BOARDROOM BRIEF

Seven quieter technologies *powering AI.*

Will AI pay off? A brief for retail, consumer and travel boards: the 2027 risks to plan around, the seven technologies, a CEO playbook and three questions.

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AS PUBLISHED IN

Forbes



WHERE AI MEETS THE REAL WORLD

A real product. A real traveler. A real order.



A REAL PRODUCT

Product identity and smart glasses at the shelf



A REAL TRAVELER

Verifiable identity at the gate



A REAL ORDER

Robotics and the edge in fulfillment

AI pays off where it meets the real world

85%

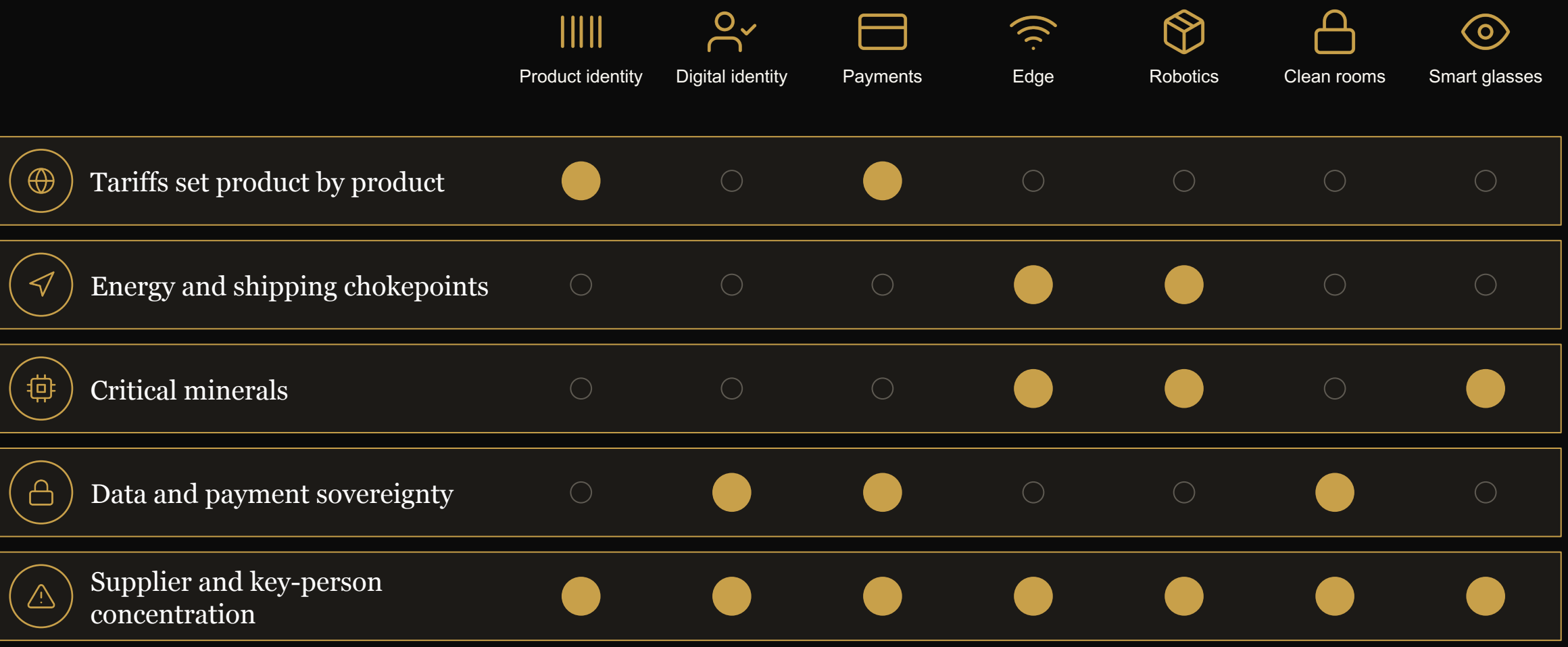
of leaders say enterprise debt in data, process, technology and talent caps the value they get from AI.

Source: Genpact and HFS Research, survey of 2,000+ senior executives, June 2026

You don't need all seven, only the ones your AI use cases depend on.

01	Product identity
02	Verifiable digital identity
03	Instant, programmable payments
04	Edge computing and private wireless
05	Robotics and automated fulfillment
06	Privacy-preserving data collaboration
07	Spatial computing and smart glasses

Five risks to plan around



Know what every item is, and who authorized every agent

01 Product identity that carries its own data



GS1 2D codes, item-level RFID and EU Digital Product Passports: every item describes itself, so AI works from facts.

BOARD LENS

Origin provable item by item, as tariffs change product by product

02 Verifiable digital identity



IATA's One ID: verify once, then move through the journey. The same credentials can prove who authorized an AI agent.

BOARD LENS

Agent authority verifiable across borders, airlines and wallets

Feb 18, 2027

The first EU product passport becomes mandatory, for batteries placed on the EU market.

Source: EU Batteries Regulation (EU) 2023/1542, Article 77

Let agents pay safely, and decide on the spot

03 Instant and programmable payments

Settle instantly, carry tokenized permissions, follow the customer's limits: the missing piece of agentic commerce.

BOARD LENS

Exposure to one network as countries build their own rails

04 Edge computing and private wireless

Decide in milliseconds on site: cameras, shelf sensors, gates and handhelds, without waiting on a distant cloud.

BOARD LENS

What keeps running if a cloud region, link or power fails

HOW AN AI AGENT BUYS SAFELY



Automate the physical, share without exposing

05 Robotics and automated fulfillment



From novelty to necessity: robots absorb repetitive work so teams focus on exceptions, service and judgment.

BOARD LENS

Dependence on magnets, chips and parts from one country

06 Privacy-preserving data collaboration



Clean rooms let brands, retailers, airlines and hotels learn from each other while records never leave their owners.

BOARD LENS

Partner data staying in its home jurisdiction

1 million

Amazon deployed its millionth fulfillment robot in July 2025.
Source: Amazon, via TechCrunch, July 2025

Smart glasses come last, on purpose

07 Spatial computing and smart glasses

Information in view, in operations first: pick lists for associates, wayfinding and translation for travelers, guided repairs.

BOARD LENS

Payback in operations, camera privacy rules, supplier concentration

Each depends on the identity, edge and data foundations beneath it.

7M+

AI glasses (Ray-Ban Meta and Oakley Meta) sold in 2025.

Source: EssilorLuxottica, full-year 2025 results

Three moves before the 2027 budget closes

01

Map AI's single points of failure

List every chip, model, cloud and payment supplier, and the key people, each AI capability depends on. Fund an alternative or a successor where one dominates.

ANSWERS BOARD QUESTION 1

02

Prove origin item by item, on open standards

Put GS1 2D codes and passports on the products most exposed to tariffs and EU rules first, ahead of February 2027.

ANSWERS BOARD QUESTION 2

03

Fund the technologies your AI depends on

Pay for them from the AI budget, judged by the value they unlock, and give one executive the whole stack.

ANSWERS BOARD QUESTION 3

FOR YOUR NEXT BOARD MEETING

Three questions to put to your leadership team

1

Which AI capabilities depend on a single chip, model or cloud supplier, and what is our plan if it is disrupted?

WHAT IT TESTS

Whether AI is resilient

2

If a tariff changed tomorrow, could we prove the origin of every affected product, within a day?

WHAT IT TESTS

Whether product identity is board-ready

3

Which of these technologies do our top AI use cases depend on, and are they funded?

WHAT IT TESTS

Whether AI can pay off

READ THE FULL COLUMN

Retail, Consumer & Travel Leaders Are Betting On AI: Quieter Technologies Will Determine If It Pays

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