

AI Is Taking Over Business, but Experience Remains the Biggest Barrier

Artificial intelligence has quickly become a serious part of Dutch business. While 8% of companies used AI in 2023, that figure had risen to 17% by 2025. This means usage has more than doubled in two years.

What stands out to me most as a marketing professional is how companies are using AI. Marketing and sales are at the top of the list. Of the companies that use AI, 35% apply the technology in marketing or sales. This means our field is leading the way in the practical application of AI.

To be honest, that does not surprise me. Marketing is largely about gathering information, recognizing patterns, understanding target groups, developing content, and delivering a relevant message at the right time. These are precisely the kinds of tasks where AI can quickly provide support.

Medium-Sized Companies in Particular Are Making Major Progress

The figures clearly show that the size of an organization influences the use of AI. Among small companies with two to ten employees, 14% now use one or more AI technologies. Among companies with 10 to 50 employees, that figure is 27%.

The strongest growth can be seen among organizations with 50 to 250 employees. There, usage rose from 20% in 2023 to no less than 45% in 2025. Among companies with more than 250 employees, 66% now use AI.

That difference is easy to explain. Larger organizations usually have more budget, specialist knowledge, and capacity to experiment. They also often have large amounts of data and many recurring processes, which means automation can deliver benefits more quickly.

At the same time, I see many opportunities especially for small and medium-sized companies. They may have less capacity, but they can often make decisions faster and implement changes more easily. For that to work, however, AI must be approached practically: not as a large and abstract innovation program, but by starting with one recognizable problem or time-consuming process.

Marketing and Sales Are a Logical Starting Point

Of the companies that use AI, 35% apply the technology in marketing or sales. This is followed by business administration and management tasks at 32%, and research, development, or innovation at 25%.

Within marketing, AI can help with, among other things:

- analyzing customer questions and market information;
- developing and improving content;
- preparing campaigns;
- identifying and segmenting target groups;
- personalizing communication;
- qualifying and following up on leads;
- summarizing customer conversations;
- drafting initial versions of proposals and presentations.

In my view, the great advantage is not only that tasks can be carried out faster. AI can also help make use of information that would otherwise remain unused, such as customer emails, meeting notes, surveys, website data, and sales reports.

But speed should never be the only goal. Producing a text more quickly is valuable, but if that text does not align with the target audience or the company's positioning, it delivers little benefit. AI only has real value when it becomes part of a clear marketing strategy.

Text Analysis Is Growing the Fastest

According to Statistics Netherlands (CBS), text mining is currently the most widely used AI technology. It involves analyzing large volumes of written text to identify topics, patterns, and sentiments. Its use grew from 4% of companies in 2023 to 12% in 2025.

The generation of written or spoken text is also growing rapidly and is now used by 8% of all companies. The use of speech recognition tripled in two years, from 2% to 6%.

This development shows that AI is becoming increasingly embedded in day-to-day work. It is no longer only about complex algorithms or experimental applications. AI is being used for tasks many employees recognize: analyzing texts, recording conversations, summarizing information, and preparing new content.

That makes the technology more accessible, but it also brings a risk. Because tools are easily available, employees may use them without any organizational agreements on quality, privacy, confidential information, and review.

Experimentation is good, but some direction is necessary.

The Differences Between Sectors Are Significant

In the information and communication sector, 54% of companies now use AI. In 2023, that figure was still 28%. Professional services and financial services are also relatively ahead.

In sectors such as hospitality, construction, transport, and storage, usage is still clearly lagging behind at 6% to 7%.

That does not automatically mean AI is less relevant there. The applications may simply be less visible, or there may be less knowledge available within these sectors to recognize practical opportunities. For example, AI can also be used by a construction company, manufacturing company, or logistics provider for quotation preparation, customer communication, planning, knowledge management, and commercial follow-up.

The question, therefore, is not whether every organization should use the same AI solutions. The question is where, within a specific organization, information is lost, work is unnecessarily repeated, or commercial opportunities are missed.

Lack of Experience Is the Biggest Brake

Perhaps the most striking figure from the study is that three-quarters of companies do not use AI and have not even considered it.

Companies that did consider AI but ultimately did not get started cite lack of experience as the main reason. As many as 73% mention this. In addition, 49% are concerned about privacy, and 42% see uncertainty about legal implications as a barrier.

Only 15% consider AI not useful.

To me, that shows that many companies are not unwilling, but mainly uncertain. They see the development, hear the stories, and suspect there are opportunities, but they do not really know where to begin.

Especially within SMEs, there is often no one who can translate the possibilities into daily practice. The director, secretary, or sales employee may already be experimenting with ChatGPT, but there is not yet a shared approach. As a result, AI remains a standalone tool rather than a means of structurally improving marketing and sales.

Do Not Start with the Technology

My advice is not to start with the question: *Which AI tool should we buy?*

Start with the business:

- Where do employees lose a lot of time?
- What information is difficult to find?
- Which customer questions keep recurring?
- Where are commercial opportunities being missed?
- Which marketing activities are not being carried out due to lack of capacity?
- Which data may and may not be processed in an AI system?

Then choose one manageable application, define in advance what it should deliver, and let employees experiment with it. Review the outcomes, document working agreements, and only scale up once the application demonstrably adds value.

That way, you prevent AI from becoming an end in itself.

My Conclusion

The figures from Statistics Netherlands confirm that AI is no longer a temporary hype. Usage is growing rapidly, and marketing and sales are the first practical area of application for many companies.

Still, the biggest difference is not made by having access to the latest technology. The difference is made by companies that know what they want to use AI for, involve their employees, and connect the technology to clear commercial objectives.

AI can make marketing faster, smarter, and more personal. But it remains a tool. Strategy, creativity, market knowledge, and human judgment ultimately determine whether it also leads to better results.

For companies that have not yet started, the good news is that this does not require a large-scale change program. Start small, choose a concrete problem, and build experience from there.

Because the biggest barrier to AI turns out not to be the technology. It is knowing how to get started.

Source: [Statistics Netherlands \(CBS\) – Companies use AI most often for marketing or sales](#), published on 12 December 2025. The 2025 figures are provisional.