

AI Agents:

Exploring Dealmakers' New Frontier

A Survey Report



Research Highlights

- **10%** of dealmakers do not use AI at all
- **5%** believe AI has had a negative impact on their goals
- Increasing efficiency and time savings is dealmakers' **#1 AI goal**
- **44%** cite low confidence in accuracy and reliability as a main obstacle for AI adoption
- **34%** would invest more in AI with proven ROI or peer benchmarks
- **Just 2%** of dealmakers believe AI should autonomously make investment decisions

AI Agents: Exploring Dealmakers' New Frontier

From computational power and innovation to available products and market valuation, AI is on a roll — but are dealmakers keeping up? Our research indicates a shrinking window of opportunity for firms to get on board before they're left behind, and an even smaller one for them to use AI as a springboard to leap ahead of the pack.

We're all familiar with AI capabilities like machine learning and natural language processing, and it's been almost three years since ChatGPT popularized GenAI. But there's a new evolution of this rapidly-advancing technology built to make decisions and take actions with a high degree of autonomy and minimal human intervention: agentic AI.

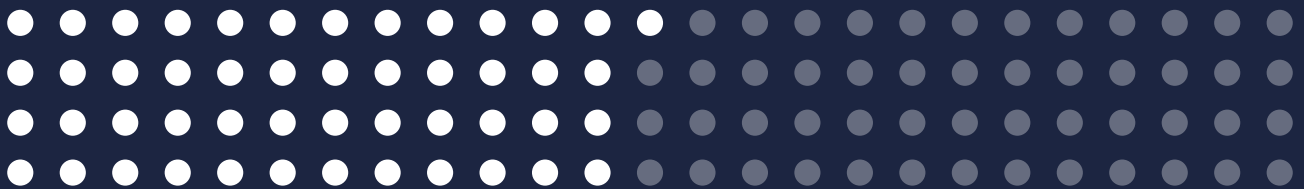
AI agents have the power to accelerate every stage of the deal flow process, redefine investment strategies based on an unprecedented breadth of data, and give teams a razor-sharp competitive edge.

But who's using these tools? Do they live up to their promise? What's preventing some dealmakers from adopting them? And most importantly, what's at stake for those who fail to embrace this new frontier? Our recent survey results shed light on these questions and more.

Leaders vs. Laggards

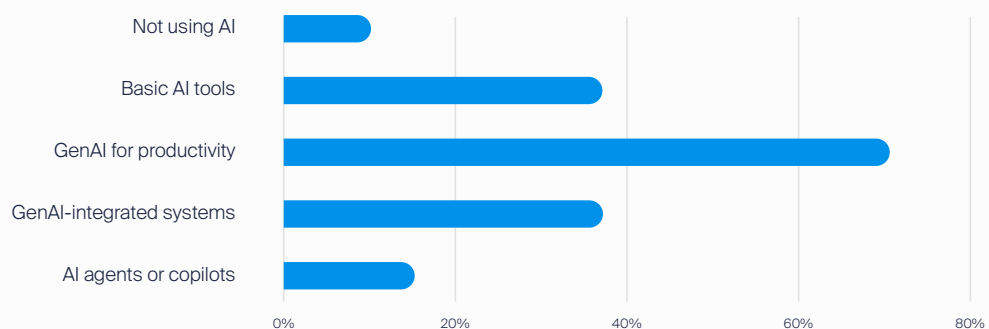
It appears most dealmakers have moved beyond basic AI and are now also embracing more generative applications that enhance productivity. According to our survey, a whopping 71% say they use tools like Claude or ChatGPT to draft emails, write memos, analyze data, and more.

Nearly half (49%) of dealmakers use AI tools on an almost daily basis!

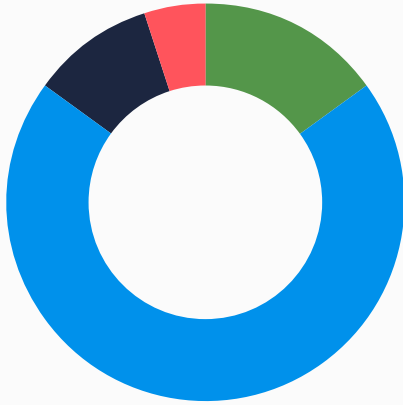


However, there is a clear divergence on both sides of this middle ground. While 15% of dealmakers say they use AI agents and copilots to make autonomous and semi-autonomous decisions, 10% claim they are not using AI at all.

What type of AI tools have you tried using in your dealmaking workflows? Select all that apply.



As we'll see, this separation shows up consistently in our survey results, leading us to loosely bucket dealmakers into 4 key groups based on their AI usage and perspectives:



1. AI Leaders (~15%)
2. AI Adopters (~70%)
3. AI Laggards (~10%)
4. AI Naysayers (~5%)

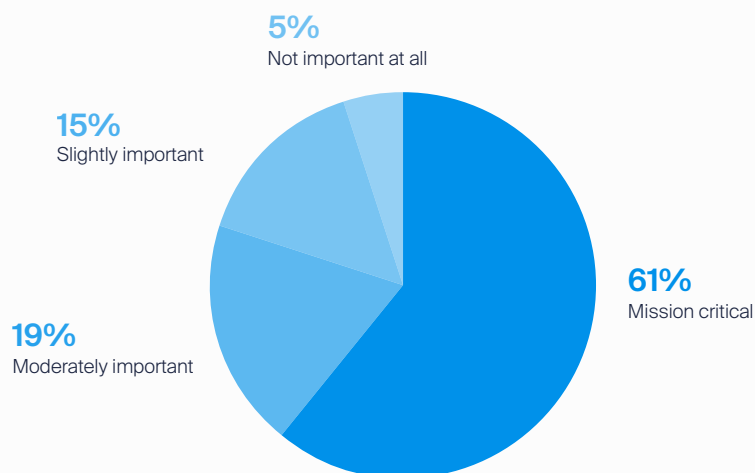
The Notion of Naysayers

Unlike AI Laggards, who are simply slow to adopt AI due to various reasons or restrictions (more on that later), AI Naysayers openly oppose the technology.

While 60% of survey respondents believe leveraging the latest AI capabilities will be “mission critical” for dealmakers to maintain a competitive advantage over the next three years, 5% say it’s “not important at all.”

Similarly, 5% also say AI has had a “negative impact” on their goals and actually made it harder to achieve them. The same percentage believes AI technology should not be involved in investment decisions in any way, shape, or form.

How important do you believe leveraging the latest AI capabilities will be for dealmakers to maintain a competitive advantage over the next three years?

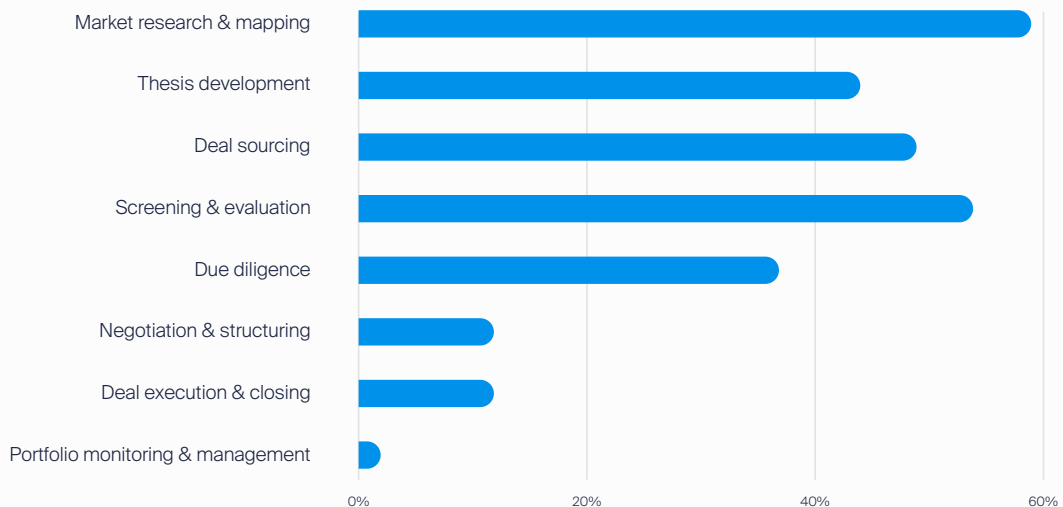


Top AI Use Cases

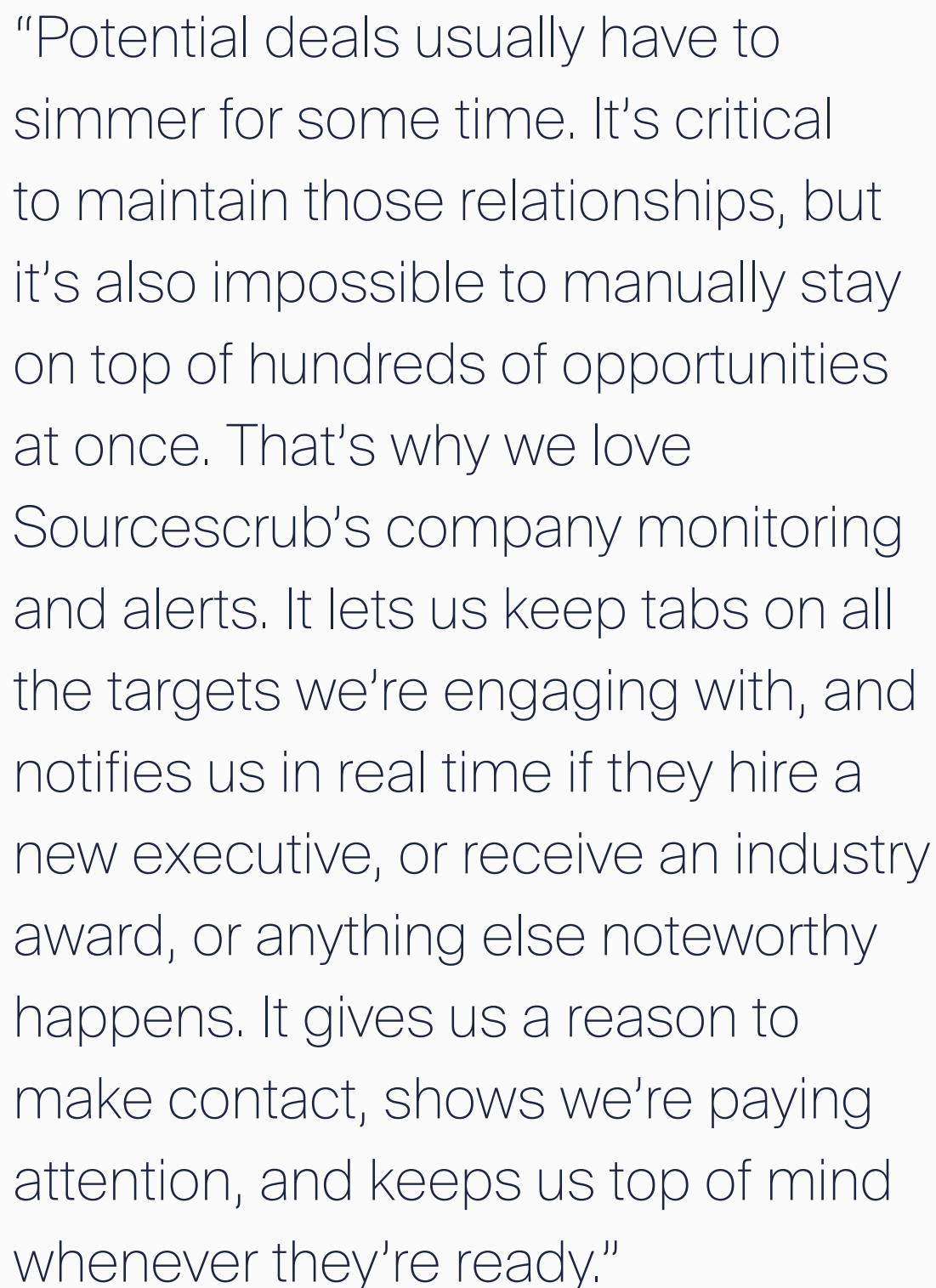
Negativity aside, how are dealmakers actually using AI? According to our survey, the number one AI use case is market research and mapping (59%). This makes sense given ChatGPT and other GenAI tools' ability to instantly summarize industry trends and draft company overviews. In addition, this exercise draws mostly from public data, circumventing dealmakers' usual data privacy and security concerns.

Company screening and evaluation is the second most popular AI use case among dealmakers, and **deal sourcing** rounds out the top three, at 54% and 49%, respectively. Interestingly, the top four use cases are all within the first half of the deal flow process, with AI usage steadily decreasing as deals progress.

Across which areas of the deal flow process do you use AI tools most? Select all that apply.



Only 12% of respondents use AI for negotiation and structuring and deal execution and closing, respectively. Portfolio monitoring and management comes in dead last at just 2%, highlighting a major opportunity for dealmakers to leverage AI-powered target and portfolio tracking and alerts.

A decorative border composed of various colorful geometric shapes (circles, squares, triangles, diamonds) in shades of blue, red, green, yellow, and orange, arranged in a repeating pattern around the perimeter of the text.

“Potential deals usually have to simmer for some time. It’s critical to maintain those relationships, but it’s also impossible to manually stay on top of hundreds of opportunities at once. That’s why we love Sourcescrub’s company monitoring and alerts. It lets us keep tabs on all the targets we’re engaging with, and notifies us in real time if they hire a new executive, or receive an industry award, or anything else noteworthy happens. It gives us a reason to make contact, shows we’re paying attention, and keeps us top of mind whenever they’re ready.”

— Guy Mitchell, Co-founder and CFO, Synacti

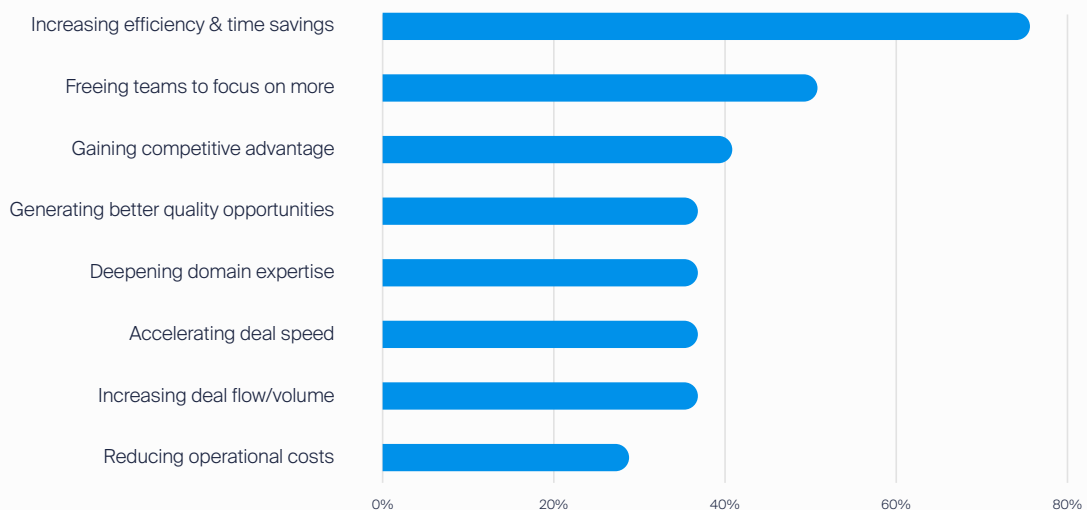
[Read the Full Success Story](#)

Dealmakers' Goals Reflect Lack of AI Confidence...

When asked about their organizations' goals for adopting AI agents and other AI-powered tools, dealmakers overwhelmingly respond with "increased efficiency and time savings" (76%). This aligns with their top AI use case, since market research and mapping is among the most time consuming parts of the deal flow process.

Dealmakers' second most popular AI goal is "freeing teams to focus on more strategic work" (51%), followed by "gaining competitive advantage" (41%). Nearly all remaining options are evenly split among respondents.

What are your organization's primary goals for adopting AI agents and other AI-powered tools? Select all that apply.



Faster deal cycles, better quality opportunities, and increased deal volume are arguably more directly impactful than efficiency gains, and certainly more measurable than competitive advantage or freedom to focus on more strategic work. However, they also require the use of more sophisticated AI strategies and tools, which likely explains their lower rankings.

Interestingly, "reducing operational costs" is the least selected goal at 29%, contradicting the common fear that organizations intend to replace humans with AI. As our results show, dealmakers are much more interested in offloading repetitive or mundane tasks to AI so humans can turn their attention to more valuable and thoughtful work robots can't do.

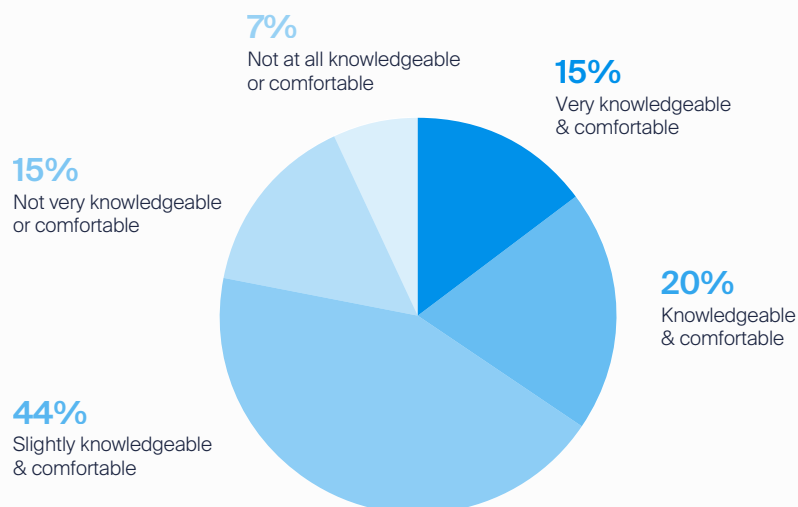
...And Outcomes Reflect AI Sophistication Levels

As previously mentioned, 5% of survey respondents, AKA AI Naysayers, claim AI has actually had a “negative impact” on these goals. The remaining responses to this question are also in keeping with our four specified groups:

- **10%, AKA AI Laggards**, say AI hasn’t “made much of a difference” in hitting these goals, likely due to minimal or no usage.
- **68%, AKA AI Adopters**, fall in the middle of the road, having experienced “a noticeable and positive impact” from AI, but acknowledging they “still have a ways to go.”
- **17%, AKA AI Leaders**, say AI has “exceeded” their expectations and been “instrumental” in achieving their goals.

Dealmakers’ knowledge of and comfort with AI technology also seems to correlate with their usage sophistication and the outcomes they achieve. For example, just 15% of respondents feel “very knowledgeable and comfortable” — which is roughly the same percentage of AI Leaders using AI agents/co-pilots and those who say AI has been instrumental in hitting their goals.

Please rate your organization’s level of knowledge and comfort with AI platforms and technology.

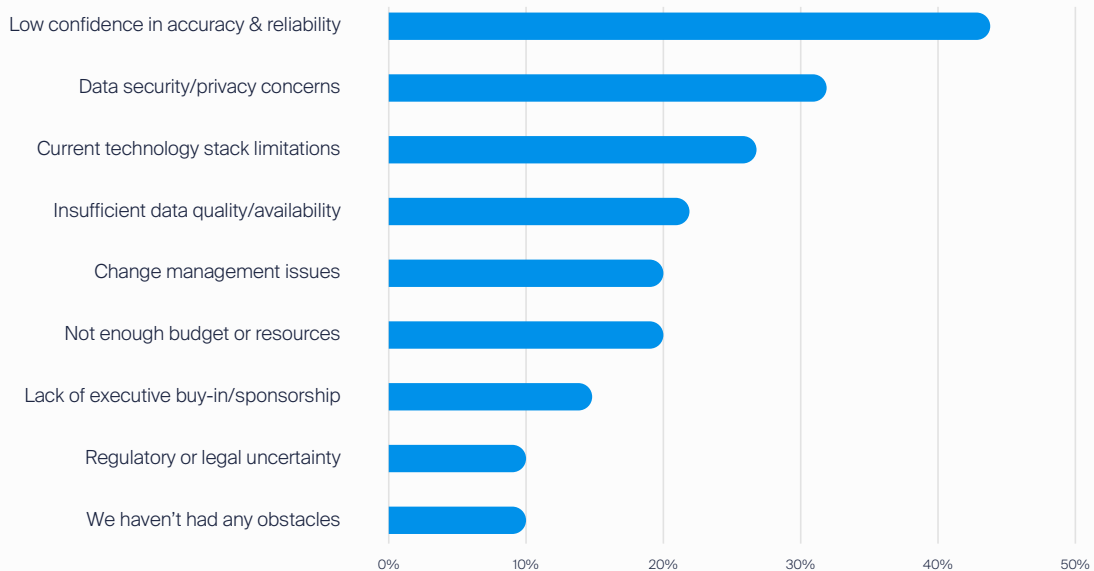


What's Holding Dealmakers Back?

Dealmakers list a number of obstacles getting in the way of AI adoption, including insufficient data quality and availability (22%), lack of budget or resources (19%), and change management issues (19%). However, the number one roadblock by far is low confidence in AI accuracy and reliability, at just under 45%.

Data security and privacy concerns emerge as dealmakers' second biggest obstacle at 32% – not surprising, but also a much lower percentage than anticipated, likely due to the explosion of purpose-built, enterprise-grade AI solutions. Rounding out dealmakers' top three biggest roadblocks is “current technology stack limitations” at 27%. It's safe to assume this is also related to AI's rapid evolution, highlighting the importance of selecting **truly modern solutions** that integrate directly with the latest agentic AI tools.

What have been the biggest obstacles to adopting and using AI agents and AI-powered platforms at your organization? Select all that apply.



The AI Laggard's Linchpin?

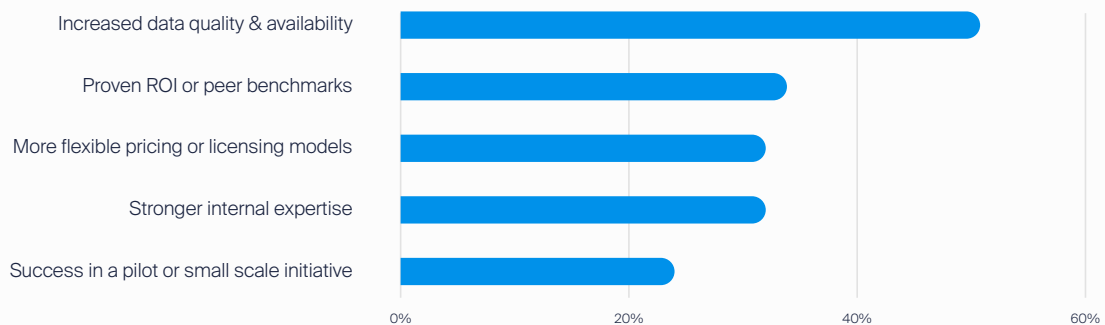
While just 10% of respondents cite regulatory or legal uncertainty as a major hurdle, it's worth noting this is the same percentage of dealmakers who say their organizations do not currently use AI. This is likely the issue holding AI Laggards back. [This recent webinar](#) offers additional insight into this issue, with two out of four panelists sharing that regulatory and compliance concerns alone prevent their organizations from harnessing AI for deal sourcing.

Additional Investment Requires Evidence

When asked what would make their organizations most likely to increase investment in AI, three of dealmakers' top five answers continue to suggest a lack of confidence, both in AI technology and their own abilities. While "increased data quality and availability" is ranked first at 51%, "proven ROI or peer benchmarks" is second at 34%.

Dealmakers would also like stronger internal expertise (32%) and success in a pilot or small-scale initiative (25%) before putting more dollars toward AI. Even their desire for more flexible pricing or licensing models, which tied with stronger internal expertise at 32%, can be interpreted as looking for an out should AI not deliver – especially since "not enough budget or resources" ranks among dealmakers' bottom three AI adoption obstacles.

Top 5 Reasons Why Dealmakers Would Increase Their AI Investments



Becoming an AI Leader Requires a Mindset Shift

There's still time for dealmakers to overcome regulatory and compliance concerns and begin integrating AI into their deal flow processes. But as with any new technology, the early adopters stand to gain the most.

AI agents' ability to independently make decisions and take actions on behalf of humans is undeniably transformative, and we've only begun scratching the surface of how it can be applied in dealmaking. However, it's also a tough pill for the investment community to swallow, as our survey results show.

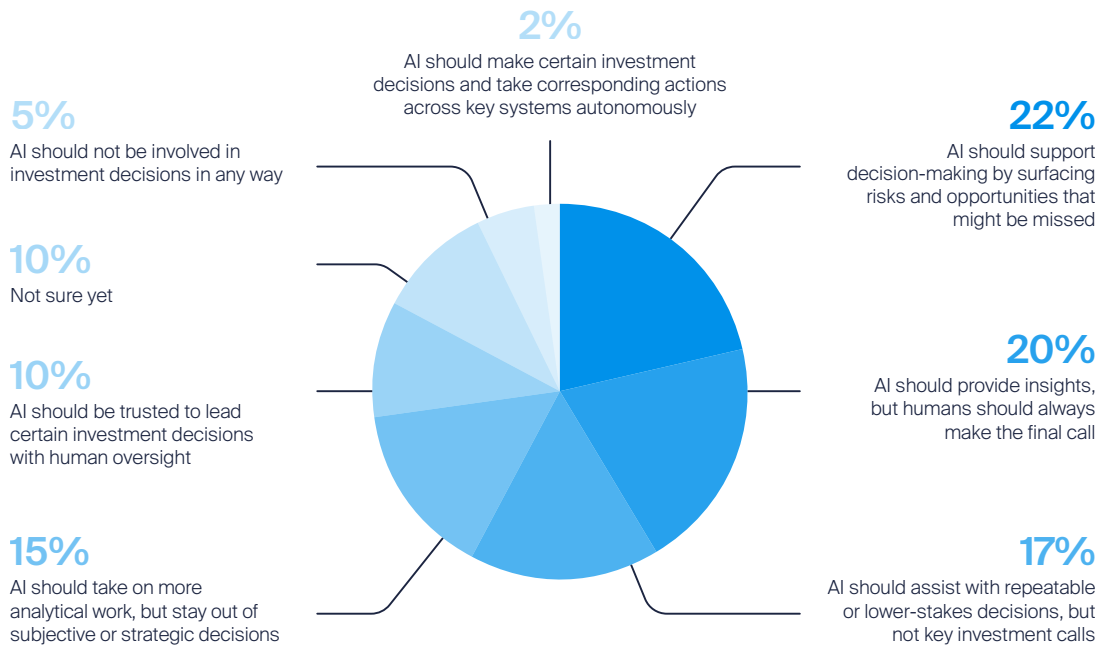
Just 2% of dealmakers believe AI should autonomously make investment decisions, while another 10% trust AI to lead certain investment decisions with human oversight. Presumably, this accounts for most of the AI Leaders in our survey.

We mentioned the 5% of our sample we labeled "AI Naysayers" doesn't think AI should be involved in investment decisions at all. Meanwhile, 10% admit they're simply "not sure yet" — likely because their AI access and usage remains restricted.

The most surprising results come from our AI Adopters, or the approximately 70% of dealmakers whose organizations are actively investing in and using basic and generative AI. While their responses range from stating AI should simply provide insights to humans (20%) to believing it should assist with repeatable and low value decisions only (17%), it's clear they have yet to come to terms with the power of autonomous agents.

Ultimately, breaking free from the middle of the pack and maximizing agentic AI outcomes will require this group to conquer uncertainty and seek knowledge and expertise that will drive breakthroughs.

What role do you think AI should play in decision making for investment organizations?



Welcome to the New Frontier

Harnessing agentic AI as a competitive advantage starts with having the right data.

[Learn more](#) about why AI Leaders choose Sourcescrub's industry-leading private company dataset to help fuel their AI agents, and how your organization can get started.

About Sourcescrub

Sourcescrub is the market-leading Deal Sourcing Platform for investment and M&A teams who need the most complete, accurate, and connected view of private markets. Using a proprietary Expert-in-the-loop AI process, Sourcescrub weaves more than 290,000 information Sources and 17M companies into a web of insight in our AI-powered platform to discover, track, and engage the best targets.

Learn more at www.sourcescrub.com

