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Retail and Consumer Goods Edition

State of Data & Analytics

Insights and trends from over 1,200 technical and business leaders at retail and consumer goods organizations worldwide.



91%

of business leaders say their career trajectory depends on their ability to work with data



31%

of IT leaders say their data is only partially connected across the customer journey



Unified data

Executive Letter



Teri Hatfield

Chief Revenue Officer

The retail and consumer goods sector is facing more change, challenges, and opportunities than ever before. As customer expectations rise, competition intensifies, and operations grow more complex, leaders are looking for ways not only to keep pace, but to get ahead.

Success in the AI era depends on the ability to act quickly and confidently across the Retail and Consumer Goods value chain. From forecasting demand and optimizing inventory to personalizing experiences and responding to shifts in market sentiment, teams rely on real-time insights to guide decisions. AI agents are beginning to make those insights more timely and accessible, helping organizations move from analysis to action. But delivering on this promise remains a challenge.

At the center of the challenge? Data.

In an industry with thin margins and fleeting customer loyalty, the ability to access, connect, and activate data across channels and operations is a competitive differentiator. Yet many RCG organizations still contend with siloed systems and fragmented data, limiting their capacity to spot trends, forecast accurately, and take proactive action with confidence.

The rapid acceleration of AI raises the stakes. Autonomous agents can unlock new levels of speed, productivity, and decision support – but speed alone is not enough. Without trust, it delivers little value. Ensuring decisions are both fast and reliable requires a disciplined approach grounded in data quality, transparency, and governance.

Ultimately, the companies that succeed will be those that treat data maturity as the foundation for connected, trustworthy, and actionable intelligence across the enterprise.

Teri Hatfield

Inside This Retail and Consumer Goods Edition

This report extracts retail and consumer goods (RCG) data from our larger [State of Data & Analytics](#) research, which covers all industries. Here, we examine insights from 1,236 RCG organizations to learn about:

- Why data maturity is now essential for agility and growth in retail and consumer goods
- How data quality issues, silos, and limited access prevent teams from turning insight into real-time action
- How AI and AI agents can transform forecasting, operations, and customer engagement when powered by reliable data

Due to rounding, not all percentage totals in this report sum to 100%. All comparison calculations are made from total numbers (not rounded numbers).

Unless cited otherwise, data in this report is from double-anonymous surveys conducted between June 27 and August 13, 2025. Respondents represent 17 countries across five continents. All respondents are third-party panelists.



1,236 line-of-business and data and analytics leaders in RCG surveyed worldwide

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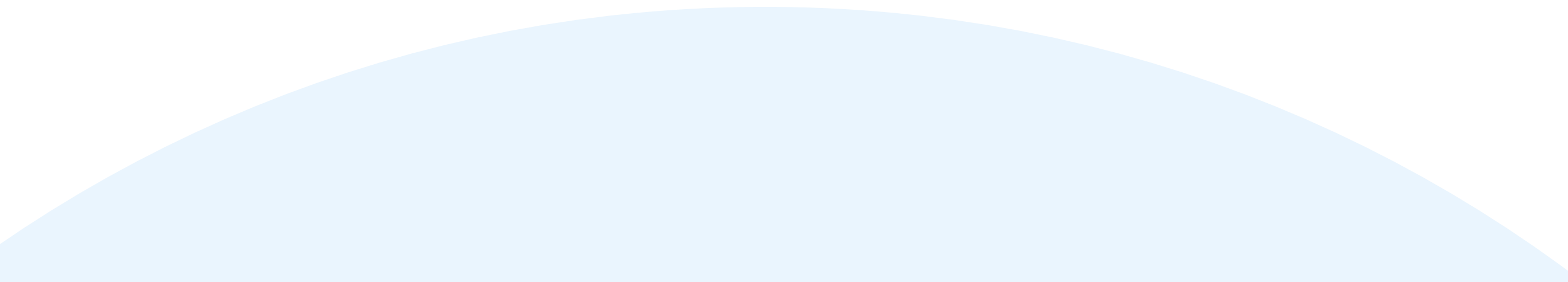
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Executive Summary

RCG companies are entering a new phase of transformation. Customer expectations are rising, competition is intensifying, and teams are managing more complexity across channels and operations. These pressures create room for disruption and opportunity. Data has shifted from a support function to a strategic advantage, helping companies make faster decisions and respond with greater agility.

AI is accelerating this momentum. RCG teams are using it to improve forecasting, streamline operations, uncover market sentiments, and deliver more personalized experiences. But the full value of AI depends on accurate, connected, and trustworthy data – a challenge many organizations are still working to address.

These shifts mark an inflection point. Companies that strengthen their data foundations will be best positioned to act faster, innovate confidently, and come out ahead of the competition.

01

Data-Driven Action Is the New Currency of RCG

RCG teams increasingly rely on data to stay agile amid market volatility. Leaders say data fluency now shapes both individual and organizational growth and many see real-time insights as essential for local decision-making. Yet expectations are rising faster than data maturity. **Ninety-one percent of business leaders say their career trajectory depends on their ability to work with data.**

02

Data Challenges Thwart Decisions, Activation, and Action

Despite strong intentions, many RCG organizations struggle with siloed systems, inconsistent data quality, and slow or inaccessible insights. This breaks trust and blocks teams from acting with speed and confidence. **Nearly one-third (31%) of IT leaders say their data is only partially connected across the customer journey.**

03

AI Emerges as a Defining Driver of Success in Retail and Consumer Goods

AI is already supporting forecasting, merchandising, personalization, and operational efficiency – but only for companies with strong data foundations. Leaders believe AI agents could make insights more timely and accessible, but accuracy concerns remain high. **Sixty-four percent of business leaders say they're concerned about the accuracy of AI agents.**

01

Data-Driven Action Is the New Currency of RCG

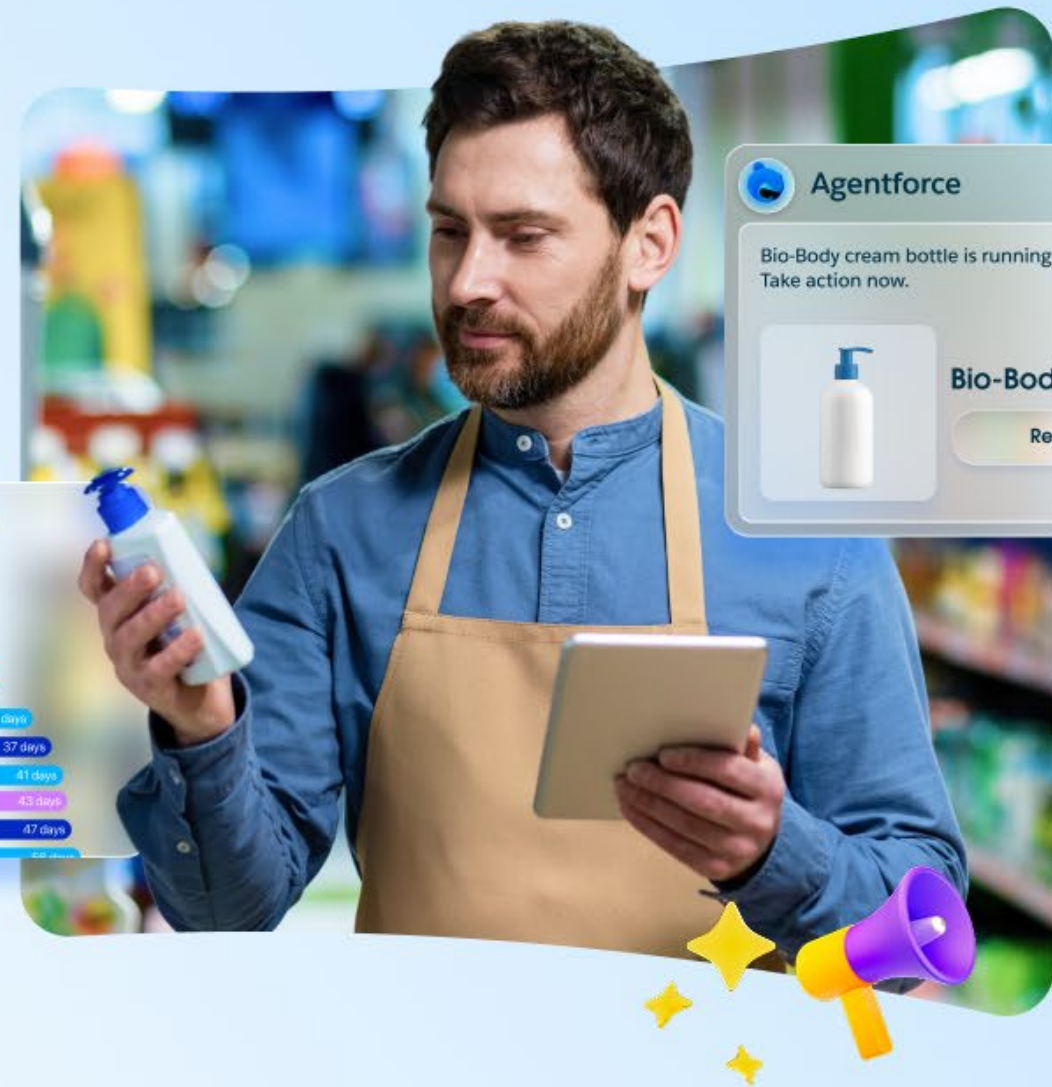


Agentforce

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Business Intelligence Is Key to RCG Agility

The past few years have been challenging for retail and consumer goods companies. In times of market volatility, data takes on added importance – helping organizations be agile and adjust to changes as they come.

Data fluency has become leadership currency, forming a foundation for both business performance and individual success. When store managers are equipped with real-time data and autonomy, they can adjust pricing on the fly. Similarly, marketers can use live performance data to quickly refine spend and targeting.

91% of RCG business leaders say their career trajectory is directly tied to their ability to work with and utilize data effectively

Most leaders also identify themselves as “data people,” and report feeling pressure to justify decisions with evidence.

Data Is at the Center of Individual and Organizational Growth



Data Culture Is Maturing, But Impact Still Lags

RCG organizations are becoming more data-centric, and most are backing that intention with investment.

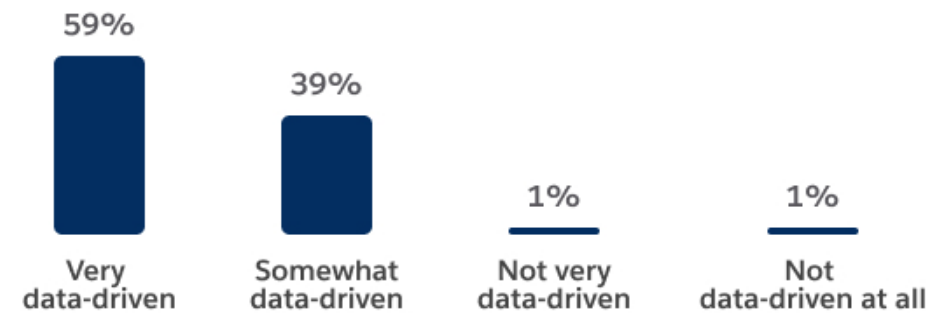
Most IT leaders (70%) say their executive teams are accurately estimating the investment needed for trustworthy AI.

But a stronger data culture doesn't automatically translate to timely, actionable outcomes.

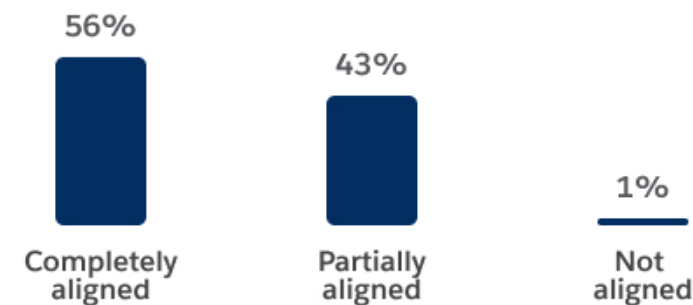
Fifty-nine percent of IT leaders say their organizations are very data-driven, yet day-to-day decision-making still lags. Nearly half of RCG leaders rely on technical resources to access data, while another 38% depend on formal request processes – slowing insight delivery, creating bottlenecks, and limiting teams' ability to act. This gap highlights the opportunity for AI to move from pulled insights to information proactively delivered to decision makers.

Data Is Shaping Decisions and Strategy

IT Leaders Who Describe Their Organizations as Very Data-Driven



Extent IT Leaders Think Data Strategy Aligns with Business Objectives



People Are Ready. Organizations Aren't – Yet.

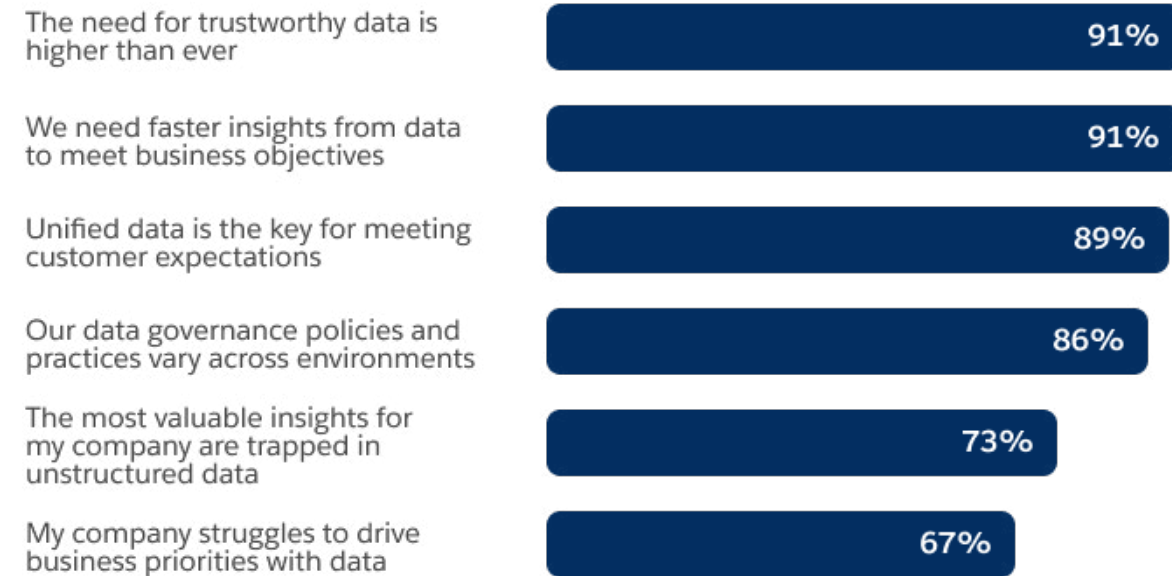
Leaders may personally value data, but their organizations still lack the trustworthy, unified, accessible foundation required to turn their data into action.

Technical leaders are feeling that strain. Sixty-eight percent say their companies struggle to drive priorities with data, and 92% say they need faster insights to meet business goals. This is problematic, especially in retail where timing is everything.

For example, a retailer may have robust loyalty data, point-of-sale, and third-party insights, but if data is fragmented or inconsistent, teams can't confidently adjust inventory to meet demand. This could lead to overstock in some regions, out-of-stock in others, and misaligned promotions. When data is connected, teams can be proactive with scenario modeling and what-if analysis to evaluate the impact of price changes, supply disruptions, or demand shifts before acting – to drive sales, loyalty, and engagement.

Data Challenges and Trust Impact Outcomes

Technical Leaders Who Say the Following



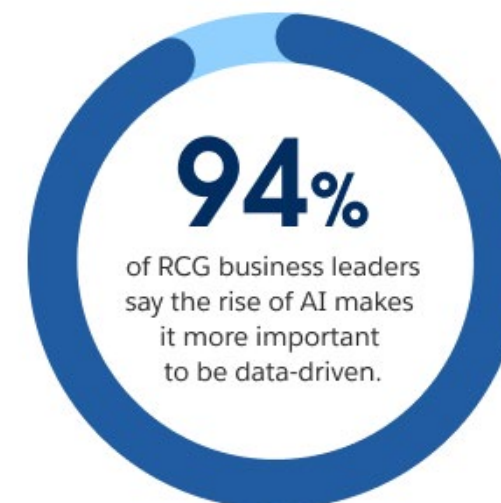
AI Raises the Bar for Data Maturity

Leaders clearly understand that the success of AI depends on the strength of their data foundations, suggesting a shift from viewing data as a support function to seeing it as a strategic enabler of operations and decision-making. However, acceleration is also exposing weaknesses or gaps in data strategy, forcing RCG leaders to hone in on modernizing their technological infrastructure, specifically their data foundations.

The acceleration of AI is also changing how decisions are made. Data is increasingly flowing across the retail value chain – from headquarters to distribution centers to the store floor – enabling teams at different levels to act with greater speed and confidence when insights are available. This makes a store manager adjusting a promotion in real time based on local demand signals part of the same AI-enabled ecosystem as the executive setting global strategy.

Strong Data Foundations Lay the Groundwork for AI Success

IT Leaders' Top Data Priorities



02

Data Challenges Thwart Decisions, Activation, and Action



02

Data Issues Stall Momentum

RCG companies want to be data driven, but their current data foundations are not strong enough to support modern analytics or AI – whether in quality, accessibility, or literacy. This leaves many organizations struggling to keep pace who have already strengthened their data foundations.

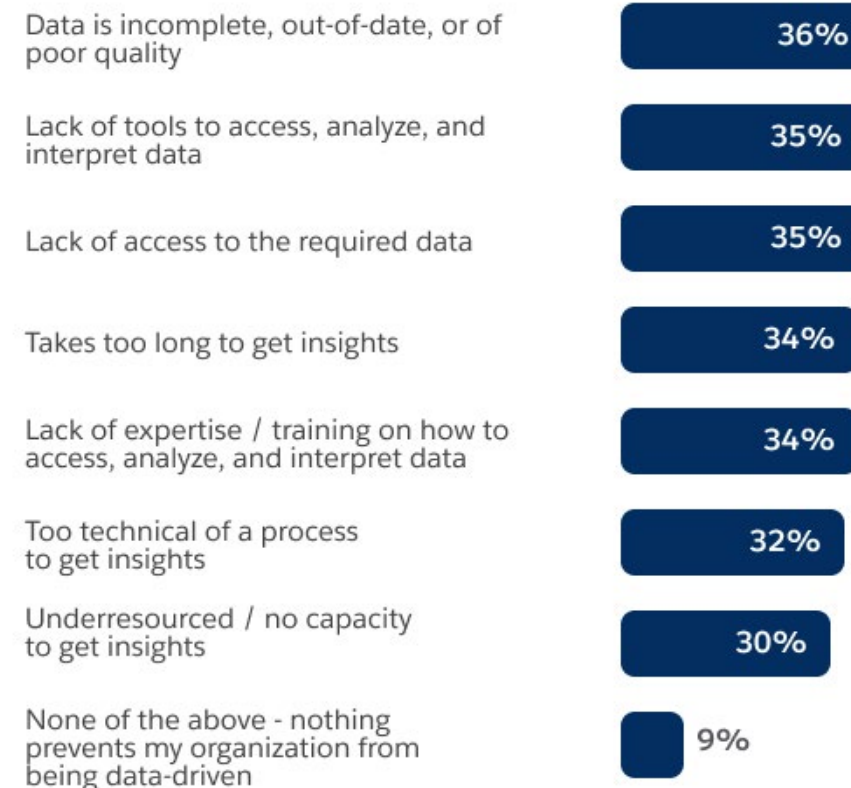
RCG also lags behind other industries: 23% of RCG IT leaders say their missing or misunderstood context leads to incorrect conclusions – 10 points above the cross-industry average.

When data foundations are fundamentally weak, it undermines confidence and keeps insights locked in silos. This leaves teams unable to act, and prevents RCG companies from being truly data driven.

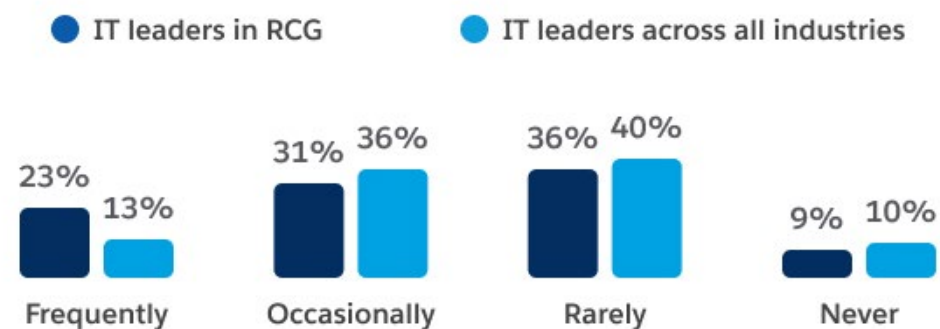
However, with a strong data foundation, brands can automatically optimize digital ad targeting in real time, shifting spend to high-performing audiences and channels, and away from underperforming placements. This improves ROI without requiring manual analysis or delayed reporting.

Data Maturity Is Still a Work in Progress

Factors Business Leaders Say Block Data Success



Extent IT Leaders Say Context Gaps Undermine Data Accuracy



Trapped Data Holds Organizations Back

Trapped data isn't just an IT problem, it's a growth and competitiveness problem. When data remains siloed, RCG companies lose data quality, slow productivity, constrain innovation and hinder decision-making. This makes it hard for teams to get accurate, real-time insights, relegating them to after-the-fact reaction, which is often too late.

31% of IT leaders say their organization's data is only partially connected

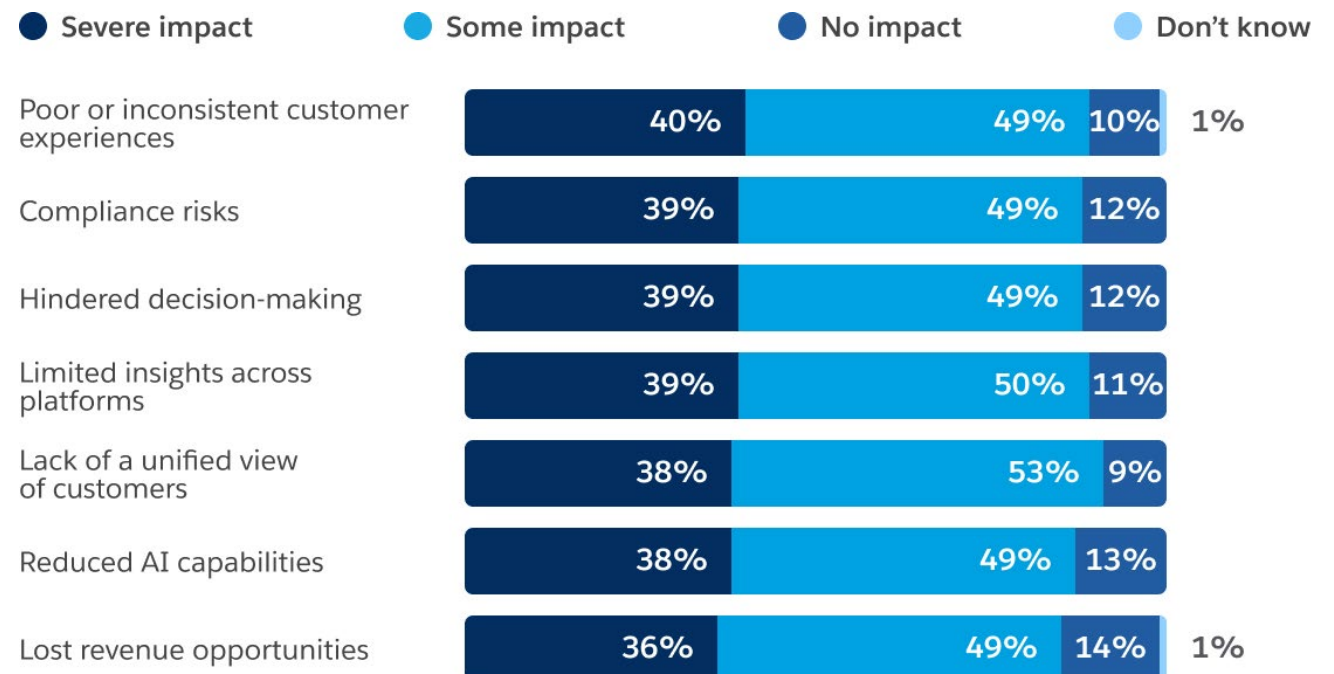
For example, if store inventory data isn't connected to warehouse and demand data, a retailer might continue shipping the wrong products to high-volume locations while nearby stores are overstocked. But with unified and accessible data, teams can monitor behavior and competitive trends as they happen, rebalance inventory in real time, and adjust production, marketing, pricing, and assortment before revenue takes a hit.

Data Silos and Fragmentation Exact a Higher Price

Top Risks of Trapped Data According to IT Leaders

- 1 Reduced AI capabilities
- 2 Compromised data quality and integrity
- 3 Reduced operational efficiency and productivity
- 4 Reduced innovation
- 5 Incomplete or inaccurate insights for decision-making

Extent IT Leaders Say Data Silos Impact the Following



02

Broken Data Risks a Loss of Consumer Trust

RCG is an industry where consumer trust is everything – brand perception and loyalty can be make-or-break.

Forty-four percent of IT leaders say data silos severely impact security and access, creating risks that could undermine consumer trust.

For RCG companies this isn't just an IT or security issue

If a retailer's customer loyalty program data is siloed or poorly secured, a breach – or even an innocent error – could result in a shopper receiving the wrong rewards or having their personal information exposed. This negatively impacts the customer experience and erodes brand loyalty. It also affects the brand's confidence in their ability to use AI for personalization, promotions, and omni-channel engagement.

Impact of Data Silos on Security and System Access Risks

Some impact

45%

Severe impact

44%

No impact

11%

Base: IT leaders

89% of IT leaders say data silos impact security and system access.

02

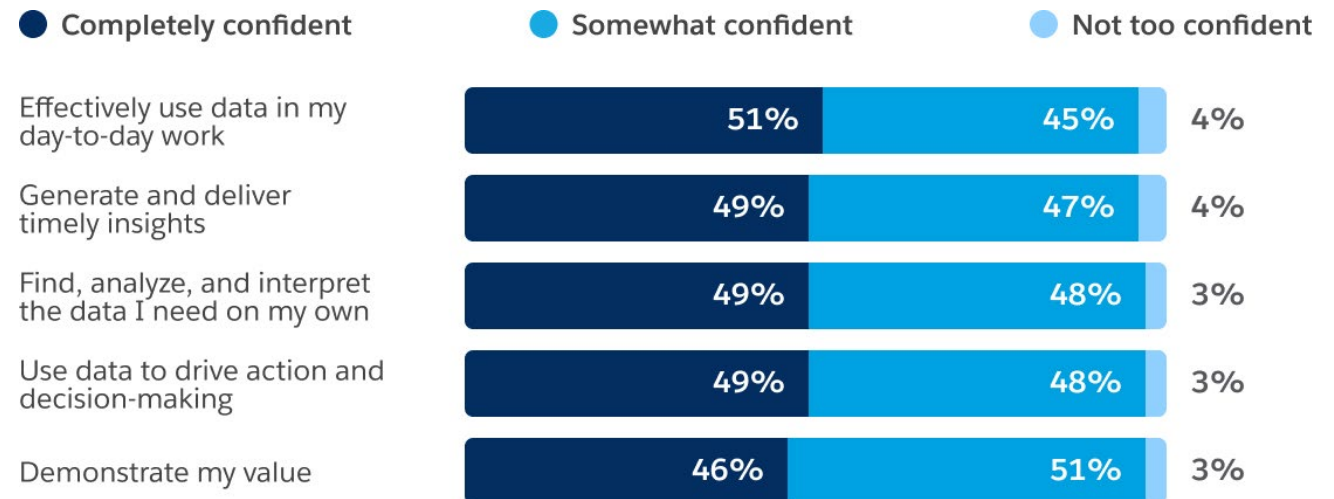
Lack of Insight Leads to Lack of Confidence

In RCG – where speed, precision, and competitive differentiation are vital – leaders' inability to confidently use data is slowing execution, eroding trust in insights, and forcing teams into guesswork. This is impeding RCG companies from operating decisively and taking advantage of AI.

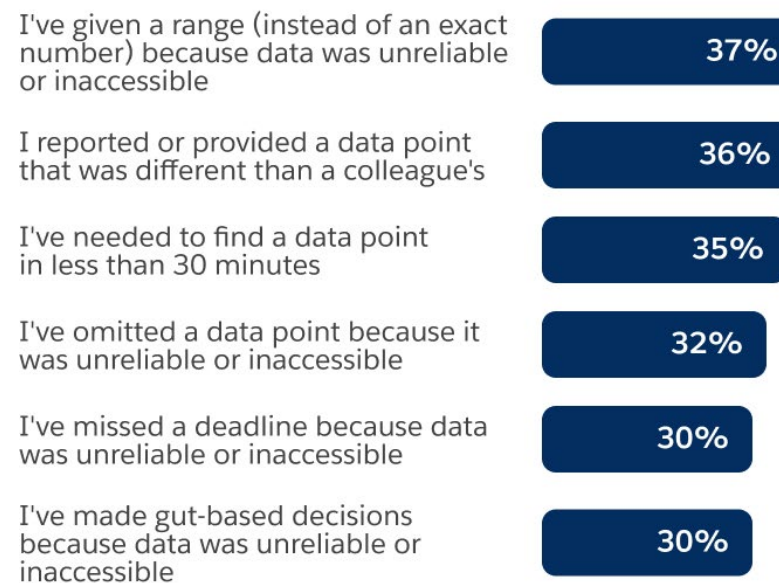
There is a critical confidence gap in RCG that can be directly tied to weak data foundations. Leaders don't trust the insights they produce because their trust in the data behind those insights is lackluster. And while it's true that the vast majority report having some level of confidence in day-to-day data related tasks, actions tell a slightly different story: 37% have provided a range instead of a number; 32% admitted to omitting a data point; and 30% say they've made gut-based decisions – all due to unreliable or inaccessible data.

Confidence in Data and Data Literacy Is Lackluster

Business Leaders' Confidence in Aspects of Day-to-Day Work



Business Leaders Who Say the Following





Spotlight: RCG Organizations Hold High-Value Unstructured Data

RCG companies are sitting on tons of unstructured data – social posts, product photos, reviews, web signals, store and shelf images – that tie directly to an immense amount of information about consumer behavior.

Unlocking this data isn't just a nice-to-have, it's an imperative, especially in a quickly shifting, competitive market. Imagine a beauty brand with thousands of social posts, review photos, and shelf images showing how customers actually use their products. If the brand can't access or analyze any of that data, it might miss rising popularity of certain shades, common quality complaints, or competitors turning out similar products and gaining shelf space. However, when they can tap into this data, they're able to act proactively – making faster, more informed decisions around product updates, pricing, and launch strategy.

The Most Valuable Data Is the Least Accessible

Unstructured Data IT Leaders Say Holds the Most Value

- 1 Social media content
- 2 Web content
- 3 Visual data
- 4 Textual data
- 5 Audio data

Top Challenges IT Leaders Report From Unstructured Data

- 1 Security or privacy concerns
- 2 Data governance concerns
- 3 Poor data quality
- 4 High storage or processing costs
- 5 Siloed or trapped data

03

AI Emerges as a Defining Driver of Success in Retail and Consumer Goods



AI Has the Potential to Transform RCG

AI is no longer experimental in RCG. It already powers consumer insight, demand forecasting, merchandising, and omni-channel experiences. The potential benefits are significant: faster decisions, smarter predictions, and more personalized customer engagement.

But those gains depend on a strong data foundation. A retailer can't trust an AI-driven demand model if store-level inventory data is missing or inconsistent. Conversely, when a grocer unifies sales, weather, and inventory data, AI can anticipate demand shifts and automatically adjust orders before shelves run empty.

AI Is Bringing Improvements Across the Board

Top Benefits of AI According to Retail Leaders*

- 1 Increased employee productivity
- 2 Improved experiences for shoppers
- 3 Increased revenue
- 4 Improved supplier relationships
- 5 Improved employee experience

Top AI Agent Use Cases in Consumer Goods**

- 1 Trade promotion creation and optimization
- 2 Innovation and new product development
- 3 Marketing campaign creation and optimization
- 4 Data analysis and insight creation
- 5 Personalized shopper engagement

* Source: [Salesforce Connected Shoppers Report, 2025](#).

** Source: [Salesforce Consumer Goods Industry Insights, 2025](#).

03

The Benefits of AI Are Clear, and So Are the Barriers

RCG leaders see AI as an accelerator of decision-making and overall operational performance, but they recognize that its value is entirely reliant on a strong data foundation.

AI success hinges on high quality and well governed data. IT leaders' vast agreement on the importance of data management, data foundations, and the "garbage in, garbage out" reality indicates that they realize data maturity and AI success go hand in hand.

IT leaders feel that current data strategies leave something to be desired. Many report having wasted resources on poorly prepared data sets and even more say their current data strategy needs an overhaul in the face of AI.

AI Is Ready But Data Isn't (Yet)

Technical Leaders Who Say the Following

A strong data foundation is the most critical factor in successful AI agent deployment

91%

Advances in AI demand new approaches to data governance

91%

AI accelerates business decision-making

90%

AI's outputs are only as good as its data inputs

88%

Wrangling unstructured data is critical for our company to successfully implement AI

84%

Our data strategy needs an overhaul for our AI strategy to be successful

84%



As AI Adoption Accelerates, Confidence Outpaces Capabilities

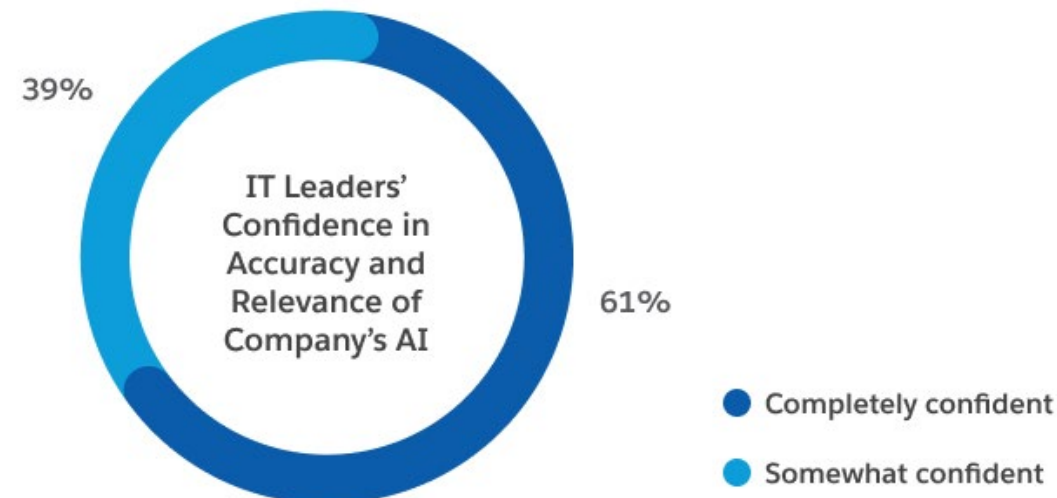
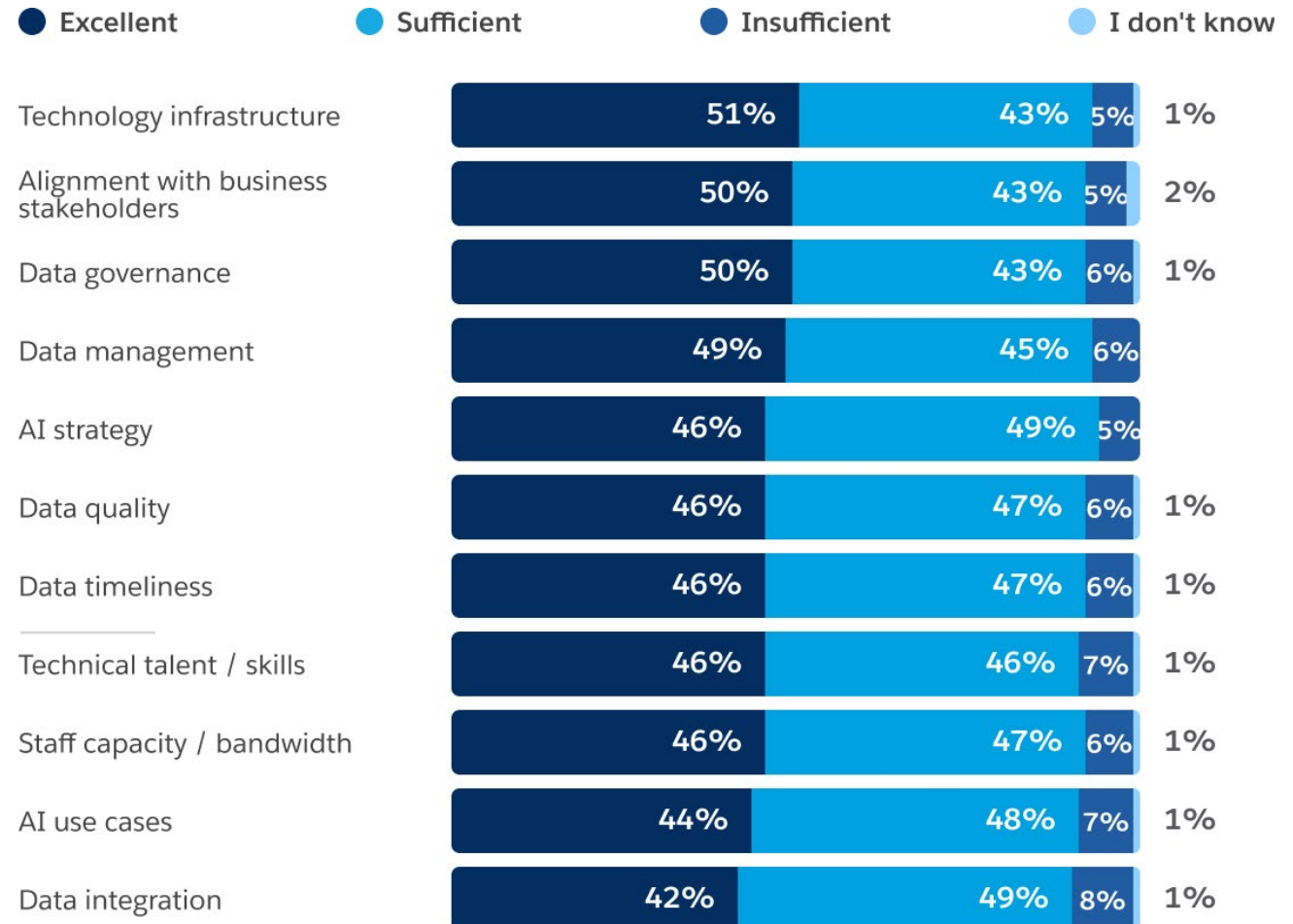
As AI adoption accelerates, many IT leaders express confidence in their AI outputs – even as underlying data capabilities lag. Fewer than half rate their data capabilities as excellent, and gaps in data quality, integration, governance, and clear use cases continue to limit the value that organizations can unlock from AI.

AI is only as strong as the data behind it. And in retail and consumer goods, every part of the business relies on fast, accurate insights aligned with operational needs and business goals.

A strong data foundation – supported by the right infrastructure and shared understanding across teams – enables organizations to move with confidence. A snack brand, for example, could track new flavors in real time, adjust marketing on the fly, and shift production before demand changes.

Confidence Outpaces Capabilities

How Technical Leaders Rate Capabilities for AI



03 RCG Leaders See Promise in AI Agents

AI agents are emerging as a promising capability for retail and consumer goods companies. Leaders see them as a way to unlock more value from their data, and make it easier to access, understand, and act upon. But this optimism is tempered by caution. Many leaders express concerns about accuracy, underscoring the importance of strong data quality and governance to ensure agents deliver reliable results.

Leaders expect agents to support real-time forecasting, automate inventory decisions, personalize offers, and help teams work more efficiently across the value chain – reducing analysis paralysis and making insights more relevant to business objectives.

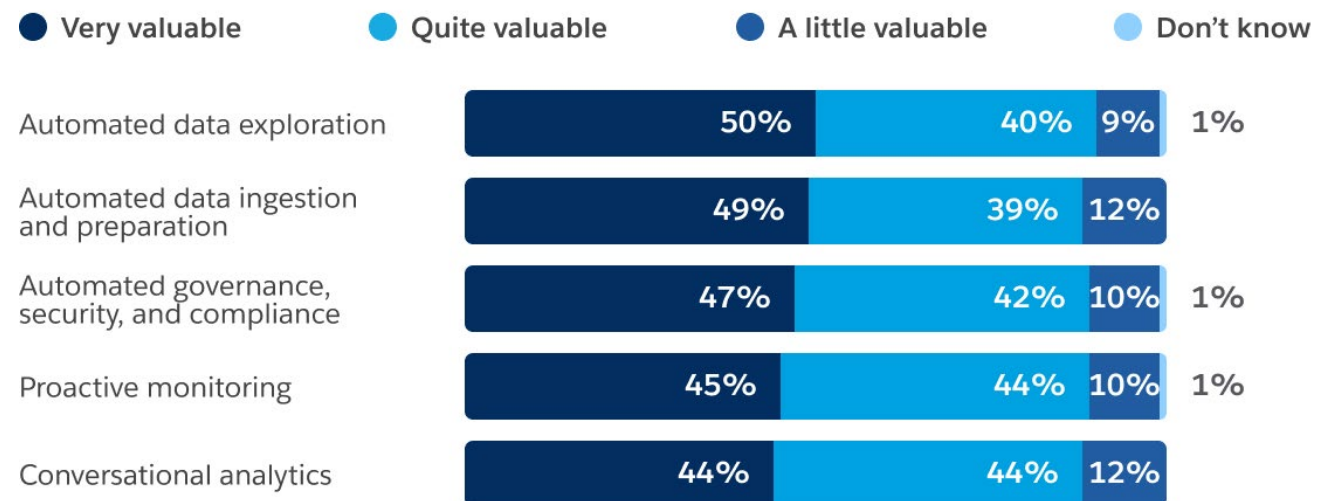
For example, an agent could spot a spike in sneaker sales at one store and launch a localized promotion. It could flag items nearing expiration, recommend markdowns, or re-engage lapsed shoppers with personalized offers.

Business and Technical Leaders Anticipate Major Impact from AI Agents

Business Leaders Who Say the Following



IT Leaders' View of AI Agent Use Cases



Salesforce's Take

As retail and consumer goods companies accelerate their use of AI – including agentic AI – they're uncovering new opportunities to improve and automate across the entire value chain, from forecasting and supply chain planning to marketing, promotions, operations, and collaboration. Yet this moment comes with a clear mandate: AI outcomes depend on strong data foundations, supported by sound governance and shared understanding across the organization

Retail and consumer goods is a people-centered industry. Success depends not only on meeting shoppers' evolving needs, wants, and preferences, but also on empowering the teams, vendors, associates, and partners who make brand experiences possible, scalable, and delightful. In the the AI era, long-lasting loyalty will be shaped by brands that leverage data, analytics, and AI to deepen relevance and strengthen human connection through technology.

AI works best when it's grounded in a deeply integrated, context-aware foundation that supports those connections. With accurate, timely, and accessible data, AI drives better decisions, enables teams to move faster, and brings focus to the moments that matter most. When data is fragmented or unreliable, even the most advanced tools fall short – sales are lost, and customers look elsewhere.

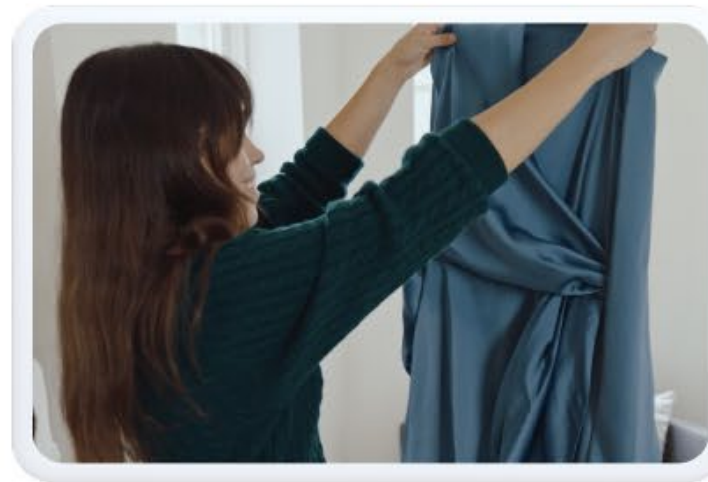
Organizations that succeed are those that treat data as a strategic foundation for elevating the ways teams work and serve customers. When people, processes, and trusted data come together, RCG companies gain the clarity and confidence to act proactively, respond to customers in more meaningful ways, and differentiate in a dynamic environment. The Salesforce platform makes these aspirations tangible and actionable – delivering measurable impact to both the top and bottom lines. Humans and agents drive customer success together. Are you ready?

Explore more resources for RCG



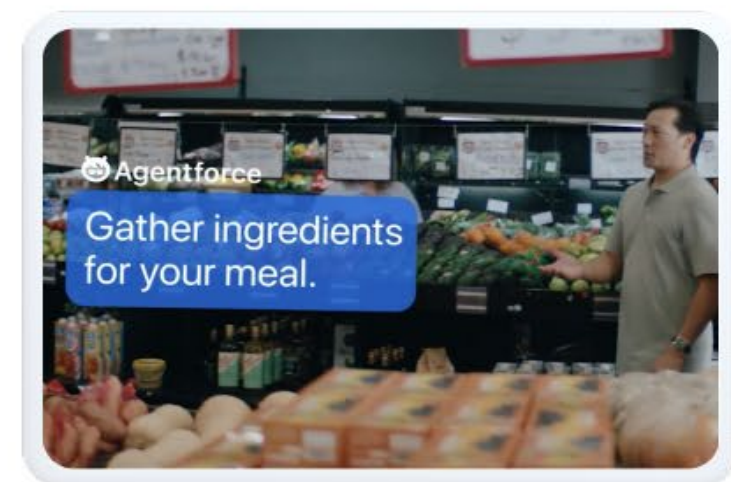
The State of Data & Analytics

Nearly 8,000 global executives share their insights on managing and activating data and analytics for the agentic enterprise.

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