Deloitte.
Digital

# GenAI in B2B Commerce

## What's now and what's next

Article 3 | Thrive in the world of eCommerce

# Intro

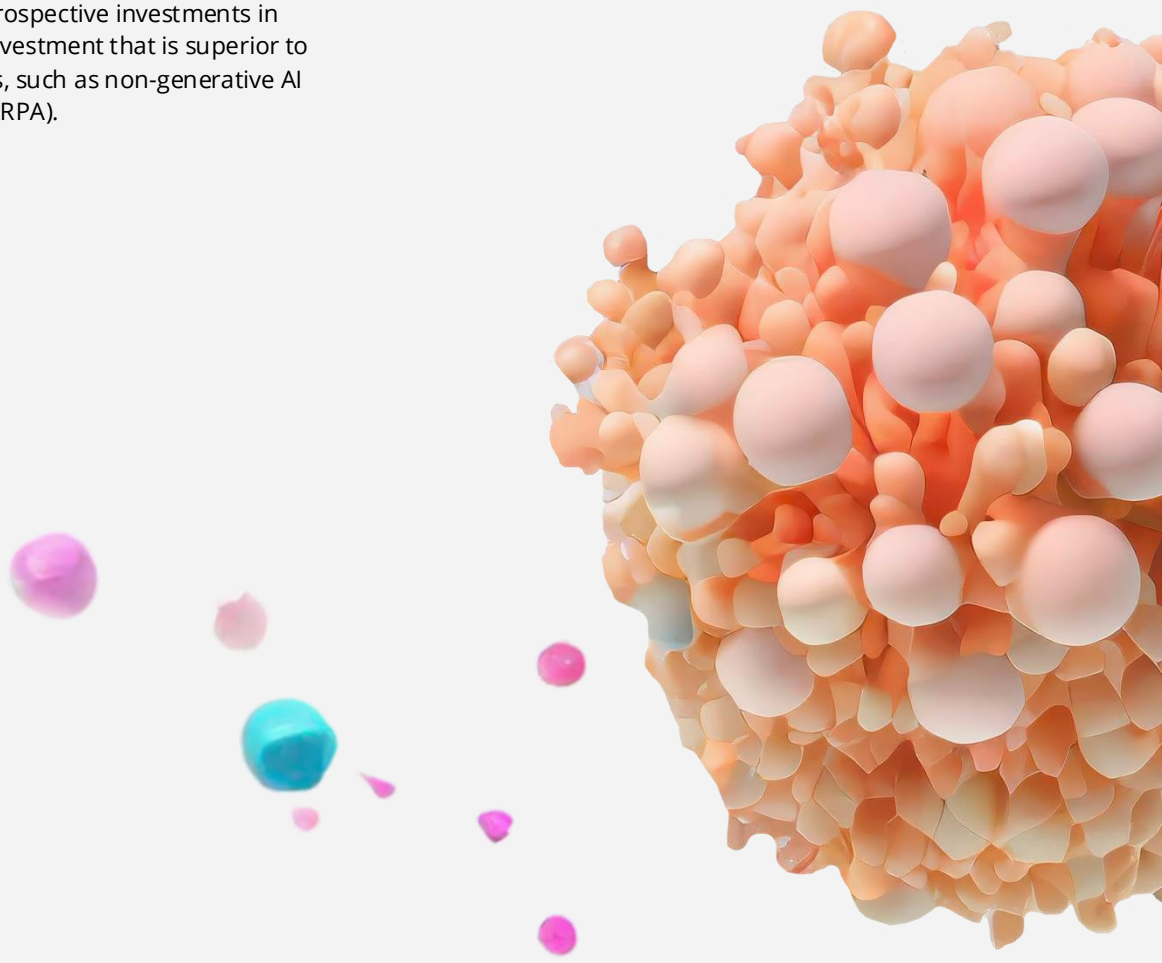
By deploying artificial intelligence (AI) along the buying journey, companies focused on B2B commerce could unlock billions of dollars in value. Our analysis shows that generative AI (GenAI) deployments, like conversational selling assistants and large scale content automation, have the potential to deliver 20-30% in incremental value to commerce budgets in the coming five years.

As businesses experiment with GenAI across their organizations, with adoption rates of up to 73% in some functions, now is the time to benchmark their application of GenAI, and discover what leaders are doing now and what they will do in the near future.

It is crucial to assess whether prospective investments in GenAI will deliver a return on investment that is superior to leveraging existing technologies, such as non-generative AI or robotic process automation (RPA).

Historically, companies that proactively adopt technological breakthroughs, such as GenAI, have gained significant competitive advantages. By contrast, technological laggards who fail to adapt are outpaced. One well-known example is Blockbuster, that once was a leader in the video rental industry, yet was overtaken by a technology-driven disruptor like Netflix. Similar cases date further back, such as Western Union, that until the 1880's had a comfortable lead in the Telegraph industry, yet underestimated the potential of telephone, driven by Bell company (now AT&T). Unlike other businesses (e.g., Siemens; T-Mobile) Western Union wasn't able to pivot as quickly to reap the benefits of the new technology within its industry. Today, integrating GenAI into the B2B buying journey offers a similar opportunity to outpace competitors by boosting revenue, enhancing efficiency and reducing costs.

Our analysis shows that a top-5 B2B company worldwide[1], with a market value of €92 billion could capture between €4-10 billion of peak value in its commerce budget by scaling the use of GenAI over five years. The potential value creation is proportionate to the organization's size (e.g., €46 billion in revenue could achieve €2-5 billion in peak value)[2,3,4].



## Value creation breakdown along the B2B buying journey

Over the past 18 months, GenAI has broadened and deepened the value that AI could deliver for organization and their customers. AI use cases that were unfeasible one year ago, are now being implemented by leaders across industries, enabled by GenAI development. Deloitte has analyzed over 50 potential AI use cases for B2B commerce functions[3], which when linked together like 'pearls on a string', can transform value streams across the whole B2B buying journey. Supported by specialist interviews, project experience and Deloitte forecasts, we have assessed the total value opportunity of AI from cost reduction, cost avoidance and revenue generation along the B2B buying journey.

Aggregating specialist insights, global project experience and extensive AI research, highlights patterns on were AI development will go based on what winners are doing now and what they will do in the coming months. To provide targeted insights on were and how AI value can be achieved, these insights are plotted on the six stages in the B2B buying journey of our framework for strategic growth: awareness, consideration, decision, purchase, post-purchase, and retention and loyalty (see Figure 1).

**Use Case Spotlight |** Marketing Copilots

By weaving together AI capabilities as strings of pearls, end-to-end transformative value can be created. A large fintech company has integrated AI 'copilots' throughout its entire marketing workflow. This systematic application of AI, including automated content generation, adaptation and A/B testing, has helped to reduce quarterly sales and marketing expenses by 11%, while increasing the frequency of campaigns.

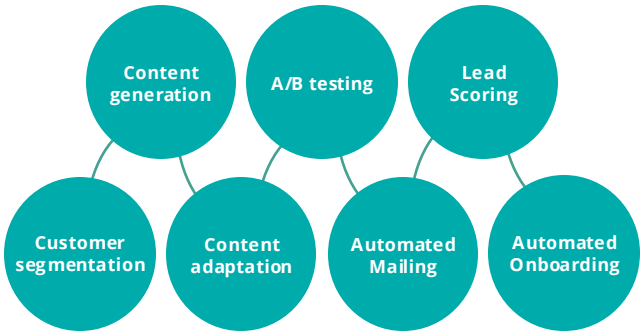
**Figure 1: Value creation per step**[4,5]

| Buying Journey Step | Value potential (% of total) | Revenue Uplift levers | Cost Reduction levers | Value creation breakdown (share of benefits) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Revenue | Cost |
| Awareness | 20-30% | • Brand awareness | • Content creation cost<br>• Advertising cost | 60% | 40% |
| Consideration | 15-25% | • Traffic and leads | • Lead-effort balancing | 40% | 60% |
| Decision | 10-15% | • Conversion rate<br>• Time-to-purchase | • Acquisition cost | 50% | 50% |
| Purchase | 10-15% | • Average selling price<br>• Basket size | • Acquisition cost | 70% | 30% |
| Post-purchase | 15-20% | • Up-selling ratio<br>• Referral rate | • Procure-to-pay cost<br>• Cost-to-serve | 30% | 70% |
| Retention & Loyalty | 10-15% | • Customer lifetime value<br>• Retention rate | • Content creation cost<br>• Renewal cost | 40% | 60% |

The awareness step represents the top value opportunity at 20-30% by, for example, applying AI to personalization and content creation, to both reduce costs and boost revenue simultaneously. This is followed by the consideration step at 15-25%, where AI can, for example, enhance traffic and lead scoring, matching revenue pipeline opportunities with costs and sales team capacity. Post-purchase is the biggest opportunity for cost transformation through efficiency realization and automation using GenAI.

**Concept Spotlight |** Pearls on a string

The 'string of pearls' concept emphasizes the collective value of multiple use cases that enhance and accelerate an end-to-end (E2E) business process. In this analogy, each use case is depicted as a 'pearl,' and their interconnections form the 'string of pearls.' The scope and value of this concept are based on the overall performance of the process, where value compounds as outputs from one use case serve as inputs for the next. As one stage improves, the subsequent stage benefits, creating a continuous cycle of enhancement and efficiency.




## What's now and what's next along the B2B buying journey

Not every company is a firm believer in the value of AI (yet); on a high-level, companies can be split into three archetypes; firms that are experimenting with out-of-the-box solutions, companies that are focused on (building) targeted solutions across certain functions and others who are waiting for the technology to advance and further prove itself. Although different perspectives might apply for each of these archetypes, in general, organizations can accelerate and de-risk their AI programs with 'no regret bets' that can deliver value in a relatively short timeframe. As well as serving as a proof point to catalyze enterprise adoption, these programs also create opportunities to fund additional investments with realized gains. Drawing on our recent work in implementing GenAI programs, we provide guidance on which 'bets' have already been adopted, what is being implemented at scale now and what needs to wait for technological advancements over the next two years (see Figure 2).

**Use Case Spotlight |** Dynamic Pricing

Deloitte helped a major Southeast Asian shipping company implement Google Vertex Gen AI to automate the process of responding to requests-for-quotes (RFQs). By consolidating data from various sources, Gen AI significantly streamlined strategic planning for route options and calculated the corresponding pricing, and provided a tailored pricing advice to customers for each individual RFQ.

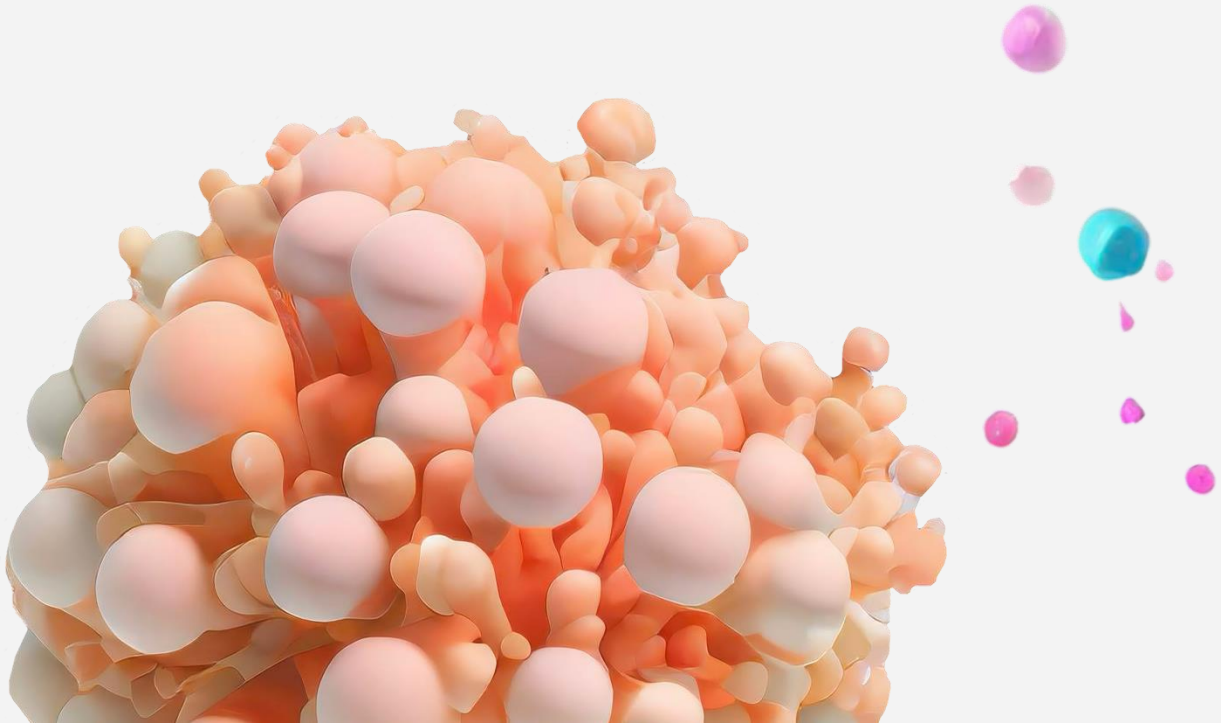


**Figure 2: No regret use cases**[3]

| Buying Journey Step | Category | Use Case | Description | Value to Enterprise | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Top-line growth | Cost reduction | Enhanced customer experience |
| **Awareness** | Adopted | Tailored copy content generation* | Creating personalized marketing materials, such as email campaigns and print ads | ☑ | ☑ | ☐ |
| | Emerging | Visual content adaptation and localization* | Customizing visual content to match cultural and behavioral preferences | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ |
| | Future | Adaptive video and TV advertising | Real-time video and TV ads adjusted based on viewer data | ☑ | ☑ | ☐ |
| **Consideration** | Adopted | Lead scoring & routing | Scoring and routing B2B leads using customer interactions and log data | ☑ | ☑ | ☐ |
| | Emerging | Sales rep. assistant* | Assisting sales reps with real-time information, schedules and customer insights | ☑ | ☑ | ☐ |
| | Future | Virtual product trial | Offering immersive virtual reality product trials and demonstrations | ☑ | ☐ | ☑ |
| **Decision** | Adopted | Customer review analytics | Analyzing customer reviews to inform product improvements and marketing strategies | ☑ | ☐ | ☑ |
| | Emerging | Conversational selling* | AI chatbots guiding customers with personalized buying recommendations | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ |
| | Future | Automated contract negotiations | Automating and optimizing contract negotiations with AI for efficiency | ☐ | ☑ | ☑ |
| **Purchase** | Adopted | Pricing optimization | AI optimizing pricing strategies based on demand, competition and behavior | ☑ | ☐ | ☐ |
| | Emerging | Tailored cross and upsell offerings | AI suggesting personalized cross-sell and upsell opportunities during purchases | ☑ | ☐ | ☑ |
| | Future | Real-time pricing* | Using AI for real-time price adjustments based on market conditions and behavior | ☑ | ☐ | ☐ |
| **Post-purchase** | Adopted | Self-service support agents | AI chatbots and voice assistants providing immediate customer support | ☐ | ☑ | ☑ |
| | Emerging | Self-service onboarding | AI tools assisting customers with onboarding, guidance and questions | ☐ | ☑ | ☑ |
| | Future | Conversational video support | AI-generated video support for complex post-purchase customer inquiries | ☐ | ☑ | ☑ |
| **Retention & Loyalty** | Adopted | Sentiment analysis (voice of the customer) | Automatically analyzing customer feedback to identify and address issues | ☑ | ☐ | ☑ |
| | Emerging | Customized rewards | Using AI to create personalized reward programs based on customer behavior | ☑ | ☐ | ☑ |
| | Future | Self-customization | Gen-AI tools enabling customers to customize products or services explicitly | ☑ | ☐ | ☑ |

## When to use GenAI and when not to

There is no one-size-fits all approach, it is important to realize that GenAI is not a goal in itself; it is often not the best fit for AI use cases. The hype around GenAI can lead to misplaced expectations and the risk of implementing use cases that are not a good fit with the technology. For example, using GenAI in Self-service onboarding is expected to deliver superior value through large-scale personalization and speed as opposed to established techniques, however, 80% of this total value potential with GenAI might already be achieved by choosing for more established techniques like RPA. Based on our project experience and AI Institute research, we provide guidance on where GenAI is superior, when to consider alternative (AI) techniques, such as RPA and rule-based engines, and when to combine both (see Figure 3).

**Use Case Spotlight** | Conversational Selling

A leading provider of B2B digital printing solutions implemented conversational search, sales and discovery experiences in 52 countries. The goal was to ensure that each shopper found the perfect product tailored to their needs. Therefore, a wide range of conversational assistants were deployed on its digital channels, to guide business customers throughout their buying journey. Implementation of these conversational selling assistants has led to an increase in conversions of more than 50%.

**Figure 3: AI technique suitability**[6,7]

| Use Case | Common AI & Automation Techniques | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Rule-based engines | Robotic process automation (RPA) | Non-generative machine learning | Generative AI |
| **Tailored copy content generation** | L | M | L | H |
| **Visual content adaptation and localization** | L | L | L | H |
| **Adaptive video and TV advertising** | L | L | L | H |
| **Lead scoring & routing** | H | H | H | M |
| **Sales rep. assistant** | L | M | M | H |
| **Virtual product trial** | L | L | L | H |
| **Customer review analytics** | L | L | H | M |
| **Conversational selling** | M | M | L | H |
| **Automated contract negotiations** | M | M | M | H |
| **Pricing optimization** | M | M | H | M |
| **Tailored cross and upsell offerings** | M | M | H | M |
| **Real-time pricing** | M | M | H | M |
| **Self-service support agents** | M | M | H | H |
| **Self-service onboarding** | H | H | M | H |
| **Conversational video support** | L | L | M | H |
| **Sentiment analysis (voice of the customer)** | L | L | H | M |
| **Customized rewards** | H | H | H | M |
| **Self-customization** | L | L | H | H |

**AI technique suitability:** High (H), Medium (M), Low (L)

[7]Rule-based engines: Systems that apply predefined rules and logic to process data or make decisions based on specific conditions, Robotic Process Automation (RPA): Technology that automates repetitive, rule-based tasks by mimicking human interactions with digital systems, Non-generative machine learning: Algorithms that analyze and learn from data to make predictions or classifications without creating new content or data, Generative AI: Advanced AI models that can create new content, such as text, images, or music, based on learned patterns from existing data

When selecting AI techniques, it is important to balance value potential and development efforts, which are not mutually exclusive. Organizations need to be aware that simpler solutions, such as RPA, may sometimes be better value for money. Businesses should prioritize GenAI only in areas where it is superior, while revisiting these assumptions continuously, as (GenAI) technology advances.

## The time to act is now

By effectively deploying GenAI and other technologies from *awareness through* to *retention and loyalty*, businesses can pre-empt customer needs, optimize operations, and foster robust and enduring client relationships.

Despite these clear benefits, firms often find it challenging to transition from the ideation and use case discovery phase to actual implementation. They can be held back by use case paralysis, the high initial cost of deployment and a lack of technical expertise. Overcoming these hurdles requires an end-to-end value approach which involves viewing use cases as interconnected components, much like a 'string of pearls.' By understanding and leveraging these interconnections, firms can prioritize use cases based on their total value, maximizing benefits to the organization.

To successfully do so, firms need to stay ahead of competitors; continuously assessing the potential impact that GenAI can deliver for them in line with most recent technological developments, set-up dedicated AI capabilities and processes, and refine their data management processes to ensure responsible usage of AI. The potential prize is a value opportunity of 20-30% of commerce budgets, with a digitally-intelligent commerce organization that will usher in a new, enhanced era of efficiency and profitability in B2B commerce.

**Sources**

[1]Statista—Most valuable business-to-business (B2B) brands worldwide in 2024
[2]Deloitte analysis
[3]Deloitte AI institute
[4]Gartner—'Gartner Data & Analytics Survey' (2023)
[5]Deloitte—Realizing Transformative Value from AI & Generative AI in Life Sciences (2024)
[6]Gartner—'When to use Generative AI' (2024)

## Authors

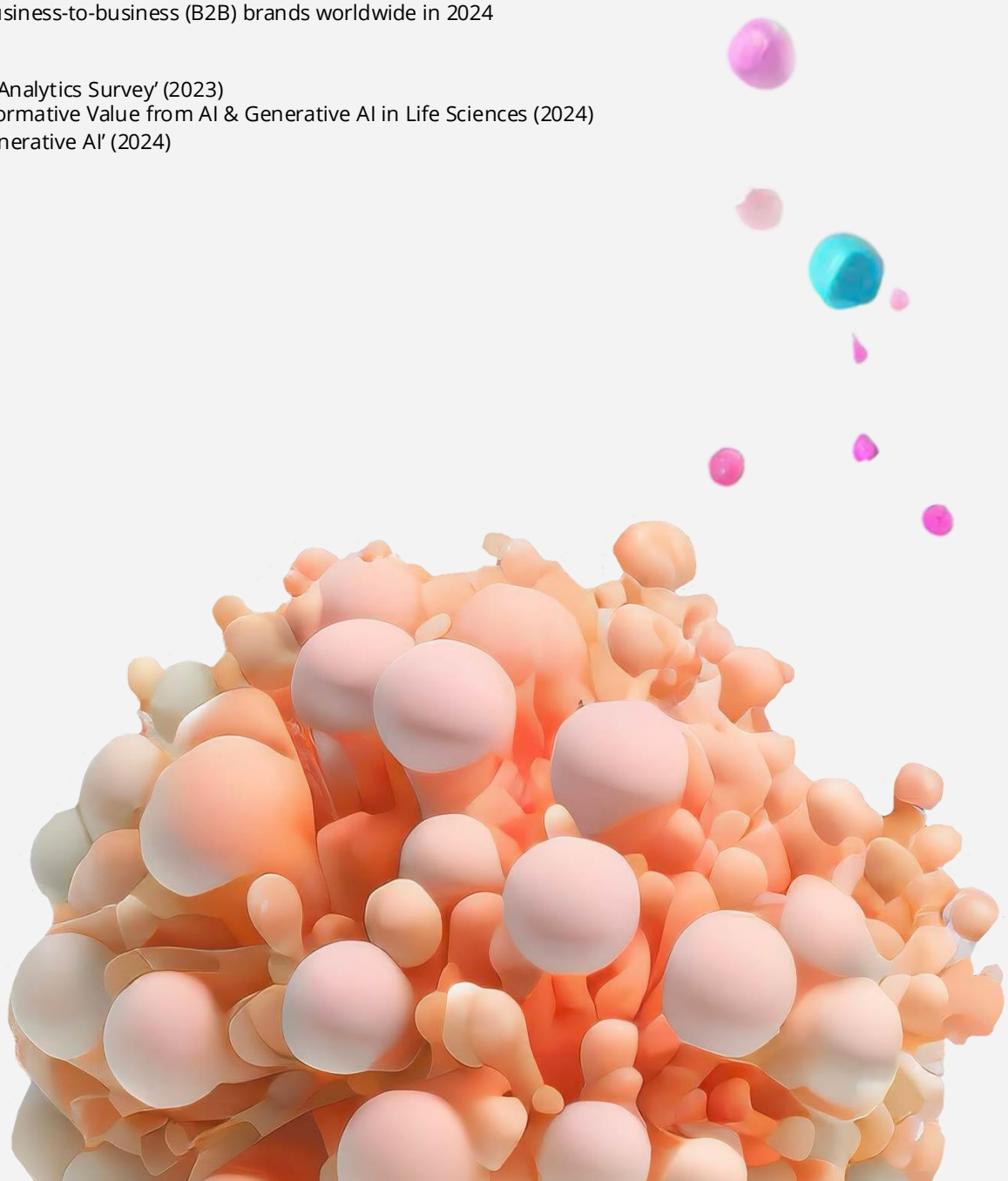
**Bram Lentz**
Blentz@deloitte.nl

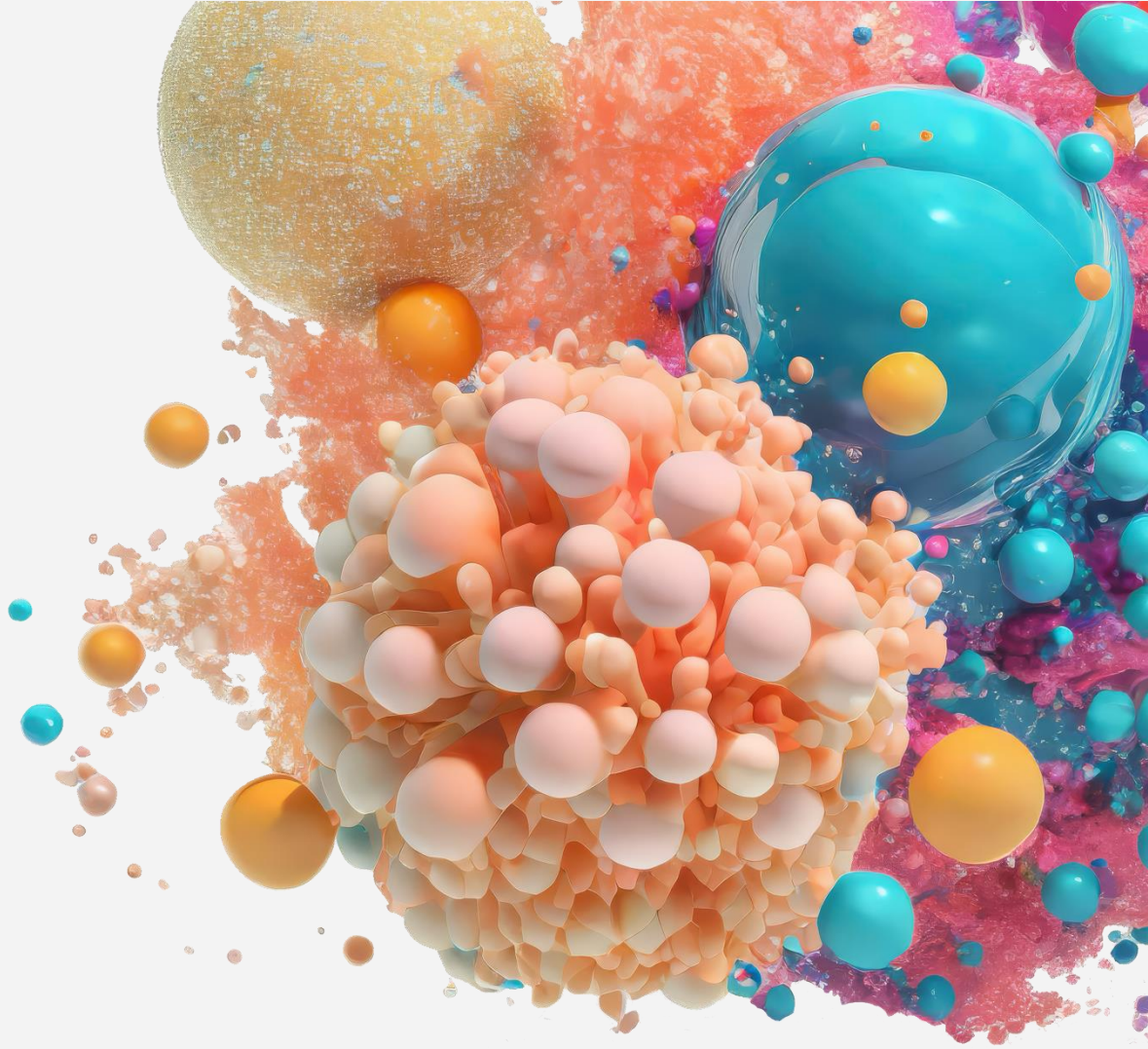
**Michael Wolfe**
miwolfe@deloitte.nl

**Morris Boermann**
mboermann@deloitte.nl

**Rowan Saris**
rowsaris@deloitte.nl

**Mike de Witte**
midewitte@deloitte.nl





Deloitte.
Digital