

The New Mandate

Why Every Retail CEO Needs an AI Strategy Now



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**LET'S BUILD
SOMETHING
MEANINGFUL**

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AI HAS MOVED BEYOND INNOVATION LABS. IT NOW SITS IN THE BOARDROOM.

In the first quarter of 2025, something irreversible happened; AI in retail crossed the threshold from novelty to necessity. According to recent Dactic research, 100% of surveyed retailers have already allocated funding for AI initiatives this year. AI has officially crossed the threshold that deems it as necessary for retail as computers are of necessity to most CEOs when it comes to running their businesses.



100% OF SURVEYED RETAILERS HAVE ALREADY FUNDED AI INITIATIVES IN 2025

High-level executives need to understand that funding alone isn't strategy and success will come down to how well those strategies are executed. Right now, too many organizations are writing checks without a clear roadmap, isolating AI efforts within tech teams, or worse, treating AI like just another IT expense instead of the business transformation engine it truly is.

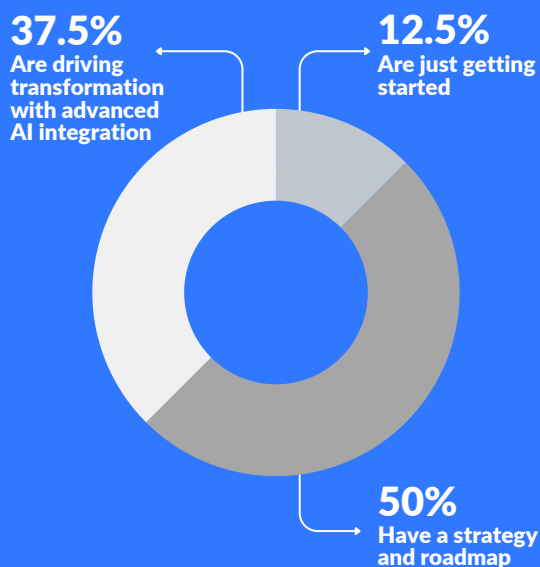
If you're leading a retail organization, you need an AI strategy; you need to shape the philosophy, pace, and cultural tone for how AI unfolds across your entire enterprise from the boardroom to the stockroom, touching every aspect of your business.



Successful AI implementation demands leadership that can translate technical capabilities into tangible business outcomes. Every retail CEO needs to understand AI as a core business competency that requires the same level of attention, resources, and strategic thinking as your financial planning or market expansion.

Moving Past the Pilot Phase

While 100% of the retailers surveyed have made investment commitments to leverage AI, the maturity gap across the industry is evident:



This uneven progress implies that while adoption is universal, only a third of the industry is reaping the full benefits of AI as a transformative business enabler.

The enthusiasm seems to be there, everyone's checking off the funding box, but the real issue seems to be leadership's capability of making AI a company-wide priority.

Unfortunately, more often than not, it appears that leadership in retail is becoming the bottleneck to transformation by isolating AI within tech departments rather than embedding it in business strategy.

One of the CIO's who contributed to the report captured it well: "We're piloting AI for merchandising and customer data unification, but without leadership driving cross-department adoption, it stalls."

CEOs must act as both visionary and integrator to move past the plateau.





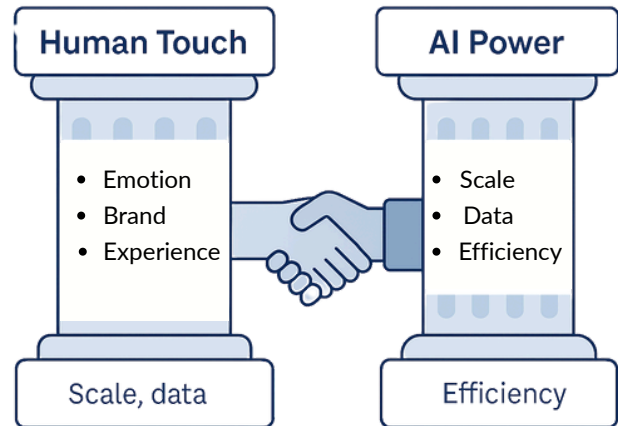
**AI CAN'T
REPLICATE
HEART**

Retail CEO's Role

The Dactic Report introduced this notion of AI as a “silent co-pilot.” It’s not here to take the wheel, it’s here to handle the data-heavy, repetitive tasks so your people can focus on strategy, creativity, and human connection.

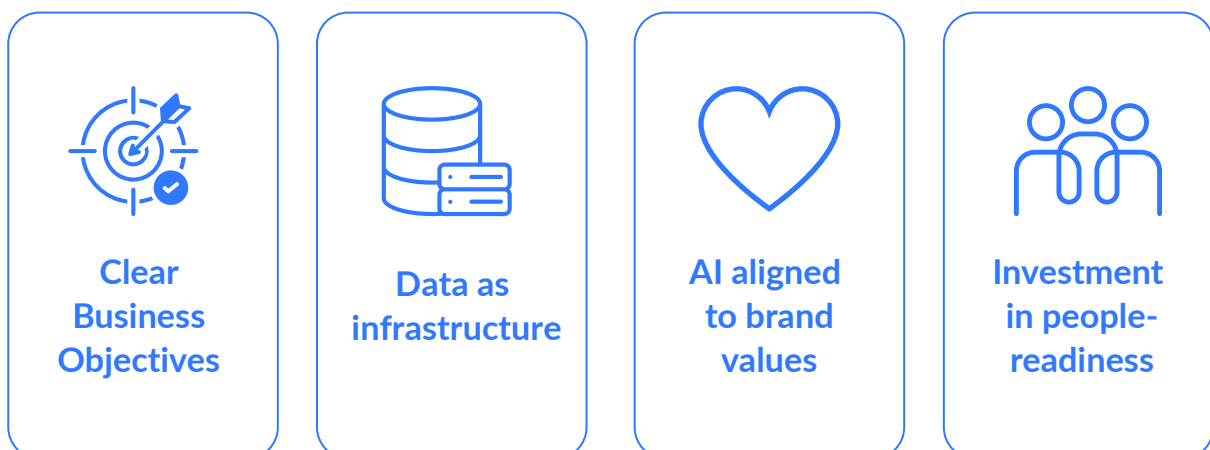
That framing, AI as augmentation, not replacement, places a specific responsibility on CEOs. A CEO’s role is to ensure your culture, workflows, and customer experiences are designed to preserve authenticity while scaling intelligently. Or, as one former CEO put it, “AI can’t replicate heart.” And that’s exactly the point.

Strategic Leadership



The companies winning in 2025 are the ones that lead with both conviction and care, integrating AI while preserving what makes their brand distinctly human; the authentic interactions, emotional intelligence, and relationship-building that technology can enhance but never replace.

Traits of High-Performing AI Retailers



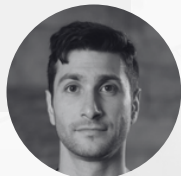
STRATEGY OVER SPEND

True AI transformation begins with clarity, not code. Based on Dactic research, here's what separates high-performing AI retailers from the rest:

- ✓ They start with clear business objectives, not shiny use cases.
- ✓ They treat data as infrastructure, not as a byproduct.
- ✓ They align AI implementation with brand values, not just operational goals.
- ✓ They invest in people-readiness—from exec education to frontline enablement.

GUY PISTONE | CEO VALERE

As CEO, your job is to connect these dots. To make AI feel not just like a powerful system, but a trusted part of your company's future.



FINAL THOUGHT

The difference between the retailers who thrive and those who merely survive will be determined not by the size of their AI budget, but by the clarity of their vision, the alignment of their leadership, and their ability to balance technological advancement with human connection. As CEO, your AI strategy should serve as the blueprint for how your organization will compete, connect, and create value in retail's next era. The time for experimentation is over; the era of strategic AI leadership has begun.

Curious about how other CEOs are navigating this? DM me or comment below. Let's compare notes.

To view the full Dactic report, visit our page [here](#).

Why Founders and CEOs Choose Valere?

- ✓ **Seamless Integration** – AI agents that fit your existing business ecosystem.
- ✓ **Security-First Approach** – AI solutions designed with privacy and compliance in mind.
- ✓ **Proven Success** – Trusted by leading enterprises to automate and optimize operations.

Are You Ready to Take the Next Step?

Not sure where to start? Take our [**AI Agent Readiness Quiz**](#) to assess your business's AI potential.

Already exploring AI and want to discuss the possibilities?
Let's chat!

Contact us

