

AI Assistant

Here are some suggestions you can try:

- ↳ What are the year end financial goals?
- ↳ How did new launches impact Q1?
- ↳ What is successful with AI?

How can AI assist employees to reach their professional goals this year?

53%
"power users" save
4+ hours per week

800
U.S.-based
professionals

What would you like to work on today?

State of AI in Documents:

AI Adoption Soars Across Key Lines of Business

+4 hours

Time Saved by Most AI "Power Users" on Documents Each Week

In late 2025, AI use within hundreds of billions of PDFs and Acrobat workflows skyrocketed 371% year-over-year. Six months later, across document-heavy, high-stakes lines of business, this exponential growth shows little sign of coming back to Earth.

Largely fueled by "power users," this sustained momentum is driven in part by a reduction in organizational red tape, as restrictive policies and use of unapproved tools—or shadow AI—have dropped significantly. More employers aren't simply encouraging AI use but formally endorsing it.

Yet, demand is accelerating at markedly uneven rates across key business functions.

For instance, while half (50%) of human resources professionals leverage AI daily or weekly to draft workforce policies or consolidate performance documentation, only 29% of those in legal report the same level of use—signaling vastly different appetites for rigor, risk, and compliance.

Our latest report analyzes anonymized and aggregated Acrobat data with insights from an April 2026 survey of approximately 800 U.S.-based professionals across human resources, finance, marketing, sales, and legal. Together, these findings reveal meaningful, measurable differences in how business functions are applying AI in documents—from specific use cases to the root causes of workflow friction. Here's what stood out:

Key Insights:

- "Power users"—those who use AI daily or weekly—**save time at twice the rate of casual users**, led by human resources and finance professionals.
- Nearly half (**47%**) of **human resources professionals save four or more hours a week**—the strongest productivity gains of any function.
- **Legal** reports the lowest AI adoption but the highest rate (**66%**) of **unapproved tool use** alongside human resources.
- Unapproved AI use dropped to 61%—**a nine-point decrease**—in just six months as organizational barriers fell; **42%** of employers now have formal AI policies.
- **3 in 4 professionals (76%)** want a shared, always-on AI workspace, while **7 in 10 (72%)** want AI that flags errors and inconsistencies across versions.

"Power users" reclaim hours each week, but proof remains elusive

It's unsurprising that AI's most frequent users also reap the largest returns. More than half **(53%) of "power users,"** or those who use AI daily or weekly, save four or more hours per week, double the share of casual users (26%)—drawing an unmistakable line between use and efficiency.

Yet, while investments are often justified by impact, only 1 in 3 **(36%)** professionals across all business functions can **formally measure AI savings or return.** The rest just rely on feel or intuition, signaling that a significant gap remains between productivity and proof of it.

"Power Users" See Twice the Return

Daily and weekly AI users save dramatically more, yet formal ROI measurement lags across all functions

2x

Savings Rate

For power users vs.
casual users

+53%

Power Users

Save 4+ hours
every week

+36%

Professionals

Can formally
prove AI's return
on investment

Most Professionals Rely on Multiple Tools to Complete Document Workflows



10%

1 tool



70%

2-3 tools



20%

4+ tools

Tool fragmentation and workflow friction swallow hours, not just minutes, each week

While 3 in 4 (76%) professionals desire a regular shared AI workspace, current tooling is driving more consternation than collaboration. Nearly all professionals **(90%) toggle between two or more tools** to complete document workflows, with 1 in 5 **(20%)** using four or more.

This is leading to considerable time traps driven by rework and wasted coordination, where nearly a third **(31%)** of multi-tool users **lose four or more hours each week switching between tools** and reentering information. In fact, 4 in 10 professionals spend four or more hours each week coordinating across documents (42%) or transforming them into presentations (40%)—quite literally hours lost in translation.

AI solved upstream tasks, but bottlenecks have now moved further downstream

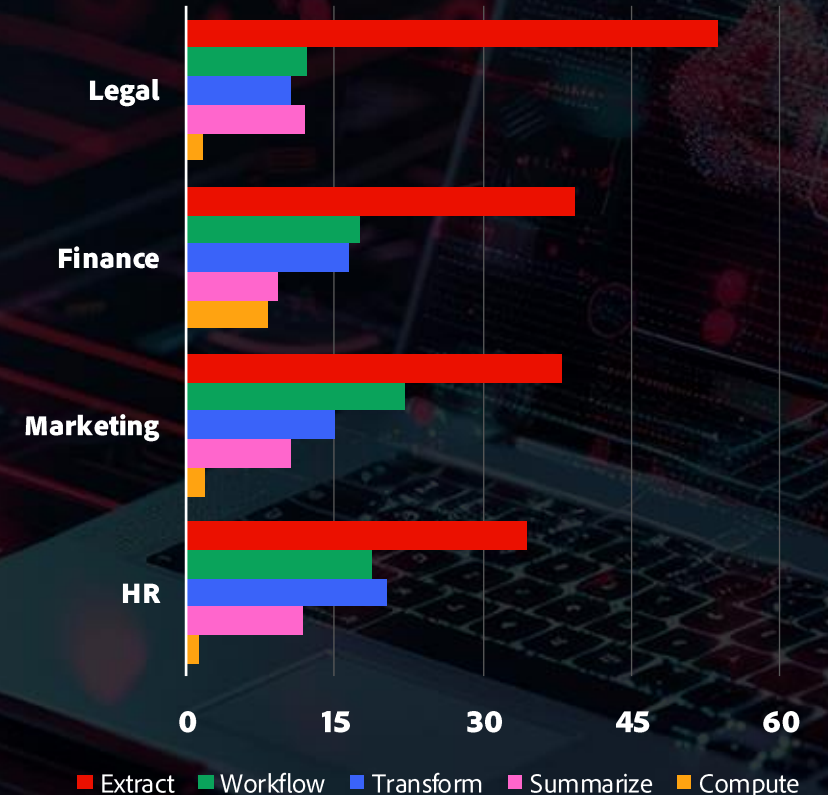
Across every document type, extracting information is the dominant AI behavior for Acrobat users, comprising more than half of all AI engagements for certain business functions, such as legal. This aligns with where professionals report AI use has most matured: ingestion tasks. More than half (51%) use AI to summarize documents, 43% to find information, and 30% to interpret content.

But then what? After extraction, creation almost always follows, often in the form of a report or presentation. Demand, however, extends beyond drafting: 72% of professionals want AI to flag inconsistencies across versions, while two thirds (67%) want it to generate polished presentations.

Yet desire outpaces current behavior—while 42% already automate first drafts of presentations, nearly as many still build decks manually (44%).

Drafting is clearly no longer the obstacle; what happens afterward is. Nearly a quarter (24%) of professionals point to **asset format as the primary post-creation barrier**, while 1 in 5 (21%) cite **alignment and approval—meaning last-mile processes**, not production, are now largely responsible for workflow congestion.

AI Use is Concentrated in Upstream Tasks



* % of AI prompts by question type | US | Oct 2025-Mar 2026

Access Improves But Trust Remains Unchanged

-9pts

Decline in Shadow AI use

70% → 61% in 6 months

Access barriers are falling

- ↓ **7pts** Licensing costs (31% → 24%)
- ↓ **6pts** IT integration (34% → 28%)
- ↓ **7pts** Regulatory (31% → 24%)

Trust barriers remain

✗ Security ✗ Privacy ✗ Accuracy

Organizations gradually bring AI out of the shadows, but confidence in tools remains flat

Unapproved AI—or shadow AI—can be an Achilles' heel for organizations, a soft spot where cyber, compliance, privacy, and data sovereignty vulnerabilities can quietly fester. Yet, unsanctioned tools remain deeply popular, particularly across business functions such as legal and human resources, where use is highest (**66%**).

But in the last six months, organizations have taken steps to drag AI from the shadows by removing procurement barriers and formalizing AI policies—now in place at 42% of employers. It's working: overall use of **unvetted AI tools dropped from 70% to 61%**.

Meanwhile, the share of professionals blocked by **licensing costs or regulatory restrictions fell 7 points**, while **IT integration complexity fell by 6 points**.

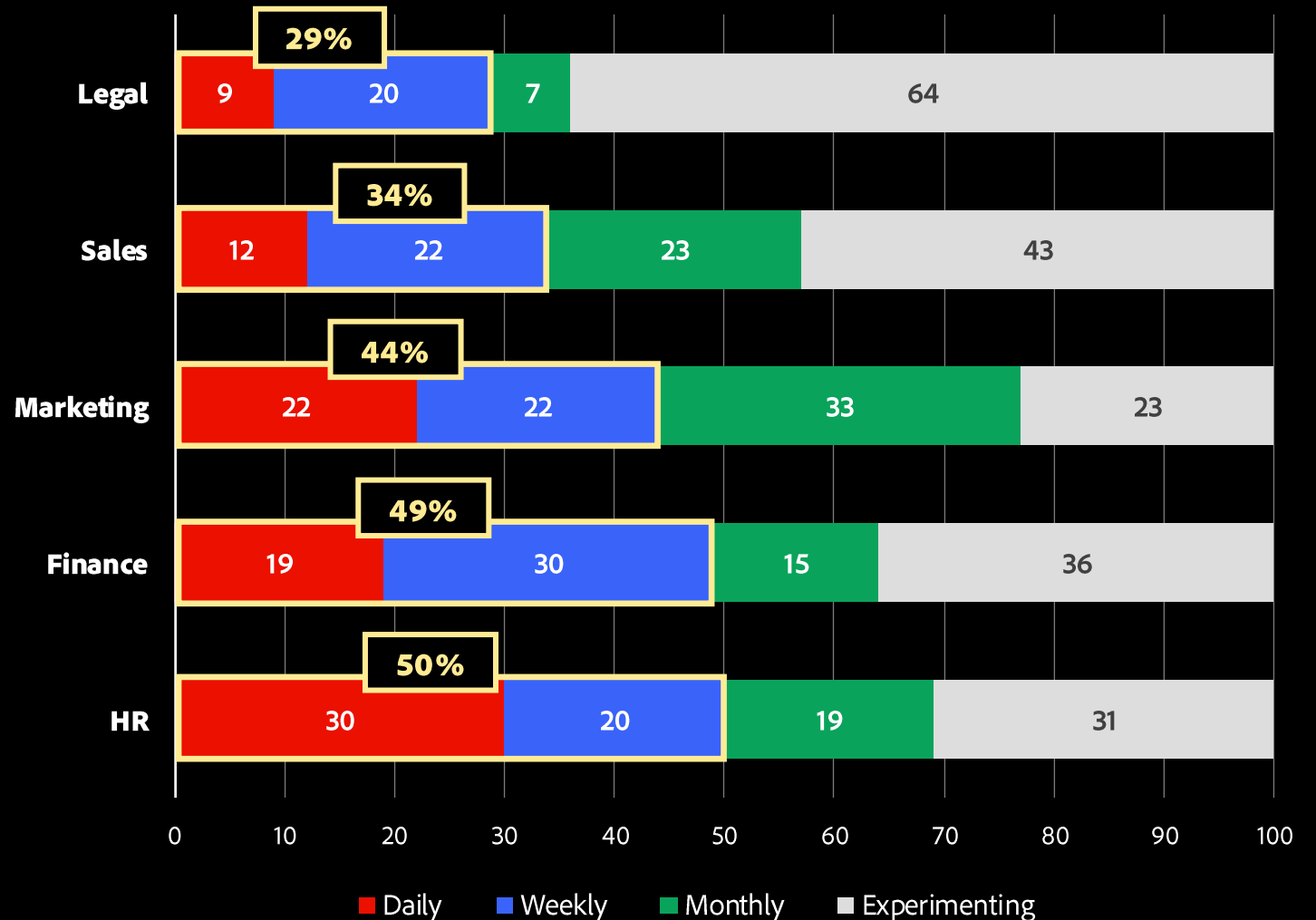
While organizational hurdles are gradually being removed, personal ones remain stubbornly fixed. Persistent concerns about AI security and privacy, accuracy and trust, and tool integration have barely budged over the same period—suggesting adoption is now gated more by trust in the technology than access to it.

AI adoption varies sharply by function, as do the challenges that impede their workflows

Across critical lines of business, AI is being integrated at dramatically different rates. While marketing boasts the highest share of professionals using AI tools at least monthly (77%), human resources (50%) and finance (49%) lead in daily or weekly “power users.” Legal trails in formal adoption, with only 3 in 10 (29%) citing regular use.

As adoption fluctuates, so do the challenges each function face. These are most visible in multi-document coordination and collaboration, from version control and cross-comparison to feedback collection and eventual approvals.

AI Adoption by Function



* % of respondents in each adoption stage, by line of business

Takeaway:

AI is here, but user trust and last-mile workflows will determine where it goes next

Fueled by a growing cohort of “power users” and stronger organizational endorsement, AI adoption in document workflows has continued to accelerate over the last six months. This momentum is translating into meaningful time savings each week as AI becomes more deeply embedded in end-to-end, multi-document tasks—streamlining extraction, scaling ingestion, and simplifying core content creation, from drafting reports and policies to producing executive-ready presentations.

Yet progress remains uneven. Adoption, impact, and workflow friction are as unique to lines of business as the professionals within them. Across functions, however, productivity gains are no longer limited by

AI’s upstream capabilities, but by downstream processes—review cycles, approvals, and last-mile coordination—that largely sit outside the tools themselves.

As organizations work to illuminate shadow AI and reduce its widespread use, the next phase of integration will hinge on improving confidence in vetted tools and rigorously measuring their output—critical steps to sustain enthusiasm, deepen engagement, and ensure early momentum translates into long-term value.

Visit [Adobe](#) to unlock how distinct lines of business are embracing AI across critical document workflows.



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