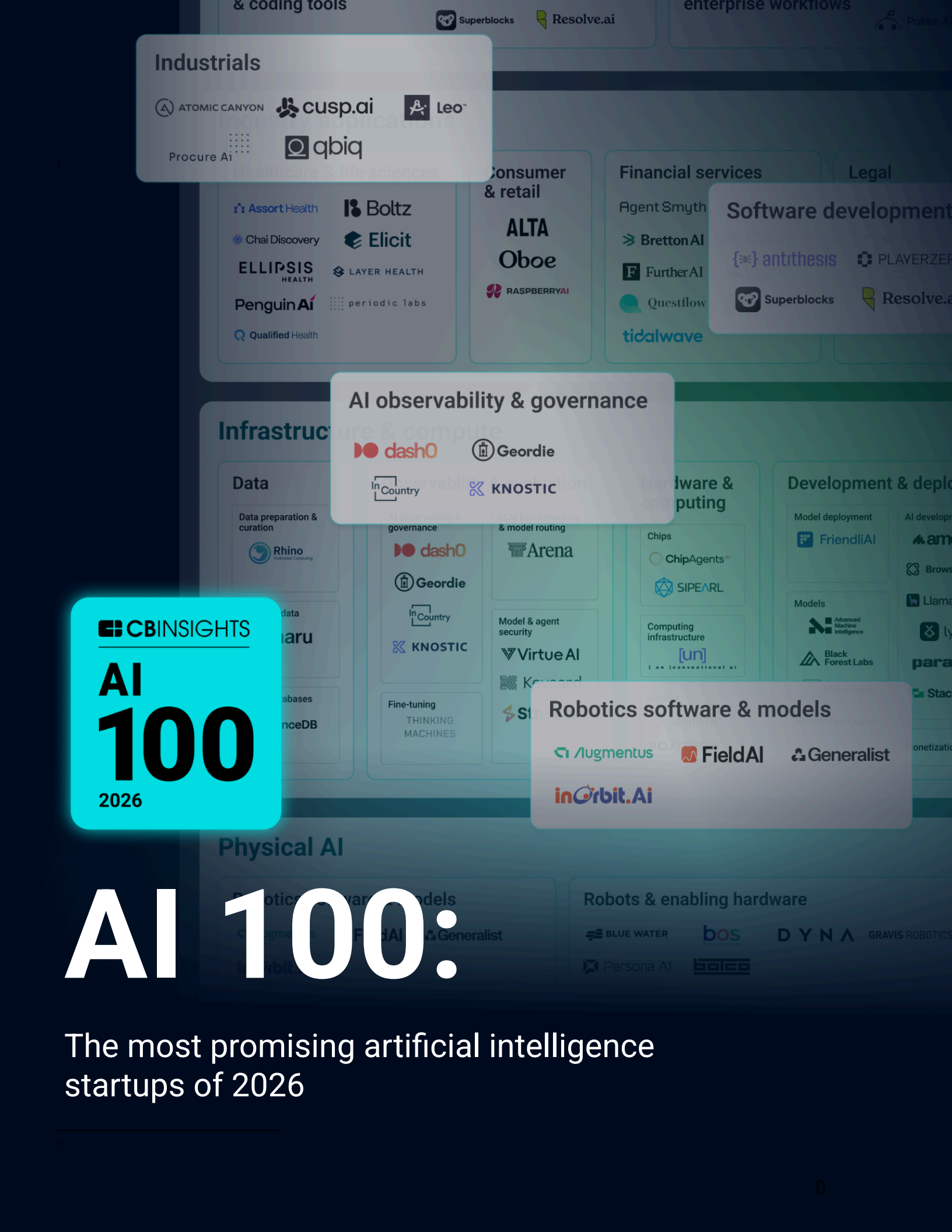


AI 100:

The most promising artificial intelligence startups of 2026

CB Insights is launching the 10th annual AI 100 — our ranking of the world's top emerging AI companies based on CB Insights' predictive signals. From the infrastructure layer to enterprise and industry-specific applications, this year's winners are shaping how industries think, decide, and act.

The AI landscape is larger, faster-moving, and harder to navigate than at any point in its history. The main question has shifted from whether AI works to how fast it can be deployed, governed, and scaled across complex workflows.

The CB Insights AI 100 captures where that shift is taking hold. Our annual list factors in strength across market traction, investor quality, and talent to identify the most promising early-stage AI companies. The list carries real signal: across five cohorts, 64% of AI 100 winners closed a follow-on equity round versus 31% for comparable AI companies and they did so a median 198 days sooner. This is why the AI 100 has earned a reputation as one of the most reliable early signals in the industry.

Some highlights of this year's cohort include:

- AI agents are emerging as a distinct class of actor requiring their own identity, credentialing, and accountability layer, and a cohort on this year's list is building exactly that infrastructure.
- Physical AI enters the AI 100 as a standalone category for the first time, with 11 companies spanning robotics software, autonomous hardware, and enabling chips, as the full stack for deploying autonomous systems matures simultaneously.

- The vertical AI companies pulling ahead are being defined by what their data looks like, not what sector they serve, with financial services and healthcare tied as the largest industry subcategories at 9 companies each.

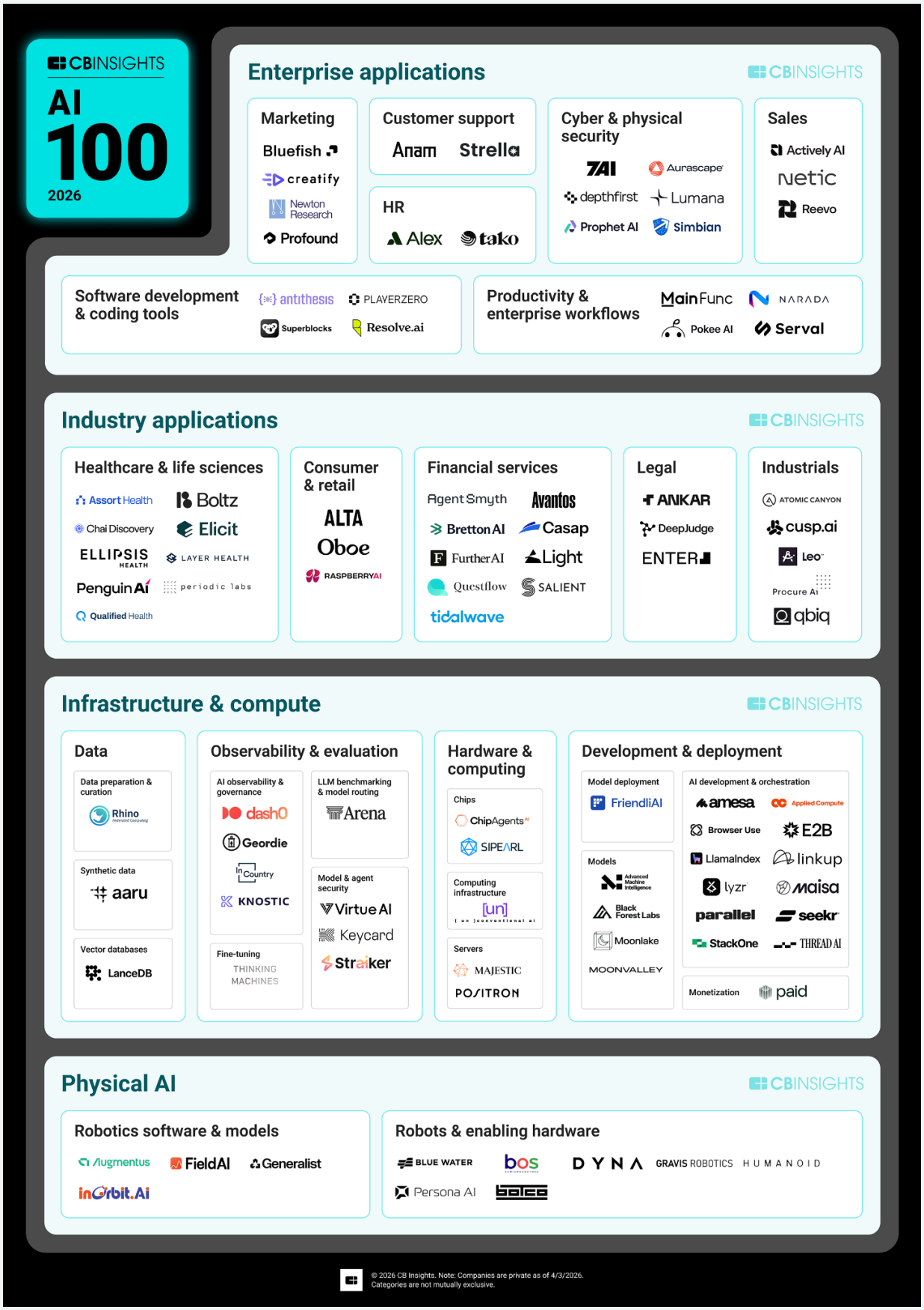
See the full list of winners

On the next page, we map the winners across categories and subcategories, along with key trends the winners reveal about the future of AI.

Those who get this right will shape the economy agents are creating.

Methodology: We selected 100 winners from 40K+ companies using deal activity, industry partnerships, investor strength, hiring momentum, and CB Insights' predictive scores for success (Mosaic Score) and commercial traction (Commercial Maturity). We also analyzed CB Insights' exclusive interviews with software buyers and dug into Analyst Briefings submitted directly to us by startups.

Check out our interactive market map of the winners


CBINSIGHTS
AI 100
2026
Enterprise applications
CBINSIGHTS
Marketing
Bluefish
creatify
Newton Research
Profound
Customer support
Anam
Strella
HR
Alex
tako
Cyber & physical security
7AI
Aurascape
depthfirst
Lumana
Prophet AI
Simbian
Sales
Actively AI
netic
Reevo
Software development & coding tools
antithesis
PLAYERZERO
Superblocks
Resolve.ai
Productivity & enterprise workflows
MainFunc
NARADA
Pokee AI
Serval
Industry applications
CBINSIGHTS
Healthcare & life sciences
Assort Health
Boltz
Chai Discovery
Elicit
ELLIPSIS HEALTH
LAYER HEALTH
Penguin AI
periodic labs
Qualified Health
Consumer & retail
ALTA
Oboe
RASPBERRYAI
Financial services
Agent Smyth
Avantos
Bretton AI
Casap
FurtherAI
Light
Questflow
SALIENT
tidalwave
Legal
ANKAR
DeepJudge
ENTER
Industrials
ATOMIC CANYON
cusp.ai
Leo
Procure AI
qbiq
Infrastructure & compute
CBINSIGHTS
Data
Data preparation & curation
Rhino
Synthetic data
aaru
Vector databases
LanceDB
Observability & evaluation
AI observability & governance
dash0
Geordie
InCountry
KNOSTIC
Fine-tuning
THINKING MACHINES
LLM benchmarking & model routing
Arena
Model & agent security
Virtue AI
Keycard
Straiker
Hardware & computing
Chips
ChipAgents
SIPEARL
Computing infrastructure
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Servers
MAJESTIC
POSITRON
Development & deployment
Model deployment
FriendliAI
Models
Advanced Machine Intelligence
Black Forest Labs
Moonlake
MOONVALLEY
AI development & orchestration
amesa
Applied Compute
Browser Use
E2B
LlamaIndex
linkup
lyzr
maisa
parallel
seekr
StackOne
THREAD AI
Monetization
paid
Physical AI
CBINSIGHTS
Robotics software & models
Augmentus
FieldAI
Generalist
inOrbit.AI
Robots & enabling hardware
BLUE WATER
bos
DYNA
GRAVIS ROBOTICS
HUMANOID
Persona AI
Boleo
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Categories are not mutually exclusive.

Key Takeaways

1. AI agents are running enterprise workflows, but they need their own rulebook

A number of companies on this year's AI 100 are deploying agents at scale that independently execute multi-step workflows without human sign-off on each step. For example, Prophet Security ran over 1M SOC investigations in six months while Bretton AI completed 1.2M financial crime cases. These agents operate in production, at enterprise scale, touching real data and workflows.

> “
>
> The best security analysts in the world are still spending most of their day doing work that humans were never meant to do in the first place. 7AI deploys agents that take on that non-human work autonomously so analysts can focus on the things that matter
>
> **Nathan Burke**
> CMO at 7AI

However, that scale surfaces the question over the role of AI agents within the enterprise. Agents act on enterprise systems, but they are not employees, service accounts, or traditional software. They have no persistent identity, no verifiable owner, no scoped authority, and no audit trail tied to a principal. They execute, but no framework exists for who they are, what they are permitted to do, or who answers when they act outside their lane.

The observability & evaluation category on this year's list is building that framework — an identity and accountability layer for non-human actors:

- Keycard (Model & agent security) handles identity and credentialing, replacing static API keys with dynamic tokens scoped to individual agent tasks, so a compromised agent can't act beyond its assigned scope.
- Geordie AI (AI observability & governance) covers behavioral verification, winning RSAC 2026's Innovation Sandbox for its real-time risk mitigation engine for autonomous systems.

- Virtue AI (Model & agent security) takes care of pre-deployment assurance, claiming 30x faster model behavior oversight with 50+ production testing environments.
- Straiker (model & agent security) owns adversarial readiness, growing 8x in six months by combining adversarial testing with runtime protection.

This is infrastructure for a new identity class, a framework aligned with Know Your Agent (KYA) software. The companies on this year's list building observability & evaluation tooling have collectively raised $278M in the last 3 years, which is early capital for what is, in effect, the operational rulebook for letting autonomous systems participate in enterprise workflows.

2. The future of physical AI is scaling single robots to coordinated fleets

Physical AI — AI that powers robots, vehicles, and autonomous machines — raised a record $78B in 2025, and this year's AI 100 reflects why: for the first time, the full stack needed to deploy autonomous systems in the real world is maturing simultaneously.

> “
>
> We've built our alpha robot in around seven months from design to a functional prototype. Just one year after founding, we are already testing robots in real-world use cases with partners. We have 34,000 pre-orders and seven successful pilots with tier-one companies.
>
> **Humanoid**

Foundation models and purpose-built hardware have advanced to the point where autonomous systems can handle unstructured environments at commercial scale, spanning autonomous warships (Blue Water Autonomy), general-purpose robots (DYNA), and industrial humanoids (Persona AI).

The next frontier, and the one this year's cohort is beginning to offer, is coordinating multiple autonomous units toward a shared objective.

- InOrbit is vendor-agnostic robot orchestration, OpenRobOps open-source fleet manager

- FieldAI's risk-aware framework explicitly enables "multiple agents or robots to operate cohesively"
- Gravis Robotics ships "Remote Orchestration" as a named product mode in Slate, letting one operator supervise one or more machines

Most enterprise robot deployments today are still single-unit. Coordinating heterogeneous fleets across a shared objective is an unsolved problem, and the companies doing it well will have significant leverage as physical AI scales. InOrbit grew its customer base 200% in the past year, FieldAI raised a $314M Series A at a $2B valuation, and Gravis Robotics is already deployed across 7 countries, early signals that the market is forming faster than expected.

3. The vertical AI winners are defined by their data, not their sector

Looking across this year's industrial, life sciences, and financial services winners, the companies with the most durable businesses share one common thread: their data is the moat, and the type of data they sit on determines what that moat looks like.

Where the underlying data is non-textual — such as molecular structures, CAD geometry, materials properties — general-purpose AI cannot natively represent it, so the companies winning here build their own models. Chai Discovery trained its own antibody design model and grew from a $150M to $1.3B valuation in 15 months. Leo AI reports 96% accuracy on mechanical engineering questions versus 46% for generic tools and its CEO describes the moat plainly:

> "The ones that are going to survive are solving a very specific problem for specific people. We have a moat because we are digesting data which is super niche within a niche. The chances that Google or OpenAI will design an AI tool that can understand mechanical design data are very, very low.

Maor Farid
CEO at Leo AI

Where AI can already read the data, the moat shifts to switching costs. In financial services, companies like Bretton AI, Further AI, and Salient build on top of existing models but embed so deeply into compliance workflows and lending systems that replacing them becomes genuinely painful. Salient's 0% customer churn and 100% pilot conversion rate is the clearest evidence of that.

The third pattern is access to rare datasets. Where the data is text-based but hard to get to — like regulated patient records, licensed databases, institutional knowledge — the dataset itself is the moat. For instance, Atomic Canyon trained on the NRC's 53M-page regulatory database. Assort Health has encoded 125M+ patient interactions without building its own foundation model. What they share is data that no competitor can replicate, regardless of what models get released.

AI 100 winners

Company	Category	Sub-category	Application
Anam	Enterprise applications	Customer support	
Strella	Enterprise applications	Customer support	
7AI	Enterprise applications	Cyber & physical security	
Aurascape	Enterprise applications	Cyber & physical security	
depthfirst	Enterprise applications	Cyber & physical security	
Lumana	Enterprise applications	Cyber & physical security	
Prophet	Enterprise applications	Cyber & physical security	
Simbian	Enterprise applications	Cyber & physical security	
Alex	Enterprise applications	HR	
Tako	Enterprise applications	HR	
Bluefish	Enterprise applications	Marketing	
Creatify AI	Enterprise applications	Marketing	
Newton Research	Enterprise applications	Marketing	
Profound	Enterprise applications	Marketing	

Company	Category	Sub-category	Application
MainFunc	Enterprise applications	Productivity & enterprise workflows	
Narada	Enterprise applications	Productivity & enterprise workflows	
Pokee AI	Enterprise applications	Productivity & enterprise workflows	
Serval	Enterprise applications	Productivity & enterprise workflows	
Actively AI	Enterprise applications	Sales	
Netic	Enterprise applications	Sales	
Reevo	Enterprise applications	Sales	
Antithesis	Enterprise applications	Software development & coding tools	
PlayerZero	Enterprise applications	Software development & coding tools	
Resolve AI	Enterprise applications	Software development & coding tools	
Superblocks	Enterprise applications	Software development & coding tools	
Alta	Industry applications	Consumer & retail	
Oboe	Industry applications	Consumer & retail	
Raspberry AI	Industry applications	Consumer & retail	
AgentSmyth	Industry applications	Financial services	
Avantos	Industry applications	Financial services	
Bretton AI	Industry applications	Financial services	
Casap	Industry applications	Financial services	
Further AI	Industry applications	Financial services	
Light	Industry applications	Financial services	
Questflow	Industry applications	Financial services	

Company	Category	Sub-category	Application
Salient	Industry applications	Financial services	
TidalWave	Industry applications	Financial services	
Assort Health	Industry applications	Healthcare & life sciences	
Boltz	Industry applications	Healthcare & life sciences	
Chai Discovery	Industry applications	Healthcare & life sciences	
Elicit	Industry applications	Healthcare & life sciences	
Ellipsis Health	Industry applications	Healthcare & life sciences	
Layer Health	Industry applications	Healthcare & life sciences	
Penguin Ai	Industry applications	Healthcare & life sciences	
Periodic Labs	Industry applications	Healthcare & life sciences	
Qualified Health	Industry applications	Healthcare & life sciences	
Atomic Canyon	Industry applications	Industrials	
CuspAI	Industry applications	Industrials	
Leo AI	Industry applications	Industrials	
Procure Ai	Industry applications	Industrials	
Qbiq	Industry applications	Industrials	
Ankar	Industry applications	Legal	
DeepJudge	Industry applications	Legal	
Enter	Industry applications	Legal	
Rhino Federated Computing	Infrastructure & compute	Data	Data preparation & curation

Company	Category	Sub-category	Application
Aaru	Infrastructure & compute	Data	Synthetic data
LanceDB	Infrastructure & compute	Data	Vector databases
AMESA	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
Applied Compute	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
E2B	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
Linkup	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
Lyzr	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
Maisa AI	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
Parallel	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
Seekr	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
StackOne	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
Thread AI	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
Browser Use	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
LlamaIndex	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	AI development & orchestration
FriendliAI	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	Model deployment
Ami Labs	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	Models
Black Forest Labs	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	Models

Company	Category	Sub-category	Application
Moonlake AI	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	Models
Moonvalley	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	Models
Paid	Infrastructure & compute	Development & deployment	Monetization
ChipAgents	Infrastructure & compute	Hardware & computing	Chips
SiPearl	Infrastructure & compute	Hardware & computing	Chips
Unconventional AI	Infrastructure & compute	Hardware & computing	Computing infrastructure
Majestic Labs AI	Infrastructure & compute	Hardware & computing	Servers
Positron	Infrastructure & compute	Hardware & computing	Servers
Dash0	Infrastructure & compute	Observability & evaluation	AI observability & governance
Geordie AI	Infrastructure & compute	Observability & evaluation	AI observability & governance
InCountry	Infrastructure & compute	Observability & evaluation	AI observability & governance
Knostic	Infrastructure & compute	Observability & evaluation	AI observability & governance
Thinking Machines Lab	Infrastructure & compute	Observability & evaluation	Fine-tuning
LMArena	Infrastructure & compute	Observability & evaluation	LLM benchmarking & model routing
Keycard	Infrastructure & compute	Observability & evaluation	Model & agent security
Straiker	Infrastructure & compute	Observability & evaluation	Model & agent security
Virtue AI	Infrastructure & compute	Observability & evaluation	Model & agent security
Augmentus	Physical AI	Robotics software & models	

Company	Category	Sub-category	Application
FieldAI	Physical AI	Robotics software & models	
Generalist AI	Physical AI	Robotics software & models	
InOrbit	Physical AI	Robotics software & models	
Blue Water Autonomy	Physical AI	Robots & enabling hardware	
BOS Semiconductors	Physical AI	Robots & enabling hardware	
DYNA	Physical AI	Robots & enabling hardware	
Gravis Robotics	Physical AI	Robots & enabling hardware	
Humanoid	Physical AI	Robots & enabling hardware	
Persona AI	Physical AI	Robots & enabling hardware	
The Bot Company	Physical AI	Robots & enabling hardware	

Category definitions

Enterprise applications: AI products that deploy agents and workflows to automate or augment business functions across an organization.

- **Customer support:** AI agents that autonomously handle customer inquiries or augment human agents across communication channels.
- **Cyber & physical security:** AI-powered solutions that detect, prevent, and respond to digital and physical threats, vulnerabilities, and attacks.
- **HR:** AI tools that automate and improve hiring, workforce management, and employee experience workflows.

- **Marketing:** AI platforms that generate, personalize, and optimize content and campaigns across channels.
- **Productivity & enterprise workflows:** Intelligent systems that autonomously handle repetitive business workflows and orchestrate multi-step processes across operations.
- **Sales:** AI platforms that identify prospects, automate outreach, and accelerate revenue workflows.
- **Software development & coding tools:** AI solutions that assist with code generation, debugging, testing, and software development workflows.

Industry applications: Verticalized AI products built for the specific data, compliance requirements, and workflows of a single industry.

- **Financial services:** AI solutions for banking, insurance, and investment workflows, covering risk assessment, compliance, and process automation.
- **Healthcare & life sciences:** AI tools spanning clinical care delivery, drug discovery, protein engineering, and biological data analysis.
- **Industrials:** AI systems that optimize engineering, manufacturing, and operational workflows in industrial environments.
- **Legal:** AI tools for legal research, document analysis, contract management, and workflow automation.
- **Consumer & retail:** AI products that serve end consumers directly or support retailers in optimizing the shopping experience.

Infrastructure & compute: The foundational layer of models, tooling, hardware, and observability that AI applications are built on.

- **Data:** Tools for generating, curating, storing, and retrieving the data that AI models are trained and run on.
    - **Synthetic data:** Platforms that generate artificial datasets to train or fine-tune AI models where real data is scarce or sensitive.

- **Data preparation & curation:** Tools that clean, transform, label, and organize data to make it suitable for AI training and deployment.
- **Vector databases:** Databases optimized for storing and retrieving high-dimensional embeddings used in AI search and retrieval.

- **Development & deployment:** Tools for building, training, deploying, and monetizing AI models and applications.
  - **Models:** Foundation and specialized models that serve as the core intelligence layer for AI applications.
  - **AI development & orchestration:** Platforms that help developers build, manage, and coordinate AI agents and multi-step workflows.
  - **Model deployment:** Infrastructure for serving AI models efficiently at scale.
  - **Monetization:** Tools that help developers and companies commercialize their models and applications.
- **Hardware & computing:** Physical infrastructure purpose-built to train and run AI workloads.
  - **Chips:** Custom silicon designed to accelerate AI training and inference workloads.
  - **Servers:** Hardware systems configured and optimized for AI compute at scale.
  - **Computing infrastructure:** Broader infrastructure solutions that support AI workload distribution and processing.
- **Observability & evaluation:** Tools for monitoring, measuring, securing, and improving AI models and agents in production.
  - **AI observability & governance:** Platforms that monitor model behavior, enforce compliance, and maintain visibility into AI systems.
  - **Model & agent security:** Tools that protect AI models and autonomous agents from adversarial attacks and misuse.
  - **Fine-tuning:** Platforms that adapt foundation models to specific tasks or domains using targeted training.
  - **LLM benchmarking & model routing:** Tools that evaluate model performance and direct queries to the most appropriate model.

Physical AI: AI systems that perceive, decide, and act in the physical world through autonomous machines and robotics.

- **Robotics software & models:** Software platforms and foundation models that power robot perception, navigation, and decision-making.
- **Robots & enabling hardware:** Physical machines and the hardware components that allow autonomous systems to operate in real-world environments.