

Knowing when to act

Grabbing the opportunity at hand

Advances in tech are happening at a pace and impact we truly have never seen before. Nowhere is this more evident than Artificial Intelligence (AI), as neatly summed up by John Chambers, ex-CEO at Cisco in a conversation with McKinsey in May 2025: “There’s not been a technology since the internet with this broad of a scope and implementation. In many ways, the implementation of AI is like that of the internet but it’s going to move at five times the speed, with three times the outcome.”





“ChatGPT has established benchmarks at multiples of magnitude faster than any other technology – it hit 100m active users within two months of launch, while it took WhatsApp four years to do the same. The popularity of ChatGPT together with Gen AI apps like Claude, Perplexity, and others, means we can expect such tools to become a must-have on almost every phone in the very near future. We’re seeing generational technology cycles happen at an unprecedented pace.”

Suzanna Chiu

Head of Amadeus Ventures,
Amadeus

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Standing still is simply not an option. 'Innovate fast' must be a driving principle. This needs to be done without compromising integrity with attention focused on solutions that solve genuine human needs.

“The travel industry stands at a juncture, where innovation is not merely an option but an imperative for sustained growth and competitiveness. But there are challenges that must be overcome. Industry stakeholders - including airlines, hotels, tour operators, and travel agencies - grapple with the immense burden of legacy systems, a highly fragmented operational landscape, and a complex patchwork of regulations.

“Consumer concerns revolve around privacy, the perceived complexity of new technologies, a fundamental lack of trust in novel offerings, and a desire for human interaction cannot be ignored.”

Mark Bennett

Vice President, Knowledge & Information Partnerships EMEA,
Google

Google

Understanding the human need

Importantly for the travel and hospitality sectors, these needs are (and always have been) consistent and identifiable because ultimately, travel – be it for leisure or for business reasons – is intrinsically linked with hope and aspirations.

Travelers' aspirations are linked to the purpose for travel being achieved. Hope the meeting secures the deal; hope they get to explore new places and unwind; hope the family has fun because time spent together can be a rarity. This echoes throughout the journey: hope you make your flight on time; hope you didn't overpack your suitcase; hope you got a great holiday deal.

With such high emotions inherently linked to travel, trust and reassurance is necessary throughout the trip. This is where technology transformation comes to the fore, and where innovation brings ever-increasingly more sophisticated solutions to market.

Adoption of new technologies, be it through the application of data; synchronicity across platforms; or through biometrics are all seeing successful implementation. But these aren't overnight processes.

When it comes to the journey, travelers may (technology early adopters aside), need reassurance about simplicity delivering the same uncompromising standards they are accustomed to (for example, around data and security).

Cloud-based reinsurance

The tipping point ultimately lies in confidence that investments will bring a return. Until now, this has been a challenge with technology on **two main fronts**:

- 1 Emerging technologies can bring unpredictability in modelling or a lack of external benchmarking upon which to base success
- 2 Lengthy build cycles can mean systems are obsolete by the time they are fully deployed



However, these fundamental challenges with technological overhaul are now being directly addressed, with cloud technology the catalyst, where platforms provide ready-to-use infrastructure, development tools and services.

These platforms allow developers to design and iteratively test solutions without having to rely on hardware (and the bottlenecks in practicality and scale involved). Cloud platforms also bring unrivalled flexibility in capacity and collaboration.

This ultimately means a faster time to market and the ability to innovate faster (yet securely and confidently).

Transformational thinking

Innovation must be more than an approach, it needs to be a mindset, with the ultimate ambition being to challenge the status quo.



Transformational and disruptive, risk-averse thinking isn't an overnight (or easy) shift. It demands trust in the reasons why new technologies are being considered, trialed and tested. There has to be confidence that new solutions necessitate exploration, and this is where we must look back at the 'benchmarking' aspect referenced above.

“The organizations that succeed in this AI-driven future will be those who understand that ‘AI is only as good as your data’ and take the necessary steps to build a solid data foundation.

“One of the biggest challenges facing organizations today is how to build and deploy high-quality AI agents that can reason on a company's own business data for more specific business outcomes. The second challenge is to ensure a modern operational database (OLTP) or a ‘Lakebase’ (essentially a super-fast database that works like an app's memory), is in place to ensure that these AI agents can be built with the speed, scale and governance required to be truly effective. We believe that solving these challenges is essential to achieving true digital transformation in the travel sector in 2025 and beyond.”

Bryan Smith

Senior Industry Director,
Databricks





“The biggest barriers are cultural and organizational, but also in risk management. Travelers today expect seamless experiences across every touchpoint where disruption is the exception, not the norm. We believe the future of travel is connected, intelligent, and resilient. ServiceNow brings the digital backbone that enables that future to scale – securely and efficiently.”

Fabio Spoletini

GVP, Southern Europe, Middle East & Africa,
ServiceNow

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Swifter visibility into ROI

The previous cost and length of deployment for technology overhaul projects carried risks when it came to the confidence that predicted ROI. Costs could spiral out of hand and timescales often ran across multiple years to then only solve yesterday’s problems, not today’s (let alone tomorrow’s).

An upshot of this was a benchmarking lag. The ROI evidence took too long to come through, creating anxieties about the value of investment.

But the cloud approach addresses this, especially when it comes to the use of AI and Gen AI – two of the most lucrative and impact-driving technologies disrupting industries worldwide. The use of Gen AI is already widespread, with tangible evidence of its benefits. And nowhere is this more evident than customer services.

“We’re seeing AI being deployed faster and at scale within back-office travel agency operations where tools are handling workloads that can be automated without the need for a human to do so. Far from taking jobs, this is freeing up agents to handle the right calls, faster and better.

“It halves the speed at which enquiries can be handled by automating the simplest and allocating the most difficult to in-person customer support teams, for example. In doing so, it doubles the number of enquiries being handled. This is a very clear demonstration of where ROI can be immediately witnessed.”

Suzanna Chiu
Head of Amadeus Ventures,
Amadeus

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So, where does this get us in understanding the time to act and undertake a transformation program? Well, we know the human needs we need to address and have the customer demand for it to be solved. We also have the technology and platforms upon which to iteratively innovate and we’re already witnessing demonstrable returns on investment and evidence that solutions are making the difference they’re intended for. As such, the time to act is very much “now”.

