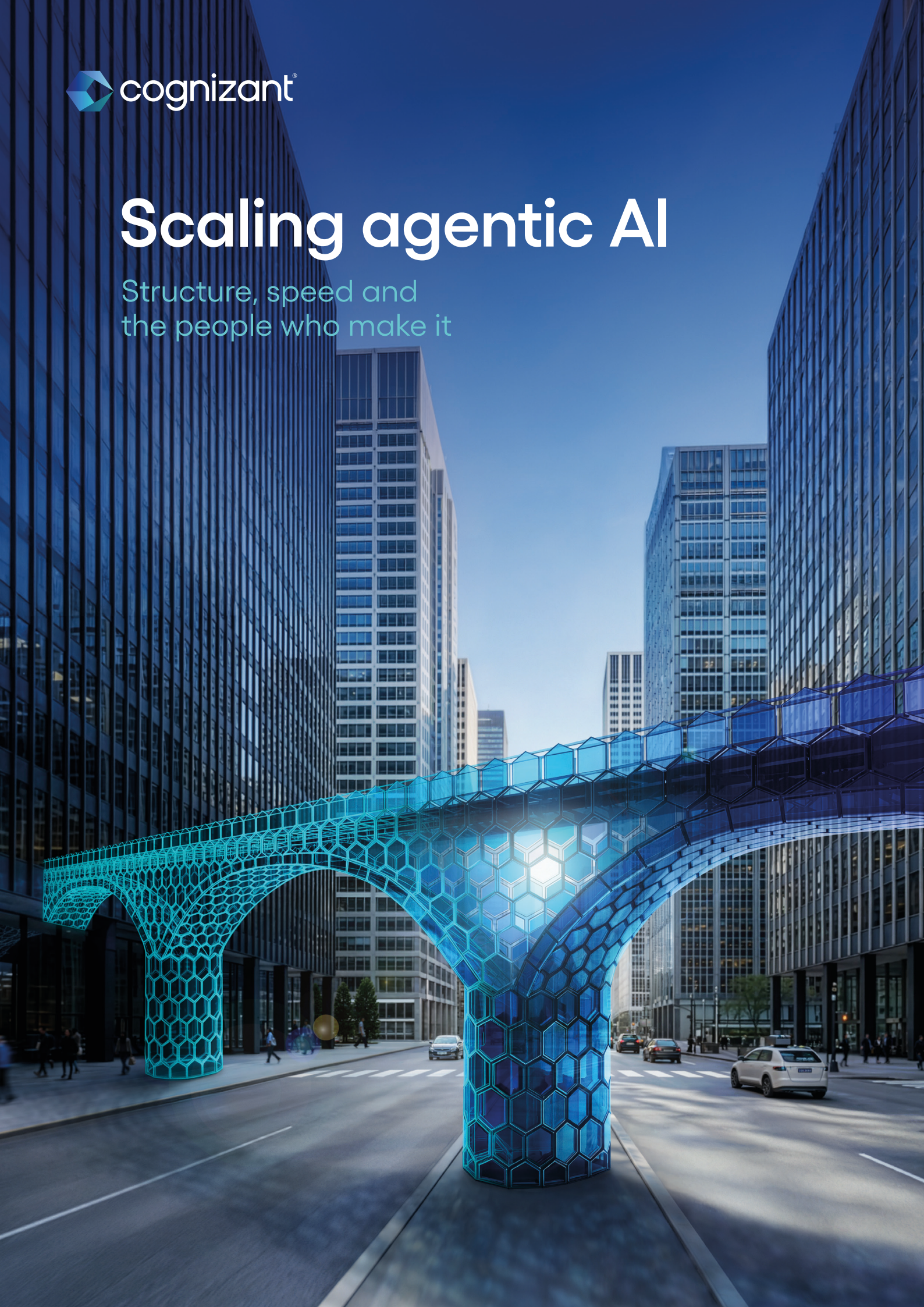




Scaling agentic AI

Structure, speed and
the people who make it



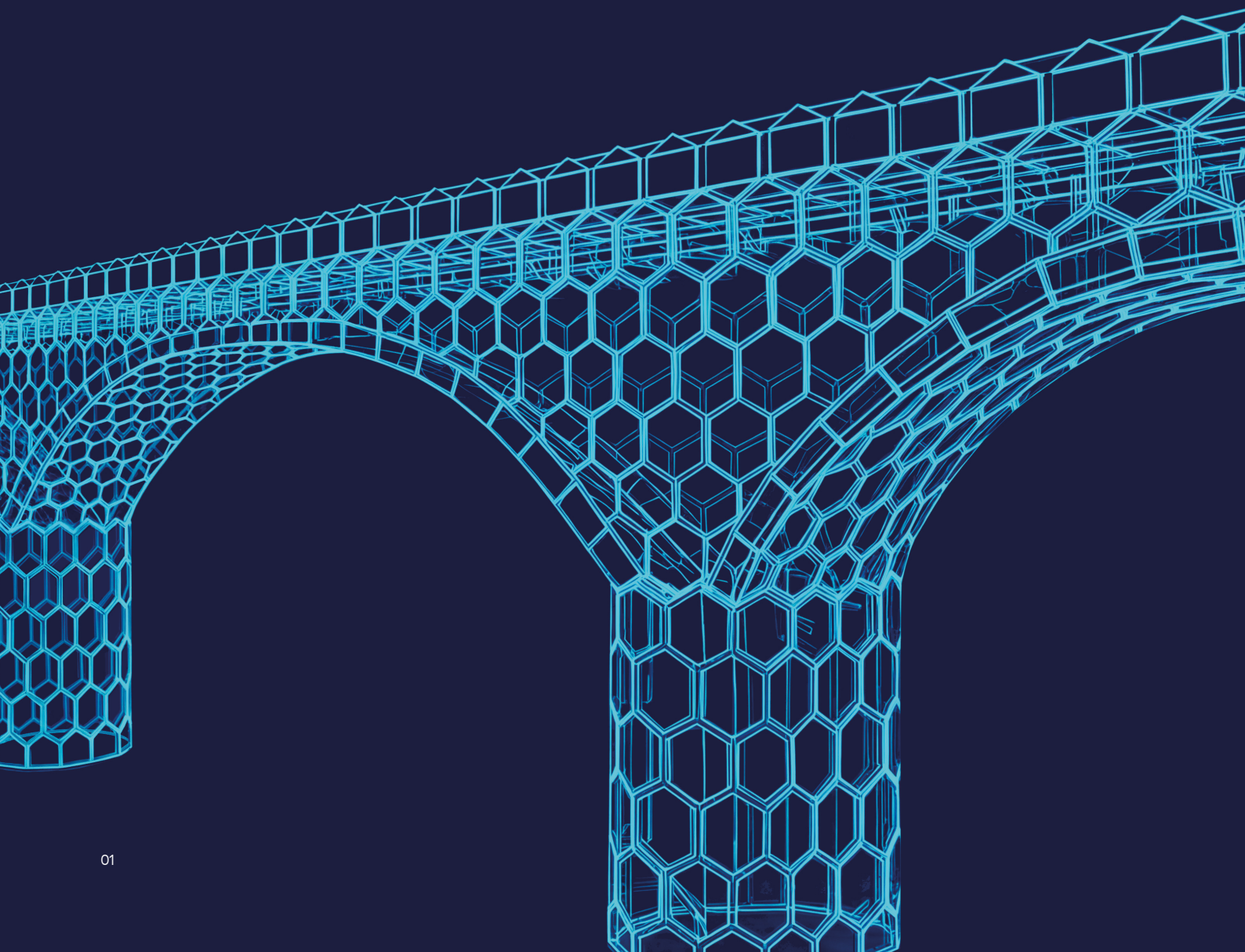
Enterprises have proved AI can work in a pilot. Few have made it pay across the business. The companies that scale it run agentic AI as a structured program and build an enduring capability, with the people to deliver it embedded from day one.

Spending on AI keeps climbing, yet the returns are thin. More than [80% of organizations using AI report no measurable impact on productivity](#), according to a February 2026 study from the National Bureau of Economic Research. That sits awkwardly beside the opportunity.

Our [New Work, New World 2026 research](#) finds AI could put \$4.5 trillion of US labor value within reach today, with 93% of jobs affected. The capability is not in doubt. Turning it into results is where most companies are stuck.



Arvind Pal Singh | EMEA Head,
Consulting and AI Unit | Cognizant



Three foundations that turn pilots into scale

At Cognizant, we believe scaling agentic AI rests on three things put in place together, not in sequence: a Program Value Office that ranks AI work by the value it returns and holds the governance and guardrails probabilistic systems demand; a foundational architecture of data, tools and reusable components, so teams build once and apply many times; and a scaling engine, a defined route from one working process to many. Companies that fund a process at a time, without these foundations beneath them, stall just as the early promise should compound.

Why the delivery model has to change

This changes what a technology partner is for. The old integrator model was sold on a per-headcount and per-billable-hour basis, with cycles measured in weeks. Agentic AI breaks both. Engineers now build, validate and test code with AI, and creating agents is a discipline in its own right. The bigger change is in the business, where people redesign a process around a blend of agents and human judgement, then run it across digital and physical labor. That work cannot stay inside IT. The opportunities live in the business, so the ownership has to as well.

Two new roles, and the comfort they bring

Two new roles make this real, and we have [defined both formally](#). A Frontier Engineer (FE) pairs the skills of an AI engineer with an understanding of architecture and the knowledge of business, taking a single process from design to deployment inside a squad of specialists. A Frontier Business Operator

(FBO) owns the process once it is live, running a workforce that is part human and part agent. The FE redesigns the map; the FBO reads it in real time. An FE needs technical depth. An FBO does not, because the role is to run a blended operation towards a result rather than to engineer it.

The reassurance matters as much as the engineering. Agentic AI is unfamiliar ground for most leadership teams, and few want to cross it alone. With an FE and an FBO embedded, a client has experienced hands at its side throughout, not a report handed over at the end. Embedding those skills also changes the pace. The old way ran on ten-week development cycles. The work now becomes rapid prototyping in days and hours, a working version to react to this week rather than a specification to approve next quarter. Our SkillSpring platform trains these people at scale and shortens the time to make them job-ready.



- Designs and builds AI-native solutions
- Brings deep technical expertise in models, systems data and integration
- Takes a single process from design to deployment with a squad of specialists



- Owns outcomes in the business
- Understands processes customers and value
- Translates capability into operational impact
- Runs a workforce that is part human and part agent

Meeting clients where they are: three cohorts

Companies sit at different points, so we meet them in one of three cohorts.



Foundation

Suits a client starting out or stalled after early experiments. A major global bank had invested heavily in AI and found progress stalling in the operational detail—KYC checks, anti-money-laundering controls, contract analysis, all still running on manual effort. Our Frontier Engineers worked alongside the bank's own engineers, mapping where AI could take over rule-based processes and building the architecture so that each subsequent step would compound rather than conflict. The result was a program structure with a clear path to scale.



Accelerate

Takes proven prototypes into production, one use case at a time. For a leading online fashion retailer, margin pressure was intensifying and the brief was unusually wide—supply chain and customer experience at once, optimizing inventory, reducing returns and protecting margin in parallel. We placed a combination of Frontier Engineer and a Frontier Business Operator across procurement, engineering, the C-suite and marketing, giving every part of the business a single point of ownership. An AI factory moved the strongest use cases directly into production, compressing development cycles that had previously run to months into days.



Scale

Builds and runs the multi-agent networks that span many processes at once. For a global pharmaceutical company, the ambition runs further than process improvement. The goal is R&D end to end—drug discovery, clinical trial design, regulatory preparation—replaced by connected agentic systems that reason, route and act across the whole chain rather than waiting for human handoffs at each stage. Our pods are embedded across the program, building the agents and running the blended workforce as each process goes live. The thing that changes is the speed and rigor of the science itself. A client enters where its maturity sits and progresses as ambition grows.

A commercial model that shares the risk

The commercial model shifts with the cohort, and here we part with the old consulting bargain. A client starting out buys a fixed-price discovery that caps its risk. A client accelerating pays for each use case once it is delivered into production. A client building multi-agent networks works with a pod priced on outcomes, including gain-sharing.

Gain share is the boldest of the three cohorts. Consider a customer moving home and switching energy supplier. Behind that one outcome, four or five agents work across separate systems to close a meter reading, settle a balance, open the next account and transfer the supply. We can contract on the result rather than the effort, the number of successful home moves and the resulting customer satisfaction, priced below the current cost of serving them, and take a share of the savings as our fee. That is a long way from buying a block of consulting whose main recommendation was to buy more.

Why us, now the field has changed

The competition has shifted. A few years ago, our rivals were other systems integrators. Today, they include the frontier model providers we also partner with, including Anthropic and OpenAI, as they move into enterprise solutions. They build

remarkable models. We add the industry and process depth to put those models to work inside a specific business, and the means to scale at speed.

We build on what a client has already done rather than starting again, field business-led squads with change management designed in from day one, and put our own skin in the game by underwriting the outcomes we promise. Across EMEA, that comes with fluency in data sovereignty and regulation, and local partnerships where sovereign AI matters.

Where to start

Every leader faces the same practical choice about where to begin. Our AI orchestration unit will work through that first process with you, from identifying where the value lies to standing up the squad that delivers it, priced based on what it achieves. Which process in your business would be worth reimagining first?

About Cognizant

Cognizant (Nasdaq: CTSH) is an AI Builder and technology services provider. We bridge the gap between AI investment and enterprise value by building full-stack AI solutions, drawing on deep industry, process and engineering expertise to build each organization's unique context into the technology. More at cognizant.ai.

