



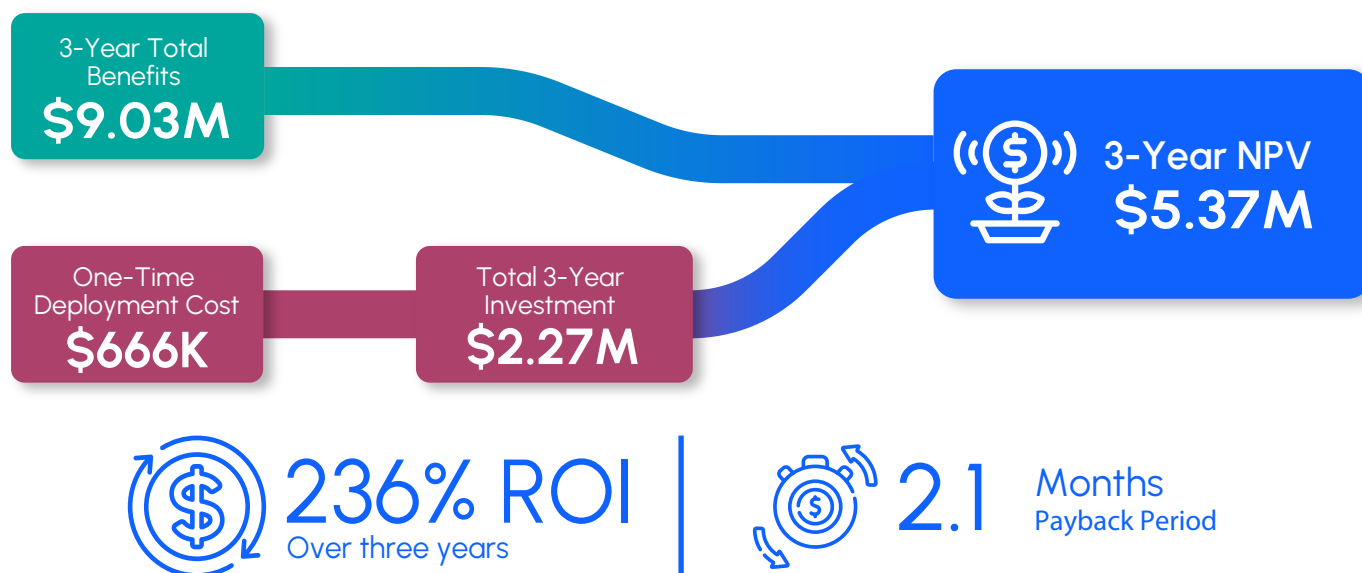
IBM watsonx Orchestrate:

The ROI Is Real – What Enterprises
Actually Earn from AI Agents

Executive Summary

IBM watsonx Orchestrate is an AI-powered automation platform that enables enterprises to build, deploy, and orchestrate intelligent agents capable of automating complex, multi-step business workflows across systems and teams. To assess the business impact of IBM watsonx Orchestrate, Futurum conducted a Business Economic Value (BEV) study based on in-depth interviews with enterprise customers and a structured financial analysis, aggregating results into a composite economic model. This approach quantifies both the costs and the measurable benefits realized across deployments. The platform delivered an average three-year ROI of 236% for four enterprise customers, according to Futurum's interviews and financial analysis. These enterprises achieved rapid time-to-value with an average payback period of 2.1 months by automating high-volume, repeatable workflows with watsonx Orchestrate (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Modeled Three-Year ROI and Payback Profile for IBM watsonx Orchestrate Deployments



In an environment where most enterprises still struggle to prove ROI on AI technologies, the customers in this study achieved payback in weeks rather than years, validating that AI is moving from experimentation to measurable execution. It is important to note that the four organizations included in this BEV study represent advanced AI deployments. Companies with more targeted implementations will typically face lower upfront costs while still realizing a rapid return.

Across the four organizations, the primary outcome of watsonx Orchestrate was the integration of AI agents into existing workflows, combining agentic and deterministic automation instead of replacing established processes entirely. Tasks that previously required multiple employees, system lookups, and handoffs are now executed through orchestrated workflows that reduce cycle times, increase throughput, and limit manual intervention. This shift allows organizations to manage higher volumes of work without a corresponding increase in staffing.

The financial impact was driven by three consistent factors: reduced manual labor, accelerated process execution, and increased automation of routine tasks. Organizations eliminated thousands of hours of manual work annually and redeployed that capacity to higher-value activities. In several cases, Tier 1 and repetitive tasks were largely automated, significantly reducing operational load on support teams.

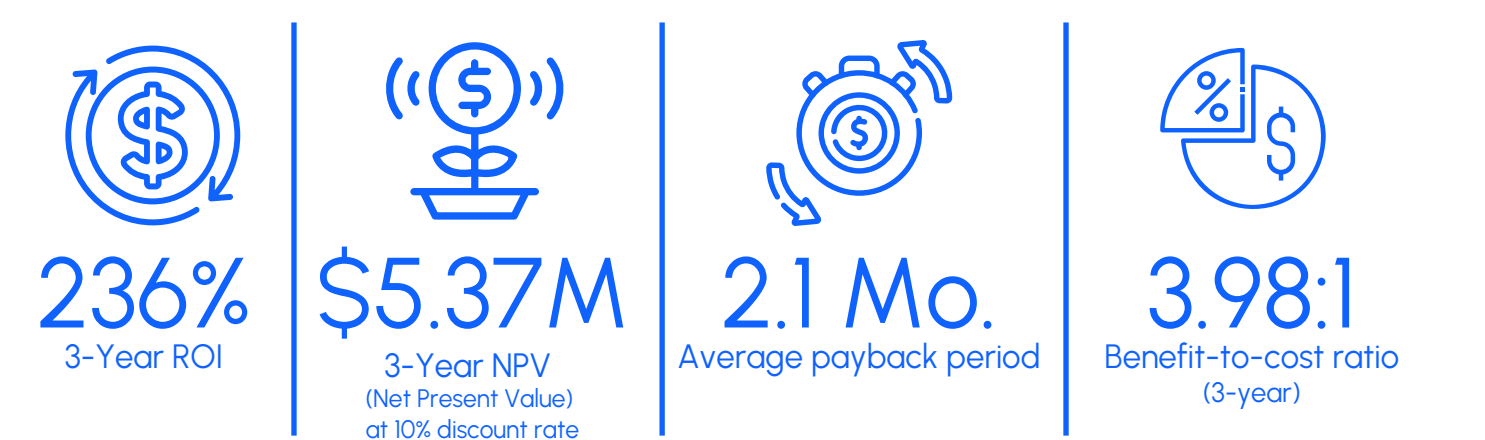
Beyond these productivity and cost gains, watsonx Orchestrate addresses a structural challenge that intensifies as AI adoption scales. As organizations deploy more agents across systems and functions, the complexity of managing them increases the risk. Watsonx Orchestrate provides a centralized control plane that enables visibility, coordination, and optimization across the AI environment. This allows organizations to manage a growing ecosystem of agents, tools, and systems in a controlled manner, while supporting governance, scalability, and sustained value realization from AI investments.

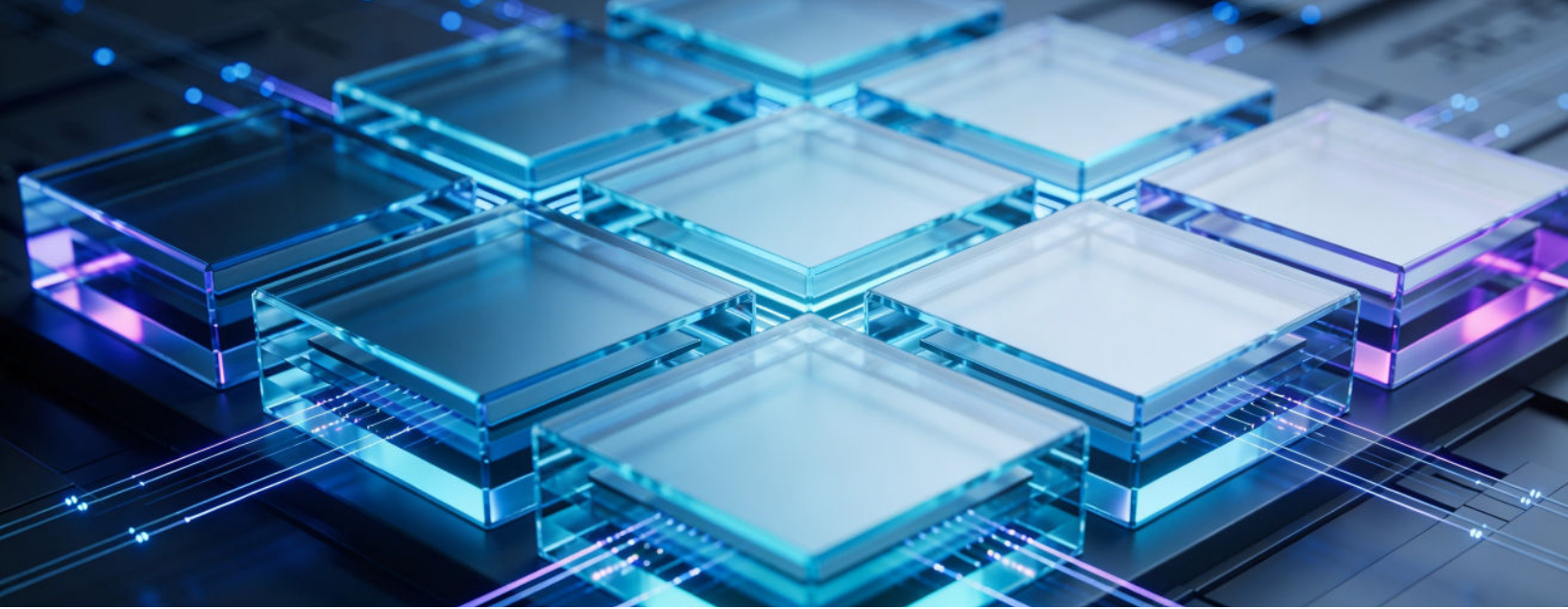
These outcomes are based on a composite financial model constructed from full financial and ROI assessments based on in-depth customer interviews. To ensure comparability, Futurum normalized inputs such as labor rates, adoption levels, and attribution across organizations with different scales and deployment models. Despite these differences, all four organizations demonstrated measurable, consistent financial benefits.

IBM watsonx Orchestrate delivers the greatest impact in environments with high volumes of repeatable workflows and clearly measurable labor inputs, particularly in organizations managing a diverse landscape of agents, tools, and integrated systems. As adoption expands across use cases and user groups, total value increases as a larger share of work is automated and coordinated across systems.

For executives, the implication is direct: watsonx Orchestrate enables organizations to reduce operating costs, increase capacity, and achieve measurable financial returns within months. The driver is not incremental efficiency; it is the restructuring of workflows to eliminate manual coordination and execution (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Composite Financial Outcomes per 100 Users (Three-Year BEV Model)





Methodology

Despite widespread AI adoption, most enterprises still struggle to prove financial returns. Futurum Intelligence's IH2026 AI Platforms Decision Maker Survey (n=820) found that proving Business Value/ROI is the third-highest barrier for enterprise GenAI adoption, while only 13% of enterprises report full-scale enterprise-wide transformation. Meanwhile, 55% of AI decision-makers still track productivity gains as their primary success metric, even as CIO prioritization of productivity declined from 67.5% to 41.8% from Q2 to Q4 2025. This highlights a gap between operational improvements and the financial validation required for executive decision-making and budget approval. This study addresses that gap by applying a rigorous, independent financial model to real customer data. The Futurum BEV methodology provides a structured basis for evaluating AI investments and translating observed outcomes into measurable, scalable financial results.

Futurum, an independent IT research and analyst firm, conducted in-depth interviews with four enterprise organizations that are actively using IBM watsonx Orchestrate in production environments. Futurum independently recruited and selected organizations based on demonstrated use across business workflows and the ability to provide both cost and operational impact data. All participating organizations are presented anonymously, and individual data points have been aggregated to ensure confidentiality. Data from the four organizations was consolidated into a composite financial model. Where organizations differed in scale, pricing structure, or deployment approach, Futurum normalized inputs to a common baseline to enable comparability across the dataset. This includes normalizing costs (e.g., on a per-100-user basis where required), labor rates, and adoption levels (as seen in Table 1).

Table 1. Profile of Participating Organizations Included in the Composite Model

Organization Type	Industry	Employees	Licensed Users
Enterprise Software	HCM, ERP & Financial Planning (SaaS)	~10,000	400
Global Asset Management	Financial Services	~10,000	4,000
Investment Management	Financial Services	~75,000	275
Commercial Real Estate	Multifamily Property Management	~60,000	50

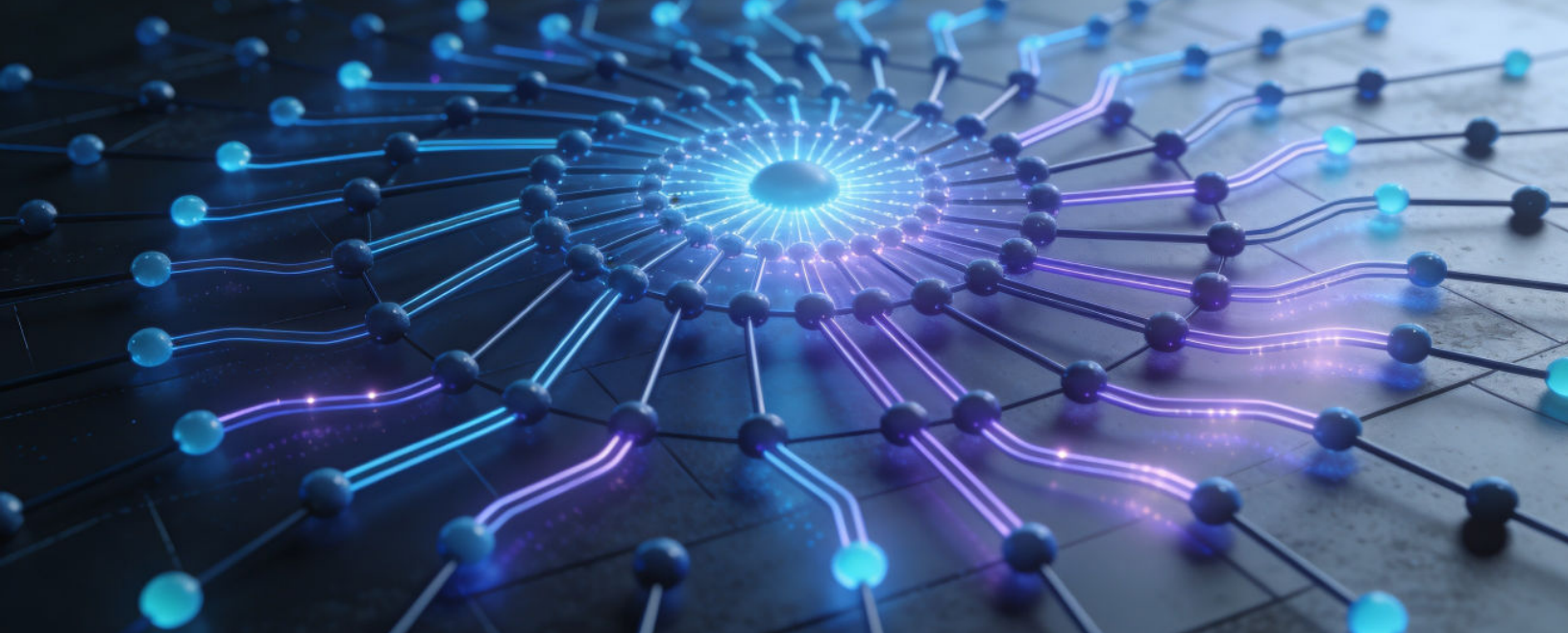
The analysis evaluates impact over a three-year period, consistent with typical enterprise investment horizons. A blended, fully-burdened labor rate of \$60 per hour was applied to reflect average enterprise labor costs for roles affected by automation. Futurum applied a 65% attribution factor to isolate the impact of watsonx Orchestrate relative to other contributing systems and process changes. This conservative assumption reflects the fact that not all observed benefits can be attributed solely to the solution.

Adoption rates were modeled to reflect phased deployment and expansion across user groups, based on patterns observed in the four interviewed organizations. Where direct data was unavailable, reasonable scaling assumptions were applied to ensure consistency across the model. The composite model focuses on measurable financial and operational outcomes, including reductions in labor costs, productivity gains, and accelerated processes. Indirect or intangible benefits, such as employee satisfaction or long-term strategic impact, are not quantified unless directly supported by interview data.

The analysis does not assume workforce reduction unless explicitly stated by interview participants. Productivity gains reflect capacity redeployment rather than headcount elimination. Results are based on a limited sample of four organizations and do not represent the full population of IBM watsonx Orchestrate customers. However, the findings provide a clear directional view of observed outcomes and consistent value patterns in active production deployments. Outcomes may vary based on use case, scale, and implementation maturity (see Table 2).

Table 2. Key Financial Assumptions and Modeling Parameters

Financial Assumption	Value / Approach
Discount Rate	10% applied uniformly across all four models
Attribution Factor	65% to 100% per organization. The attribution factor is the percentage of observed productivity gains and cost savings credited specifically to IBM watsonx Orchestrate, as distinct from other AI tools or automation investments running concurrently. For example, if an organization saves 1,000 hours and also uses Microsoft Copilot, the attribution factor determines how much of that saving is credited to watsonx Orchestrate alone. Factors were set based on each interviewee's own assessment of which tool drove the observed improvements.
FTE (Full-Time Equivalent) Hourly Rate	Organization-specific: \$27.88 to \$84/hr (interviewee-validated or industry proxy)
Benefit Accrual Period	Year 1 through 3 only; Year 0 = deployment cost exclusively
Normalization Base	Per 100 licensed users, equal-weight composite average of all four organizations



Adoption

Before deploying IBM watsonx Orchestrate, the four organizations in this study shared a common problem that manifested differently across their industries: highly capable employees spending disproportionate hours on the mechanical connective tissue of work. Analysts were copy-pasting data between systems. Help desk technicians were answering the same questions repeatedly across different tickets. Property managers were manually entering lease terms into multiple platforms. HR teams were orchestrating onboarding sequences by forwarding emails from system to system.

These activities required minimal expertise but consumed significant expert time. The cost was not visible on any budget line, but showed up in slower cycle times, growing ticket backlogs, and incremental headcount requests driven by coordination overhead.

Why watsonx Orchestrate

While each organization arrived at watsonx Orchestrate through a different path, their selection criteria consistently converged. The Enterprise Software organization required a platform to govern AI agents across enterprise applications with auditability. The Global Asset Management organization required security-grade access controls and the ability to handle sensitive financial and identity data. The Investment Management Firm prioritized time-to-value, targeting deployment within weeks. The Commercial Real Estate Firm required integration with industry-specific property management systems.

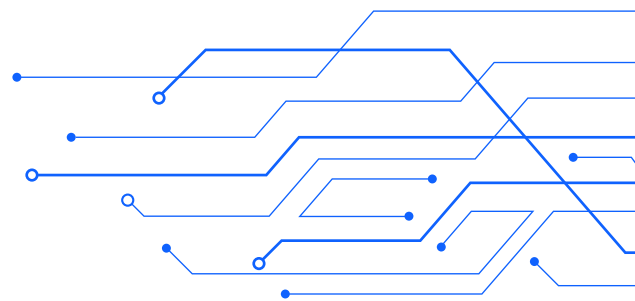
A consistent theme across the four interviews was the need for platform breadth: a single solution deployable across HR, IT operations, finance, and customer service, rather than separate tools for each function. As one interviewee noted, point solutions limit reuse when organizations expand automation to additional departments.

What Deployment Looked Like

Deployment timelines ranged from 2.5 weeks to 8 months, and that variation is itself a finding. The Investment Management Firm's 2.5-week go-live demonstrates what is possible when scope is tightly constrained and the vendor is operationally prepared.

"About two and a half weeks is how long it took to onboard it."

– Director of DevOps and DevSecOps, Investment Management Firm



The Enterprise Software organization completed deployment over 8 months, reflecting the complexity of integrating an AI agent platform across HR, CRM, and financial systems while transitioning away from a legacy RPA tool. The Global Asset Management organization completed deployment in 4 to 6 months, connecting watsonx Orchestrate to Security Information and Event Management (SIEM), vulnerability management, identity and access management, and IT ticketing systems. The Commercial Real Estate Firm went live in 3 months, integrating with multiple property management systems across 1,300 locations.

Across all four organizations, the first production deployment of an AI agent executing an end-to-end workflow shifted internal perception more than any business case. Once employees saw an AI agent complete an end-to-end workflow without human intervention, the internal conversation shifted from "should we do this" to "what else can we automate."





Financial Impact & Investment Categories

The following sections detail the major business value drivers and investment categories identified across the four organizations. Each outcome category includes the mechanism by which value was generated, the composite model assumption used in the financial model, the observed range reported by interviewees, and a "What This Means For You" note on how results may differ across organizational contexts.

Outcome Category: Productivity Time Savings

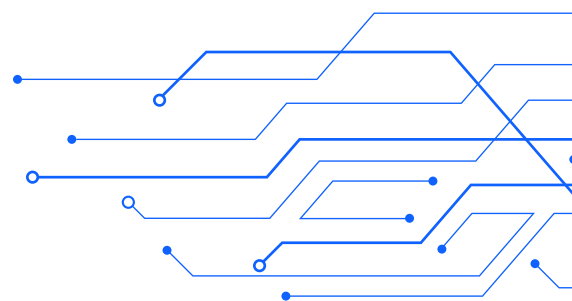
When AI agents handle the mechanical steps of a workflow, such as pulling records from multiple systems, formatting outputs, routing requests, and updating logs, knowledge workers reclaim hours that had been invisibly consumed by coordination overhead. The value is not hypothetical: **for every organization studied, interviewees cited specific task types that were being fully or substantially handled by agents with IBM watsonx Orchestrate within weeks of deployment.**

For modeling purposes, Futurum constructed a representative scenario based on a 400-user deployment, with adoption estimated to scale from approximately 20% in Year 1 to 60% by Year 3, reflecting phased rollout patterns observed across the four interviewed organizations. Using a blended FTE hourly rate of \$60 and a 65% attribution factor, the model indicates potential productivity savings of approximately \$2.03M in Year 1, increasing to \$6.08M by Year 3 as adoption expands.

For comparison, in one observed case, the Global Asset Management Firm generated approximately \$2.73M in Year 1 savings, projected to scale to \$8.19M by Year 3 as active benefit-generating users increased from an estimated 500 to 1,500 within a licensed population of 4,000.

"On average, we are saving over eight to ten hours per employee basis on a weekly level."

– Senior Technology Leader, Global Asset Management Firm



Key Metrics



\$965K

Productivity savings,
Year 1 (composite per 100 users)



\$3.08M

Productivity savings,
Year 3 (composite per 100 users)



2 to 10 hrs

Hours saved per user
per week (per interview data)

What This Means For You

Organizations with higher blended hourly rates, larger user populations, or broader use case scopes will see productivity savings scale accordingly. The conservative savings of 2 hours per week used in this study are validated as a floor. Firms in higher-wage sectors such as financial services, legal, or healthcare may realize 2 to 3 times the per-user productivity value compared to administrative-weight deployments.

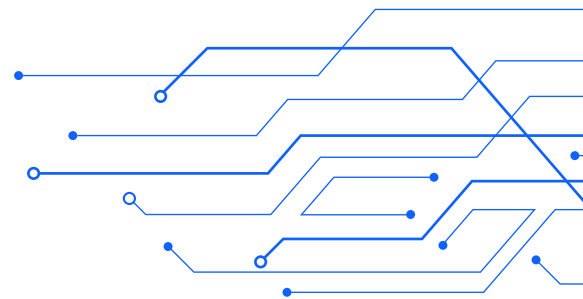
Outcome Category: Help Desk and Service Automation

High-volume, repetitive request types are the highest-density opportunity for AI agent automation. Password resets, access provisioning, standard IT troubleshooting, HR policy lookups, and benefits inquiries share a common profile: they consume analyst time in proportion to volume, not complexity. An AI agent integrated with IT Service Management (ITSM) and HR systems can handle the full resolution cycle for these request types, covering intake, classification, response, and system update, without human involvement.

Before deploying watsonx Orchestrate, the Enterprise Software organization's HR team processed 12,000 tickets per year – 70% of which were repetitive requests regarding leave balances, payroll dates, and HR policies. The average handling time was 12 minutes per ticket, with 14 FTEs dedicated to Tier 1 queries. After deploying AI agents using watsonx Orchestrate, 75% to 85% of Tier 1 requests were resolved automatically, and the team reduced from 14 FTEs to 3 FTEs to handle these queries.

"The handling time has dropped dramatically, almost 90% reduction. The case resolution rates have also increased by about 25%. And the first call resolution for Level 2 issues has increased almost 40%."

– Senior Infrastructure and Operations Leader, Enterprise Software Organization



The Investment Management Firm deployed and integrated watsonx Orchestrate with ServiceNow for ITSM ticketing and Workday for HR management to triage and resolve help desk tickets. The firm saved approximately 8,000 hours of analyst time worth \$327K in Year 1, growing to \$511K by Year 3 as the licensed user base expanded.

Key Metrics



\$327K

Help desk automation
savings, Year 1
(Investment Mgmt. Firm, per 100 users)



8,000 hrs

Hours saved in Year 1
(IT automation, Investment Mgmt. Firm)



0.32 months

Payback period
(Investment Mgmt. Firm)



75–85%

HR ticket auto-resolution rat
(Enterprise Software Organization)

What This Means For You

Help desk and service automation economics improve with ticket volume increases. Organizations with fewer than 5,000 tickets per month may find the math tighter; those processing 20,000 or more will see step-change returns. IT-heavy organizations in financial services, healthcare, and enterprise software, where compliance and access controls generate high-frequency requests, are particularly well positioned for a fast payback on this use case.

Outcome Category: Workforce Upskilling and Redeployment

AI agents do not replace existing employees; they absorb the workload growth that would otherwise require new hires, freeing employees to focus on higher-value, more strategic work. When agents handle a larger share of routine requests autonomously, the workforce is redeployed to activities that require judgment, creativity, and relationship management skills that AI cannot replicate. This shift is economically real and represents budgeted positions redirected toward growth and innovation rather than routine task execution.

The Enterprise Software organization avoided two full-time support roles at an average annual rate of \$85K, valued at \$176K per year. The Commercial Real Estate Firm avoided the equivalent of several administrative coordination roles annually, valued at \$200K in Year 1 and growing to \$250K by Year 3 as the deployed agent portfolio expanded. Both organizations confirmed that these positions were actively in the hiring pipeline when the automation was deployed.

Key Metrics



\$132K

Annual headcount avoidance
(Enterprise Software Organization, per 100 users)



\$270K to \$500K/yr

Annual headcount avoidance
(Commercial Real Estate Firm, per 100 users)

What This Means For You

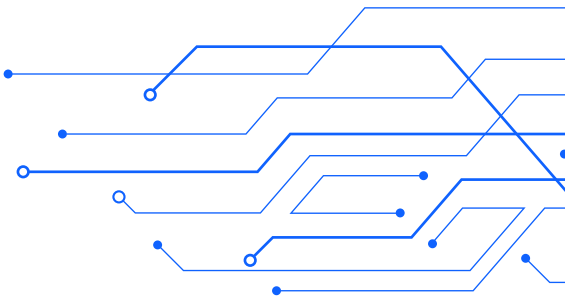
Headcount avoidance is most credible when tied to specific open requisitions or documented staffing plans. Organizations with rapidly growing service demand, such as those expanding geographically or scaling operations without proportional budget increases, will realize the highest avoidance value. Companies in constrained labor markets with long recruitment timelines also benefit from reduced time-to-capacity pressure.

Outcome Category: Process Automation and Workflow Efficiency

Beyond productivity time savings, IBM watsonx Orchestrate agents generate direct economic value by eliminating error-prone manual steps in structured business processes. The Commercial Real Estate Firm deployed agents to handle resident inquiry intake, draft lease documentation, and dispatch maintenance requests, compressing the lead-to-lease cycle from an average of 50 days to 12 days. The Enterprise Software organization's agents automated financial reconciliation workflows and Service Level Agreement (SLA) monitoring, reducing penalty exposure and accelerating close cycles.

"[Lead-to-lease cycles] took an average of 50 days. And what do you think it is now? 12 days."

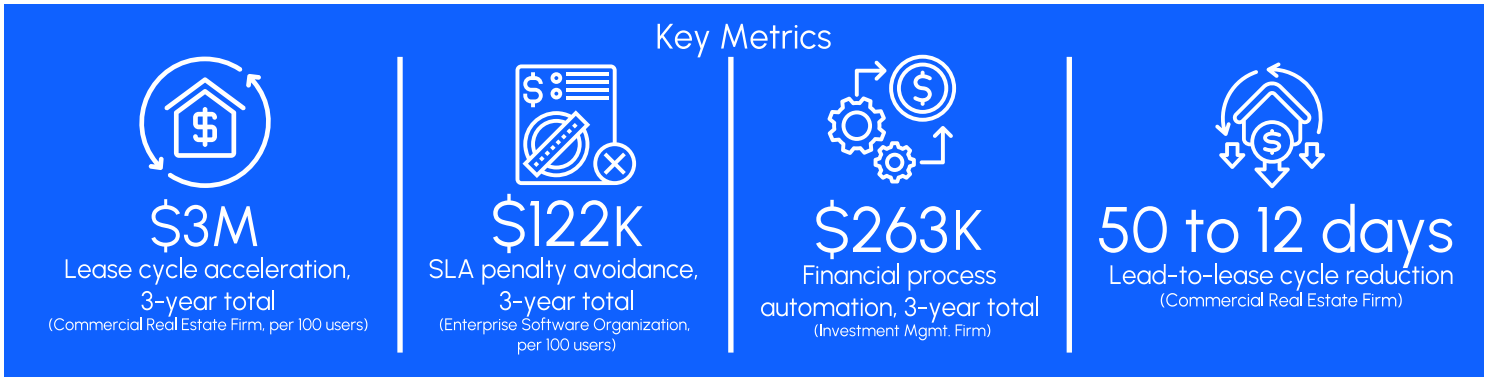
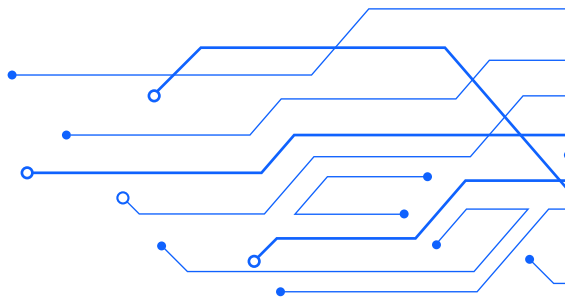
– Head of Technology, Multifamily Division, Commercial Real Estate Firm



The Global Asset Management organization's Security Operations Center (SOC), a dedicated team responsible for monitoring and responding to cybersecurity threats, had previously required four to six hours for end-to-end analysis of a true incident. After deploying watsonx Orchestrate agents integrated across security tooling, the analysis time collapsed to minutes.

"For a true incident, it would take us maybe four to six hours to do an end-to-end analysis. Through automation, we're talking about data getting back in minutes."

– Senior Technology Leader, Global Asset Management Organization



What This Means For You

Process automation value scales with transaction volume and error frequency. Real estate, financial services, and manufacturing organizations with high-volume, structured transaction flows will see the greatest returns from workflow efficiency automation. Organizations with contractual SLA obligations or regulatory reporting deadlines face additional financial risk-avoidance dimensions that conservative productivity-only models do not fully capture.



Outcome Category: Revenue Influence and FTE Redeployment

IBM watsonx Orchestrate agents can directly impact customer experience and business performance metrics that influence revenue. The Commercial Real Estate Firm's deployment produced the study's most distinctive category of value: AI-enabled improvements in tenant experience and property performance that had the potential to drive revenue.

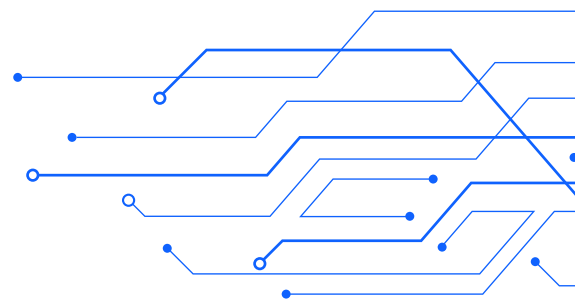
IBM watsonx Orchestrate enabled the firm to accelerate resident inquiry response, provide AI-assisted maintenance coordination, and proactively send lease renewal communications. These translated into measurable improvements in the organization's Online Reputation Assessment (ORA) score, a composite rating for residential properties that aggregates online reviews, response times, and unit availability. A higher ORA score correlates directly with higher occupancy rates and achievable rental premiums. The interviewee reported an ORA improvement from 65 to 85 points a 20-point gain after deploying watsonx Orchestrate agents across the resident-facing workflow.

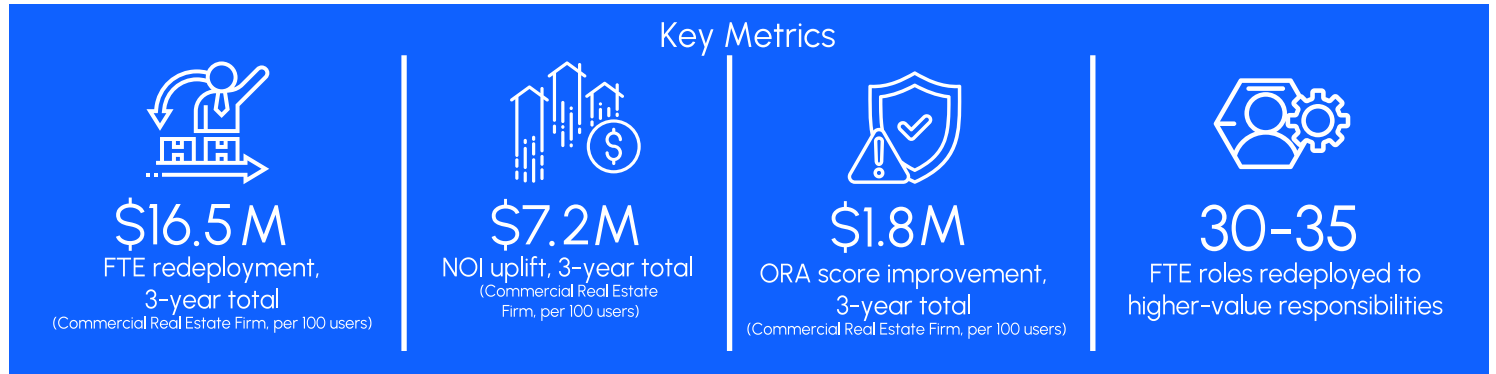
Net Operating Income (NOI), the bottom-line revenue minus operating cost figure used to value a property as a business, was modeled at a 2% improvement across the portfolio, translating to \$900K in Year 1 and growing to \$1.5M by Year 3. These figures reflect conservative per-unit assumptions across 1,300 managed properties and 300,000 residential units.

FTE redeployment was the single largest benefit line item in the study. The Commercial Real Estate Firm redeployed 30 to 35 administrative and coordination roles from data entry and resident communication to portfolio analytics and strategic planning. This was not workforce reduction: the interviewee explained that there were previously 3 property managers splitting leasing, resident engagement, and administrative duties, but after deploying the IBM watsonx Orchestrate agents, one property manager now covers all resident-facing responsibilities while the others focus on property health, inspections, and performance.

"If there were three property managers splitting all those duties, guess what? Now you can have one property manager [do it all], and the others can do different duties. And we can [avoid] hiring a fourth property manager."

– Head of Technology, Multifamily Division – Commercial Real Estate Firm





What This Means For You

Proving the influence on revenue growth is the hardest to model conservatively, yet the most compelling when validated. Organizations in property management, retail, hospitality, or any customer-facing industry where response time and service quality directly influence revenue retention will find this category highly relevant. The model applied here is a floor: organizations with larger portfolios, higher average revenue per unit, or more complex tenant interaction profiles will see proportionally larger returns.

Investment Category: Deployment and Implementation

Initial deployment costs include platform license fees for the contract activation period, systems integration and implementation consulting, technical training and certification for internal staff, API and integration development work, governance and security configuration, and transition costs associated with retiring legacy automation tools.

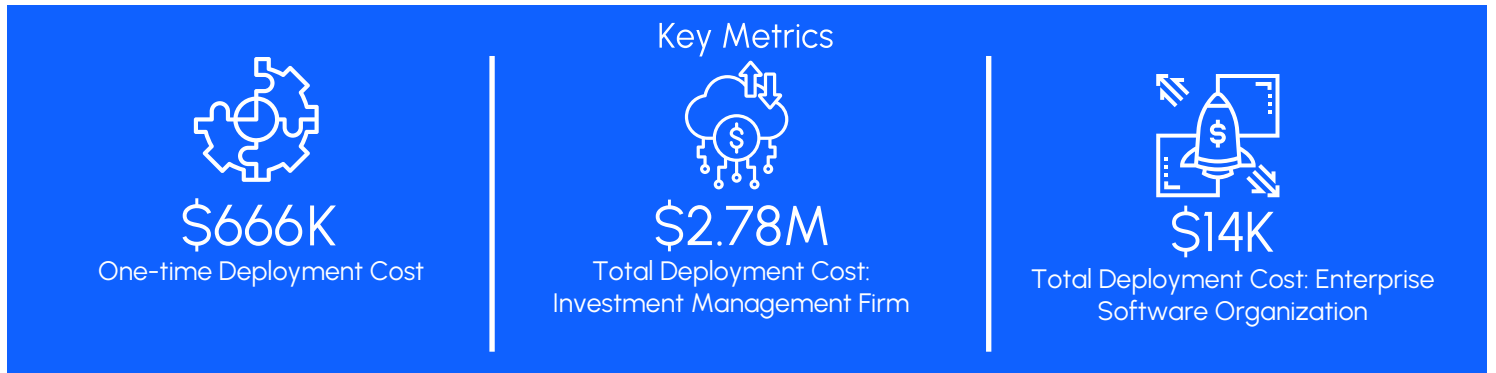
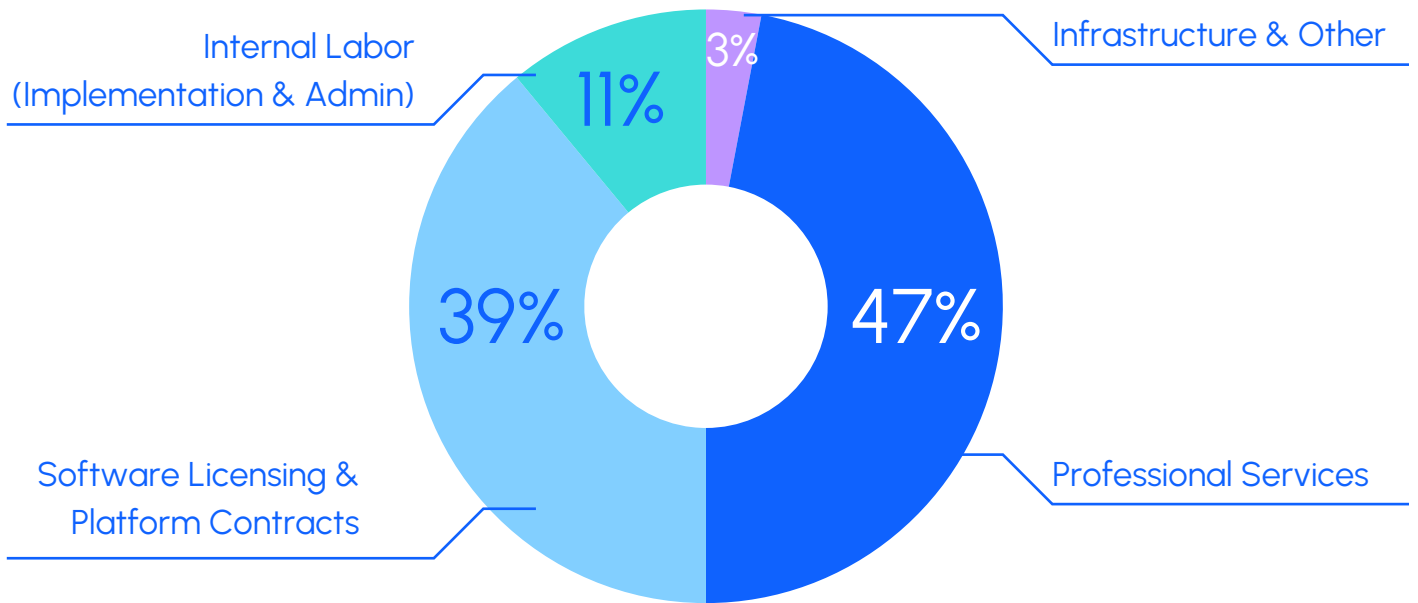
Deployment costs varied significantly across study participants: approximately \$14K for the Investment Management Firm's narrowly scoped help desk deployment to \$2.78M for the Enterprise Software Organization's enterprise-wide rollout. The latter included more than \$1M in API integration work and \$375K in training and certification programs. On a normalized basis, the composite deployment cost was \$666K per 100 users, influenced by the Enterprise Software Organization's larger investment distributed across a 400-user base.

A closer examination of the data shows that deployment costs are driven primarily by professional services rather than software licensing. Across the four organizations, professional services, including systems integration, consulting, and training, accounted for approximately 47% of deployment costs on a per-100-user basis. Software licensing and platform fees represented approximately 39%, with the remainder attributed to internal labor and infrastructure setup (see Figure 3).

This distribution reflects the complexity of enterprise-scale implementations. For example, the Enterprise Software Organization incurred more than \$1M in API integration costs across six enterprise systems, along with \$375K in workforce training. In contrast, the Investment Management Firm completed its deployment in approximately 2.5 weeks at a total cost of \$14K, driven almost entirely by professional services provided by a single implementation specialist.

Organizations evaluating potential investments should distinguish between these cost components. Licensing costs are generally predictable and scale with usage, while services-related costs vary materially based on deployment scope, integration requirements, and organizational complexity.

Figure 3. Composite Deployment Cost Breakdown by Category (per 100 Users)



What This Means For You

Deployment cost is the most controllable variable in the BEV equation. Organizations that start with a single, well-defined use case and leverage IBM professional services for rapid deployment will face a fraction of the upfront cost of a broad enterprise launch. The infrastructure built in Year 0, including governance configuration, integration connectors, and identity and access management setup, has high reuse value for subsequent use cases, meaning the marginal cost of expansion is substantially lower than the initial deployment cost.

Investment Category: Annual Operating Cost

Annual operating costs include platform license renewal, cloud infrastructure and compute charges, platform maintenance and enhancement work, ongoing governance and compliance activities, and costs for internal administrative staff. These costs were generally stable year over year across most organizations, with modest increases reflecting user base expansion or license tier upgrades tied to usage growth.

The composite average annual operating cost was approximately \$535K per 100 users across Years 1 through 3. This figure is dominated by the Enterprise Software Organization's \$2.36M annual operating cost, which included \$960K in platform licenses, \$600K in platform operations staff, and \$500K in maintenance work across a broad, multi-system deployment. The Investment Management Firm's \$241K to \$336K annual cost range illustrates what a focused, low-complexity deployment looks like operationally.



What This Means For You

Operating cost should be evaluated in the context of scale, scope, and utilization. As deployments expand, costs increase modestly while value scales faster; in this study, benefits exceeded operating costs by approximately 4.5x in Year 1. Variability is driven primarily by integration complexity, the number of active users, and the breadth of use cases, rather than by the platform itself. Focused deployments can maintain relatively low operating costs, while enterprise-scale deployments require additional support, governance, and optimization. Over time, as adoption deepens and more workflows are automated, incremental costs rise gradually while incremental value compounds, improving the overall benefit-to-cost ratio.





The Big Picture

The financial model in this study captures what is measurable. It does not capture everything that matters. Interview participants described outcomes that compound the value of the financial results but do not appear in any ROI calculation.

Employee Experience and Workforce Transformation

All four organizations interviewed reported a change in how employees relate to their work after AI agent deployment. The most common theme was relief from spending professional time on clerical tasks. At the Commercial Real Estate Firm, administrative staff who had manually entered data across multiple systems described a shift in role. At the Investment Management Firm, help desk analysts reported focusing more on issues that require judgment than on high-volume, routine requests.

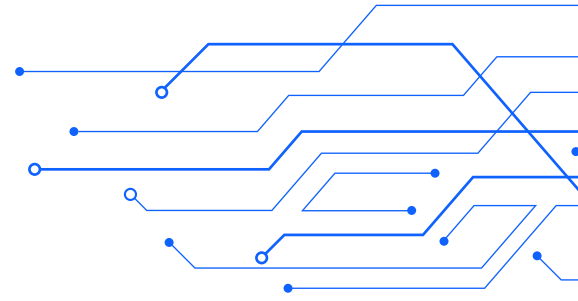
- Reduction in repetitive, low-skill task burden for knowledge workers across all four organizations
- Workforce capability reorientation: staff transitioned from high-volume routine processing to higher-value analytical and strategic responsibilities
- Reduced recruitment pressure for roles previously focused on coordination overhead
- Improved employee satisfaction was reported qualitatively by all four organizations

AI Capability Maturity and Strategic Positioning

Organizations that deploy AI agents for a defined use case gain something more durable than the immediate ROI: they build organizational competency in AI operations. They develop governance frameworks, integration patterns, data quality practices, and change management muscle that compound with each subsequent deployment. The Global Asset Management Organization described their deployment as ongoing expansion, targeting growth from 3,000 to 4,000 active users by the end of 2026, with new use cases in cloud security, automated red-team testing, and third-party vendor management in development.

"IBM watsonx Orchestrate helps security teams automate repetitive tasks such as alert triaging, log collection, and incident response workflows across multiple security tools. This improves analyst productivity. It accelerates threat detection investigations and enables faster, coordinated response to security-related events and incidents."

– Senior Technology Leader, Global Asset Management Organization



Customer and Resident Experience

Faster internal processes translate to measurably better external experiences. The Commercial Real Estate Firm's improvements in resident response times contributed to a 20-point increase in ORA (Online Reputation Assessment) score, from 65 to 85, which, at the portfolio scale, influences occupancy, renewal rates, and NOI. These outcomes represent revenue-adjacent (indirect financial) impacts driven by improved service performance.

At the Investment Management Firm, help desk automation reduced ticket resolution time, improving employee productivity across the organization. These second-order effects are real but are excluded from the conservative financial model.

Compliance and Risk Reduction

The Global Asset Management Organization cited a 20% reduction in risk exposure as a result of the automation, driven by increased breadth of security tool coverage and improved accuracy in threat detection and response. AI agents operate within defined governance boundaries, produce auditable records of actions taken, and eliminate the class of compliance errors that arise from manual process variation. In regulated industries such as financial services, this is a structural risk reduction that has financial value even when it cannot be assigned a precise dollar figure.





Recommendations

The BEV results in this study are achievable; they are not outliers nor were they produced by unusually favorable conditions. They reflect what disciplined, well-scoped deployments of IBM watsonx Orchestrate produce across diverse enterprise contexts. Based on the results and recommendations provided in the customer interviews, Futurum recommends:

- Begin with a single high-volume workflow, not a platform-wide transformation. The Investment Management Firm achieved a 2.5-week go-live by focusing on help desk ticket resolution. The governance, integrations, and organizational confidence built in this initial deployment form the foundation for subsequent expansion. By comparison, a broad initial scope increases costs, timelines, and risk without improving Year 1 returns.
- Establish productivity baselines before go-live. Organizations that measure ticket volumes, handling times, FTE hours by activity, and error rates before deployment can attribute outcomes more precisely after go-live. Without baselines, ROI depends on estimates rather than measured results.
- Invest in adoption, not just deployment. Organizations that realized the highest benefits invested in user enablement, internal champions, and change management. Platform capability depends on consistent employee engagement. Adoption investment amplifies technical investment.
- Plan governance architecture for scale, not just the initial use case. Organizations that deploy audit logging, guardrails, and policy enforcement early within an enterprise agentic control plane maximize their ROI by preventing the compounding failure modes (hallucination, data leakage, prompt injection) that cause agentic deployments to stall or be pulled back. Access controls, audit logging, and configuration standards built early are reused across deployments. Underinvestment creates technical debt that slows expansion and complicates compliance.
- Calibrate expectations by industry and wage environment. Organizations in higher-wage sectors will see higher per-user productivity value. Organizations in operations-heavy environments should emphasize process efficiency and outcomes that drive revenue.
- Track attribution separately from the start. This study applied attribution factors ranging from 65% to 100%. Organizations deploying multiple AI tools should track contributions separately to support accurate ROI analysis.

Financial Summary

All values are normalized to per 100 licensed users. Equal-weight composite average of four organizations. Numbers rounded to three significant figures.

Figure 4: Three-Year Cash Flow-Composite BEV Model (Per 100 Users)

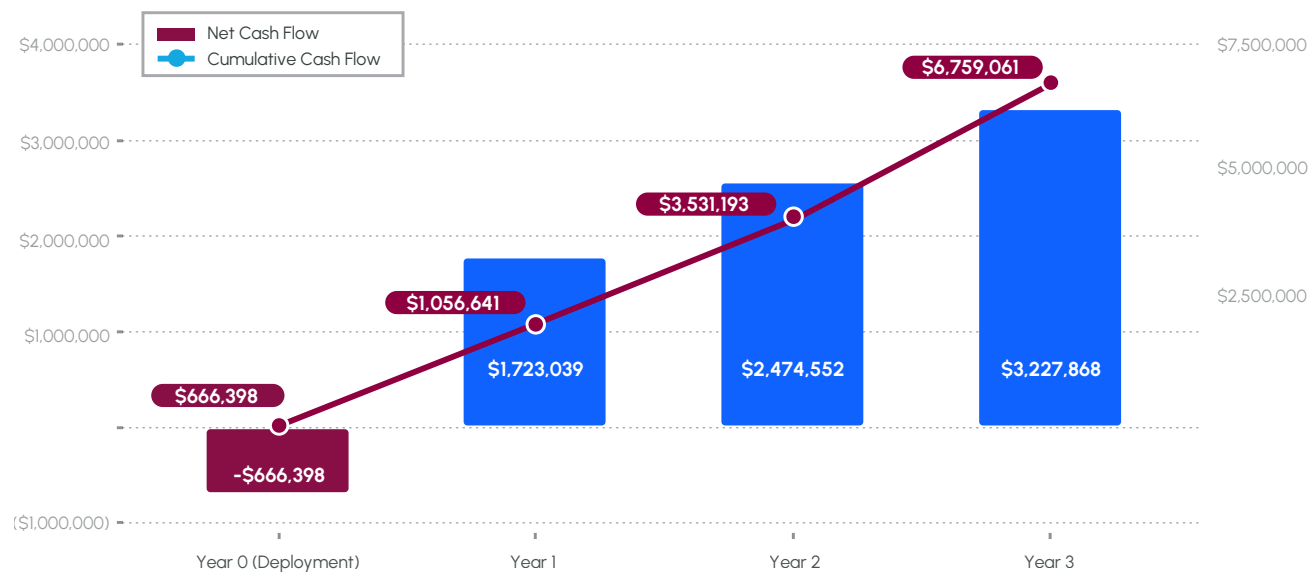


Table 3. Composite Business Economic Value Results (Per 100 Users)

Metric	Composite Result (Per 100 Users)
3-Year ROI	236%
Payback Period	2.1 months
3-Year NPV at 10% Discount Rate	\$5,370,000
Initial Deployment Cost (Year 0)	\$666,000
Total 3-Year Operating Cost (Years 1–3)	\$1,600,000
Total 3-Year Investment (All-In)	\$2,270,000
Total 3-Year Benefits (Undiscounted)	\$9,030,000
Benefit-to-Cost Ratio	3.98:1

Table 4. Three-Year Benefit Category Breakdown (Per 100 Users)

Benefit Category	Composite Model (3-Year, per 100 Users)
Productivity Time Savings	\$863,000
FTE Redeployment/Customer Experience Outcomes*	\$6,561,000
HR, Help Desk, and Service Automation	\$258,000
Headcount Growth Avoidance	\$371,000
Process and Workflow Efficiency	\$977,000
Total 3-Year Benefits	\$9,030,000

*Includes labor redeployment benefits observed across multiple organizations and indirect financial outcomes (e.g., improved customer experience leading to higher occupancy or retention) observed in customer-facing environments.

Sources

Primary interview data collected by Futurum Research analysts in early 2026 with four enterprise organizations that deployed IBM watsonx Orchestrate between November 2024 and August 2025. All financial figures are research-based estimates and should not be construed as guarantees of future financial performance.

Important Information About This Report

AUTHORS

Donald Jin

Research Director, Business
Economic Value | The Futurum Group

PUBLISHER

Futurum Research

INQUIRIES

Contact us if you would like to discuss this report and The Futurum Group will respond promptly.

CITATIONS

This paper can be cited by accredited press and analysts, but must be cited in context, displaying author's name, author's title, and "The Futurum Group." Non-press and non-analysts must receive prior written permission by The Futurum Group for any citations.

LICENSING

This document, including any supporting materials, is owned by The Futurum Group. This publication may not be reproduced, distributed, or shared in any form without the prior written permission of The Futurum Group.

DISCLOSURES

The Futurum Group provides research, analysis, advising, and consulting to many high-tech companies, including those mentioned in this paper. No employees at the firm hold any equity positions with any companies cited in this document.



ABOUT IBM

[IBM](#) is a global technology and consulting company focused on helping enterprises modernize operations, manage data, and deploy AI across complex, hybrid environments. Its portfolio spans hybrid cloud infrastructure, enterprise software, and consulting services, enabling organizations to integrate systems, automate workflows, and drive more intelligent decision-making. A key part of its AI strategy is watsonx Orchestrate, which helps organizations coordinate tasks, tools, and data across workflows to operationalize AI at scale. IBM Consulting further supports this approach by helping clients align technology, processes, and governance to deliver measurable business outcomes. Together, IBM's platform and services are designed to help enterprises move from isolated AI use cases to more coordinated, enterprise-wide execution.



ABOUT THE FUTURUM GROUP

[The Futurum Group](#) is an independent research, analysis, and advisory firm, focused on digital innovation and market-disrupting technologies and trends. Every day our analysts, researchers, and advisors help business leaders from around the world anticipate tectonic shifts in their industries and leverage disruptive innovation to either gain or maintain a competitive advantage in their markets.



CONTACT INFORMATION: The Futurum Group LLC | futurumgroup.com | (833) 722-5337