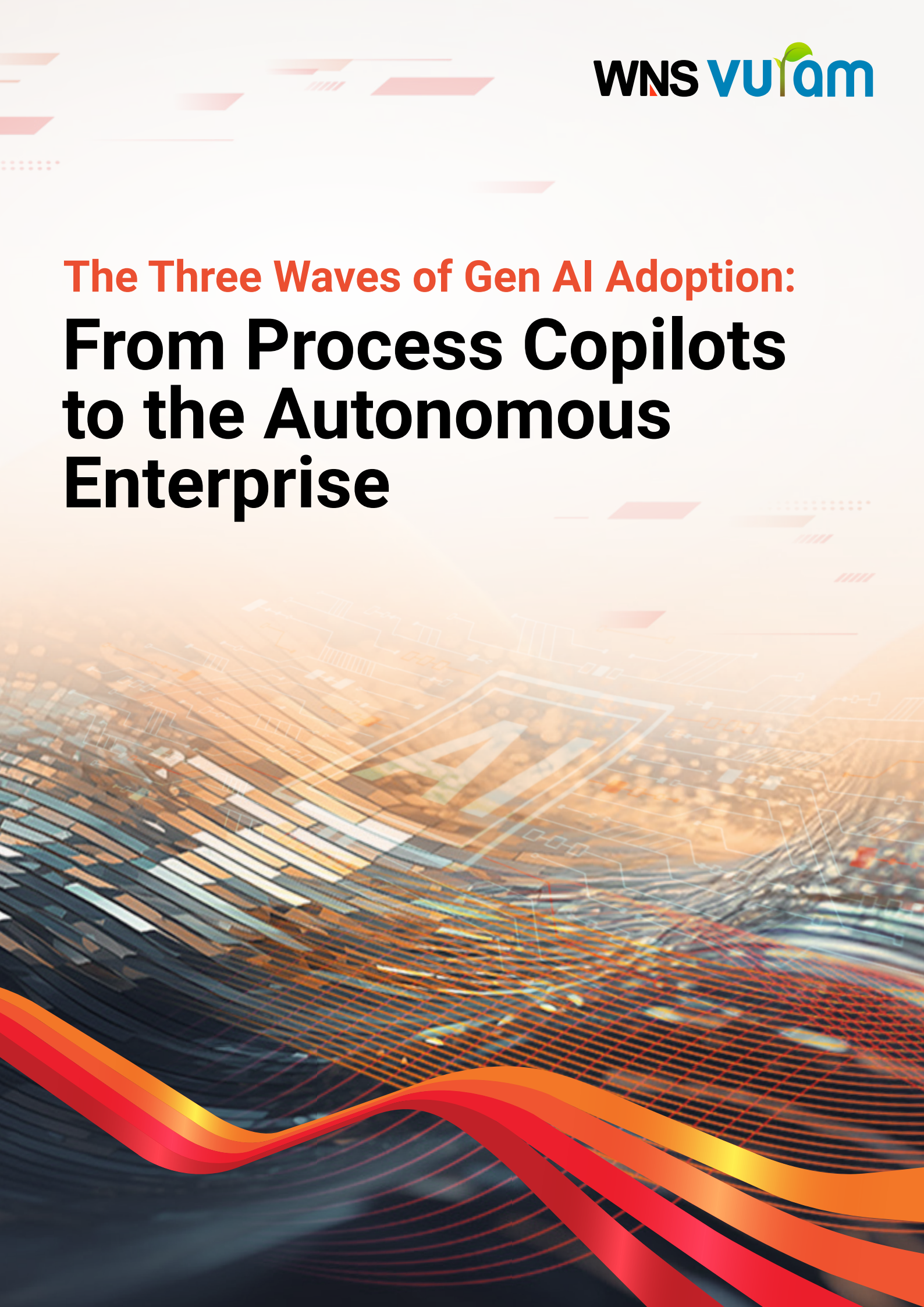
The Three Waves of Gen AI Adoption:

From Process Copilots to the Autonomous Enterprise



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Introduction:

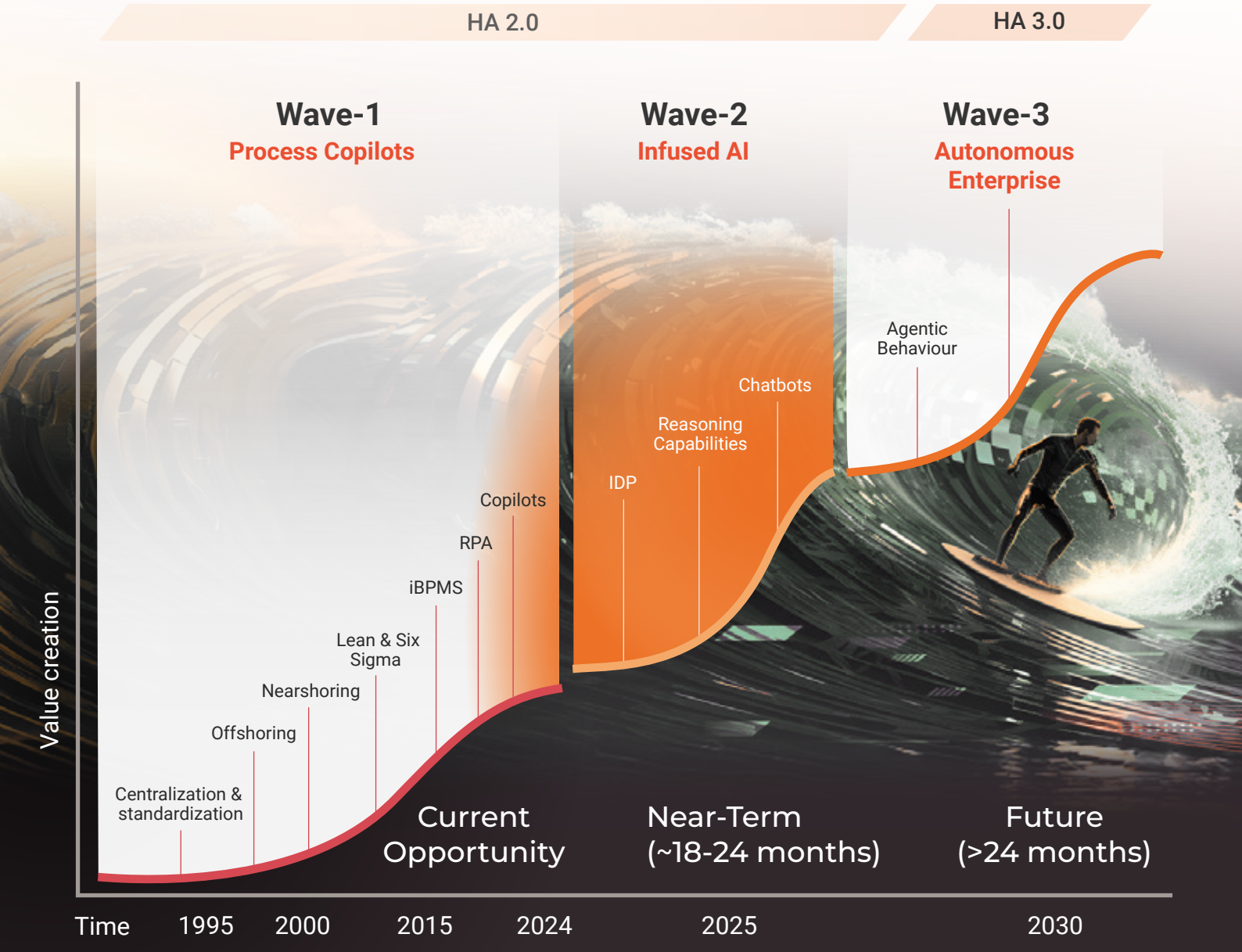
Technological disruption is a defining feature of the digital age, but few innovations hold as much promise and complexity as Gen AI. It's arrival into the public consciousness has seen its transformative potential much vaunted, with Gen AI heralded as the key to unlocking all-new possibilities across myriad industries, boosting efficiency and empowering previously unimaginable levels of productivity among workforces.

Research from Oliver Wyman helps us to understand Gen AI's potential power, estimating that the technology could add up to $20 trillion to global GDP by 2030 and save 300 billion work hours a year, impacting 96% of workers. A study from the MIT Sloan School of Management, meanwhile, found that Gen AI can improve a worker's performance by as much as 40% compared with workers who don't use it.

What's most revealing about these figures, however, is that they are constantly being reassessed, with the rapid acceleration of Gen AI's capabilities requiring almost real-time revision when it comes to determining its true potential. Which begs the question: how will Gen AI ultimately evolve? What kind of future could it unlock? And where exactly are we along this journey?

To answer these questions and more, here we outline the three waves of Gen AI adoption that will drive us toward a future of AI-led hyperautomation. We explore how Gen AI will unlock not only task and process automation, but goal automation too, evolving from a copilot to a trusted enterprise partner capable of enacting strategic initiatives seamlessly. In doing so, Gen AI will usher in the era of the autonomous enterprise, self-optimizing organizations that leverage a harmonious synergy between humans and Gen AI to innovate in all-new ways.

AI-Led Hyperautomation



The First Wave: Process Copilots

Despite its relatively recent entrance into the cultural zeitgeist, the first wave of enterprise Gen AI adoption has been building for a long while. Its roots can be traced through the remarkable transformation we've witnessed in the process automation space over the past decades, with the emergence of Business Process Management (BPM) and the subsequent entry of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) onto the scene – the former revolutionizing how we perceive and work with processes and the latter introducing task-based automation.

The synergy between BPM and RPA laid the groundwork for the Gen AI-powered culmination of this initial wave, with the technology enabling the creation of previously conceptual process copilots. Where in the prior landscape organizations where limited in human-machine interaction by the inability of computers to understand natural language, Gen AI turned this on its head. It means that, for the first time, humans and machines can converse much more easily, with Gen AI's natural language processing (NLP) capabilities enabling the development of process copilots – Gen AI-powered tools akin to digital workers, able to assist and empower employees across a breadth of processes through hyper-personalization, creative problem-solving and increases in speed and accuracy, among other benefits.

This is where many find themselves today. ChatGPT, MS Office Copilot, GitHub Copilot are just a few current examples of assistive tools that are becoming part and parcel of employees' day-to-day roles, augmenting their capabilities through content generation, suggested actions and other efficiencies.

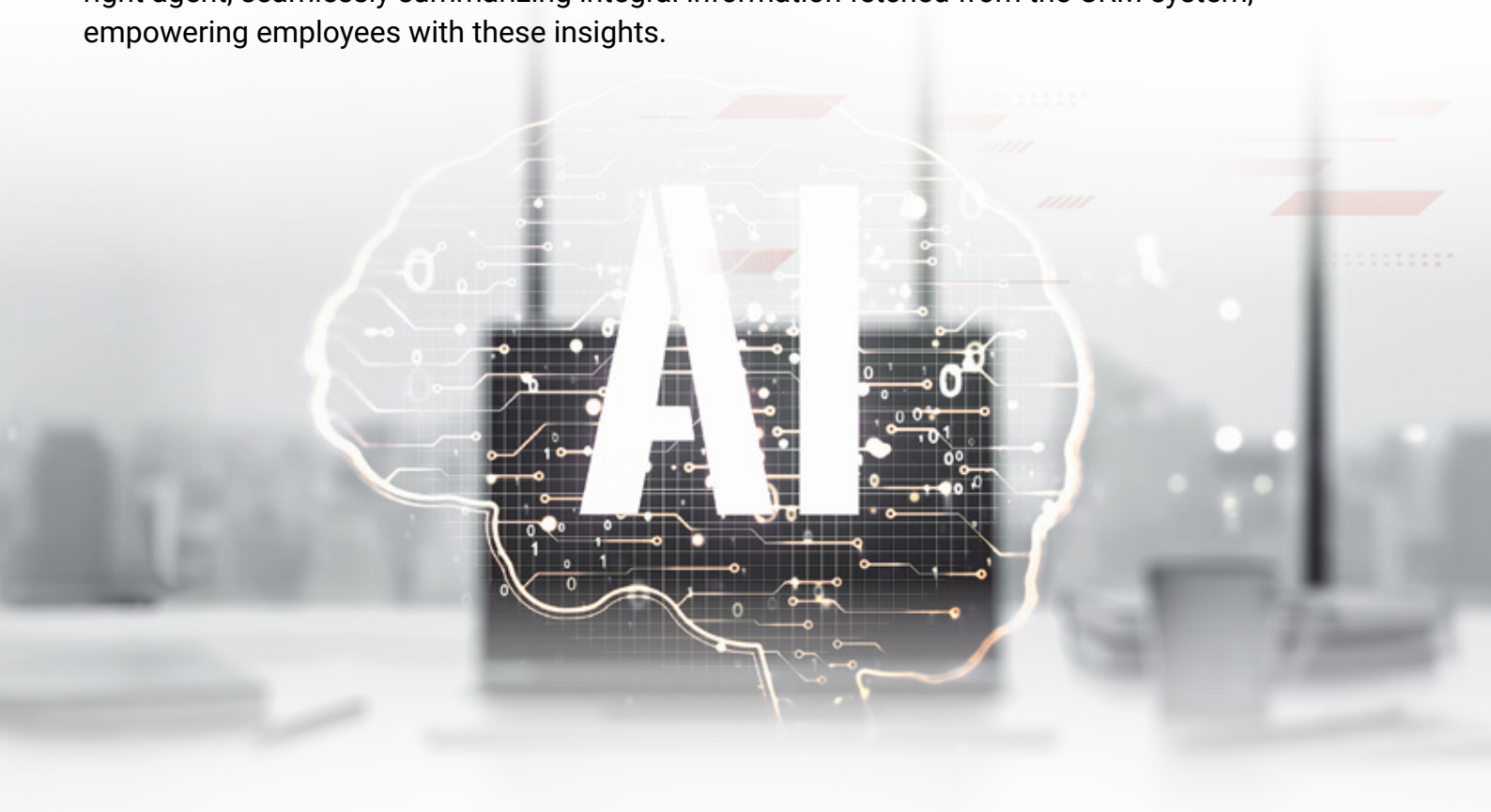
The benefits are clear to see, with 70% of Microsoft's Copilot users saying it made them more productive, and 68% saying it improved the quality of their work. GitHub's AI-powered coding tools, meanwhile, have become a staple among developers, with between 30-40% of developers indicating their organizations actively encouraged and promoted the adoption of AI coding tools.

Research from Corinium Intelligence, in partnership with WNS, affirms this positive uptake, revealing that a massive 76% of enterprises are planning or currently involved in Gen AI projects. But with the same research also showing that almost three quarters (72%) of leaders are extremely concerned about the ethical implications of AI decision-making in their organization, it's integral to understand how the Gen AI adoption journey will continue to unfold in its second wave.

The Second Wave: Infused AI

What makes the second wave of Gen AI adoption distinct is the stage at which the technology comes into play within operations. In the first wave, process orchestration is still sparked by human in the loop, with entry level agents working on a particular process (with Gen AI only assisting) and supervisors – our checkers – validating these tasks. But the second wave of adoption sees Gen AI infused into the process earlier, with Gen AI-powered bots conducting many maker activities.

What does infused AI look like in practice? Conversational chatbots are one case in point, with future-facing organizations already embracing these capabilities. Gen AI-powered chatbots can contextualize interactions with customers, providing summarization, extraction and cognitive search functionality for employees. If a customer is unhappy, the chatbot can escalate to the right agent, seamlessly summarizing integral information fetched from the CRM system, empowering employees with these insights.



Crucially, in wave one and two, the process is still owned by the human, who is responsible for the outcome but infusing AI to achieve a certain result. At this stage on the Gen AI adoption journey, this represents a deliberate choice, with Gen AI still lacking several features required for complete automation.

Hallucination is perhaps the prime example, with Gen AI models still generating incorrect or misleading results presented as accurate answers. The New York Times reported the rates at which popular AI models made up facts, with hallucinations ranging from OpenAI's ChatGPT at 3% of the time to Google's PaLM at a staggering 27%. Such errors can be caused by a wide range of factors, from insufficient training data through to data bias and opacity, the prevalence of which marks the boundary between waves two and three.

The Third Wave: The Autonomous Enterprise

Should the pace at which Gen AI investment is moving continue, the deliberate limitations that define infused AI will only prove temporary. It's a future made likely by

the rapid and iterative approach many have taken to the technology, with the vast difference in capabilities of Open AI's GPT-3 model – with 175 billion parameters – versus its GPT-4 model – which is rumored to be upwards of 1 trillion parameters – encapsulating this accelerated progress.

It means that, in the near future, we will likely see Gen AI expressing agentic behaviors – a new class of Gen AI capable of acting as autonomous agents, performing tasks and making decisions without the need for direct human intervention. Where in wave two we saw Gen AI tackle maker tasks, the third wave sees Gen AI tackle checker tasks too, enabling the automation of goals end-to-end.

Let's take booking a journey from destination A to B between certain hours for the lowest price as an example. At present, it requires a person to conduct a search, compare prices, book tickets, check in and so on. But in the third wave, this goal can be outsourced to Gen AI, which will break it down into various tasks and processes. It may sound simple, but it requires complex capabilities, refining choices based on a user's past history, combining decision making factors, and making reasoned judgements on the optimal course.

Now imagine applying this capability to the enterprise. A wealth of goals across functions – from sales and marketing through to HR and finance – could be delegated to Gen AI agents able to execute on behalf of humans, enabling an organization's technology to solve its own problems, creating all-new efficiencies and allowing time to be repurposed toward innovation and delivering business value. This is the era of the autonomous enterprise, where Gen AI breaks down goals fed into the system into different processes, and each process into tasks.

Harnessing The Gen AI Adoption Journey

A profound change is on the horizon, characterized by businesses that harness the collaborative potential of human expertise and machines – and Gen AI represents the catalyst for this shift. However, realizing this future – and the full enterprise potential of Gen AI – is no easy task.

While readiness varies across industries, we know that data is one crucial aspect that can unlock the third wave of adoption. According to research from Everest Group, in collaboration with WNS, sufficient availability of high-quality training data for Gen AI solutions is a major roadblock, with 40% of enterprises expressing reservations. However, with the same research showing that 62% of enterprises are seeking third-party assistance when it comes to enhancing tech capabilities and training Gen AI models on enterprise data, it's a roadblock that could soon be dismantled.

Regardless of how adoption journeys are approached, we can expect Gen AI to fuel the next decade of enterprise evolution and beyond, bringing unprecedented efficiency and productivity, and elevating innovation capabilities to all-new levels.

About the Author

Narendran Thillaisthanam is the Chief Technology Officer at WNS-Vuram where he is responsible for technology strategy. His areas of expertise include Gen AI, AI/ML, automation, Intelligent document Processing, Analytics, Business Intelligence, and RPA. Narendran has more than two decades of experience in the technology domain spanning strategy, product management and core software development/architecture.

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WNS-Vuram's hyperautomation stack – encompassing intelligent business process management (iBPM) / low-code application platform (LCAP), robotic process automation, intelligent document processing, process discovery and analytics – drives maximum value and high-impact transformation in enterprises. With a strong presence across seven countries, WNS-Vuram offers end-to-end consulting, design, development, post-go-live support and maintenance across all technologies via offshore, nearshore and onshore delivery models. For more information, visit https://www.vuram.com.

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