

nCS //



Digital Resilience:
The grandmaster strategy to
maximise your AI investment



Discover why resilience, not just innovation, determines AI success.

Artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly transitioned from a theoretical innovation to a transformative force reshaping industries, economies, and organisational strategies.

Early signs of game-changing companies integrating AI into critical business systems are emerging, delivering meaningful investment returns. According to IDC, global investment in AI is projected to reach \$632 billion by 2028, showcasing the widespread enthusiasm for AI's potential to drive innovation and efficiency (IDC, 2024).

However, most organisations are still in the early stages of AI adoption. Beyond the hype surrounding a few successful case studies, many businesses are grappling with industry-specific challenges and uncertainties around AI's return on investment (ROI).

In the grand game of AI, organisations face a complex chessboard of opportunities and challenges. While the queen—representing AI's transformative power—commands attention, true success requires safeguarding the king: Digital Resilience (DR). Like a chess grandmaster planning several moves ahead, businesses must strategically align their AI initiatives with a robust DR foundation to secure a winning position.

AI's strain on digital systems is a significant bottleneck

Most businesses face significant challenges in scaling AI systems and deriving consistent ROI. Legacy infrastructure, fragmented IT environments, and constrained budgets present barriers to implementing high-performance AI workloads. According to Gartner, AI compute requirements double approximately every 3.4 months, and Cisco projects global IP traffic will triple by 2025 due to AI and other data-heavy applications. These trends place immense pressure on existing digital systems, many of which are ill-equipped to handle such demands.

The reliance on legacy systems further complicates efforts to scale AI. Forrester reports that 89% of businesses still rely on at least one legacy system, which consumes up to 80% of their IT budgets on maintenance. Additionally, as AI integrates data from diverse sources, cybersecurity risks escalate. Sensitive data traverses networks that may lack uniform security, thereby increasing the risk of breaches. Gartner estimates that the global cost of cybercrime will reach \$10.5 trillion annually by 2025, underscoring the critical need for robust security measures.

The challenges of AI adoption are not uniform; they vary significantly across industries, as revealed by a recent NCS-IDC global survey of 870 enterprises and government organisations, which shows the varying impact AI is having on different industries (Figure 1).

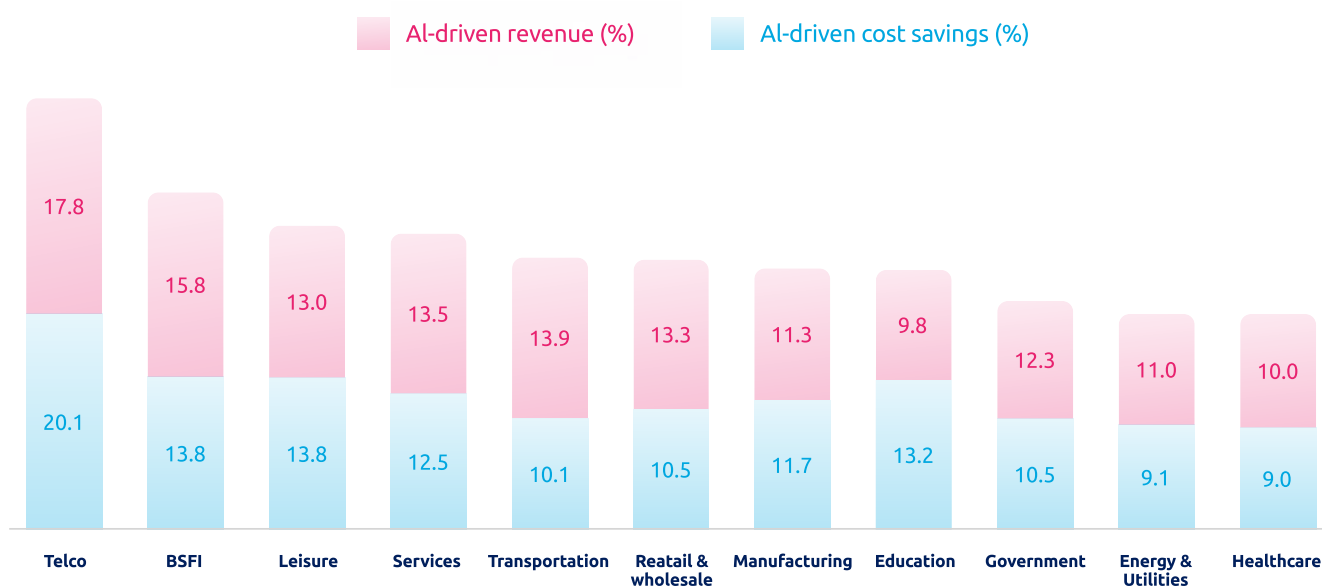


Figure 1: AI-driven business value (%) across different Industries.

Strengthening DR is the key to unlocking AI ROI

The same NCS-IDC survey also revealed a clear correlation between investments in DR and the extent of AI adoption (Figure 2). Organisations with stronger digital foundations demonstrated higher readiness and ability to scale AI initiatives effectively. This finding reinforces a core thesis: strong DR is the key to unlocking AI's ROI. By investing in DR, organisations can bridge the gap between experimental AI applications and transformative outcomes.

Figure 2. Positive correlation between the extent of AI adoption and DR readiness.

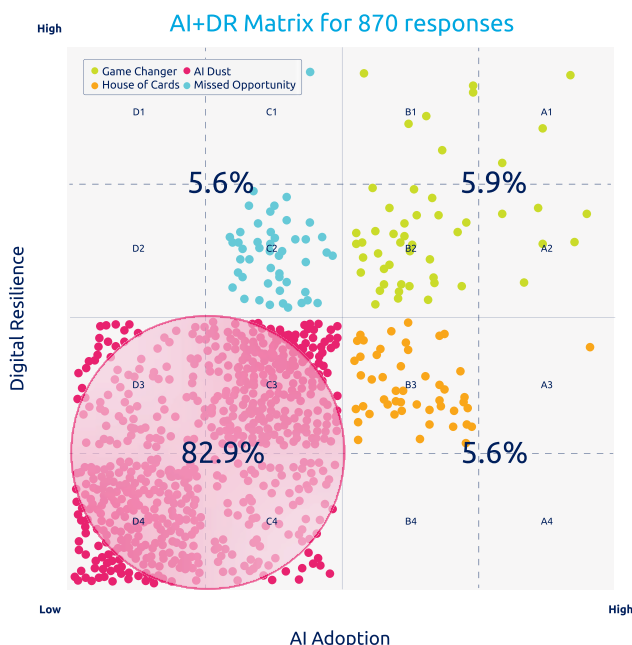
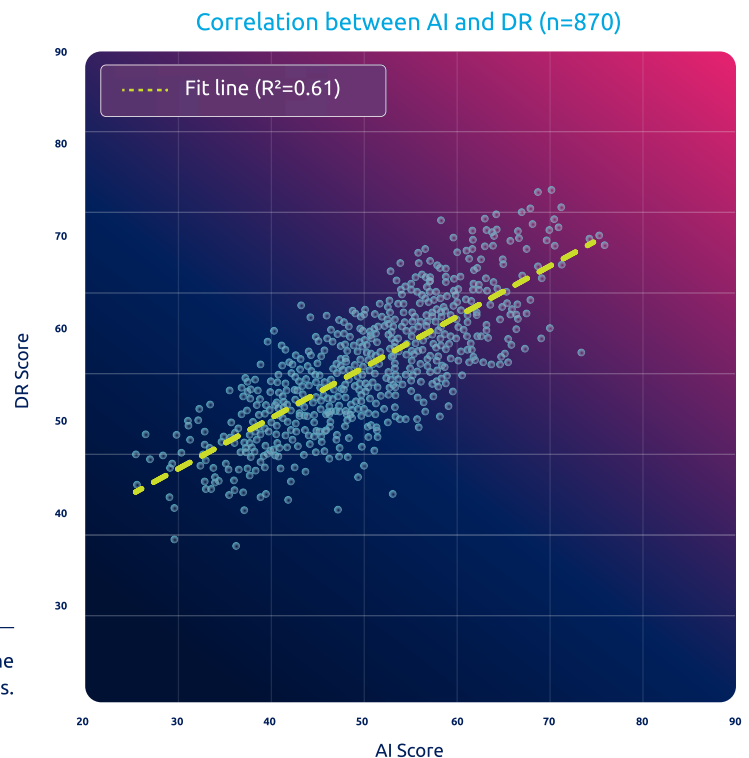


Figure 3. AI+DR Matrix (n=870). The AI+DR Matrix divides organisations into four quadrants: 'Game Changers' (6%) demonstrate high AI adoption and DR readiness, realising substantial business value. Conversely, 'AI Dust' (82.9%)—organisations with low maturity in both areas—struggle to scale AI effectively. The remaining groups, 'House of Cards' (5.6%) and 'Missed Opportunity' (5.6%), indicate partial strengths but face gaps that limit their AI potential.

Other interesting and profound insights from the survey showed:

- There are significant disparities in AI and DR performance and maturity across companies, which can be visualised in an AI+DR Matrix (Figure 3). Over 80% of organisations are estimated to be in the AI Dust quadrant, with many AI experiments and POCs but unable to scale the AI impact and achieve business competitiveness.
- The banking, financial services and insurance (BFSI) sector is the early leader in AI adoption due to their higher DR readiness, while sectors like retail and wholesale and leisure are laggards (Figure 4).



Figure 4. AI+DR Matrix across leading industries. BFSI emerges as the clear leader, with 21.7% of organisations demonstrating high AI adoption and DR readiness. Meanwhile, sectors like Retail & Wholesale (1.4%) remain at the lower end, indicating a need for foundational investments to unlock AI's transformative potential.

Many facets of DR exist

DR extends beyond traditional cybersecurity measures. It encompasses five critical aspects:

Cybersecurity

As AI adoption expands, so does the attack surface for cyber threats. Organisations must invest in advanced cybersecurity measures that account for AI's unique vulnerabilities, including the increased reliance on data, interconnected systems, and complex algorithms. Securing AI systems and data is essential to protect organisational integrity and trust.

Data Backbone

AI depends on massive amounts of data and managing this data securely and in compliance with regulations is paramount. Organisations must establish robust governance frameworks to ensure data accuracy, protect sensitive information, and maintain regulatory compliance. This goes beyond traditional data management, as AI intensifies the need for real-time data access and cross-organisational data flows.

Applications Interplay

AI-powered applications must be resilient to disruptions and adaptable to evolving environments. These systems should maintain their performance under stress, ensuring they can support critical operations even in unpredictable conditions. This is especially crucial as AI increases the complexity of applications and their interdependencies.

Infrastructure Robustness

Scalable infrastructure is crucial for accommodating the increasing demands of AI workloads, which require substantial compute power, storage, and network capacity. Without scalable systems, organisations risk performance bottlenecks and security vulnerabilities. Scalability ensures that AI can be integrated seamlessly into operations without compromising the stability of underlying systems.

Operations Responsiveness

AI introduces new layers of complexity into operational processes, making it critical for organisations to respond to disruptions and adapt to new risks quickly. Operational resilience requires flexible processes that can recover swiftly from failures, ensuring continuity and minimising downtime in AI-driven environments.

These facets collectively form the backbone of a comprehensive DR strategy. Each of these facets can be likened to chess strategies—defensive formations, adaptability, and readiness—that together create a winning position on the board.

The IDC-NCS survey highlights how organisations excelling in these five DR elements—i.e. Game Changers—significantly outperform their peers in AI-driven revenue and cost savings (Figure 5). Game Changers achieve 1.1x higher AI-driven revenue and 1.4x greater cost savings compared to organisations in the AI Dust quadrant. This advantage stems from their investments in DR, such as 80% faster recovery times, 52% more modernised applications, and 32% better document classification processes.

Game Changers gain more value from their AI initiatives supported by strong DR capabilities.

As industry frontrunners, Game Changers can expect up to:

1.1x more AI-driven revenue

1.4x more AI-driven cost savings

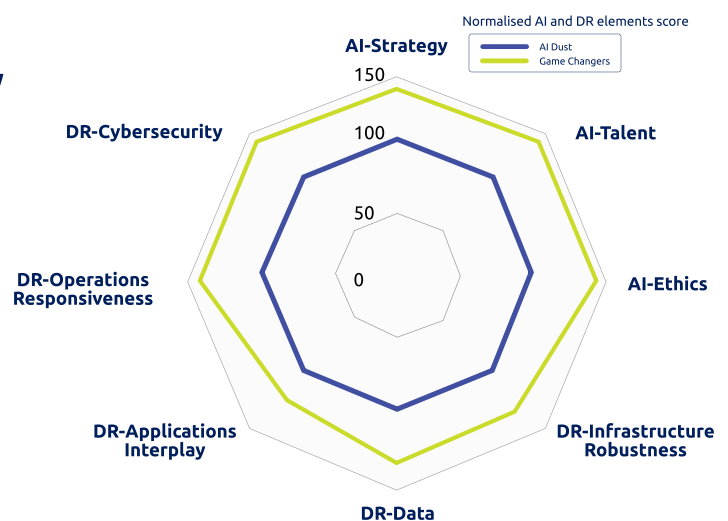


Figure 5. Comparison of AI-driven Business Value and Normalised AI and DR Element Scores Between Game Changers and AI Dust.

NCS provides comprehensive AI+DR services

To support organisations in enhancing their AI and DR readiness, NCS offers a diagnostic tool that provides a structured approach to assessing current capabilities, identifying gaps, and prioritising investments in AI and DR.

Combined with a range of tailored service offerings (Figure 6), NCS aims to equip organisations to:

- **Benchmark their readiness in AI**
- **Develop actionable strategies to strengthen digital**
- **Achieve scalable, secure, and adaptive AI implementations**

To become a gamechanger, every organisation, regardless of which quadrant they are currently in, should consider taking two steps (Figure 6):

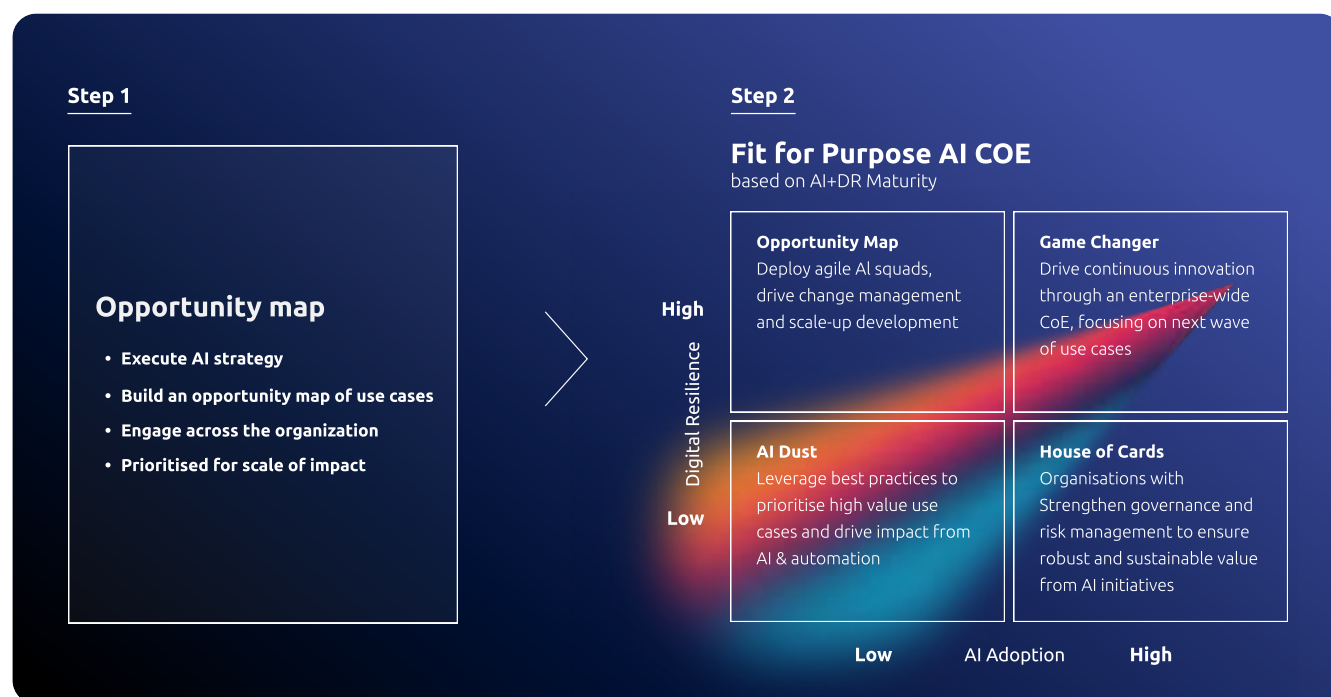


Figure 6. NCS AI+DR service offerings.

Opportunity Map

The first step is to create an opportunity map outlining how AI can transform your business and operations. This opportunity map represents a roadmap for executing the enterprise AI strategy, articulating how and where an organisation expects to utilise AI to deliver a business outcome and how applications and use cases should be prioritised.

Ideally, the process of creation of this opportunity map should also engage key stakeholders and teams across the organisation, to both benefit from insights of the people who are intimately aware of the business challenges as well as ensure their buy-in and continued involvement through the AI adoption journey.

AI Centre of Excellence (COE)

The second is to put in place a fit-for-purpose AI COE. Given the importance of harnessing AI for business and the potential challenges to successful and sustained AI adoption, an AI COE will be able to help orchestrate AI initiatives within your organisation, as well as ensure that learnings, best practices, and resources are efficiently shared.

Depending on a business's AI+DR maturity, the AI COE may have a different focus. For example, an organisation currently in the House of Cards may have its COE focus on governance and risk management to support AI initiatives more effectively. While an organisation in the Gamechanger quadrant is already leading in AI adoption, and their COE may instead be focusing on continuous innovation and keeping tabs on new, emerging technology to build the next wave of use cases to stay ahead of the curve.

The combination of an Opportunity Map and a fit-for-purpose COE provides every business with a plan and the organisational capability to execute it. These tools are like your chess pieces, each with its unique role and potential, ready to be deployed strategically to secure victory.

Conclusion

AI holds immense potential to transform industries and deliver substantial business value. However, unlocking this potential requires a strong focus on Digital Resilience. Organisations must move beyond surface-level adoption of AI and invest in robust DR strategies to maximise their ROI. By integrating the facets of DR and leveraging tools like the NCS AI+DR Impact Framework, businesses can chart a clear path towards sustained innovation and growth in the AI era.

In the grand game of AI, DR is the cornerstone of success. Much like a chess grandmaster planning several moves ahead, organisations that prioritise DR can navigate the complexities of AI adoption with confidence, securing their position as leaders in the digital economy. To win, businesses must not only make the right moves but also ensure their defences are unassailable, creating a balanced and enduring strategy for the future.



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References

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