Veeva QualityOne

The State of AI in Consumer Goods

Exclusive new research reveals how IT and quality leaders are overcoming obstacles and reimagining digital quality in the age of AI

November 2025

The AI readiness challenge: Turning potential into progress

The quality organization of a leading consumer goods company was eager to integrate AI into its operations after seeing early pilots succeed in marketing and supply chain management. The team defined use cases focused on making quality proactive, data-driven, and scalable, and initiated a review to prepare for AI pilots.

The review quickly revealed a familiar obstacle. Across regions, multiple legacy systems were still in use, each with its own distinct data standards and varying levels of adoption. In some areas, paper-based processes persisted. The team recognized that it lacked the right data foundation to scale AI effectively.

Before expanding further, the company decided to standardize its quality processes on a single, connected platform. Establishing consistent, trusted data became the critical next step toward realizing its vision of AI-enabled quality.

This scenario mirrors what many consumer goods organizations are now discovering: the path to AI success begins with strong digital and data foundations.

AI is no longer an experiment for the consumer goods industry.

Nine out of 10 CPG and retailers are already actively using AI or assessing AI projects via trials, pilots, and evaluations.[1]

To understand how progress is unfolding, **Veeva** commissioned third-party research from April to October 2025. This eBook covers key insights for IT and quality leaders in consumer goods (focusing on the consumer packaged goods and food and beverage sectors) responsible for balancing innovation with assurance.

With safety, compliance, and brand trust at stake, consumer goods leaders are navigating AI adoption with both urgency and care. This report surfaces research across **three dimensions: barriers** that still slow progress, **shifts** that signal maturity, and **opportunities** that show where AI is already adding value.

1. State of AI in Retail and CPG, NVIDIA, 2025.

Key data at a glance

Barriers

60%

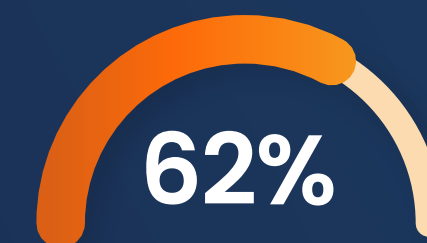of leaders cite compliance and security risks as the top challenge

Data silos and integration complexity continue to limit AI scalability

Cost pressures are squeezing budgets and hindering pilot projects from reaching enterprise scale

Shifts

62%

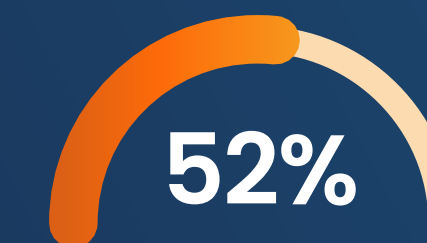of consumer goods companies are consolidating systems onto unified platforms

AI has moved from curiosity to board-level imperative, with growing urgency to prove ROI

Leaders are moving from fragmented experiments to intentional, cross-functional AI strategies

Opportunities

52%

of respondents identifiy predictive analytics as the #1 AI priority

AI governance is shifting from static policy documents to practices embedded in daily workflows and decision-making

System rationalization and workforce training are laying the groundwork for responsible and scalable AI deployment

The potential of AI is real and accelerating. But the barriers to realizing value are equally pressing.

Successful leaders are finding ways to move forward with discipline: rationalizing systems, embedding governance, managing change, and choosing the right partners.

75%

of organizations now use AI in at least one business function.[2]

The majority of consumer goods enterprises have begun their AI journey, though many are still in the early stages. Leaders are deliberately sequencing their AI investments rather than rushing to implement. **Traditional AI** provides a proven foundation, **GenAI** is being tested for clear value, and **Agentic AI** (though emerging) is being explored with urgency. A staged approach is proving effective because testing new systems alongside existing ones enables leaders to validate results before wider rollout, minimizing disruption while driving progress.

AI technologies are diverse. Each form has a role to play in IT and quality leaders' initiatives. Companies that are advancing are building the right capabilities, with the right technology, in the right order rather than chasing every potential use case.

AI and consumer goods

Traditional AI dominates, with **46%** rating predictive analytics as the top priority

Curiosity about GenAI, but activity mostly limited to pilots

GenAI adoption increases to **52%**, but scaling challenges become clearer

Agentic AI a horizon concept

Agentic AI increases **2X** to become the fastest-growing AI type

GenAI tied to ROI as initiatives become more disciplined

April 2025

Wave 1

July 2025

Wave 2

October 2025

Wave 3

Three survey waves conducted with a total of 150 senior IT and quality executives from the consumer goods sector.

2. "The state of AI: How organizations are rewiring to capture value," McKinsey, 2025

The hidden cost of fragmented data

A global consumer goods company planned to implement a new supplier quality system to better oversee its vast supplier network. The project depended on connecting supplier master data to the new platform, a critical step to ensure visibility and control.

Early in the rollout, the team uncovered a fundamental issue: many of the 70,000 suppliers in the company's master database were duplicates, outdated, or misclassified. Each regional quality team had been maintaining its own offline spreadsheets to manage daily work. There was no clear way to identify which suppliers mattered most for quality or compliance, or even to distinguish between parent organizations and individual sites.

The technical solution was ready, but the data foundation wasn't. The project stalled until the company could consolidate and clean its supplier information. Even well-designed systems can't deliver value without trusted, unified data.

Data silos, complex integrations, and compliance pressures challenge consumer goods leaders.

Data silos and governance: A core constraint

Over a six-month period, the percentage of leaders citing data silos and poor data quality as their top barriers to AI success dropped by 22 percentage points. Although they've made progress by consolidating systems and strengthening data practices, data silos still remain a top concern for consumer goods leaders.

The lack of clear strategies for data ownership and accountability hinders AI scalability. Without this essential foundation, organizations struggle to ensure data consistency across business units, effectively prioritize data problems, or address cross-functional data needs.

Integration complexity: A persistent drag

Alongside silos, complex integrations continues to slow progress. Legacy technology, acquisitions, and regional customizations create an environment where integration is partial, patchy, or fragile. Scaling AI will require simpler architectures and tighter alignment between IT and business functions.

An integrated digital ecosystem is requisite for data to connect and flow across the business. When data and processes connect seamlessly across systems, leaders can derive quality insights quickly, improving decision-making.

Compliance and security: A constant pressure

Compliance and security risks are now the leading barrier to AI success, with 60% of IT leaders' citing it as a top concern.

This rise stems from AI's complexity, as well as its increasing autonomy. Transferring responsibility from human operators to the AI system demands new compliance and security frameworks. Global regulations like the EU AI Act mandate model transparency, data privacy, and auditable governance. Scaling AI safely requires systems that demonstrably meet evolving standards for safety and trust.

"There is a legacy system today, but we are aiming toward the future. As we go through that journey, we make sure the quick wins are shared and recognized. At the same time, we know there will be a stage where old and new coexist – there will be overlap – and then we will transition fully to the other side."

Madhavi Purohit
Global Head of Quality, Home Care
Unilever

"For me, digitization is not a matter of evolution but a matter of survival. We can't operate at scale and be competitive unless we are digital."

Thanh Nguyen
Global Food Safety & Quality Officer
Kerry

Leaders' focus has moved from exploration to execution.

Connecting data for AI readiness

Consumer goods companies are consolidating technology environments to connect data across quality, manufacturing, and IT.

In six months, the share of organizations unifying legacy systems onto platforms grew from 42% to 62%. Reliance on fragmented "best-of-breed" solutions fell from 36% to 20% over the same period.

Consumer goods leaders recognize that scaling AI requires connected data, not isolated tools.

In just **six months**, the number of organizations actively consolidating legacy systems onto unified platforms rose sharply

FROM

42%

IN APRIL

TO

62%

IN OCTOBER

Agentic AI gains ground

Agentic AI is the fastest-growing AI category, with adoption doubling to 20% across consumer goods enterprises. This signals growing confidence in more autonomous systems.

- **Traditional AI:** Drives efficiency and consistency through predictive analytics that anticipate equipment failures or identify potential deviations before they escalate.

- **Generative AI:** Beginning to summarize investigations and CAPA plans, and automate documentation to speed up quality review cycles.

- **Agentic AI:** Evolving from concepts to pilots, with leaders exploring complaint triage and supplier issue management as early use cases.

Redefining quality leadership

Expectations for quality leaders are changing just as quickly. Managing AI requires leaders to have a clear vision for how this intelligence is applied, governed, and trusted. It's also about rethinking operations: how decisions are made, teams collaborate, and processes evolve in a more intelligent, data-driven environment.

As Madhavi Purohit of Unilever said, "The profile of the future quality leader is digitally fluent, emotionally sharp, but human."

Cost pressures: From steady to surging

60% of leaders cite cost pressure as a top challenge behind security and compliance, compared to 30% just a few months ago.

This trend isn't limited to consumer goods. 90% of CIOs cite out-of-control costs as a major barrier to achieving AI success.[3]

In early 2025, most organizations were running limited, low-cost experiments. By autumn, those experiments had grown into enterprise-scale programs with real budgets, staffing needs, and ROI expectations. The focus has shifted from "Can we do this?" to "Can we afford to do this at scale, and prove its value?"[3]

"We still need to show a return on investment — or at least clear cost avoidance. What helps is doing a real analysis of disruptions across the supply chain: downtime, supply gaps, potential recalls, waste, or destroyed product. When you take the time to put those numbers together, you may discover the business case is easier than you think."

Susanne Garcia-Schauermann
SVP Global Quality & Food Safety & Regulatory Affairs
Mondelēz International

3. "CIOs face mounting pressure as AI costs and complexities threaten enterprise value," CIO.com, 2024

Advance digital quality with AI: connect systems, support governance, and lead change.

1 Unlock predictive power

AI-driven predictive analytics is the #1 investment priority for improving both IT efficiency and operational performance. Specifically, IT leaders value AI models for quality and compliance assurance (24%), improved decision making (21%), and issue detection and prevention (19%).

These capabilities are being integrated into daily operations, advancing from dashboards to automated decision support.

" I can foresee a day where we actually wouldn't even need to test for quality before we release because we trust the data so much."

Ray Murray
Chief Quality Officer
Unilever

⚡ Action

Identify one high-impact process where predictive insights can be embedded directly into workflows, such as batch release, deviation management, or supplier quality monitoring. Measure the downstream effects on speed, cost, and compliance outcomes, and scale from there.

2 Make governance a source of confidence

Data governance is shifting from a static policy to a living, everyday practice. Leaders are embedding governance directly into daily workflows, validating data at the source, enforcing quality checks, and ensuring that every AI insight is defensible.

The desired outcome is confidence. When data is trustworthy, AI can scale safely and deliver credible results.

"AI is useless without governance and the structures around it."

Amr Arafa
Chief Digital Officer
Barry Callebaut

⚡ Action

Treat governance as a product of collaboration between IT, quality, and impacted business stakeholders, not a compliance afterthought. Start small — embed data validation and traceability into one core process, prove its value before expanding.

3 Simplify to scale

Integration complexity is a hidden tax on digital progress. 62% of organizations are consolidating legacy platforms, standardizing quality processes, and creating unified data models.

This simplification work may not grab headlines, but it enables AI to see, learn, and act across the value chain.

"We replaced more than 10 fragmented legacy systems with a single cloud-based solution, providing real-time transparency across the entire value chain."

Ahmed Maklad
Global Head of Quality Digital Transformation
Unilever

⚡ Action

Prioritize unification and standardization in one high-impact area, such as consumer complaints or deviation management, and use it as a model for global consistency (and eventually automation).

4 Turn compliance into a competitive advantage

Compliance and security remain top concerns, but IT and quality leaders are reframing them as differentiators. AI used responsibly, trained on trusted data and aligned with quality standards, strengthens brand integrity. By collaborating with technology partners that bring deep industry expertise and secure and fit-for-purpose systems, companies are accelerating innovation while staying inspection-ready.

"In 2020, we had one of the larger quality recalls of my career. We realized we had all the data we needed to be able to anticipate it, but it just sat in 10 different places. So, we built this AI-driven solution, which generated a signal. We took action with our suppliers or our supply chain, and as a result, nothing [negative] happened."

Sean Leighton
Global VP of Food Safety & Quality
Cargill

⚡ Action

Build cross-functional "AI assurance" teams that include quality, IT, and other impacted functions. Their shared mandate should be to make every new AI initiative defensible by design.

5 Invest in people, not just platforms

Technology adoption rises and falls on human readiness. Nearly one-third of consumer goods leaders said they are already investing in employee technology skills and data literacy.

Transparent communication eases resistance and closes skill gaps. The payoff is greater trust, faster adoption, stronger collaboration across quality and IT, and a workforce that is more digitally mature and confident.

"At least in Europe, you have a regulatory framework that says AI literacy is mandatory. That has driven all sorts of new training courses. We have a culture established now that people look at AI primarily with the opportunity angle, widely free of fear that this is going to cut their job."

Dr. Jörg Behrend
Group Chief Information and Technology Officer
Ferrero

⚡ Action

Create an AI literacy roadmap for your organization. Focus training on practical scenarios: how AI will change decision-making, audit preparation, or root-cause analysis. Invite teams to codesign those changes.

6 Build toward agentic AI, responsibly

Agentic AI, the next generation of systems that act autonomously and coordinate across workflows, is no longer hypothetical. One in five consumer goods leaders say they are now seriously exploring its potential and mapping where automated coordination could safely deliver value.

The clearest starting points are in highly structured, repeatable processes such as complaint triage, supplier deviation management, and predictive maintenance.

"We are maybe the last generation to have organizational charts with only humans. Now we will have org charts with AI agents, and agents managing agents. It's the moment to dream. It's the moment to really say, 'If everything is possible, what could we do?'"

Berenice Vettore
Global Chief Quality Officer
The Estée Lauder Companies

⚡ Action

Start small and design smart: focus on data-rich, rules-based workflows where automated agents can add value. Build tightly governed pilots with clear human decision points, validation frameworks, and audit trails to ensure compliance and quality remain intact as autonomy grows.

Scaling AI requires the right foundations and culture.

Predictive analytics remain the anchor, providing tangible value in efficiency and risk management. Generative AI is maturing beyond pilots. Agentic AI is moving from concept to reality faster than many expected.

Rapid progress requires the right foundations and culture. Leaders consistently point to the same barriers: silos, integration challenges, compliance pressures, and workforce readiness. This is the groundwork necessary for AI to scale. Companies that invest in rationalizing systems, embedding governance, and guiding their workforces through change will be the ones that unlock business value.

"Data is boundaryless. We need data to make quality successful, and quality data is needed to make other parts of the company successful. How do we unify our data across the company so we can see that digital thread that can enable a great consumer experience?"

Derek Henderson
Vice President North America Quality & Compliance
Kenvue

Veeva helps consumer goods leaders realize AI's full potential in quality.

Technology isn't the only factor at play. Progress requires partners that understand the realities of compliance, the complexity of global manufacturing, and the cultural shifts needed to make transformation stick.

Veeva's commitment to IT and quality leaders begins with the product. We continually invest in advancing our quality solutions, expanding their AI capabilities, deepening integration across quality and manufacturing, and strengthening the governance and security features that consumer goods organizations rely on. That same commitment extends to the independent research we commission to help customers benchmark progress, and to the peer forums we host to share best practices across the industry.

Together, these efforts reflect:
- Helping quality and IT leaders unify data
- Reducing complexity
- Realizing the full potential of AI

By combining a deep focus on quality with AI that's simple, secure, and compliant, Veeva helps consumer goods enterprises deliver safe, high-quality products that consumers trust.

What's next

Explore insights, learn from peers, and connect with Veeva

Schedule a conversation to explore the research in depth

Veeva QualityOne

About the research

This eBook is informed by Consumer Goods Technology research commissioned by Veeva to understand how AI is reshaping digital quality in the consumer goods industry.

Research period

April–October 2025

Methodology

Three survey waves conducted with senior IT and quality executives across the consumer goods sector

Respondents

50 leaders per wave, representing global companies in consumer packaged goods and food & beverage

Geographies

North America and Europe

Focus areas

AI adoption trends, digital transformation priorities, data governance, system integration, compliance, and workforce readiness