



Services-as-Software: Blurring the Lines

Q3 2026



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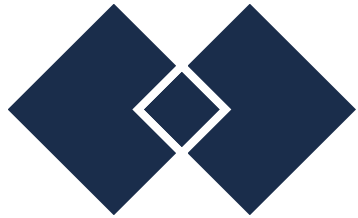
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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Services-as-Software (SaS) is redefining how enterprise work is delivered, priced, and scaled, as AI agents shift from supporting workflows to executing outcomes and expanding the opportunity beyond traditional software

SaS is a delivery model where AI agents execute business work directly and capture value through the outcome, not the tools

Market Shift: Enterprise Delivery Moving to SaS

AI agents **execute repeatable workflows end to end**, turning software from a support layer into an execution layer

What Is Driving This Shift



Driven by the need for:

- Cost Pressure
 - Labor shortage and skill gap
 - Speed and scalability gap
- This creates large potential for providers

Opportunity Sits in the Work Itself



AI executing more work unlocks the **larger services and labor opportunity** beyond software, pushing providers to rethink how they deliver work

How Providers Are Capturing the SaS Opportunity

Shifting the Business Model:

Copilot → Autopilot: providers are shifting from supporting work to **delivering the outcome itself**

Targeting the First Entry Points:

Providers start with **outsourced, repeatable workflows**, where AI can lower vendor delivery costs

FDEs* Bridging the Deployment Gap:

To turn these opportunities into production, **FDEs embed AI agents into client workflows**, systems, and controls to move pilots into production

Rising SaS Traction Prompting Incumbents to Recalibrate Strategies

- **Service providers** are acquiring AI-native capabilities and shifting to outcome-based delivery
- **Software providers** are embedding agents and rethinking seat-based pricing

Investors View

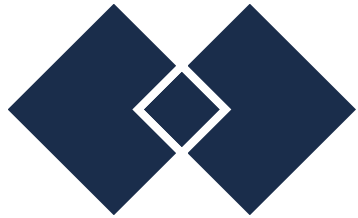
With the potential now well defined, investors view SaS as a **distinct category, backing AI-native providers** through roll-ups, category-defining bets, and accelerator programs

What's Next

The market will reach **\$1.5T by 2035¹**, favoring providers that turn software and services into AI-led outcome delivery, where success depends on faster, cheaper, and scalable results

1. Investing.com

*Forward Deployed Engineers (FDEs)



Market Evolution and Growth Drivers

Evolution of Enterprise Service Delivery

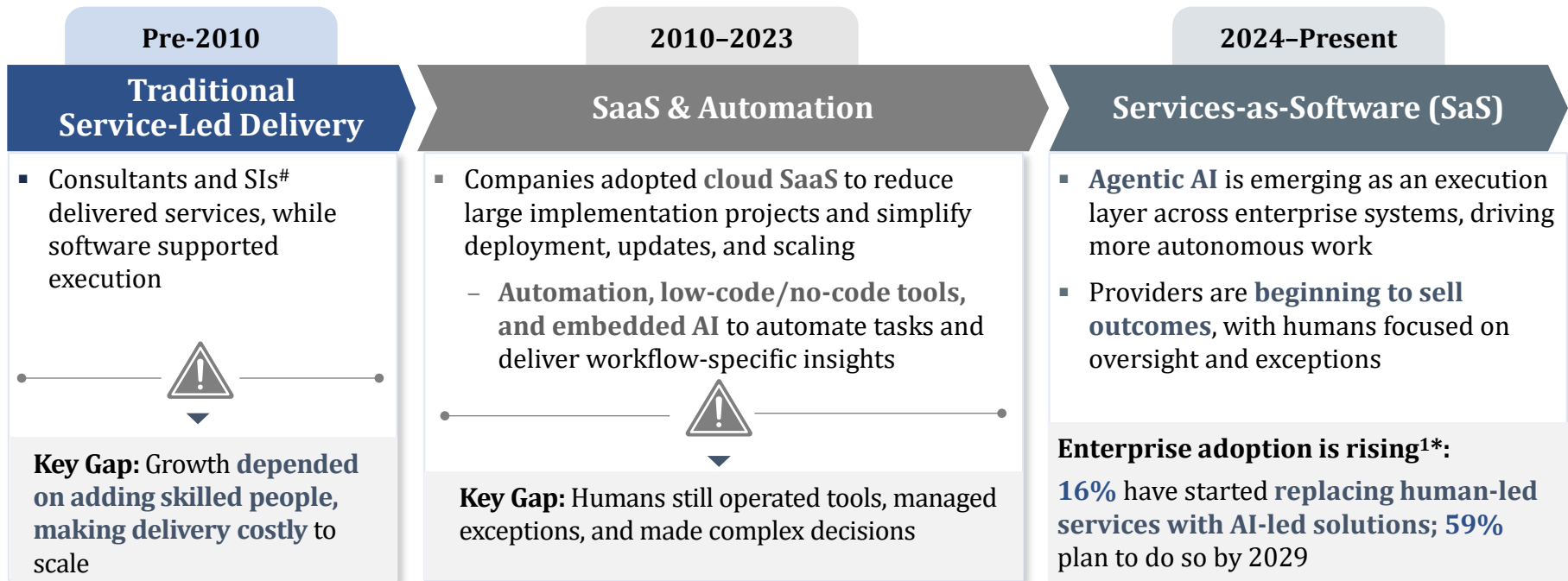
Enterprise service delivery is shifting from people-led work and process automation to agentic AI models that execute repeatable work and deliver service-like outcomes, blurring the lines between software and services

Definition: Services-as-Software (SaS)

A delivery model where AI agents execute repeatable knowledge workflows end-to-end, delivering business outcomes instead of selling tools, seats, or hours

Example:

Marketing AI agents draft campaigns; finance AI agents build forecasts and run scenarios



AI is not replacing enterprise software; it is changing how value is delivered on top of it. This shift is driving enterprises toward a new Services-as-Software model.

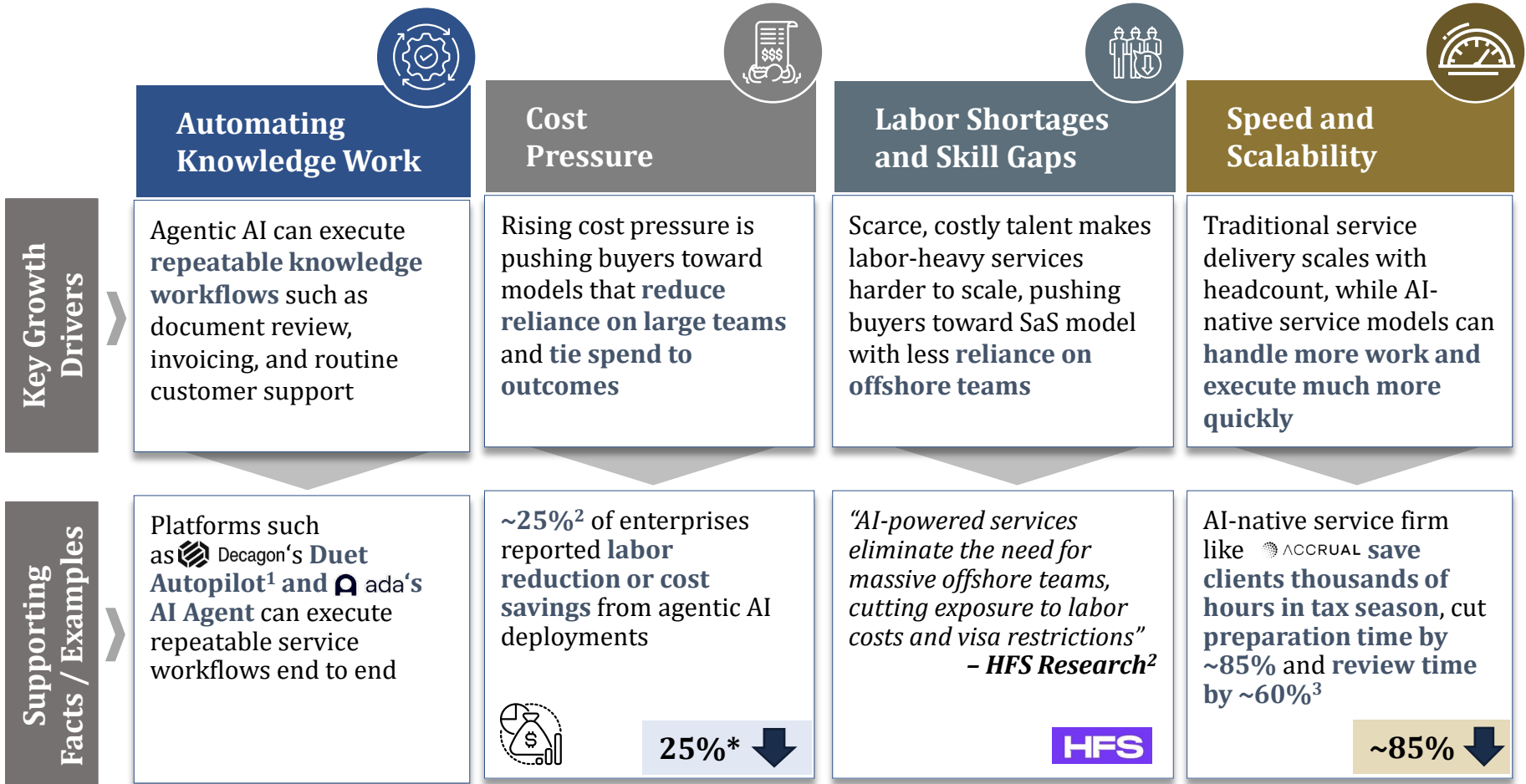
1. HFS

[#]SIs (System Integrators)

^{*}HFS Pulse Data, 2025; N=605 executives from Global 2000 enterprises globally

Key Factors Driving the Shift to Services-as-Software

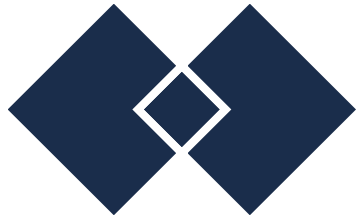
The model is gaining traction as enterprises seek faster, lower-cost ways to automate repeatable work, address talent gaps, and scale delivery



Together, these drivers are accelerating enterprise demand for SaaS, while creating a larger opportunity for AI-native and software providers to move beyond tools and capture new growth

1. LinkedIn
2. HFS Research
3. Businesswire

*HFS Research, 2026; N=505 Global 2000 enterprise decision-makers



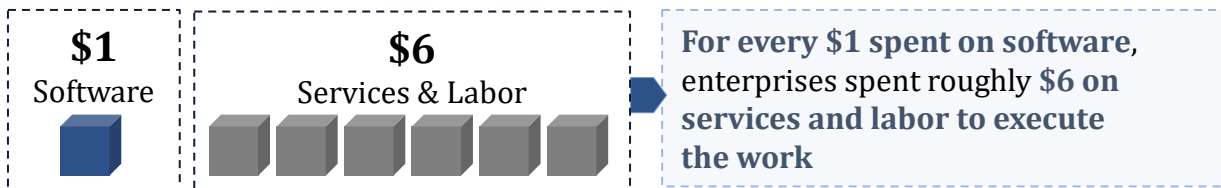
Market Opportunity and Business Dynamics

Beyond Software: The Larger Prize Is the Work Itself

The biggest opportunity for providers sits beyond software licenses, in the larger services and labor spend around enterprise workflows

Market momentum: The US SaaS market is expected to grow from \$3.9B in 2025 to \$26.7B by 2034, at a ~26% CAGR¹

Current Spend: Software vs. Services



Old Reality: Software Was Only the Starting Point²

- Enterprises used to buy software and services separately: software managed workflows, while internal teams delivered the work
- Software vendors competed for the \$1 software budget through licenses and subscriptions

The Shift: AI Can Now Sell the Work Itself

- AI agents can now execute the work directly, expanding providers' revenue beyond the \$1 software spend to \$6 services spend

The shift is from selling the tool to selling the work.

SEQUOIA 

Early Examples of Providers Shifting to Workflow Execution

ORACLE³: Redesigning its Fusion cloud suite as “**agentic apps**” that complete tasks, not just support them

EvenUp⁴: Moving deeper into **service delivery workflows**, helping firms produce legal work outputs instead of automating isolated tasks

AUCTOR⁵: Raised **\$20M** led by Sequoia to **automate implementation** work done by consultants and system integrators

The larger prize is not software access alone; it is the work around software. As value shifts to delivered work, providers need to change their business models and what they sell

Business Model Evolution: From Tools to Outcomes

To capture the work, providers are shifting from copilots that improve productivity to autopilots that deliver outcomes

Business Models Are Expanding from Copilot to Autopilot



Offered as a tool to support the work, and humans remain responsible for outcomes

Copilot Model

Autopilot Model



Offered as completed work to buyers and helping them get the outcome

Providers Shift to Autopilot Models

The larger economic upside lies in Autopilot models, where providers deliver work that companies currently pay employees or service firms to perform



Instead of selling software to customers to help them do the work, providers can use the software themselves and sell the finished product at 100x the price.

- Aaron Epstein, Partner,  **Combinator**²

Examples of Providers Entering Into Autopilot Models



Introduced **Scout, its first Autopilot agent**, an “always-on” agent that works across Microsoft 365 apps and acts without repeated prompts



Expanded **Autopilot** from a developer-focused aid into a broader automation layer

As AI shifts service delivery from copilots to autopilots, AI-first firms may have an edge because they are not tied to legacy business models, creating new ways to measure value and price outcomes

1. Sequoia Capital

2. Forbes

3. Microsoft

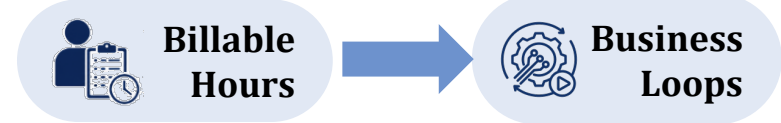
4. UiPath

Services-as-Software: Redefining Value and Pricing

The shift from AI tools to AI-led service delivery is changing the unit of value from time spent to measurable business loops that support new pricing models

Unit of Value: From Billable Hours to Business Loops

The unit of value in services is shifting from human effort, measured in hours and deliverables, to **repeatable AI-led workflow loops** that complete defined tasks



Pricing Model: From Seat-Based Access to Outcome-Based Pricing

- As buyers shift from paying for access to paying for completed work, pricing is moving beyond seat-based access toward units of work, including per-action, **per-resolution**, **per-document**, **workflow-based**, and **outcome-linked pricing**

83%¹ of AI-native SaaS companies adopted* **usage- or outcome-based pricing in 2025**

40%² of enterprise SaaS spend will shift **toward usage-or outcome-based pricing by 2030** **Gartner**

Proof Points: Companies Adopting Outcome-Based Pricing

Leading software and AI-native providers are shifting from hours and seats to pricing by outcomes, documents, and resolutions:



servicenow



"It would be foolish to still charge subscription-based pricing, since AI is now powerful enough to automate a large share of tasks."

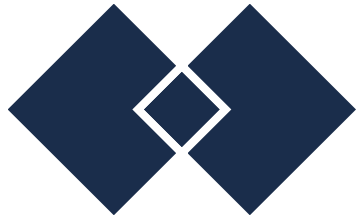
- Christian Klein, CEO, **SAP**⁴

As economics for firms adopting the SaaS model shift toward measurable service units, providers need to identify the service categories most ready for AI-led delivery

1. SoftwareSeni
2. Gartner

3. Sequoia Capital
4. Xccelera

*Maxio's 2025 Pricing Survey: 600+ responses from 400+ B2B companies globally



Framework for AI-Native Service Providers

AI-Native Service Providers: Where to Enter First

Providers are assessing SaaS opportunities by identifying where buyers already purchase work externally and where AI can automate a meaningful share of execution

Entry Filter:
Outsourced +
Repeatable Work



- **Target firms already use external providers** for their service work, budgets exist, and vendor switching is easier than internal behavior change
- Prioritize repeatable, **intelligence-heavy work first**, where AI can execute or assist before moving into judgment-intensive work

Priority Opportunity Areas¹

Category		Estimated Service Spend*	Why It Is Attractive
Healthcare RCM		\$50B–\$80B	Outsourced, outcome-based market with billing, coding, and claims workflows that are intelligence-heavy and measurable
Accounting & Audit		\$50B–\$80B	Talent shortages are pressuring a large outsourced market with repeatable finance workflows ripe for AI automation
IT Managed Services		\$100B+	SMBs already outsource IT, and MSP workflows such as monitoring, patching, provisioning, and triage repeat across clients
Transactional Legal		\$20B–\$25B	Document-heavy work such as NDAs, contracts, filings, and reviews is standardized, intelligence-heavy, and easier to verify
Insurance Brokerage		\$140B–\$200B	Large, fragmented market with repeatable workflows across quoting, carrier comparison, forms, and renewals

These categories are the clearest near-term SaaS entry points because buyers already outsource the work, workflows repeat across clients, and AI can reduce delivery costs

AI-Native Service Providers: Where to Expand Next

Beyond the priority areas, other large markets may scale later as AI proves value in narrower, repeatable workflow wedges

Emerging/Mixed Opportunity Areas¹

Why It Is Attractive

Management Consulting (\$300B+)



Most work still depends on human judgment; AI is more likely to first automate research, benchmarking, and analysis

Recruitment & Staffing (\$200B+)



AI adoption is strongest in top-of-funnel tasks like screening, matching, and outreach, while candidate closing and culture fit remain judgment-led

Supply Chain & Procurement (\$200B+)



Much of the opportunity sits in overlooked supplier work, where work is often ignored rather than already outsourced

These markets are large, but AI adoption will begin in narrower use cases because key parts of the work still require human judgment or are less directly outsourced



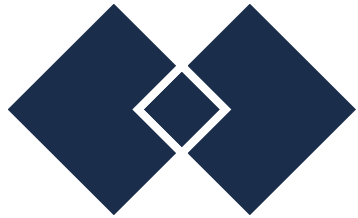
Today's judgment will become tomorrow's intelligence. "

- VC Firm, Sequoia Capital¹
SEQUOIA 

Key Takeaway

- AI-native providers are likely to gain traction first in outsourced, intelligence-heavy categories where buyers already use vendors and AI can lower delivery costs, then expand into emerging areas as buyers gain confidence
- However, adoption depends on embedding functional AI agents into enterprise workflows

1. Sequoia Capital



From Opportunity to Execution: Deployment and Scaling Dynamics

FDEs: The Last-Mile Bridge for Services-as-Software

To move AI agents beyond pilots, providers need Forward Deployed Engineers (FDEs) to translate generic AI platforms into customized workflow-specific deployments within enterprise environments

FDEs are client-embedded technical teams that redesign business processes and convert them into deployable AI workflows

Why FDEs Matter in the SaaS Model

- Enterprises are using AI for individual productivity, but struggle to embed it across workflows
- FDEs bridge pilots to production by tailoring AI to clients' workflows, data, and KPIs, proving value in daily work

Strategic Moves: AI Providers Are Building FDE Capacity In 2026

Company	Deployment Strategy
 OpenAI	Launched \$4B OpenAI Deployment Company ¹ to move enterprise AI from pilots to production
ANTHROPIC	Formed an \$1.5B+ AI services entity ² , Ode , with PE firms to embed Claude into mid-sized firms' operations
	Investing \$1B ³ to build an FDE unit that co-develops and deploys agentic AI solutions with customers
	Formed Microsoft Frontier Company with a \$2.5B ⁴ investment and 6K experts to help clients deploy AI at scale
	Set up an Enterprise Solutions unit ⁵ to embeds engineers and product managers with customers to drive adoption of its AI tools
	Built an AI-focused GTM* unit ⁶ and expanded FDE hiring to help clients deploy agentic AI, backed by a \$750M ecosystem fund

Investors	
 Goldman Sachs	 emergence CAPITAL
 WARBURG PINCUS	
Goldman Sachs	H&F
	GENERAL ATLANTIC
LGP	SEQUOIA
APOLLO	Blackstone

Internally funded



The bottleneck to enterprise AI isn't access to models; it is turning them into real business impact amid messy data, legacy systems, and compliance hurdles."

–Rodney W. Zimmel, Global Head, Blackstone⁶

FDE Model Extends to Domain Experts: Complex, high-value workflows need **forward-deployed domain experts**, not just engineers. Legal AI providers such as **Legora**⁶ and **Harvey** are deploying lawyers into their clients' offices to help automate workflows

1. OpenAI
2. Anthropic
3. AWS

4. Analytics India
mag
5. Forbes

6. LinkedIn
7. Legora

*Go-to-market

FDEs: Reshaping Services-as-Software Economics

As FDE-led deployment scales, it changes the economics of SaS, influencing provider growth, buyer adoption, and investor assessments of margin quality

How FDE-Led Deployment Reshapes SaS Economics

For AI Providers

- FDEs **shorten sales cycles, move pilots into production, and prove ROI faster**
- They also **add service-like costs** to a software model

For Buyers

- FDEs make AI agents **easier to adopt** by translating them into real workflows
- However, **highly customized deployments can raise cost**, complexity, and vendor dependency

For Investors

- Investors show strong appetite for FDE-led models, driving enterprise AI deployment
- They may turn cautious if FDE **reliance weakens the software-like margin**
- The key test will be providers' ability to codify FDE work into repeatable products and agents

What This Means for Services-as-Software

"Model capability is commoditizing at the edges. Value is shifting to deployment, integration, and trust."

– **Rodney W. Zimmel, Global Head**, Blackstone¹

AI tools are powerful but complex to commercialize

FDEs help firms implement AI in real workflows, adapt it to operating needs, and prove ROI through measurable gains

FDEs help clear the AI adoption bottleneck today

They move AI from productivity tools and pilots into scaled business workflows, making SaS practical in enterprises

The long-term model depends on repeatability

Providers need to convert deployment learnings into reusable patterns, products, and agents to improve software-like economics

Forward deployment remains key for complex workflows

Integration, governance, process redesign and domain judgment are unlikely to be solved by software alone

Once deployment capability is in place, the next challenge is to scale delivery with software-like economics

1. LinkedIn

The Next Challenge: Scaling SaS Economics

FDEs help move AI into production, but scaling SaS profitably brings execution challenges around building trust, balancing services and product priorities, and proving software-like economics

Scaling SaS Requires More Than Moving AI Into Production

Build Trust in Critical Workflows



Buyers need confidence that AI-led delivery can handle real client work where accuracy, timelines, accountability, and controls matter from day one



Deep domain trust on day one. Delivery teams handling real client work under real deadlines."

Manage the Services/ Product Tension



Providers have to balance two businesses at once: the services side focused on rapid client delivery and the product side focused on building a scalable platform



The actual build is a different story. It is much harder than SaaS. You are building McKinsey and Stripe at the same time."

Prove Software-Like Economics



Providers need to scale revenue faster than service costs by using repeatable products, agents, and playbooks to reduce the work required for each new deployment



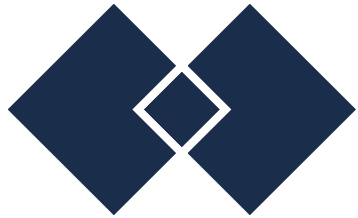
When that seam is tight, the economics flip. When the seam is loose, you are just a services firm with extra software costs."

- Jake Saper, General Partner, Emergence Capital¹



Key Takeaway

Providers can scale SaS by turning repeatable product learning into faster deployments, lower effort, and stronger margins, prompting incumbents to recalibrate their strategies around AI-led delivery



Implications for Service and Software Providers

Implications for Service and Software Incumbents

As SaaS opportunities become clearer, incumbents are rethinking their business models around outcomes and pricing, with services companies acquiring AI-native capabilities and software providers embedding agents

Service Providers



Acquiring AI-Native Capabilities to Compete on Outcomes

Demand for outcome-based delivery is pushing service providers to acquire AI solutions

- This helps automate delivery, improve margins, and support outcome-based pricing

NTT DATA
acquired¹
WinWire

Adds agentic AI and data engineering capabilities to deliver production-ready AI solutions for specific industries

K2 Integrity
acquired²
riskfront

Uses RiskFront's technology to automate compliance work and launch AI-enabled managed services in financial crime

AI and Software Providers



Expanding from Software Access to Workflow Execution

SaaS providers are shifting from software access to workflow execution by adding agentic capabilities and partnering with foundation model providers



Expanded its partnership with OpenAI and Anthropic³ to power **Agentforce 360**, its agentic AI platform, to create, deploy, and manage AI agents that execute workflow tasks



With OpenAI, ServiceNow is building the future of AI experiences: deploying AI that takes end-to-end action in complex enterprise environments

- Amit Zavery, President, COO, and CPO, servicenow⁴

Rethinking Revenue Models

As AI agents automate work, incumbents on both sides are rethinking how they price and capture value:

- **Software:** Seats → Usage & outcomes
- **Services:** Hours → automation-led delivery and outcomes

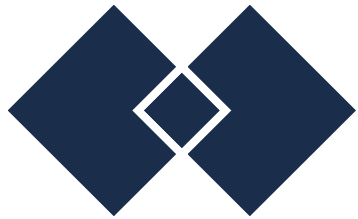
Up to **\$234B** in enterprise application spend could be disrupted by "agentic arbitrage" by 2030, ~20% of enterprise SaaS spend⁵

Gartner

Incumbents on both sides are taking steps toward SaaS, rethinking their delivery and pricing strategies, shifting the model from an operating opportunity to an investable theme, drawing investor attention to AI-native providers

1. NTT
2. Finextra
3. Salesforce

4. Techitup
5. Gartner



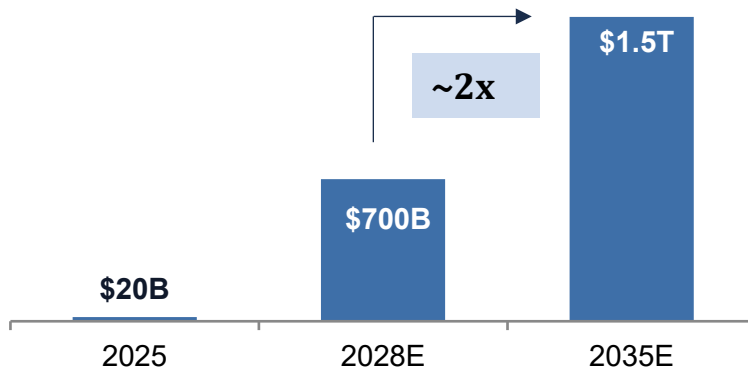
Where the Market Is Heading

Services-as-Software: The Next Phase of Growth

As SaaS enters its next phase, it is moving from early adoption to scaled opportunity as software and services converge, budgets shift to AI-led delivery, and providers compete on outcomes

A Multi-Trillion-Dollar Market Is Emerging¹

SaaS is emerging as a large global market, growing from:



“SaaS is an emerging trend that will profoundly transform the business model of services providers and reshape the competitive landscape over the next 3–5 years.”

- **Richard Nguyen, Analyst, BERNSTEIN¹**

What Will Drive the Next Wave of Growth

Software and Services Continue to Become a Delivery Model

Software and services will converge as SaaS captures work and budgets from traditional IT services and SaaS models focused on selling software seats

“The future is not software versus services; it is the convergence of both through an autonomous AI agent”
- **Peter Bendor-Samuel, CEO, Everest Group¹**

Enterprise IT Budgets Will Shift Toward SaaS

20%¹ of IT spend is expected to shift to SaaS by 2028, up from near zero in 2025, signaling a move from pilots to recurring budgets

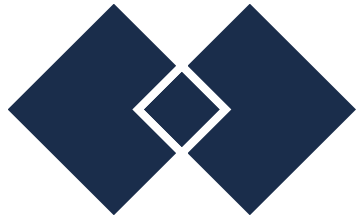
Outcome-Based Delivery Wins

SaaS won't eliminate SaaS or traditional services; it will evolve them into outcome-based delivery built on existing enterprise software stacks

Looking
Ahead



The winners will be AI-native providers and incumbents that combine AI agents with existing enterprise software stacks to deliver outcomes faster, cheaper, and at greater scale



Investor Perspectives on the SaS Market Shift

Services-as-Software: Emerging as an Investment Category

Building on that shift, investors are increasingly viewing the model as a distinct category and prioritizing AI-native service providers over AI tools

Investors See a Larger Addressable Market¹

Investors see SaS as expanding the AI opportunity beyond the **~\$1T** software market into the much larger **~\$16T** global services market



~\$1T
Global Software Market



~\$16T
Global Services Market

How Top VC Firms Are Responding to the SaS Shift



Using a **build-and-buy model**¹ for SaS, starting with an AI workflow, proving automation in the field, and scale through acquisitions of service businesses



Framing services as the **next software market**² and backing AI-native service providers like Auctor

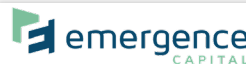


Combinator

named AI-native agencies a **priority category** in its Spring 2026 Request for Startups⁴



Believes AI moves software beyond tools into services³, with AI-native firms using domain expertise and deployment to capture work



Framing AI-native services⁴ as a **defining business model** for the AI era

Recent Deals Show VC Firms Are Backing AI-Native Service Providers (2026)^{5,6}

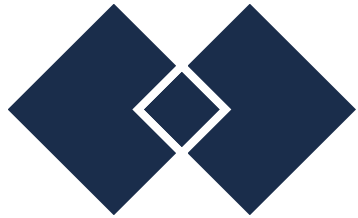
Lux Capital and **Index Ventures** co-led a \$60M Series B in **Crosby**[®] with participation from Sequoia, 01 Advisors, Elad Gil, and Bain Capital Ventures

Sequoia Capital and **Khosla Ventures** co-led a \$42M Series B in **WithCoverage**, backing its AI-enabled risk management model

Sequoia Capital led a \$20M Series A in **auctor**, with participation from M12, HubSpot Ventures, Workday Ventures, and others

1. General Catalyst
2. Sequoia Capital
3. a16z

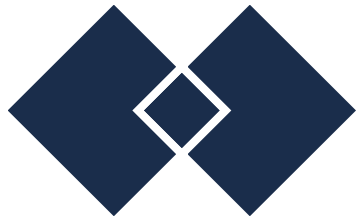
4. EMCAP
5. LinkedIn
6. DreamLegal



Transaction Updates

Recent M&A Deals – Acquisition of FDEs

Deal Date	Target	Acquiror	EV	EV/FDE	Rationale
08-Jul-2026	 Northslope	 OpenAI Deployment Company	NA	NA	This acquisition strengthens OpenAI's enterprise AI deployment capabilities by adding forward-deployed engineers to accelerate client implementations
15-May-2026	 WinWire	 NTT DATA	\$265.0M	~\$0.3M	This acquisition strengthens NTT DATA's enterprise AI and Azure capabilities by adding 1,000 engineers and specialists to scale cloud and AI delivery
11-May-2026	 tomoro.ai	 OpenAI Deployment Company	~\$400.0M	~\$2.7M	This acquisition strengthens OpenAI's AI deployment capabilities by adding 150 forward-deployed engineers and specialists to accelerate implementation
16-Mar-2026	 FACULTY	 accenture	~\$1.0B	~\$3.3M	This acquisition strengthens Accenture's enterprise AI deployment by adding 400+ AI professionals and Faculty's decision intelligence platform
26-Jan-2026	 encora	 Coforge	\$2.4B	NA	This acquisition strengthens Coforge's AI engineering capabilities by adding Encora's AI, data and cloud expertise, nearshore delivery and U.S. client base
20-Nov-2025	 RANGR	 accenture	NA	NA	This acquisition strengthens Accenture's Palantir and forward-deployed engineering capabilities by adding 40 professionals with Foundry and AIP expertise
27-Aug-2025	 NeuraFla	 accenture	NA	NA	This acquisition strengthens Accenture's Salesforce, generative AI and agentic capabilities by adding ~510 professionals to scale intelligent solution deployment
07-Apr-2025	 Hakkōda	 IBM	NA	NA	This acquisition strengthens IBM's enterprise data and AI capabilities by adding Hakkoda's modernization expertise and AI assets to accelerate transformations

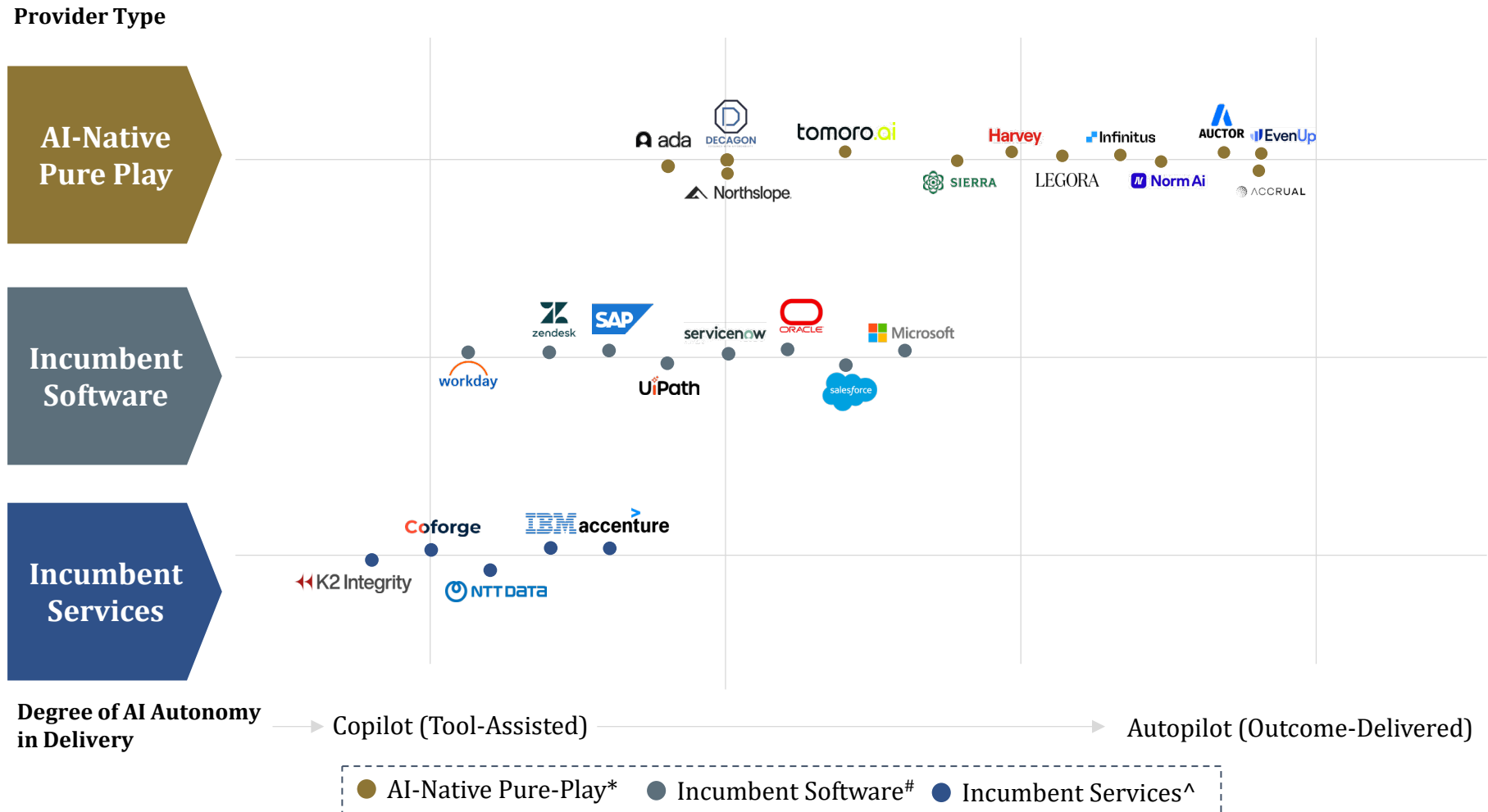


Market Landscape

Market Landscape: Active Players in the SaaS Space

AI-native players are leading the transition toward outcome delivery, followed by software incumbents moving toward AI-led execution, while services incumbents remain earlier in the shift

Positioning by Business Model and AI Autonomy

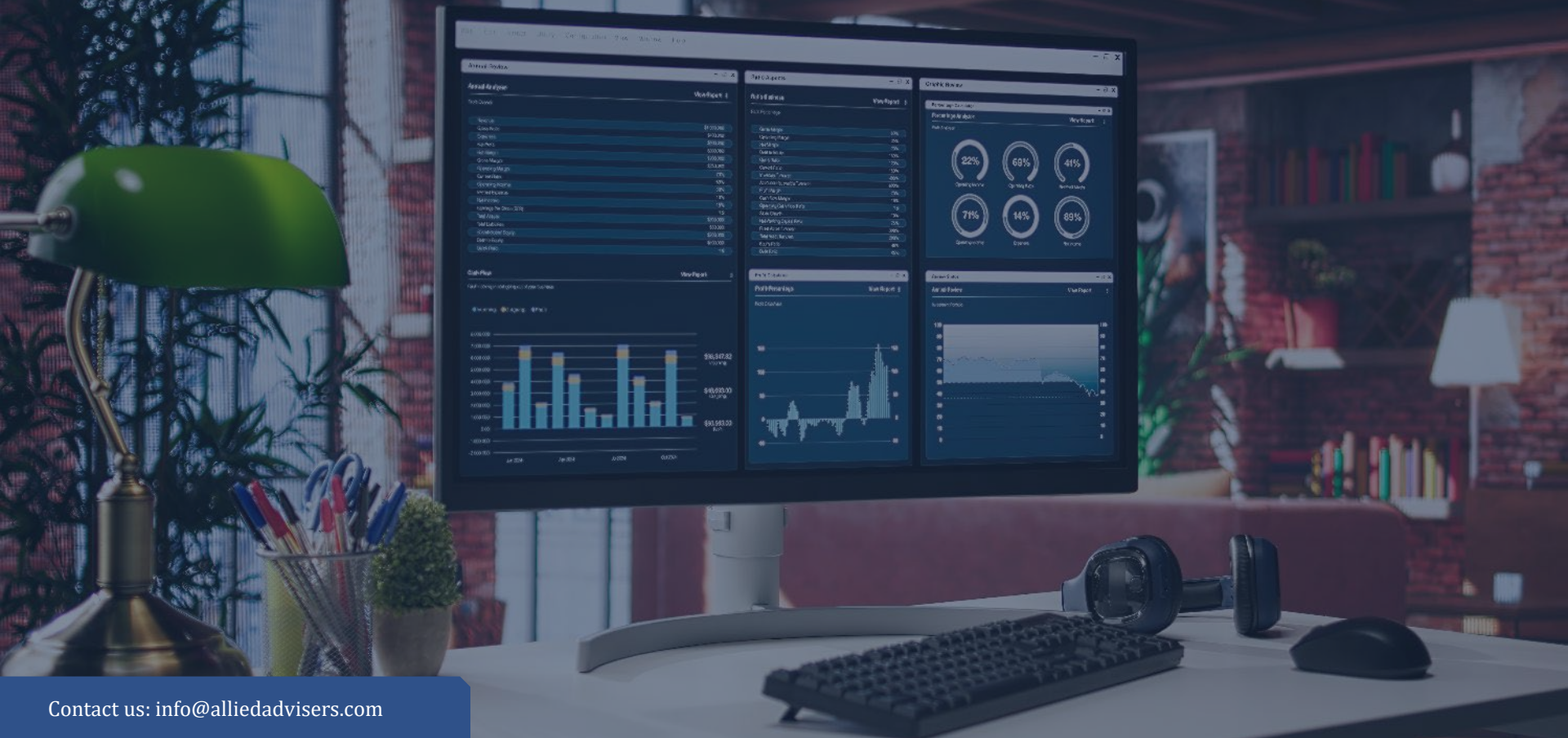


*Outcome delivery is their core business model from day one

#Actively adding agents and outcome pricing, but still transitioning from seat-based legacy models

^Building SaaS capability mainly through M&A rather than organic autonomy

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