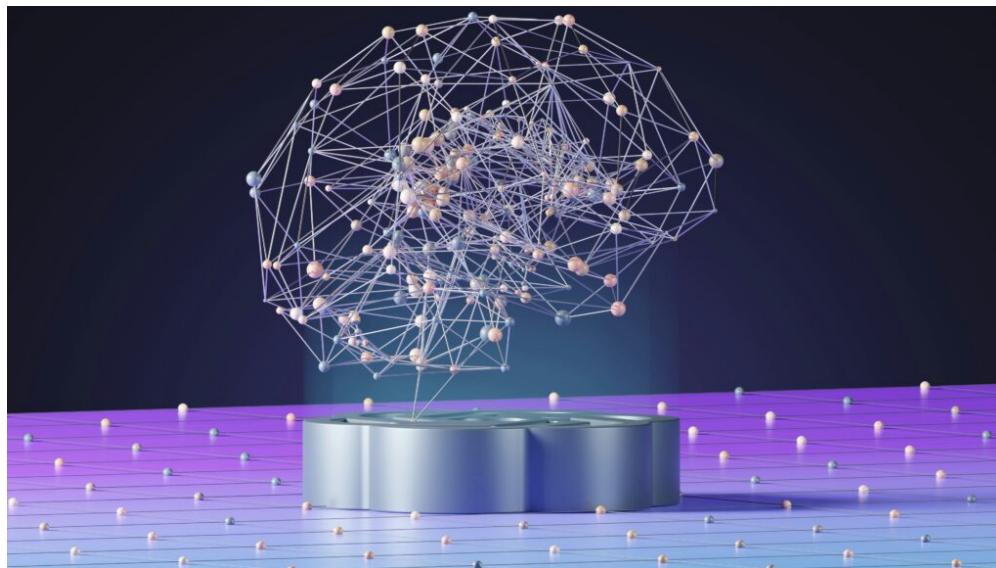


AI Agents Set to Become Core to Professional Services Workforces, Kantata Report Finds

January 9, 2026



Eighty-seven percent of professional services organisations plan to use AI agents as part of their workforce, according to Kantata's annual *State of the Professional Services Industry Report*. Nearly nine in ten leaders (89%) also believe that future revenue growth will depend more on how effectively firms scale AI than on how they scale headcount, signalling a structural shift in how the sector expects to grow.

Resourcing pressures are accelerating this change. More than two-thirds of professional services firms report turning down work due to capacity constraints, while 68% cite skills shortages as a major barrier, up sharply from 45% last year. As a result, resourcing is no longer just about people, but about balancing human capability with AI capacity.

However, execution is proving to be the critical challenge. Leaders identify the integration and management of AI agents within delivery workflows as the single biggest resource and project management issue they face. Reflecting this reality, 90% of respondents say their systems will soon need to attribute work, cost, and value across both human staff and AI agents, exposing the limits of traditional workforce and financial models.

"The professional services sector is at an inflection point," said Micheal Speranza, CEO of Kantata. "AI isn't knocking on the door anymore; it's already inside, reshaping how work gets done, how value is created, and how firms compete."

Where AI is being applied, the impact is already visible. Among organisations using AI to optimise core processes, 54% report more efficient project execution, 53% see improved proposal quality and win rates, and 52% report better forecast accuracy or utilisation.

These gains are becoming essential as commercial pressures mount. Client expectations continue to rise, with 72% of firms citing higher demands for quality, 51% for speed, and 47% for transparency. At the same time, margin pressure remains the dominant concern for 70% of respondents, ahead of topline growth. Execution gaps persist, with 54% of firms saying at least one in ten projects still miss budget targets.

Confidence in data is also eroding. Only 12% of leaders say they fully trust the data in their systems, down from 24% last year. While 88% trust AI outputs enough to use them operationally, almost the same proportion (89%) spend significant time validating those outputs, pointing to transparency and data quality challenges.

"This isn't just about technology, it's about leadership," Speranza added. "The firms that pull ahead will be those that use AI not to optimise at the margins, but to fundamentally raise the standard of how they deliver value and prove expertise."

The findings are based on a Kantata-sponsored survey of 200 professional services leaders conducted by Censuswide. The full report is available at:

<https://www.kantata.com/resource/2025-state-of-professional-services>.