

FINANCIAL TIMES

Does AI really save fund executives time?

Experts say technology is not silver bullet and can create 'more problems than it solves'

By Robert Van Egghen | 16 December 2025

2025 was the year when artificial intelligence moved from the hype of the conference stage and the screeds of LinkedIn influencers to a part of everyday life.

As large language models start to become as common a workplace tool as Microsoft Excel, so some of the promises made for the technology start to seem less utopian and more utilitarian.

In a recent report published by OpenAI, the ChatGPT creator said the technology was now saving workers 40-60 minutes per day, with the most frequent users gaining around 10 extra hours a week.

OpenAI said the technology was "not just helping people do the same work faster" but also "enabling people to do new kinds of work".

However, fund professionals say the time-saving benefits offered by large language models are not always as significant as it appears.

According to an Ignites Europe poll of 113 fund staff, almost a third say the technology does not save them time.

Xavier Meyer, chief executive of Aberdeen's investments arm, says the UK fund house estimated that rolling out AI in the workplace has only saved its employees about 20 minutes a day, but in reality could have been even less.

AI experts agree that the technology should not be viewed as a silver bullet that will suddenly lead to dramatic increases in workplace productivity.

"AI isn't a universal solution. It won't always save time and can even create complications," says Siobhan Noble, managing director of data and AI strategy at Carne, a fund service provider.

Noble says the "biggest risk" with AI is "organisations using it in the wrong places and creating more problems than they solve", such as bespoke investment decisions and client or regulatory negotiations.

"AI is proving most valuable in everyday operational tasks that drain productivity [...]. These incremental gains add up," she adds.

These tasks can include administrative tasks like summarising emails and reports, extracting insights from documents and processing data from unstructured files like PDFs.

Ulf Herbig, chair of the European Fund and Asset Management Association's AI taskforce, says: "In my day-to-day, AI collapses hours of research and preparation into minutes, especially where the work involves a multitude of documents and sources."

Herbig says "the biggest value [of AI] is that it turns noise into signal", meaning that "instead of manually gathering and organising material, I can spend my energy on evaluating things".

However, he says "AI doesn't save time when the underlying process or data model is unclear or poorly defined".

"It will simply generate mistakes faster," Herbig adds.

"High-stake areas" such as interpreting fund regulations "still require strong human oversight, which can offset efficiency gains".

"AI falls short when organisations expect it to replace expertise. Without the right human expert guidance and oversight, AI can produce output that looks convincing but isn't correct, which creates risks and [more work] rather than savings," Herbig says.

The fragmented and siloed nature of many asset managers' technology systems also means introducing AI tools "requires re-examining processes, data architecture and pipelines, controls, and governance frameworks" before any time-saving benefits begin to materialise.

Michael Horvath, sustainability leader at PwC Luxembourg, adds that the amount of human hours and operational resources required to introduce a new process or tool in the workplace is often forgotten when discussing the time-saving benefits of AI.

"The results [of the project] will save you time, but it will take a lot of time to get there," he says.

Horvath adds that the time-saving benefits of AI are more likely to accrue to senior executives as they should already have the knowledge and expertise to be able to determine whether the AI is "hallucinating" and producing inaccurate results.

"Where AI saves time is when you already have a sense of what is a good outcome.

"It is more complicated for people at a junior level to know that [...]. If you don't have a critical mindset it is easy to think everything ChatGPT produces is brilliant."

Oskar Åslund, chief strategy officer at AKJ, a tokenised fund platform, adds that while "AI slashes mundane information gathering from hours to seconds", employees must not forget the importance of the human element to achieve greater productivity from the technology.

He says: "Business is, to a large extent, relational – both internally and externally. In many situations, face time can enlighten, while a black box can send you off course."