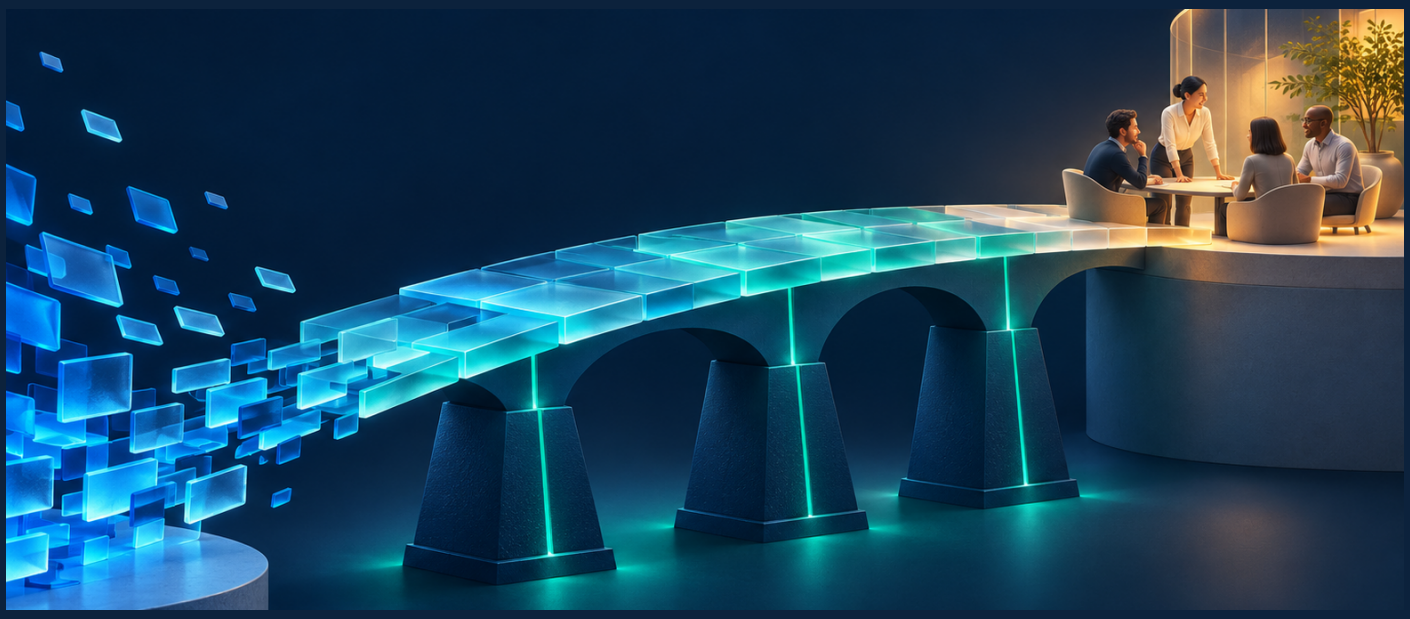
TODD SOBIECH

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE / NOVEMBER 2026

The AI Conversation Has Changed.

Now Comes the Work That Matters.

Seven shifts in AI through hands-on involvement and perspectives shared with industry peers.



KNOWLEDGE → WORKFLOWS → VALUE

A year ago, much of my AI work started with exploring the possibilities. Today, the questions are more practical: can it help complete a task, use our company knowledge, and deliver value we can explain?

These reflections draw on my involvement in AI initiatives, with additional perspective from industry peers. Every organization has its own priorities and pace; your experience may look different.

01 / AI IS STARTING TO HELP COMPLETE THE WORK

From Answers to Getting Things Done.

FIND
Bring information together

→

HELP
Prepare the next step

→

CONNECT
Move the request forward

Early in my work with AI, many uses involved questions, summaries, or email drafts. Those remain useful. What has grown is the range of everyday tasks and connected steps AI can help with.

An AI agent can use tools to work toward a goal. I am seeing customer assistance agents become a single place to find information and make requests, with connections to tools such as ServiceNow helping link the request to the next step.

Model Context Protocol, or MCP, is one way to make connections easier. Think of it as a common plug: a standard way for AI applications to connect with compatible business tools and information, with the right permissions. [1]

> **The question is becoming: can AI help me move the work forward?**

EXAMPLES FROM THE WORK I AM SEEING

EVERYDAY WORK

Presentation slides, report building, meeting notes, and summaries.

DOCUMENT-HEAVY WORK

Help with contract review and legal, compliance, and back-office documents, with specialists reviewing the work.

DATA & ANALYTICS

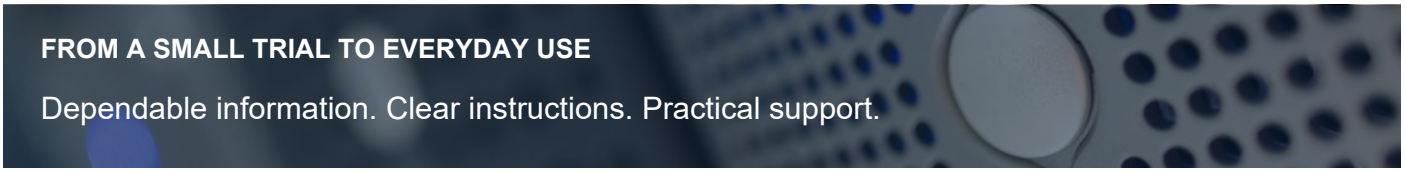
Generative AI helping prepare and clean up data and improve metadata - the descriptions and labels that help people understand and use it.

BUILDING & MODERNIZING

Support for application and tool migrations, along with coding across different skill levels.

02 / INTEREST IS GROWING FASTER THAN READINESS

The Work Beyond the Demonstration.



FROM A SMALL TRIAL TO EVERYDAY USE

Dependable information. Clear instructions. Practical support.

I have found that getting an AI idea working can happen quickly. Making it useful for a wider group takes more effort: does it work with our information, is it easy to use, and who helps when something goes wrong?

As business users and data and analytics leaders become more familiar with AI, I have seen more willingness to look beyond the model. Its quality still matters, but data quality, governance, and access increasingly take priority in making AI useful.

That is a meaningful change in my experience: stronger foundations are becoming part of the investment, rather than something to address after the demonstration.

> **A good demonstration creates interest. A useful everyday experience builds confidence.**

03 / THE TOOL CHOICES ARE BECOMING MORE FOCUSED

Fewer Tools. More Shared Direction.

Early on, my work involved exploring different models and applications. More recently, the focus has shifted toward a smaller set of tools the organization can support.

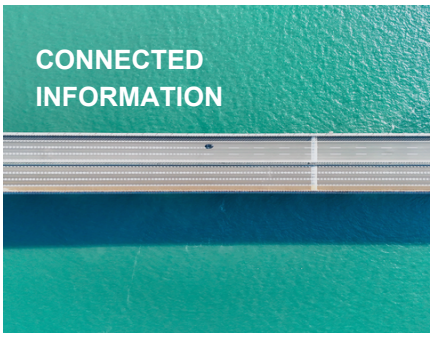
People need to know which tools they can use, where company information belongs, and where to get help. Shared tools make costs more visible and help teams build on what others have learned.

There is still room for different tools. The bigger decision is how they fit the business, connect to its information, and help people complete work.

CLEARER CHOICES / SHARED LEARNING / SUPPORT

04 / COMPANY KNOWLEDGE IS GETTING MORE ATTENTION

AI Needs to Understand Our Business.



CONTEXT & KPIs
Agree on the business meaning and measures.

CATALOG & LINEAGE
Find the information and understand its origins.

RAG & CONNECTIONS
Bring the right reference material and sources together.

One of the clearest changes I am experiencing is how data and analytics teams prioritize investment. More attention is going toward business context, shared KPIs, data catalogs, lineage, and finding the right information for AI.

These are practical foundations. Shared KPIs define what success means. A catalog helps people find available information. Lineage shows where it came from and how it changed.

Retrieval-augmented generation, or RAG, gives AI reference material before it answers. The application finds relevant company information and provides it to the model. It still needs the right material; looking something up does not guarantee a correct answer. [2]

Meaning matters too. Does profit include delivery, rebates, and returns? A semantic layer acts like a shared business dictionary, defining measures and how information relates so teams and AI use consistent meanings.

Alongside connecting information across sources, I am seeing more focus on data products: reusable information with someone responsible for keeping it accurate, current, and understandable. These investments give AI a stronger business foundation.

> **A useful answer needs to fit the business, as well as the question.**

WHAT I AM SEEING CHANGE

Data and analytics teams are giving these foundations a stronger place in their investment priorities. The model remains important; the information around it is receiving more attention.

05 / MORE PEOPLE CAN EXPERIMENT

Innovation With Clear Ground Rules.

AI makes it easy for groups to bring in their own tools and start building. I have seen this happen without formal policies, risk review, or enough consideration of connections to other systems and growth beyond the original team. This is shadow AI.

In my work, I am pushing governance from optional to required: clear rules about tools and information, what needs review, and who supports the result.

AI Centers of Excellence are taking on more of this work alongside education and experimentation. The aim is to give useful ideas a path the business can support.

> **I want to keep the energy of experimentation while making the ground rules a requirement.**

06 / PEOPLE NEED MORE THAN ACCESS

People Are Finding Their Own Possibilities.

I am seeing more business users feel empowered and become enthusiastic about learning and working with new AI capabilities. The ideas increasingly come from people who know the everyday work and can see where help would matter.

That enthusiasm still needs practical learning: what to use AI for, what information to share, and how to check an answer. This is AI literacy - the understanding to use AI thoughtfully in your own work.

My experience reinforces the value of practice. Watching a colleague, trying a real task, and having someone to ask help turn interest into confident use.



1. **TRY** A task from your work
2. **CHECK** An answer that makes sense
3. **LEARN** Practice and share

> **The excitement becomes more useful when people can connect it to their own work.**

07 / VALUE, COST & CONNECTION TO STRATEGY

Cheaper AI Does Not Always Mean a Smaller Bill.



A PATTERN I HAVE SEEN IN SOME TEAMS

In some teams, I have seen lower token prices - one part of AI usage charges - alongside higher total bills. Usage is growing faster than unit prices are falling.

That reinforces the need to manage usage and link spending to value. Licenses and AI charges are only part of the investment; connecting data, supporting the solution, training, and people's time matter too.

Leaders are pushing for greater transparency on how these investments connect to value. In my work, that also means linking each initiative to business strategy and the broader data, analytics, and AI strategy.

Leaders need to see the investment, purpose, and results. Customers need an explanation relevant to them: quicker answers, more consistent service, or a better experience. Making the contribution understandable is becoming part of the work.

> **A lower price per use does not guarantee a lower bill. The spending still needs a clear business purpose.**

CHANGES I AM EXPERIENCING

INVESTMENT: Data and analytics teams are prioritizing context, shared measures, and trusted information.

LEADERSHIP: Leaders are asking for a clearer connection between investment and value.

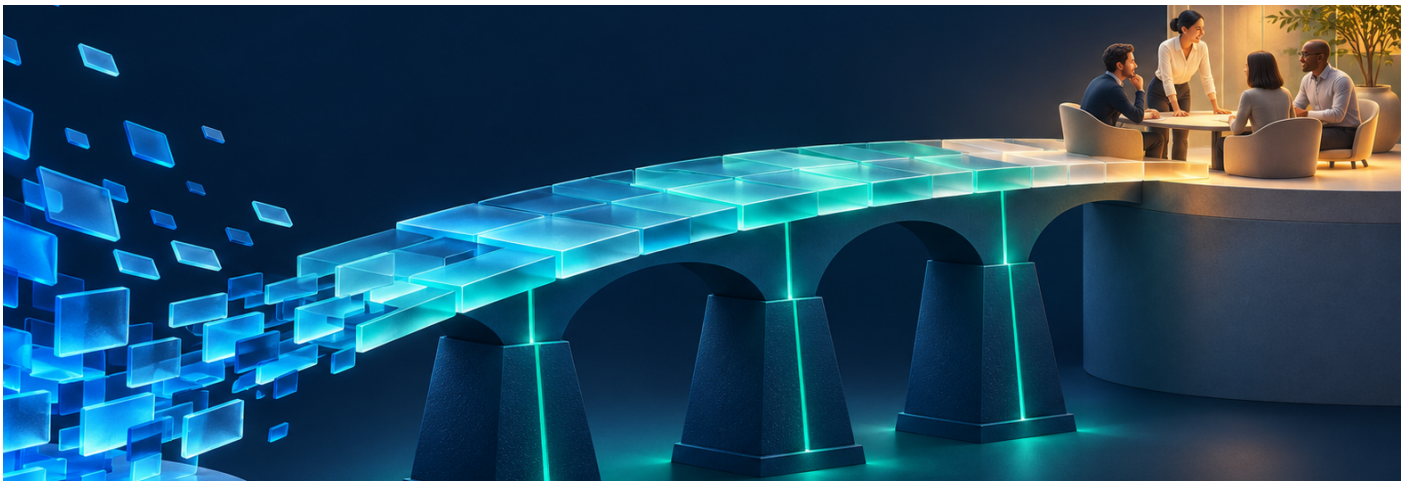
PARTICIPATION: Business users are becoming more empowered and enthusiastic about learning and applying AI.

Technical references: [1] Anthropic: Introducing MCP. [2] Microsoft Learn: RAG. References support the explanations; the experiences described are the author's.

Cover: original AI-generated illustration. Stock photography: panumas nikhomkhai; zs Lin; fauxels / Pexels, used under the Pexels License. Photography illustrates the theme. Diagrams prepared with AI assistance.

CONCLUSION / FROM POSSIBILITY TO MEANINGFUL PROGRESS

The Progress That Matters.



What stands out to me over the past year is how much closer AI has moved to everyday work. The possibilities now extend from preparing a presentation to helping a customer complete a request. More people can see where they might contribute.

That wider use is changing what deserves attention. In my experience, trusted company information, practical learning, clear ground rules, and visibility into spending are becoming essential parts of the investment. They help turn an interesting capability into something people can use with confidence.

For me, the next stage is making the connection to business value clearer: what improves, who benefits, and what it costs. That gives leaders a stronger basis for investment and gives employees and customers a reason to care about the progress.

AI progress becomes meaningful when trusted data and empowered people turn investment into better work, better decisions, and business value we can demonstrate.