

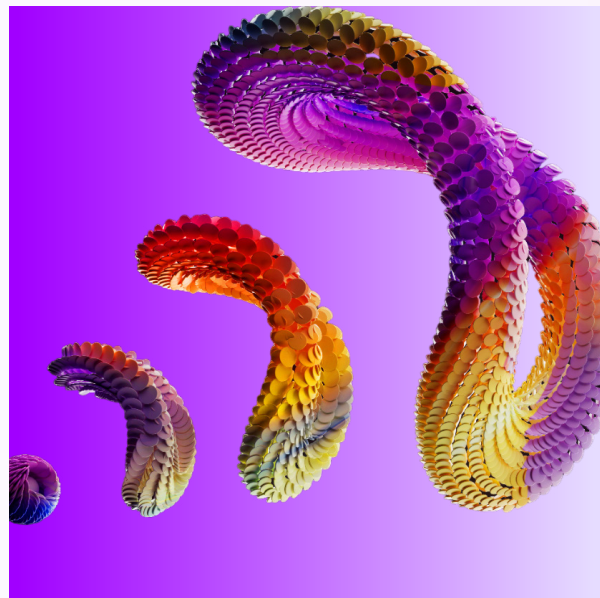


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Reinventing the consumer goods value chain

It's time to move from thinking functionally
to developing end-to-end “mega processes”

Contents



03

Preface



04–05

The time to act
is now



06–09

What does
reinvention look like?



10–19

What are
mega processes?

- Insight to plan
- Innovate to scale
- Engage to advocate
- Plan to deliver



20–21

Five imperatives
for end-to-end value
chain reinvention

Preface

The consumer goods industry is on the brink of profound change. We expect to see companies reinvent every part of the value chain within the next five years.

Consumer goods companies are facing a productivity imperative driven by cost pressures and stubbornly high inflation that can no longer be addressed through price increases. Reinvention—enabled by generative AI—offers the ability to deliver 3-5% improvements in operating margin over the next three to five years.¹

The potential of generative AI goes beyond just cutting costs. Our research revealed that 80% of executives believe generative AI drives growth and disruptive innovation.² And Reinventors expect to outperform the rest with boundaryless ways of working that reframe the enterprise around end-to-end mega processes.

Disruption has grown **183%** in the past four years (33% in 2023 alone).³



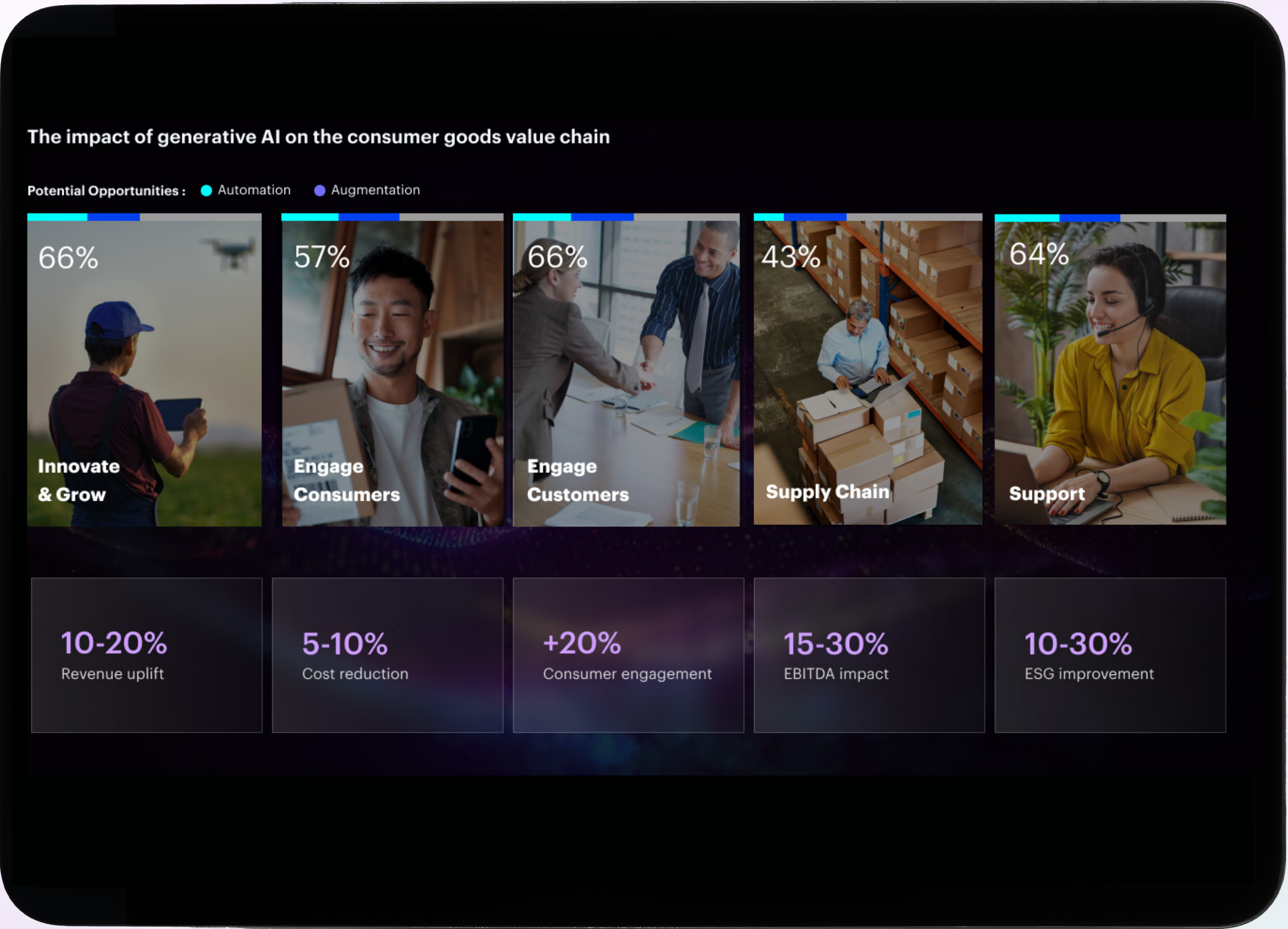
The time to act is now

In the past year, 83% of executives accelerated their reinvention strategies in response to ever-increasing disruption.⁴ Technology—including generative AI—is both a key cause of industry disruption and a material accelerator of a company’s ability to achieve reinvention. Over the next three to five years, every aspect of the industry’s value chain will be reinvented, creating both winners and losers. Our research shows that companies that reinvent with generative AI will leapfrog the leaders of today.⁵

Generative AI marks a fundamental departure from previous technology transformations. The scale of impact is more profound than any other technology we have seen. Reinventing with generative AI affects every part of the company and every person in the organization, from the CEO down to the most junior individual. In the consumer goods sector, our experience suggests that generative AI could automate or augment 40–60% of activities (see Figure 1).⁶

More significantly, those who seek to reinvent with generative AI expect the benefits from revenue and innovation growth to exceed those of cost savings. Based on client experiences, we are seeing consumer conversion increasing in the range of 15–25% and customer net promoter score (NPS) by 35%. And let’s not forget employees—we’re seeing cases where employee satisfaction has improved 20% or more.

Figure 1: Reinventing with generative AI yields more than just cost savings.





The time to act is now. Unlike past digital transformations, there is real first-mover advantage as large language models and related ways of working are evolving exponentially. Early adopters gain a significant advantage.

This is not reinventing for the sake of it, but instead to address the very real pain points the industry faces today. Today's consumer goods companies struggle with an ever more unpredictable consumer and functional silos that make it impossible to match demand with supply. As a result, consumers and customers have disappointing experiences and brands lose growth opportunities. At the same time, macroeconomic pressures and rising costs constrain consumer spending and consumer goods margins. In short, nobody wins.

What does reinvention look like?

Executives frequently ask us, “What is best-in-class today and how do I get there?” As the pace of change increases, it’s not enough to emulate today’s leaders. Companies that seek to become best-in-class today will be behind by the time tomorrow arrives.

What distinguishes Reinventors is that they seek to set a new performance frontier. Instead of focusing on incremental improvements, Reinventors look ahead to understand the art of the possible based on where technology, talent and ways of working are heading in the next five years and redesigning the enterprise to be future-ready. This goes far beyond making existing processes faster, smarter or cheaper—instead, these leaders fundamentally redesign core processes.

76% of consumer goods executives claim they plan to fundamentally reinvent two or more business functions in the next three years.⁷



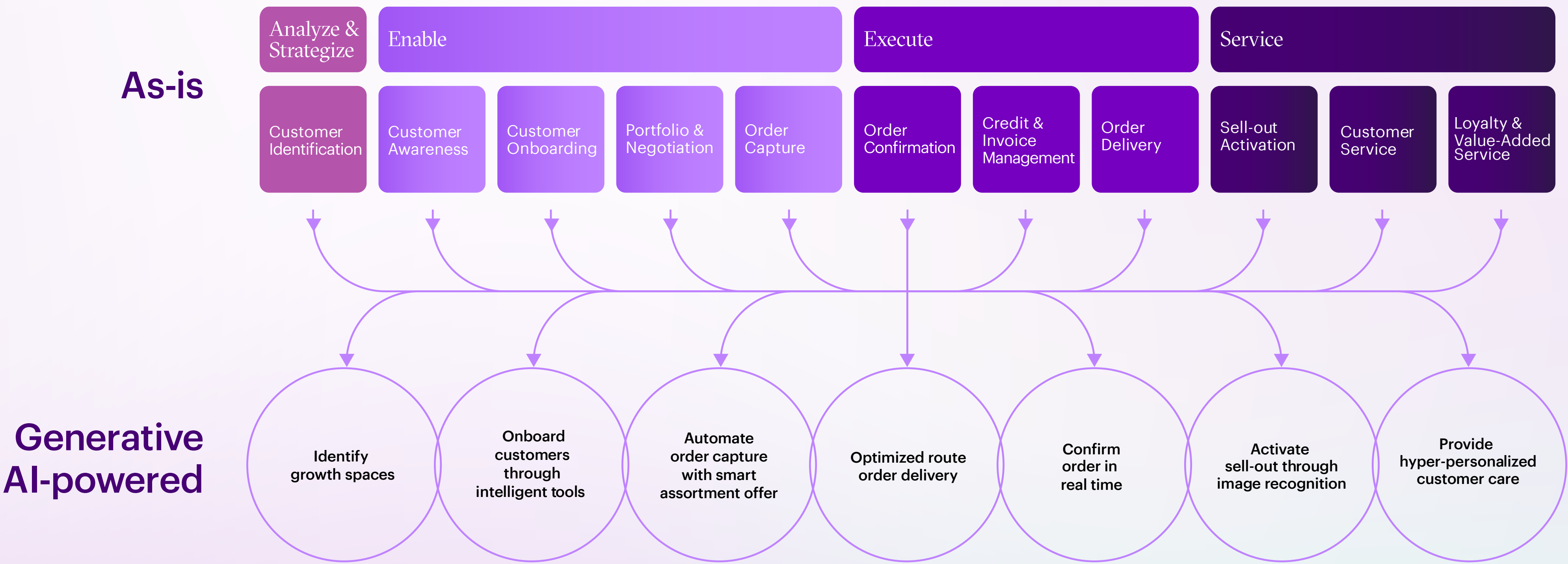
Shaping a best-in-class sales process

The current sales process is heavily manual, and sales reps spend more time planning to talk to customers than actually talking to them. In some cases, non-customer-facing activities such as market analysis, route planning and order capture consume more than 60% of a salesperson’s time.

Customer engagement is ripe for reinvention. Using generative AI, AI and new ways of working, we are able to contract the number of process blocks from eleven laborious steps to seven outcome-driven activities (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Illustrative example of the consumer goods workflow for engaging customers, reinvented using generative AI.

Source: Accenture 2024

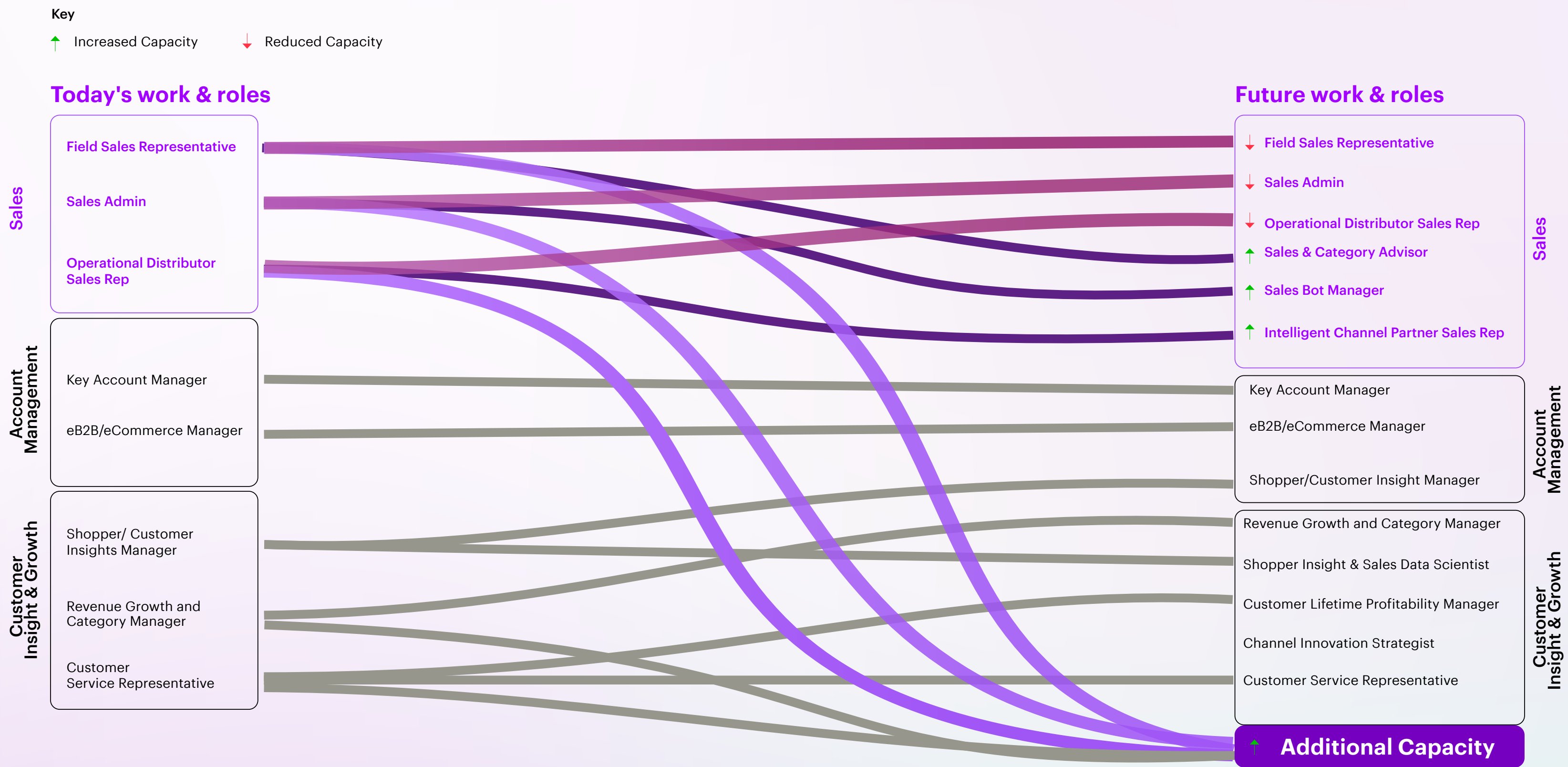


Enabling this is an “intelligent sales coach,” which acts as a co-pilot for all the activities of a sales rep, including personalized advice on their sales pitch, suggested next best actions and the automation of many non-customer-facing activities.

This substantially changes the work of a sales rep, transforming them from order taker to growth advisor and focusing them on relationship-building that drives growth for both the brand and the customer (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Illustrative example of how work and roles can be reallocated in a generative AI future, freeing additional capacity.

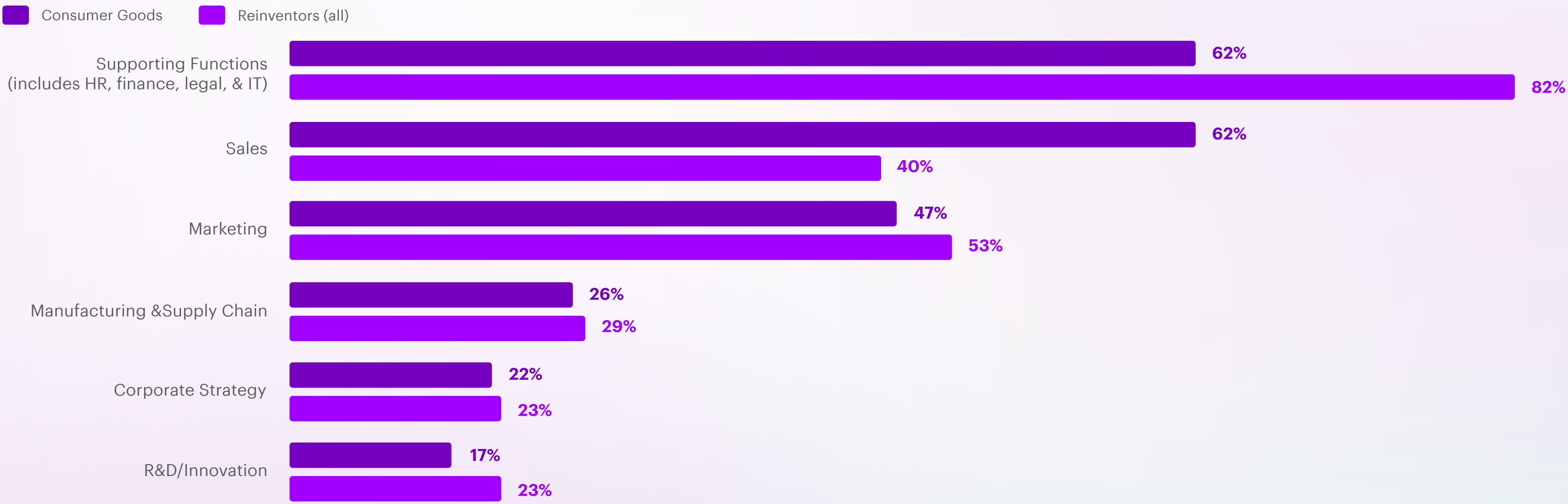
Source: Accenture 2024



Many consumer goods executives are already exploring the potential of technologies like generative AI within sales and marketing, but according to our research (see Figure 4), Reinventors are targeting the entire value chain, rethinking the enterprise as a series of end-to-end mega processes.

Figure 4: Willingness to reinvent using generative AI. Source: Accenture, Reinvention in the age of Generative AI CXO survey, n=112 CGS executives, 2023

Over the next three years, in which of the following business functions/areas do you plan to use generative AI to fundamentally reinvent how you operate?
Respondents were asked to indicate all that apply



What are mega processes?

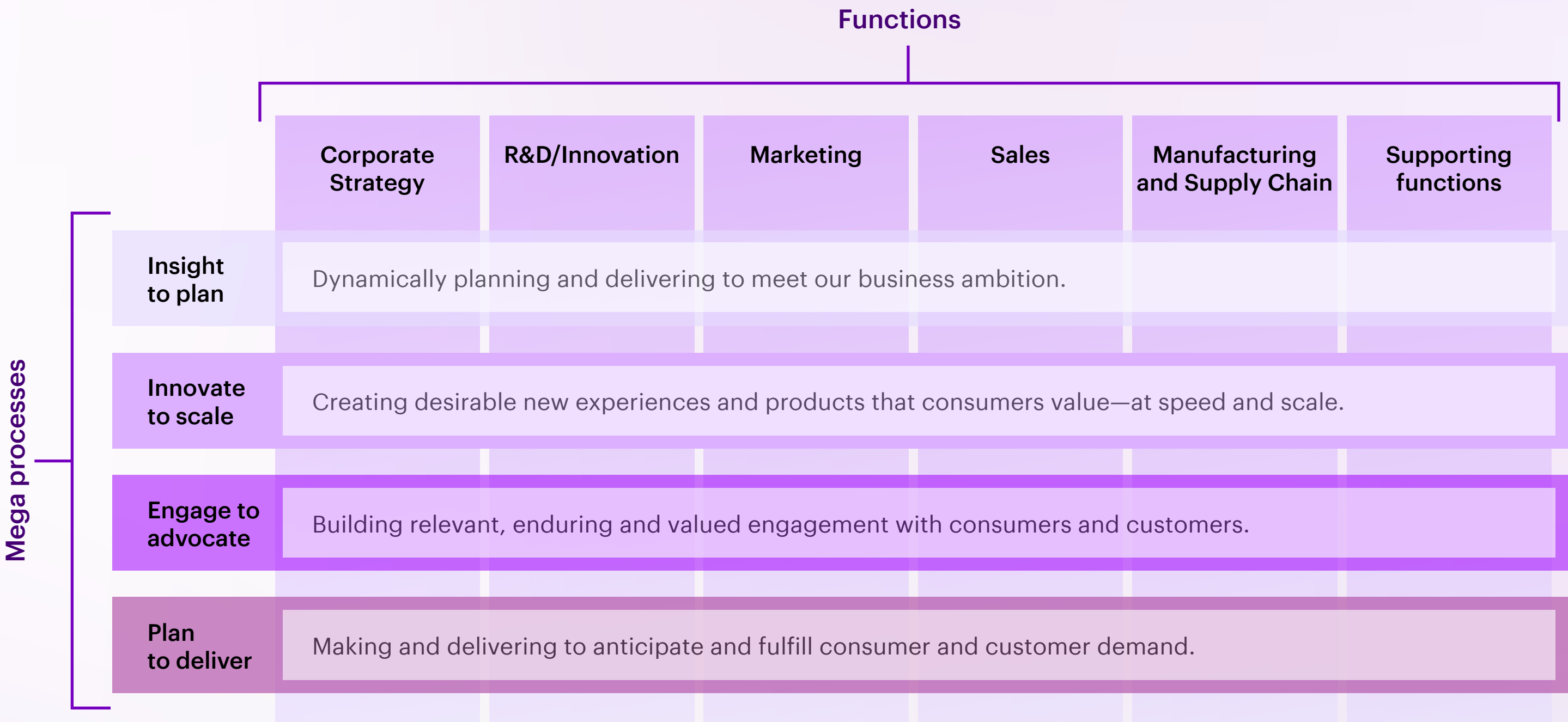
Reinventors radically redesign processes with the possibilities of emerging technology and new ways of working, and reimagine siloed functions as outcome-based, end-to-end value streams—in other words, mega processes. To be clear, functions remain intact, and the expertise people have developed within those functions remains crucial—but the way they operate and collaborate fundamentally shifts to an interconnected enterprise that runs holistic, end-to-end value streams.

Reinvention is no longer an aspiration for the future—it’s an imperative today. This report explores the reinvention of end-to-end value streams and starts to highlight the connections between them. Figure 5 illustrates the connections we see as being essential to reinvention strategy for consumer goods companies.

We’ve defined four mega processes. Every consumer goods company should have a clear articulation of its purpose, which is managed through **insight to plan**. **Innovate to scale** realizes that purpose through the invention of products and services. Consumer and customer experiences are brought to life through **engage to advocate**, creating a promise that is fulfilled through **plan to deliver**. All this is enabled by a company’s people, technology and operations.

Figure 5: The new end-to-end consumer goods value chain.

Source: Accenture 2024



Reinventing the consumer goods value chain

81% of Reinventors operate in an integrated way that cuts across siloes.

80% of Reinventors operate through multi-disciplinary teams that are cross-functional.

75% of Reinventors incentivize their employees based on shared outcomes.⁸

Mega processes create agility at scale

Amazon is an excellent example of a company well on its way to making this a reality. With full control (and data-driven visibility) over product development, marketing, merchandising, sales and fulfillment, the company can dynamically and seamlessly shift levers across all parts of the enterprise to optimize profitability.

For example, suppose the company misreads potential demand for a product in a local market and has excess inventory in local distribution centers. Rather than shipping these products elsewhere—an expensive proposition—the company can instead shift marketing, search and pricing to increase demand and offload excess inventory.



Insight to plan

Translating strategy into plans for action.

Consumer goods companies face increasing complexity, volatility and uncertainty—and a continued scarcity of resources. Strategic planning can no longer be an annual activity. As the world continues to change, strategies will need to be far more flexible to capture these new opportunities. Resilience and agility to survive requires dynamic and continuous decision-making and resource allocation to translate strategy into action—changing as the market changes.

Unfortunately, traditional planning approaches are generally siloed and inflexible, limiting their efficacy and stifling companies' ability both to predict and rapidly respond—the frequent conflicts between marketing, sales and supply chain plans are an obvious example. On a more basic level, the amount of data available is increasing exponentially and making it more difficult for overwhelmed leaders to make the right decisions. In our experience with clients, leaders are spending up to 800 hours per year simply preparing data for meetings.

In the past, leaders largely made decisions based on experience. Today, leaders have access to far more data to inform their decision-making, but they frequently tell us that they simply default to finding data that confirms their gut feel. Going forward, leaders will leap beyond data-driven decision-making to focus on executing. We call this “algorithmic leadership,” where the burden of insight generation and even decision-making increasingly shifts to AI, and every individual in the organization has unprecedented clarity on the next best action.

There are several tools and approaches that enable consumer goods companies to make this shift. For example, an enterprise digital twin enables consumer goods companies to simulate and optimize the entire value chain, providing real-time visibility over the business performance, integrating the functional plans of marketing, commercial, finance, supply chain and ESG. AI-enabled processes monitor patterns, trends and signals to flag deviations from the plan and suggest appropriate actions. Generative AI-enabled executive co-pilots make this possible by putting sophisticated insights into human terms so people can act.





Elastic, “always-on” strategic planning, optimal resource allocation—and a focus on execution

It’s already possible for companies to build a data-driven, AI-enabled process to predict and detect deviations from the plan, trigger alerts and suggest corrective or preventative actions. With the right infrastructure, advanced analytics and machine learning can tap into historical patterns, trends and future signals to drive more precise decisions than ever before. And instead of spending their time on data cleansing and analysis, workers will focus on continually improving the algorithms. Where we see the industry going next is in algorithmic decision-making and automated resource allocation to optimize financial, consumer/customer, employee and sustainable value.

Early AI success that signals further potential

“Decision cockpit” constructs that centralize weekly or even daily insights for executives are becoming more widespread. We have also been working with companies who are overlaying massive data sets with generative AI to allow executives to query financial and operational data through natural language chat interfaces. The next step will be ongoing identification of next best action at every level of the organization. This is so new that we haven’t yet spotted any pioneers in the consumer goods industry—but watch this space.

Value opportunities

This depth of awareness will enable consumer goods companies to become both more profitable and more sustainable. Consumer delight and customer loyalty would also get a boost as companies will be better able to deliver the right offerings and engagement at the right time and place. Empowering employees to make better decisions through exceptional tools and creating a culture of learning and innovation would improve engagement and retention throughout the workforce.



Innovate to scale

Creating desirable new solutions that people value.

Traditional consumer goods categories continue to mature, and breakthrough innovation is increasingly elusive. At the same time, consumer desires and expectations are becoming more and more sophisticated. Consumers are looking for solutions to human needs—not just incremental improvements to products. Differentiation increasingly depends on myriad factors such as serving a confusing set of human values, offering solutions with science-based benefits or reacting at lightspeed to viral trends. Meanwhile, consumer goods companies are still tethered to an outdated and cumbersome product innovation process. Today, 59% of consumer goods executives say it takes a year or more to adapt to changing consumer needs.⁹

The good news is that ever-expanding types of data and advancing technology are starting to provide solutions to this conundrum. Already, AI and generative AI are making innovation cycles adaptive, generating insights that evolve as quickly as people do and helping innovators invent radical new products, experiences and services. From our work with clients to date, we see as much as an 80% reduction in data processing time, which supports a 40% improvement in speed to market with new products and services.¹⁰

In-silico innovation in combination with 360°, real-time feedback from consumers dramatically reduces time in development and potential risk. Consumer goods companies are already using in-silico research and development (R&D) for ingredient discovery and product formulation. Companies are also using synthetic data to create digital twins of consumers to test and refine propositions.

While conversations tend to focus on ideation, let's not forget getting to scale. Too frequently, executives express frustration about their organizations' inability to scale innovation. The end-to-end approach can help. Stronger connections between continuous strategic planning and new product development (NPD) ensures that the latest market and consumer modeling actively informs product concepts. Seamless connections with marketing feed market and consumer insights directly back to NPD teams to enable tailored brand offerings and better sales figures. An integrated design-to-value process enables optimal profit-to-serve/carbon-to-serve—where collaboration from R&D through sourcing, sales and fulfillment optimizes decisions across the value chain for financial and sustainable value.

Impact of generative AI

25-50% faster time to market.





Real-time innovation that quickly turns trends into profit

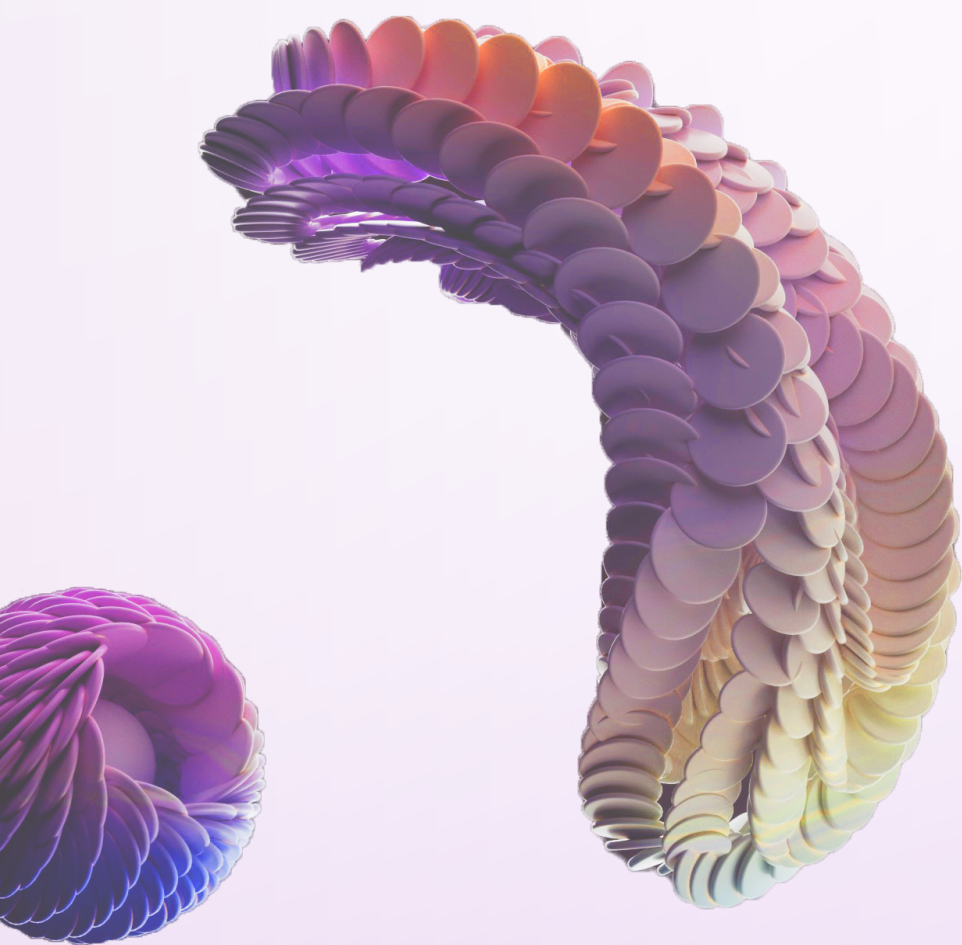
You may soon be able to get a clear overview of the implications of a new product across the entire value chain to ensure it will be both profitable and sustainable. AI and generative AI can synthesize real-time market and consumer insights to recommend which product features—like ingredients, packaging, recipes, and shelf presentations—are important to consumers and whether they are willing to pay for those features. Also, virtual simulation technologies will allow for rapid testing and prototyping to quickly validate profit-to-serve and carbon-to-serve metrics much earlier in the innovation process.

Early AI success that signals further potential

A global confectionary company is using new multi-physics simulation technologies to design and prototype new product packaging innovation, minimizing the need for extensive physical testing. It offers detailed insight into complex production phases, including wrapping, drop tests and failure scenarios. Early results have been promising, with a time reduction of up to 40% and almost 250 tons of plastic eliminated from the testing process.

Value opportunities

Near-term, the most value is found in a significant uptick in speed to market and reduced waste—both in lowered product fail rates and mitigating the ecological impact. There’s also extensive scope for reducing the cost of the product ideation and concept generation process. Looking ahead, generative AI can drive market expansion, improving the understanding of fast-changing consumer trends and expectations to drive breakthrough innovation.



Engage to advocate

Building enduring engagement with customers and consumers.

The combination of generative AI, other technologies and new ways of working will finally enable the realization of a long-promised dream: genuine consumer and customer relevance. Digital assistants will get ever closer to human-like performance, providing consumers, customers and salespeople with immediate and dynamic guidance that just gets more relevant as it interacts with the individual.

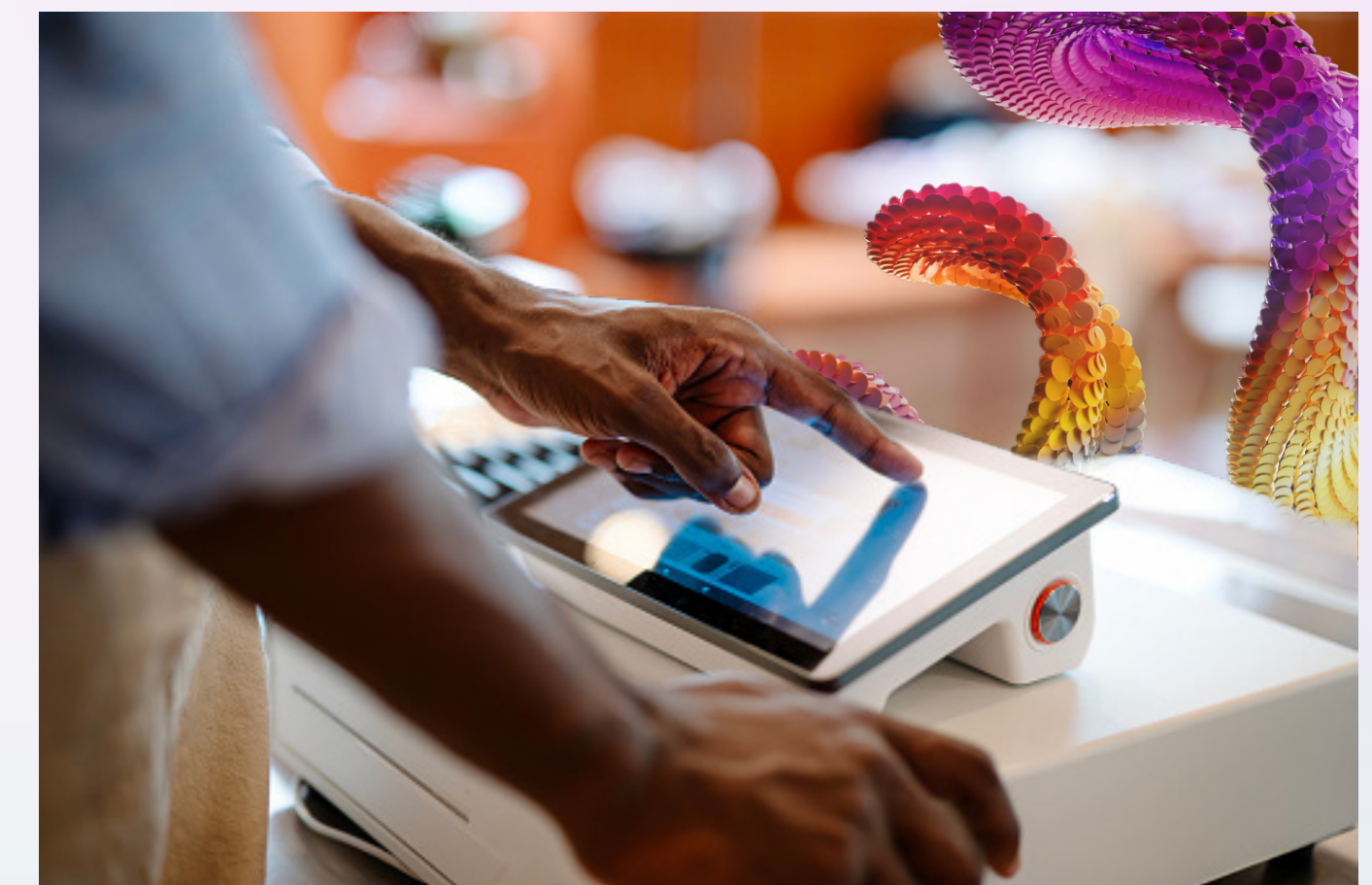
To realize this dream, companies must connect the full consumer journey from how they first alert a consumer to their existence all the way through to converting them into a lifelong advocate for their product or experience. This involves integrating marketing, sales and customer service to create seamless engagements, joining up with supply chain to fulfill the promise and optimize value to serve—while also creating a 360° link to product design that relentlessly enhances what they sell to remain relevant to their consumers as their lives change.

Reinventing the process will fundamentally change what each actor in the value chain does. Marketers automate much of the creative process and instead focus on making their messages more relevant to smaller and smaller consumer segments, cutting through the buying frustrations and abandoned baskets that litter today's retail landscape. Instead of waiting for sales calls, customers can place orders on B2B platforms at their convenience. Salespeople can then spend their in-person time with customers collaborating on local market growth strategies.

Impact of generative AI

15-25% increased consumer conversion rate.

35% improvement in customer NPS.



Hyper-personalized experiences aligned across consumer and customer

You can now craft hyper-personalized experiences that resonate powerfully both with customers and consumers, immediately, in any language—and on a scale that has previously been impossible. The most human of technologies we have ever seen, generative AI can deliver the right messages to the right people in the right moments, maximizing relevance for consumers and sales for customers.

Early AI success that signals further potential

Companies are already using generative AI to reinvent core marketing and sales activities. For example, a major food and beverage company is using generative AI to enhance online content, ensuring a relevant and high-quality consumer experience worldwide with a >80% productivity gain in content management and >30% higher conversion rate. A global alcoholic beverage company is empowering sales reps with an intelligent sales coach that offers actionable insights and trend predictions to guide their conversations, tailoring sales strategies to each salesperson's style and each customer's preferences. Looking ahead, companies are increasingly moving towards integrating these use cases to connect consumer behavior and desires with the most relevant content and product assortments and realize these with tailored value propositions for retailers.

Value opportunities

Behavioral, social and local market insights can be used to select the most relevant product assortments and refine value propositions delivered to retail customers. This leads to a more delighted consumer and drive unprecedented relevance and lifelong engagement. Generative AI and other technologies empower consumers and customers, while at the same time augmenting marketers and sales reps so they can focus on the value-adding activities they enjoy most. The financial impact: sales uplift of over 20%.



Plan to deliver

Real-time signals, fed throughout the supply chain for clear, actionable forecasting.

One of the single biggest table stakes for consumer goods companies is both physical and virtual on-shelf availability. When a consumer comes upon an empty shelf, they will likely stop looking for the brand and instead select the next best alternative. This can lead to a long-term switch to a competitor product, fundamentally destroying the lifetime value of the consumer.

Stockouts are most often a result of poor partner and cross-functional communication. Manufacturing “interprets” production requests from supply chain, producing what they *believe* will be needed; supply chain fails to collaborate sufficiently with customers, misreading what to deliver; and supply chain and customers themselves misunderstand consumer interest, providing the wrong assortment.

Unlike a year ago, generative AI now allows us to add unstructured insights (for example, from social media) to traditional transactional and behavioral data to develop far richer demand signals. Store and supply chain cooperation is enabled by next best action prompts,

supported by conversational AI, which enhances ecosystem speed and effectiveness. Supply chain and manufacturing operate as a demand-driven, fully integrated team, operating plants that monitor and adjust without human intervention, and prioritizing fulfillment to drive consumer and customer value, profitability and sustainability. In this landscape, the supply chain becomes an active driver for growth. Looking to the near future, consumer goods supply chains could soon be able to respond to market signals in real time, such that they can evaluate scenarios across functions and make decisions that ensure value and drive growth. For forecasting, generative AI adds a critical feature: a clear explanation of what AI-produced insights mean in real terms, which has the potential to save up to 80% of time taken to analyze.

In short, companies can realize the vision of enterprise planning with a focus on the core of the value chain: integrated business planning.

Impact of generative AI

2-5% improvement on-shelf availability (physical and virtual).





Consumer-centric supply chains delivering the right proposition in the right place

You may soon be able to incorporate demand data from specific geographic areas (for example, social listening, local events and viral trends) in combination with supply chain data (like available inventory and order patterns) to influence what a customer orders, rather than passively responding to them. This would enable supply chain teams to produce the right products and services, for the right locations, at the right time, to meet consumer demands effectively.

Early AI success that signals further potential

A global food and beverage company has connected its marketing and supply chain functions to respond to market signals in real time. Using advanced data analytics, it has been able to closely monitor consumer trends at a granular level, including by zip code. This enabled it to identify a demand trend for a specific fruit-flavored drink popular among Hispanic consumers in certain zip codes. In response, the company rapidly developed and targeted the distribution of the new product to those locations. This strategy not only increased beverage sales by 7% in those areas but also drove a 9% increase in its snack categories as well, exemplifying the benefits of a connected, responsive supply chain that works in tandem with marketing insights.

Value opportunities

In this case, customer confidence is boosted as precise responses to pockets of demand will better and more efficiently tap into growth opportunities. It also enables higher agility to optimally respond and adjust based on ever more volatile demand and supply conditions.



Five imperatives for end-to-end value chain reinvention

By and large, we find that consumer goods companies believe in the opportunity, but are increasingly frustrated with isolated experiments and siloed use cases. Instead, executives want to know how to reinvent, and are seeking to understand the pragmatic journey to realize holistic value.

We have defined five imperatives for successful reinvention:

01/ Lead with value

For most companies, implementing wholesale reinvention across the enterprise all at once is not a viable option—and the proliferation of disconnected proofs of concept across the organization is distracting and wasteful. The key is to focus on the greatest areas of value. For many consumer goods companies, this will include consumer and customer engagement, and the ability to fulfill this promise. Generative AI is the most human technology we have seen to date and significantly strengthens the value of end-to-end thinking. It allows us to communicate actions and connections in the most human of terms and across every language, enabling us to capitalize on the value of being joined up. Vitally, it can coach and provide feedback in ways that have never been possible before and this allows us to successfully undertake more complex sets of coordination across the value chain. Siloed behavior often reflects what people believe they can command and control—generative AI shifts the art of the possible by extending individuals' understanding and reach.

Consumer goods companies must take a value-led approach when deciding how and where to use generative AI and other emerging technologies to reinvent, taking full account of the costs and the returns on an ongoing basis. Consumer goods companies must examine the opportunities and define their own best path forward, aligning with their corporate strategy.

02/ Reinvent talent and ways of working

Success with this latest tech revolution requires leaders to set and guide a vision for reinventing work, reshaping the workforce and preparing workers for a generative AI world. Consumer goods companies must prioritize upskilling and developing their talent to empower influential employees in various functions. One key factor will be how time is spent and how roles might evolve when some tasks are automated and processes are not just augmented but fundamentally redesigned.

The move to end-to-end thinking and the embracing of generative AI represents the largest shift in ways of working that we have seen in our adult lifetimes. A successful evolution will require moving to a skills-based model and embedding lifelong learning across the organization.

03/ Close the gap on responsible AI

Leaders must commit to maintaining high standards of trust, transparency and sustainability in every AI-driven initiative. Concerns around privacy, potential bias in outputs and intellectual property are very real—and yet only 2% of executives feel they have the appropriate structures set up to manage these.¹¹ Responsible AI ensures that technology aligns with human values and protects people from negative impacts.



04/ Understand and develop an AI-enabled, secure digital core

Moving to end-to-end working needs to be mirrored in how a company architects and runs the data and technology needed to make new ways of working happen. Data and technology hold immense promise for facilitating connectivity throughout the enterprise, but being equipped to make the most of technology's capability means architecting a digital core that is coherent, secure and AI-enabled. To derive maximum value from generative AI, it's essential to elevate the IT suite and ensure that data and technology foundations are predicated on business value creation. For many consumer goods companies, this means clearing legacy technologies and understanding how to support and inform new technologies, with the right data in the right ways.

05/ Drive continuous reinvention

Change is constant, so reinvention never ends. Leaders cannot approach reinvention as a contained effort undertaken every few years, but must instead build the capability to continuously reinvent, making the ability to change a core part of the organizational DNA. To support the ongoing development of end-to-end processes, companies need to appoint end-to-end process owners—senior leaders who have the organizational influence to continue to drive ongoing reinvention.

Reinventors embrace the boundaryless enterprise. Organizations that continue to be dominated by a “four walls” mentality that resists both internal and external collaboration will increasingly lose out to those that embrace more agile ways of working. Boundaryless enterprises outperform the rest. You need to embrace this shift—now.

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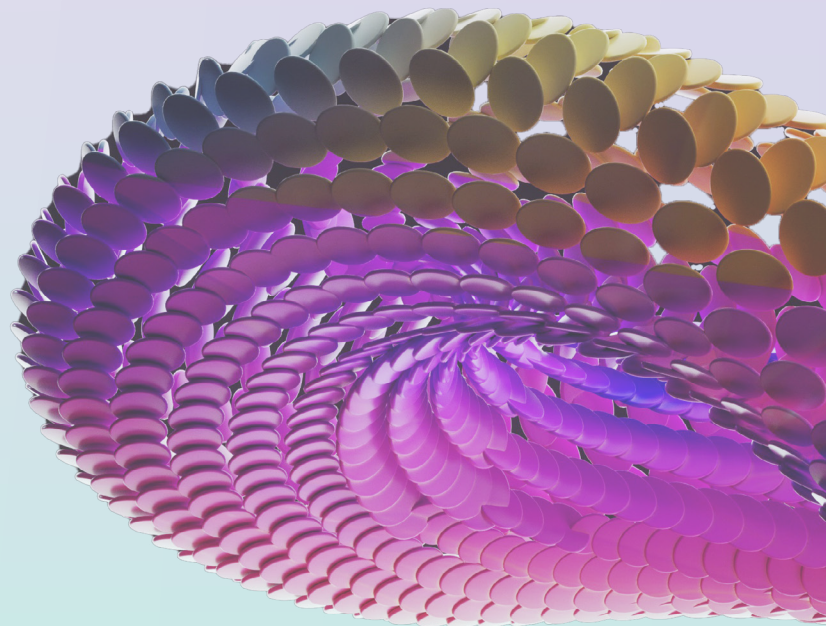


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All other data points in this report draw on our experience from across thousands of transformational client engagements and over 700 generative AI projects in which companies applied the technology to reinvent how they operate. The examples cited are drawn both from client work and from the wider world to bring to life the concepts we’re referencing. Wherever possible, we have cited sources.



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