VISIUM

[A PRACTICAL ROADMAP]

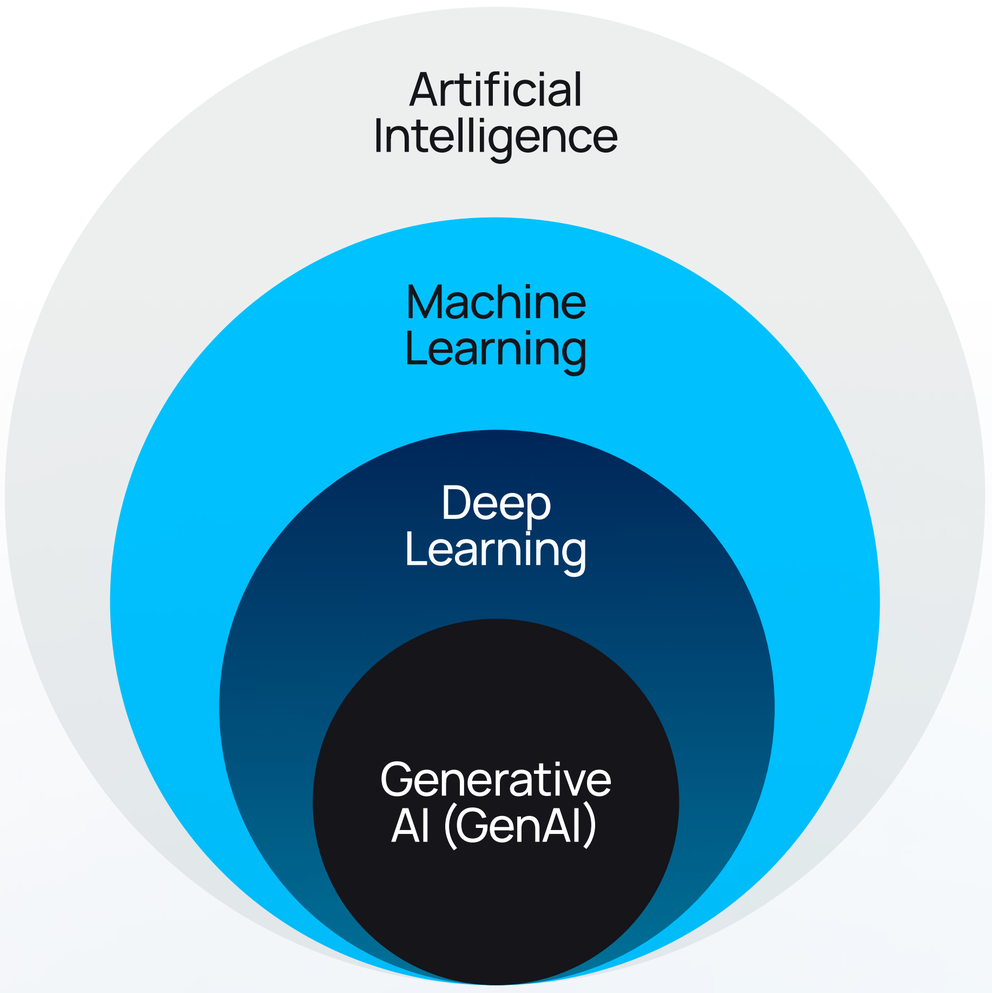
The C-level guide to kickstart your AI journey

Content overview

Many companies feel overwhelmed when beginning their AI journey, and as a leader, you may feel the same amid a sea of information and recommendations.

This guide will help you cut through the noise and navigate your AI journey one step at a time.

AI glossary



Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Refers to a field of computer science that creates machines capable of human-like tasks, such as perception, reasoning, planning, learning, and decision-making.

Example: AI optimizes scheduling for tasks like employee shifts or transportation.

Machine Learning (ML)

A branch of AI where machines learn to solve problems by generalizing patterns from provided examples.

Example: ML detects patterns and anomalies to identify fraud.

Deep Learning

A specialized area within machine learning using brain-like neural networks to process complex data such as text or images.

Example: Neural networks process camera sensory data for autonomous driving.

Generative AI (GenAI)

A category of deep learning algorithms focused on creating realistic content from data such as text, images, or audio.

Example: Popular examples are ChatGPT (for text) and DALL-E (for images).

AI Glossary

Understand AI - from data to decisions

Unlike programming that operates on deterministic rules and predefined instructions, AI, particularly Machine Learning (ML), uses a probabilistic approach. Instead of following rigid rules, AI systems learn patterns from data, make predictions, and adapt over time based on feedback and observed outcomes. This adaptive, data-driven method allows AI to handle uncertainty and continuously improve, making it fundamentally different from the static, rule-bound nature of traditional computing.

AI's data dependency - balancing data and expert knowledge

The data needs of AI projects vary based on the specific problem and algorithm used. While having large amounts of labeled data can reduce the need for some types of expertise, expert knowledge remains key in building relevant and usable AI solutions. Experts provide the domain-specific insights needed to structure data, define meaningful objectives, and interpret results accurately. When data is limited, expert involvement becomes even more critical to ensure that AI models are not just technically sound but also tailored to the needs of end users.

Harnessing AI - key metrics for model performance and business value

The true measure of an AI model's success is measured by its technical performance but also by the business value it creates. To effectively assess AI models, it's important to distinguish between model-specific metrics and those that reflect broader business impact. For example, in a classification task like defect detection in quality control, model-specific metrics such as false positives (detecting a defect when none exists) and false negatives (missing an actual defect) are crucial for understanding model performance. However, the ultimate goal is to connect these technical metrics with business-relevant outcomes like operational efficiency and key financial outcomes like cost reduction, revenue growth, and improved profitability.

AI Glossary

Humans AI - augmentation, not replacement

While AI can mimic specific human tasks, it is still just one tool in the broader toolbox for creating value. AI can assist in thinking, planning, and decision-making processes, but it relies on human guidance to define, refine, and apply these capabilities effectively. This distinction is crucial for leaders to understand; AI accelerates and amplifies what humans can achieve but does not replace the nuanced judgment, creativity, and contextual understanding that only humans bring.

Scaling AI - the need for full pipeline support

Unlike traditional software, AI cannot be separated from its data, making it hard to break the system into smaller modules that can be easily managed or updated separately. This challenge is amplified by the lack of specialized tools for managing AI workflows, often turning simple AI pilots into unexpectedly complex scaling efforts, sometimes costing 10-20 times more than the pilot phase. Scaling AI requires continuous management of the entire so-called ML pipeline — a process that oversees every step from data preparation and model training to deployment and user interaction. Mastering AI at scale remains one of the biggest hurdles in business today.

Ownership of AI - make vs. buy

The decision to develop AI in-house or purchase an external solution isn't straightforward due to factors like strategic value, data ownership, customization, performance of external solutions, and total cost of ownership. In-house development offers control and tailored solutions but requires substantial investment in expertise, infrastructure, and continuous maintenance. External solutions provide quicker access to advanced capabilities and ongoing vendor support but may involve compromises on data privacy, integration complexities, and adaptability to specific needs. These implications, especially with their strong financial component, must be carefully considered to align with your business strategy.

Navigating AI ethics - mitigation bias

Ethical AI goes beyond compliance; it's about building systems that are fair, transparent, and aligned with your company's values. Addressing bias is crucial, as AI decisions are deeply tied to the quality and biases of its training data. Principles like 'equal treatment' require human intervention to define fairness, making us rethink whether treating groups 'on average' is sufficient. This underscores the critical role of human judgment as a safeguard, but also as an active guide in ensuring AI decisions are contextually aware and aligned with the broader ethical goals of the organization.

The AI opportunity

Most companies are still experimenting with AI, facing challenges in strategy and execution.

However, its impact is clear. AI can boost EBITDA by 20-30%, according to McKinsey and Accenture.

AI isn't just a technical upgrade; it transforms businesses at every level. Tools like LLM chatbots (e.g., ChatGPT) are changing how we work and learn. For companies, AI drives efficiency, sparks innovation, and reshapes operations, enhancing competitiveness. At the industry level, AI optimizes processes from R&D to distribution, redefining whole value.

To keep in mind

AI projects differ from traditional IT initiatives due to their experimental nature. The outcomes are not always guaranteed, and success often hinges on iterative experimentation and adaptation. Effective AI adoption requires significant data science expertise, strategic planning, and a shift in how leaders engage with data science.

Implications for the CFO function

Implications for the CFO function

Core responsibilities

01 Budget & investment

While there's growing experience with AI's performance across various applications, implementing AI solutions carries inherent uncertainties and outcomes are still highly dependent on the quality and quantity of data.

AI investments should be treated like innovation projects, using a phased approach with clear milestones (e.g., gates or sprints). This requires close collaboration between users, development teams, and finance from the outset.

The overall budget should be stable, but decisions on the project's direction , including changes or potential termination, should be made at each milestone.

Unlike traditional IT investments, AI projects should not follow rigid schedules or predefined deliverables due to their inherent nature.

02 Planning & forecasting

Many of the tasks within a CFO's scope, such as planning, forecasting, risk management, order processing, and invoicing, are highly suitable for AI-driven automation.

AI is now essential for detecting internal transaction fraud and ensuring compliance. It excels at identifying irregular patterns and outliers in financial or market data and is widely adopted in financial processes.

CFOs are ideally positioned to lead AI adoption due to their team's strong statistical expertise, which helps in accurately interpreting AI outputs.

This expertise equips CFOs to showcase practical AI applications to their peers, enhancing data-driven decision-making within internal processes.

Implications for the CFO function

Example of AI in action: Use cases

Use cases	Description
Cash flow management	AI enhances capital flow management by accurately forecasting capital needs, optimizing liquidity with predictive insights, and detecting financial risks early. This enables the CFO to make proactive, data-driven decisions, enhancing financial resilience and supporting strategic planning.
Compliance monitoring	AI can provide sophisticated forecasting models that integrate market data, internal financial trends, and risk indicators. This enhances the accuracy of financial forecasts, optimizes budget allocation, and aligns financial planning with strategic goals.
Smart contract and report automation	AI streamlines the execution of contracts and automates report generation, based on predefined conditions, ensuring compliance and efficiency, significantly reducing the need for manual intervention.

Cash flow optimization using AI

The challenge

Our client's manual cash flow forecasting, conducted three times a year, faced declining performance and was a resource-intensive process that lacked scalability.

The solution

Visium implemented a cash flow intelligence tool that automated data analysis and forecasting, achieving over 95% accuracy. The tool provided real-time adjustments and a simulation dashboard, enabling strategic decision-making and quarterly updates that aligned forecasts with business objectives.

The outcome

- Achieved CHF 1 million in annual cost savings through automated forecasting.
- Streamlined financial workflows and accelerated cash inflows due to increased accuracy and reliability.
- Enhanced working capital management through greater visibility and insights into cash flow patterns.

Revenue forecasting using AI

The challenge

Our client, an international leader in the beverage industry, faced challenges with misaligned targets and suboptimal decision-making due to inaccurate forecasts. They needed a dynamic forecasting solution capable of generating daily to yearly revenue predictions across global, zone, and market levels.

The solution

Visium implemented an AI-driven forecasting model that integrates Google Analytics Premium data to track and forecast revenue performance. The model considers various behavioral segments (Bouncers, Lookers, Shoppers, Buyers) and detailed sales operations data. The solution was designed to easily connect to Big Query, ensuring scalability and more precise data handling as new data sources become available.

The outcome

- Enhanced revenue predictions across all timeframes.
- Improved alignment with strategic and financial targets.
- Delivered a scalable Integration, ensuring precise forecasts as data sources evolved.

About Visium

Visium is a leading Swiss AI & Data consultancy helping enterprises turn their most strategic AI initiatives into measurable business outcomes. Since 2018, we've delivered over 250 solutions for global leaders like Roche, Novartis, Nestlé, and dsm-Firmenich; helping them drive efficiency, unlock new revenue streams, and scale solutions that deliver long-term value.

Built on a foundation of ethical innovation, our mission is to make AI work for business, people, and long-term impact.

70+

Engineers and consultants throughout Europe

50+

Happy enterprise clients

250+

AI & data engagements

Pan-European presence

Recognized leaders

2nd fastest growing company in Europe by Financial Times

Our partners

Academia

Technology

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AI initiatives delivering real impact at scale

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