Microsoft

Microsoft 365 Copilot Adoption

A practical guide for business leaders and consultants

Mark Smith | Megan Smith

Foreword by Cadie Kneip, Readiness Business Program Manager, Microsoft

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

Microsoft

Microsoft 365 Copilot Adoption: A practical guide for business leaders and consultants

Mark Smith and Megan Smith

©Microsoft 365 Copilot Adoption: A practical guide for business leaders and consultants

Published with the authorization of Microsoft Corporation by:

Pearson Education, Inc.

Hoboken, New Jersey

ISBN-13: 978-0-13-546804-3

ISBN-10: 0-13-546804-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2025944513

$PrintCode

Trademarks

Warning and Disclaimer

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Julie Phifer

EXECUTIVE EDITOR
Loretta Yates

ACQUISITIONS EDITOR
Shourav Bose

DEVELOPMENT EDITOR
Rick Kughen

MANAGING EDITOR
Sandra Schroeder

SENIOR PROJECT EDITOR
Tracey Croom

COPY EDITOR
Rick Kughen

INDEXER
Rachel Kuhn

PROOFREADER
Barbara Mack

TECHNICAL EDITOR
Zoe Wilson

COVER DESIGNER
Blair McLean

COMPOSITOR
codeMantra

GRAPHICS
codeMantra

Dedication

For the innovators, the change makers, and the constructive skeptics.

Contents at a Glance

Contents

PART 4 SUSTAINING AND MEASURING SUCCESS

This page intentionally left blank

Foreword

At Microsoft, our Copilot journey began as more than a product launch, it was a shift in how we work, learn, and lead. One of the most powerful lessons I've learned is that peer influence moves faster than policy. The Copilot Champs Community, thousands of employees across the company and around the globe, became the heartbeat of adoption. These Champs didn't just teach others how to use Copilot, they shared stories, surfaced feedback, and created a ripple effect that transformed how people engaged with AI.

That kind of momentum doesn't come from the top down—it comes from people feeling empowered to lead from where they are.

This book explores AI adoption, but at its core, it's about people. A human-first, AI-enabled approach means helping individuals feel confident and supported. It's about recognizing the parts of our work that are uniquely human—creativity, empathy, judgment—and letting AI help with the rest. When AI fits naturally into your workflow, it stops feeling like a tool and starts feeling like a superpower.

I'm especially grateful to know the authors of this book, Megan and Mark Smith. Their people-first approach to AI adoption deeply resonates with me. They understand that scaling Copilot isn't about technology, it's about trust, empathy, and shared learning. Their research and insights have helped other businesses embrace Copilot not just as a tool, but as a catalyst for meaningful change. I'm proud to call them friends.

At Microsoft, we call ourselves "Customer Zero." That means we're not just testing Copilot—we're living it. We're navigating the same transformation our customers are, learning what works and what doesn't. The Champs Community has played a vital role in that process, helping shape how Copilot evolves internally and externally.

Whether you're beginning or scaling AI adoption, I hope this book reveals what's truly possible—not just with technology, but with people. Because AI isn't just a tool, it's a transformation. When you center change around human strengths, you don't just improve workflows—you unlock greatness.

—Cadie Kneip, Readiness Business Program Manager, Microsoft

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgments

We need to acknowledge all the people who have been involved in bringing this book to you. These people include colleagues and friends who have profoundly impacted our thinking, created opportunities to test our theories, and generously shared their own knowledge and experience.

First, we thank our children—Connor, Poppy, and Nīkau—and our parents and siblings, who gifted us the belief that hard things are worth doing well. To our friends who have become family and our local village—we appreciate your support more than you know.

To the team at Pearson and Microsoft Press: thank you for backing us and guiding us through the writing and editing process. Special thanks to Loretta Yates, Shourav Bose, and Rick Kughen for your patience and expertise throughout. We are so grateful to Zoe Wilson, our incomparable technical editor, whose input has strengthened the recommendations and frameworks in this book through her experience leading Copilot rollouts for some of the world's largest organizations. To Alan Chai, Tina van Heerden, Brett Gilbertson, and the hundreds of others who have shared their stories on conference stages and podcast platforms. Thank you for allowing others to learn from your experiences. Huge thanks to Cadie Kneip for sharing her experience building Microsoft's own Copilot champions community in the foreword, and to Karuana Gatimu, Jessie Hwang and the whole team responsible for the helpful content published at *adoption.microsoft.com/copilot*. Thank you to Blair McLean, who brought his vision and artistry to this project through the cover design.

Mark would especially like to acknowledge those who have been influential in his career journey. To Jason Ferguson, whose faith in me unlocked opportunities and flung open doors that have forever transformed my life. Working with you and the indomitable Shane Parsons, the technically brilliant Andrew Li, and skilled deal crafter Darren Clark has been a highlight of my career. Special thanks to Steve Mordue for being a relentless challenger and status-quo buster; your uncanny eye for emperors without clothes inspires sharper thinking and bolder action. To my good friends, William Dorrington, Chris Huntingford, and Andrew Welch: your brilliance as natural changemakers inspires me to reach new heights.

Megan is grateful for the people at Microsoft around the world who have embraced and supported her in recent years, especially Suzanne Quinn, who has long been a believer and steadfast encourager for Mark and now inspires us both with her enduring passion for empowering others through technology. Thank you to our friends in the

90 Day Mentoring Challenge community who we have the privilege of learning with. Learning in community is one of the most powerful ways to keep people at the center of technology use and innovation.

Finally, to the Microsoft 365 Copilot MVPs around the globe—and especially those who have contributed their experiences to this book—thank you for sharing your stories and for standing ready as local guides whenever readers seek expert advice. Find your local MVP at *mvp.microsoft.com/en-US/search?target=Profile&program=MVP*.

About the Authors

Mark Smith is the founder of the 90 Day Mentoring Challenge (90DayMC.com), a global program that accelerates careers through structured mentoring, skills development, and community support. Under its banner, he created The AI Advantage—a pathway designed to help any professional develop the skills to become AI-augmented in the Intelligence Age. Known online as nz365guy, Mark is a futurist and co-founder of Cloverbase, where he develops frameworks and advises global organizations—including Microsoft—on AI adoption strategy and skilling. He is a Microsoft AI Platform Most Valuable Professional (MVP), Microsoft Certified Trainer, and host of the Microsoft Innovation Podcast, where he distills practical lessons from technology pioneers. With more than two decades at the forefront of the technology industry, his mission is to help leaders and consultants drive human-centered innovation empowered by AI.

Megan Smith is a digital strategist, change manager, and AI educator. She is the CEO of Cloverbase, an AI adoption and skilling company that guides organizations through tailored learning journeys and mentoring programs to amplify human intelligence and connection. With a career spanning more than a decade at the intersection of technology and transformation, Megan has led Copilot enablement programs for Microsoft's global account teams, equipping organizations to embrace AI-driven change. Together with Mark, she created the 90 Day Mentoring Challenge, a career accelerator designed to empower business leaders and consultants with the practical skills to unlock their full potential and drive meaningful innovation.

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence is not new, but we are living in a hype cycle that has made it the buzzword of conversations around both board tables and dining tables. The hype around AI in general and Microsoft 365 Copilot specifically often starts with the promise to get more done, in less time. For many, it's an exciting prospect to claw back time that's currently spent drafting documents, replying to emails, summarizing meetings, or crunching data. While the advent of AI stirs excitement and opportunities for some people, for others, it generates fear and risk.

How can we learn from the organizations that are leaning into AI and shaping their strategies to take advantage of the benefits it offers? In *Microsoft 365 Copilot Adoption,* we uncover the patterns amongst the early adopters of Microsoft Copilot and organize them into an adaptable framework. This framework offers business leaders and consultants a roadmap for the organizations they are leading into the AI-enabled future. Because the AI revolution isn't really about productivity; it's about possibility.

Many people we've spoken with are already incredibly productive. They're not looking to squeeze more tasks into their days; they're looking for more time to spend on higher-value, meaningful work. They want to stop spending evenings catching up on admin. They want to contribute their creativity, judgment, and insight to the problems that matter most. They want to go home at a reasonable hour, knowing they've made a difference and not just ploughed through a to-do list.

That's where this book starts—not with tasks and tools, but with the why behind Copilot adoption.

The evolving nature of work

The access and scale of generative artificial intelligence are changing how we work. The way people approach work will continue to evolve at an accelerated pace as the development of this technology advances. Organizations that fail to adopt AI technologies will not be able to compete with those that do. This technology-driven wave of change is likened to changes we've seen in the past—the industrial revolution, the arrival of the Internet, the always-online mobile generation. Indeed, it builds on these changes, but one key difference is the timeline of change cycles contracting from decades to years, from years to months. Where companies were once able to take a conservative approach to adopting cloud computing with a "watch-and-learn" strategy, waiting even 12 months to start incorporating AI into organizational processes would place that organization at a severe disadvantage to its competitors.

However, letting "fear of being left behind" drive AI strategy is as likely to fail as doing nothing. It's become a common directive from executives to add AI into every project, but it's important to first understand how AI fits into your organization's vision and purpose so that you can secure the leadership commitment necessary to adopt AI effectively.

From productivity to purpose

Microsoft Copilot is a suite of AI-driven features built into Microsoft 365 and other Microsoft platforms. It uses natural language intelligence to help people create digital artifacts, automate tasks, and collaborate more effectively—without needing deep technical expertise. Microsoft Copilot makes it possible to seamlessly blend AI into everyday workflows, simplifying complex processes and encouraging people to rethink how they work.

When we think about using AI or Copilot for a specific workload or scenario, we need to move beyond a one-dimensional focus on productivity. Time saved is good, but what happens with that time is where real value lives. To move beyond a productivity conversation, it's helpful to frame the intended impact that adopting Copilot will have across a continuum that starts with productivity and ultimately progresses to purpose:

- **Productivity—doing more** Copilot helps individuals accomplish more in less time. It drafts, summarizes, suggests, and automates parts of your day so you can keep moving.
- **Efficiency—doing it smarter** Copilot helps streamline workflows across teams. It reduces friction, shortens cycles, and simplifies complexity in how work gets done.
- **Effectiveness—doing the right things** This is where Copilot becomes strategic. It improves the quality of decision-making, aligns work with outcomes, and focuses energy where it counts.
- **Purpose—doing what matters** This final stage is where Copilot unlocks time and mental space for people to focus on meaningful, human work—whether that's innovation, service, creativity, or connection.

It's important that we make purpose, not productivity, the goal. Say, for example, your organization holds an all-hands question-and-answer meeting every two weeks, offering employees a chance to get answers directly from the leadership team. However, in the pursuit of productivity, this meeting is replaced with an AI-powered chat experience.

The upside of this solution is an hour back for every employee, as well as instant answers to questions outside of the scheduled all-hands meeting. Is it more efficient? Absolutely. Is it more effective? Mostly. But whether the new AI chat experience achieves the purpose of the original meeting depends on the goal.

Sure, the new system streamlined communication, but at the expense of the human connection, cultural reinforcement, or even serendipitous moments that are possible when people get together. Efficiency gains are only progress if we're also paying attention to effectiveness and purpose.

Who this book is for

This book is for business leaders and consultants who are involved in leading, sponsoring, or implementing Microsoft Copilot. It's a practical guide for people responsible for improving the effectiveness of their teams, creating a culture of innovation, and ensuring their organization is ready for the future.

Whether you are a CEO who needs to present an AI strategy to the board for approval or a consultant who needs to demonstrate the value of investing in Copilot, this book guides leaders and consultants through successful AI adoption patterns, frameworks for change management, and AI skill development. It highlights the importance of measuring and celebrating wins and failures, addressing common concerns—such as data privacy or shifting job roles—while staying flexible in the face of rapid AI advancement.

Maybe you're thinking about automation. Maybe you're aiming for innovation. Either way, here's our challenge to you:

1. Don't stop at productivity.
2. Don't settle for efficiency.
3. Push for effectiveness. And lead with purpose.

In the chapters ahead, we'll give you frameworks, stories, and tactics to do just that. But it starts by understanding that Copilot is not a magic wand. It's a copilot to sit beside your people, not in place of them. Its real power is in what it enables your teams to become.

Assumptions

You don't need deep technical knowledge to apply the concepts in this book, but you should have a solid understanding of how your organization collects, stores, and uses data, as well as a high-level understanding of how your organization uses Microsoft technologies.

Foundational knowledge of artificial intelligence and generative artificial intelligence would be beneficial. More importantly, you should be able to answer these questions:

- How has your organization approached AI to date?
- What experimentation has been done?
- What does the organization's high-level technology ecosystem map look like?
- Which mission-critical technologies does the organization rely on to deliver its products and services?
- What relationship does the organization have with Microsoft?

You might be familiar with how your organization uses Microsoft technologies, including Microsoft 365 (for example, Teams, Outlook, SharePoint), Microsoft Copilot, and Copilot Studio. You may also have some knowledge of whether your organization uses Microsoft Business Applications (for example, Dynamics 365, Power Platform), Microsoft Fabric, Microsoft Azure AI Foundry, and Microsoft Purview.

How this book is organized

Microsoft 365 Copilot Adoption is organized into four parts. These four parts include chapters on each of the 12 Cs of Copilot adoption, structured as follows:

Part 1: Preparing for Copilot

- Chapter 1, "Context" How generative AI is changing the way we work and why your organization needs to have a plan for Copilot adoption
- Chapter 2, "Clarity" Why it's important to establish how your organization's goals align with a clear leadership-driven AI vision
- Chapter 3, "Commitment" The role of a representative AI council in creating an organization-wide culture of innovation

Part 2: Driving change and adoption

- Chapter 4, "Change management" Strategies for managing cultural and technical shifts
- Chapter 5, "Capability" Building Copilot confidence and AI literacy skills amongst your team
- Chapter 6, "Compliance" How to plan for data governance, security, and compliance considerations
- Chapter 7, "Champions" The vital role an internal network of Copilot champions plays in scaling Copilot adoption

Part 3: Essential skills to win with AI

- Chapter 8, "Conversation"—How conversation shapes effective use of Copilot and learning from peers
- Chapter 9, "Critical Thinking"—Encouraging a culture of critical thinking and problem-solving
- Chapter 10, "Communication"—Keeping stakeholders engaged and informed by sharing success stories

Part 4: Sustaining and measuring success

- Chapter 11, "Continuous improvement"—Measuring adoption and impact to build on incremental gains
- Chapter 12, "Culture"—Bringing everyone on the Copilot adoption journey and integrating Copilot into every part of the organization

We recommend first reading the parts in order and returning to the chapters as you complete each stage. You might also find it valuable to ask others involved in Copilot adoption in your organization to read the chapters relevant to the role they will play. Establishing a shared understanding and language can be a powerful tool to realize the benefits of Copilot.

How the "Try this prompt" section works

At the end of each chapter, we've included a section with an example prompt that you can use with Copilot. These prompts can be customized to your unique circumstances, serving as a reminder that an essential part of successfully adopting Copilot is to become a skilled user. Everyone will use Copilot differently because your own unique strengths and experiences amplify the value it offers.

Quick access to online references

Appendixes A through E, as well as the prompts from the "Try this Prompt" sections are available as digital downloads. The playbooks are provided in PDF for easy portability. The "Try this prompt" sections are available as .txt files, allowing you to easily cut and paste the prompts into your favorite AI engine.

Download the companion files at *MicrosoftPressStore.com/MS365copilot/downloads*

Errata, updates, & book support

We've made every effort to ensure the accuracy of this book and its companion content. You can access updates to this book—in the form of a list of submitted errata and their related corrections—at

MicrosoftPressStore.com/MS365copilot/errata.

If you discover an error that is not already listed, please submit it to us on the same page.

For additional book support and information, please visit *MicrosoftPressStore.com/Support*.

Please note that product support for Microsoft software and hardware is not offered through the previous addresses. For help with Microsoft software or hardware, go to *support.microsoft.com*.

CHAPTER 2

Clarity

> *With Copilot, it's not about replacing people—it's about empowering people by simplifying workflows and inspiring a forward-thinking mindset. It makes us faster, more productive, and easier to do business with.*
>
> –*Ryan Asdourian, VP Lumen Technologies*

In this chapter, you will:

- Explore why aligning Copilot capabilities with your strategic business objectives is fundamental for successful adoption
- Learn how to evaluate the readiness of your data and technology ecosystem for AI
- Discover how to build a compelling business case that demonstrates the value Copilot can add across your organization

The cost of confusion

Say you were starting a construction project, and your CEO bursts into the first planning meeting, shouting excitedly about new, innovative bricks. "They're better than traditional bricks because they are self-stacking and align automatically," she exclaims. The project manager flips through photos of buildings made from these amazing bricks; you're sold. "Let's start straight away," you say. It's a no-brainer. But even a house built with self-stacking bricks would require a blueprint—a strategy for building and a clear idea of the purpose that the structure will serve.

This scenario might feel farfetched, but a version of this conversation has been playing out in boardrooms around the world as AI hype inspires leaders to decree, "We must add AI to this project." Forging ahead without taking the time to get clarity on the problems you're solving with Copilot and the outcomes you want to achieve is likely to waste resources and ultimately delay progress. It's important to get the foundations right. Just as a house requires a strong foundation and a clear blueprint, Copilot's ability to help you get more stuff done is dependent on the quality of your data. The rate at which the building goes up and the condition of the building that stands in the end are still influenced by the skill set of the people involved.

Deep knowledge of how your organization operates and an understanding of the customers you serve are required to get value out of Copilot. Take the time to understand the current digital literacy of your staff; identify gaps in knowledge that could impact their ability to utilize Copilot effectively. And just as constructing a physical building requires permits and inspections, implementing AI like Copilot safely requires appropriate consideration of ethical, governance, and compliance implications.

Prioritizing creative and meaningful work

On average, knowledge workers spend 60 percent of their working day on repetitive tasks, in unnecessary meetings, or making sense of duplicated communications. That means that many organizations are losing hundreds of hours every week to "work about work," as one report phrases it.[1] That's time that could be spent on strategic initiatives, creative problem-solving, or proactive customer service. It can be hard to prioritize creativity and meaningful work when interruptions are constant.

The 2025 Work Trend Index report from Microsoft and LinkedIn highlights that employees are interrupted every two minutes, averaging 275 interruptions a day. This results in a workforce that is exhausted and overstimulated; the same study found that 80 percent of workers say they lack the time or energy to do their job.[2] Microsoft Copilot can help solve these challenges so that people can reclaim time in the day to prioritize what truly matters. As a leader or consultant, are you clear on what that means?

What would it mean if you could get several hours a week back? Do you know what you would do with the time saved? At a personal level, there's no shortage of ways to fill half an hour. Many workers already juggle more than a day's work, so that time could be spent getting ahead for the next day or recharging with family. But what about when those 30 minutes a day are aggregated across thousands of employees into perhaps weeks or months of time saved? How do you ensure that recovered time is reinvested wisely? Clarity on your organization's purpose and objectives means you can align the capabilities of Copilot with your organization's goals.

Copilot is so much more than just a shiny new tech too. It can be a partner that helps everyone get stuff done if you pinpoint the workloads where Copilot can make an immediate difference and then create a clear vision and adoption strategy. This allows your people to leverage Copilot in every area of their daily work. Clarity on the value your organization stands to gain by embracing Copilot will prevent it from becoming another failed technology adoption project.

Let's explore the capability, leadership, technology, and data readiness needed for your organization to realize value from Microsoft 365 Copilot and make the cost justification clear.

---

[1] Asana, *Anatomy of Work Global Index*, 5th ed. (San Francisco: Asana, 2025), https://asana.com/resources/anatomy-of-work.

[2] Microsoft Corporation and LinkedIn, *2025 Work Trend Index Annual Report: The Year the Frontier Firm is Born*. (Redmond, WA: Microsoft, April 23, 2025), *https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/worklab/work-trend-index/2025-the-year-the-frontier-firm-is-born*.

> **Caution** Studies show that people are bringing their own AI to work and engaging in Shadow AI within the organizations they work for. If you aren't already providing access to generative AI tools, talk openly about your intentions and make staff aware of the risks of using their own AI tools at work. Encourage your people to start experimenting with Microsoft 365 Copilot Chat if they don't have a paid license for Copilot yet. Copilot Chat offers a secure, trusted environment for experimentation that does not leak your IP or train models outside your organization's tenant.

The vital role of executive sponsorship

Cross-functional leadership—from the board and the CEO through to people managers and team leaders—acts as a compass guiding the organization through AI transformation. Leaders must set the direction and stay on the course to realize the benefits AI offers. Unlike traditional technology projects, where the drive often originates from the IT department, the pervasive impact AI will have across all business functions necessitates a top-down approach led by the C-suite. It's important to understand the pivotal role executive sponsorship plays in AI adoption and how leaders can effectively champion this change.

AI is not just another piece of technology but a transformative force that will significantly impact every person and process involved in an organization's operations. For many organizations, Copilot will be the first step in AI adoption at scale. Given its strategic importance, it is essential that the leadership team, including the CEO, CFO, CTO, and other department leaders, are active and visible sponsors of AI initiatives. This group of leaders is responsible for aligning the AI adoption goals with the organization's overall strategy and objectives. They don't necessarily need deep technical knowledge about how AI works, but they do need to be able to articulate why AI solutions will help the organization hit its targets. An Ipsos study found that all organizations that are realizing value from their AI investments had leader-driven AI strategies, with clear vision and commitment from senior leaders. By contrast, only 1 percent of organizations that were at the earliest stages of creating value with AI had buy-in from senior leaders.[3] When leaders are seen as the drivers of change, it reinforces the importance of AI and the strategic role it can play in achieving business targets.

A clear example of this is Lumen Technologies. When President and CEO Kate Johnson set a vision to evolve the company from a traditional telecom into a technology leader, she placed AI adoption at the heart of that strategy. Through the Microsoft 365 Copilot Early Access Program, Lumen deployed Copilot across several departments. Sales people saved an average of four hours a week in meeting preparation, unlocking an estimated $50 million in annual value through increased customer engagement

[3] Microsoft, *AI Strategy Roadmap: Navigating the Stages of AI Value Creation* (Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation, 2024), PDF, *https://info.microsoft.com/ww-landing-AI-Strategy-Roadmap-Navigating-the-stages-of-AI-value-creation.html.*

and productivity. Strong leadership and a clear vision for AI turned early adoption into real business outcomes.[4]

Trust is critical to the change process. A clear vision for AI, mapped to strategic goals, inspires trust in why it is being used. Employees also need to trust that the leadership has their best interests at heart and that AI is being used in a trustworthy manner. If they feel that AI is being brought in to increase surveillance or to extract more work from employees instead of increasing efficiency and creativity, it will erode trust and hinder adoption. Leaders inspire trust by communicating transparently about the purpose and benefits of AI, addressing any concerns, and demonstrating its positive impact on the organization.

Executive sponsors must be visible and active

Leaders who sponsor AI initiatives and actively model the use of generative AI tools have an outsized impact on their successful use across the organization. This involves integrating AI tools like Copilot into their daily workflows and demonstrating their practical applications, such as ensuring Copilot transcription is turned on for meetings when appropriate. Using Copilot live in board meetings and executive sessions to run data analysis to inform decision-making and aid with strategic planning is another way to be visible and active. By acquiring their own applied knowledge of how Copilot can assist in tasks throughout the workday, leaders will build belief and credibility, which will flow through to their communications about the vision for Copilot across the organization. As they lead by example, executives can inspire confidence and encourage wider adoption across the organization.

Given the impact executive sponsors have on the success or failure of Copilot adoption, a tailored training approach will help build their confidence and proficiency with AI tools. This may involve a white glove service with dedicated coaches who can provide personalized training sessions, practical advice for how executives would use Copilot, and ongoing support.

The goal of this training program is to turn executive sponsors into Copilot power users because doing so means their vocal endorsement will carry more weight. Alongside the executive rollout, it's a good idea to empower executive assistants and other business support roles to leverage AI effectively, enhancing their productivity and enabling them to better support the team. If they believe in Copilot, it will be easier to encourage widespread adoption among most employees.

> **Note** Executives use Copilot very differently from other workers, but their delegation skills can set them up to be excellent power users. It's important to customize the support and training approach to meet the unique needs of leaders who will become executive sponsors for your Copilot rollout. A coach who can support them one-to-one will help uncover how they can use Copilot as a strategic thought partner.

[4] Deborah Bach, "The only way: How Copilot is Helping Propel an Evolution at Lumen Technologies," *Microsoft Source — Digital Transformation*, July 25, 2024, *https://news.microsoft.com/source/features/digital-transformation/the-only-way-how-copilot-is-helping-propel-an-evolution-at-lumen-technologies/*.

For AI to be truly effective, it must be integrated into the organization's strategic operational framework. AI initiatives should not only support existing strategic objectives but also have the potential to reshape them. Leaders must continuously evaluate how AI can drive innovation, improve efficiency, and create new opportunities. To do that, they need to be using it daily so that they are making strategic decisions based on a practical, hands-on understanding of how generative AI works. Copilot improves constantly with advanced capabilities like Researcher and Analyst agents to help leaders make strategic data-driven decisions. Leaders can ensure that Copilot delivers maximum value by aligning AI with the organization's strategic goals.

Chapter 3, "Commitment," highlights the ongoing role leaders can play as drivers of change when it comes to reimagining their organization for an AI-powered future.

Technical readiness for Copilot

Evaluating the current state of your organization's technology ecosystem will help ensure your data, systems, and security posture are aligned to unlock business value from Copilot. Without access to the right data and the right governance around that data, Copilot can't deliver meaningful outcomes. Getting technical readiness right means Copilot has safe, targeted access to information that can drive productivity, insights, and innovation.

Data accessibility and integration

Start by assessing the current state of your data. This is a discussion that should be conducted with people in your IT department:

- How accessible is your organizational data, and have you restricted access to only what's needed?
- Are critical line-of-business systems integrated, or are data siloes limiting visibility?
- Are your users creating, duplicating, and storing content in ways that create noise or risk?

Achieving an ideal data estate through cleanliness, security, and structure is a constant moving target. Perfect data hygiene is unattainable. Content is constantly being created, copied, and shared. The goal is not perfection but control, ensuring that Copilot can access the data it needs—and nothing it shouldn't. One effective way to achieve this is to use Microsoft Purview, which allows content to be classified and accessed based on roles. It allows you to set up rules to continually classify data across the data estate. Combined with tools like Microsoft Entra, Defender, Intune, and Sentinel, organizations can maintain a Zero Trust posture while allowing Copilot to reason over high-quality, trusted content.

> **Note** Zero Trust in a Microsoft context refers to a security approach that assumes no one—inside or outside an organization—should be trusted by default. It continuously verifies identity and access at every step to protect sensitive data and systems from threats. Read more at *https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/security/zero-trust/zero-trust-overview.*

As demonstrated in Figure 2-1, it can be helpful to reduce data from the total available artifacts to a refined subset of filtered artifacts so that Copilot is grounded on the most relevant and accurate data. Let's say an average-sized organization has 10 million digital artifacts—files, images, videos, and meeting recordings. It's beneficial to filter this number to a targeted amount for the specific scenarios it will be used for. This involves filtering out duplicates and errors to prevent hallucinations in the dataset, ultimately refining it to a smaller, more accurate set of records for use by Copilot.

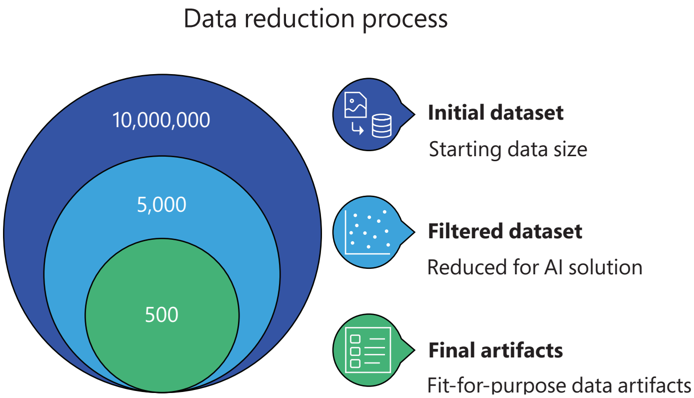

FIGURE 2-1 Data reduction process

For a construction company that regularly responds to requests for proposals (RFPs), instead of Copilot reasoning across all the files they've collected on SharePoint, this type of refinement process could result in grounding Copilot with only the best quality, winning RFPs to learn from when generating a response to a new one. The key is to reduce and refine this to a targeted set of useful, well-governed information aligned to specific scenarios. That reduces hallucination risk, enhances output quality, and builds user confidence.

Another component is the organization of data within the data estate. Most organizations now operate across a sprawl of cloud platforms and apps. With hundreds of tools in play, data fragmentation is inevitable. Microsoft Fabric can act as a unifying layer, orchestrating data across systems like Google Cloud Platform, AWS (Amazon Web Services), Oracle, SAP, and Snowflake, helping maintain a clean, connected data estate for Copilot to work from.

The role of digital exhaust

Digital exhaust is the invisible trail of data from everyday digital work. Each email sent, meeting scheduled, chat message swapped, or document edited leaves signals and metadata such as timestamps, application IDs, and relationships. The Microsoft Graph exposes and aggregates these data points, giving a live insight into how applications are used. This "digital exhaust" becomes a powerful input for Copilot. It's what allows Copilot to tailor responses based on your context, calendar, projects, and team interactions—things no public large language model (LLM) could access. This differentiator means that Copilot isn't just smart when you get the technical foundations right; it's situationally aware, and because of that, it can turn that into valuable outputs.

Workloads and scenarios

Identifying typical workloads and their associated scenarios can help you work out how Copilot can have the most significant impact. For example, some workloads and scenarios apply broadly. Communication is a good example of a workload that applies to most knowledge workers. Copilot can assist in email management by summarizing long threads and generating draft responses. This can make communications more efficient and effective, thanks to the ability to specify the appropriate tone and language.

Say your usual email communication style is abrupt and straight to the point. Copilot can help you adapt your tone and soften your message while maintaining professional communication etiquette. Meeting preparation is another typical workload that Copilot can help with by compiling and summarizing relevant documents and even setting agendas, allowing knowledge workers to focus on strategic thinking rather than administrative details.

> **Note** *Workloads* refer to specific tasks or groups of tasks that professionals routinely perform, such as drafting emails, preparing reports, or analyzing data. Scenarios are the contexts or situations where these workloads occur, like preparing for sales meetings with customers or conducting market research.

Then, there are workloads that will be specific to industry sectors. For example, in healthcare, Copilot can summarize patient data, draft clinical notes, and analyze research findings, enhancing patient care and operational efficiency. In a legal context, Copilot can review contracts, draft legal documents, and stay updated on regulatory changes, reducing time spent on routine tasks and focusing more on client advocacy.

> **Tip** The Microsoft Scenario Library highlights examples of how you can use Copilot by Function and Industry. Explore workloads and use cases relevant to you at *https://adoption.microsoft.com/en-gb/scenario-library/.*

Start with high-value workloads

Organizations should identify their top three time-consuming tasks across priority functions and explore how Copilot can eliminate at least two. Each department will have a different view on which scenarios would deliver the most value, so it's a good idea to run this process within teams to get the most impactful ideas. Extending the legal example, one firm in the UK crafted a lengthy and detailed Copilot prompt that, once rolled out for use in document analysis across the firm, significantly reduced the time spent on legal matters. This prompt offered tremendous value to the organization in terms of accuracy and time saved.

Productivity is often the first area in which Copilot can deliver significant impact. Even your most productive employees have a more extensive to-do list than time in the day, so using Copilot with existing processes creates efficiency and allows people to get stuff done in less time. But the real value creation happens when that time saved on automating repetitive tasks is reinvested in more strategic and value-added activities.

Even if that reinvestment looks like enabling people to leave work on time, enhancing morale, and improving overall job satisfaction, it may be difficult to put a dollar value on improved employee morale. However, it's worth collecting quantitative feedback from staff about what extra time means to them as you factor in the value Copilot is adding to your organization. Copilot contributes to a more engaged and motivated workforce by freeing up time for more meaningful tasks.

> **Note** You don't need everything perfect to kick off. It's better to get started and iterate. Start with the capability, leadership support, and data you have available. Look at how Copilot can help with workloads that are repetitive and time-consuming.

Building a case for the value Copilot delivers

To get buy-in from senior leaders, you need to be able to pitch the payoff to decision-makers in a way that links what Copilot can do with what they care about—saving time, being more productive, reducing overheads, or creating the next big thing. Linking the impact of Copilot to key business goals such as productivity, innovation, and employee experience, and then outlining a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis, is an effective way to present the value to executives.

A detailed analysis of the financial return on investment (ROI) for adopting Copilot can silence the critics who might designate it as a cost to be cut. This should compare expected returns on initial implementation investment with potential cost savings from increased efficiency and productivity.

As people get good at delegating tasks to Copilot, a multiplication of time input to value output is created. However, it is equally important to explore the intangible benefits of Copilot, such as risk reduction, knowledge capture, and innovation. Copilot can help mitigate risks by ensuring consistent and accurate task execution and capturing valuable organizational knowledge that might otherwise be lost. Emphasizing a multi-lens approach to ROI, considering both financial and nonfinancial benefits, provides a more comprehensive understanding of the value Copilot can deliver for the organization.

Measuring and communicating the ROI of Copilot

Successfully adopting Copilot requires not just implementing technology but clearly demonstrating the tangible value it delivers. Stakeholders across the organization—from executives to frontline employees—must clearly see how Copilot improves business outcomes.

> **Tip** One way to track ROI is by building a custom solution on the Microsoft Power Platform to reflect this ROI framework. It can be an effective way to highlight the value to your leadership in real time.

Building your Copilot ROI framework

A robust return on investment (ROI) framework for Copilot should systematically address three core components:

- Strategic alignment
- Value measurement
- Impact communication

By structuring your ROI approach around these elements, you'll create compelling, data-driven narratives that resonate with stakeholders and drive continued support for Copilot adoption.

Step 1: Align Copilot with strategic goals

Start by identifying how specific Copilot capabilities align with your organization's strategic priorities. Strategic themes include operational efficiency, employee productivity, innovation acceleration, and enhancement of customer experience.

For each Copilot scenario, explicitly document the following:

- **The business challenge** Clearly state the problem, inefficiency, or opportunity you want to solve with Copilot.
- **The Copilot solution** Explain how Copilot resolves the challenge or capitalizes on the opportunity.
- **The strategic alignment** Articulate how the Copilot solution aligns with and contributes to broader organizational goals.

Step 2: Define and measure the value of Copilot

Use measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) related to productivity, quality, efficiency, or innovation. Follow these steps to measure impact:

- **Establish baseline metrics** Gather current performance data before implementing Copilot, such as the average time spent drafting documents, response times to customer queries, or the number of tasks completed per day.
- **Capture post-adoption metrics** After Copilot adoption, remeasure these metrics. Ensure the period is sufficient to capture reliable data (typically, 30-90 days post-adoption).
- **Calculate the impact** Compare baseline and post-adoption data to quantify the impact of using Copilot. For example, reducing the time it takes to draft documents from 2 hours to 45 minutes is a clear, quantifiable improvement.
- **Convert metrics to value** To translate improvements into ROI, multiply productivity improvements by relevant average costs. For example, saving 1.25 hours per document, multiplied by the average employee's hourly rate, provides quantifiable value. Multiplying it by what your client pays for that document provides a clear opportunity to generate more revenue.

> **Note** This is just one way to demonstrate value through time saved. Ideally, you'll be able to quantify the impact beyond time saved by looking at the capacity Copilot creates. Perhaps that means being able to win and service more business with the same resources or demonstrate how the time saved has enabled the team to create a new offering.

Step 3: Continuously collect user feedback

Quantitative data alone is insufficient; capturing qualitative user insights strengthens your business case. Regularly collect user feedback on how they are using Copilot, using simple surveys or interviews, asking questions like:

- What is easier to do with the help of Copilot?
- How much time does Copilot save you for key tasks?
- How has Copilot improved the quality of your work?
- How much faster is it to prepare for client meetings when you get Copilot to help you?
- How would you feel if you lost your Copilot license?

This qualitative feedback enriches your ROI story, offering relatable examples of impact.

Step 4: Communicate Copilot impact with value cards

Create concise, visually appealing "value cards," summarizing key outcomes that can be published via Teams and SharePoint. Each value card should

- Highlight a clear metric improvement (such as "Document creation time reduced by 40 percent")
- Include monetary value estimates (such as "Annual productivity gain equivalent to $50,000")
- Provide a direct user testimonial (such as "Copilot helped me complete the quarterly report in half the time.")
- Include customer feedback if you have it (such as "We got our replacement order in record time.")

Distribute these Value Cards regularly through organization-wide communication channels, presentations, intranets, or internal newsletters.

Step 5: Aggregate and present data through dashboards

For ongoing transparency and impact tracking, consider creating a Copilot ROI dashboard using tools like Microsoft Power BI. Dashboards should visually aggregate

- KPI improvements
- Financial impact estimates

- User feedback trends
- Adoption rates across teams

This real-time visualization helps people see the cumulative and ongoing benefits of Copilot, fostering sustained support. Dashboards like this also make it easier to encourage friendly competition between teams and use gamification to accelerate the adoption process.

Step 6: Proactively evaluate and prioritize future Copilot use cases

Use this ROI framework proactively. Before implementing new Copilot scenarios, you should

- Evaluate potential Copilot use cases based on strategic alignment, projected impact, and uniqueness.
- Prioritize use cases demonstrating the greatest expected ROI and alignment with strategic objectives.

This disciplined approach ensures resources are invested effectively, increasing the overall value Copilot delivers for your organization.

Setting the vision builds momentum for Copilot adoption

By aligning Copilot initiatives with strategic objectives, rigorously measuring impact, capturing qualitative feedback, and communicating outcomes clearly and consistently, you can demonstrate the substantial value Copilot can deliver. This approach validates your Copilot investment and builds momentum for broader adoption, embedding AI innovation into your organizational culture.

Why is it important to know this framework at the start? Because you need to set your course. Determine where you're heading, and then you can evaluate whether you got where you intended to go. Clear goals aligned with your organization's mission will help you quantify the impact of adopting Copilot.

Try this prompt: Board meeting follow-up

Helping leaders find their a-ha moment with Copilot is an important step on their personal Copilot adoption journey. Effective executive sponsors need to use Copilot daily. This prompt is a good way to show how Copilot can be used to synthesize actions from meeting transcripts.

Because there is usually a person taking notes and recording actions, the AI outputs from this prompt could be evaluated against those notes for accuracy. It's also a quick way to see any actions that have been assigned to you if you have missed the meeting. Use this prompt with Copilot in Teams after your meeting has been transcribed:

> *As my Board-Meeting Action Assistant, analyze this meeting transcript to:*
>
> 1. *Extract and itemize all follow-up actions explicitly mentioned*
> 2. *Compile a separate list of formal decisions approved during the meeting*
> 3. *Identify actions where ownership is unclear*
>
> *Present both lists in a structured format with clear, formal language. Group actions by discussion topic where applicable.*
> *For each action item:*
>
> - *Include verbatim context from the transcript*
> - *Note if timeframes were specified*
> - *Flag items requiring clarification*
>
> *If multiple potential owners are mentioned for an action item, highlight this ambiguity for my review.*
> *When complete, ask me specifically about any actions requiring ownership clarification.*

> **Tip** Ask Microsoft 365 Copilot directly in the recap of the Teams meeting, or if you are using Chat, include a link to the meeting recording and transcript in your prompt.

Next steps

In this chapter, we discussed the importance of a clear, leader-driven vision for AI. Successful adoption relies on clarity of how AI transformation initiatives align with strategic organizational goals.

- Get clear on how Copilot can help achieve business goals by assessing the readiness of your people, leaders, data, and technology ecosystem.
- Prioritize meaningful work by reinvesting the time saved with Copilot on strategic and creative tasks, thereby improving productivity and job satisfaction.
- Secure strong, cross-functional executive sponsorship for Copilot by building a compelling business case for AI adoption and transformation.

Index

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

Q

R

S

T