



CONSULTING STRATEGY • SEPTEMBER 2026 • 18 MIN READ

Outcome-Based AI Consulting: Beyond the Pilot

The engagement model that ties every fee to a documented, auditable financial return

88%

of organizations use AI in at least one function

MCKINSEY, 2025

6%

qualify as AI high performers with 5%+ EBIT impact

MCKINSEY, 2025

\$14B

AI consulting market size in 2026

BUSINESS RESEARCH INSIGHTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The AI consulting market reached \$11-14 billion in 2025/26 and is projected to reach \$91-117 billion by 2035. Yet despite near-universal AI adoption, with 88% of organizations using AI in at least one function, only 6% qualify as genuine AI high performers generating meaningful financial returns.

This gap is the core commercial opportunity for outcome-based AI consultancies. The billing model is not a pricing mechanism. It is a statement about what consulting is for.

[The full analysis continues in the members' edition](#)

INSIDE THE FULL ARTICLE

- 01 The Market Inflection Point
- 02 The High-Performer Playbook: What the 6% Actually Do Differently
- 03 The Billing Model as Strategic Architecture
- 04 The Implementation Gap — Why It Matters Now



Plus 3 further sections, including "Why the Referral Flywheel Matters More Than Marketing"

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