

Argon&Co\*

**AI with  
real ROI**



# IRIS. Enlightened AI with real ROI

Today's tech-focused business leaders face a testing dilemma. AI promises a cure-all for a vast range of operational challenges, potentially futureproofing enterprise tech stacks for generations to come. But information overload and a lack of clear-sighted guidance causes information paralysis. As hesitant organisations are left languishing with legacy SaaS systems while AI-savvy competitors forge ahead, how can you ensure you're not left behind?

IRIS is Argon & Co's specialist Data and AI team. Operating globally, we help enterprise clients across a vast range of verticals apply AI prudently and strategically – solving the most pressing business problems and rapidly delivering demonstrable ROI.

Our research reveals four cross-cutting forces complicating AI investment decisions for enterprise budget holders. But understanding these four forces provides decision makers with a framework for focused investment. This crystal-clear roadmap closes the gaping abyss of AI overwhelm and unscrambles marketing hype-cycle chaos.

Organisations that combine these learnings with our carefully calibrated predictions for the cultural move away from SaaS in the next five years can make their next moves with confidence. By deploying targeted, flexible enterprise AI, they'll move the needle now – rather than stalling at the starting grid.

The future of enterprise AI is unwritten. Yet our proven experience, deep expertise and robust results mean no IRIS client needs to work with a blank slate.

Here are two examples of ways we've developed and deployed ROI-focused AI for diverse enterprise clients.

## Reducing a real estate developer's HR effort by 70% using AI assistants

A \$1bn real estate developer asked IRIS to simplify variable compensation. We built three GenAI assistants that cut HR effort by 70%, resolved 75% of queries via chatbot, and delivered the company's first consistent payroll run—eliminating paper forms, spreadsheets, and email chains from bonus and incentive processes.



## Reducing a drinks brand's ERP effort by 70% and making content creation 5x faster

IRIS solved two tech issues for a drinks brand: automating messy order forms cut ERP upload time by 70% and app switches by 50%. A GenAI copy tool let users create on-brand content instantly, boosting campaign speed 5X, improving consistency, and simplifying localisation—eliminating reliance on costly agencies.





## For business leaders, AI feels like everything, everywhere, all at once.

Faster, smarter LLMs (large language models) seem to be released on a weekly basis. Additional applications and services are wrapped on top of rapidly evolving platforms.

But if you're a business leader looking to futureproof your enterprise tech stack, AI can feel like a bewildering buzzword. Cue 'AI analysis paralysis': too many options and too many outlandish promises lead to overwhelm, overload and indecision.

Legacy SaaS providers often insist on punitive licensing regimes. Therefore weighing up AI options rather than tying yourself into another medium to long-term contract is a wise move at this juncture. But with the breathtaking pace of AI technologies (not to mention the marketing hype cycle), how do you ensure your next move is the right move?

This whitepaper takes you through three systematic steps to help you move forward:

- Understanding the Four Forces of AI complicating your decision-making
- Predicting the cultural move away from enterprise SaaS up to 2028
- Converting the Four Forces of AI to your competitive advantage

This paper includes two AI business use cases from IRIS – Argon & Co's specialist data and AI team. Read them to understand the powerful results made possible when our enterprise clients apply AI prudently and strategically.

# Understanding the Four Forces shaping enterprise AI

The AI market is in conflict, with Four Forces competing for your personal and enterprise AI spend. But rather than being caught in the crossfire, you can place yourself at the crossroads – the sweet spot where enterprise productivity and personal user experience meet.

To invest and generate a return from AI technology, a deeper dive into these four forces is worthwhile.

## Key terms & concepts

**AI:** software that can sense, reason, act and adapt.

**GenAI (or Generative AI):** a field of machine learning and specific computer conceptual design and operational structure designed to convert data input into content and predictions.

**ML (or Machine Learning):** algorithms using large amounts of data to predict outcomes.

**LLM (or Large Language Model):** the underlying machine model delivering GenAI through generative pre-trained computer conceptual design and operational structure.

**VLM (or Vision Language Model):** an LLM derivative designed for expert image and object detection.

**Deep Learning:** very large multi-layered neural networks modelled from our own brains, utilising vast amounts of data to learn.

**Multi-modality:** the various ways GenAI outputs its content. Modalities include voice, text, visualisations and video.

**ASI (or Artificial Super Intelligence):** AI at scale with massive compute power as a proxy for an oversized brain.

**AGI (or Artificial General Intelligence):** sentient AI with intelligence ability beyond human levels.

**Vector database:** a tool for securely storing and retrieving unstructured data.

## 1. GenAI Model innovation

When ChatGPT was introduced in November 2022, it opened the floodgates for LLM building and refining. Now, industry giants like OpenAI, Meta and Google are focusing on monetising through ever-expanding service innovations.

Take Gemini, for instance. Although Google's LLM initially played catchup with other players, its current model is industry leading and includes valuable additional services like VEO for video creation, Google Code Assist (AI-powered assistance to help dev teams build and deploy applications throughout the software development cycle) and gcloud CLI (a suite of tools to create and manage Google Cloud resources). This breaches early innovators' competitive moats, causes product pivots and stops startups in their tracks.

## 2. Incumbent applications

Existing platforms like SAP, Salesforce and ServiceNow are responding to the AI revolution in a couple of ways. In general terms, those with more foresight had already included AI in their roadmaps, whereas those caught unprepared have tended to invest in a service wrapper, using a chat interface to improve UX.

However, new application developers are challenging this quadrant by offering cheaper app services requiring less time and change management.

## 3. Personal AI applications

By putting ChatGPT in the world's pockets, OpenAI defined an entirely new category of applications. Many competitors have followed in their wake, developing their own LLMs offering multi-modal interaction and content creation.

Necessity is the mother of invention as these providers push consumer scale adoption. Innovation therefore continues at pace, and many have diversified into enterprise solutions and services. Further, early adopters have built successful platform-native products – such as Perplexity, the leading deep research tool for students and academics.

## 4. Custom AI applications

This newest and most competitive AI market sees consultancies, product companies and entrepreneurs pumping large sums into developing

applications on top of AI platforms.

Additionally, some model and component providers are implementing vertical AI, rather than generalist AI, leveraging quality training data and specific features. Take Nvidia's composable application libraries built with its NEMO open-source framework for building and customising GenAI models, for example - created to cement customer loyalty.

### In summary

With these four forces shaping enterprise AI, it's no wonder you might be stuck in limbo at proof of concept or AI strategy. However, to help you act now and capitalise on emerging opportunities, we've predicted enterprise AI evolution over the next 36 months.



# Understanding the Four Forces shaping enterprise AI

## User Experimentation

Retail tools spark curiosity

- ChatGPT, Gemini, Meta
- Personal productivity use cases

"This looks powerful... but is it enterprise ready?"



## Custom AI Applications

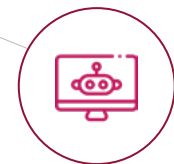
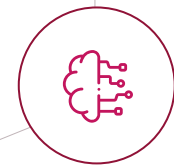
Startups and teams building niche tools

- Startups like cursor, Iris app

"Should I be building my own tool?"



"How do I drive value from AI without getting lost in the hype?"



## Incumbent SaaS Tools

AI wrappers in existing platforms

- SAP, Salesforce, Workday, Oracle

"is it worth upgrading, or just more liscence fees?"



## GenAI Model Innovation

Platforms progress in a corporate world

- OpenAI, Anthropic, Google, Meta

"Do I build on these? Wait, Integrate?"





## Your AI opportunity timeline: from experience-led to SaaS is dead

By analysing market dynamics and observing the ways our most astute clients are targeting opportunities and investments, we've predicted the evolution of enterprise AI over the next 36 months.

With major milestones around every six months, the time to get ahead of the curve is always now. Let's walk through the opportunities and notes of caution at each step.

### Experience layer

In terms of new ways of interacting with applications, chat has so far dominated. ChatGPT, for instance, hit 100 million monthly users in just two months, making it the fastest-growing consumer app ever. Currently it has in excess of 750 million users per month - clearly demonstrating the trend of chat interfaces having become our go-to for AI. But this is only the beginning - we're now on the brink of richer, multi-modal interfaces that tap visual, voice and immersive elements. Still, the challenge will be in making experience design meet demand without sacrificing technical integration or intuitiveness.

### AI platforms

Once multiple AI apps are softly integrated through new experience layers, users can unlock deeper, cross-platform intelligence. This shift threatens incumbent application providers, although the murky terrain of data ownership is already causing friction. The New York Times has sued OpenAI and Microsoft over the use of its articles for AI

training, triggering legal proceedings around data preservation and governance. The risks therefore aren't hypothetical - they're happening now.

### Enterprise AI adoption

AI adoption is unique because consumer demand has surged ahead of enterprise roll-out. A recent survey showed 32% of US adults used generative AI in the past week, yet only 6.1% of businesses had AI in production by late 2024. The reason? Change management and integration challenges. The MIT 'GenAI Divide' study shows that 95% of generative AI pilots fail to deliver measurable ROI, often because organisations struggle to adapt workflows, systems and culture fast enough.

### Human + Machine

Industry 4.0 focused on driving operational improvements via technology and data. But human to machine integration is one of the core aspects of Industry 5.0. And although there's been no mass adoption as yet, new technology and the reimagined experience layer will drive acceleration and significant organisational benefits along the way. Nvidia already offers its LLM-powered Cosmos digital twin platform, for example - making the potential for human + machine short-run robotics economically viable. The downside? Projected progress can be slow and subject to economic uncertainty and volatility.

### AGI decision augmentation

With the debate on ASI and AGI settled by this point, we believe robust guardrails and ethical use policies will be in place to protect humanity and promote a symbiotic relationship with this powerful new technology. AI advancements will

present two major opportunities. Firstly, ASI enables enormous computing power at 24x7 scale applied to humanity's biggest problems – should entrepreneurs like Elon Musk monopolise sectors like the driverless car platform, this would equate to 10% of global GDP. Google DeepMind continues to demonstrate the scale of medical innovation possible with the introduction of the AI system AlphaFold, AlphaFold3 and AlphaProteo. This work allowed us to create a vast free database of 214 million protein structures, and predict biological molecules like DNA – instrumental in future ground-breaking therapeutic innovations. Therefore, AGI should enable further life-saving medical advancements. Potential roadblocks to these outcomes include market impatience combined with a dearth of financial resources, as well as compute-level AI's inherent environmental impact (particularly on water and energy resources).

### SaaS is dead

Against the backdrop of AI services innovation, vibe coding (where software developers work with LLMs to generate functional code), fully automated coding and AI applications, we believe long-term investment in SaaS platforms is unlikely – at least if current predictions materialise. Clients are already questioning multi-year SaaS rollouts

when AI-driven, flexible alternatives exist, and limited integration and ecosystem challenges only compound SaaS obsolescence.

We're already seeing signs of this shift: Wix and Webflow have moved away from classic SaaS subscription models, launching AI-driven site generators instead. Developers are bypassing traditional SaaS dev platforms in favour of GitHub Copilot's automated coding, while Adobe has had to reinvent its Creative Cloud with Firefly AI to avoid disruption from generative tools that sit outside the SaaS model. Even at the enterprise level, Gartner reports CIOs are reallocating budgets away from SaaS projects to fund AI initiatives.

Analysts still predict SaaS as a trillion-dollar industry with a CAGR of 19% by 2030 (Kahl, 2025). But this only seems viable if SaaS providers undergo a root-and-branch reform – reinventing not just platforms and services, but also commercial models, integration and (above all) the introduction of a contemporary experience layer.

---

Now you understand the Four Forces shaping AI and recognise the pathway to opportunity, let's consider how IRIS is already helping switched-on clients to capitalise.





## Your AI opportunity timeline: from experience-led to SaaS is dead





## IRIS. AI focused on ROI

**IRIS are Argon & Co's data and AI specialists.** Our expertise spans data and AI advisory, advanced operations analytics and AI applications - all underpinned by our innovation lab.

Based in Paris, London and Sydney, we keep a discerning eye on AI - working globally to help business leaders invest judiciously in the latest technology. Unscrambling AI chaos by combining sharp technical expertise with hard-won business acumen across multiple verticals, we help you

embrace AI opportunities with clarity and confidence.

When you're ready for the boundless potential and functionality of enterprise AI (rather than the exorbitant costs and punitive licensing associated with SaaS) we target a 10X ROI for clients.

Take a look at two of our latest business case studies.



## Business case: real estate developer's HR effort reduced by 70% using AI assistants

The HR leadership team of a €1 bn-turnover real-estate developer approached IRIS with a particularly tricky puzzle. How could they escape the labyrinth of spreadsheets, email chains and paper forms that governed every element of variable compensation?

### The results:

- **70% reduction in HR effort to prepare yearly bonus and incentive cycles:** Cutting a year-end process that once took 20 working days to just six.
- **75% of employee and manager questions now resolved at “chatbot level”:** Freeing HR to move the needle with coaching and talent strategy.
- **Full consistent payroll-run for the first time in the company's history:** Harmonising the process with project tracking and automated data validation across the HR information system.
- **Adoption rate above 90% within ten weeks:** Achieving buy-in with specific AI-use training and communication through various videos and coaching sessions. Ambassadors were identified during a four-week pilot phase and encouraged team uptake during rollout.

### The Challenge

With a small HR business partners' team serving more than 800 employees across four- and five-year construction projects, it took weeks to reconcile end-of-year bonuses, sales incentives and profit-sharing pools. And this conundrum was compounded by an endless stream of “how much will I earn this month?” questions from staff.

“Our client knew another SaaS module wouldn't solve the problem” says Hamza Kabbaj, IRIS Principal Engineer. “They needed an experience layer that would hide the plumbing, automate the maths and give employees instant, trustworthy answers.”

### Our solution:

We built and deployed three tightly integrated GenAI assistants using Azure-hosted

LLMs coupled with an on-premise vector database for security:

- **Variable Pay Orchestrator** – digitises every incentive workflow (annual bonus, individual increases, project-linked pay-outs and profit-sharing). It pulls real-time data from the HR information system, SharePoint and a home-grown project-tracking system to automatically calculate and surface entitlements in one click.
- **HR Policy Assistant** – a conversational interface that performs retrieval-augmented generation (RAG) on thousands of policy PDFs. This resolves Level-1 employee queries in seconds – complete with clickable sources for audit trails.
- **Employee Knowledge Assistant** – gives HR and line managers a 360° view of any team member (contracts, salary history, absence records) while enforcing strict role-based access controls.

### The takeaway:

GenAI's enterprise value lies less in another point solution and more in a unifying, intelligent layer – surfacing insight where people already work.



## Business case: Drinks brand ERP effort reduced by 70% and content produced 5X faster

A major drinks brand approached IRIS with two problems requiring unique human + machine solutions.

### Soft process order entry tool results:

- **70% reduction in hours** spent uploading an error-free order to ERP.
- **Over 50% fewer application switches** during order conversion.
- **Post-deployment support** revealed no critical bugs.
- **New documented process** with clear roles and responsibilities.

### Copy generation tool results:

- **5x faster time-to-market** for campaign content.
- **Consistent brand and product messaging** across brands, channels and markets.
- **Fewer bottlenecks** and less agency dependency.
- **Easy content localisation** and recycling.
- **Greater marketing team productivity** with the same headcount.

### The Challenge

Firstly, inconsistent customer order forms were creating costly rework, errors and endless app switching before ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) upload. Secondly, campaign content was produced at a glacial pace, inconsistent across brands and markets and overly reliant on outsourcing to expensive marketing agencies.

### Our solution:

We designed and deployed a GenAI soft process order entry automation tool to convert messy inbound forms into ERP-ready sales orders. The tool incorporates human-in-the-loop checks and a clean approval workflow.

Powered by LLM, this tool automates sales order entry from emails, PDFs and other free-text formats. Streamlining manual order processing while reducing errors, it integrates easily with most ERP systems.

We also built and rolled out an on-brand copy generation tool that lets users choose tone, format and intent. The tool produces multiple options with compliance and SEO prompts, with in-built human review and approvals.

This tool enables even non-technical users to generate everything from product descriptions to social posts in seconds. Commercial and marketing teams are producing on-brand, high-quality content faster than ever.

**The takeaway:**

An experience layer-first and AI platform approach complements journeys that match real work, keeps data portable and avoids single vendor traps.

## Talk to us about strategic enterprise AI

Wherever your market, whatever your problem, IRIS takes a clear-sighted approach to futureproofing your enterprise technology stack – converting unfocused frustration to targeted implementation and producing tangible results rather than making unsubstantiated promises.

Our AI predictions aren't loosely based on marketing hyperbole. They're anchored on carefully analysing market dynamics, accurately assessing technological capabilities and keenly observing the behaviour of our clients.

**When you need targeted AI with real ROI [contact us for a consultation.](#)**



# About Argon & Co

Argon & Co is a global management consultancy that specialises in operations strategy and transformation. With expertise spanning supply chain planning, manufacturing, logistics, procurement, finance, and shared services, we work together with clients to transform their businesses and generate real change. Our people are engaging to work with and trusted by clients to get the job done. We have 17 offices across Europe, Australasia, America, Asia and the Middle East.

[argonandco.com](http://argonandco.com)

Argon&Co\*