

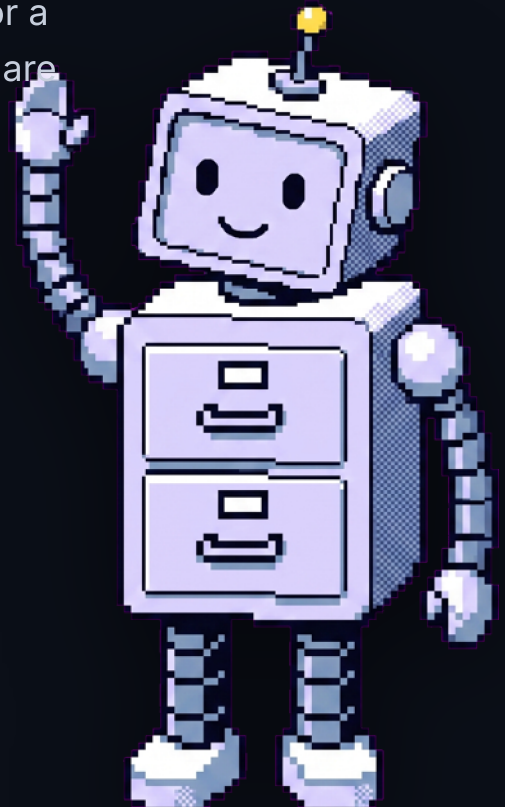


AI READINESS REPORT • 2026

How Coaches & Consultants Are Benefiting From AI in 2026

AI has moved from curiosity to everyday practice for a lot of coaches and consultants — and the numbers are starting to show what that's actually worth.

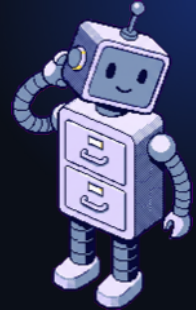
↳ **This PDF is also an AI context file.** Drop it into ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini and ask it anything about putting AI to work in your business.



HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

Read it for where your field stands. Then put it to work — this PDF doubles as an AI context file.

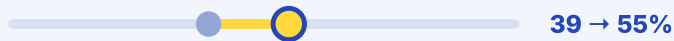
Drop it into ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini and ask it questions: which of these moves fit a business like yours, or how to start with one. A few prompts to try are at the end.



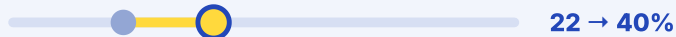
The shift, in numbers

● earlier ● latest

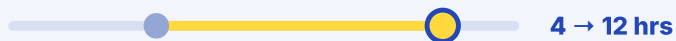
Small businesses using AI



Pro-services adoption



Hours saved per week (professional services)



The state of play

Adoption is up across the board. Overall AI use among small businesses hit **55% in 2025**, up from 39% in 2024 — a 41% jump in a single year. For businesses with 10 to 100 employees, it climbed from 47% to 68%. ¹

Inside professional services specifically, the shift is even more pronounced. Organization-wide AI usage nearly doubled in one year — from 22% in 2025 to **40% in 2026**. ²

Early-adopter territory is behind us. The majority of your peers are using AI in some form.

Where it's paying off

Meeting notes, session summaries, and follow-up drafts

One of the highest-impact uses is the simplest: capturing what happened after a call. Coaches and consultants are running session recordings through AI transcription tools, extracting action items automatically, and getting a follow-up email drafted before they've even poured a second cup of coffee. That's 30 to 60 minutes of admin work per client, per session, that just doesn't need to be manual anymore. Over a full roster, it's a meaningful chunk of the week back.

Research and knowledge synthesis for client engagements

Before a strategy session or a new engagement kicks off, consultants are using AI to pull together industry research, map competitor landscapes, and synthesize briefing materials in a fraction of the time it used to take. A landmark study from Harvard Business School and BCG found that 758 BCG consultants using GPT-4 completed **12.2% more tasks** and finished them **25.1% faster**, with 40% higher quality output. ³ The preparation work that used to eat a half-day now takes an hour or less.

Proposal, roadmap, and pitch deck generation

First drafts of proposals and client-facing roadmaps are one of the heaviest lifts in any consulting practice. The workflow that's working: paste your discovery call transcript, give the AI context about the client's situation, and get a structured draft in minutes. It won't be final — but starting from a solid draft is a fundamentally different experience than starting from a blank page.

Content creation for marketing and thought leadership

Content is the most common AI use case among small business owners — 55% of AI-using small businesses use it for content generation ¹ — and coaches and consultants lean on it hard for newsletters, LinkedIn posts, case study drafts, and downloadable guides. Keeping a consistent content presence used to require either a large time investment or outsourcing it. AI makes consistency realistic for a solo or small-team practice.

Scheduling, intake, and client communication automation

The back-and-forth that fills up a solo practitioner's inbox — scheduling, intake forms, FAQ responses, pre-sale questions — is increasingly being handled by AI-integrated tools that run 24/7. A prospective client who reaches out at 10pm on a Sunday gets a response. The intake is processed before the first call. None of it requires you to personally touch it.

What businesses are actually hiring AI to do

Here's a useful tell. We used AI to comb through more than 200 current job ads to see what businesses are actually paying people to set up — and across industries, it lands on the same three jobs. ⁴ For a coaching or consulting practice, they look like this.

What 200+ job ads keep asking for

Across industries, AI hiring comes down to the same three jobs.



01

Automate the busywork

Turn repeat work — intake, scheduling, recaps, follow-ups — into documented, automated systems.

02

Wire the tools together

Connect the AI you use (ChatGPT, Claude) to the CRM, calendar, and inbox you already run on.

03

Put AI on the marketing

First-draft content, email, and ads — plus the reporting that shows what's working.

Automate the busywork into a system

The work that repeats — intake, scheduling, session recaps, follow-ups — gets mapped once and handed to AI so it runs the same way every time. One posting put the rule plainly: automate what should be automated, and document what should stay human. That's the whole game — the busywork comes off your plate, and the relationship stays yours.

Wire the tools together

The pattern is connecting the AI you already use — ChatGPT, Claude — to the tools you already run on, like your calendar, your CRM, and your inbox. Done right, a discovery call turns into notes, a follow-up, and a booked next step without you copy-pasting across five tabs.

Put AI to work on the marketing

Content, email, and ad drafts, plus the reporting that tells you what's landing. AI handles the first pass and the number-crunching; you keep the final call and the voice.

If those three read like a job description, that's the point: it's the work most owners are doing themselves, in the cracks of the week.

The numbers

A few figures worth knowing:

58% of small businesses using AI save more than 20 hours per month

and they're reinvesting that time in customer acquisition, process improvement, and growth. ¹ *Note: this figure covers all small businesses, not coaches and consultants specifically.*

66% of small businesses using AI save \$500–\$2,000 per month

commonly redirecting those savings to marketing, technology, and infrastructure. ¹ *Note: this figure covers all small businesses, not coaches and consultants specifically.*

Professional services practitioners project AI will save them 4 hours per week

in the near term, scaling to

12 hours per week by 2029

equivalent to adding one extra colleague per 10-person team. ⁵

What's next in 2026

The next shift is already underway: agentic AI. Fifteen percent of professional services organizations have already adopted tools that don't just assist with a task but take autonomous multi-step actions — scheduling, researching, drafting, and sending follow-ups without a human prompt at each step. Another 53% are actively planning or considering it. ²

For coaches and consultants, what that looks like in practice: an AI that can pull together a pre-session brief, flag relevant notes from past engagements, draft a follow-up, and queue a check-in — without you managing each step. It's still early, but it's past the experiment stage.

The coaching profession is also working through a bigger structural question. The ICF's 2026 Coaching Futures Report identifies technological acceleration as one of five core forces reshaping coaching through 2036. ⁶ The practitioners who seem best positioned are the ones using AI to handle the back-office — admin, content, research — while keeping the

human relationship at the center of the work. That combination lets them serve premium clients who want the full human experience and reach a broader audience through AI-assisted formats.

The gap most haven't closed yet

Here's the thing: most coaches and consultants are using AI reactively. They'll draft a LinkedIn post with it, or use it to summarize a transcript, or ask it to research a topic. That's useful. It's also a long way from AI that actually knows your practice.

Only 18% of professional services organizations even track ROI on their AI tools. ² The majority are using AI without any accountability loop to know if it's working — which also means they haven't thought hard about what "working" would look like for their specific practice.

The deeper gap: very few coaches or solo consultants have built a persistent AI context layer. A structured brief that tells any AI tool who you are, how you work, who you serve, what your voice sounds like, what your methodology is. Without that, every AI interaction starts from zero. The tool doesn't know you're a leadership coach who works exclusively with founders in their first three years. It doesn't know you prefer frameworks to bullet lists. It doesn't know your client base skews toward women returning to leadership after a career break. So it produces generic output — and you spend half the time you saved doing heavy editing to make it actually sound like you.

The good news is that building that context layer isn't complicated. It's a one-time investment — a structured document (or set of documents) that you load into your AI tools as a starting point for any interaction. Once it exists, the AI stops producing generic drafts and starts producing drafts that reflect your voice, your frameworks, and your clients. That's the shift from AI as a novelty to AI as a genuine extension of your practice.

Tools worth a look

Real tools owners in this field are using today — examples to explore, not endorsements. Pick what fits.

Session notes & follow-up

- **Fathom** — Joins your Zoom, Meet, or Teams calls automatically, transcribes and summarizes the conversation, and drafts follow-up notes — so coaches can stay present on the call instead of typing.
- **Otter.ai** — Records and transcribes meetings in real time with 93–95% accuracy, extracts action items, and lets you search across every past session by keyword — useful for coaches managing a full client roster.
- **tl;dv** — Records, transcribes, and timestamps video calls, then can automatically update your CRM and draft follow-up emails via AI agents — strong choice for consultants who bill by the engagement and need a paper trail.

Scheduling & client intake

- **Calendly** — Automates booking with intake form collection and payment — clients self-schedule and fill out intake questions before the first call, cutting back-and-forth email entirely.
- **Acuity Scheduling** — Scheduling tool built with coaches in mind: custom intake forms attached to each appointment type, payment collection at booking via Stripe or Square, and package/retainer management in one place.

Proposals, research & client deliverables

- **Claude** — Handles long-form writing tasks — strategy proposals, engagement roadmaps, client briefs — with strong instruction-following across lengthy documents; the preferred choice when tone consistency and structured output matter.
- **ChatGPT** — General-purpose AI assistant for research synthesis, frameworks, rapid ideation, and drafting; particularly effective for building out discovery call prep and synthesizing competitor or industry research before an engagement.

Content & thought leadership

- **Buffer** — Schedules and publishes LinkedIn posts and other social content in advance, with a built-in AI assistant to generate and repurpose content ideas — the simplest pick for solo coaches keeping a consistent posting cadence.
- **HubSpot CRM** — Tracks leads, proposals, and client relationships in a pipeline view, with AI-assisted email drafting for follow-up and outreach — the free tier covers most of what a solo or small-team consultant needs.

Put this report to work

This PDF doubles as an AI context file. Drop it into ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini, then try a prompt like:

- "Based on this report, which two workflows would save a coaching or consulting practice the most time right now? Before you answer, ask me 3 questions about how my business currently runs — size, number of active clients, and where most of my admin time goes."
- "I want to use AI to draft better client proposals and follow-up emails. Based on this report and what you know about coaching and consulting, walk me through a practical workflow I can start using this week. Keep it to tools most people already have access to."
- "This report mentions that most coaches use AI reactively but haven't built a persistent context layer for their practice. What would that look like for me? Ask me about my niche, my methodology, and my typical client so you can sketch out what I'd actually put in that document."
- "Based on this report, where is the biggest gap between what coaches and consultants are doing with AI and what's actually possible today? Give me the honest version — what's worth acting on now versus what's still too early to bother with."

Sources

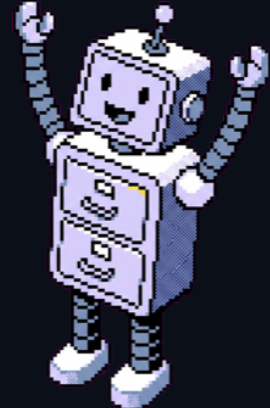
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- 4 Daring Strategy, *analysis of 200+ AI-related job listings*, 2026 — our own research, not a third-party study
- 5 Thomson Reuters Institute, *Future of Professionals Report 2024*, 2024 — <https://www.thomsonreuters.com/en-us/posts/innovation/future-of-professionals-report-ai-set-to-save-professionals-12-hours-per-week-by-2029/>
- 6 International Coaching Federation, *2026 ICF Coaching Futures Report*, January 2026 — <https://icfcoachingfuturesreport.com/>

Now go train yours.

Every move in this report depends on the same thing: an AI that knows how your business actually works. Out of the box it knows none of it — your voice, your customers, the steps you take to get a job done — so you get generic output and spend the time you saved editing it back.

Training it is a one-time job. The **Business Brain** walks you through a 20-minute conversation and turns your answers into a set of files any AI can read. After that, ChatGPT, Claude, or Gemini works from how you actually run things and writes the way you actually talk.

Train yours at daringstrategy.com →





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