

AI ROI: Why 'How Many Roles Can We Cut' Is the Wrong Question

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY & CORE TAKEAWAY

AI ROI does not come from cutting headcount — it comes from multiplying what one person can produce. Enterprise AI now costs more than expected: governance alone runs 8–12% of budgets, training only 3–6% yet shows the strongest ROI correlation. Chasing headcount reduction misses the real lever: output per person.

CONTEXT & EXECUTIVE RELEVANCE

The question driving most enterprise AI projects is the wrong one: how many roles can we eliminate with AI? The question that actually determines ROI is: how much more output can one person produce with AI support? By 2026, enterprise AI costs more than most business cases assumed — compute, integration, orchestration, security, governance, data and oversight add up to a cost structure that has little to do with the license price on the vendor's slide. Chasing ROI through headcount reduction alone means missing the real lever: value created per person.

According to Presenc AI Research (May 2026), governance now accounts for 8–12% of AI budgets, up from just 3–5% in 2024. A typical enterprise budget split today looks like this: 30–40% software/SaaS, 20–25% cloud, 15–20% talent, 10–15% implementation/consulting, 8–12% data, 8–12% governance, and 3–6% training. GS Consulting (June 2026) found that in one regulated project, platform, model and cloud together made up only 16% of Year-1 TCO — the remainder was the work required to make the system production-ready: data cleanup, architecture, identity, security, compliance, integration, monitoring, training and people.

CORE ACTION ITEMS

- 01 Redesign workflows — don't just deploy tools on top of old processes
- 02 Define trust thresholds: when does AI decide, and when does it escalate?
- 03 Build escalation paths and control points directly into the process
- 04 Target training at the roles that sit closest to the lever

SWISS COMPLIANCE & ARCHITECTURE GUIDELINES

- ☑ Full compliance with revised Swiss Data Protection Act (revDSG).
- ☑ Zero vendor lock-in on closed proprietary models.
- ☑ Seamless integration into Abacus, Bexio and M365 ecosystems.

Non-Binding Process Analysis

Let us review in 20 minutes where AI agents create immediate measurable efficiency in your workflows.

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