



# Breaking legacy application chains with AI: 10 key takeaways

IDC virtual roundtable

**T**he urgent need for digital agility in today's business landscape highlights the critical role of AI in transforming legacy systems. At an exclusive virtual roundtable, Pete Marston from IDC along with Dwayne Allen and Manju Naglapur from Unisys met with a small group of industry leaders. What resulted was a dynamic exchange about leveraging AI for modernizing, optimizing and enhancing legacy applications.

The following key takeaways were distilled from this dialogue, offering practical knowledge and forward-thinking strategies in AI-driven modernization.

## 1. AI-driven modernization across industries

Industries are leveraging AI for holistic business transformation, process optimization and enhanced customer engagement. This trend signifies a shift from traditional operational methods to AI-centric strategies, driving efficiencies and competitive advantages. This shift is particularly evident in sectors like healthcare, finance and retail, where AI is revolutionizing everything from patient care to customer service and risk assessment.

## 2. Strategic integration of AI

Integrating AI requires a nuanced approach, from data optimization to advanced applications, with transparency to ensure stakeholder engagement. This strategic layering of AI technologies facilitates smoother transitions and aligns AI capabilities with business objectives. This approach helps mitigate resistance to change by clearly demonstrating the benefits and practical applications of AI within the organization.

## 3. The evolution of application portfolios

Organizations are expanding their application portfolios, driven by the need for improved decision-making and customer interaction. This expansion reflects a growing dependence on digital solutions to meet various business challenges and customer expectations. In addition, an increase in diverse software tools demonstrates a strategy to harness data more effectively and deliver more personalized, responsive services to customers.



IDC has found that organizations are relying more upon artificial intelligence to support a wide variety of application lifecycle activities. When it comes to the modernization of legacy systems, IDC has found that many organizations are leveraging AI to not only support the automation of systematic tasks like applying machine learning to support regression testing also to help target where to put attention for deeper modernization strategy work, using generative AI for analytics development, code documentation and code conversion.

In the next three years, IDC expects AI utilization will grow more intense as enterprises look to harness the benefits of generative AI and conversational AI further to catapult ongoing application lifecycle management competencies to new levels."

**Pete Marston**

Research Director, Worldwide Intelligent  
Application Services  
IDC

## 4. Balancing legacy systems and innovation

Integrating modern AI technologies with legacy systems is a significant challenge, balancing the preservation of existing assets with embracing new efficiencies. This balance is vital to ensuring continuity in operations while tapping into the potential of AI-driven innovations. The key is to integrate AI to complement rather than overhaul legacy systems, thereby preserving established workflows while introducing new capabilities.

## 5. Data as a cornerstone for AI success

Effective data management, covering compliance, governance and security, is fundamental in AI integration. Solid data management practices lay the groundwork for reliable and scalable AI applications, enhancing their effectiveness and trustworthiness. This is crucial in industries like finance and healthcare, where data sensitivity is high and compliance with regulatory standards is nonnegotiable.

## 6. Generative AI's role in modernization

Generative AI is recognized for its potential to transform and modernize, especially in code documentation and legacy code conversion. Its ability to automate and streamline complex tasks presents new opportunities for business efficiency and agility. Organizations can significantly reduce the time and resources typically required for manual code updates and documentation by automating these processes.



Adopting AI in today's business landscape presents a great opportunity to accelerate outcomes that achieve business impact. This involves a harmonious blend of strategic vision, stakeholder engagement and meaningful use cases. It extends beyond deploying new technologies to include cultivating an ecosystem where AI acts as a catalyst for productivity, driving a paradigm shift in how we approach data, processes and learning. This learning could transform knowledge transfer, solving a long-standing challenge in supporting or transitioning legacy systems.

When AI, innovation, insight and executive support are applied to solving problems that matter, it generates a cause for action that gets everyone engaged and committed."

**Dwayne Allen**

Senior Vice President and Chief Technology Officer  
Unisys



The real power of digital evolution lies in harmonizing the wisdom of legacy systems with the innovative pulse of generative AI. It's about re-envisioning our approach to data as a dynamic force driving business growth and efficiency.

By fostering strategic partnerships, prioritizing knowledge transfer and embracing gradual integration, we can release the full potential of our technological heritage and propel it into a future where data governance and AI excel together. It's a renaissance of how we perceive and leverage technology in every facet of our business."

**Manju Naglapur**

Senior Vice President and General Manager, Cloud, Applications & Infrastructure Solutions  
Unisys

## 7. Organizational change management for AI adoption

Successful AI integration involves comprehensive organizational change management, aligning AI with business goals. This process requires a proactive approach to training, communication and adaptation, ensuring the workforce is prepared for technological changes. This includes addressing potential skill gaps, managing workforce expectations and redefining job roles to accommodate new AI-driven workflows.

## 8. The importance of interdisciplinary teams and ethics in AI

Developing and implementing AI solutions benefit from multidisciplinary teams, including ethicists and legal professionals, ensuring ethical AI practices. These teams play a crucial role in navigating the complex ethical landscape of AI, fostering responsible and compliant AI use. This collaborative approach is essential to address the societal and moral implications of AI, such as bias in algorithms and privacy concerns.

## 9. Embracing a culture of continuous learning and experimentation

Cultivating a culture that values continuous learning and encourages experimentation is essential for leveraging AI advancements. This cultural shift is vital for fostering innovation. It allows organizations to stay at the forefront of technological developments and rapidly adapt to new AI technologies and methodologies, keeping them agile in a fast-evolving digital landscape.

## 10. Collaborative ecosystems and partnerships

Leveraging partnerships with technology and service providers is crucial for accessing expertise and resources and facilitating effective AI integration. These collaborations provide access to specialized knowledge and tools, enhancing an organization's efficient implementation of sophisticated AI solutions. These partnerships can help bridge the gap between AI's potential and practical implementation, providing tailored solutions that fit unique business needs.





## The path to modernization

By integrating AI into modernization strategies, you're not just adapting to future trends but actively shaping them. To explore how Unisys can support your application modernization needs, please visit us [online](#) or [contact us](#).



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