

EBOOK

8 Steps to Becoming an AI-Forward Retailer



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Introduction

In a world where data is king, retailers have historically been trailblazers, pioneering data technology adoption to supercharge their operations, enhance customer understanding and sharpen personalization. The journey began with the simple cash register about 150 years ago, progressed to standardized product reporting with the introduction of the UPC and EAN, and has evolved to include cutting-edge technologies such as RFID and machine learning.

Today, we stand on the brink of “Generation AI,” defined by sophisticated language models and images. Retailers, with their history of embracing data technologies, find themselves in a strong position to reap the benefits of this new era. Automation of customer service, supply chain modeling with digital twins and delivering hyper-personalized experiences in real time are all in the cards, promising to bolster revenue, improve margins and slash costs for early adopters.

According to an internal analysis by Databricks, data pioneers are already outstripping their competition. The “Databricks 30” — an index tracking the publicly traded data and AI leaders across six major industry sectors, including retail — shows these front-runners outperforming the rest of the market by an impressive and increasing margin. It’s clear: retailers integrating data and AI strategies are setting themselves up for significant gains and a robust competitive advantage.

However, for retailers mired in the landscape of outdated data platforms, the transformation into an AI-driven organization can seem a Herculean task. Embracing this wave of innovative technologies may feel overwhelming, yet it’s clear that those who make the leap stand to gain significantly in the rapidly evolving retail landscape.

To help you navigate the rapidly evolving world of retail and consumer goods, this eBook provides a road map for organizations embarking on digital transformation journeys — a shift that is as much about culture as it is about technology, if not more so. The core advice? Start with a crystal-clear vision for transformation, outlining a compelling case for why such change is vital for the company’s long-term survival. Then, initiate the process by introducing AI to make gradual enhancements in critical business procedures.

The State of the Retail Industry: The Diverging Performance of Data Leaders vs. Data Laggards

The pandemic's fallout has led to a widening chasm between the retail industry's leaders and laggards. McKinsey & Company encapsulated this trend succinctly: "Companies with tech-forward business models, who were already pulling ahead pre-crisis, left their competitors in the dust."

But what exactly is a "tech-forward business model"? It isn't a simple narrative of digital natives dethroning traditional retailers. Heavyweights like Walmart, Target and Costco held their own against Amazon. Nor was it purely a matter of scale — smaller brands like Warby Parker or Everlane managed to carve out substantial consumer bases, competing against larger, established players.

The common denominator among all victors was their ability to harness data, analytics and AI to rapidly react to shifts in consumer behavior.

These businesses deftly used consumer demand insights to understand the effects of supply chain disruptions and labor shortages and reallocate resources to mitigate the most harmful impacts. They adeptly introduced new delivery

methods, optimizing operations to alleviate the pressure these modes exerted on margins. They successfully established tighter partnerships with suppliers and logistic entities, collaborating toward shared triumphs.

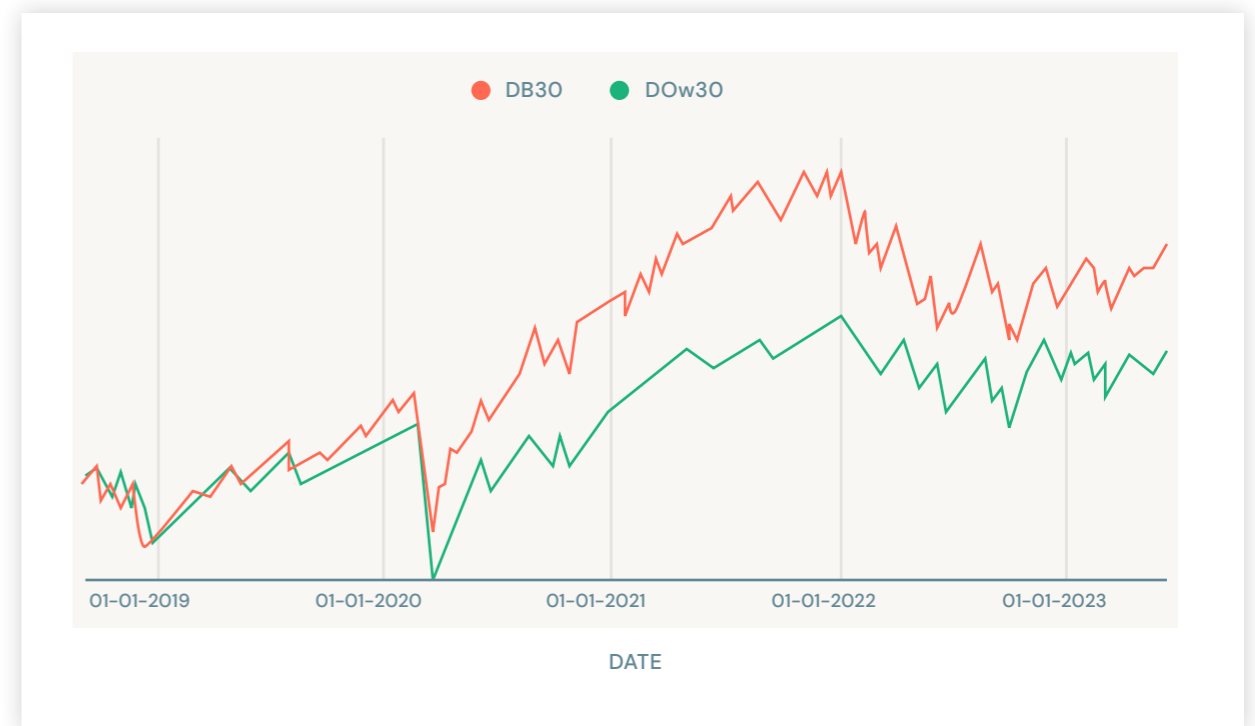
In all these instances, it was their timely access to information, foresight driven by this data, and the exploration of probable outcomes that set these organizations apart. Infusing data-driven decision-making into core processes within the organization, as well as those crossing partner boundaries, unlocked this approach's full potential.

To illustrate the significance of prioritizing data and AI, we developed the Databricks 30 Index. Drawing inspiration from Morgan Stanley's "Data Era" stocks research, this index tracks marquee customers across our top five verticals and partners. The Databricks 30 is an equal-weight price index, composed of five marquee customers each across Retail/Consumer Products, Financial Services, Healthcare, Media/Entertainment, Manufacturing/Logistics, plus five strategic partners.

Our analysis reveals that companies in the Databricks 30 Index outpaced the S&P 500 by an impressive +21 percentage points (pp) over the past three years. In other words, if the stock market rose by 50% during this period, the Databricks 30 Index would have soared by 71% (outperforming by 21pp). Even more remarkable, excluding tech entirely from the Databricks 30, the Databricks 30 ex-Tech index outperforms the S&P 500 by an even larger margin over the same time frame: +23pp.

Similar to Morgan Stanley's analysis, we find that non-tech U.S. companies that are investing in cloud, data and innovation do, in fact, win.

So now that we see the impact, let's dive into the steps retail organizations can take to put themselves on a trajectory of continued growth and success amid an ever-changing landscape.



Begin With a Shared Vision of Success

The most overlooked activity in becoming an AI-forward retailer is the most crucial. In the rush to secure a position on the AI frontier, many companies are leaping before they look, embarking on AI initiatives without a clear understanding of what they want to achieve. Simply adopting the newest, shiniest tech tools isn't a silver bullet. Many companies set themselves up for failure by neglecting to clearly define the expected business outcomes at the onset of the initiative, a strategic move that can effectively reduce project risk and costs and lead to the ultimate success of the program. In fact, in an attempt to accelerate results, this cavalier approach can instead spiral into expensive mistakes, wasted resources and a decrease in trust for stakeholders from unmet expectations. It's like setting sail on an open ocean without a destination in mind; the journey might provide some interesting detours, but it lacks direction and purpose.

However, when organizations take the time to articulate their expected business outcomes before deploying AI and data-driven programs, they position themselves to reduce project risk and costs. By aligning AI initiatives with specific business objectives and creating a shared vision with stakeholders, the focus becomes less about the technology itself and more about how it can be used to reach these defined goals.

Technology decisions, too, are improved by having a known target. Without clear business outcomes in mind, companies tend to design, develop and implement technologies that *might* be needed to solve the problem. Aligning the technical road map and activities with business outcomes mitigates the risk of misallocated resources and the potential fallout from the unfulfilled promise of AI.

Furthermore, a clear understanding of expected business outcomes allows for efficient project management and cost control. Companies can set key performance indicators (KPIs) tied directly to these outcomes. This not only provides a means to measure progress, but also helps control costs by ensuring that resources are targeted toward initiatives that deliver value.

It's not just about numbers either; having explicit objectives aids in cultivating stakeholder buy-in. Clear communication about the purpose and potential benefits of an AI initiative can foster support from executives, employees, investors and customers alike. This collective backing can further mitigate risk and cut costs by ensuring that everyone is pulling in the same direction.

Why Companies Struggle With Setting Clear Business Outcomes for AI

Getting started with AI at your organization might be daunting, and that's because it is a big undertaking! Struggling to define clear outcomes for AI projects is a common issue among many businesses for a variety of reasons. Here are some key factors that contribute to this challenge:

- ▶ **They believe the data strategy is a technology problem.**
Companies often hire a chief data officer, or make the data strategy the responsibility of the technology organization.
- ▶ **They lack an understanding of their business processes**
An alarming number of businesses jump onto the AI bandwagon without understanding how their business operates. Decisions are made at the leadership level, but how they translate to operational decisions is muddled. Data and AI are fundamentally business process technologies, and without fully understanding how the business works, any initiative in data and AI is bound to have limited success.

- ▶ **They lack a data culture**
Somewhat related to the previous point, many companies have teams that make decisions based on experience and intuition. These should not be discounted, but the reason for intuition is often a result of a poor definition of processes, which prevents the ability to measure and improve processes.
- ▶ **They struggle to get high-quality data**
AI projects require good-quality, relevant data. Many businesses struggle with issues related to data access, quality, privacy and security, which can complicate the process of defining clear outcomes.
- ▶ **They lack the organizational structures required**
Implementing AI often requires significant changes in business processes, organizational structures and even corporate culture. Many companies find it hard to manage these changes, leading to difficulties in setting and achieving clear outcomes.

 **They don't have the right people in place**

There's often a gap between the skills available within a company and the skills needed to define and achieve AI outcomes. Without team members who understand AI, data analysis and project management, businesses can struggle to set clear objectives for AI initiatives.

 **They struggle to quantify the value of AI projects**

AI's benefits can sometimes be intangible or long-term, making them difficult to quantify. Companies may struggle to define outcomes in measurable terms, complicating the process of setting objectives and monitoring progress.

Data and AI programs are a business process problem first, and a technology problem last. Familiarity with technology is important, but irrelevant if companies do not understand it.

Addressing these challenges often requires companies to invest in education about AI capabilities, to formulate clear strategies, to manage change effectively, and to bring on board the necessary skills either by hiring new talent or upskilling existing employees. It's a journey that requires commitment, but the potential benefits of successful AI initiatives make it a worthwhile venture.

Before Diving In: Assess Your Readiness

There is a growing sense of urgency for organizations relatively new to data and AI-driven enablement to “get in the game.” Profiles of top performers and headline-making achievements create a clearer sense of what is possible and what can be gained, leaving those entering into the space eager to achieve similar results.

But what’s missing in those articles are the sustained investments in process, people and technology and the numerous challenges, missteps and outright failures that had to occur before success was achieved. Data-driven transformation is a journey, and before any successful journey is pursued, it’s wise to reflect on the organization’s readiness so that you can anticipate challenges and identify areas for remediation and improvement that will deliver you to your intended destination.

With this in mind, we encourage organizations new to this space to assess their maturity in terms of the use and management of their existing information assets:

1. How easily discoverable and accessible are data in your environment?
2. How well understood are these information assets?

3. Is the quality of these data formally verified?
4. Are key entities such as products and customers actively managed, and can data related to these items be easily linked across various data sources?
5. How quickly are data made available for analysis following their creation or modification? Is this latency aligned with how you might use this data?
6. Are processes established for determining appropriate uses of data, governing access and providing oversight on consumption?
7. Is there one individual responsible for effective data management across the enterprise, and has this person established a process for receiving and responding to feedback and shifting organizational priorities?

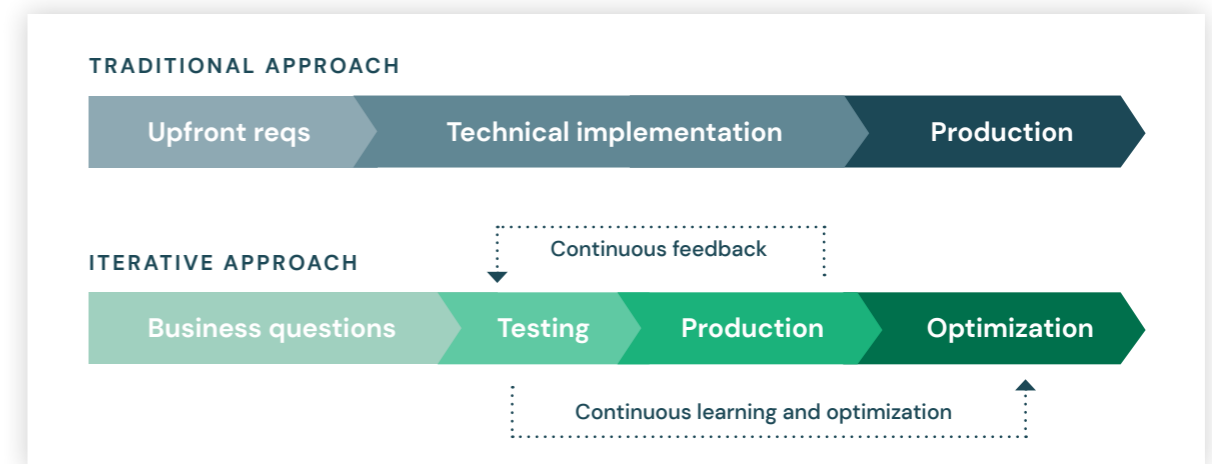
This list of questions is by no means exhaustive, but it should help to identify blockers that are likely to become impediments down the road.

Similarly, we would encourage organizations to assess their maturity in terms of analytics capabilities:

1. Is business performance at all levels assessed in terms of key metrics?
2. How frequently are data-driven analyses used in making key business decisions?
3. To what degree are advanced analytics techniques — i.e., data science — used in decision-making processes?
4. Are predictive models regularly leveraged as part of operational business processes?
5. How is experimentation used to assess the performance of various initiatives?
6. Are predictive models used to automate key business decisions?
7. Has the organization embraced a model of continuous deployment for the regular update of model-driven processes?

Lastly, and probably most importantly, we'd encourage the organization to perform a frank assessment of its readiness to embrace change. Becoming a data-driven enterprise is fundamentally about operating differently than before. Decision-making authority becomes more diffuse and often more automated. Project outcomes become less certain as the organization focuses on innovation where learning is emphasized over predictable results. Process silos often become more intertwined as new modes of engagement evolve.

When done right, this transition creates a healthy tension between what's needed to be successful today and what's needed to be successful tomorrow. But this can also manifest itself as employee resistance and political infighting as processes and organizational structures evolve. What's often needed to overcome this is strong leadership, a clear vision and mandate for change as well as a reassessment of incentive structures and active organizational change management as the organization transitions into this new way of working.



An iterative approach involves the use of data to continually optimize the performance of data products.

Getting Started: Putting Some Wins on the Board

With the organization ready to proceed, the next phase is about learning to deliver new solutions within your organization. There will be new technologies to deploy and new skills to develop, and there will be new patterns for integration into business workflows and procedures for incremental updates and improvements. But most importantly, there will need to be a new level of partnership and trust between the business and the technology sides of the organization that needs to be carefully nurtured.

The best way we have found to do this is to start with projects that improve on existing operational workflows, i.e., do what you do, but do it smarter. The business is often familiar with existing pain points and can more clearly envision how a new capability can be folded into its processes. They are also familiar with how to assess the impact a new approach may have on their business and can help design tests to validate whether the intended results are or are not being delivered.

Work on these projects is a collaborative effort between the business and IT. Together, the project team explores a potential solution with a notion of how it may be integrated in mind from the outset. As the project unfolds, all members are part of the iterative cycles and help to steer the solution in new directions until an item of value is derived.

As capabilities demonstrating value over the status quo are developed, they are folded into business processes. This is not a one-and-done effort but part of an ongoing cycle of deployment to continue so long as the team has a line of sight to meaningful gains. The team does not wait for the ideal solution but instead focuses on incremental improvements that deliver measurable value along the way.

Oversight for this process is provided by another body, one tasked with the success of the overall transformative efforts within the business. As success is delivered, there will be growing demand for the time and talents of these teams, and the organization will need to prioritize resources across an increasing number of opportunities. This steering committee will need to be responsible for allocating limited resources and advocating for additional ones as well to strike the right balance of investments for the organization.

DEMAND FORECASTING

Demand forecasting is a massive challenge for retail and consumer goods organizations. And one where even an incremental change can have a massive impact, so it's often one of the first projects organizations identify to put a win on the board. According to [McKinsey](#), a 10% to 20% improvement in supply chain forecasting accuracy is likely to produce a 5% reduction in inventory costs and a 2% to 3% increase in revenues. To hit the ground running, check out the [Databricks Solution Accelerators for Demand Forecasting](#) — pre-built notebooks and best practices for key use cases.

Going Big: Learning to Embrace Transformational Change

With some experience under your belt, it's time to build on the organizational muscle developed during initial efforts and flex for more transformative impact. Again, the focus is on established functions within the business, but instead of pointed, incremental improvements, the team begins to create a vision for the part of the organization that would operate if it were to fully embrace data and AI enablement.

It's at this phase that many of the concerns about organizational resistance mentioned earlier are most likely to manifest themselves. Ideally, initial implementation efforts have built champions within the business, but it's still important to be mindful of pushback that can emerge as the organization more fully begins to change. Having and maintaining strong business sponsorship in this phase is critical, and having that sponsor articulate and regularly reinforce a clear vision for the change that's now underway can help everyone understand the need to support these efforts.

So far in this exploration of the journey to data and AI transformation, we've minimized the importance of technology in order to focus on the business and organizational aspects that often get neglected in this conversation. But it's at this stage that the organization needs to have established its preference for data and analytics platforms. Because of the breadth of needs that will have to be addressed and the ongoing innovation taking place in the data science community, we strongly suggest standardizing on a platform that is open and flexible while also providing cost-effective use of both infrastructure and people resources and strong data governance and protection. For many organizations, the Databricks Lakehouse Platform has proven itself to be the ideal platform to meet these needs.

WHY STANDARDIZE ON DATABRICKS?

The Databricks Lakehouse is the only enterprise data and AI platform that allows retailers to leverage all of their data, from any source, on any workload to always offer more engaging customer experiences driven by real-time data, at the lowest cost and with the greatest investment protection.

But simply standardizing on a platform is not enough. The organization needs to work through the roles and responsibilities around the use of this platform and processes for moving things from experimentation and formal development to testing and operationalization.

The importance of having an MLOps strategy really comes to life at this phase. This doesn't mean your strategy around MLOps can't change, but this phase is when you want to think about and define your answers to some key questions such as the following:

1. How do we evaluate new and existing (retrained) models as part of their movement from development to production?
2. How do we determine when a model should be retrained?
3. What are the preferred mechanisms for production deployment?
4. How do we fall back should we have a deployment problem?
5. What are the service level expectations for the deployment processes?



“Databricks Lakehouse has simplified the adoption of AI so that we can deliver better shopping experiences for our customers.”

Numan Ali

Solutions Architect, Data and Analytics Center of Excellence at Pandora

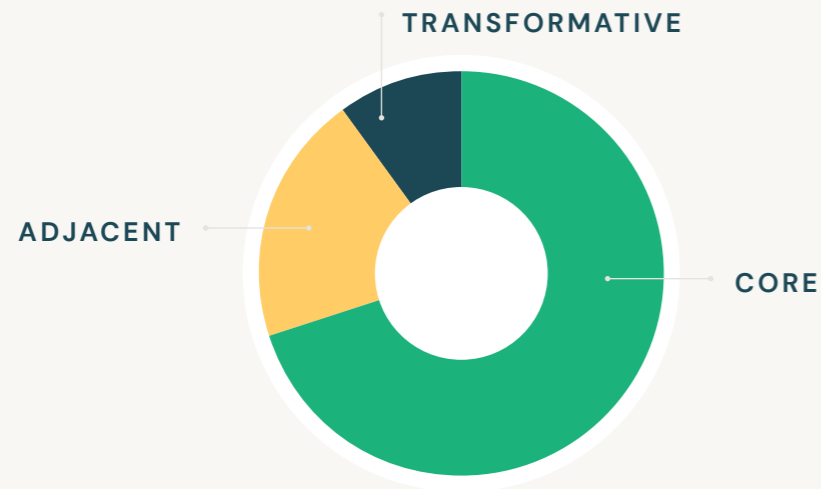
Normalizing the Process: Engraining a Data-Driven Mindset Into the Fabric of the Business

Too often, leadership views innovation as a destination and not a process (“Let’s launch an LLM app!”). An enterprise doesn’t simply transform into a data-driven organization overnight and then it’s done. Yes, there will be an upfront investment, but there will also be ongoing investment in order to support sustained innovation.

Ironically, one of the major obstacles to this change is viewing the goal as simply delivering a project or projects. Think about it — just 12 months ago, only a few specialists in academia and industry were talking about generative AI and large language models (LLMs). Today, **retailers have to integrate this new technology** or fall behind others who will find a way to create more personalized consumer experiences with it.

Technology, especially when it comes to data and AI, moves far too quickly. What retailer tech teams need to deliver at the end of the day is applications, of course, but also the ability to react quickly to change. What sort of ongoing investments in terms of people, process and technology do retailers need to foster in order to ingrain an innovation mindset?

This is an ongoing balancing act where organizations need to innovate and look for new opportunities but also sustain that innovation in a way that is realistic for the business. For this, let’s consider the 70-20-10 rule: the idea that companies should allocate 70% of innovation investment to core initiatives, 20% to adjacent ones and 10% to transformational ones, or “moonshots.” While not a hard-and-fast rule, this concept was touted by Google co-founder Larry Page in a **Fortune magazine article**, and was validated by a **study conducted by Harvard Business Review**, which found that companies following the rule outperformed their peers, typically realizing a P/E premium of 10% to 20%.



Companies that allocated about **70%** of their innovation activity to core initiatives, **20%** to adjacent ones and **10%** to transformational ones outperformed their peers.

Bansi Nagji & Geoff Tuff

Managing Your Innovation Portfolio

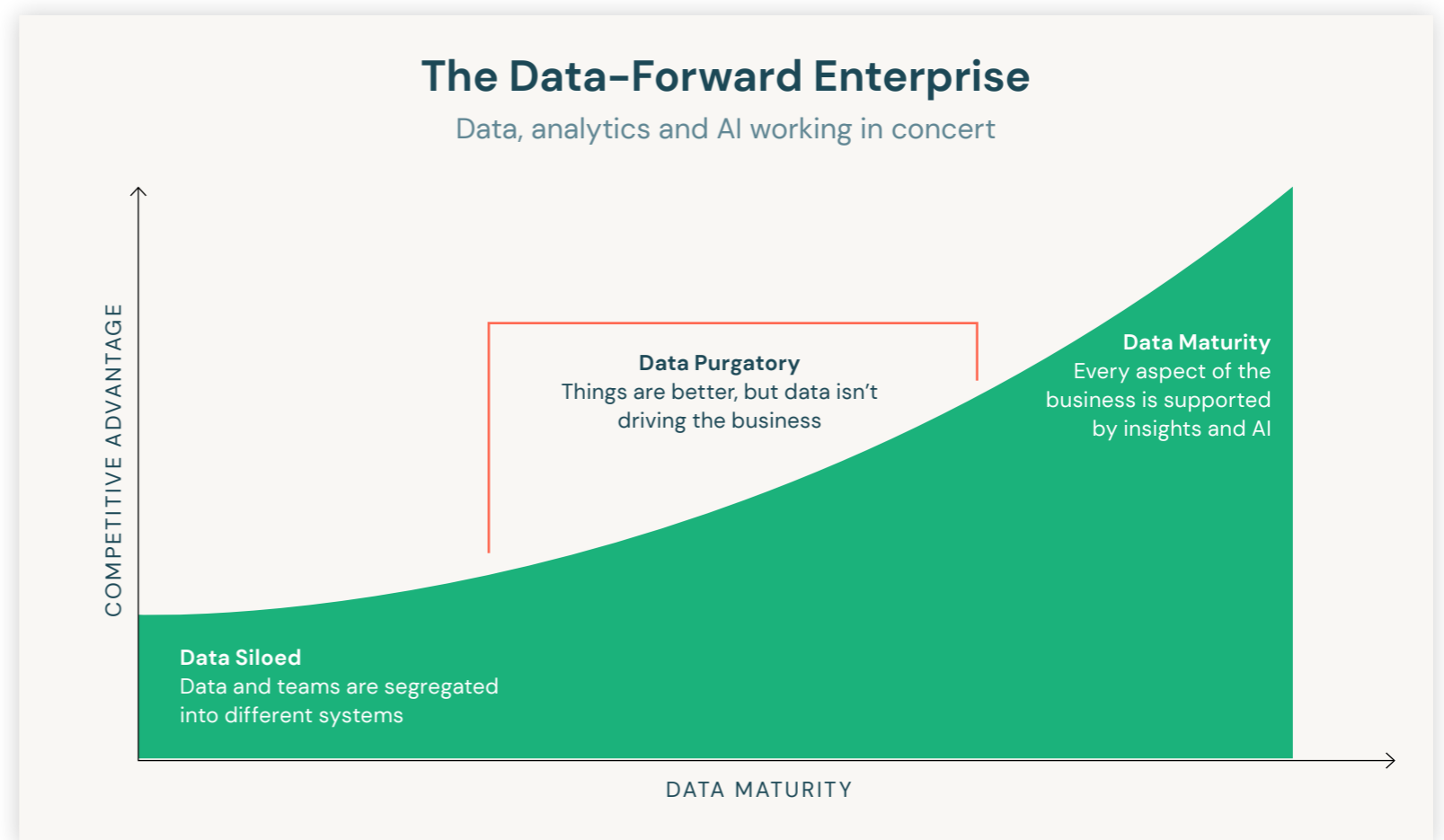
Harvard Business Review, May 2012

The goal of the 70-20-10 rule is to help guide the organization toward sustained innovation and spend the bulk of time on the core business. This is part of why we recommend starting first with fast (just 2- to 3-month total) pilot projects to use AI on existing business use cases like demand forecasting and call center optimization. By working in these areas with a focus on learning and iterating, retailers will soon find where data silos and rigidity exist in the system. As these foundational barriers are knocked down, it then makes it possible to tackle more transformational use cases and start to build the characteristics of a data-forward enterprise. In other words, start to utilize data and data-driven insights as a primary driver for decision-making and operations, while also prioritizing continuous data analysis and improvement.

From Hindsight to Foresight: The Journey to Becoming a Data-Forward Enterprise

So what does it take to successfully embark on this journey to becoming a data-forward enterprise? First and foremost, you need to not only establish a baseline understanding of what has occurred by examining historical data but leverage advancements in technologies (e.g., streaming, computer vision, voice recognition) to make predictions of the future.

Through the use of both historical data and predictive techniques such as forecasting, recommendations, prescriptive care and next-best-action, organizations can begin to improve decisions and, in some cases, automate certain decision-making processes. But rather than moving from historical views to predictive actions in a linear fashion, this journey involves addressing both approaches simultaneously. Once you are able to unify historical and predictive analysis, you can then take significant steps toward becoming a data-forward enterprise.



Being data-forward means silos cease to exist, and data, analytics and AI are informing every aspect of the business.

The 8 Steps to Building a Data-Forward Retailer

Before you start your data-forward journey, a few critical steps must be considered to establish a solid foundation to build upon. Based on our work with the largest and most successful retailers in the world, spanning startups to global giants, we at Databricks have seen that the most successful followed these steps to effectively gain wallet share, whereas those who couldn't would often leave major gaps that competitors could take advantage of. These steps are the basics to prepare businesses for where they need to be both now and in the near future.

1 Set the foundation: Define goals and objectives

The best way to avoid shiny object syndrome (where you start out with a technology and then try to figure out what to do with it) is to first identify the problems you want to solve. From there, you can set goals around innovation to align incentives, and, most importantly, ensure you are driving specific business outcomes such as improving customer engagement, optimizing inventory management or increasing sales.

2 Get grounded: Understand the technology

To start, business leaders need to ground themselves in technology, especially when it comes to AI. AI can do amazing things, but it is not magical and vendors are prone to overpromising and underdelivering. Less than getting deep into code, the purpose is to understand the limitations and ideal use cases.

Databricks provides several [free resources for retailers](#), but we recommend starting with [The Big Book of Retail & Consumer Goods Use Cases](#) for a C-level perspective of how different brands are using data, analytics and AI to drive revenue or cut operational costs.

3 Understand the skills and processes in your business

As we will get into in step 4, starting with smaller pilot projects enables you to not just deliver a quick win and validate the use of AI in the enterprise, but also understand the in-house capabilities in terms of people, process and technology to deliver technical projects. And if required, be willing and ready to hire people with the right skill sets that can help you make the most of your data. For example, building a core team of data analysts can help extract deep insights that lead to better decision-making and identify opportunities for growth. It is critical at this step to define the roles you need, determine how you will source for those roles (via external hiring or internal transfer), and ensure those roles have opportunities for career progression.

gousto



Delivering exactly what customers want, every time, and on time

Data is at the heart of Gousto's mission to change the way people eat through the delivery of boxes of fresh ingredients and easy-to-follow recipes. However, even as their business exploded at the start of the pandemic, their systems couldn't ingest data fast enough, couldn't talk to each other and wouldn't scale — forcing them to temporarily stop accepting new customers. Now Gousto is set up to achieve exciting ambitions for menu expansion, sophisticated personalization and next-day delivery. Learn how they did it.

[READ THE FULL GOUSTO STORY](#)

4 Start small: Pilot a project

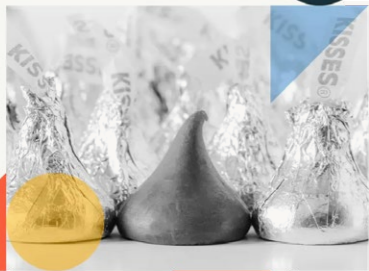
There is no substitute for rolling your sleeves up and running a pilot project to evaluate the feasibility and potential impact of a project before implementing it on a larger scale. When selecting a pilot project, we recommend starting with a project that will deliver clear business value, such as incremental revenue or clear cost savings, yet only takes 2–3 months to complete. The more time there is between project inception and seeing results, the more likely it will lose momentum internally.

For inspiration and a head start, check out our [Solution Accelerators for Retail & Consumer Goods](#). These free resources were created to help our customers save hours of discovery, design, development and testing. Our purpose-built guides — fully functional notebooks and best practices — speed up results across your most common and high-impact use cases and enable you to go from idea to proof of concept (PoC) in as little as two weeks. We have over 20 accelerators built specifically for critical retail and consumer goods use cases, from Demand Forecasting and On-Shelf Availability to Recommendation Engines and Customer Lifetime Value. We also have a set of Solution Accelerators specifically for [LLMs in Retail & Consumer Goods](#).

5 Implement data management and governance early

The first step to successfully implementing AI/ML in your business broadly is to ensure you have accurate, reliable and current data to train your models against. This data can (and should) come from a variety of sources, so it's key to unify all data types and sources (sales transactions, customer feedback, social media) in a centralized location that is easily accessible, while not losing sight of data security to maintain customer trust. Setting up data governance parameters to control who has which kinds of access to what data, and being able to audit the history of this access, will actually accelerate innovation while ensuring data security and compliance.

HERSHEY



Building an operationally efficient omnichannel business

The Hershey Company analyzes the data they need to stay in front of changing human behavior and delight their customers. With Databricks Lakehouse, they can analyze data feeds from their largest retail customer — uncovering insights that will help extend their industry leadership.

[READ THE FULL HERSHEY STORY](#)

Ushering in a new era of data-driven retailing

Outdoor apparel brand Columbia Sportswear has enabled data and analytics self-service throughout the organization in a way that ensures everyone is working from a single source of truth. Whichever data team needs access to the data, Databricks Lakehouse gives them the confidence that the data is reliable and consistent.

[READ THE FULL COLUMBIA SPORTSWEAR STORY](#)

Columbia



6 Incorporate AI across the business (starting with daily tasks)

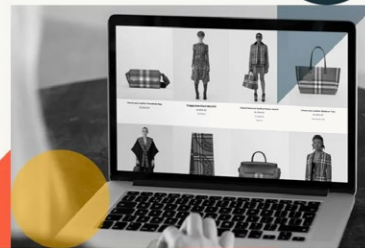
Given the large upfront investment in data scientists and engineers to build an AI program, the ROI will come from using it at scale. Constantly look to uncover patterns and repeatable processes that can be optimized or fully automated with AI.

Building a global fashion icon with a customer-first approach

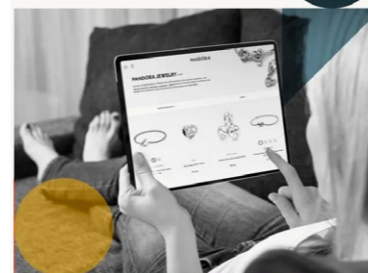
British luxury brand Burberry was seeking an efficient way to annotate its thousands of highly specific marketing assets for better targeting. Working with Labelbox within Databricks Lakehouse, they are now able to complete image annotation projects in hours instead of months. And marketing team members now have access to powerful content insights without needing to ask data scientists for help.

[READ THE FULL BURBERRY STORY](#)

BURBERRY



PANDORA



Customizing interactions that convert clicks to revenue with Databricks Lakehouse

Global jewelry manufacturer and retailer Pandora needed a unified view of all their data where they could easily segment, categorize and analyze to deliver custom messaging to consumers. With Databricks Lakehouse, they now have the insights they need to deliver highly targeted messaging — increasing consumer engagement from the initial opening of a marketing email to maximizing shopping bag conversions to driving revenue on the website.

[READ THE FULL PANDORA STORY](#)

7 Foster a culture of data-driven decision-making

What does it mean to have a culture of data-driven decision-making? In practice, it means empowering all employees to use data to inform their decisions. Only some strategic decisions will be based on complete and accurate information. It's unwise to assume otherwise. The right approach is to leverage as much data as possible, from past tests or current efforts, to mitigate risk. Leaders need to not only ask for data but also ensure that their employees will be able to find the data they need.

Unlocking critical trends and insights needed to serve our 180 million customers

Reckitt, the maker of Lysol as well as hundreds of other household brands, was looking to deliver best-in-class customer experiences to their over 180 million customers spanning the globe. With Databricks Lakehouse, Reckitt has established a data-first culture by surfacing real-time, highly accurate, deep customer data insights that have led to a better understanding of international market trends and demand across the multiple product lines they support.

[READ THE FULL RECKITT STORY](#)



Customer 360 to enable faster speed to market, better results

The Middle East's AI-Futtaim serves as a local distributor for global brands such as Toyota, IKEA and Ace Hardware. With Databricks Lakehouse serving as a unified platform to aggregate and analyze various data sources on all customers, they have created a "golden customer record" that improves all decision-making, from forecasting demand to powering their global loyalty program.

[READ THE FULL AI-FUTTAIM STORY](#)

8 Continuously evaluate and improve

Recognize that establishing a data-driven culture is an ongoing journey and never a set destination. Constantly evaluate your data collection, analysis and decision-making process to identify areas for improvement. Even small and constant incremental improvements will deliver large gains in absolute terms when applied at scale. You can always personalize more, forecast better, or better manage your supply chain as you bring in better data sources and refine your models.

Transform Retail Data Into Actionable Insights

Becoming data forward is not a crazy idea. Too often, leaders or organizations allow themselves to be intimidated by focusing on large-scale transformations. But it's the small operational changes that can make your business more efficient as well as shift the larger culture forward. Once you've set this foundation, it then allows you to move toward bigger things. These steps may fail, but it's actually positive to have these setbacks to learn from to try again. The bigger risk is to not try and thus fall behind competitors who are embracing the internal changes needed to take advantage of AI and machine learning.

Core to delivering on these steps to become a data-forward retailer is a solid data foundation that can unify your data and AI workloads with sharing and governance built in, so internal and external teams can get access to the data they need when they need it. With the [Databricks Lakehouse for Retail](#), companies gain valuable insights into customer behavior, optimize supply chain operations and make informed business decisions in real time.

Visit our [website](#) to learn more about Databricks Lakehouse for Retail.

EXPLORE DATABRICKS LAKEHOUSE FOR RETAIL

Access key resources to understanding how a lakehouse for retail can set you on the path toward becoming a data-forward organization.

[LEARN MORE](#)



About Databricks

Databricks is the data and AI company. More than 9,000 organizations worldwide — including Comcast, Condé Nast, and over 50% of the Fortune 500 — rely on the Databricks Lakehouse Platform to unify their data, analytics and AI. Databricks is headquartered in San Francisco, with offices around the globe. Founded by the original creators of Apache Spark™, Delta Lake and MLflow, Databricks is on a mission to help data teams solve the world's toughest problems. To learn more, follow Databricks on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook](#).

[START YOUR FREE TRIAL](#)

Contact us for a personalized demo
databricks.com/contact

