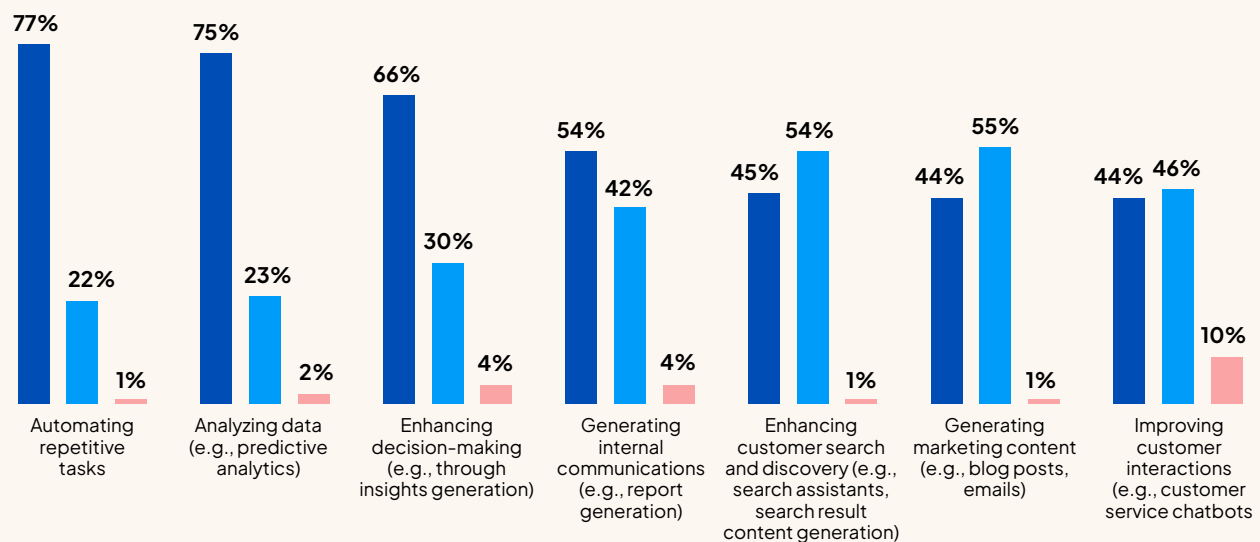
Concerns about generative AI are being overshadowed by its potential benefits. Based on these numbers, we can expect B2B businesses to significantly scale their use of generative AI in key areas of the business, such as marketing and sales.

Generative AI Will Be Critical for Automation and Analysis Despite Concerns

Although generative AI is still a relatively new technology, B2B companies are already leveraging it in a variety of contexts. Some of these use cases will be more critical than others in the coming years, especially as AI implementations mature.

In your view, how important will the following use cases for generative AI be for B2B marketing and sales over the next three years?

- Very Important
- Somewhat Important
- Not Important



In each case, most respondents say it is very important that generative AI automates repetitive tasks (77%); analyzes data, such as through predictive analytics (75%); enhances decision-making, such as through insights generation (66%) and generates internal

communications, such as reports (54%) for B2B marketing and sales teams over the next three years.

Automating repetitive tasks liberates the workforce to focus on more strategic and creative endeavors, effectively boosting

productivity and innovation. Data analysis, particularly through predictive analytics, equips businesses with the foresight needed to anticipate market trends, optimize operations, and tailor strategies to meet future demands.

Generative AI Will Be Critical for Automation and Analysis Despite Concerns

Enhancing decision-making capabilities through insights generation ensures businesses are better positioned in the marketplace, reducing risk and leveraging opportunities to their advantage. Lastly, the generation of internal communications streamlines the creation and dissemination of information, ensuring all team members are aligned and informed. This is vital for the cohesion and efficiency of strategic initiatives.

Collectively, these aspects illustrate a growing recognition that generative AI is not merely a technological advancement, but a strategic asset integral to staying competitive in the dynamic B2B marketplace.

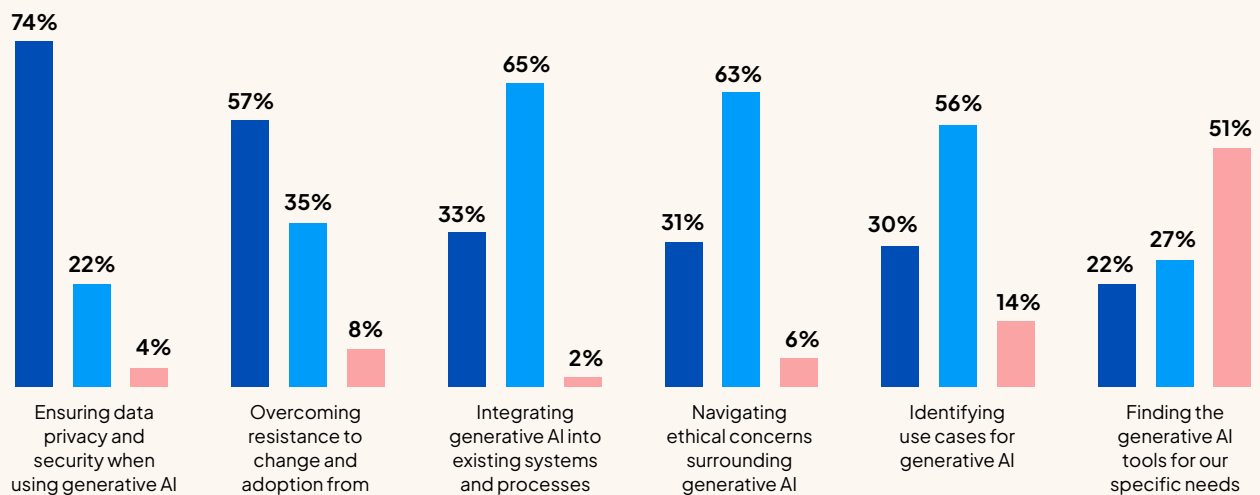
Nonetheless, implementing generative AI is not without challenges. In each case, most respondents consider ensuring data privacy and security when using generative AI (74%) and overcoming resistance to change and adoption from employees (57%) very significant challenges in their efforts to explore, implement, and use generative AI within their organizations.

Most of the respondents also consider integrating the technology, navigating ethical concerns, and identifying use cases for generative AI to be somewhat significant challenges.

Each company must decide about how best to use generative AI, or whether to use it at all. However, most B2B companies would likely benefit from generative AI despite its challenges. The technology is quickly becoming a competitive element in the B2B market, and companies with robust capabilities will be in a position to differentiate themselves.

Some potential solutions to these challenges include comprehensive training and support for employees, proper data governance practices, and working closely with stakeholders to implement changes to the company's technologies and processes.

How significant have the following challenges been in your efforts to explore, implement, and/or use generative AI within your organization?



● This has been a very significant challenge. ● This has been somewhat of a challenge. ● This has not been a challenge.

Generative AI Will Be Critical for Automation and Analysis Despite Concerns

As we've learned, some B2B companies are forgoing generative AI investments because they are concerned about issues like bias, privacy, and internal push-back. These are concerns even among those companies that are using generative AI, as well as those who are planning future investments.

At 74%, the biggest concern about generative AI among B2B leaders is its potential for errors or bias in generated content. As generative AI has received a considerable amount of news coverage, B2B leaders already have anecdotal evidence of what these types of errors can look like, as well as the cost they can bring for businesses.

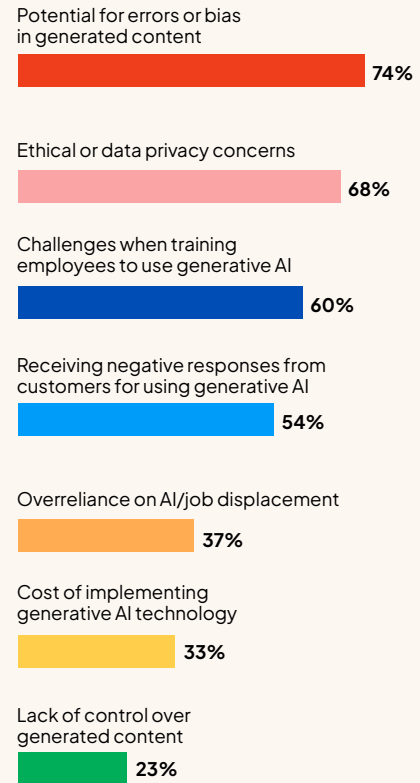
Similarly, most respondents are concerned about issues of ethical violations and data privacy. B2B businesses must ensure the data they are using has been ethically sourced and that the results

they are producing with AI do not expose sensitive information. They must also ensure that their AI-produced content isn't leveraging the intellectual property of others.

The final two most common concerns among the respondents have to do with employees and customers. Specifically, 60% of the respondents are worried about challenges in training employees, while 54% are worried about receiving negative responses from customers.

These concerns indicate the need for companies to carefully consider the impacts of AI on their workforce and customer interactions. For example, training and educating employees on how to use AI tools effectively can help mitigate fears and resistance. Additionally, businesses must be transparent with customers about their use of AI and address any concerns or criticisms that may arise.

Which of the following are concerns you have about the widespread adoption and use of generative AI among B2B businesses?



Enhancing decision-making capabilities through insights generation ensures businesses are better positioned in the marketplace, reducing risk and leveraging opportunities to their advantage.

Generative AI Will Significantly Improve Search and Knowledge Discovery

Generative AI can revolutionize search and knowledge discovery by anticipating user queries and offering more accurate, context-aware results.

It can sift through massive datasets at unprecedented speeds, identifying patterns and insights that would be invisible or time-consuming for human researchers to uncover.

Additionally, by generating summaries and abstracts, generative AI can make the consumption of large volumes of information more manageable for users. This facilitates quicker learning and decision-making.

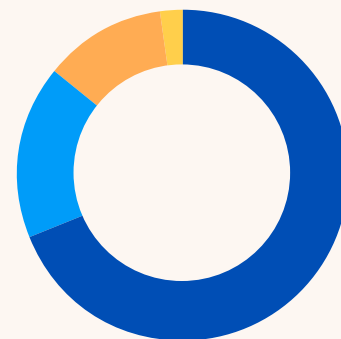
Most respondents (69%) believe AI will make the search and knowledge discovery process better for search users in the future. This is

likely because generative AI can alleviate the burden of information overload and allow users to quickly access the most relevant information.

Moreover, generative AI has the potential to support diverse industries, such as healthcare, finance, education, and more. For instance, in healthcare, generative AI can assist with medical product research by analyzing vast amounts of patient data and identifying patterns that could lead to new treatments.

To gain a better understanding of how generative AI could impact search and knowledge discovery, researchers asked the respondents to clarify why they believe generative AI will help search and discovery or make it worse.

In your view, how will AI impact the search and/or knowledge discovery process for search users in the future?



- 69% It will make the search process better.
- 17% It will have no impact.
- 12% It will make the search process worse.
- 2% I don't know.



Generative AI has the potential to support diverse industries, such as healthcare, finance, education, and more.

Generative AI Will Significantly Improve Search and Knowledge Discovery

Some respondents express concern that generative AI could harm the search and knowledge discovery process due to inherent biases, the potential for spreading misinformation, and data privacy issues. The lack of effective control mechanisms to mitigate the spread of misinformation is a prevalent concern, alongside the fear that AI's creativity is limited by the quality of its training data, potentially leading to less accurate and biased search results.

Furthermore, there's skepticism about the current stage of generative AI technology. Some of the respondents feel that it's too early to fully understand or predict its impact, particularly in terms of enhancing search efficiency and accuracy.

However, most of the respondents believe that generative AI will significantly elevate the search and knowledge discovery process by enhancing accuracy and efficiency. They believe that generative AI's ability to process and analyze larger volumes of information will deliver more relevant and customized search results.

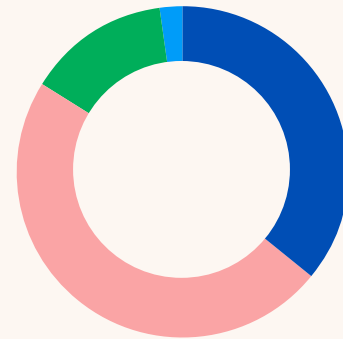
Respondents also say that integration of complex algorithms and the capability

to understand and predict user intent further ensures that the information retrieved is precise. When implemented properly, generative AI can ensure that retrieved information aligns closely with the user's expectations, manifesting a considerable improvement in both the speed and quality of the search outcomes.

Among those respondents who think generative AI will have no impact on search and discovery, many believe search results are already valid enough with existing technologies. They also don't believe the quality of search results will improve by a substantial amount, even if AI is integrated.

Not surprisingly, most of the respondents say they are either very likely (36%) or somewhat likely (48%) to use generative AI as part of their search and discovery process in the next 12 months. Despite the concerns of some B2B leaders, this technology is quickly becoming an integral part of the customer experience in the B2B buying cycle. Companies will be looking at the results of these implementations to determine how they should change their AI strategies, or whether they should finally initiate them.

How likely is your company's search and/or knowledge discovery department(s) to use AI more in the next 12 months?



- 36% Very likely
- 48% Somewhat likely
- 14% Not very likely
- 2% Not at all likely

Most of the respondents believe that generative AI will significantly elevate the search and knowledge discovery process by enhancing accuracy and efficiency.



Conclusion: How Generative AI Will Change B2B

In their final line of questioning, researchers asked the respondents to describe how they believe generative AI will change how B2B companies market and sell over the next three years.

B2B leaders anticipate using generative AI to create highly personalized and engaging content, which is crucial for connecting with business clients. They also expect this technology to empower B2B marketers to gain deeper insights into customer needs and behavior patterns through data analysis, leading to more effective marketing campaigns and sales strategies.

The potential for generative AI to automate content creation and streamline repetitive tasks will also enable businesses to allocate

their resources more efficiently. This capability could potentially reduce costs while enhancing the quality and relevance of their marketing efforts.

Finally, generative AI is poised to revolutionize the way B2B companies understand and predict market trends and customer expectations. By analyzing first-party data and competitor information, businesses can make more informed decisions and tailor their products and services to meet market demands.

However, there is a note of caution regarding the potential for job displacement among marketing and sales professionals, as well as the need for companies to manage the risks associated with adopting generative AI technology. Overall, generative AI is expected to make B2B marketing and sales processes more efficient, personalized, and competitive, ultimately leading to innovative marketing strategies and improved sales outcomes.

Key Suggestions

Integrate generative AI into your search and discovery processes:

Generative AI can significantly improve the efficiency of your customers' search and discovery processes and deliver personalized search results based on customer data.

Leverage generative AI for personalized content creation:

Generative AI can create highly personalized and engaging content using the right data inputs.

This can enhance B2B marketing efforts and help the brand connect more effectively with potential clients.

Use AI to generate insights into market trends and customer expectations:

By analyzing first-party data and competitor information, generative AI can provide valuable insights into market trends and customer expectations, enabling businesses to make more informed decisions.

Implement controls to combat bias and errors:

Since biased and erroneous information is a concern with generative AI, implement review and fact-checking policies to ensure all content is accurate before release.



About the Authors



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