
cognizant
Google Cloud
Unstuck. Unstoppable.
The retailer's guide to turning agentic AI ambitions into enterprise-wide outcomes.

Agentic AI in retail: What's stopping you from scaling?

Agentic AI is changing how the world shops.

Consumers are no longer just searching and browsing. They're using AI-powered interfaces to discover products, compare options and complete transactions—often without ever visiting a retailer's website. Forecasts suggest that AI-powered consumers will drive 55% of spending[1] by 2030—consolidating AI as an increasingly dominant market force.

It is no surprise that many organizations are already piloting agentic AI use cases in discovery, service and fulfillment. However, instead of building momentum, retailers are getting stuck between experimentation and scale.

In most cases, the barrier isn't the technology itself. It's the organization's inability to turn early progress into lasting results.

From misunderstood workflows to overestimated data readiness. From accountability gaps that slow decision-making to generic AI solutions that don't reflect how retailers actually operate. The list of obstacles that block momentum goes on—but, with the right approach, progress is well within reach.

This guide explores four key areas where Cognizant and Google Cloud can help retailers go from stuck to unstoppable.

Gartner predicts over

40%

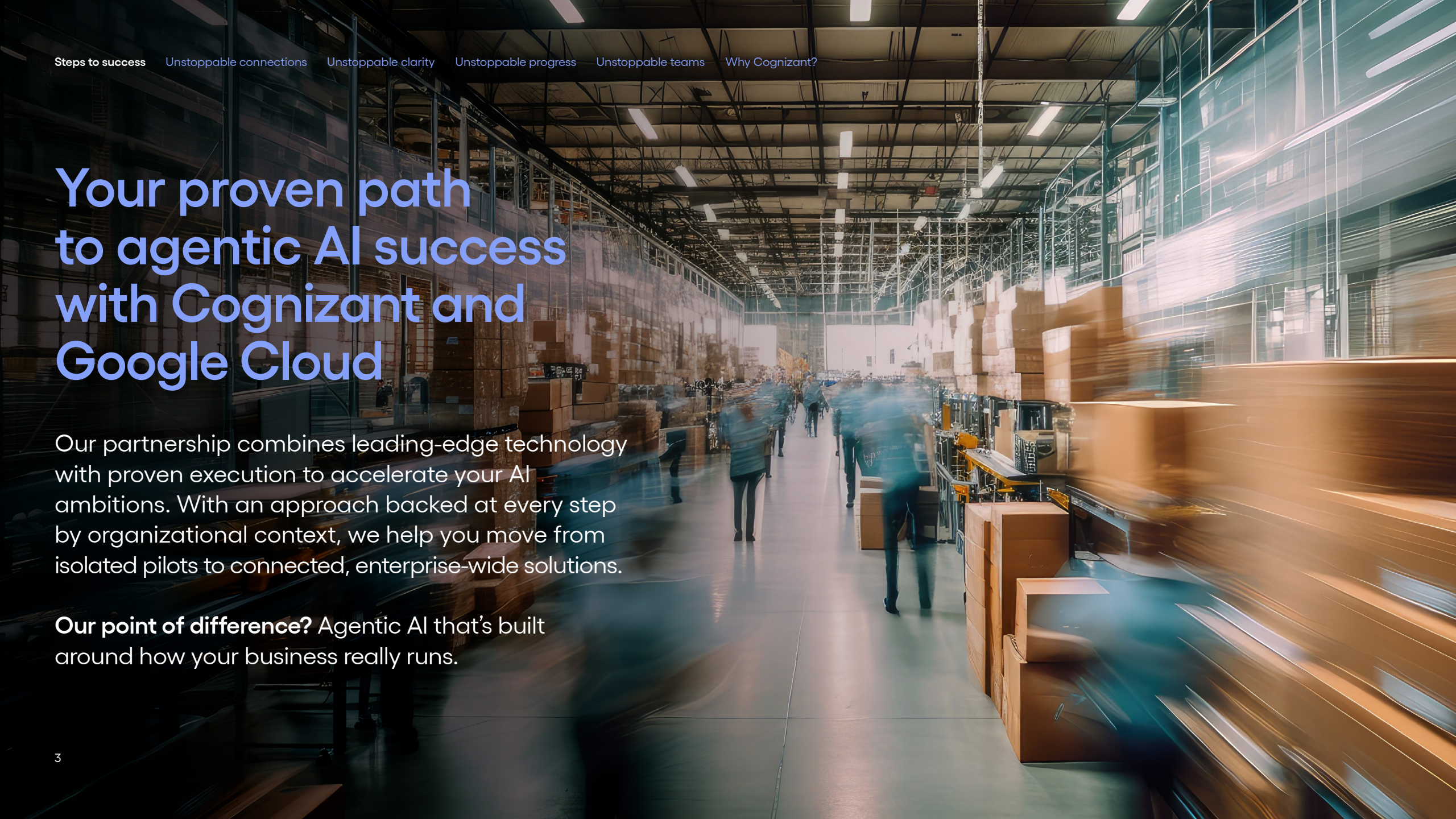
of agentic AI projects will be canceled by the end of 2027 due to escalating costs, unclear business value or inadequate risk controls.[2]

Over

70%

of retailers have invested in AI[3]. But most are stuck at proof of concept: pilots that work in isolation but can't scale across the enterprise.

[1] New minds, new markets - AI and customer experience | Cognizant
[2] Gartner, 2025.
[3] IDC



Your proven path to agentic AI success with Cognizant and Google Cloud

Our partnership combines leading-edge technology with proven execution to accelerate your AI ambitions. With an approach backed at every step by organizational context, we help you move from isolated pilots to connected, enterprise-wide solutions.

Our point of difference? Agentic AI that's built around how your business really runs.

Success starts with rapid agent development

Rapid agent development (RAD) isn't a single use case—it's a model that identifies them. Our co-delivered approach is designed to turn ideas into working solutions, fast.

How it works

1

Begin with a business problem

We start with a specific operational pain point—not a technology wish list. Whether that's onboarding vendors with messy product data or replacing IVR with conversational AI, your priorities set the direction.

2

Kickoff

Cognizant and Google Cloud architects work with you to define the full project scope. What data exists? What systems need connecting? What does success look like?

3

Hands-on build

Working side-by-side with your team, our architects create a live agent based on your data and infrastructure. This isn't a demo or a sandbox, but a live, working solution.

4

Production rollout

The agent quickly goes live in your organization—ready to deliver business value.

5

Full engagement

From there, we refine, govern and scale—connecting your new agentic solution to the wider enterprise.

RAD is all about setting the right direction. Read on to discover the four key areas where we can help you fast-track progress.

Owning the customer conversation? It's in the bag.

How to boost visibility—and keep interactions flowing.

Remember when retailers that skipped out on Google search became practically invisible overnight? Today, being discovered by potential customers relies on being connected to AI-powered interfaces. If your products aren't visible on these platforms, you're no longer part of the customer conversation. And you could be missing out on sales you don't even know you're losing.

Together, Cognizant and Google Cloud can make your catalog, pricing and inventory readable and transactable to external AI agents. We can also replace your legacy CX systems like phone menus and siloed chats with AI agents that can handle entire conversations across channels. What's more, embedded sentiment awareness means you can trust these agents to adapt and respond in real time.

The result? Wherever the conversation is happening—voice, chat, email or AI interfaces—you can be a part of it.

"It's an existential crisis for retailers, especially omnichannel ones. How do you control the narrative and continue the first-party relationship?"

Klarissa Marenitch, Retail CTO

Get unstuck: Use cases in action

Stay visible at the point of purchase

Expose your catalog to external agents so consumers can discover and buy your products via AI interfaces. Using open protocols with Google Cloud (MCP/UCP), Cognizant securely connects your systems and keeps your products visible and transactable even if consumers never visit your site. With Google Gemini a key player in agentic discovery and recommendation, your products will be surfaced when and where it counts.

Deliver smart, seamless service

By unifying voice and text through a single agent, we give customers the ability to speak naturally and move between channels without repeating themselves. Built-in authentication, system access and sentiment awareness means every interaction is faster, more intuitive and more effective.

This transformational solution was adopted by 13 clients within the first year alone.



AI that fits your retail reality

How to ground agents in your unique data, operations and processes.

Without grounding agents in your specific data, workflows and business logic, AI remains an ambitious idea rather than a reliable outcome. In short, generic, off-the-shelf solutions lack the context needed to drive meaningful outcomes.

Cognizant and Google Cloud start by mapping what's really happening across your business and how people actually work. After that, we build agents and connect them to your internal systems and external data sources via an orchestration layer. No rip and replace. This allows external agents to pull unstructured data, translate it into a standardized format and feed it into internal systems.

The result? AI that works for your retail reality, instead of just a demo.

Data readiness is the most common blocker across almost every engagement, with most enterprises beginning the process overconfident in their starting point.

While 73% of enterprises initially believe they have good data accessibility, only 64% are satisfied with the quality and observability when their agentic systems go into production.[4]

[4] Build and Scale Agentic AI Enterprise Solutions | Cognizant

Get unstuck: Use cases in action

Scale marketplace onboarding with ease

We helped one major US retailer onboard thousands of local vendors at record speed. We did it by pulling unstructured, unstandardized product data from vendor websites, spreadsheets and catalogs, standardized it, then connected it so products could be listed and purchases could be processed automatically. What once required extensive manual effort was delivered in just three months.

Streamline IT support

One major global sportswear brand was able to agentify every step of its IT monitoring, triage and resolution. With agents now handling everything from detection to diagnosis to fix, the brand has eliminated 50,000 IT support tickets. Today, staff can focus on higher-value work instead of repetitive troubleshooting.

Forecast demand with precision

Thanks to Google Cloud Vertex AI, Coop Group—one of Switzerland's largest retail and wholesale companies—was able to improve demand forecasting by over 40% and optimize inventory across its distribution network. As a result, the retailer reduced overstock, minimized food waste and improved the sustainability of its operations.[5]

[5] IDC Retail AI report, May 2025

Rapid progress is in store

How to move from proof of concept to business impact.

CXOs don't need more AI excitement: They need proof it works. The problem isn't starting AI projects—it's proving that they work fast enough. When results take too long to materialize, momentum stalls and investment is redirected elsewhere.

Cognizant helps retailers progress from early-stage AI productivity to enterprise-wide agentic capability. Our methodology enables you to go from concept to working solution in days, not months, while our built-in governance scales effortlessly to support you. Our goal is to prove value fast, then scale securely. At every step, measurable outcomes prove the investment and fund the next phase.

The result? Transformation that proves its own value and sustains momentum.

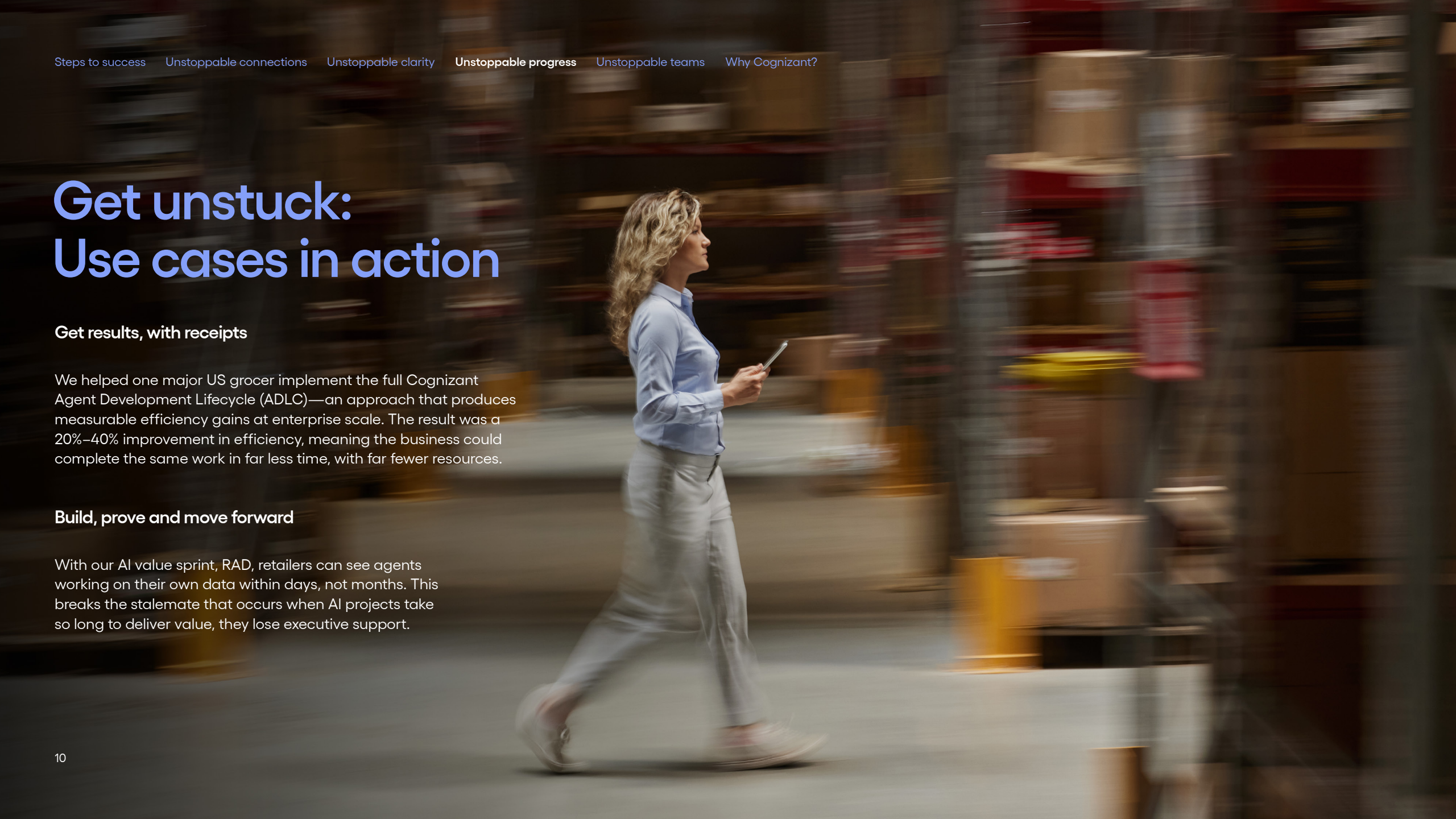


40%

of agentic projects face cancellation.[6]

[6] Gartner

Get unstuck: Use cases in action



Get results, with receipts

We helped one major US grocer implement the full Cognizant Agent Development Lifecycle (ADLC)—an approach that produces measurable efficiency gains at enterprise scale. The result was a 20%–40% improvement in efficiency, meaning the business could complete the same work in far less time, with far fewer resources.

Build, prove and move forward

With our AI value sprint, RAD, retailers can see agents working on their own data within days, not months. This breaks the stalemate that occurs when AI projects take so long to deliver value, they lose executive support.

Retail results, powered by people

How to equip your teams and make agentic AI stick.

The promise of agentic AI is clear, but the human side is often overlooked. Organizations aren't seeing the results they need because they're deploying new technology without rethinking people's roles, skills and ways of working.

The potential impact of getting it right is significant: According to research from McKinsey, AI high performers are 2.8 times more likely to have fundamentally redefined workflows.[8]

Cognizant helps retailers foster the people, roles and operating structures needed to make agentic AI an everyday reality. We do it by equipping teams with the skills and confidence to work alongside AI agents—starting from where your teams really are, not where business leaders assume they are.

Our approach focuses on three priorities:

- Building a new class of workers that bridge business and technology
- Deploying AI that augments people in real time
- Embedding capability through a long-term center of excellence model

The result? Not a bolted-on training program, but built-in workforce transformation.

A Harvard Business Review survey found that 76% of executives thought employees felt excited about adopting AI. In reality, just 31% of individual contributors expressed enthusiasm.[7]

84%

of enterprises haven't rewired jobs for AI[9]

[7] McKinsey: The state of AI in 2025: What it means for CX
[8] McKinsey: The state of AI in 2025: What it means for CX
[9] 84% of enterprises haven't rewired jobs for AI

Get unstuck: Use cases in action

Put AI in your people's hands

We helped a major North American retailer deploy conversational agents across its entire associate base of 100,000 employees. Used for HR support, training and IT queries, these agents now provide valuable, real-time assistance at scale. A compelling example of full-scale workforce AI adoption.

Grow AI capability from within

One US convenience retailer established an AI-training center of excellence to educate and upskill its entire IT department. Teams are now able to develop and maintain AI solutions themselves—reducing reliance on external partners and driving a greater sense of ownership.

Cognizant is investing in the future workforce

At the time of publication, Cognizant is developing 1,000 specialists who combine business and technical expertise to train, monitor and validate AI agents. These "ambidextrous" roles bridge the gap between strategy and execution—ensuring AI delivers accurate, reliable outcomes in real-world operations.

Become unstoppable with Cognizant and Google Cloud

Agentic commerce is set to redefine how customers discover, engage and buy. The retailers who prepare now will shape those interactions—and own the conversation. To achieve this, you must move beyond isolated pilots to connected, enterprise-wide strategies. Build systems that work together. And choose partners who can deliver both technology and transformation.

Everything you need, on one shopping list

Our expert partnership delivers persistent progress that drives real results.

Google Cloud is the technology enabler—offering leading AI platforms and open protocols that enable retailers to build and orchestrate multiple agents swiftly and securely.

- Gemini Enterprise
- Vertex AI
- Agent2Agent (A2A) protocol
- Model Context Protocol (MCP)

Cognizant is the delivery engine. We shape agentic AI around your specific, organizational needs, so agents don't just work in theory, they work in production. Unlike rigid, off-the-shelf solutions or vendors who can't deliver on their promises, our operational know-how and enterprise-grade governance deliver measurable results from the very beginning.

Together, our co-delivered approaches like RAD and the Gemini Enterprise Center of Excellence can help you become unstoppable.

How to build and maintain momentum

Our best-practice approach for supercharging success.

1. Start with outcomes, not technology. Focus on what drives business value, like cycle time and cost per handling.
2. Map real workflows before building agents. This will help you understand what people really do, not what they say they do.
3. Prove value early. If you generate ROI fast, you can use it to self-fund what comes next.
4. Build governance in from day one, not after the pilot succeeds.
5. Invest in people alongside technology. Consider new roles, new skills and new ways of working.
6. Avoid ripping and replacing. Success looks like orchestrating the agentic layer on top of existing systems.



For the journey ahead

As enterprise-wide strategy replaces pockets of experimentation, physical-digital convergence will accelerate and connected agentic networks will define the industry leaders. Having the support of the right partners will matter more than ever. Technology, integration and industry expertise must come together as one, to help you turn ambition into impact.

Add to cart?

You've already taken the first step to success reading this guide.

Now, it's time to build momentum.

If you're ready to turn your agentic AI ambitions into reality, get in touch with the experts.

Contact us

Explore more case studies and research around scaling agentic AI for retail here:

Learn more

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Cognizant (Nasdaq: CTSH) is an AI Builder and technology services provider, building the bridge between AI investment and enterprise value by building full-stack AI solutions for our clients. Our deep industry, process and engineering expertise enables us to build an organization's unique context into technology systems that amplify human potential, realize tangible returns and keep global enterprises ahead in a fast-changing world. See how at **www.cognizant.com** or **@cognizant.**

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