Fast-track AI readiness with a smarter data strategy

Getting data ready for AI doesn't have to mean suffering through years of complex digital transformation

Enterprises that embraced digital transformation early are reaping an unexpected reward: better AI readiness.

By implementing the necessary measures to enable higher levels of data quality, preparation, and governance, they've been able to more quickly take advantage of generative AI — something few anticipated when they first set out to modernize. In addition, these pioneers are finding themselves well-positioned to deploy autonomous AI agents enterprise-wide to improve operations and enhance customer experience.

"The companies that went through that transformation years ago are ahead because now they don't have the same barriers to using data as modernization latecomers," says Chad Smykay, AI CTO for digital-first industries at Hewlett Packard Enterprise. "They've already trained their staff, modernized their apps, and put data catalogs and governance processes in place for use in AI."

But many other organizations just aren't there yet. Nearly 90% of organizations are still undergoing some form of digital transformation,[1] and it hasn't been a smooth ride for all of them. In fact, just 48% of digital initiatives enterprise-wide have met or exceeded business outcome targets, according to Gartner.[2] Various cultural, organizational, and technological challenges are often the culprits that drag down these projects.

Enterprises that have struggled to modernize now face an even steeper ramp-up with AI because they lack the proper infrastructure to collect data from disparate sources and prepare it for use by large language models. As a result, they're now playing AI catch-up.

"Unfortunately, if you missed the digital transformation age, you're behind," Smykay says. "You're not only going to struggle with your data but with your applications when running LLMs or any kind of agent-based AI."

Accelerated options for late adopters

Organizations that haven't modernized face two significant hurdles. First, their data is usually scattered or siloed in various on-premises systems, endpoint devices, data lakes, and disconnected clouds, making it challenging to locate a complete picture of the data landscape. Second, their infrastructures often lack AI-friendly APIs, making it nearly impossible to meet business needs or expectations, says Smykay.

The contrast between digitally mature organizations and those still modernizing is striking. But for those still playing catch-up, there's at least one turnkey option: HPE Private Cloud AI.

Pre-integrated with infrastructure, storage, development frameworks, and software, HPE Private Cloud AI, co-developed with NVIDIA®, simplifies the process of building and deploying AI systems while maintaining enterprise-grade security and compliance.

For example, one Swiss IT service company is using HPE Private Cloud AI to power internal AI assistants and streamline data-heavy tasks in customer service and sales. The solution enabled the business to build its own private AI platform with its own private data, without the need for an intense data modernization undertaking.

Meanwhile, another German renewable energy company selected HPE Private Cloud AI to help extract, handle, and prepare the volume of data required to create its weather models. Without a digital overhaul, company researchers can still more quickly and easily deploy private cloud AI infrastructure, enabling them to experiment and scale AI projects and models across domains and regions.

Tapping into a unified platform

HPE Private Cloud AI also includes HPE Data Fabric Software, which provides a global namespace for unified data visibility across core, edge, and cloud environments. This gives enterprises a unified and consistent way to access, manage, and govern structured, unstructured, and streaming data across the entire organization, integrating diverse data sources, automating data tasks, and providing data quality and security.

HPE Data Fabric Software also allows organizations to audit who accessed what data, when, and for how long. Such governance capabilities are becoming increasingly important as enterprises integrate AI into business-critical workflows. Still, many fall short on governance readiness, even if their data prep is on track, Smykay notes.

Scaling securely with modern infrastructure

HPE's approach is built to support growth. The platform scales freely, allowing you to add nodes and resources as AI demands increase. Customers retain full control while benefiting from flexible consumption models and simplified lifecycle management. And organizations can begin with small-scale experiments and expand confidently with support from HPE experts.

The system is also built to support industry standards and emerging protocols, including Anthropic's Model Context Protocol (MCP), which simplifies how AI agents access data and infrastructure services.

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[1] What is digital transformation? McKinsey & Company. Aug. 7, 2024

[2] Gartner 2025 CIO Survey, Gartner

Smykay emphasizes the importance of choosing open systems with modern, interoperable standards like MCP.

"The biggest mistake I see is companies locking themselves into one toolset for data preparation, and then they have to develop everything around that. That controls how they ingest data, what they do with it, and how they prepare it for AI models," Smykay says. "That can become an expensive bottleneck. You want open-source options that don't commit you to a proprietary platform because migrating away from it can be time-consuming and expensive."

Smykay points to one North American telecommunications company as a cautionary tale. After buying into a hyperscaler's proprietary data preparation platform, the company faced millions in monthly operational costs and steep challenges it's still trying to overcome.

"They're stuck," Smykay says. "Even if they wanted to migrate to something else, the cost and time involved make it prohibitive."

Instead of getting locked into proprietary approaches, companies can now modernize incrementally. And they can build with infrastructure that grows with them, not against them.

The tools to make this possible are improving rapidly. Platforms like HPE Private Cloud AI allow you to move quickly, build on what's already in place, and focus on what matters: making data usable.

"AI doesn't care how much data you have," Smykay says. "It cares how fast it can find it, how fast it can access it, and how clean it is."

Fortunately, with HPE Private Cloud AI, you can now achieve all of those things and get your data ready for AI, with a minimum of headache.

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