"OUR JOURNEY SHOWS HOW REDEFINING THE ROLE OF AI CAN TRANSFORM AN ORGANIZATION FROM SURVIVING TO THRIVING."

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CREATING A GROWTH-FOCUSED PLAYBOOK FOR AI

Many enterprises view artificial intelligence as a cost-cutting tool to unlock greater efficiencies. But how can it act as a growth driver that more broadly benefits your company?

By Ettienne Brandt
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Many executives see artificial intelligence as a cost-cutting tool for greater efficiency, but it can also be a powerful growth driver that can have broader benefits for your company. At Frontier, we shifted our perspective—and it changed everything.

When I joined Frontier in mid-2022, the company was in the early stages of a turnaround, having emerged from bankruptcy a year earlier.

I stepped in to lead our B2B division which was grappling with years of negative growth. My goal was clear: stabilize, then accelerate growth. To do that, we embraced AI as a force multiplier to transform how our sales team operates.

Partnering with Elixirr, we reframed the conversation. Instead of just chasing efficiencies, we prioritized freeing up our sales team to focus on what matters—connecting with customers and closing deals.

The results speak for themselves. In an industry where B2B telecommunications is often in decline, we've turned the tide. New customers now drive over a third of our business—up from less than 5%—and our sales team spends more time selling, thanks to AI streamlining processes, and without costly system overhauls.

AI has been pivotal in modernizing our operations and empowering our customers to run their businesses more effectively. It's more than a cost-cutting tool—it's a catalyst for transformation, growth, and delivering greater value to those we serve.

So, what exactly did we do? Here's how we built an AI playbook for growth.

Using AI to Make Us Smarter

One of our early wins was in knowledge management. In B2B sales, time is money, and our sales team was losing time—up to eight minutes per search—digging through our internal systems for training manuals or data. We developed a solution that we call Giga Agent, which is an AI-powered search assistant that operates like ChatGPT. This tool transformed what had been an eight-minute task into a 45-second one. The cumulative effect of this across the team was significant: more time for client engagement and less time spent searching for information.

Next, we used AI to be smarter in how we reach out to prospective new customers.

Tapping Into a New Context
Shifting AI's context from merely a cost-saving tool to a growth driver reframes its value. AI can spark innovation, open new markets, and create personalized customer experiences, driving revenue and competitive advantage. Emphasizing AI's potential for growth encourages investment in creative solutions, fostering scalability, resilience, and long-term business success.

Practical Solutions to Support The Field

Beyond sales, we have found ways to extend AI's benefits into our field operations, where it could make a real difference for our technicians and customer service teams.

Consider fiber deployment. It's not just about laying cables; it involves complex route planning, customer mapping, and overcoming logistical hurdles. Traditionally, this work was data-heavy and time-consuming. By integrating AI into our engineering processes, we streamlined deployment, making route planning faster and more accurate. What used to take days of manual work could now be completed in hours, boosting our overall efficiency.

We also equipped our field technicians with an AI-powered tool that provided access to detailed manuals, troubleshooting steps, and past solutions in real time. Before, if a tech faced a complicated issue, they might have needed to call back to the office or schedule a follow-up visit. Now, with instant access to relevant information, technicians can solve problems faster, reducing callbacks and improving the customer experience.

Customer service saw similar benefits. AI reviews interactions to ensure that our teams follow the right protocols and provide effective solutions. It also flags potential escalations early, allowing reps to manage customer concerns before they become significant issues. This proactive approach has helped us reduce churn and maintain higher customer satisfaction. Predictive modeling is another area where AI has been invaluable. By forecasting customer behavior, we can anticipate service take-up rates and better allocate resources.

This ability to adapt quickly gives us a competitive edge, enabling us to meet customer needs efficiently and effectively.

The Right Infrastructure to Support AI

AI's potential is only as strong as the infrastructure supporting it, and that's where fiber comes in. Many executives overlook this, focusing solely on AI's algorithms and software. But without high-speed, low-latency connectivity, even the most advanced AI applications will fall short.

Why fiber? Well, AI requires crunching massive amounts of data, so speed and latency are most important. Fiber delivers data at the speed of light, ensuring that AI applications can crunch all that data quickly and provide insights in real time. This goes beyond downloading movies faster or enhancing video calls. It's about enabling critical, data-driven applications that rely on real-time decision-making. For example, imagine a traffic management AI system that adjusts signals dynamically to reduce congestion and prevent accidents. Without fiber, delays in data processing could lead to real-world consequences.

Bandwidth matters, and low latency is crucial. Fiber provides an environment that ensures AI algorithms run smoothly and efficiently. At Frontier, we have tested 100-gig speeds, preparing for the future where AI applications will become even more data-intensive. This futureproofing ensures that as the complexity of AI grows, our infrastructure is ready to support it.

Advice for Senior Executives

Just like AI, we get better as we learn, so I would encourage you to be inquisitive of the possibilities of AI. Be curious and don't aim for perfection, it will slow you down. Too often, leaders become paralyzed by the need for a perfect plan, but AI's true value comes from an iterative approach. Be ready to test, adapt, and refine. The chaos of trying and learning is where true innovation lives. At Frontier, we found success because we dove in, asked questions, and learned as we went.

Another piece of advice is to take AI to where the work happens and engage your IT teams in your day-to-day work. Hands-on experience provides valuable insights that shape how AI is integrated into your operations. Instead of top-down assumptions, develop practical, on-the-ground understanding of where AI could make the most significant impact. The biggest gains don't often come from sweeping overhauls but from incremental changes that add up.

These are some of the lessons we've learned, and it's transformed AI from a cost-cutting tool to a driver of growth for the benefit of our business. It's not about having all the answers at the start; it's about asking the right questions and staying open to learning and adapting. If you're willing to roll up your sleeves and explore, you're already on the path to success. **IQ**

BIO: Ettienne Brandt
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Ettienne Brandt has over 20 years of experience in the telecommunications industry across cable, fiber and wireless providers. He served as Managing Director, Commercial for the Consumer Division of BT Group plc. as a key member of the leadership team getting the BT brand back to growth. Previously, he served in a variety of roles at EE Ltd prior to BT's acquisition, including leading the Enterprise P&L as Marketing and Commercial Director. He began his telecommunications career at NTL (now Virgin Media), the largest UK cable provider, and also worked in South Africa and the USA. Mr. Brandt holds a Bachelor of Commerce from Stellenbosch University and is a member of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.

Building Gigabit America
Fiber technology is crucial for AI, as it provides the high-speed, high-bandwidth connectivity needed to process vast amounts of data in real-time. This supports rapid data transmission and seamless communication between AI systems, enabling faster decision-making, enhanced machine learning capabilities, and efficient cloud computing. Without fiber, AI's potential would be limited.

Prospecting is one of the most challenging parts of sales, requiring targeted, meaningful outreach that resonates with potential clients. Using AI, we integrated data from various systems into a unified platform. This approach enabled our sales team to craft tailored, relevant messages that speak directly to each prospect's needs and industry context. The result was more effective outreach, faster client engagement, and ultimately, increased sales.

A Single Source of Truth

Transparency is more than just a corporate buzzword; it is a lifeline for modern businesses. For too long, sales and project management teams have worked in silos, disconnected from the full lifecycle of a deal. This disconnect often results in frustration, delayed installations, and canceled orders. At Frontier, we decided to change that narrative with a unified, AI-powered platform—a "single pane of glass."

We built a platform that integrates data from contracting, provisioning, billing, and even sales commissions into one accessible view. For the first time, our B2B sales teams could track the progress of their deals from start to finish. They could see project milestones, billing status, and commission timelines, empowering them to stay engaged and proactive post-contract. The impact was immediate: fewer canceled deals, faster order-to-cash cycles, and more collaboration.

The benefits extended beyond the sales team. Project management now had better visibility into potential bottlenecks, allowing them to address issues before they escalated. This transparency improved communication and accountability, leading to a more unified operation. The results were undeniable: our post-sale cancellation rate dropped by half, a testament to how transformative a single, connected system can be.

When teams have the tools and insights to see the entire process, they become more invested in outcomes. The result? Smoother handoffs, quicker problem resolution, and a more seamless experience for the customer.