

State of Monetization Infrastructure 2026

The Year Stacks Broke



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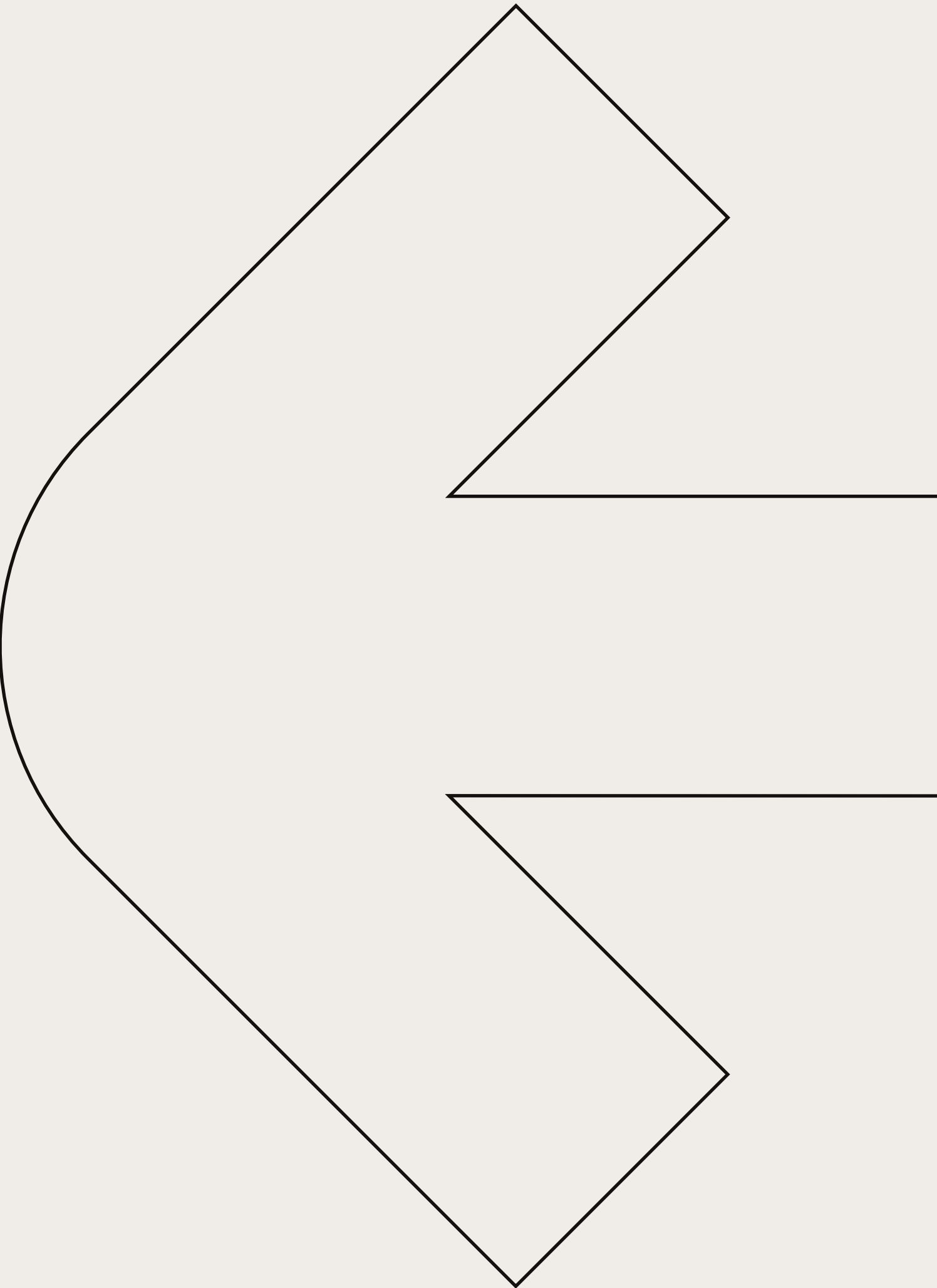
Foreword

Infrastructure businesses have always lived close to usage. Their commercial models depend on what customers consume, how often they consume it, where that consumption occurs, which systems record it, and how accurately it can be translated into revenue. But the pressure on that model has changed. Cloud, AI, partner ecosystems, multi-service bundles and more frequent product change have turned usage into something more volatile, more granular and more difficult to reconcile.

This report is about the organizations sitting at that pressure point: cloud and infrastructure providers, resellers, managed service providers, channel businesses and adjacent technology companies whose growth depends on converting complex usage into trusted revenue.

These organizations are not simply modernizing technology stacks. They are modernizing the systems that sit between product usage and money. That distinction matters because the revenue layer is becoming a strategic control point. A provider can launch new services, package AI capabilities, expand partner routes to market and add new consumption models, but if usage cannot be captured, priced, rated, invoiced, reconciled and settled accurately, growth becomes fragile. Revenue can leak. Invoices can be disputed. Partners can lose confidence. Finance teams can struggle to explain margin.

Product teams can find that launch speed is constrained not by demand, but by the downstream systems needed to monetize it. The research behind this report shows a market in transition.



Foreword

Many believe their existing systems still work. In fact, confidence in current operations remains relatively high. But the same data also shows signs of strain: leakage, invoice disputes, manual work, slow invoicing, difficulty onboarding new usage sources and growing pressure around partner settlement. The central tension is therefore not that everything is broken. It is that systems built for one era of infrastructure monetization are being asked to support another. This report follows that tension across the usage-to-revenue chain.

It looks at AI services, pricing complexity, agility, revenue trust, leakage, invoicing, manual work, architecture and partner settlement. Together, these chapters make one argument: monetization is no longer a back-office process. It is becoming part of the business model itself.

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Introduction



Infrastructure monetization has entered a more demanding phase. Usage-based businesses once had a relatively clear commercial logic: measure consumption, apply a price, generate an invoice and recognize the revenue. That model still exists, but it is no longer sufficient to describe the reality these organizations now face. Today, a single customer relationship may involve usage-based charges, subscriptions, custom pricing, prepaid credits, tiered usage, partner settlement, discounts, multiple upstream usage-data sources and manual exceptions.

AI adds another layer of difficulty. It creates more usage signals, more volatile consumption patterns and more pressure to connect usage data with billing, settlement and revenue recognition. The issue is not simply more volume. It is more variability, more dependency and

more commercial interpretation. The result is a new kind of monetization challenge. These are usage-native businesses by nature — not organizations discovering usage-based models for the first time. Their operating models have long depended on infrastructure consumption: compute, storage, data transfer, API activity, managed capacity, service bundles and other measurable forms of use.

But being usage-native does not automatically mean being future-ready. A stack can support today's business and still be too brittle for tomorrow's products. It can be patched together, operationally familiar and “working,” while still making it difficult to launch new offers, change pricing, automate settlement or explain revenue confidently. That is the core question behind this report: can the usage-to-revenue stack support the business model at

cloud scale, or is it silently limiting growth, margin and operational control?

The answer is mixed. Many remain confident in current capabilities. Seventy-seven percent agree or strongly agree that their usage and revenue systems are fit for their business model at cloud scale. Seventy-three percent say they can ingest usage data from the required sources at the volume and velocity needed.

Seventy-seven percent say they can apply different pricing or contract rules consistently. These are not the numbers of a market in obvious collapse. Yet the same research shows a clear modernization gap. Only 64% agree or strongly agree that they can onboard new usage sources and launch or change consumption or AI offers without major downstream rework.



That leaves 36% who are neutral, disagree or strongly disagree. In a market where AI-related offers, partner models and multi-metric pricing are accelerating, that 36% matters. It points to a gap between operational confidence and commercial agility. The chapters that follow explore that gap.

The report argues that the next wave of modernization will not be defined only by billing replacement or finance-system upgrades. It will be defined by the ability to orchestrate usage, pricing, rating, invoicing, revenue controls and partner settlement in a way that is accurate, auditable, automated and adaptable.

Purpose of the report series - including the link between them

This report is part of a wider series on how organizations are modernizing the monetization layer — the operational and financial systems that determine whether new business models can scale. Infrastructure and platform providers feel that pressure first because usage is already central to how they earn revenue, and because they sit closest to the consumption signals AI and partner ecosystems are now multiplying.

That makes them a useful early indicator. Where infrastructure providers, resellers and managed service businesses struggle to onboard new usage sources, support AI services, reduce leakage and automate settlement, the same pressures will surface elsewhere as usage-based and partner-led models spread.

The report treats modernization as a business-model question, not a technology-hygiene one: whether the organization can introduce new services, change pricing, handle usage volatility, protect margin, invoice quickly, resolve disputes, maintain auditability and settle with partners without excessive manual work. That is what makes the monetization stack strategic.





Who this report addresses

This report addresses infrastructure providers, cloud resellers, IT services and managed service providers, platform businesses, systems integrators and channel businesses — organizations whose model depends on converting infrastructure or infrastructure-adjacent usage into revenue at scale. Different labels may apply in different markets; what unites them is operating reality, not nomenclature.

These organizations have always been usage-native. Many have built capable systems — frequently in-house — that have served their business well for years. What has changed is the intensity. Usage signals, pricing models, upstream data sources and downstream stakeholders are all multiplying at once.

Architectures that were sound for stable consumption are now being stress-tested by AI, multi-partner settlement and faster product change. Four pressures define the category today: pricing is multi-dimensional, rarely a single metric; revenue operations depend on multiple upstream data sources, often across systems and partners; agility is becoming a constraint, not just a capability — organizations confident in current systems are less confident they can onboard new usage sources or launch AI offers without major rework; and trust — accuracy, auditability, explainability — is moving from operational concern to growth determinant.

The question these organizations are now actively confronting is straightforward: can the revenue layer keep pace with the business model?



Summary of findings

Summary of findings

Infrastructure and platform providers are entering a new phase of monetization pressure. They are usage-native businesses, but usage is becoming harder to manage. AI-related services, multi-metric pricing, partner ecosystems, revenue share, credits, custom contracts and multiple upstream data sources are increasing the strain on legacy usage-to-revenue systems. The result is a growing gap between systems that appear to work today and systems that can adapt quickly enough for tomorrow.

The research shows strong current confidence. Seventy-seven percent agree or strongly agree that their usage and revenue systems are fit for their business model at cloud scale. Seventy-three percent say they can ingest usage data at the volume and velocity required. Seventy-seven percent say they can apply different pricing or contract rules consistently.

These numbers suggest that many organizations do not see an immediate reason to disrupt their current stack. But the same research reveals significant pressure points. Only 64% agree or strongly agree that they can onboard new usage sources and launch or change consumption or AI offers without major downstream rework. Thirty-six percent are neutral, disagree or strongly disagree.

That is the modernization gap. It is not primarily a gap in current operations. It is a gap in agility. AI is accelerating the problem.

Sixty-five percent already sell or resell AI-related services or plan to within 12 months. Twenty-nine percent already do so at

meaningful scale or in pilot form, and 27% plan to do so in the next six months. Supporting AI-related offers is the highest-ranked modernization driver, cited by 36%. For these organizations, AI does not only create a new product category.

It creates more usage signals, more volatility and more pressure on billing, settlement and revenue recognition. Complexity is also multiplying beyond AI. Forty-four percent use usage-based pricing, 33% use subscription or per-seat pricing, 30% use custom pricing, 27% use prepaid credits, 26% use revenue share or partner settlement and 26% use tiered usage. Seventy-nine percent use two or more pricing metrics for their most complex consumption or usage-based offering, and 41% use four or more.

Seventy-seven percent consolidate two or more upstream usage-data sources to bill customers or settle with partners, while 36% consolidate four or more. The biggest warning sign is leakage. Seventy percent report at least 1% revenue leakage attributable to usage data, pricing, reconciliation or billing issues. Forty percent report leakage of 1–2%, 25% report leakage of 3–5%, and 30% report leakage of 3% or more.

Eleven percent do not measure leakage or are not sure, while only 2% report zero leakage. This directly challenges the idea that current systems are “fine.” A stack can function and still leak material revenue. Invoice disputes show the same pattern. Eighty percent fall into a visible invoice-dispute bucket of 1% or higher.



Summary of findings

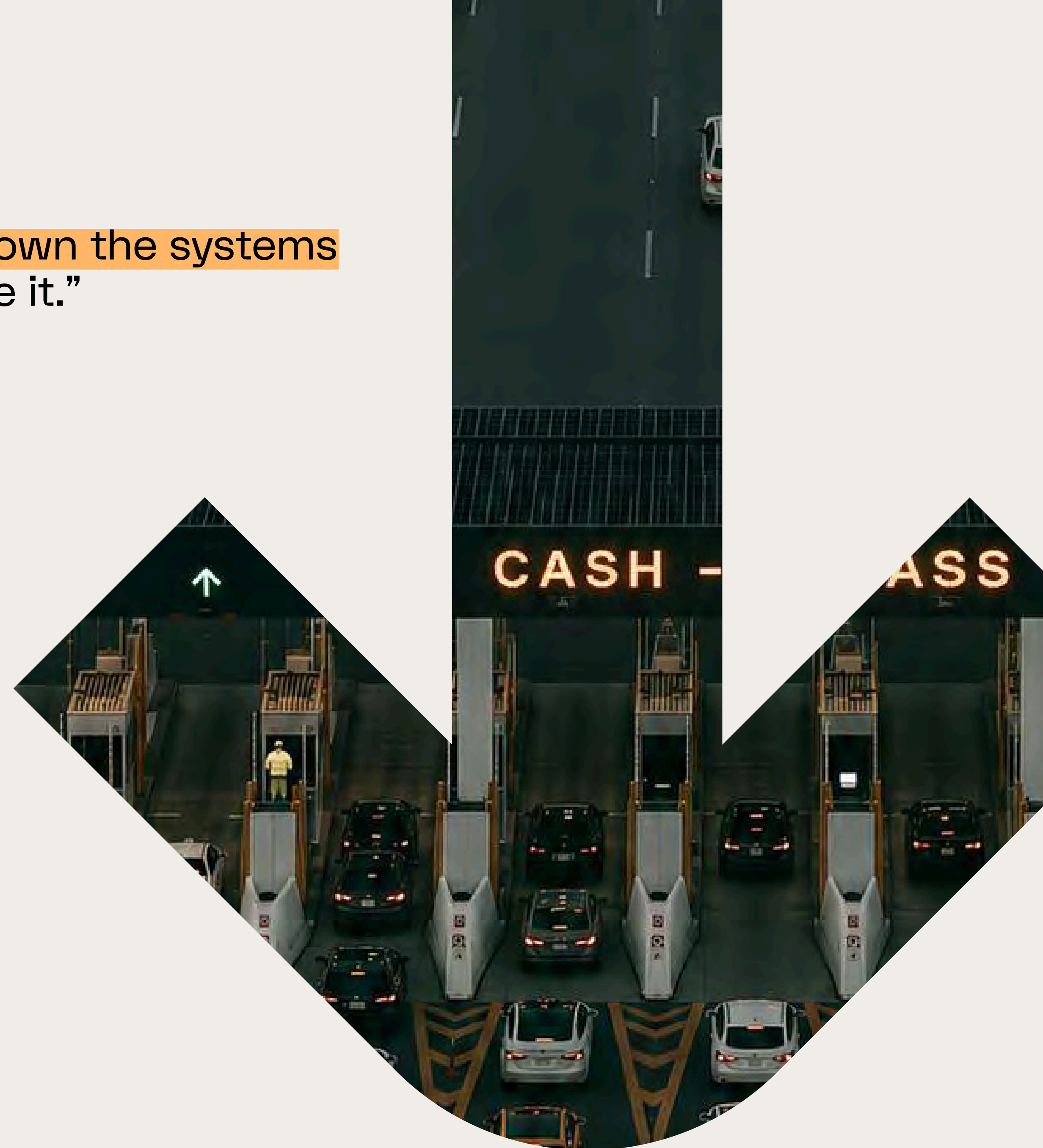
Forty-six percent report dispute rates of 1–5%, 30% report dispute rates of 6–10%, and 33% fall into the 6% or higher range. In usage-based B2B2B models, the invoice is no longer just an administrative document. It is a trust document. If customers or partners cannot verify what was consumed, how it was priced and why they were charged, monetization complexity turns into friction.

The research also shows that billing problems often start before the invoice. Twenty-two percent select pricing and rating as the single stage creating the most friction, while 16% select usage capture or ingestion, 16% select validation or cleansing and only 9% select invoice generation. When respondents identify their top three friction points, 53% include validation and cleansing, 45% include pricing and rating, 43% include usage capture or ingestion and 40% include invoice generation. The implication is clear: modernization must move upstream.

Manual effort and slow invoicing are weakening scale. Seventy-five percent have at least 10% manual effort in producing accurate invoices for consumption or usage-based services. Forty percent have at least 26% manual effort, and 12% have more than 50%. Fifty-six percent take three days or more from usage period end to invoice issue, and 23% take more than a week.

Fifty-nine percent say billing delay has a moderate, significant or critical impact on cash flow. The response is orchestration, not monolithic replacement. Thirty percent

“Complexity has now **outgrown the systems** built to manage it.”



Summary of findings

are moving away from point-to-point integrations toward a central mediation or orchestration layer. Twenty-two percent are expanding API or microservices-based custom architecture.	Overall, 52% are moving toward orchestration, APIs or microservices, more than five times the share moving toward a monolithic platform. Partner settlement is also becoming urgent. Twenty-six percent currently use revenue share or partner settlement as a monetization model, but 74% expect partner revenue share or	settlement processes to become more automated, auditable or end-to-end automated over the next 12–24 months.	the scale, complexity and audit burden of partner settlement are increasing. The conclusion is that usage-to-revenue modernization needs to be treated as a commercial-control program, not just a billing upgrade.	can keep pace with cloud-scale, AI-enabled and partner-led growth while protecting trust, margin and cash flow.
Ten percent are moving toward a single end-to-end suite or monolithic platform.		Thirty-six percent say improving partner settlement accuracy is one of their top architectural initiatives. The tipping point is not that partner settlement is new. It is that	The priority is to build a revenue layer that	

Usage-to-revenue pressure points

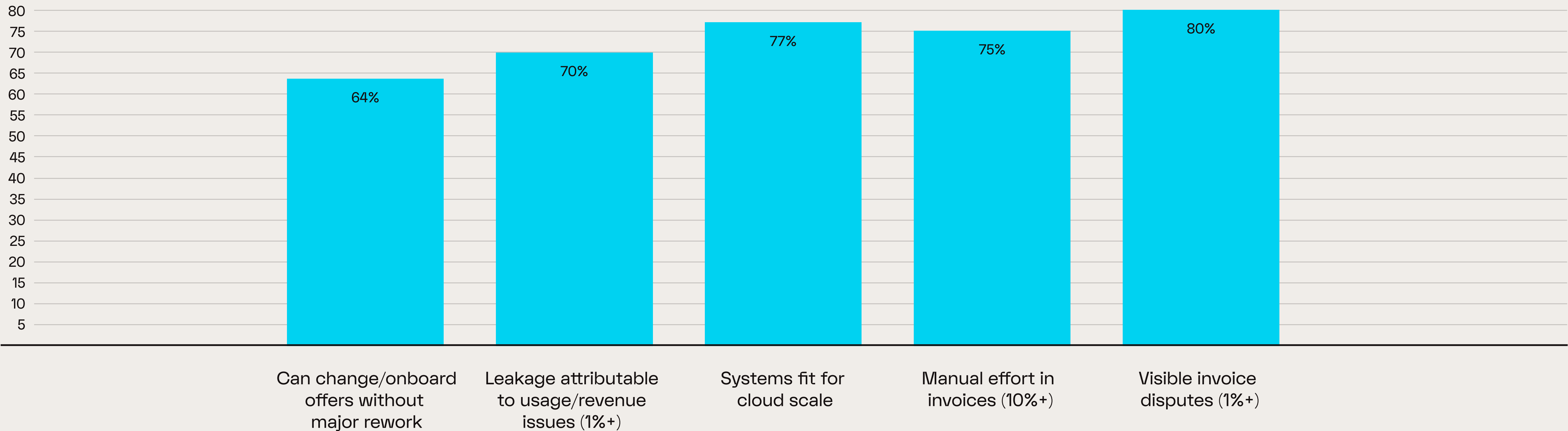
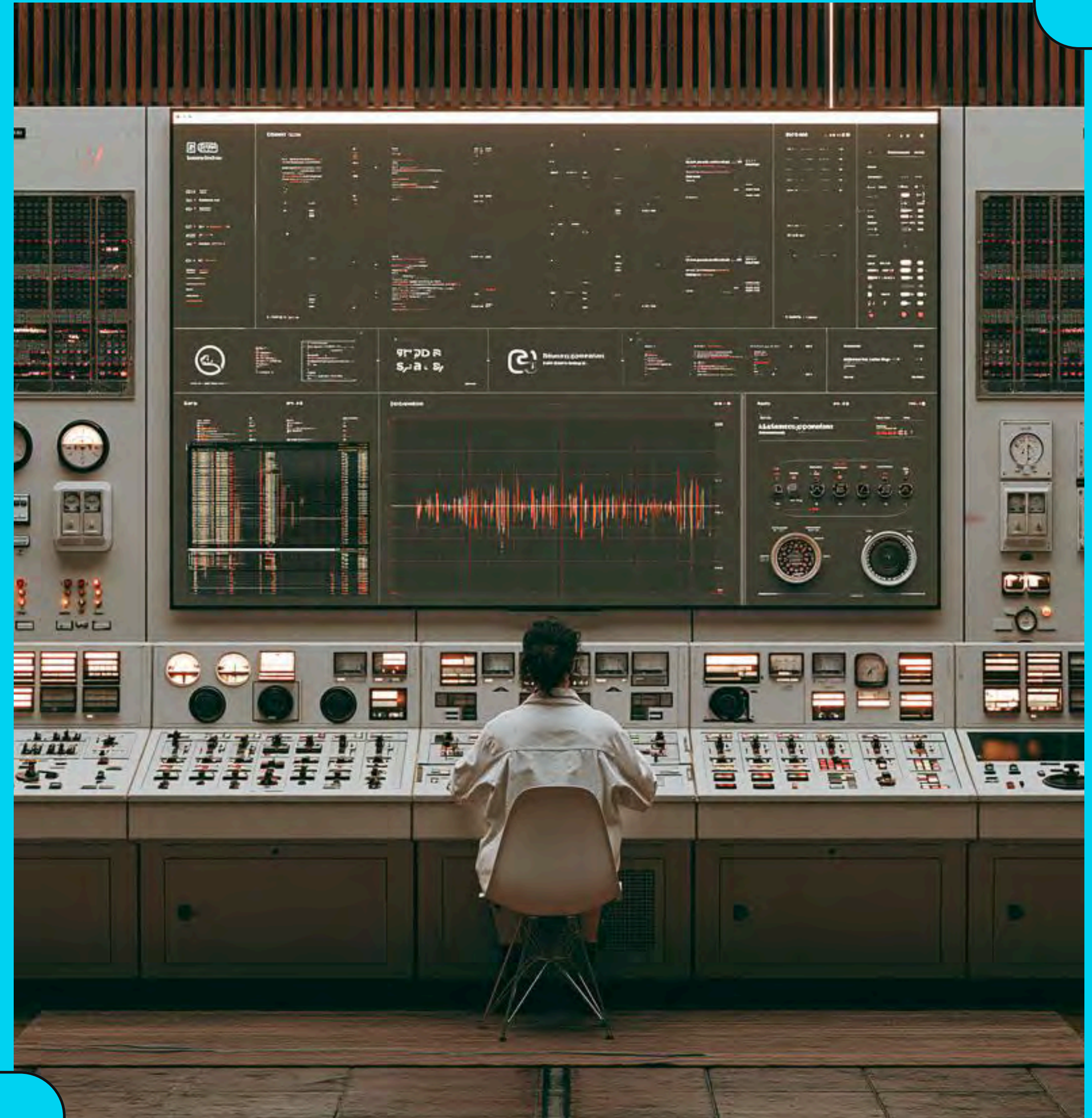


Figure 1. The core tension: current confidence sits alongside leakage, disputes, manual effort and agility limits.

Chapter one:

AI services are exposing legacy usage-to-revenue stacks





AI is a stress test for the entire usage-to-revenue chain. AI-related services create more usage signals, more volatile consumption patterns and more pressure on the revenue layer to translate activity into accurate billing, settlement and recognized revenue. The research shows how quickly AI is becoming part of the Modernizer agenda.

Sixty-five percent already sell or resell AI-related services or plan to within 12 months. Twenty-nine percent already sell or resell AI-related services, either at meaningful scale or in pilot or limited form. Another 27% plan to sell or resell AI-related services in the next six months. Supporting AI-related offers is cited by 36% as a primary driver for modernizing usage-to-revenue systems, making it the highest-ranked modernization driver.

That makes AI the clearest catalyst for change. But the important point is not that AI is fashionable or high growth. The important point is that AI changes the shape of usage. It introduces more granular, variable and difficult-to-predict consumption patterns.

It creates new forms of billable activity. It can involve multiple providers, platforms, services and partners. It can turn a simple resale or managed service relationship into a multi-layered commercial model involving infrastructure, software, service wrapping, usage volatility and downstream settlement. Legacy usage-to-revenue stacks are often not designed for this level of variability.

Many were built to support known products, established usage feeds, familiar

billing cycles and relatively stable pricing models. AI disrupts those assumptions. It requires the stack to support new usage sources, new units of measurement, new pricing logic and new reconciliation requirements. If these elements are added through manual workarounds or brittle integrations, the organization may be able to sell AI faster than it can monetize AI.

This is why AI exposes hidden weakness. A Modernizer may feel confident that existing systems support current operations. But when AI-related offers are introduced, the system has to answer more demanding questions. Can the organization capture the right usage signals?

Can it price them correctly? Can it

reconcile upstream costs and downstream charges? Can it invoice clearly? Can it settle with partners?

Can it recognize the revenue with confidence? Can it change the model again when the offer evolves? The risk is that AI ambition outruns billing reality. Organizations may be able to package, sell

and resell AI services, but monetizing them reliably is a different operational challenge.

The revenue layer becomes the bottleneck. When that happens, growth is no longer constrained only by product demand or sales capability. It is constrained by the ability of the monetization stack to keep up.

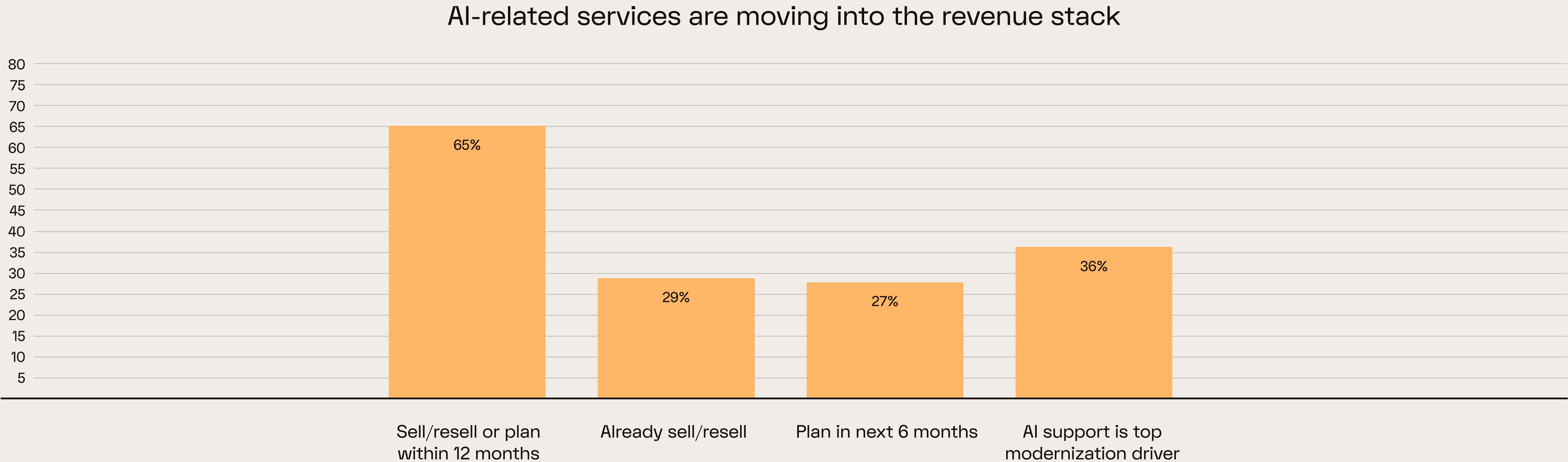
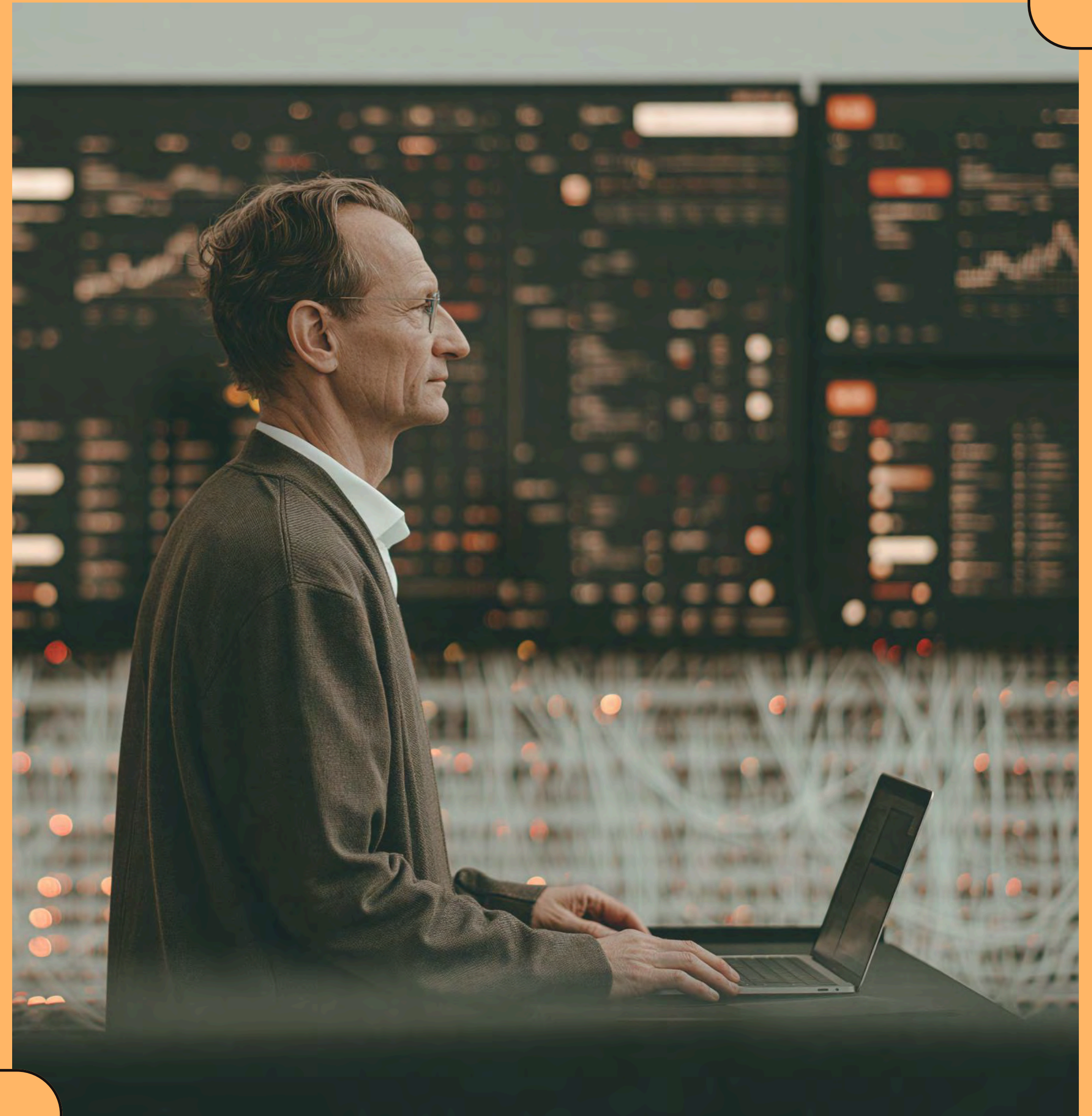


Figure 2. AI-related services are already in market or on the near-term roadmap, making AI support the leading modernization driver.

Chapter two:

Usage is the starting point, but complexity is multiplying



Chapter two

These businesses are not new to usage. They are inherently usage-native. They have long worked with consumption-based infrastructure models, service usage, capacity, data movement, support models and variable customer demand. The issue is not that they need to learn usage-based monetization from scratch.

The issue is that usage is no longer enough as a single organizing principle. The research shows a highly mixed monetization environment. Forty-four percent use usage-based pricing. Thirty-three percent use subscription or per-seat pricing.

Thirty percent use custom pricing. Twenty-seven percent use prepaid credits. Twenty-six percent use revenue share or partner settlement. Twenty-six percent use tiered usage.

These organizations are not managing a single pricing model. They are managing overlapping models. The complexity deepens when looking at the most complex consumption or usage-based offers. Seventy-nine percent use two or more pricing metrics, and 41% use four or more.

That is a critical finding. It shows that the monetization challenge has moved beyond

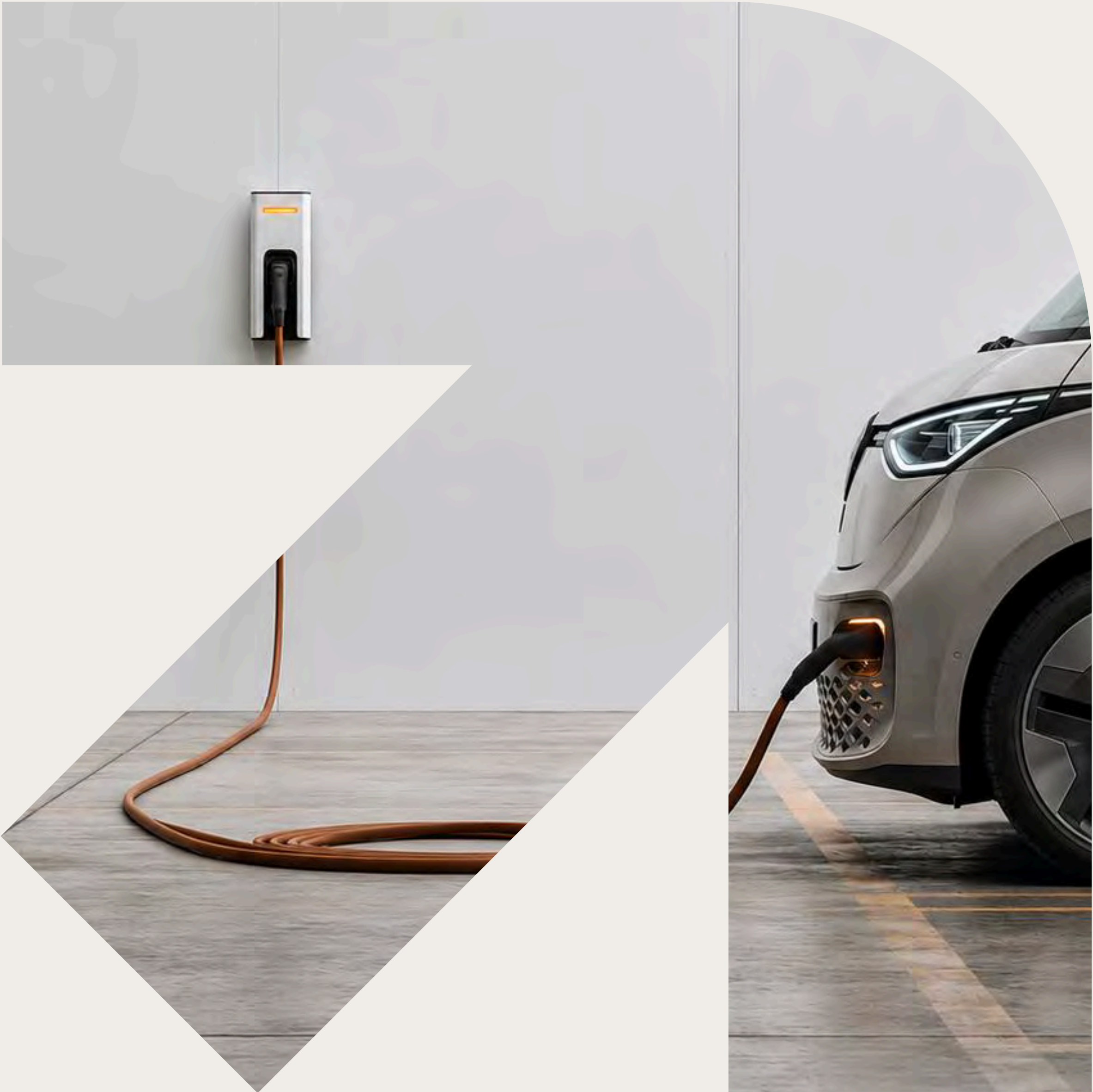
simple metering. The hard problem is not just measuring usage. It is combining multiple pricing dimensions, often across different products, contracts, customers, usage sources and partner relationships.

The data-source picture confirms this. Seventy-seven percent consolidate two or more upstream usage-data sources to bill customers or settle with partners, and 36% consolidate four or more. Each additional source creates more potential for mismatch. Data can arrive late.

It can be incomplete. It can be formatted differently. It can require validation, cleansing or enrichment. It can affect not only the customer invoice but also partner settlement and revenue reporting.

This is where the internal confidence story becomes complicated. Some may look at current systems and conclude that they are working. That may be true in a narrow sense. Invoices are being produced.

Revenue is being recognized. Customers are being served. But the stack may still be held together by manual effort, point-to-point integrations and operational knowledge that does not scale well when the business changes. The challenge is therefore not usage alone.



It is usage plus subscriptions, custom pricing, credits, tiers, settlement, multiple data feeds and frequent change. Each of these elements may be manageable on its own. Together, they create a monetization environment where the revenue layer has to be more flexible, more automated and more explainable than before. The Modernizer problem is that complexity has become cumulative.

A new AI offer is not added to a clean system. It is added to a stack that may already be supporting multiple pricing metrics, several upstream data sources, custom customer terms and partner obligations. That is why modernization cannot be reduced to one system or one process. It has to address the architecture of usage-to-revenue itself.

“Each model may be manageable on its own. Together, they create something **harder to control.**”

Modernizers manage overlapping monetization models

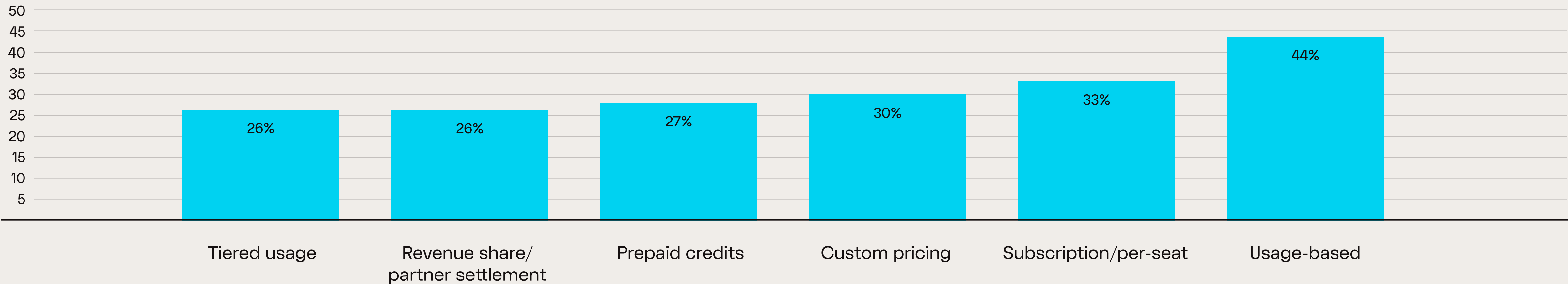


Figure 3. Overlapping monetization models rather than a single usage metric.

Chapter three:

The modernization gap is an agility gap



Chapter three

The most important contradiction in the research is the gap between confidence in current operations and confidence in future agility. Respondents are not generally saying their systems fail today. They are saying, more subtly, that their systems may not change fast enough tomorrow. Seventy-seven percent agree or strongly agree that their usage and revenue systems are fit for their business model at cloud scale.

Seventy-three percent agree or strongly agree that they can ingest usage data from required sources at the volume and velocity needed. Seventy-seven percent agree or strongly agree that they can apply different pricing or contract rules consistently. These findings explain why some organizations hesitate to modernize. If the stack appears to work, changing it can feel risky.

The internal argument may be: do not touch the system if it is keeping the business running. But that confidence weakens when the question becomes agility. Only 64% agree or strongly agree that they can onboard new usage sources and launch or change consumption or AI offers without major downstream rework. Thirty-six percent are neutral, disagree or strongly disagree.

This is the modernization gap. The gap matters because the market is moving toward more frequent product change. AI-related services are being added. Pricing models are becoming more mixed.

Partner relationships are becoming more important. Customers expect more transparency. Finance teams need stronger controls. In that environment, the ability to run today's business is not enough.



The stack must also support change. Agility should not be understood only as speed. It is the ability to change without destabilizing control. A Modernizer needs to onboard a new usage source without breaking billing accuracy.	work. It needs to change pricing without undermining auditability. It needs to support new partner settlement models without introducing leakage or disputes. This is why the modernization gap is not a minor operational issue.	cannot move at the pace of the market. Product innovation becomes dependent on billing readiness. Sales ambition becomes dependent on finance operations.	current cloud-scale operations, but a significant share are less confident when asked whether those systems can adapt. That tension should be central to the report because it explains why modernization is difficult to prioritize. The problem is not always visible as failure.
It needs to launch a new AI-related offer without creating manual reconciliation	It is a strategic constraint. If every new offer requires downstream rework, the business	AI strategy becomes dependent on whether usage data can be captured, rated and invoiced. The tension is clear: many believe their systems are good enough for	It appears as drag.

Current process capabilities: net agreement

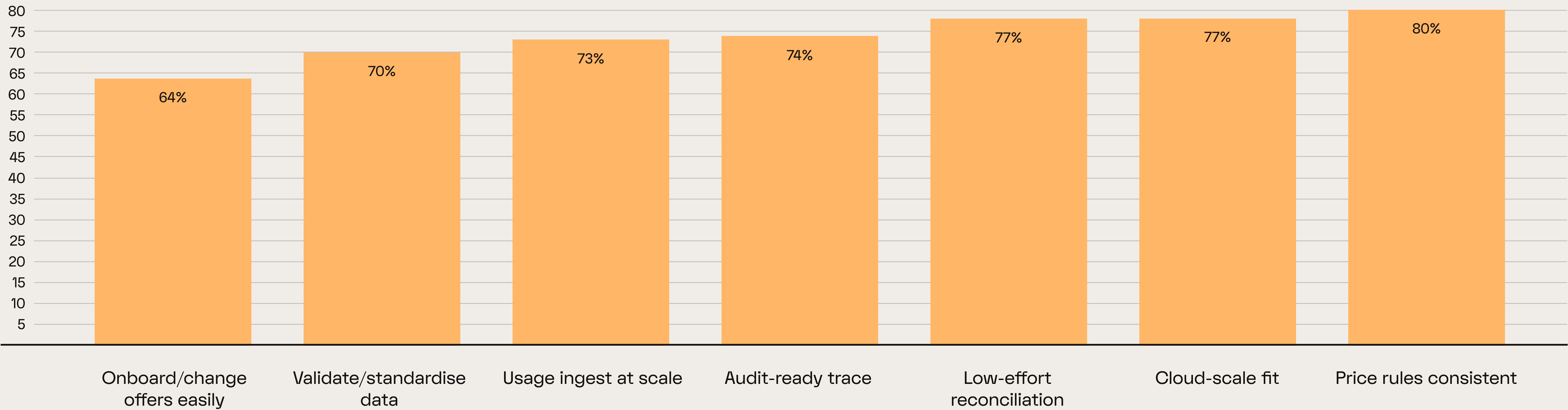
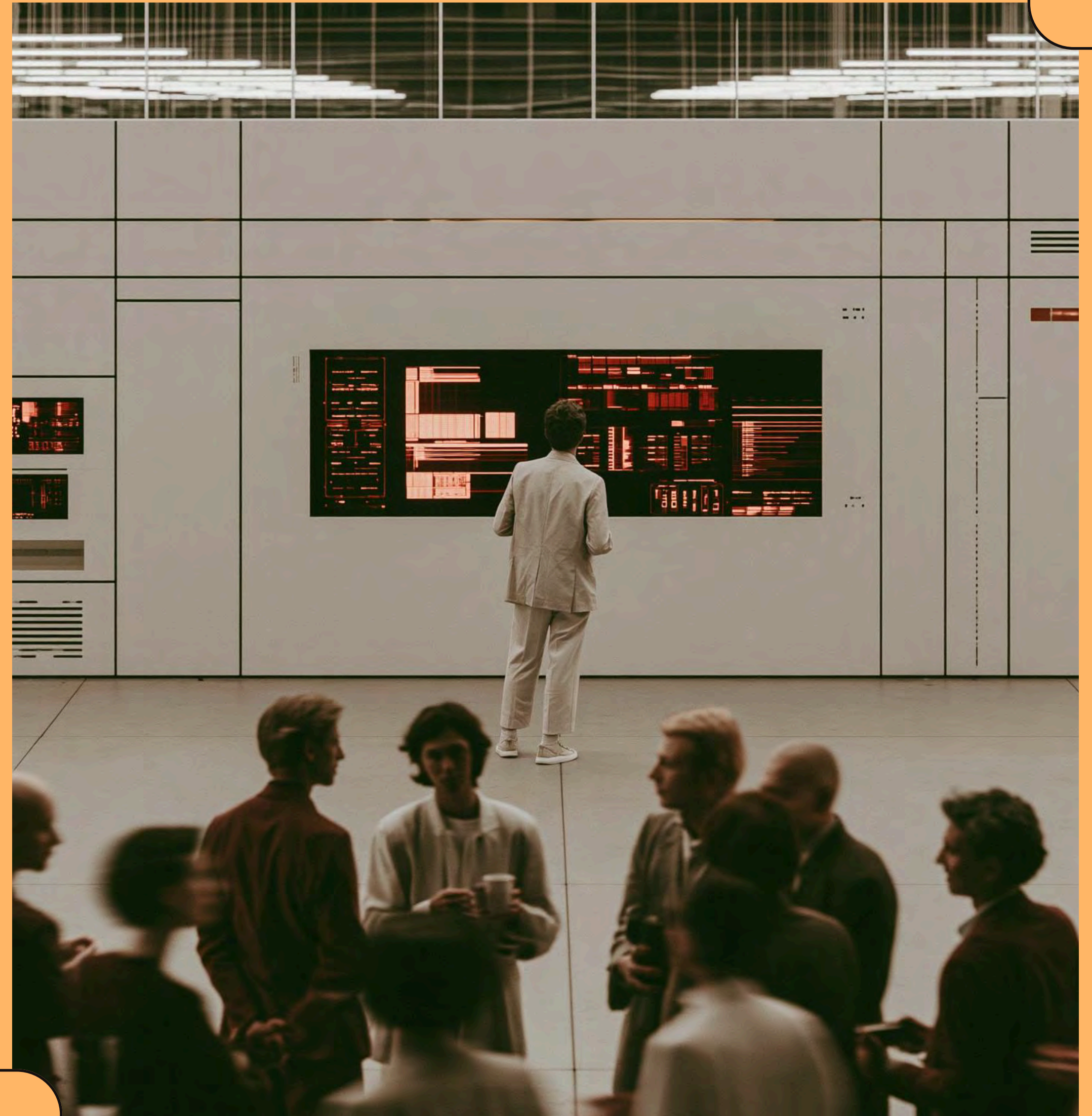


Figure 4. Confidence is strongest around current process capability, but weakest around onboarding and changing offers without rework.

Chapter four:

Revenue trust has become the top modernization priority





The priority is building trusted revenue operations where usage, pricing, invoicing, settlement and controls are accurate, explainable and auditable — not simply launching products faster. The research makes this clear. Thirty-five percent rank billing accuracy and customer trust as the most important modernization outcome, and 68% place them in their top two.

Twenty-six percent rank financial control and auditability as the most important outcome. Thirty-nine percent place margin protection or reducing leakage in their top two. Thirty-three percent place speed to launch or change pricing in their top two. This ordering is important.

Speed matters, but trust matters more. The leading modernization outcome is not simply faster product launch or faster pricing change. It is confidence that the revenue process is correct and explainable. That tells us something about the maturity of the Modernizer challenge.

Organizations are not just trying to move quickly. They are trying to move quickly without losing control. The modernization drivers reinforce this. Thirty-two percent cite improving audit-readiness or compliance as a primary driver.

Thirty-two percent cite accelerating invoicing to improve cash flow. Thirty-one percent cite improving margin control. Twenty-nine percent cite reducing manual work. These drivers are closely connected.

Audit readiness, invoicing speed, margin control and manual work all point to the same underlying issue: the revenue layer must become more reliable. Revenue trust is especially relevant because of the agility

gap identified in the previous chapter. The 36% who are not confident that they can onboard new usage sources or change offers without major downstream rework are likely to feel the risk of broken trust most sharply. If a system is slow to change, every new product or pricing model creates a control problem.

If pricing logic is hard to update, rating errors become more likely. If usage sources are difficult to integrate, reconciliation becomes harder. If invoices are unclear, customers and partners dispute them. Trust therefore becomes the bridge between growth and control.

A Modernizer that cannot trust its usage-to-revenue process will be cautious about launching new offers. A customer that cannot trust an invoice will challenge charges. A finance team that cannot trust the revenue data will add manual checks. A partner that cannot trust settlement will demand more evidence.

In each case, lack of trust slows the business. The modernization priority is not just to make systems newer. It is to make revenue operations defensible. Every charge should be explainable.

Every invoice should be credible. Every settlement should be auditable. Every

pricing change should be controlled. That is what revenue trust means in practice.

Revenue trust outranks speed as the modernization outcome

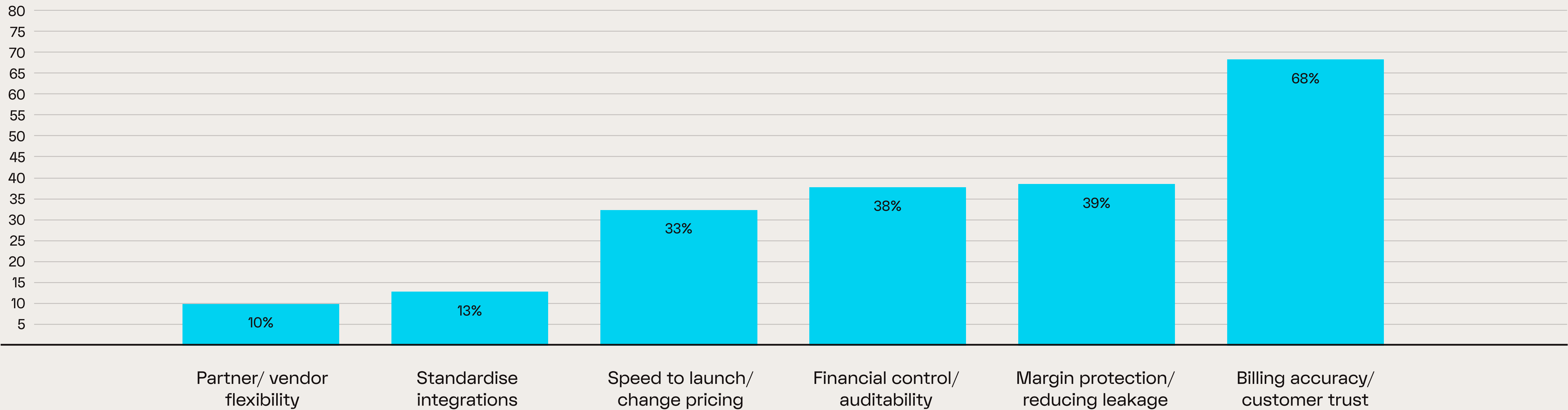


Figure 5. Billing accuracy and customer trust dominate the modernization outcome hierarchy

Chapter five:

Revenue leakage has made modernization a commercial-risk issue





Revenue leakage is the strongest evidence that current confidence may be misleading. Many believe their systems are fit for today’s business, but the leakage data shows that working systems can still lose money. Seventy percent report at least 1% revenue leakage attributable to usage data, pricing, reconciliation or billing issues. Forty percent report leakage of 1–2%.

Twenty-five percent report leakage of 3–5%. Thirty percent report leakage of 3% or more. Eleven percent say leakage is not measured or they are not sure. Only 2% report zero leakage.

These numbers should be central to the argument. They create the tension the report needs. On one side, 77% say their systems are fit for their business model at cloud scale. On the other side, 70% report at least 1% leakage, and only 2% report zero leakage.

Both things can be true at the same time. A system can run the business and still leak revenue. A stack can produce invoices and still misprice usage. A process can be familiar and still create margin risk.

Leakage turns modernization into a commercial-risk issue. It is no longer just about operational efficiency or system

architecture. It affects revenue, margin and financial confidence. Leakage may come from missed usage data, incorrect pricing, rating errors, reconciliation gaps, billing delays, manual adjustments or settlement issues.

As AI services, pricing rules and upstream data sources become more complex, the number of leakage points increases. The fact that 11% do not measure leakage or are not sure is also significant. Unknown leakage is not the absence of risk. It is a risk that has not been quantified.

For a Modernizer, not knowing whether usage-to-revenue processes are leaking value creates a blind spot. It weakens margin control and makes it harder to build a business case for modernization. Revenue leakage also challenges the idea that modernization can wait until systems visibly fail. Leakage is often quiet.

It may not appear as a major outage or customer complaint. It can be absorbed into margin, hidden in credits, corrected manually or explained away as complexity. But over time, leakage becomes a structural cost of operating with systems that are not aligned to the business model. This is why leakage should be treated as a shared CTO and CFO issue.

The causes may sit in data, architecture, integrations and product configuration. The consequences sit in revenue, margin, cash flow and auditability. Neither technology nor finance can solve it alone. Modernization has to connect both.

The key message is simple: confidence in current systems plus measurable leakage equals incomplete confidence. The question is not whether the stack works. The question is whether it works accurately

enough, automatically enough and transparently enough to protect growth.

“The question is not whether the stack works. The question is whether it works accurately enough to protect growth.”

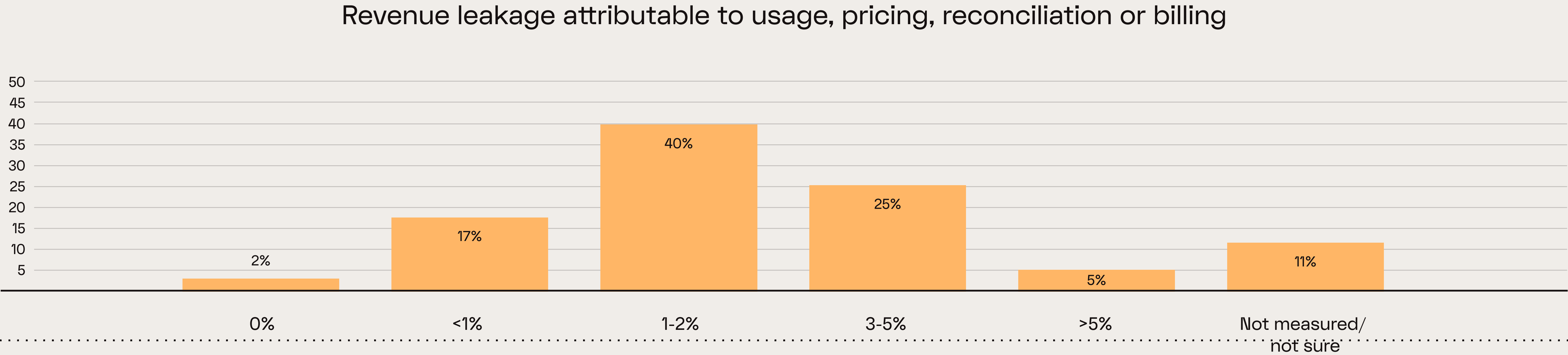


Figure 6. Leakage has become a material commercial-risk signal, with only a small minority reporting zero leakage.

Chapter six:

In B2B2B revenue chains, the invoice has become a trust document



Chapter six

In usage-based B2B2B models, billing accuracy directly affects customer and partner trust. The invoice is no longer just a request for payment. It is the document that proves what was consumed, how it was priced and why the charge is valid. The research shows that invoice disputes are widespread.

Eighty percent fall into a visible invoice-dispute bucket of 1% or higher. Forty-six percent report invoice dispute rates of 1–5%. Thirty percent report dispute rates of 6–10%. Thirty-three percent fall into the 6% or higher dispute-rate range, based on the visible dispute buckets.

Ten percent report dispute rates below 1%, and 8% say disputes are not measured or they are not sure. These findings matter because invoice disputes are not just finance noise. They are signals of trust breakdown. When a customer or downstream partner cannot verify what has been consumed, how it was rated, which pricing rule applied, or why a settlement amount is correct, the invoice becomes a point of friction.

In B2B2B revenue chains, that friction multiplies. A Modernizer may sit between upstream providers, technology partners, resellers, end customers and downstream sellers. The invoice must satisfy more than one audience. It must be accurate for finance, understandable for customers, traceable for partners and consistent with internal revenue controls.



If it fails, the dispute can affect more than one relationship. This is why invoice clarity has become part of modernization. A complex invoice may be technically correct but commercially weak if the recipient cannot understand it. In usage-based models, customers increasingly need to see the connection between usage and charge.

Partners need to see the connection between usage, customer billing and

settlement. Finance teams need to see the connection between invoicing and recognized revenue. The invoice is therefore the visible surface of the entire usage-to-revenue stack. If usage capture is weak, the invoice suffers.

If validation is weak, the invoice suffers. If pricing and rating are inconsistent, the invoice suffers. If reconciliation is manual, the invoice suffers. If settlement rules are

unclear, the invoice suffers.

The high dispute rate shows invoicing cannot be treated as the final step only. Invoice quality depends on everything that happens before the invoice is issued. The more complex the revenue chain becomes, the more the invoice has to function as a trust document.

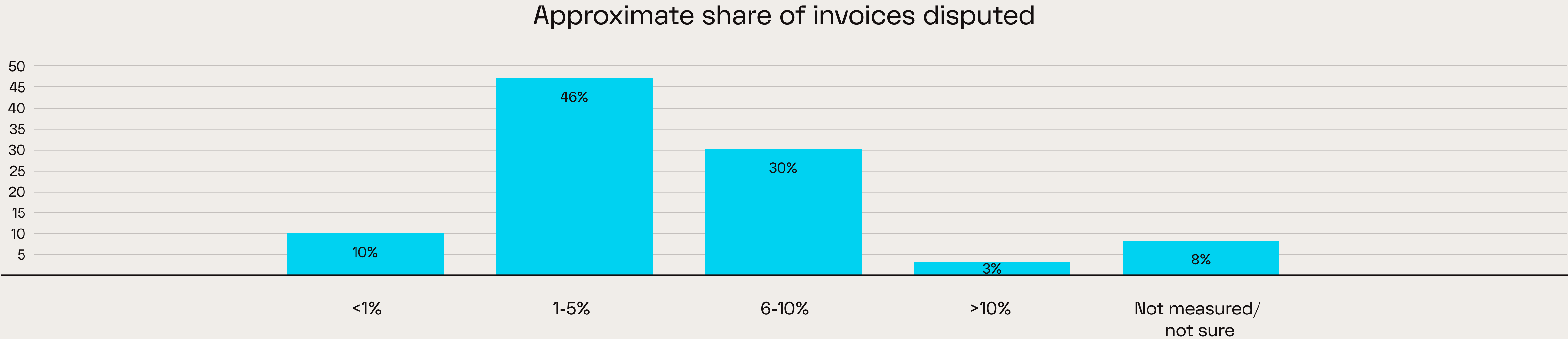


Figure 7. Invoice disputes are visible across most respondents, reinforcing the role of the invoice as a trust document.

Chapter seven:

The biggest billing problems start before the invoice





The main friction in modern usage monetization is not simply invoice generation. The hardest problems sit upstream: usage capture, validation, cleansing, pricing, rating and reconciliation. The research confirms this. Twenty-two percent selected pricing and rating as the single stage creating the most friction.

Sixteen percent selected usage capture or ingestion. Sixteen percent selected validation or cleansing. Only 9% selected invoice generation. When respondents identified their top three friction points, 53% placed validation and cleansing in their top three, 45% placed pricing and rating, 43% placed usage capture or ingestion and 40% placed invoice generation.

This creates another important contradiction. Invoice disputes are widespread, but the biggest causes of friction often begin before the invoice exists. The invoice is where the problem becomes visible. The root cause may be much earlier.

This is a critical modernization insight. It is tempting to focus on invoice production because that is where customers complain and where finance teams feel pressure. But faster invoice generation alone will not solve the problem if usage data is incomplete, validation is inconsistent, pricing logic is fragile or rating rules are hard to change. The upstream stages are where revenue trust is created or lost.

Invoice quality is decided upstream — by capture, validation and rating — not at the invoice itself. Reconciliation determines whether the charge can be defended.

Invoice generation only exposes the

outcome. This also explains why manual work persists. If upstream data and pricing processes are not reliable, people step in to fix, check, adjust and explain. Manual effort becomes the compensating control for upstream weakness.

But as usage volumes grow and AI-related services create more volatility, manual checks become harder to sustain. The conclusion is that modernization must

reach upstream, not stop at the invoice layer. The goal should be to make usage data cleaner, pricing logic more consistent, rating more explainable and reconciliation more automated before the invoice is produced. That is how disputes are reduced and revenue trust is built.

“The goal is to fix usage data, pricing logic and reconciliation before the invoice is produced – not after.”

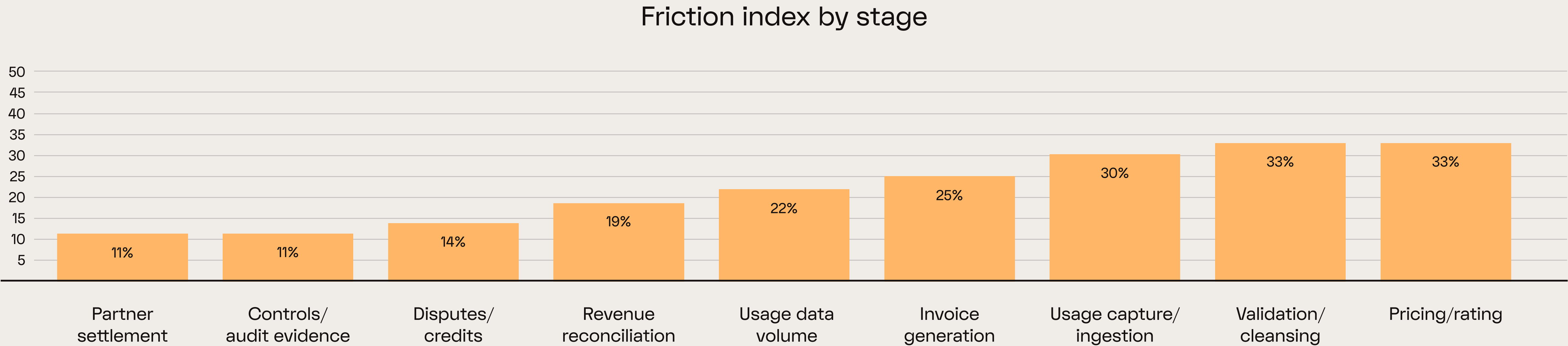
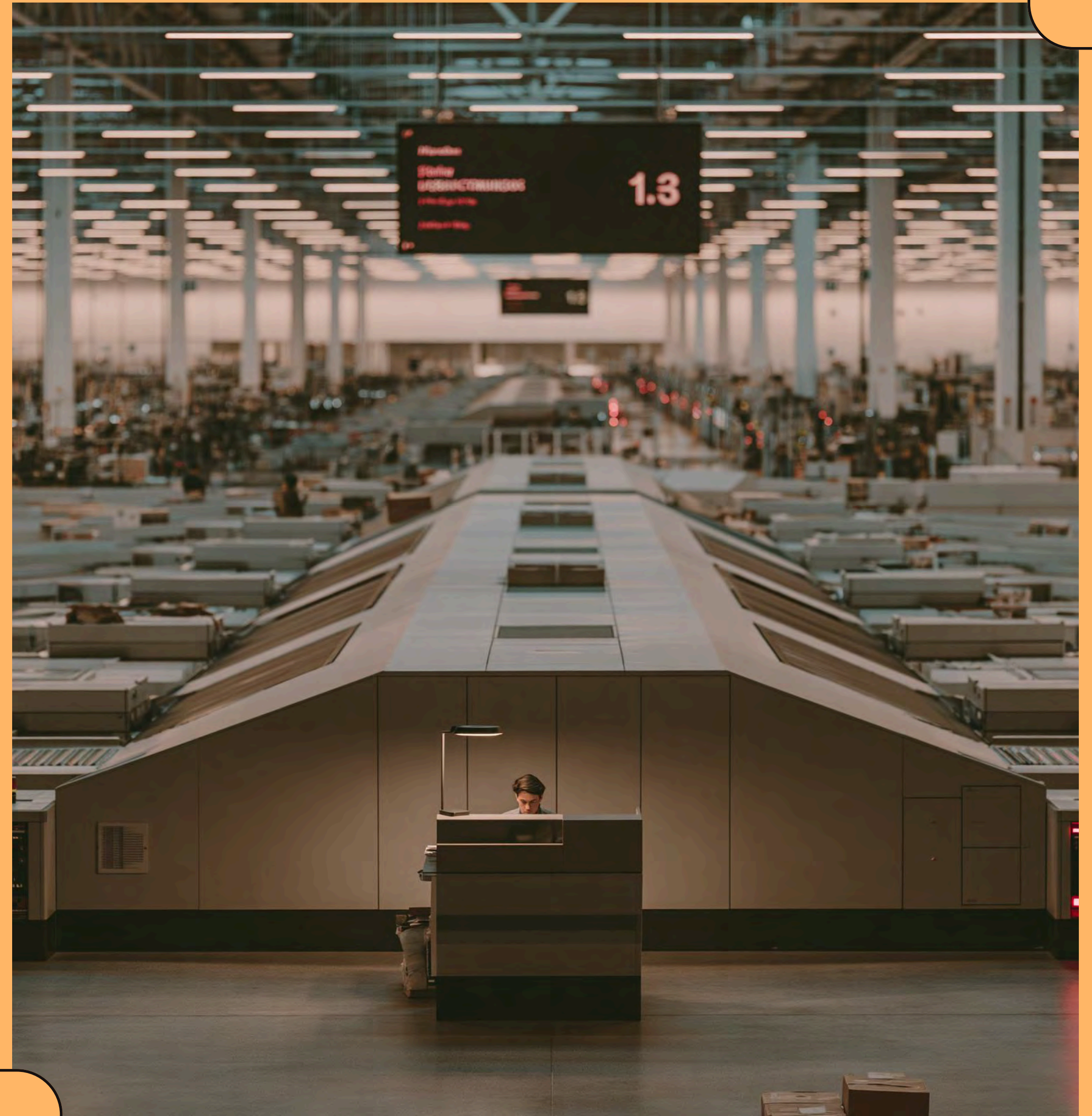


Figure 8. The biggest friction points sit upstream of the invoice, especially pricing/rating, validation and usage capture.

Chapter eight:

Manual effort and slow invoicing are weakening scale



Chapter eight

Manual work is one of the clearest signs that usage-to-revenue systems are under strain. Many still rely on people to produce accurate invoices for consumption or usage-based services, and delays in turning usage into invoices are creating cash-flow pressure. Seventy-five percent have at least 10% manual effort in producing accurate invoices. Forty percent have at least 26% manual effort.

Twelve percent have more than 50% manual effort. Only 18% say invoice production is highly automated, with less than 10% manual effort. In a modern usage-based business, any high level of manual effort should be treated as a warning sign.

It slows invoicing, increases error risk, depends on institutional knowledge and makes it harder to support new products or pricing models. It also masks system weaknesses. If people are constantly correcting, checking or reconciling, the organization may not see how fragile the underlying process has become. The invoicing-timing data reinforces the point.

Fifty-six percent take three days or more from usage period end to invoice issue. Twenty-three percent take more than a week. Fifty-nine percent say billing delay has a moderate, significant or critical impact on cash flow, and 18% say the cash-flow impact is significant or critical. This connects modernization directly to working capital.



Slow invoicing is not just a process metric. It affects cash flow. If usage has been consumed but invoices are delayed, revenue realization is slowed. If delays are caused by manual reconciliation, customer disputes or upstream data issues, the business is effectively financing its own operational complexity.

Manual effort also weakens agility. If launching a new offer increases the manual

burden, teams may become reluctant to innovate. If every pricing change requires operational workarounds, product teams slow down. If AI usage creates more data variability, manual billing processes become more exposed.

The challenge is therefore to reduce manual work without losing control. Automation is not valuable if it simply accelerates errors. The goal is accurate automation: usage

captured correctly, pricing applied consistently, invoices generated quickly and exceptions handled transparently. Manual effort and slow invoicing are not separate problems.

They are symptoms of the same underlying issue: the usage-to-revenue stack is being asked to support more complexity than it can process cleanly. Modernization must address that gap.

Manual effort and invoice delay are weakening scale

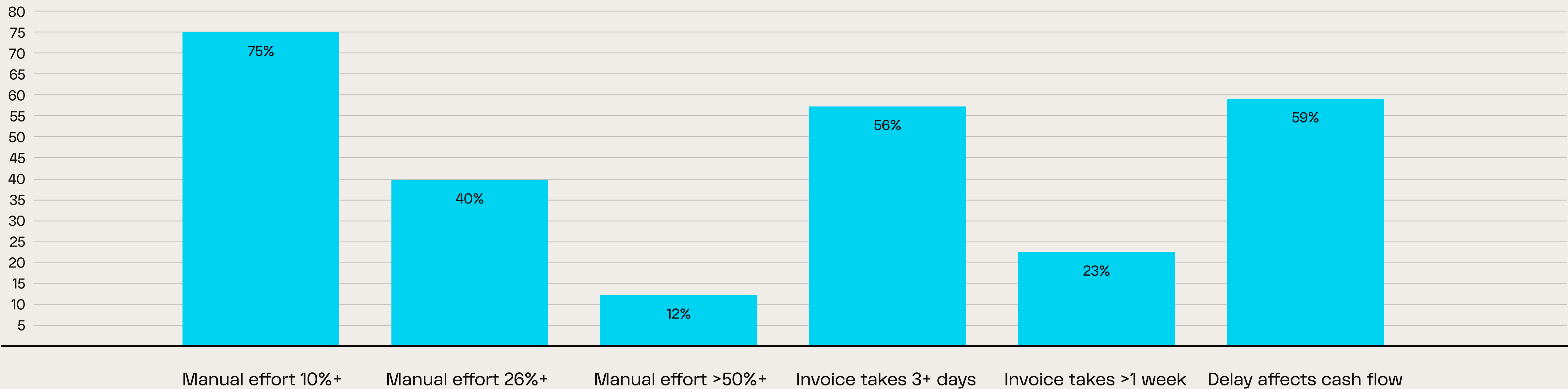
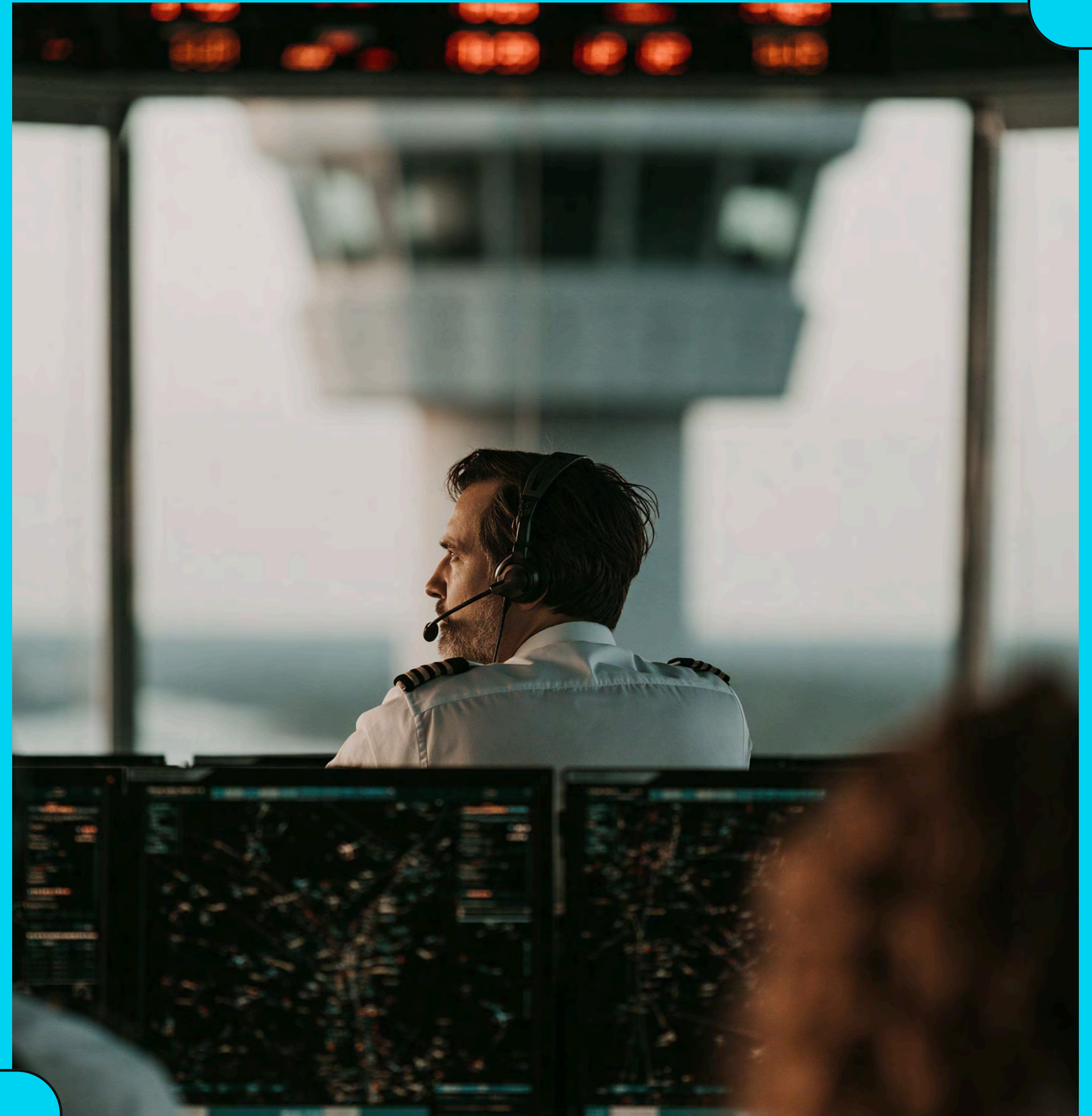


Figure 9. Manual effort and invoice delay remain material constraints on scale and cash flow.

Chapter nine:

Orchestration is winning over monolithic transformation





The market is not moving toward one single pattern of replacement. The research suggests that the market is moving toward orchestration, APIs, microservices and central mediation rather than large monolithic transformation. Thirty percent are moving away from point-to-point integrations toward a central mediation or orchestration layer. Twenty-two percent are expanding API or microservices-based custom architecture.

Ten percent are moving toward a single end-to-end suite or monolithic platform. Overall, 52% are moving toward orchestration, APIs or microservices. That is more than five times the share moving toward a monolithic platform. This is an important architectural signal.

There is recognition that the revenue layer needs flexibility. Their systems must connect usage sources, pricing, billing, finance and partner systems. They must support current operations while adapting to new products, AI offers and settlement models. A single replacement program may not be the preferred answer, particularly where existing systems are deeply embedded and still operationally functional.

The stronger story is that orchestration is becoming the natural modernization pattern. As technology stacks become more composable, mediation and orchestration become more important. The goal is not to rip everything out. The goal is to connect systems in a way that makes usage-to-revenue processes more adaptable, automated and auditable.

This matters because many are likely operating with a mix of legacy systems, custom integrations, finance platforms, billing tools, product systems and partner processes. Point-to-point integrations may have worked when the business was simpler, but they become brittle as complexity grows. Every new usage source, pricing model or partner route adds another dependency. Orchestration provides a way to manage those dependencies more coherently.

The move toward APIs and microservices also reflects the need for modularity. Different parts of the monetization stack do different jobs: usage capture, validation, rating, pricing, billing, reconciliation, revenue recognition and settlement. If each function can be managed more independently, the organization can change one part of the stack without destabilizing the whole. The research does not suggest that one architectural model will suit everyone.

But it does show a clear direction of travel. Organizations are looking for architectures that can mediate complexity rather than hide it. They need systems that can connect, adapt and provide evidence. That is why orchestration is becoming central to modernization.

Architecture direction over the next 12-24 months

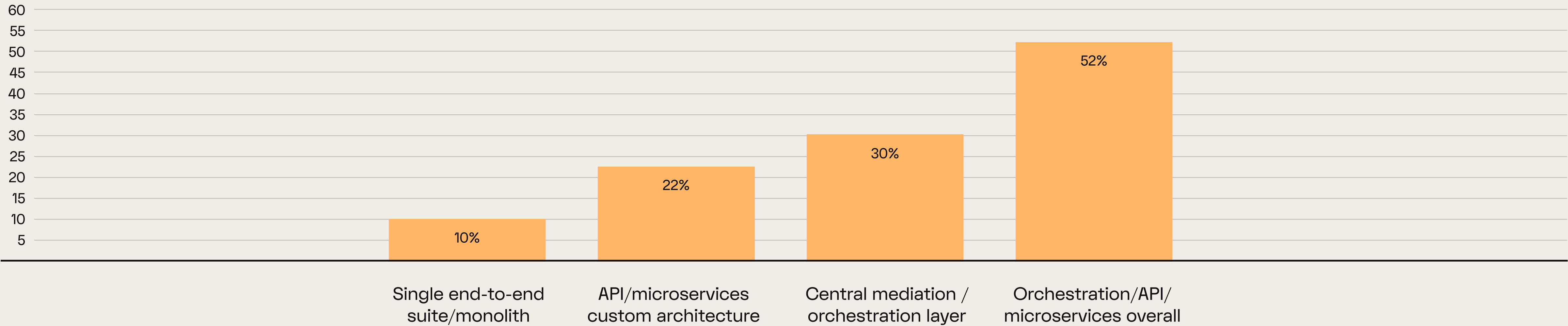


Figure 10. Respondents are leaning toward orchestration, APIs and microservices over monolithic replacement.

Chapter ten:

Partner settlement is moving into the modernization agenda



Chapter ten

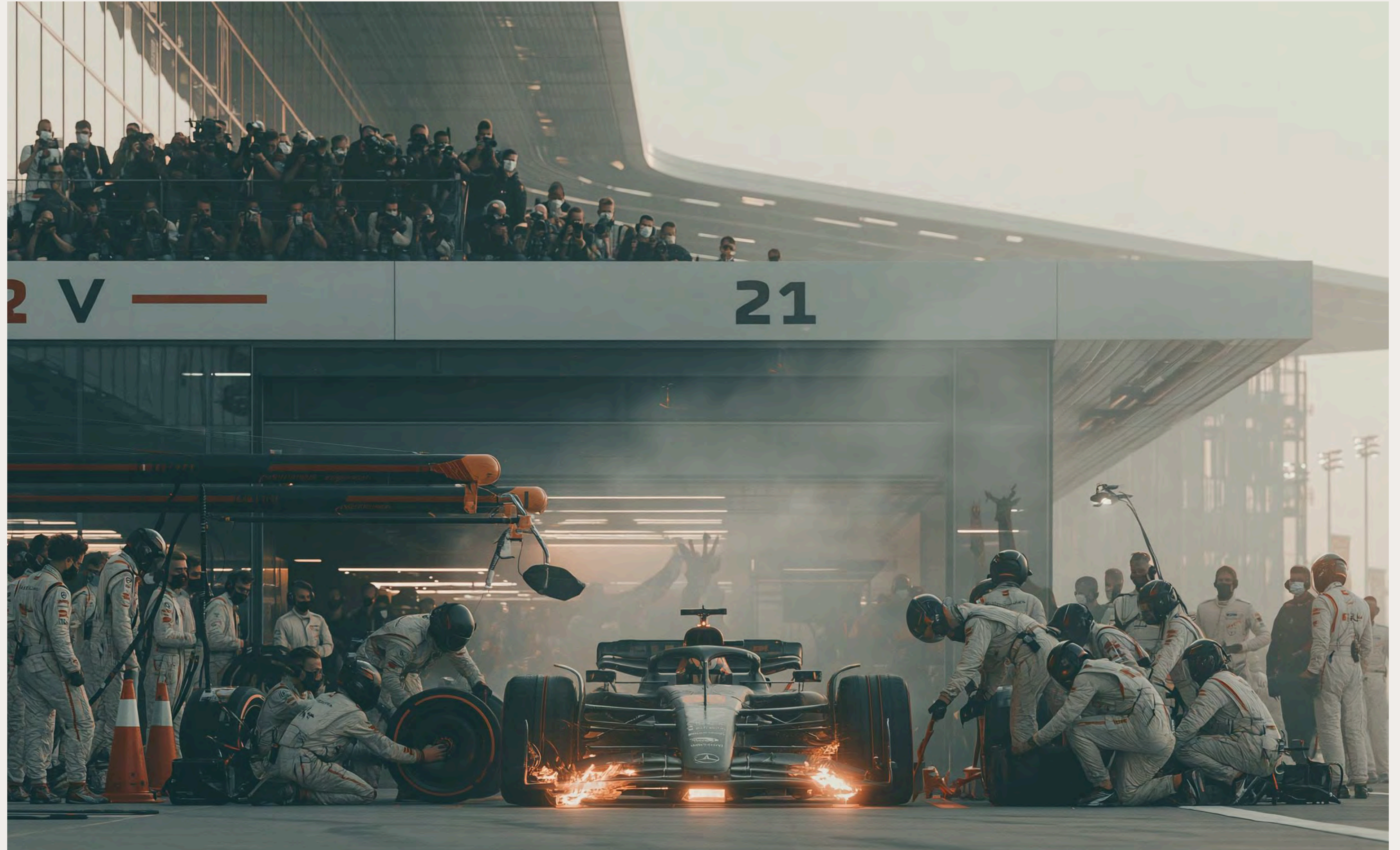
The question is why it is becoming more urgent now. The tipping point is complexity.

As partner, reseller, marketplace and B2B2B ecosystem models scale, settlement becomes harder to manage manually and harder to treat as a downstream process. Usage-based and AI-related offers create more variable revenue. Multiple pricing models create more exceptions. Customers and partners expect greater transparency.

Finance teams need stronger audit evidence. As a result, settlement is moving from an operational afterthought into the modernization agenda. Twenty-six percent currently use revenue share or partner settlement as a monetization model. That alone makes settlement relevant.

But the forward-looking data is more important. Seventy-four percent expect partner revenue share or settlement processes to become more automated, auditable or end-to-end automated over the next 12–24 months. Forty-six percent expect to increase automation and audibility within existing partner settlement systems. Nineteen percent expect to implement end-to-end automation from usage data through partner settlement with an audit trail.

This shows the market is not merely maintaining existing settlement processes. They expect settlement to become more automated and more auditable. That is the urgency. Partner settlement is being pulled into the same trust agenda as billing accuracy, audibility and revenue control.



Architectural priorities confirm this. Thirty-six percent say improving partner settlement accuracy is one of their top architectural initiatives. Twenty-eight percent prioritize improving audit evidence and controls. Twenty percent prioritize automating reconciliation from usage to invoice to revenue.

These findings show that settlement is no longer separate from the core usage-to-revenue stack. It depends on the same data and controls. If usage is wrong, settlement may be wrong. If pricing is unclear, revenue share may be disputed.

If invoices are delayed, partner settlement may be delayed. If audit evidence is weak,

the organization may struggle to defend the calculation. The “so what” is therefore clear: partner settlement is becoming a strategic control point because these revenue chains are more interconnected than ever. The more they depend on partners, resellers and downstream sellers, the more settlement accuracy affects trust, margin and growth.

A Modernizer cannot fully modernize billing while leaving settlement behind. The next phase of modernization will connect usage data, invoicing, revenue recognition and partner settlement more tightly. Settlement will need to be accurate, automated and auditable from end to end. That is why it belongs in the modernization agenda now.

Partner settlement is moving towards automation and auditability

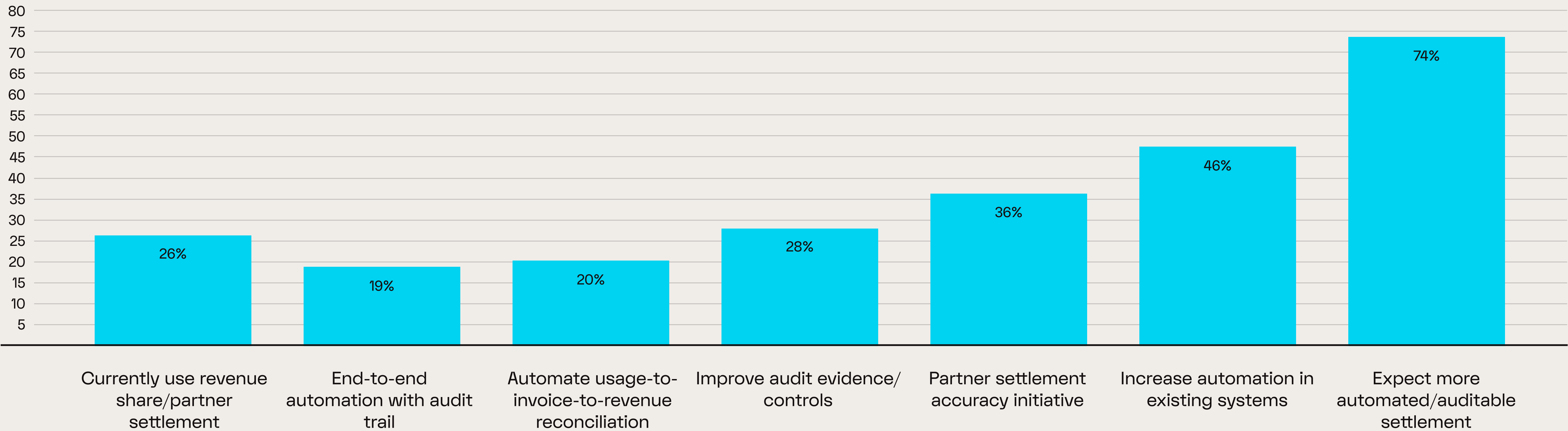


Figure 11. Partner settlement is moving toward more automated, auditable and end-to-end processes.

Conclusions





The picture is one of confidence shadowed by discomfort. Systems work — yet they leak, dispute, delay and require manual effort to produce a trustworthy invoice. The central finding of this research is that "working" is no longer a strong enough standard.

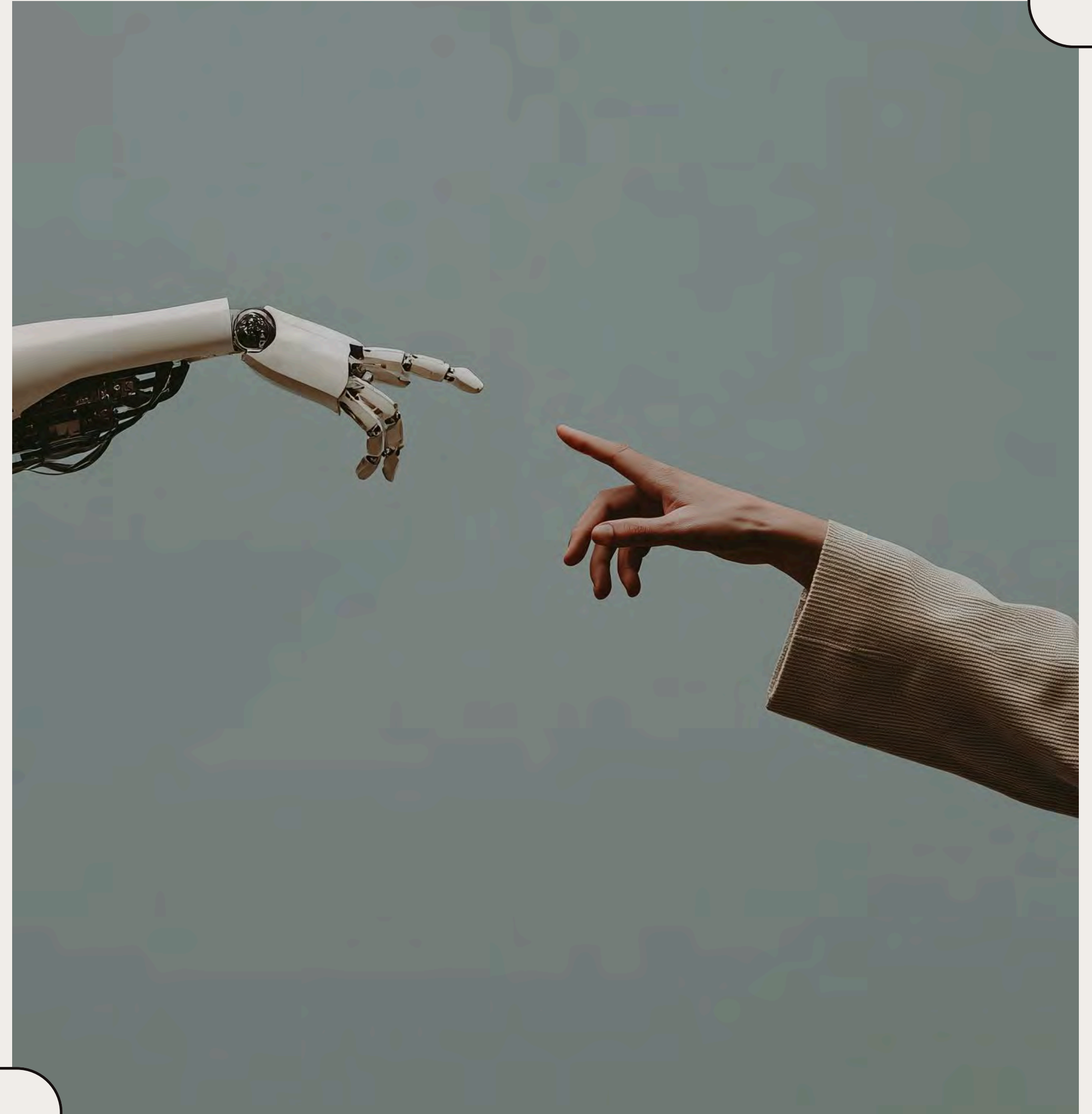
The agility gap is the load-bearing issue. Three-quarters say their systems are fit for cloud scale, but only 64% can onboard new usage sources or change AI and consumption offers without major downstream rework. That gap is where AI ambition will outrun billing reality, where pricing experiments will stall, and where partner ecosystems will become harder to settle. Leakage, manual effort and slow invoicing are the visible consequences; the agility gap is the cause.

Three shifts will define the next 12–24 months. Architecturally, the move is toward orchestration, APIs and microservices over monolithic platforms — a recognition that composability is now a revenue-layer requirement, not a developer preference. Operationally, the upstream stages — capture, validation, rating — are where invoice quality is actually decided, which means modernization cannot stop at invoice production. Commercially, partner settlement is moving into the same trust

and control agenda as billing and revenue recognition, with three in four organizations expecting more automation here.

The practical implication is that the revenue layer needs to be modernized as a system, not as a billing project. Replacing or upgrading components in isolation will not close the agility gap, and that gap is where competitive advantage will be won or lost as usage-based and AI-enabled models keep multiplying the signals, the metrics and the counterparties the stack has to reconcile. The organizations that can turn complex usage into trusted revenue — quickly, accurately, with clear evidence — will set the pace. The rest will spend the cycle catching up to their own offers.

Methodology



Methodology

This report is based on DigitalRoute’s research survey which comprises 631 respondents across six regional markets: the UK with 117 respondents, the US with 104, Germany with 105, France with 101, the Nordics with 103 and Benelux with 101. This gives the report a broadly balanced regional view across major cloud, infrastructure and technology-services markets, rather than concentrating the findings in a single geography.

Respondents were selected from roles close to the usage-to-revenue, billing, finance systems, enterprise applications and technology-platform decision chain. Across the six regions, CIOs, CTOs, Chief Architects and VP Engineering or platform leaders represented between 33% and 41% of respondents. Finance systems owners or leads represented between 18% and 23%, billing systems owners or leads between 17% and 19%, and Heads of Enterprise Applications between 11% and 14%. Quote-to-cash or billing transformation leads represented 1–2% across regions, while other roles accounted for between 2% and 14% depending on market.

This role profile is important to the interpretation of the findings. The research does not reflect a purely technical view, or a purely finance-led view, of monetization

modernization. It draws from the functions most likely to see where cloud and AI usage complexity creates downstream pressure: technology leadership, enterprise applications, billing ownership, finance systems ownership and transformation leadership. That mix supports the report’s central argument that usage-to-revenue modernization is a shared commercial-control issue rather than a narrow billing-system upgrade.

All percentages from the survey data and respondent profile have been rounded to whole numbers for readability. Where the data included more precise decimal values, the report expresses them as rounded percentages while preserving the underlying meaning and relative emphasis of the findings.

The survey data is treated as directional evidence of the modernization pressures facing infrastructure-oriented, usage-native businesses. The figures are used to support the research findings around AI-related pressure, pricing complexity, agility gaps, revenue trust, leakage, invoice disputes, upstream billing friction, manual effort, architectural change and partner settlement.



Modernizing the revenue layer is no longer a billing project. The work of **orchestrating it as a system** starts now.

DigitalRoute helps infrastructure and platform providers close the gap between a stack that works today and one that can adapt tomorrow – orchestrating usage, pricing, invoicing, revenue and partner settlement so they stay accurate, auditable and automated as AI and partner models keep multiplying signals. If this report raised questions your organization hasn’t fully answered, we’d like to be part of that conversation

UsageUnlock™ – A virtual roundtable

Join senior leaders discussing how to turn AI usage data into governed, forecastable revenue. Hosted by DigitalRoute.

Reserve a spot

Read the 2026 AI Monetization Research report

The strategy half of the story – where AI monetization is heading before usage has to make it real.

Download the report

Read the 2026 Usage to Revenue Research report

The foundation half of the story – making usage trustworthy enough to build a modernized revenue layer on

Download the report



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The Year Monetization Stacks Broke