

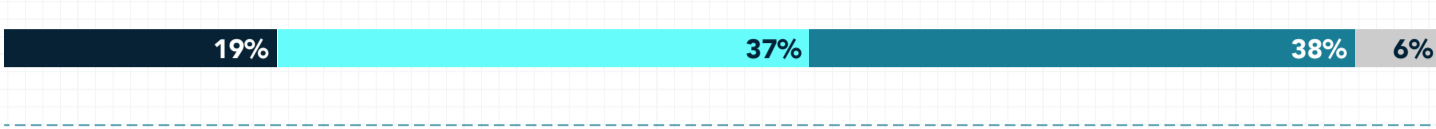
How sales leaders are using AI today

Our survey of leaders in sales about their use of AI shows that nearly **20% say their companies are not yet using AI**—and more than half think their companies are adopting AI too slowly. In order to increase their capabilities, these leaders most often say they are developing talent internally.

Separate surveys explored the perspectives of chief people officers; chief marketing officers; chief legal officers; chief strategy officers; chief supply chain and operating officers; chief digital, technology, or information officers; and chief AI officers. Other survey reports and other insights on leadership and AI can be found on heidrick.com.

Usage is widespread—but most leaders want to move even faster

The majority of sales executives say their companies are using AI in at least some capacity, though **nearly 20% say that their companies are not yet using AI**—a higher share than most peers.

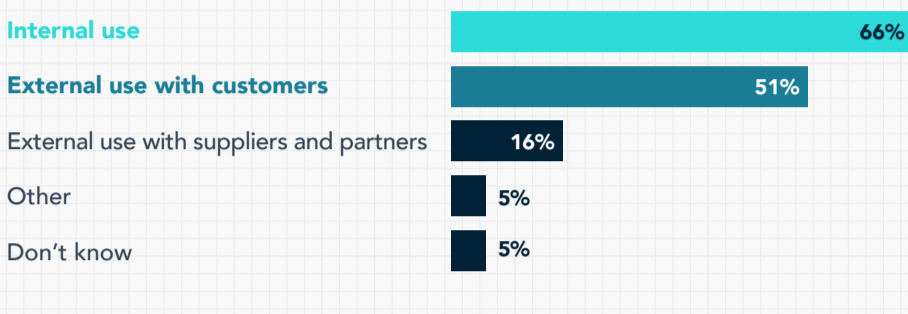


And more than half of sales executives say their **companies are adopting AI too slowly**, which is similar to most peers.



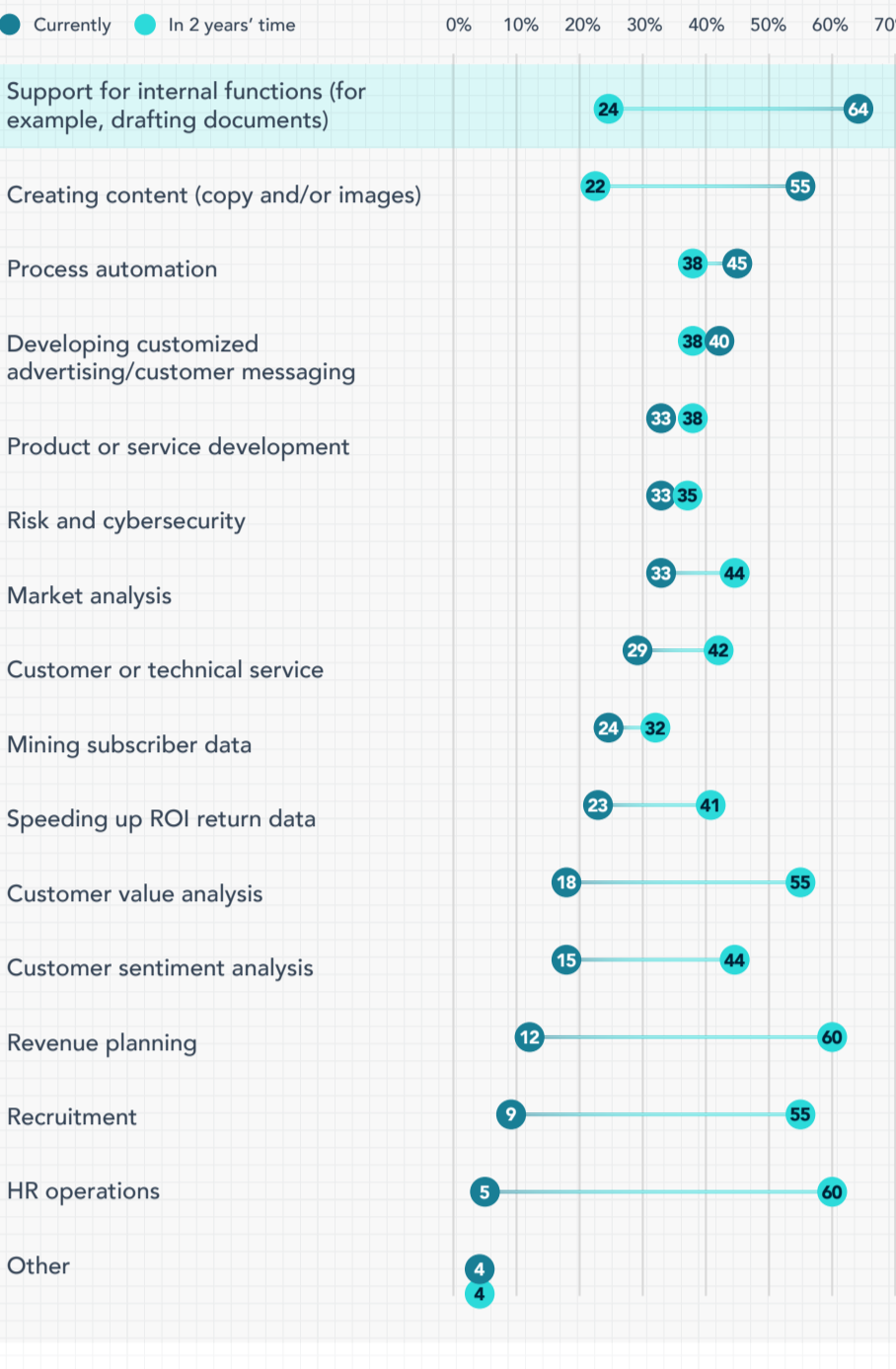
A focus on internal use and productivity gains

Two-thirds of sales leaders say they are **focused on AI for internal use**, similar to peers, but **more than half for external use with customers**, higher than most other functional leaders and tied with marketers...



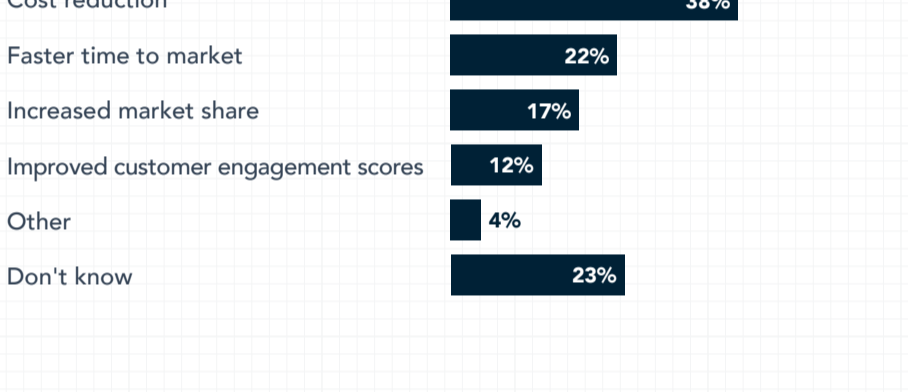
...with nearly two-thirds seeking opportunities to support their **internal functions**. Across marketing, sales, and strategy officers, content creation was also a frequent use for AI.

Looking two years ahead, notable shares of **sales leaders expect the biggest increases in the function's use of AI will be in revenue planning, HR operations and recruitment, and customer value analysis**.



Measuring ROI

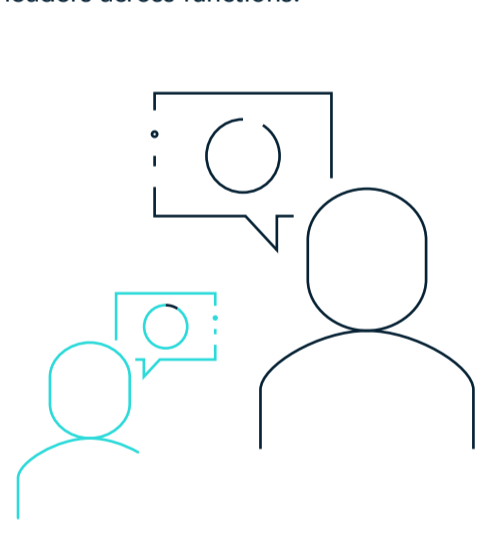
Despite the hype about AI and how quickly companies are adopting it, sales leaders, as well as most of their peers across functions, indicate that their companies aren't investing just to keep up with peers: they are **measuring success based on their goals, as they would any other investment**.



Who's taking the lead?

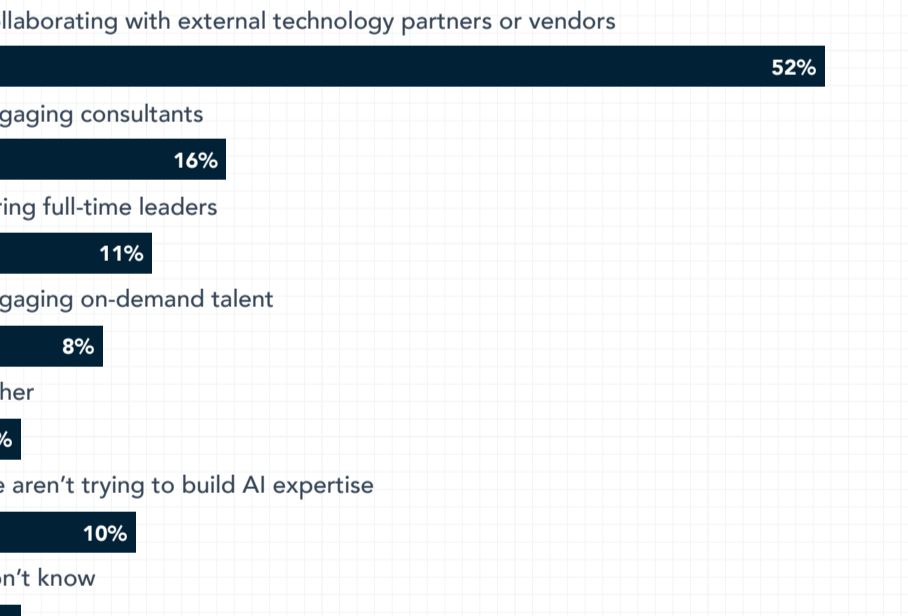
Across functions, the person who is most often cited as owning AI strategy is the chief information, technology, or digital officer. **About 10% say it's the CEO. And just over 10% say no one.**¹

Forty percent say the CEO is involved in setting AI policies, and just over 60% say the digital leader is involved. There's little consistency among survey respondents in who else is involved, though general counsels and chief information security officers are cited more often than most other leaders by leaders across functions.

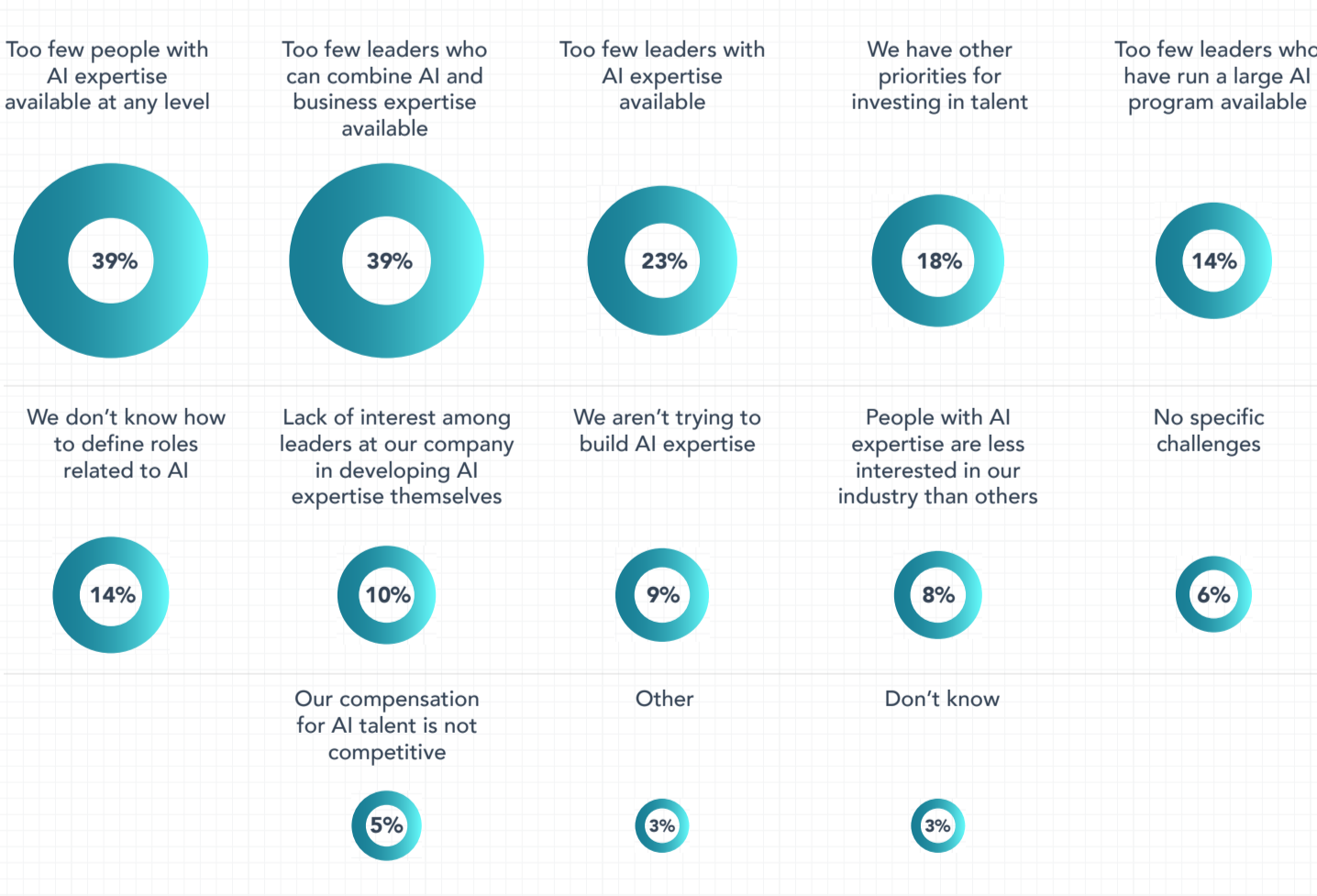


Finding AI expertise for sales

Nearly 60% of sales leaders say they are building AI expertise for the function by developing it internally. Developing internal talent is followed by collaborating with external partners or vendors. Hiring remains less frequent, mostly because expertise remains hard to find. Most functional peers' views are similar.



Sales leaders most often say there are too few people with AI expertise available at any level, and that there are also too few leaders available who can combine AI and business expertise.



Considerations for leaders

Across functions, it's still hard for companies to find the AI talent they need. As leaders seek to use AI for a broadening range of tasks and projects—eventually rewiring business processes across the enterprise—we expect high demand for AI-specific expertise at all levels to continue for three to six years. In the long run, it seems likely demand will follow a pattern similar to that in earlier waves of computing innovation, from personal computing to cloud, in which specific technical expertise was in high demand during the transition, but then declined as the relevant knowledge became a part of every person's role. In other words, we expect that basic working knowledge of AI will be as fundamental an expectation for senior leaders as being digitally savvy is today.

That said, we also expect every enterprise will have a senior leader responsible for the AI strategy and for AI platforms and tools. This executive may or may not have a chief AI officer title.

About the research

In spring 2024, we surveyed 1,894 executives: 518 executives in finance; 401 executives in human resources; 153 executives in legal; 335 executives in marketing; 93 executives in sales; 90 executives in strategy; and 304 executives in supply chain and operations. This survey had a global reach; respondents represent the full range of industries, company revenue levels, and various company ownership structures.

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