

MSP AUTOMATION REPORT · 2026

The 2026 State of MSP Automation

MSPs run better on automation.
And AI is widening the divide.



Foreword

When we started building Rewst, I kept hearing the same thing from MSPs: “We’re already pretty automated.”

They weren’t wrong, exactly. They built some scripts. They had a few task-based workflows in their RMM. Tickets were getting routed. On the surface, it looked like automation. But when I sat with them to walk through the full processes across tools: how a new user actually got onboarded, or how a security alert made its way from detection to resolution, there were lots of gaps.

That was 2021. In 2026, I’m still having a version of that conversation. But now, the stakes are higher.

This report is a look at where the MSP industry stands on automation. We surveyed 300 professionals and what came back confirmed what we see: most MSPs have made real progress. But few have solidified how to sustain it.

The blocker isn’t budget. It isn’t buy-in. It’s expertise, and the absence of a clear playbook for what to build after the early wins are done. That’s the wall most MSPs hit.

AI changes things. And I want to be direct about what that means and what it doesn’t.

AI isn’t a shortcut around automation. It isn’t going to replace the work of building reliable, scalable workflows. What it can do is lower the barrier of who gets to build them. It’s the best answer to the expertise barrier that’s held the middle of the market back for years. The data in this report shows the MSPs at the highest maturity levels are also the ones leaning hardest on AI to get there and pulling ahead as a result.

MSPs that are doing this today are still early adopters who won’t be playing catch-up once the majority of MSPs have adopted automation.

Your size, budget, or how long you’ve been in the market don’t matter as much as how you’re treating automation. Those who integrate automation as a strategic capability — something you’re actively building, measuring, and compounding — will reap the big rewards. Those who treat it as a collection of one-off wins will fall behind and eventually close up shop.

This report aggregates the responses of 300 MSP professionals, Rewst customers and non-customers alike, and we want to share it with you — so you’re armed with the perspective you need to take the right steps for your business.

Toodles.



Foreword by
Aharon Chernin
CEO of Rewst

A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read "Aharon Chernin".

Setting the scene

Automation isn't new for MSPs. Its value is already proven.

And yet, when we asked 300 MSP professionals — Rewst customers and non-customers alike, spanning technical operators, team leads, and executives across North America, EMEA, and APAC — where they actually stand, a consistent pattern came through:

Most have made progress. Fewer have been able to sustain it.

The issue isn't buy-in. **71% say automation is essential to their strategy.** It isn't budget either; only 18% cited it as a barrier.

The real blockers are harder to solve: not enough people with the right expertise, too many competing priorities, and no clear playbook for what to automate next once the early wins are done.

Anyone who's knocked out a ticket categorization workflow in an afternoon and then spent weeks trying to get end-to-end user onboarding right knows exactly what that gap feels like.

At the same time, the scope of automation is expanding. It's no longer just the service desk. MSPs are pushing into billing, security, operations, and client management. **97% plan to automate even more processes this year.**

But building a workflow is one problem. Maintaining it, scaling it, and knowing what to build next is a different one entirely.

71%

say automation is essential to their strategy

97%

plan to automate even more processes this year.

And we'll get this straight out of the way: AI isn't replacing automation. They're two different things, where AI thinks and automation acts. But AI is beginning to change how automation gets built — reducing the expertise required, shortening the path from idea to working workflow, and helping teams decide what process to tackle next.

The MSPs already combining AI with automation are moving faster.

What's forming is the Automation Divide. A growing wedge between MSPs turning automation into a genuine competitive capability and those still running on one-off wins and manual fallbacks. AI is accelerating that wedge.

This report looks at where automation is delivering, where it's stalling, and what the MSPs making real progress are doing differently.



300 MSP professionals surveyed — Rewst customers and non-customers alike. Respondents span technical operators, team leads, and executives across North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. All percentages are calculated among respondents who answered each question.

The case for automation is closed

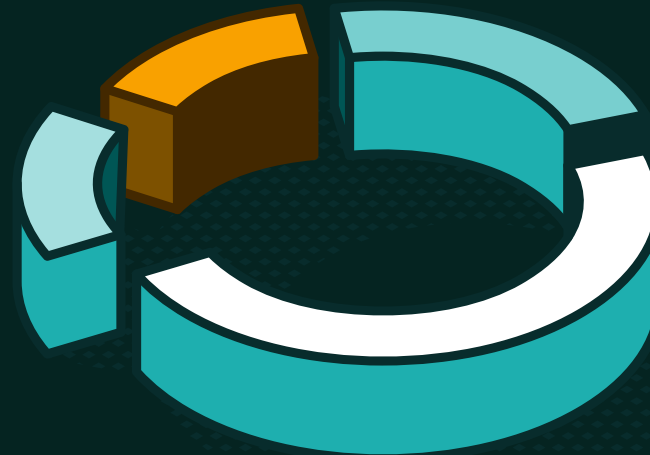
MSPs aren't automating for the sake of it. When we asked what they're trying to achieve as a business, the answers were consistent across every segment of the survey: increase staff productivity (80%), enhance client experience (73%), grow revenue (54%), improve security and compliance (55%).

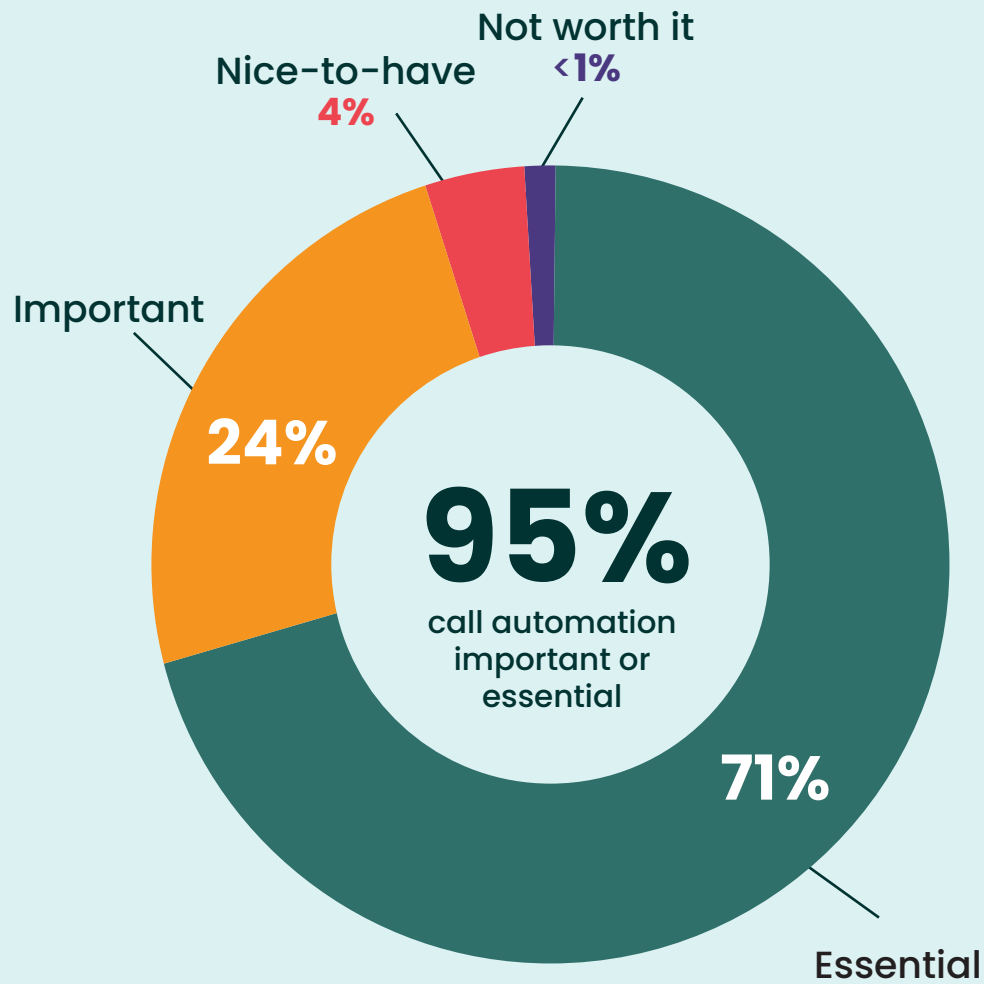
These are business goals, not automation goals. But the connection between the two is becoming harder to ignore. The MSPs that have made automation foundational to how they operate are moving faster toward all of them, and the ones that haven't are feeling the distance grow.

24% of MSP leaders say automation is important to their business strategy. 71% go beyond that, calling it essential. That's 95% of the industry aligned on one thing: automation isn't optional.

But essential to strategy and delivering on that strategy are different things. What the data show is that automation has moved beyond an operational advantage into something closer to a competitive requirement.

Nearly three quarters of MSP leaders say automation helps them differentiate and win clients. This isn't a leadership talking point. Technical operators and executives agree at almost exactly the same rate. The people building the workflows and the people running the business are aligned: automation isn't just making processes smoother, it's showing up in client conversations.





95%

agree: automation isn't optional

24% important • 71% essential

71%

call automation essential to strategy

only 4% say 'nice-to-have'

Automation goals

80%

Staff productivity

73%

Client experience

55%

Security & compliance

54%

Revenue growth

47%

Reduce costs

24%

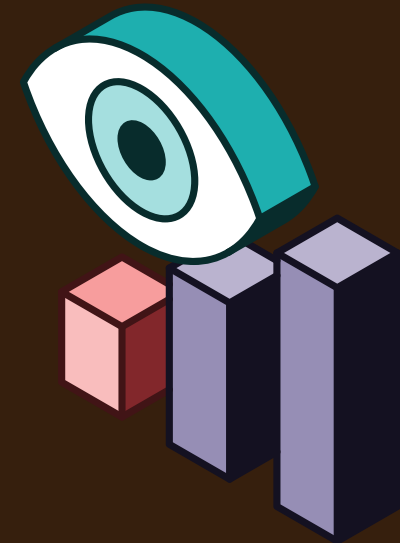
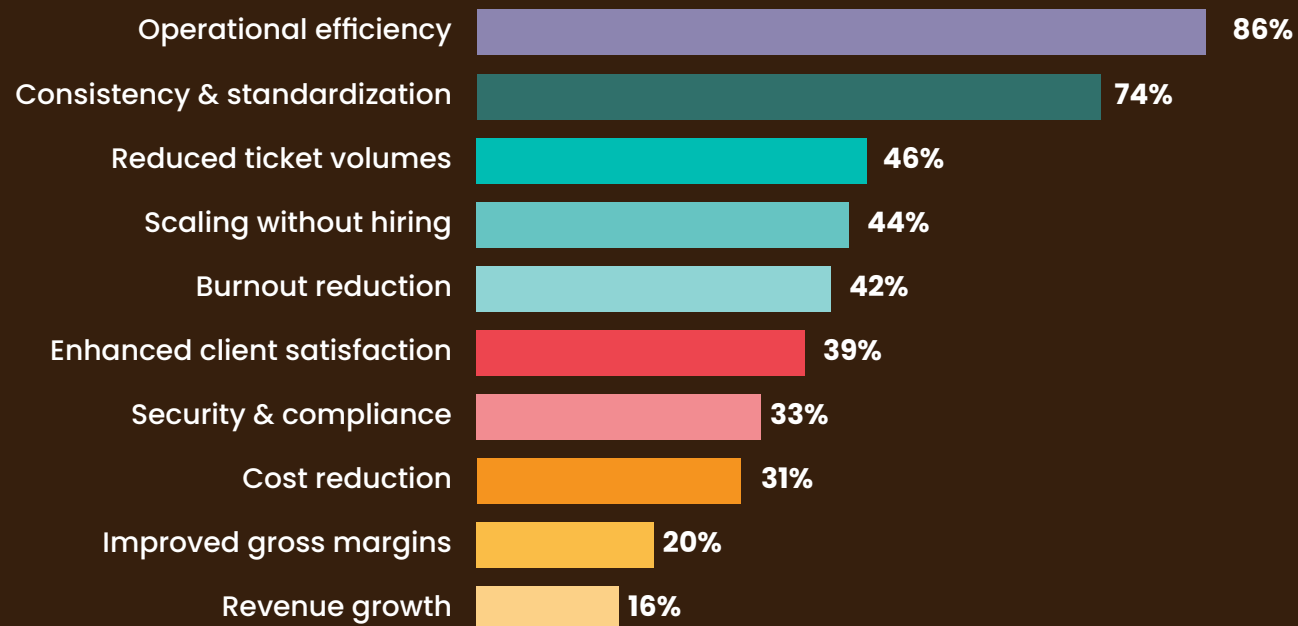
Expand service portfolio

What automation is actually delivering

When respondents told us what automation has delivered, the hierarchy tells a more important story than any individual number.

Operational efficiency leads at 86% and consistency and standardization at 74%. Both numbers point to something many MSPs don't lead with when they talk about automation: reliability. Doing things the same way, every time, without depending on the right person being available at the right moment. That's a better business.

Below that is a cluster of strategic outcomes that don't get enough attention: scaling without hiring (44%), technician satisfaction and burnout reduction (42%), and enhanced client satisfaction (39%). These aren't side effects of automation. They're the outcomes that determine whether an MSP can grow without straining. The human cost of manual processes has a business cost attached to it. Teams that aren't burning out build better automations, retain more clients, and have more capacity to do the work that actually matters.



The competitive line is already forming

Here's the finding that should focus attention at the leadership level: 68% of executives strongly agree that AI and automation together create more value than automation alone. These are the people making investment decisions, and they already believe it. The MSPs who cited scaling without hiring as a core benefit are already acting on it: 28% of them are actively delivering automation as a service to clients, compared to 17% of the overall sample.

The MSPs treating automation as a strategic capability rather than just an operational tool are pulling ahead. The gap is still closeable. But it won't stay that way.



68%

of executives strongly agree
AI + automation create
more value together

61%

more likely to already be
delivering automation
as a service when focused
on scaling without hiring

Good intentions don't build workflows

The ambition is real. 97% of MSPs plan to automate more processes this year. The conviction is there, the plans are made, and the budget, as we've established, isn't the issue. So what's getting in the way?

The scope is expanding — fast

Start with where MSPs want to take automation next. The answer, it turns out, is everywhere. When asked which areas of their business they wanted to automate, respondents didn't cluster around the obvious answers. Across every department we asked about, between 96% and 98% of MSPs said they want to automate there too. IT support and the service desk – the natural starting point for most MSPs – leads at 98%, alongside security and compliance. General and administrative, marketing and sales, and professional services all follow at 97%. Even billing and finance came in at 96%. No department was spared.

MSPs aren't looking to automate a department. They're looking to automate the business. The ambition has outgrown the original use case entirely.

96–98%



IT support & service desk



Security & compliance



General & administrative



Marketing, sales & account management



Professional services & project management



Billing & finance

The blockers are real, and they're not going away on their own

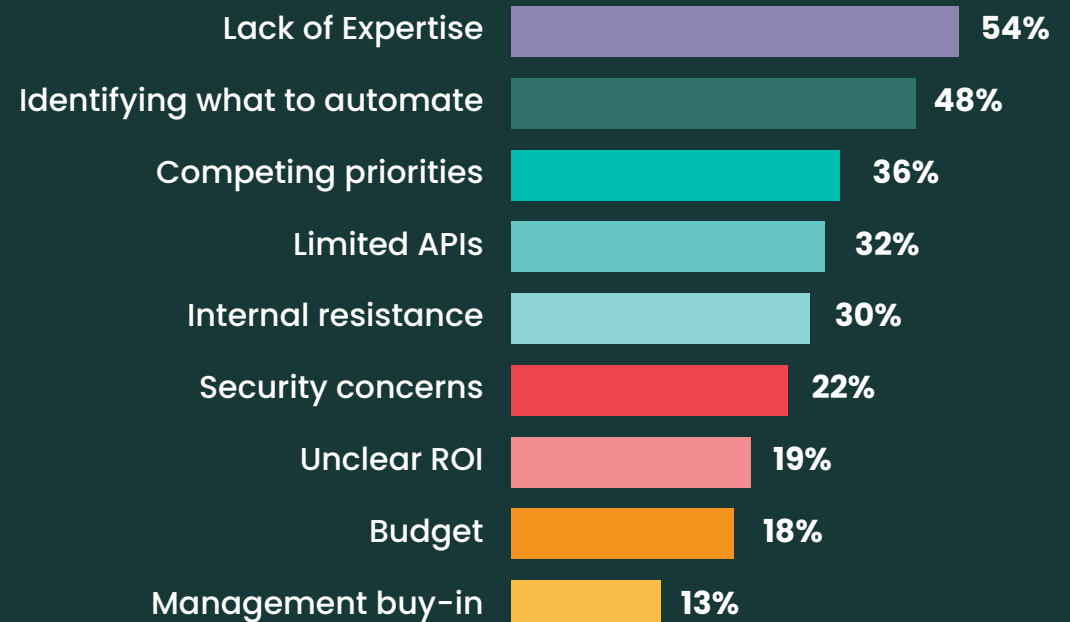
The gap between that ambition and reality comes down to a handful of persistent blockers, in order of how often they came up:

Lack of expertise leads at 54%. Identifying which processes to automate follows at 48%. Competing priorities sit at 36%, and limited tool APIs at 32%, an often-overlooked constraint.

Notice what's at the bottom of that list: budget came in at 18%, well below every other barrier we measured. This isn't a spending problem. It's a capability and clarity problem. MSPs know automation matters, many have the budget to act on it, but they don't always have the people who know how to build it or a roadmap to tell them where to start.

What makes this harder is that expertise doesn't fix itself with growth. MSPs in the \$10M–\$25M revenue band cite lack of expertise more than smaller shops: 63% versus 50% for \$1M–\$3M MSPs. Getting bigger doesn't close the gap. If anything, it raises the stakes.

Automation barriers

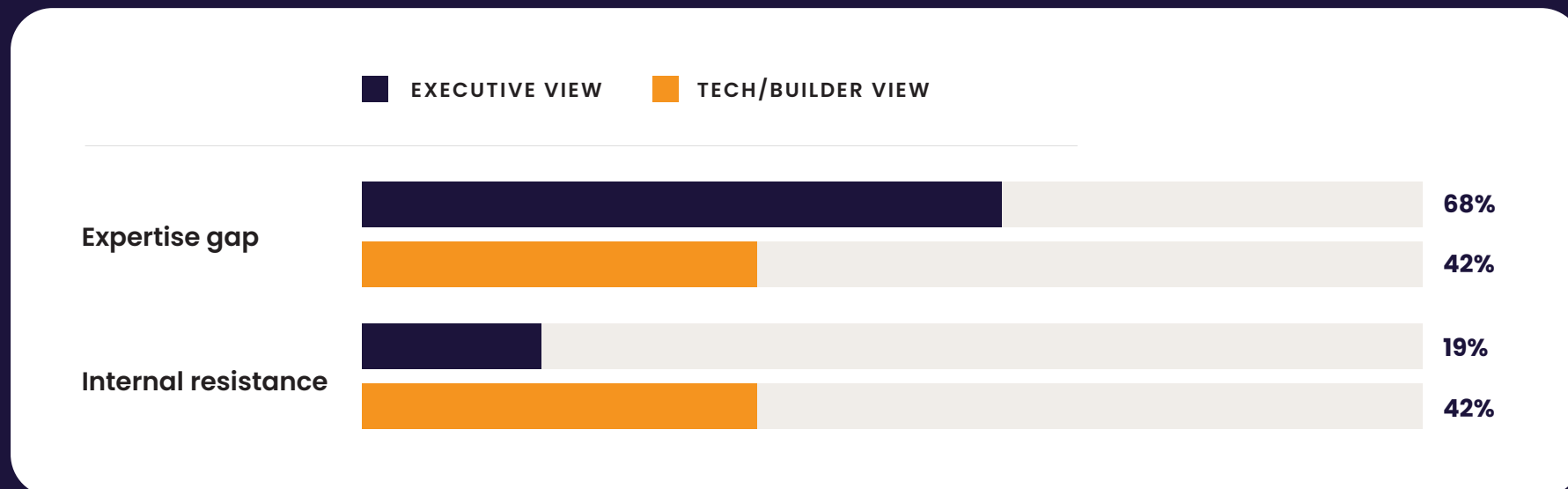




Where it breaks down organizationally

The expertise problem looks different depending on where you sit in the organization. For executives, the biggest barrier is resources and expertise, cited by 68%. For technical operators, the picture is different. Expertise and internal resistance to change are tied as the top barriers, both at 42%, compared to just 19% of executives who flagged resistance as an issue.

That gap matters. Leadership is worried about having the right people to build automation. The people doing the building are worried about whether the organization will actually adopt what they build. Both are real problems. They're just different problems. Solving one doesn't automatically solve the other.



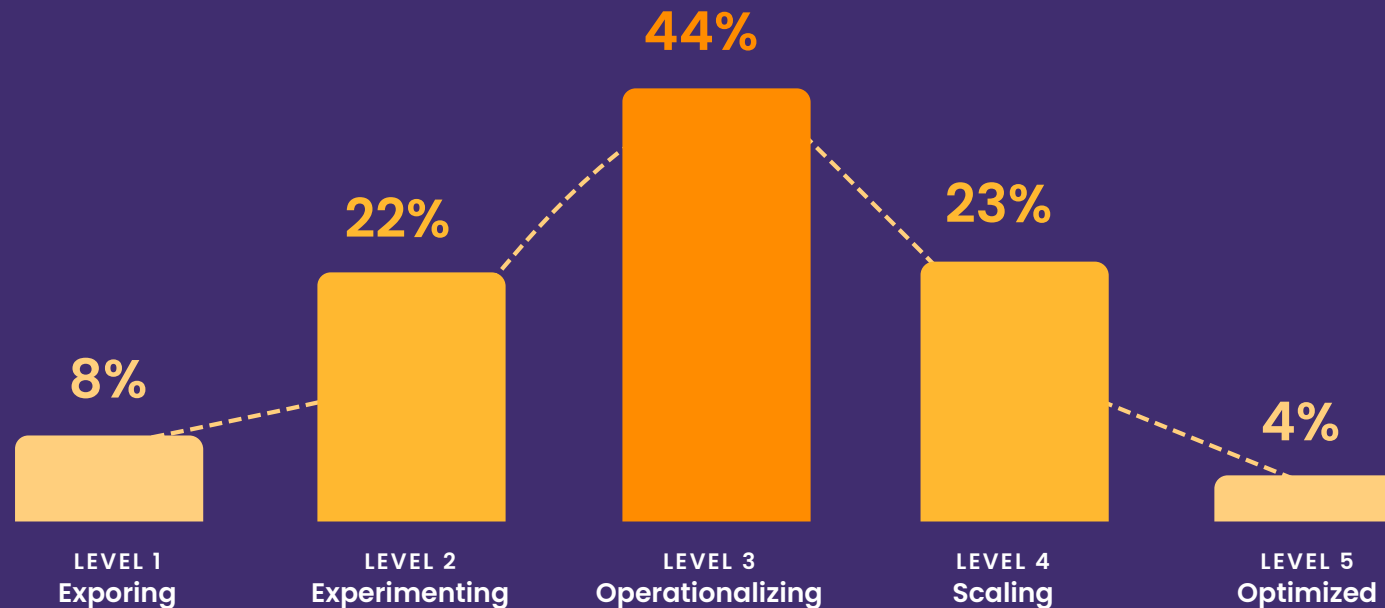


The maturity trap

We asked respondents to rate their own automation maturity on a scale of one to five, from just getting started to fully scaled across the business. The distribution tells you a lot about where the industry is right now. Most MSPs landed in the middle: 44% rated themselves at level three. They've moved past the basics but haven't reached the point where automation is running consistently across their business.

Fully scaled automation is rarer than most would admit. Only 4% of respondents put themselves at the top. But the expertise barrier tells a clear story across the scale. Among MSPs who rated themselves at the bottom, 72% cited lack of expertise as a blocker. Among those at the upper end, that number dropped to 42% at level four, and among the small group at the highest level, fewer than one in three cited it as a blocker.

The more you automate, the less expertise becomes an insurmountable constraint. Experience, tooling, and institutional knowledge start doing some of the heavy lifting. The problem is getting there. And that's precisely where the next shift is happening.



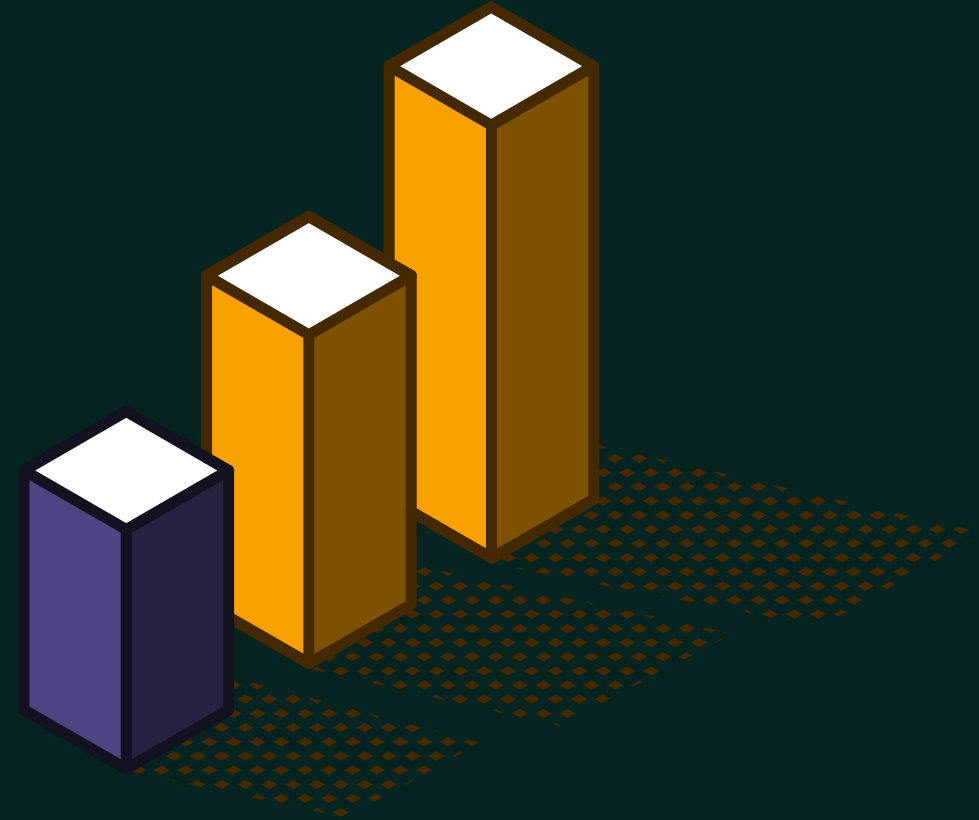
What separates the leaders

The maturity gap isn't random. When you look at what distinguishes MSPs further along the scale from those still climbing, one variable keeps coming up: whether they're using a dedicated automation platform or relying on other tools like their PSA and RMM, PowerShell scripts, or custom solutions.

58% of respondents use a dedicated automation platform. 42% don't. The difference in how those two groups think and operate shows up across every part of the picture we've been drawing.

Start with conviction. 81% of MSPs using a dedicated automation platform say automation is essential to their strategy. Among those without one, that drops to 58%. The use of a dedicated automation platform is a signal of a fundamentally different relationship with automation.

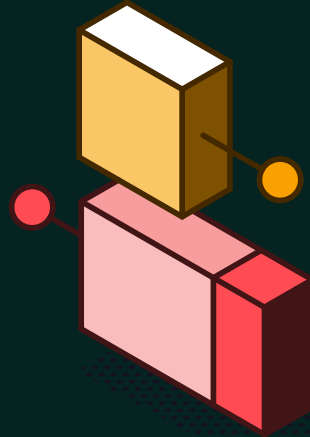
The distinction matters. Many MSP tools can handle task automation: a single action triggered within one platform, like auto-closing a ticket or sending an alert. That's useful. But it's a different thing entirely from process automation: orchestrating a sequence of steps across multiple tools, systems, and teams without anyone having to intervene. Onboarding a new user end-to-end. Reconciling client billing. Routing, actioning, and documenting a security alert from detection to resolution. That kind of automation requires something the average point solution wasn't built to do.



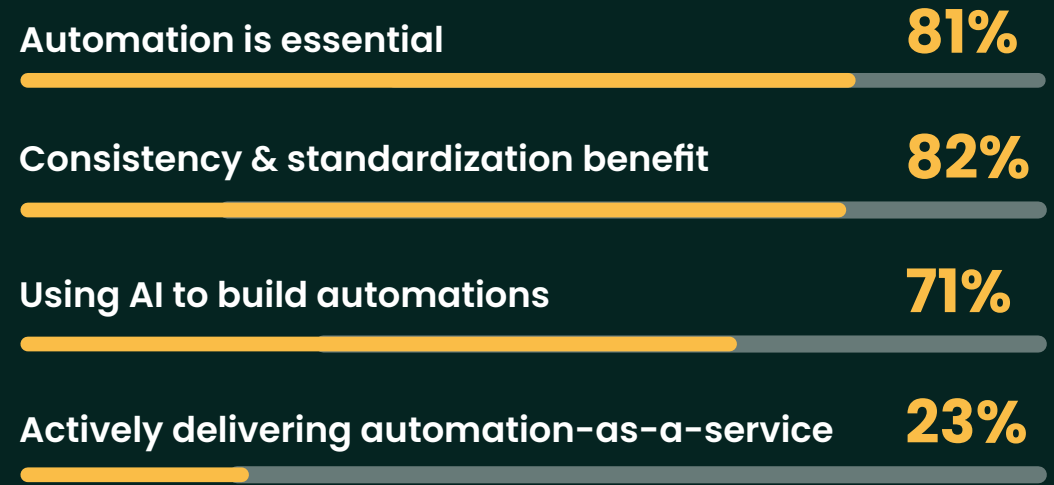
The benefits data follows. 82% of platform users cite consistency and standardization as a core outcome, versus 60% of those without. Scaling without hiring: 49% versus 36%. Technician satisfaction and burnout reduction: 45% versus 38%. Across the board, those with a dedicated platform are reporting better results on the metrics that matter most for sustainable growth.

The AI picture is the most striking. 71% of platform users are using AI to help build automations. Among non-platform users, that drops to 38%. Nearly double. At the more sophisticated end, using AI for decision-making within automations, the gap is 51% versus 26%.

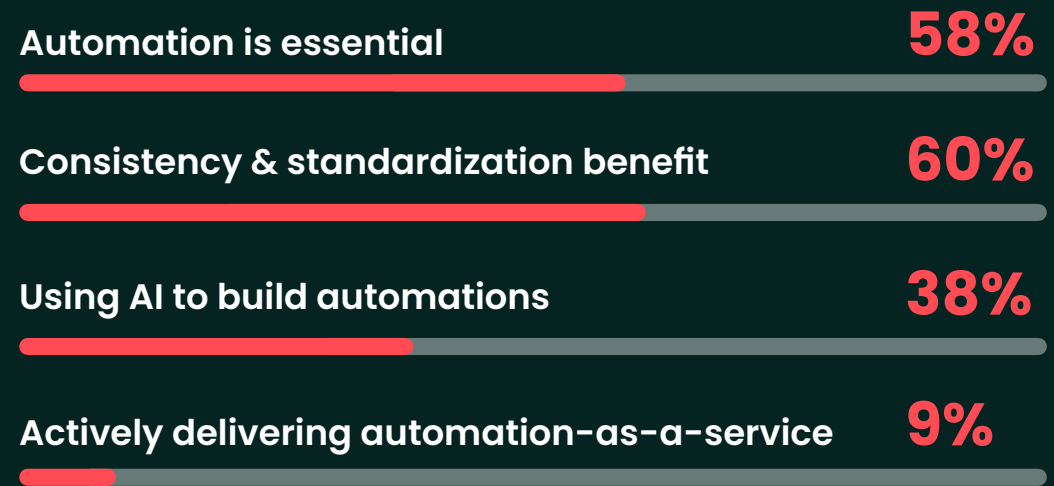
The commercial consequence is already showing up. 23% of MSPs using a dedicated platform are actively delivering automation as a service to clients. Among those without one, that figure is 9%. Both groups are roughly equally interested in getting there. This is where the Automation Divide becomes visible. Not in intention, but in execution.



Respondents with a dedicated automation platform



Respondents without a dedicated automation platform



AI is already in the room. But what's it doing here?

Here's a number worth sitting with: only 1.4% of MSPs said they're not using or exploring the use of AI at all. That's not a typo. It's now woven into how most MSPs operate, whether they've made a deliberate decision about it or not.

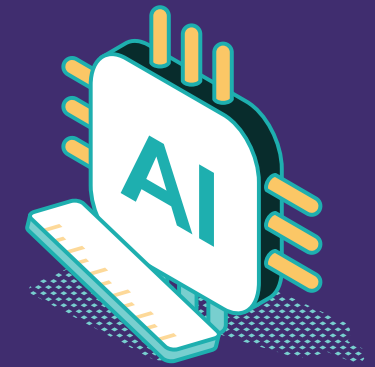
The more important question isn't whether MSPs are using AI. It's what they're using it for, and whether it's closing the gaps that matter.

1.4%

of MSPs aren't using or exploring the use of AI at all. The rest — 98.6% — are already in motion.

85%

believe that AI and automation are stronger together than apart.



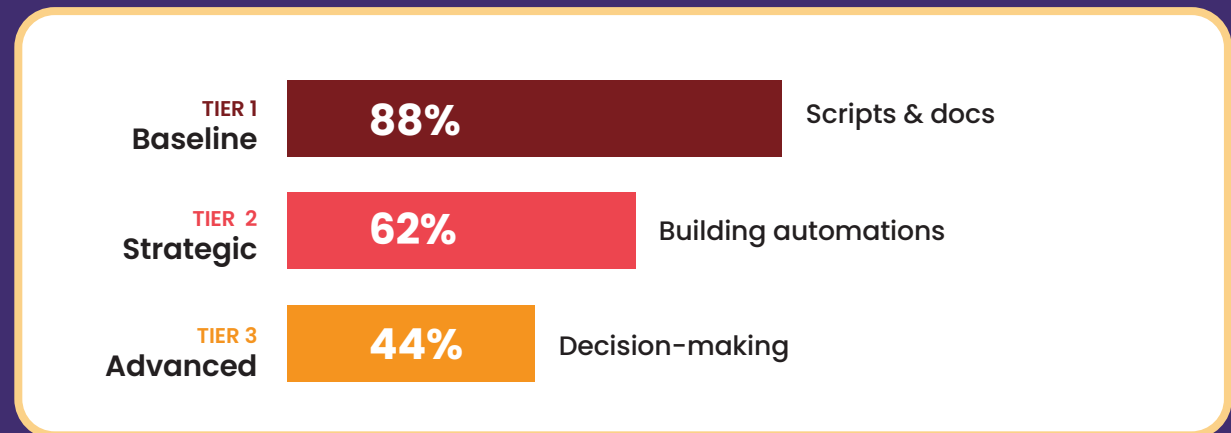
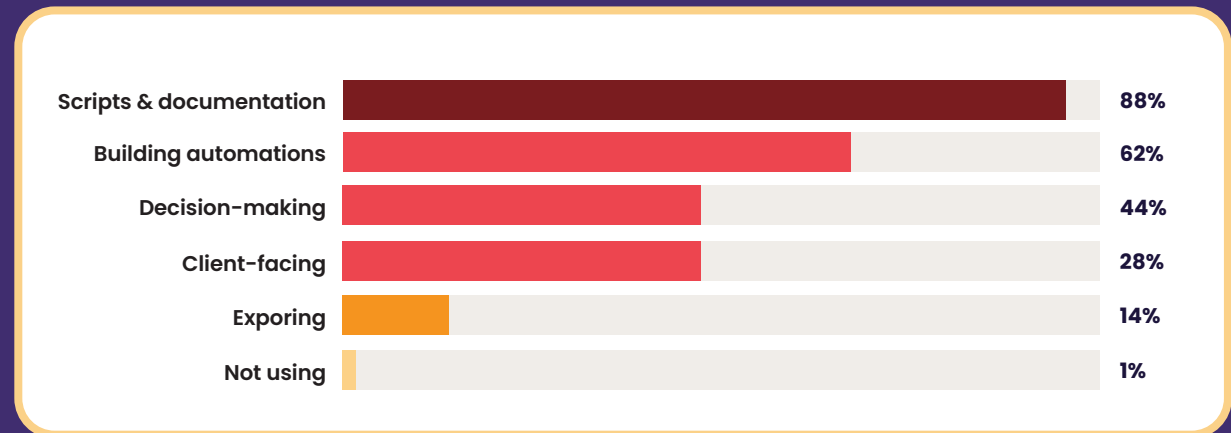
What AI is actually being used for

The most common use is the most obvious one: 88% of respondents are using AI assistants to write scripts, generate documentation, or troubleshoot internally. That’s a real productivity gain, but it’s also the lowest rung of the ladder. AI as a faster way to do things people were already doing.

More interesting is what’s happening further up. 62% are using AI to help build automations. And 44% are using it for decision-making within their automations — ticket sentiment analysis, routing logic, automated triage. That’s the tier where outcomes start to diverge. The Automation Divide shows up here, in what MSPs choose to do with AI once they have it.

MSPs using AI for decision-making report significantly higher revenue growth: 41% grew significantly in the past year, compared to 33% across the overall sample. They’re also 43% more likely to already be actively delivering automation as a service to clients — 25% versus 17% overall.

When asked what they want from their tools going forward, 59% of MSPs cited leveraging AI to enhance existing tools as a priority — second only to tighter cross-platform integration at 71%. The question has already shifted from whether to use AI to how to get it working inside what already exists.



The maturity signal

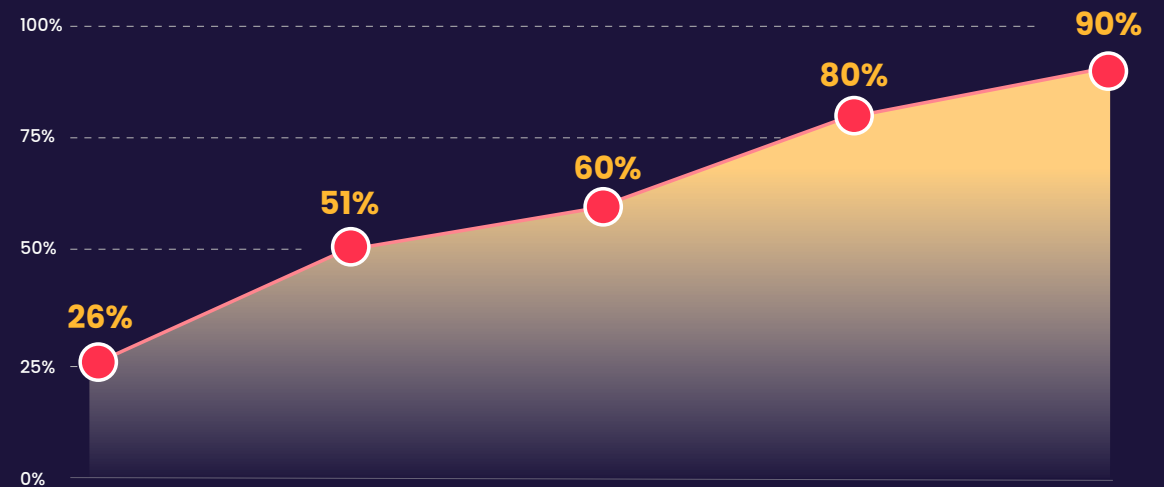
Here's where the data gets most interesting. When you look at AI usage to build automations by self-reported maturity level, the relationship is unmistakable.

Among MSPs at the lowest maturity level, 26% are using AI to help build automations. At level two, that rises to 51%. Level three, 60%. Level four, 80%. And among those who put themselves at the highest level, 90%.

The MSPs making the most automation progress are also the ones leaning most heavily on AI to get there. The reason isn't hard to find. The expertise barrier, the single biggest constraint in this entire survey, starts to loosen when AI can help identify what to automate, generate the logic to do it, and flag where things are breaking down. Automation that once required a specialist to build and maintain starts to become something a broader team can own. That changes what's possible. And it changes how fast.

The direction is clear enough to act on. Waiting until you feel ready for AI to help with automation may mean waiting longer than your competition.

And that competition is moving. The gap between MSPs using AI strategically and those using it only for scripts and documentation is starting to show up where it matters most: in what they can build, how fast they can build it, and how much of their business runs without someone having to intervene. It's an operational gap. And it's widening.



The gap is real. So is the window.

Most MSPs reading this report will recognize themselves somewhere in the middle of the story it tells. They've automated the obvious things. They've seen the results. And they've run into the wall that comes next: not enough expertise to keep building, not enough time to figure out what to build, and a growing list of processes that still depend entirely on the right person being available at the right moment.

The ambition is real. 97% of MSPs plan to extend automation this year, and 95% agree it isn't optional. The gap isn't in either of those things. It's in execution: between knowing and doing, between planning and scaling, between the workflows that work and the ones that never quite get built.

What's changing is the size of that gap, and what's available to close it.

The MSPs combining AI with automation aren't operating in a different category. They're running the same business every MSP runs. They're just running it better. That's the Automation Divide. It's not theoretical. It's starting to show up in what MSPs can build, how

fast they grow, and whether they have the capacity to take on more without adding headcount. The data doesn't show a dramatic performance gap yet. But it shows the conditions for one forming.

The barriers that have kept automation from scaling are exactly the barriers AI is best positioned to address.

The overlap isn't accidental. It's where the next phase of MSP automation is being built.

The window is open. The MSPs who move now won't just be more efficient. They'll be fundamentally better businesses.

Join us for our upcoming webinar

The 2026 State of MSP Automation:

Bridging the Automation Divide

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