

REPORT

Leading the next era of digital experience

Insights from 1,009 enterprise leaders on what's blocking digital experience, and what to do next



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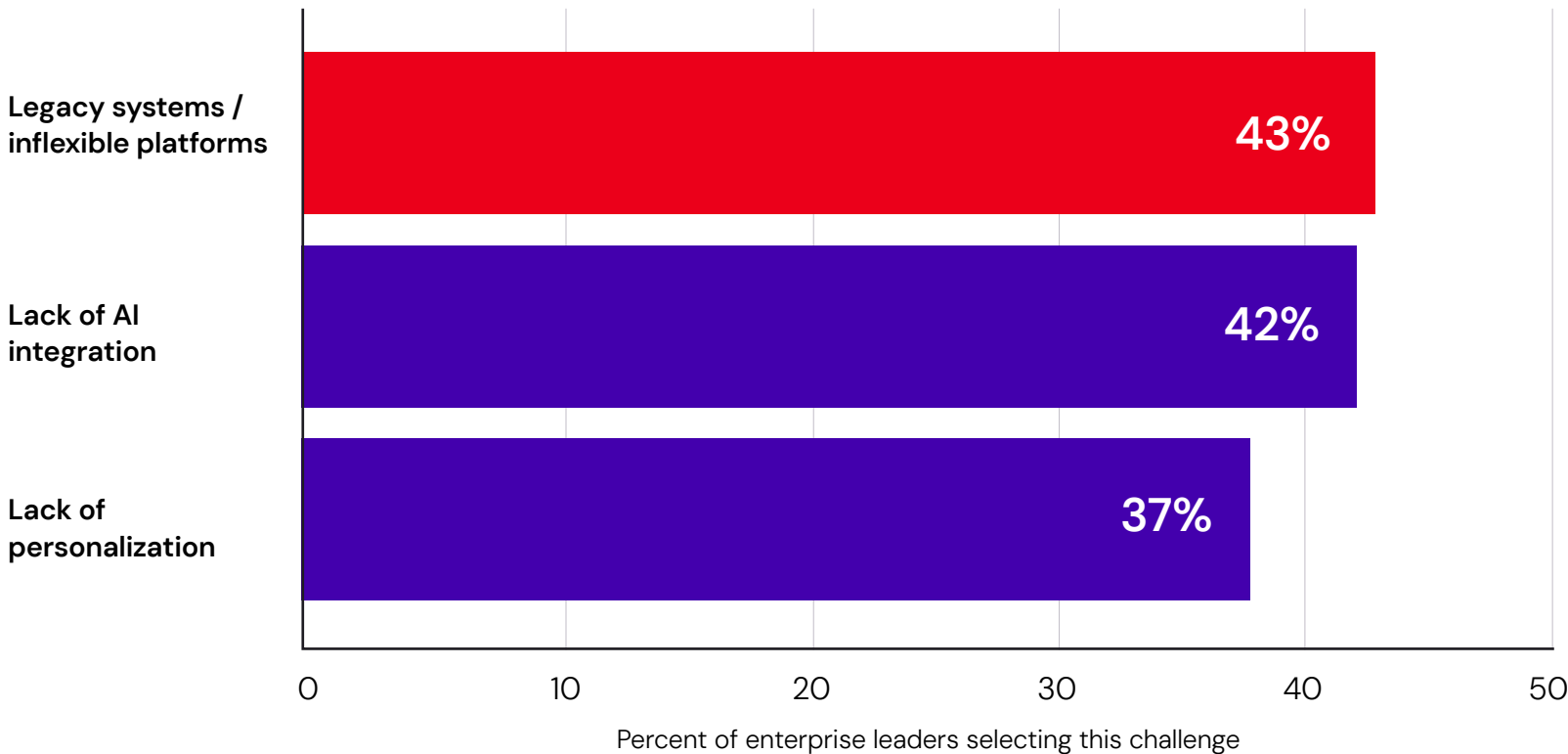
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Executive summary

Digital experience is being reshaped by intelligence, integration, and trust. Insights from 1,009 senior leaders across 10 industries and four regions reveal a shared reality: technology keeps advancing, but connection still decides who moves fastest. This report explores how organizations are redefining digital experience and growth in an AI-driven economy, and why connection has become the defining skill of modern leadership.

AI now sits at the center of digital transformation, changing how businesses grow and how customers engage. Yet progress is uneven. 43% of leaders say legacy systems block innovation, 42% struggle to integrate AI, and 37% find personalization out of reach. The challenge isn't knowing what's next—it's connecting what's already here.

Top challenges blocking high-quality digital experiences



As digital experience becomes the primary driver of competitiveness, the next stage of enterprise growth depends on how well leaders connect technology, people, and purpose to value across every touchpoint. Transformation demands alignment; that's what connects the tools, teams, and data that make innovation real.

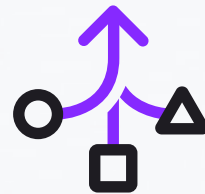


What matters most



Connection is the new competitive edge.

55% of leaders say they're already seeing signs they're falling behind competitors on digital experience, and 61% admit they're struggling to close the gap between customer expectations and current experiences.



AI's value depends on alignment, not adoption.

43% still can't prove the business value of their digital experience investments. The next stage of growth depends on connecting data, systems, and teams around shared goals, not just adopting new technology.



Trust turns technology into traction.

In an era of automation and algorithmic decision-making, trust can be measured. Enterprises that lead with transparency, accessibility, and ethical design see deeper loyalty and stronger brand equity.

1 Connect what you have

Nearly all leaders (97%) agree that digital experience orchestration is essential to their strategy over the next 2–3 years, yet 60% say they are not equipped to deliver it at scale. The path forward begins by aligning what you already have. Connecting data, systems, and teams to create one shared view of the customer.

97% of leaders say digital experience orchestration will play a crucial role in their overall strategy over the next 2–3 years.

Readiness is not a one-time initiative; it’s a discipline of alignment. When your enterprise moves in sync, intelligence scales with intention. Alignment transforms AI from a standalone tool into the connective layer that drives creativity and growth; readiness is how the future is built.



Quick win

Identify one duplicated or disconnected data source and merge it with your main system. A single integration can reveal immediate value.



Next moves

Map your current capabilities and eliminate friction between systems so you can define a unified vision for digital experience. Create a connection blueprint, mapping data flows, dependencies, and ownership to identify 3–5 quick wins to reduce system friction.



② Make AI work for you, not instead of you

AI is no longer a single tool or trend; it's the operating layer that links data, decisions, and customer experience. Yet its impact depends entirely on how leaders deploy it.

89% of leaders believe AI agents will soon be essential for real-time, multi-channel engagement.

94% of leaders expect AI agents to speed campaign execution and 90% believe AI agents will scale personalization. Despite this optimism, many organizations risk turning AI into another silo—automating without alignment or deploying models without meaning.

Responsible AI leadership means designing systems that are transparent, explainable, and guided by purpose. When people understand *why* automation makes a decision, they trust *how* it does.

Even the most advanced intelligence means little if it can't be discovered or trusted. Visibility ensures your innovations surface where credibility meets curiosity.



Next moves

Anchor every AI use case in a clear business and customer purpose. Form an AI ethics board to define transparent model criteria and integrate explainability dashboards into decision workflows. Use AI to simplify complexity, amplify human creativity, and deliver experiences that move as fast as your customers, without losing clarity or control.



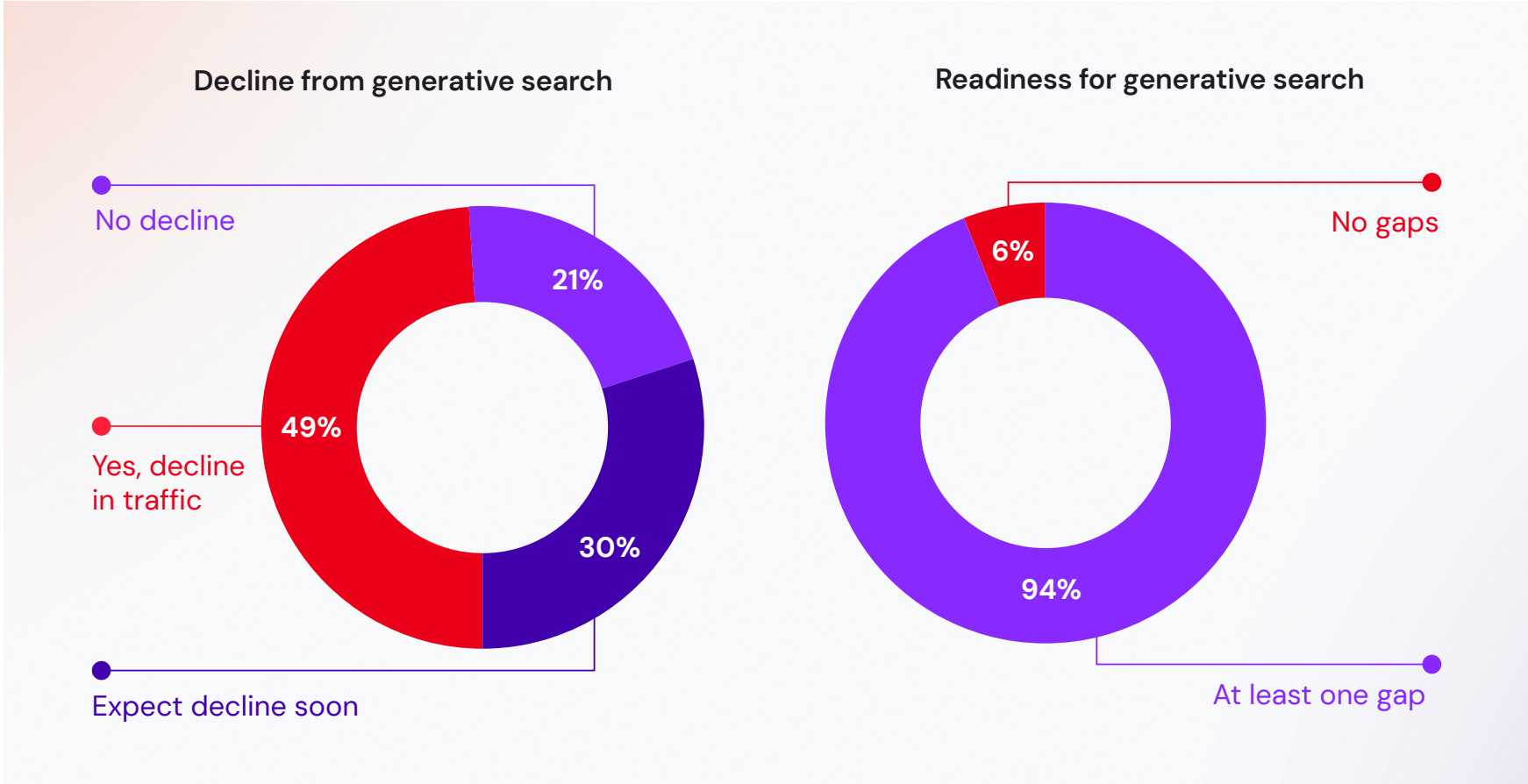
How to form an ethics board

Form a small, cross-functional group from data, legal, marketing, and customer teams. Set three guiding principles: transparency, fairness, accountability. Assign owners to review AI use cases and meet quarterly to track risk and impact.



3 Be found and trusted

Discovery has changed, and visibility must change too. Almost half of enterprise leaders (49%) report lower visibility in search due to AI summaries or zero-click results. 94% say they have at least one gap in AI search optimization.



In an AI-first world, brands must structure content for conversational and contextual discovery. Metadata, context, and narrative now determine whether information surfaces or disappears in the age of machine interpretation.



Next moves

To move forward—rebuild visibility through clarity. Audit how your brand and content appear in AI-driven discovery, structure content for conversational search using schema markup and narrative context, and pilot zero-click optimization to strengthen credibility and consistency across emerging channels.

Checklist: Optimize for AI-driven discovery

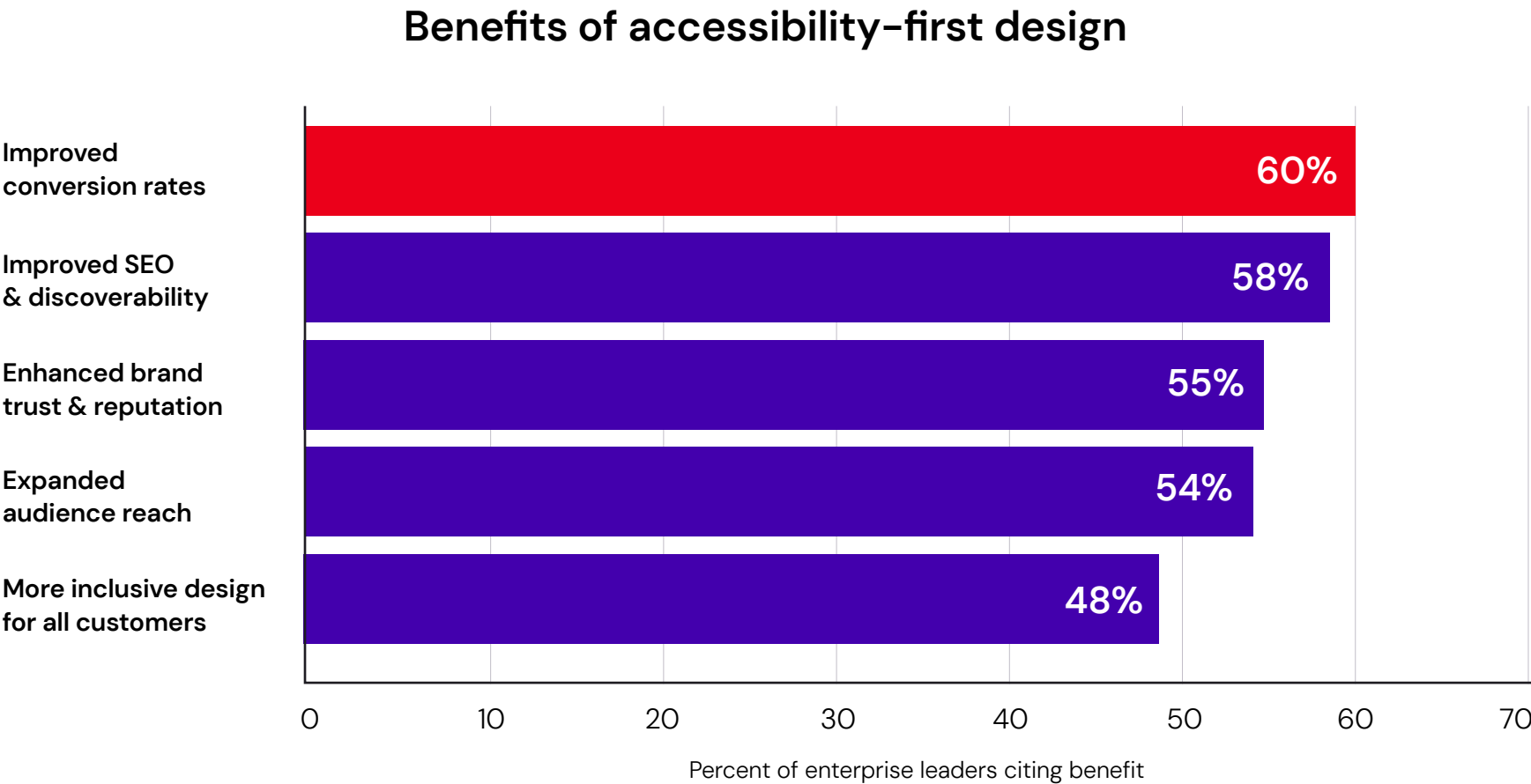
Winning in an AI-first search era means thinking beyond rankings and optimizing for recognition, clarity, and intent. Here are the seven moves every brand should make to stay visible and relevant:

- ☐ **Create fresh, original content:** Become the source AI models reuse most.
- ☐ **Structure content for machines:** Use schema, semantic markup, and clean HTML.
- ☐ **Align with intent:** Capture high-value, ready-to-act audiences with conversational content.
- ☐ **Build authority across the web:** Strengthen trust through citations and credibility signals.
- ☐ **Expand your content footprint:** Increase visibility beyond your own channels.
- ☐ **Add rich, multimodal experiences:** Incorporate video, images, and audio for deeper engagement.
- ☐ **Measure AI-specific performance:** Move beyond traffic metrics to show real visibility and impact.

Discovery is only powerful when it leads everyone in. Inclusion transforms visibility into value, ensuring every experience is accessible and intuitive.

4 Design for everyone

Make accessibility a growth strategy. Leaders who prioritize inclusion rather than treat it as a ‘box-ticking exercise’ see measurable returns. 70% say accessibility goes beyond compliance—and we risk falling behind if we don’t prioritize it, 60% see higher conversion and 58% see better search visibility. More than half (55%) see stronger brand trust.



Inclusive design expands reach and deepens loyalty. When experiences are designed for everyone, they become smoother, simpler, and more trusted for all.

Inclusive experiences open doors, but optimization keeps them open. The most connected enterprises learn, refine, and advance with every interaction.



Next moves

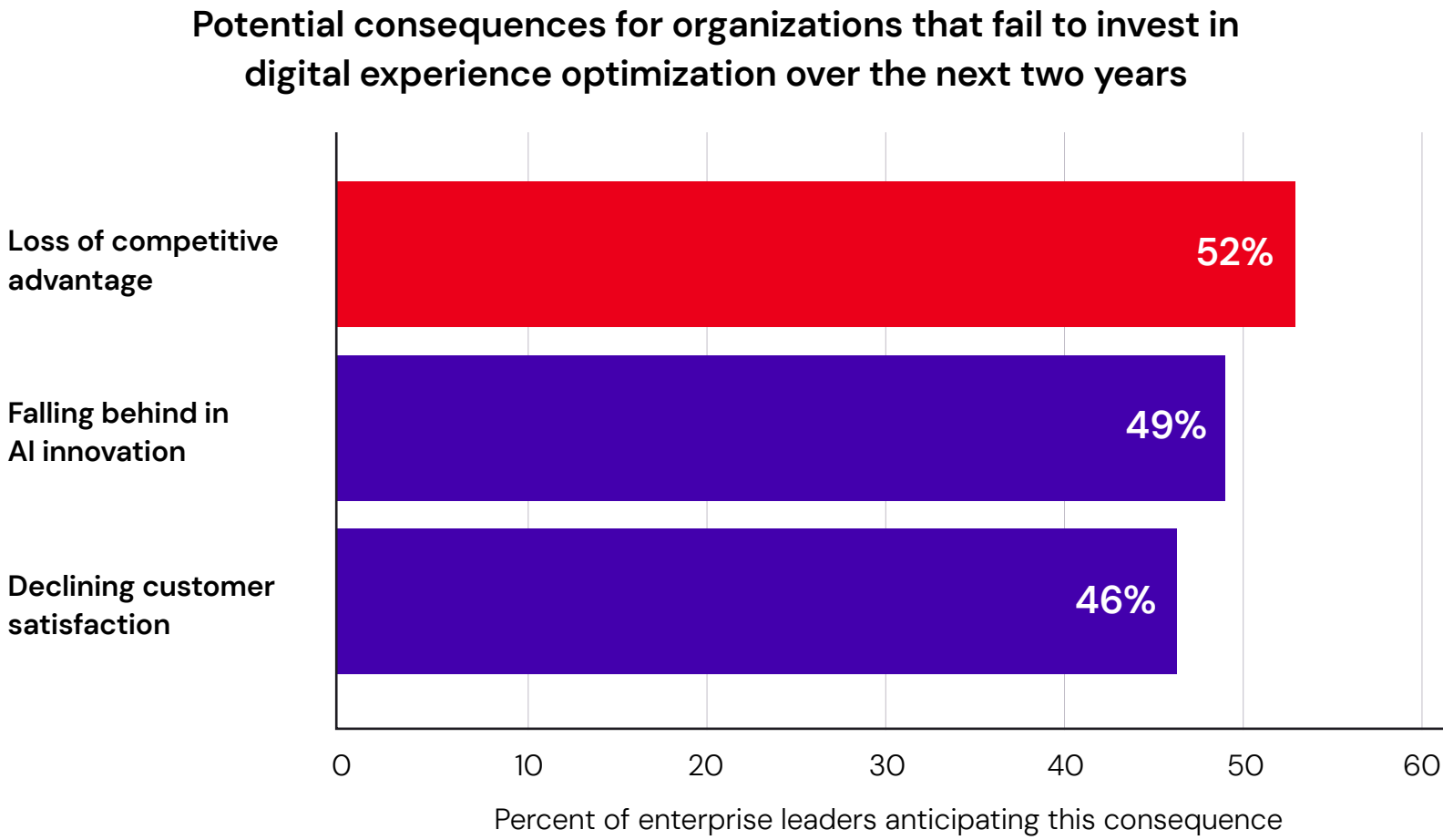
Build accessibility into every design standard and treat inclusion as a core measure of brand performance. Review Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.2 and set KPIs for accessible engagement that incorporate those recommendations.





5 Keep improving

Progress depends on continuous learning, yet 94% of leaders say their organizations struggle to optimize at scale—constrained by unclear ROI (47%), disconnected tools (46%), and widening skill gaps (40%).



The most adaptive organizations treat experimentation as culture. They build teams that test, measure, and evolve continuously—turning every customer interaction into an opportunity to refine performance. Optimization builds performance and trust sustains momentum. Every improvement strengthens the integrity that keeps customers coming back.



Quick win

Pick one customer touchpoint and test a simple change (a headline, layout, or offer). Observe the change, then use real results to guide your next decision.



Next moves

Replace static project milestones with learning milestones. Implement a quarterly experimentation calendar, and reward curiosity and iteration in your teams to ensure optimization becomes a shared habit.

6 Build trust

Trust is the most powerful currency of the connected enterprise. In an era defined by automation and algorithmic decision-making, trust determines whether technology drives adoption or resistance. Every digital experience, every click, recommendation, or AI-generated interaction either strengthens or weakens the bond between brand and customer.

Trust is measurable. It builds from every decision you make and every experience you design.

Enterprises that lead with transparency, accessibility, and ethical design see measurable returns: higher conversion, broader reach, and deeper loyalty.

When every decision communicates integrity, trust stops being a goal and becomes your greatest competitive advantage.



Quick win

Publish a short, plain-language statement on how customer data is collected and used. Visible transparency builds credibility faster than any campaign.



Next moves

Lead with clarity and consistency. Publish data-use transparency statements and align your brand voice with the ethical AI principles established by your AI board and the recommendations of external industry leaders. Commit to building systems that are explainable, inclusive, and fair.



7 Grow through connection

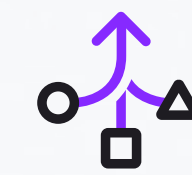
You already know the priorities: AI, orchestration, data, accessibility and trust. What separates leaders now is not the knowledge but the execution. The ability to connect what they have, empower their teams, and build experiences that earn trust at every step.

Lead with confidence by leading with connection. Align your systems and teams. Apply AI with purpose. Design for inclusion. Build trust through transparency. Make optimization a daily habit. Every connection you create, between teams, technologies, and customers, compounds into growth.

The future will not belong to those with the most technology but to those who use it to connect most meaningfully. The leaders who unite intelligence with integrity and imagination will not just keep pace with change; they will shape what comes next.



Four leadership essentials



1. Orchestrate before you optimize

Align people, platforms, and priorities before scaling innovation. True readiness comes from building a foundation where data, systems, and teams move together.



2. Make AI human-centered

Use automation to enhance creativity, not replace it. Build systems that are explainable, fair, and built on purpose.



3. Design for inclusion

Embed transparency, accessibility, and learning into every decision. When experiences are built for everyone, they become simpler, stronger, and more trusted.



4. Build trust into every decision

Lead with openness and consistency, ensure systems are explainable and fair, and treat transparency as a performance standard. Every clear decision compounds into long-term confidence.

About Sitecore

Sitecore is a global leader in AI-enabled digital experience software. Trusted by thousands of global brands and supported by one of the world's largest digital experience communities, Sitecore helps organizations design experiences for the world beyond the website, with the flexibility of customizable SaaS and the scale of a global ecosystem.

Learn more at sitecore.com.