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Key Tech Trends & Disruptions in 2026

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Tech Trends Outlook 2026

In 2025, AI moved from content generation to autonomous action, with multi-step agentic AI workflows forcing a rethink of work, decisions, and value creation. In 2026, organisations will focus on scaling these systems — balancing speed, control, and trust — while redesigning workflows, decision rights, and value creation.

3 forces are driving this evolution:

1

Autonomous Systems

Goal-driven AI agents are moving beyond pilots, reshaping customer service, finance, IT, and operations with faster, more accurate, and cost-efficient decision-making.

2

The Compute Race

Scalable AI demands specialised, high-performance infrastructure. Governments are accelerating investments in local data centres, chip fabrication, and sovereign AI stacks.

3

Governance as Strategy

As AI agents take on more decision-making, explainability, auditability, and risk management are shifting from compliance tasks to strategic levers.

In 2026, organisations that structure themselves around autonomous systems — aligning data, decisions, and infrastructure — will shape industries, redefine competitive advantage, and make AI the framework for economic and operational systems.

Ecosystm analysts present the key trends and disruptors shaping the tech market in 2026.

1 Sovereign AI Will Be the Defining Infrastructure Imperative

Regulatory mandates, geopolitical uncertainty, and linguistic diversity will push most countries to prioritise sovereignty in their AI strategies, with a focus on retaining data, models, and compute within national borders.

Governments and enterprises will accelerate in-country compute expansion, with data centre capacity set to double by 2028 in Asia Pacific markets, including Japan, India, Malaysia, Australia, and Indonesia. Enterprises will adopt diverse cloud strategies, combining global hyperscalers, local providers, and domestic infrastructure, while on-device Sovereign Edge AI keeps sensitive data within jurisdictional boundaries.

Sovereign AI will also become a strategic advantage, helping firms differentiate in markets shaped by regulatory scrutiny and cultural complexity.

Multilingual LLMs trained on regional data will power inclusive financial services, personalised healthcare, and sector-specific compliance.

INSIGHT

> AI sovereignty is no longer just about compliance; it will determine who leads. Mastery of local compute and culturally attuned models will drive scalable, accountable, and genuinely intelligent national growth.

Amit Gupta
Founder & Group CEO, Ecosystm Group

2 Value Chains Will be Re-Architected Through Data Flows & Platforms

Value chains are shifting from sequential hand-offs to continuous, interoperable data flows. As first and third-party data moves through secure, governed platforms, industries are adopting real-time, adaptive operating models where decisions update dynamically. Data becomes the shared coordination layer linking suppliers, distributors, service providers, regulators, and customers, unlocking high-velocity value creation, predictive operations, and enhanced customer experiences.

Organisations that integrate structured and unstructured data across partners through governed orchestration layers (enforcing lineage, consent, quality, and security) will gain a decisive advantage.

This approach lays the foundation for future quantum-era optimisation, where multi-party data flows feed quantum-classical workflows.

INSIGHT

> Enterprises that master secure, seamless data coordination across ecosystems will lead the next wave of industry innovation.

Jacqui Visch
Principal Advisor

3 AI Will Reshape Tech, Exposing Early Cracks

AI has reshaped the tech landscape. Traditional SaaS pricing and premium services are under pressure as outcome-based models and rapid AI-generated content commoditise value. New AI-native entrants are creating alternative competition layers, from foundation models to AI-enabled devices, offering “good enough” solutions that challenge legacy systems on cost and speed.

Instead of committing to long, drawn-out “transformation” programs, organisations will favour modular, incremental approaches, testing and scaling what works. This shift, combined with the rise of operational automation, reduces reliance on traditional tech resources and drives a focus on efficiency and reskilling teams for AI-driven capabilities. At the same time, user experiences are being redefined by agentic AI, putting incumbents who merely layer intelligence onto existing offerings at risk.

Providers with proprietary data, mission-critical infrastructure, and deeply embedded AI platforms will maintain an edge but cracks will appear; speed of innovation will determine the winners.

INSIGHT

> Competition will diminish the influence of traditional infrastructure, SaaS, and service providers, forcing them to rethink pricing, business models, and product delivery speed.

Sash Mukherjee
VP Industry Insights

4 Visibility to AI Agents Will Be the New Competitive Battleground

As agentic AI systems mature, they won't just assist decisions — they will execute them. Early movers will see AI agents sourcing suppliers, evaluating offers, and initiating transactions across B2B and B2C markets. Brands that rely solely on search, UX, or personal persuasion will struggle if their product and service data is not structured, verified, and trusted by these autonomous agents.

To remain visible, organisations must rethink how they present product specifications, pricing, performance claims, ratings, and third-party reviews. Success will depend on machine-readable formats, APIs, schemas, and agent-accessible trust signals.

Waiting for standards to settle is not an option; leaders are already reshaping their data strategies to be discoverable and credible in an AI-driven marketplace.

INSIGHT

> **Agentic AI won't replace marketers, but it will ignore organisations if their data can't be found, parsed, and trusted.**

Gerald Mackenzie
Principal Advisor

5 Domain-Specific & Edge AI Will Take Centre Stage

2025 saw strong growth in GenAI, LLMs, and the introduction of agentic AI solutions in the market. While enterprise enthusiasm remains high, scaling pilots remains a challenge, with an MIT report noting 95% of GenAI pilots failing to deliver accelerated revenue. Adoption and implementation of GenAI and agentic AI are set to continue rising in 2026.

However, a key trend gaining momentum in 2026 is the rise of Small Language Models (SLMs), domain-specific AI solutions, and Edge AI, bringing intelligence directly to edge devices. These solutions deliver domain expertise, regulatory compliance, and industry-specific accuracy, with early adoption in Health, Legal, Finance, and Manufacturing.

Growth is being driven by specialised hardware, SLMs, and edge-cloud architectures, which enable low-latency, high-accuracy processing at scale and make domain-specific AI practical and deployable across industries.

INSIGHT

> While investment in generic AI infrastructure and LLMs continues, funding will increasingly shift toward specialised and domain-focused AI, particularly in Healthcare, Defence, and Finance.

Manish Goenka
Principal Advisor

6 Agentic AI Will Be a Wake-Up Call for BPO

BPO service providers are on the cusp of a major change as agentic AI reshapes the market. High-volume, rules-based functions — payroll, HR, legal, claims, collections — will increasingly be automated by digital-native BPO startups. Unencumbered by legacy systems, long-standing labour contracts, or outdated pricing models, these AI-first entrants leverage specialised, low-latency agent platforms to deliver faster, more flexible, and cost-efficient services. They compete on outcomes, forcing incumbents to rethink their offerings.

Yet established providers still hold a critical advantage: trust, governance, and expertise in navigating regulated environments. To remain competitive, incumbents must pivot to offering governed, hybrid intelligence. This involves supervising AI agents, auditing outcomes, and handling exceptions that require human judgment or empathy.

Successful BPOs will embed agentic AI on top of client systems (CRMs, ERPs), ensuring auditable, compliant, and efficient operations.

INSIGHT

> **Agentic AI is a huge opportunity for traditional BPOs to transform themselves – but digital-born competitors will spring up everywhere.**

Achim Granzen
Principal Advisor

7 Testing & QA Will Step Back into the Limelight

Testing has long been seen as a “necessary evil” in software development. QA teams add time and cost to projects, highlight flaws in work that teams hope is perfect, and repeatedly push fixes back over the fence — all to protect the end-user experience. Traditionally, their efforts have remained behind the scenes, only gaining attention during major upgrades or high-profile system rollouts, such as large-scale ERP updates in the past decade.

AI is now shifting this dynamic, bringing QA teams into the spotlight and expanding their responsibilities. Their work will move beyond simple pass/fail outcomes toward confidence levels and risk-based scoring. They will oversee entire AI pipelines, not just individual models, and take on critical security responsibilities, including testing for prompt injection, data leakage, model inversion, jailbreaks, agent misuse, and content safety.

As AI becomes more pervasive and autonomous, QA teams will be essential strategists ensuring that AI systems are safe, reliable, and aligned with business and ethical standards.

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In an AI-led world, QA cannot just be a checkpoint. Organisations that successfully deploy AI will make QA the frontline of trust and safety.

Tim Sheedy
VP Research

8 Synthetic Data Will Become a Strategic Enabler (if Controlled)

By 2026, synthetic data will move from niche to necessary, but only organisations with mature data foundations will see meaningful results.

Real-world data still comes with gaps, privacy limits, and entrenched biases. Synthetic data offers a way to train AI when real data is scarce or sensitive. Forward-thinking organisations will start building pipelines to generate, validate, and integrate synthetic datasets for focused use cases such as anomaly detection and customer-journey modelling.

But many will jump in without the governance to manage bias, drift, or regulatory expectations. “Realistic enough” synthetic datasets require strong validation, lineage, and quality controls, something off-the-shelf platforms alone cannot guarantee. Tech providers will push synthetic-data tools, but the responsibility will sit squarely with the organisation to own the process, understand the risks, and build trust in the outputs.

INSIGHT

> Synthetic data won’t be a silver bullet – but in 2026, it will start separating the ready from the unready.

Simona Dimovski
Principal Advisor

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