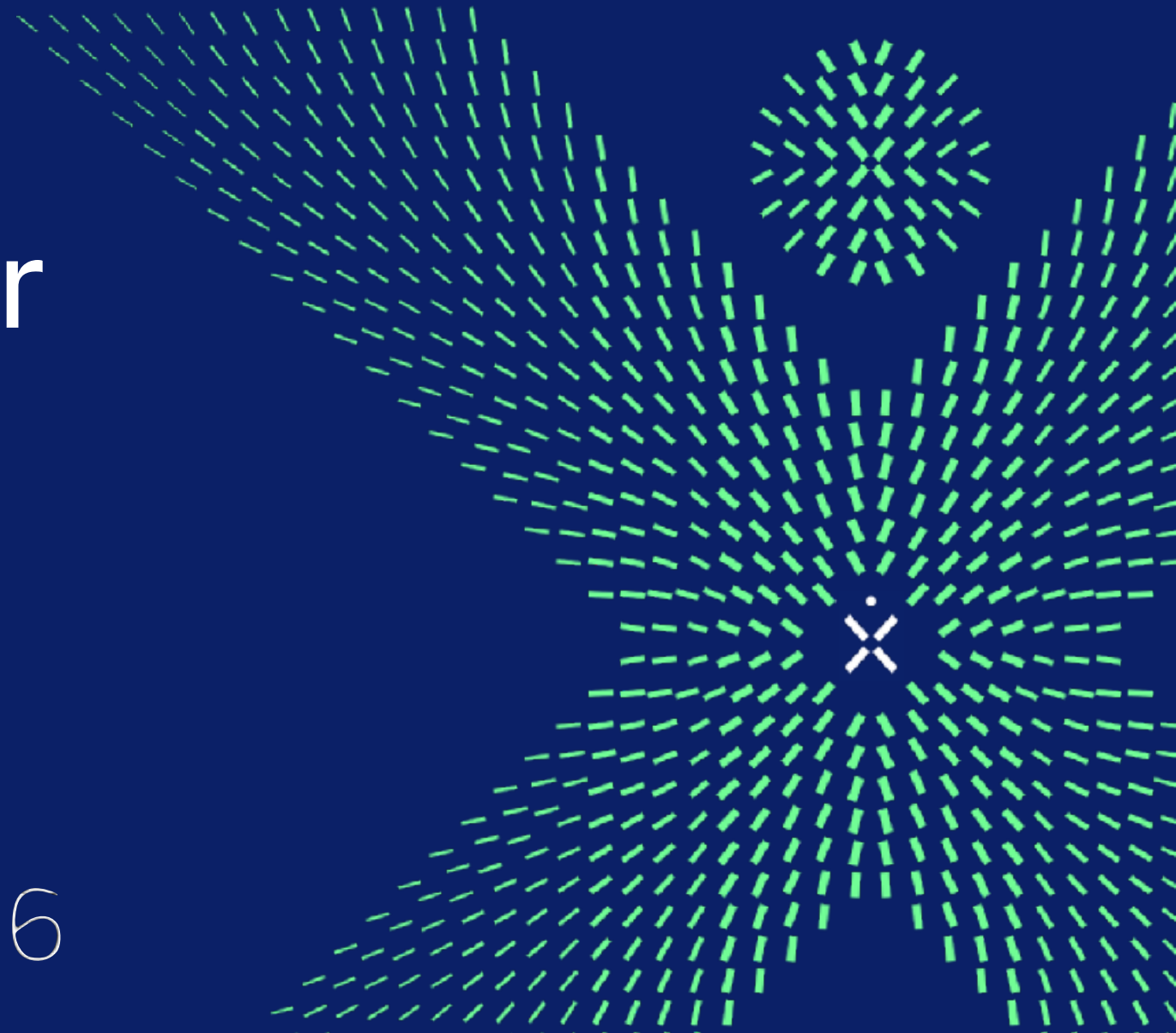


What is a worker in 2031?

Brian Madden, Futurist, Citrix


ARROW FORUM 2026



What is a worker
in 2031?

2031?

A vibrant, painterly illustration of a futuristic city at night. The scene is filled with tall, dark buildings illuminated by a mix of blue, purple, and orange lights. Two sleek, dark flying ships are positioned in the upper half of the frame, each emitting a bright red laser beam that points towards the other. On the left side, a prominent building features a glowing red sign that reads 'MAGNI'. The overall atmosphere is one of high-tech urban warfare or surveillance.

2031?

citrix

2031



citrix®

What happens in the next five years of work?

2031

AI!

citrix.

Thank you!



Brian Madden, Futurist, Citrix


ARROW FORUM 2026



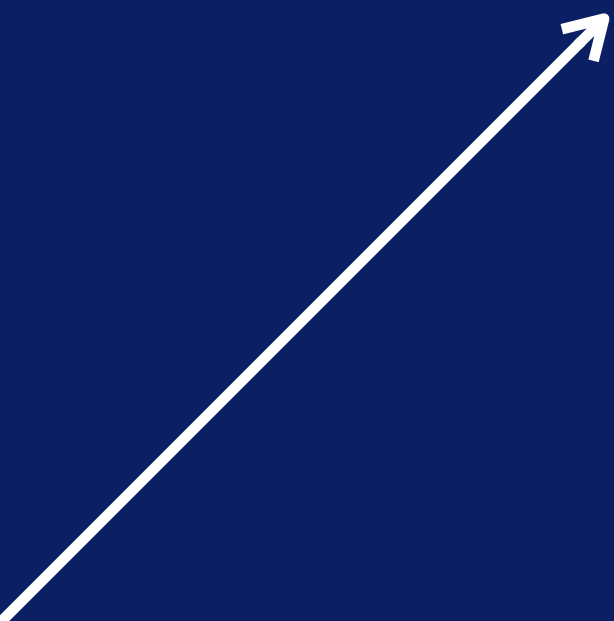
Let's start with what we know

What do we know about the next five years?

1. AI **capabilities** will continue to increase

AI Capabilities

What can AI actually do?



?



Companies Are Pouring Billions Into A.I. It Has Yet to Pay Off.

Corporate spending on artificial intelligence is surging on major efficiency gains. So far, they report little payoff.



Listen

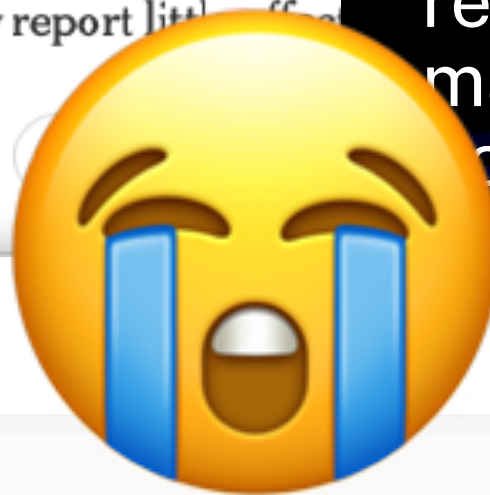
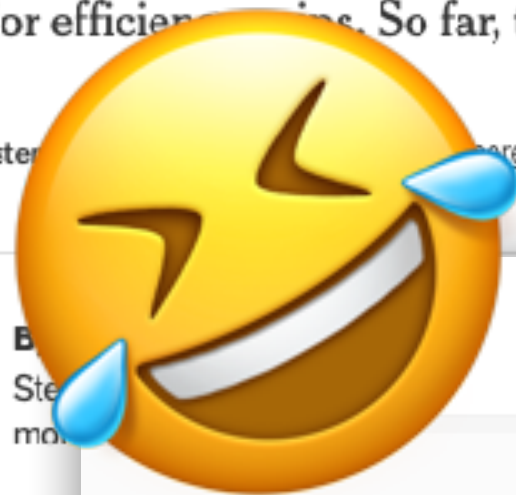


By
Sheryl Estrada
Senior Writer

Aug. 13, 2025
[Leer en español](#)

Nearly four
swing, a ph

It was a re
technology
efficiency.



NEWSLETTERS · CFO DAILY

MIT report: 95% of generative AI pilots at companies are failing



BY SHERYL ESTRADA
SENIOR WRITER AND AUTHOR OF CFO DAILY

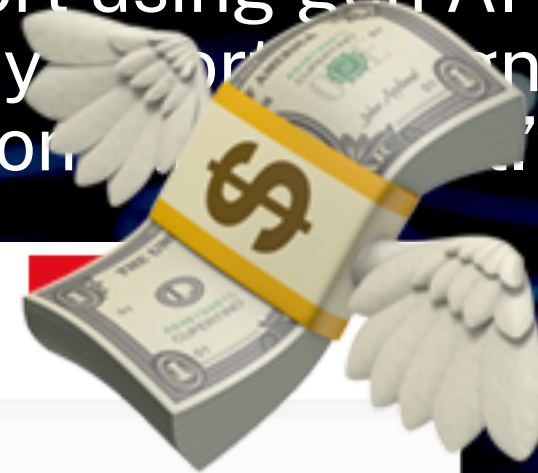


QuantumBlack
AI by McKinsey

Sign in | Subscribe

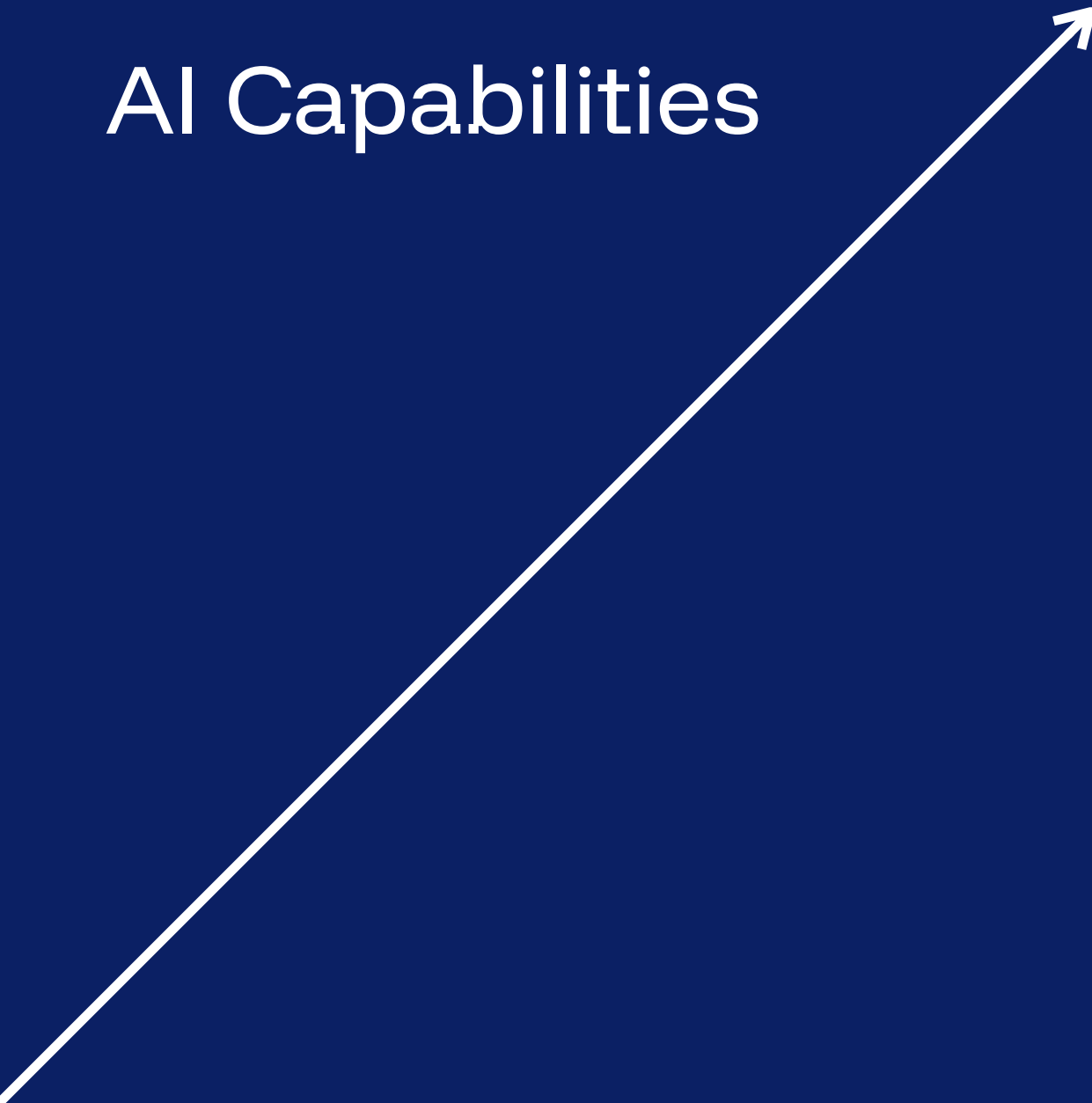


“Nearly eight in ten companies report using gen AI — yet just as many report no significant bottom line impact.”



AI advantage 

AI Capabilities



AI Diffusion
How fast AI is absorbed?

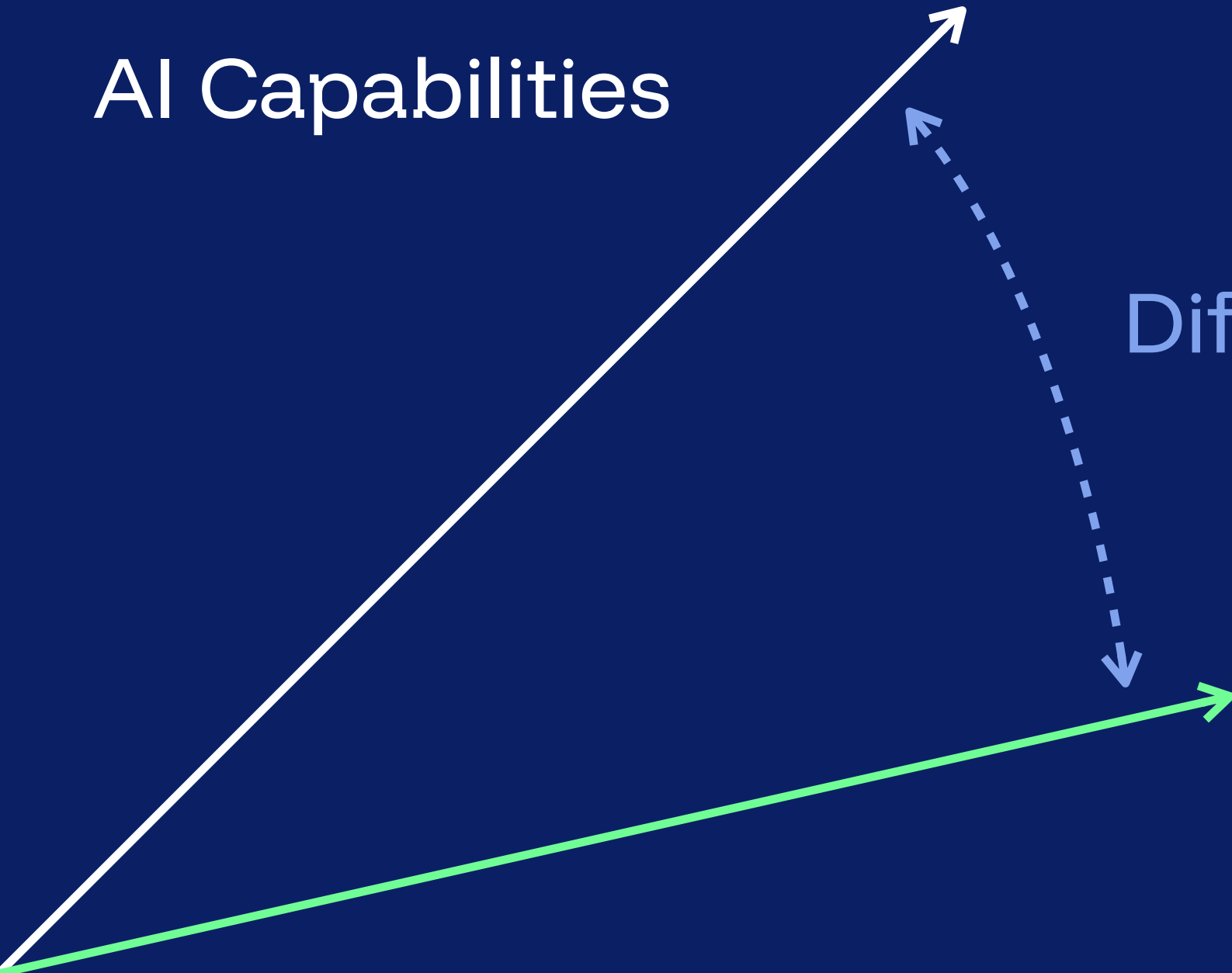
citrix®

AI Capabilities

Diffusion Gap

AI Diffusion

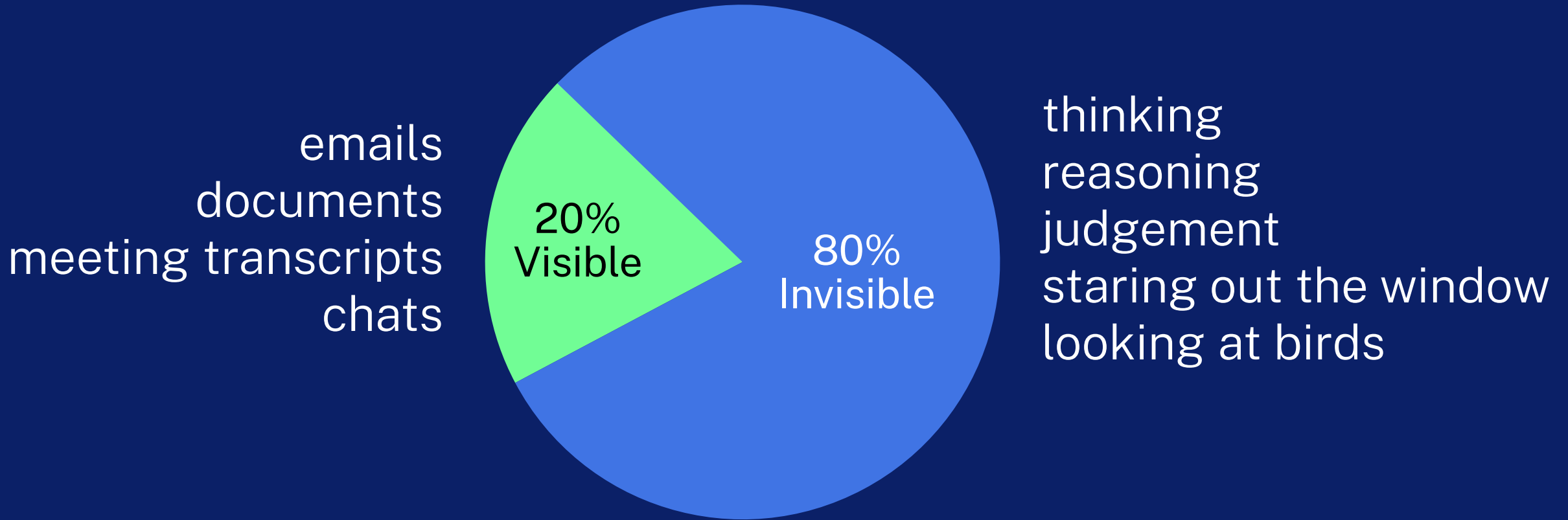
citrix®



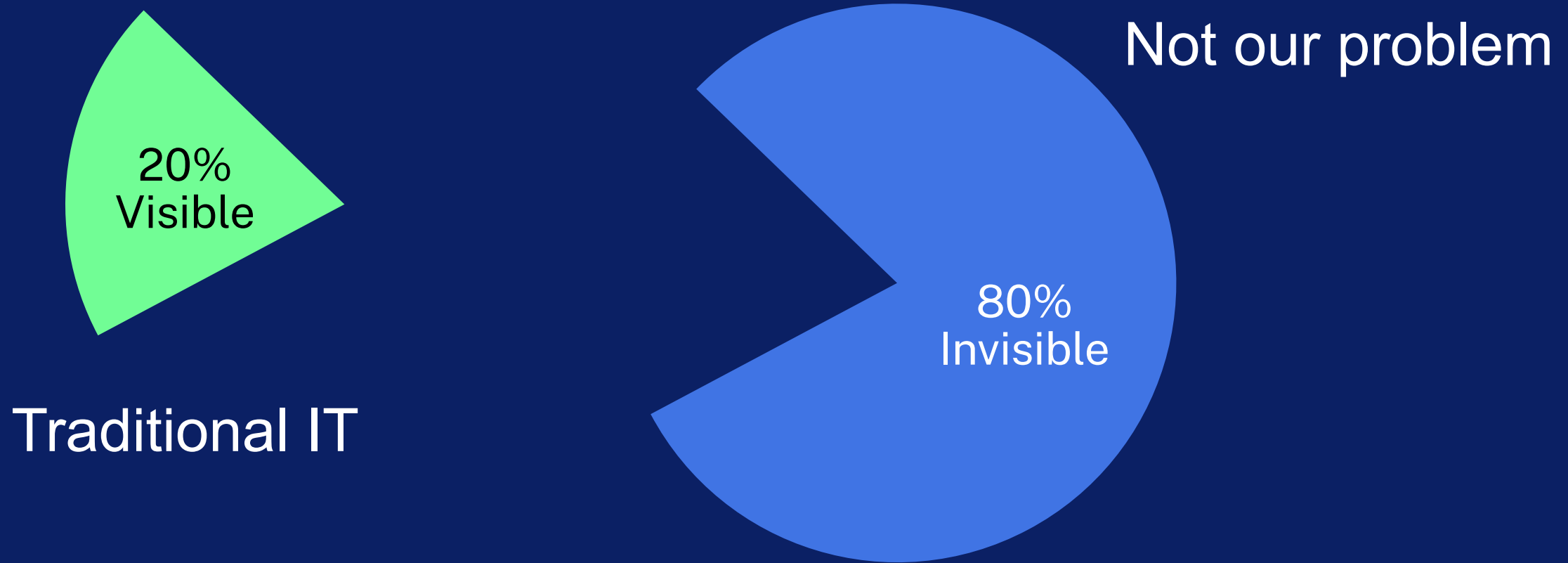
What do we know about the next five years?

1. AI capabilities will continue to increase
2. AI diffusion is slow

Knowledge Work

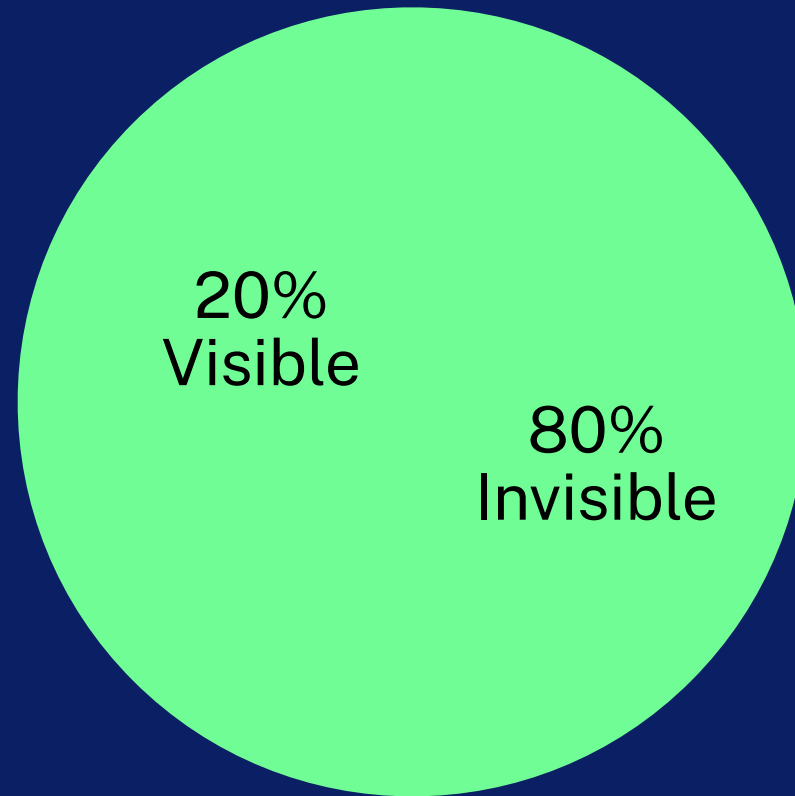


Knowledge Work



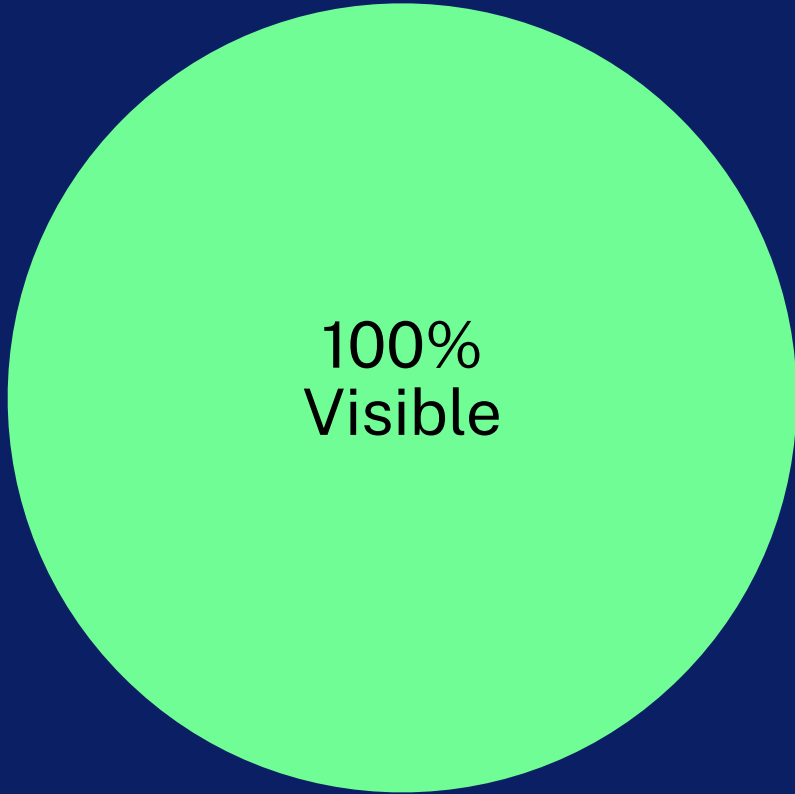
Knowledge Work

IT after AI



Knowledge Work

IT after AI



100%
Visible

How do we get there? Develop an AI Strategy!



1. CEO declares “We are an AI-first company!”



2. Buy Copilot licenses for every worker.



3. ???

What do we know about the next five years?

1. AI **capabilities** will continue to increase
2. AI **diffusion** is slow
3. Closing the AI **diffusion gap** will greatly expand IT
4. Knowing how to close the diffusion gap will be **the key to the future of IT** and work over the next few years...



So how do we predict the future?



I am a futurist!



citrix.
Secure the Work.



Brian Madden ✓

VP & Futurist, Citrix

Paris, Île-de-France, France · [Contact info](#)



Citrix

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I am a futurist

A futurist does **NOT** predict the future

A futurist works with **probabilities**

A futurist thinks about **all possible futures**

assume

What do we ~~know~~ about the next five years?

1. AI capabilities will continue to increase ???
2. AI diffusion is slow
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4. Knowing how to close the diffusion gap will be the key to the future of IT and work over the next few years...

What assumptions are built into this ?

“AI capabilities will continue to increase” ↗

1. AI technical progress will continue



What assumptions are built into this ?

“AI capabilities will continue to increase” ↗

1. AI technical progress will continue *probably?*

2. The most advanced AI models will be available

Selected recent news headlines

- 7 April** Anthropic releases Mythos Preview to ~50 companies
- 9 June** Anthropic releases Fable 5 & Mythos 5
- 12 June** US Government forces Anthropic to cut off those models
- 16 June** Chinese lab Zhipu releases GLM-5.2* as full open-weight model
**Opus 4.8 / GPT 5.5 class model*
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- 25 June** US Government “asks” OpenAI to limit GPT 5.6 to trusted partners
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**If the US government allows them*

Selected recent r



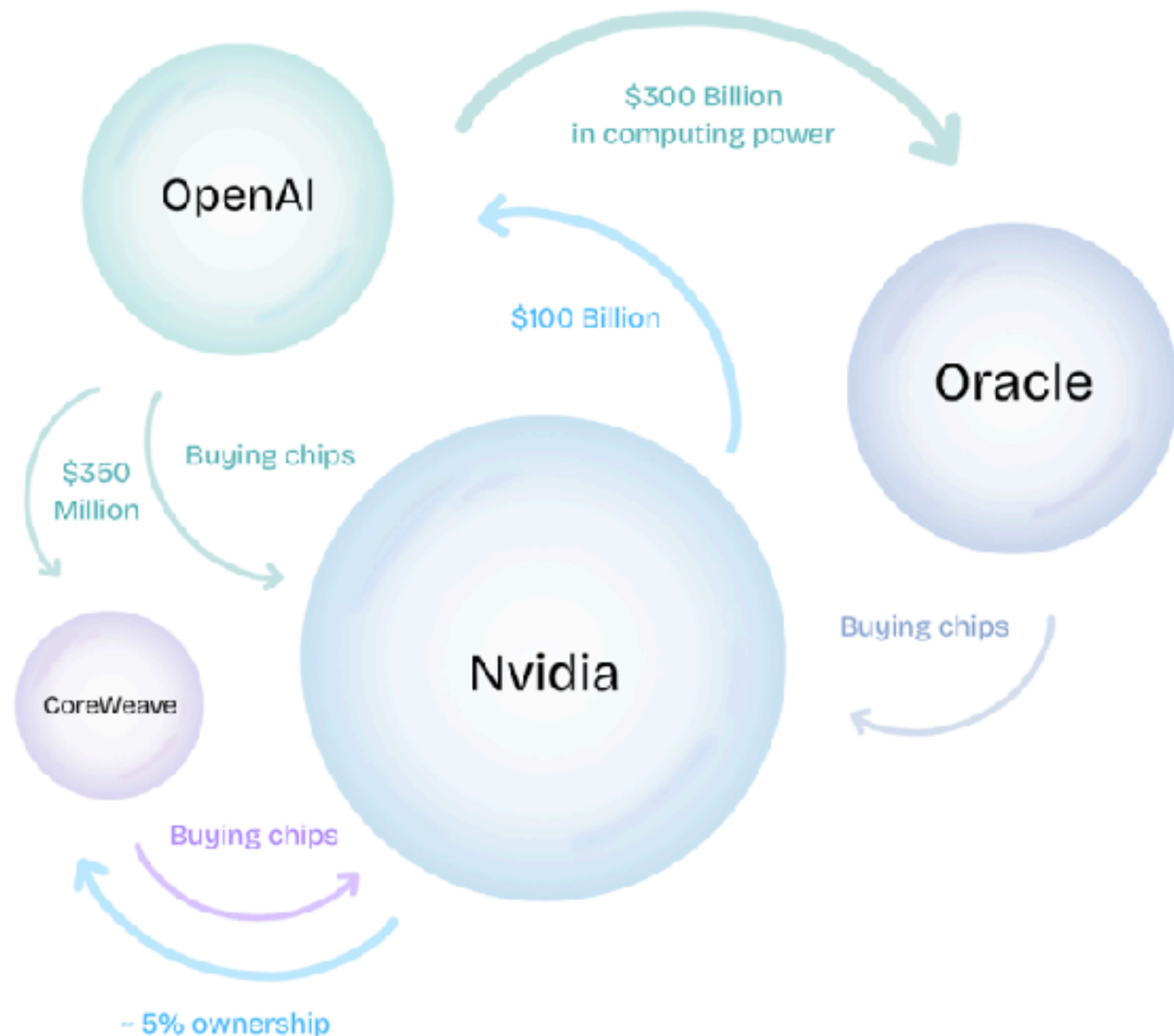
AI bubble

Article [Talk](#)

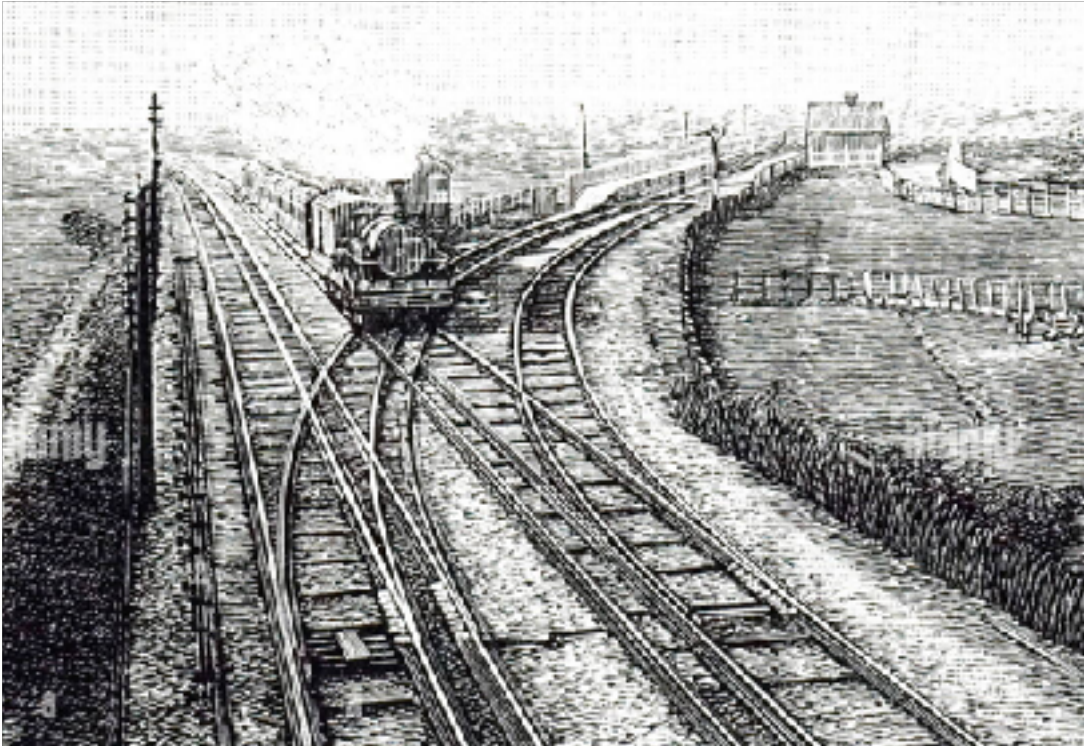
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

For the loss of effectiveness by

An editor has a
number of irre
discussion ma



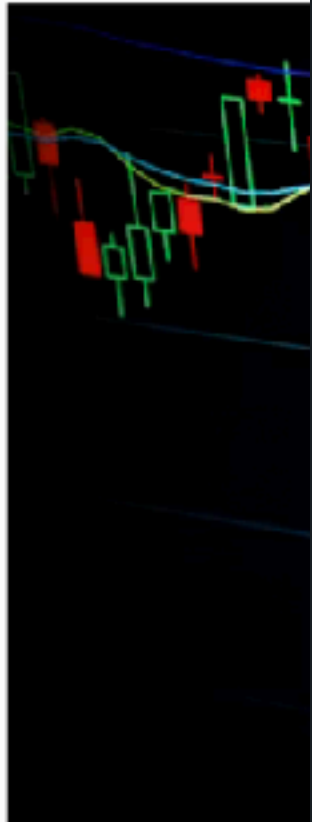
“But even if the AI bubble pops,
the technology still exists and is available!”



Are we **making an assumption** that's also true with AI?

OpenAI Leaked Financials: \$20.9B Loss Reveals the True Cost of AI Inference at Scale

BY ERIC BUSH · JUNE 18, 2026 · 8 MIN READ



The Broken Economics of AI: The Numbers Behind Training, Inference, and Chat



Joy B., CBDA 

Private Markets | Investment Banking · Deal Strategy · Capital Raises | AI Infra
Research | Venture Capital



September 22, 2025

Loss Leader Pricing Strategy in AI Monetization

Large language mod
Both the training ph
the model answers u
interaction costs co
revenue — meaning



Anbu Muppudathi

Technology Executive | CEO | Board Advisor

June 18, 2025



What assumptions are built into this ?

“AI capabilities will continue to increase” ↗

1. AI technical progress will continue *probably?*

2. The most advanced AI models will be available

**If the US government allows them*

**If the models are available after a bubble pop*

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2. The most advanced AI models will be available

**If the US government allows them*

**If the models are available after a bubble pop*

**If the Chinese government allows them*

What do we know about the next five years?

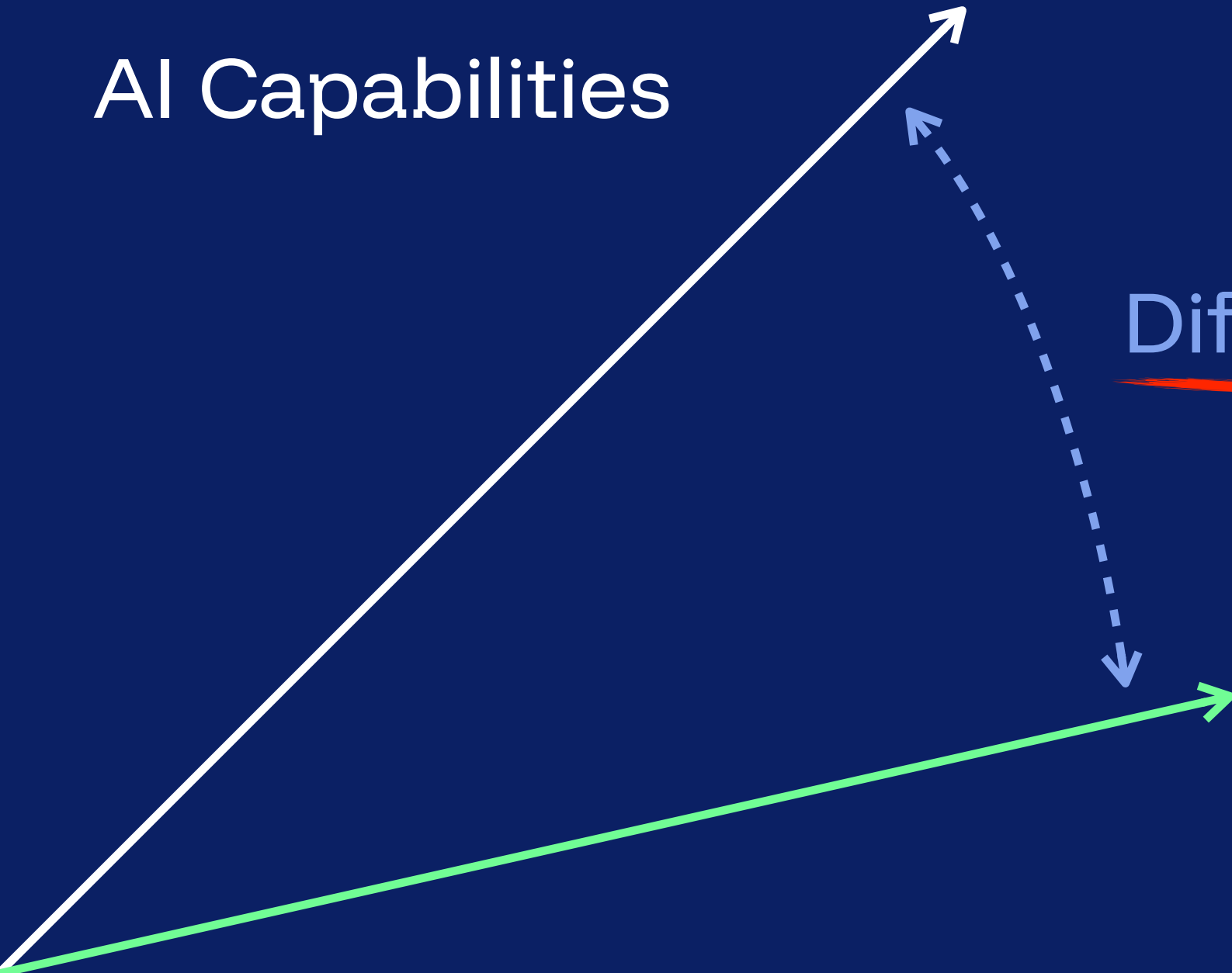
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AI Capabilities

Diffusion Gap

AI Diffusion

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Selected recent news headlines

- 5 May** Palantir Q1 earnings: US commercial up 133% year over year. CEO credits their FDE model.
- 11 May** OpenAI announces Deployment Company: \$4B+ investment, 150 FDEs on Day One, partners with BCG, McKinsey, Capgemini, Accenture
- 11 June** Anthropic and DXC announce alignment to train tens of thousands of FDEs
- 30 June** AWS announces \$1B to build its own FDE organization
- 2 July** Microsoft announces “Microsoft Frontier Company” \$2.5B / 6k FDEs
- 15 July** Anthropic & Blackstone set up Ode, \$1.5B funding

What's an FDE?

Forward Deployed Engineer

What does an FDE do?

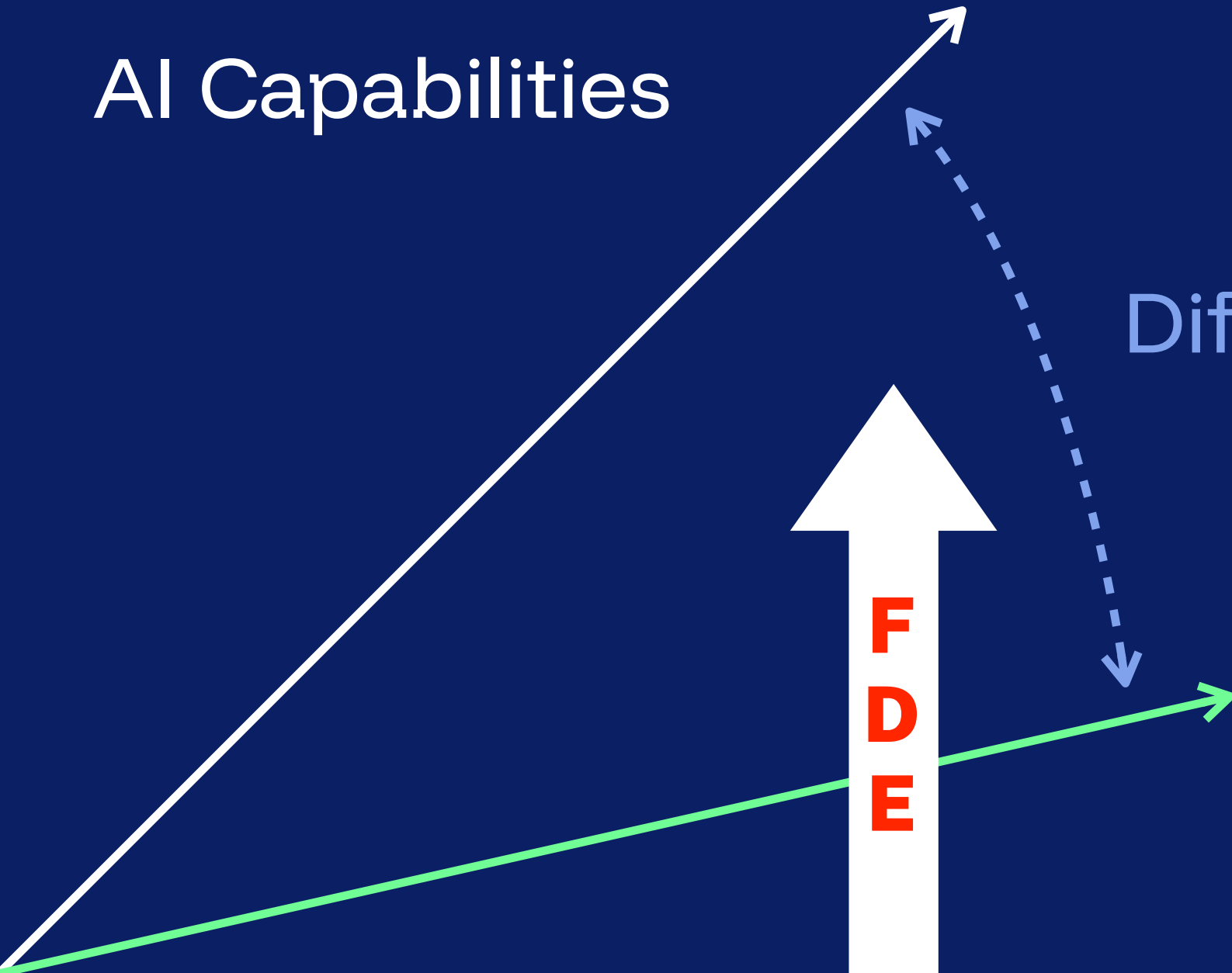
AI Capabilities

Diffusion Gap

AI Diffusion

F
D
E

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How do you get an FDE to close the diffusion gap?

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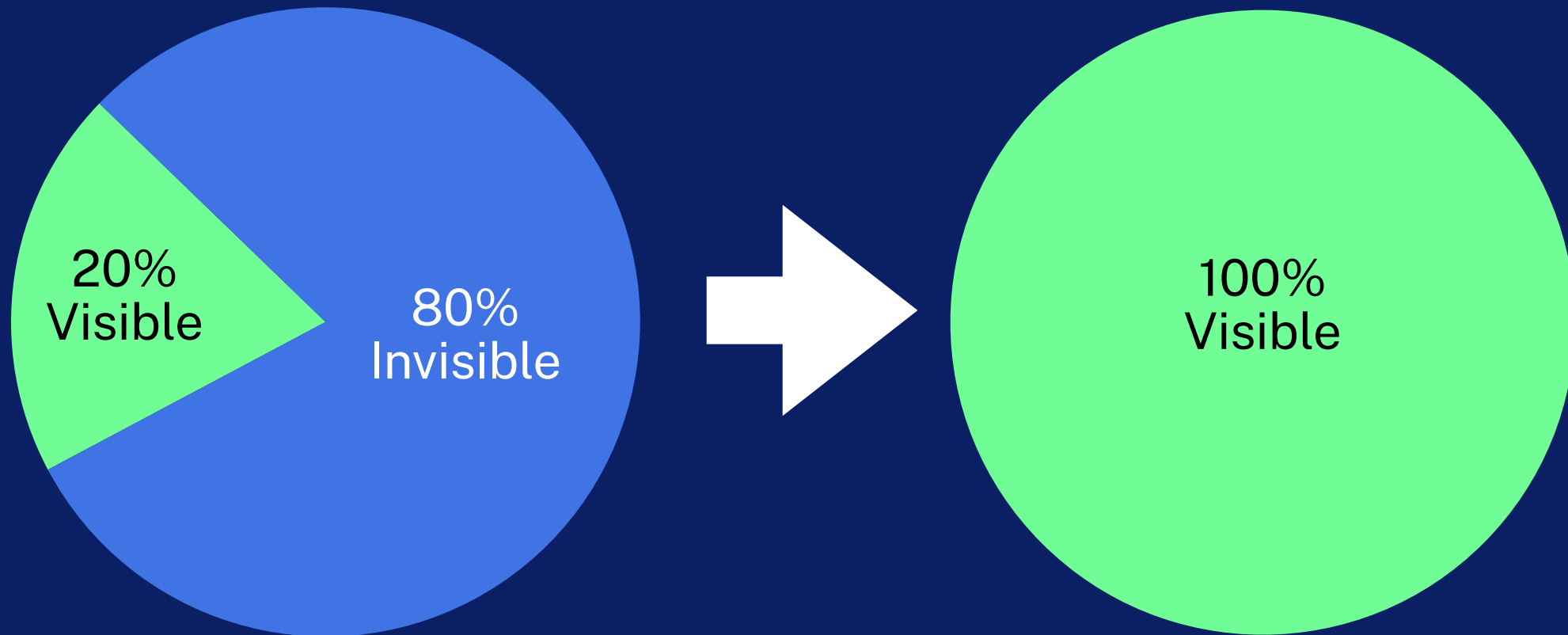
How do you get an FDE to close the diffusion gap?

Hire Palantir, OpenAI's Deployment Company,
BCG, McKinsey, Capgemini, Accenture,
Anthropic, DXC, AWS, and/or Microsoft!



How do you get an FDE to close the diffusion gap?

You better figure out what an FDE does!



What do we know about the next five years?

- ~~1. AI capabilities will continue to increase~~
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What do we know about the next five years?

- ~~1. Capabilities will continue to exist~~
- ~~2. AI diffusion is important, FDEs can speed it up~~
3. Closing the AI diffusion gap will greatly expand IT
4. Knowing how to close the diffusion gap will be the key to the future of IT and work over the next few years...

How to close the AI diffusion gap

Understand how AI use evolves

The 7-stage roadmap for human-AI collaboration (2026 Edition)



Brian Madden

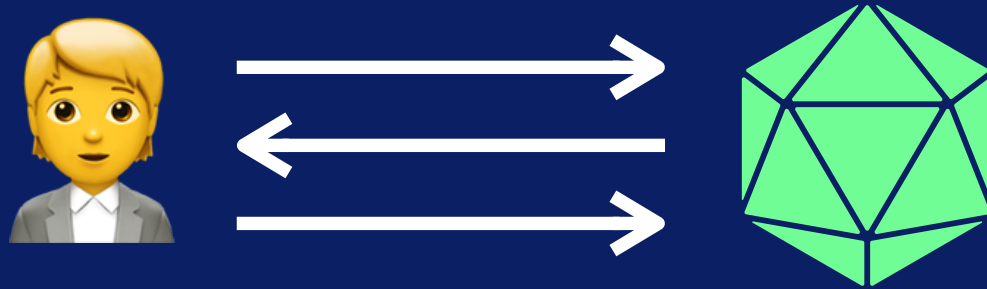


Last year I published the first version of my [7-stage roadmap](#) which detailed how human workers adopt AI over time. It started with workers using AI as simple answer bots in 2024 and stepped through the incremental changes up through full AI-orchestrated work by 2028.

That roadmap was directionally correct, though my timelines were hilariously off. (My Phase 6, which I predicted for 2027+, accurately

1. Faster
Search

AI as a Faster Search



1. Faster
Search

2. Thinking
Partner

3.

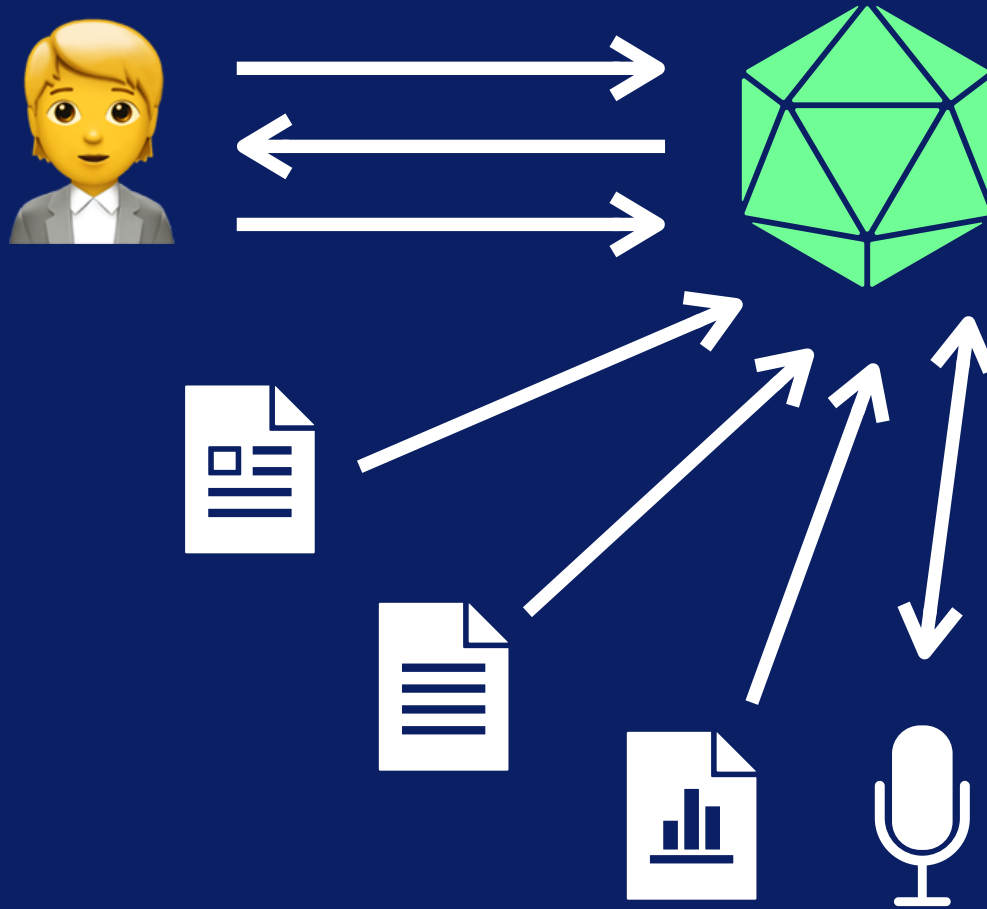
4.

5.

6.

7.

AI as a Thinking Partner



1. Faster Search

2. Thinking Partner

3. Cognitive Extension

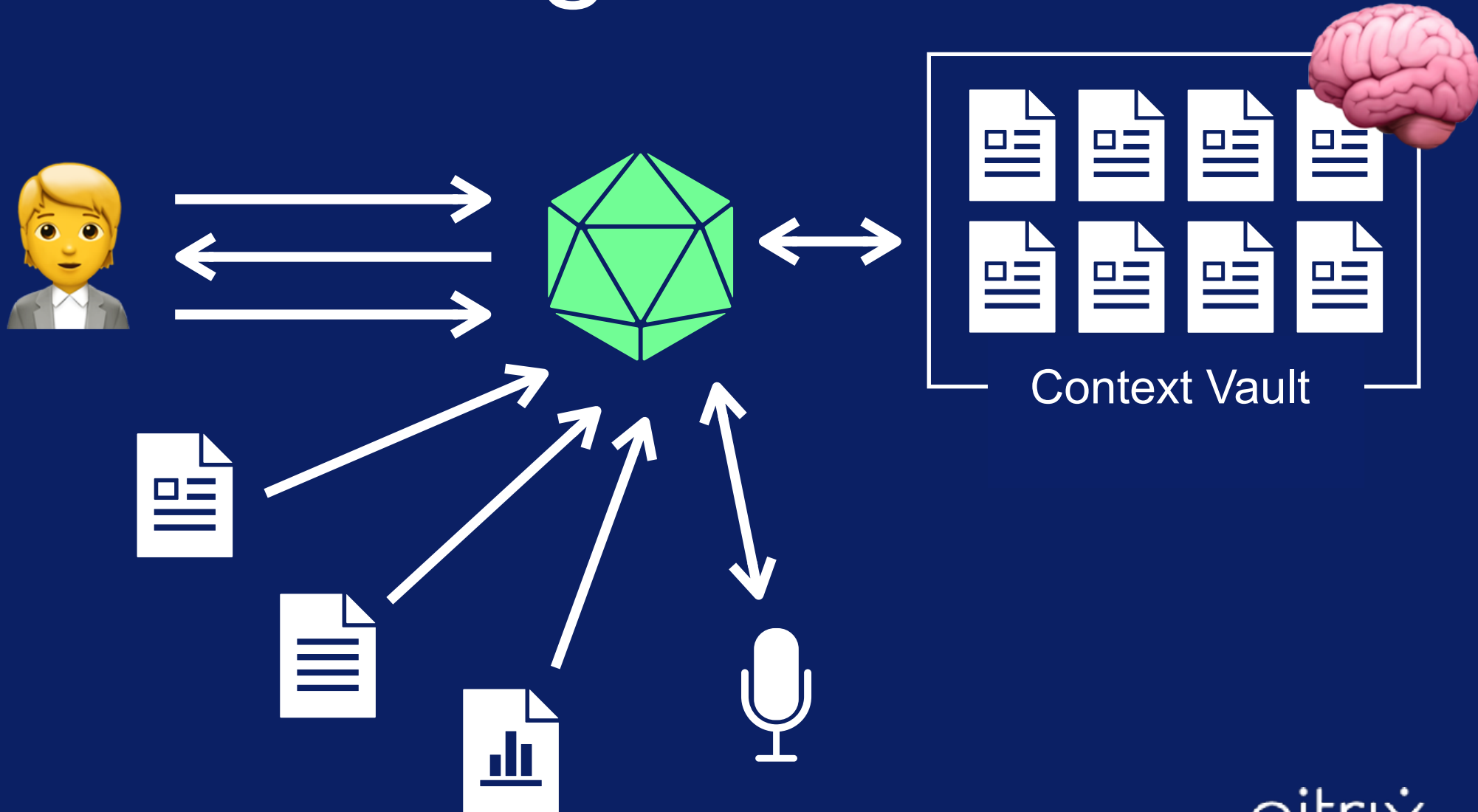
4.

5.

6.

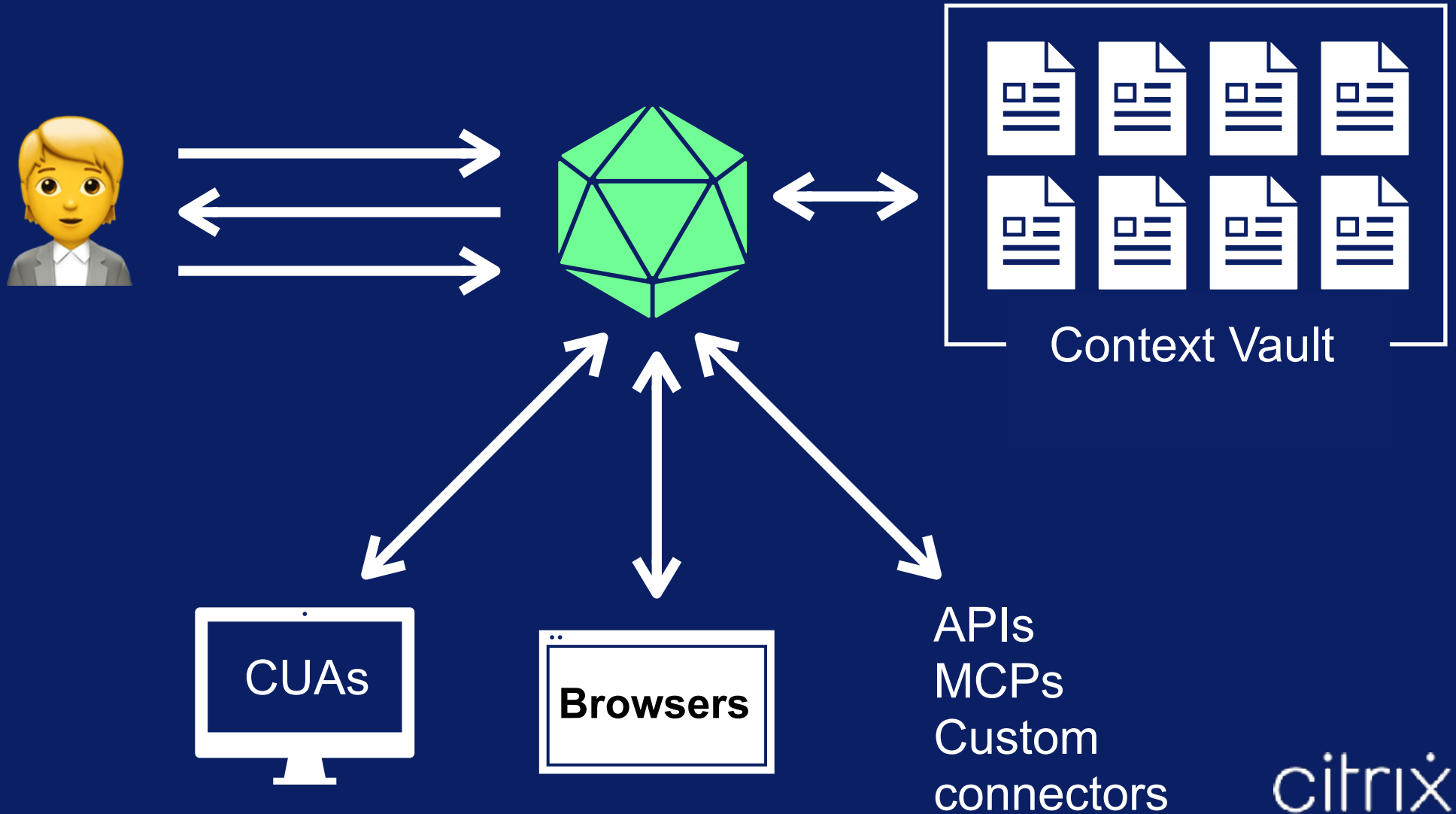
7.

AI as a Cognitive Extension



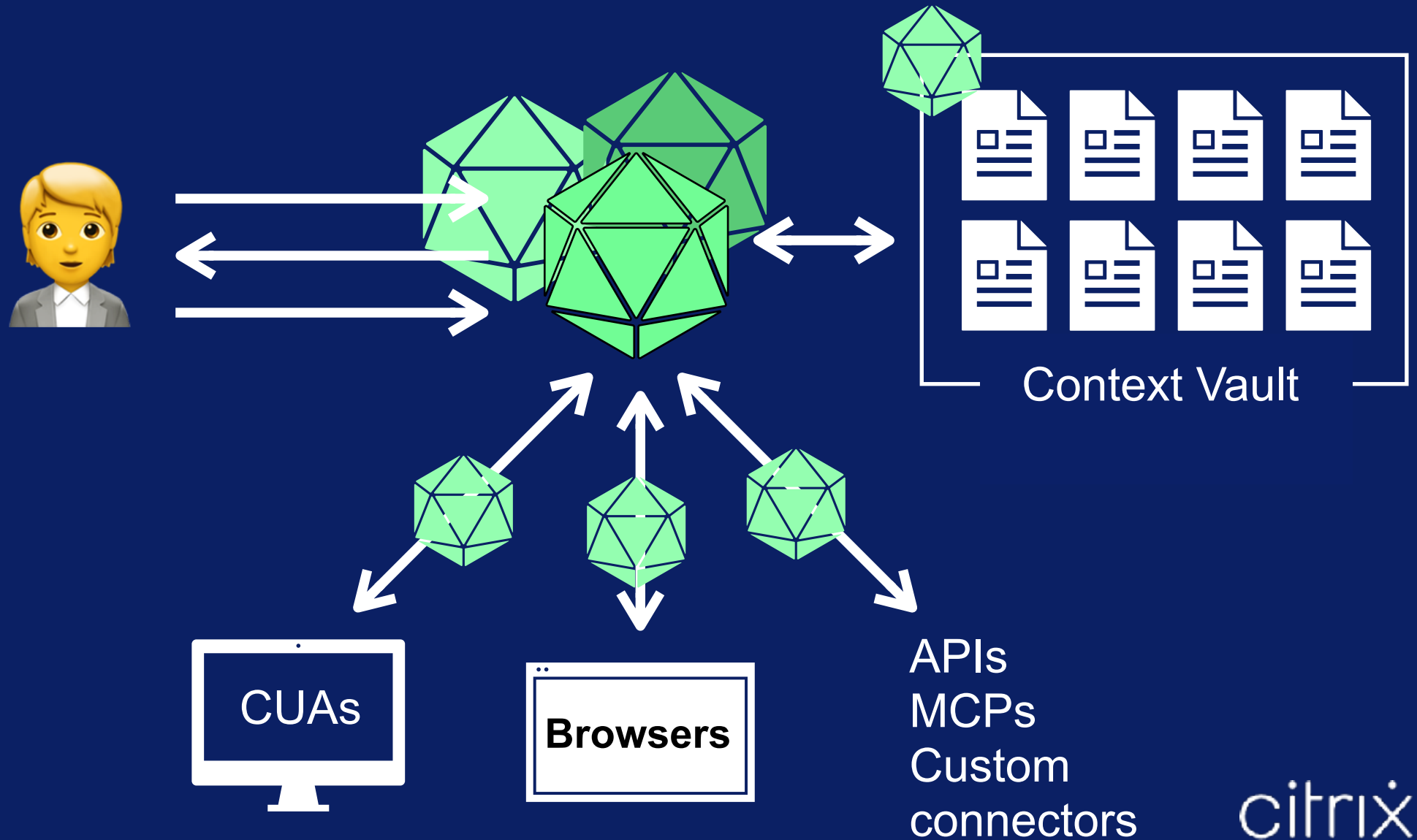
1. Faster Search
2. Thinking Partner
3. Cognitive Extension
4. Multi-tool Agent
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.

AI as a Multi-Tool Agent



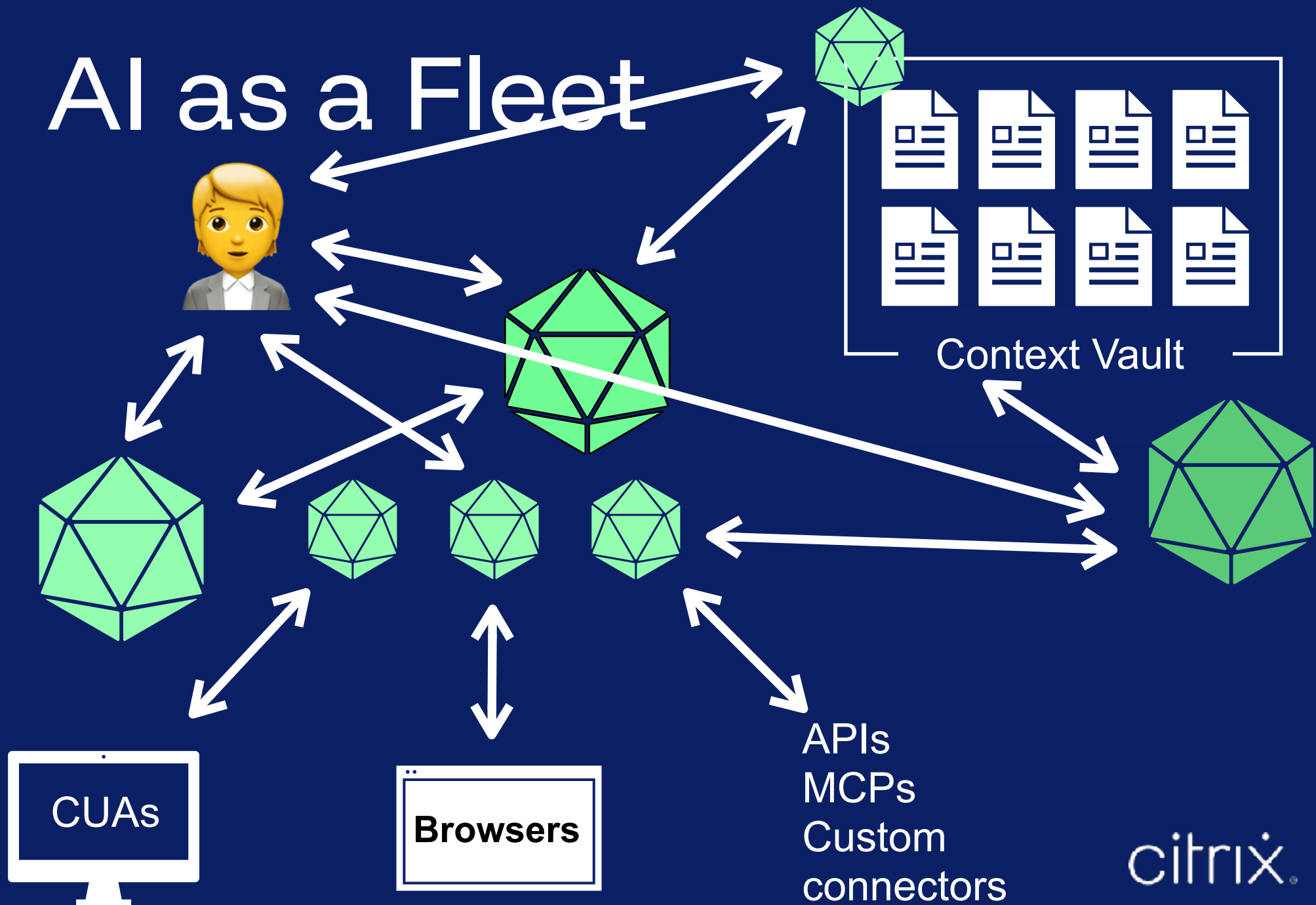
1. Faster Search
2. Thinking Partner
3. Cognitive Extension
4. Multi-tool Agent
5. Fleet
- 6.
- 7.

AI as a Fleet



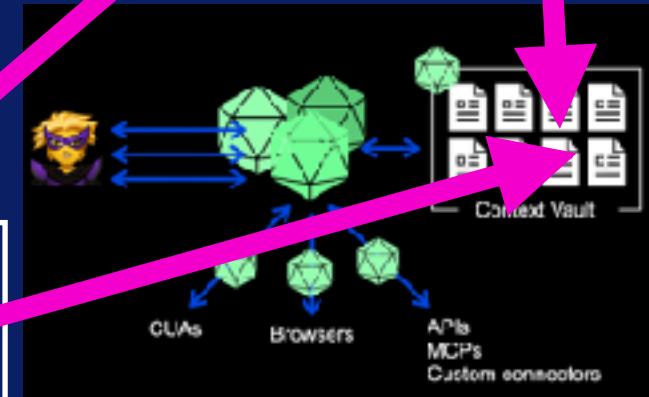
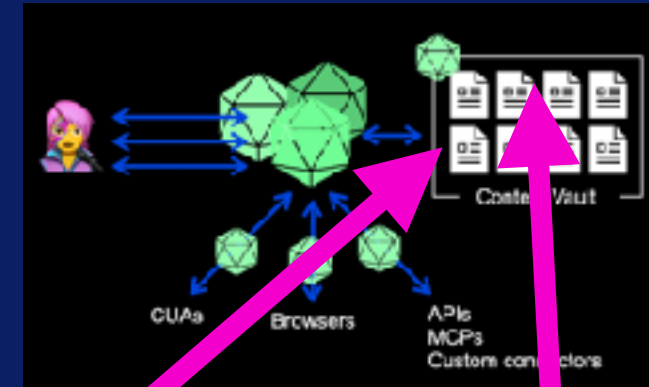
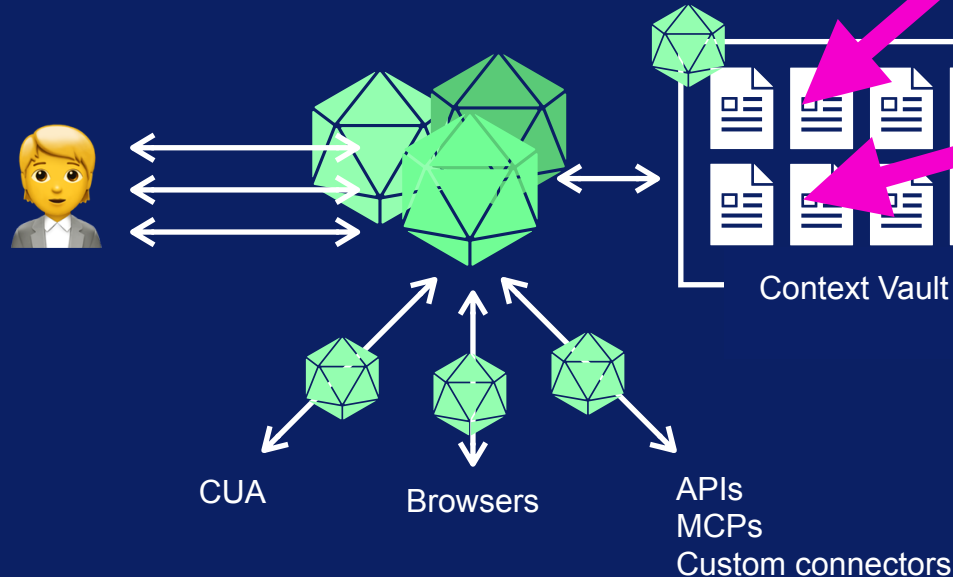
1. Faster Search
2. Thinking Partner
3. Cognitive Extension
4. Multi-tool Agent
5. Fleet
- 6.
- 7.

AI as a Fleet



1. Faster Search
2. Thinking Partner
3. Cognitive Extension
4. Multi-tool Agent
5. Fleet
6. Pod
- 7.

AI as a Pod



1. Faster Search

2. Thinking Partner

3. Cognitive Extension

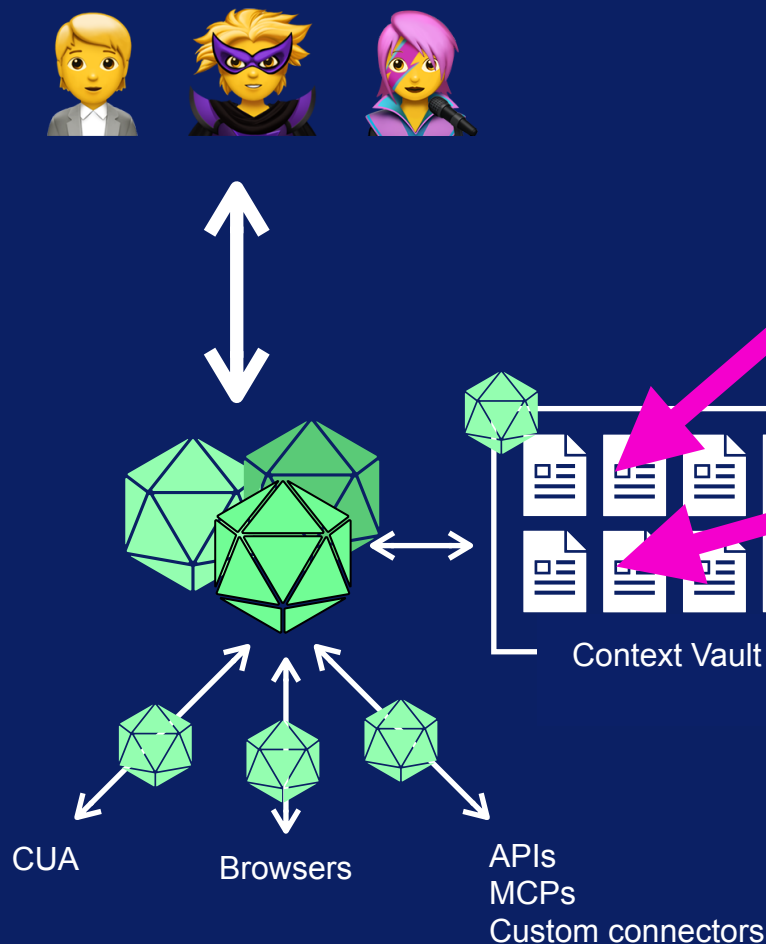
4. Multi-tool Agent

5. Fleet

6. Pod

7.

AI as a Pod



1. Faster Search

2. Thinking Partner

3. Cognitive Extension

4. Multi-tool Agent

5. Fleet

6. Pod

7.

AI as a Pod

3 worker types



Cognitive Owners

Context + judgment, the source of expertise

Cognitive Operators

Run agent fleets

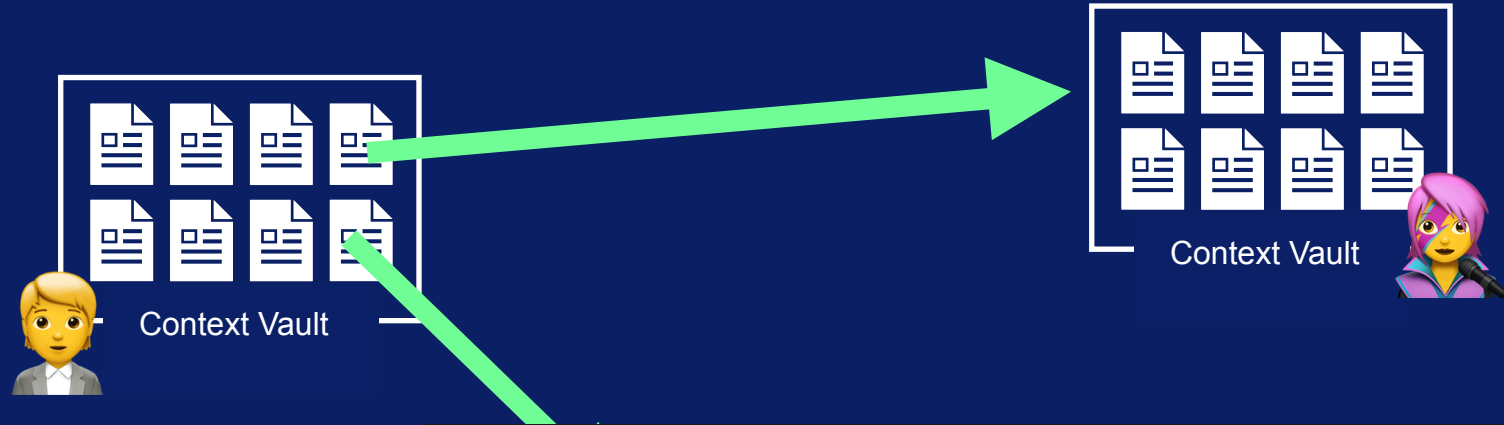
Cognitive Curators

Maintain context & skill libraries

1. Faster Search
2. Thinking Partner
3. Cognitive Extension
4. Multi-tool Agent
5. Fleet
6. Pod
7. Published Self

The Published Self

(Optional fork)



Announcing brianmadden.ai : I just published my brain for you to merge into your AI



Brian Madden 
VP & Futurist, Citrix

February 26, 2026

A few weeks ago I wrote about how I used AI to build a personal compounding



Every worker is somewhere on here



1. Faster Search



2. Thinking Partner



3. Cognitive Extension



4. Multi-Tool-Using Agent



5. Fleet of Agents



6. Self-Running Pod of Agents



7. Published Self

What do we know about the next five years?

1. Sonnet-class AI is real, and guaranteed to exist
2. AI **diffusion** is important, FDEs can speed it up
3. Closing the AI **diffusion gap** will greatly expand IT
4. Knowing how to close the diffusion gap will be **the key to the future of IT** and work over the next few years...

Resources



Citrix AI Hotsheet Podcast

citrix.com/blogs



bmad.com



The Current EUC Model

Many assumptions are baked into our current model

Work is **one** person.

Work is **one** screen.

Work is **one** set of apps.

Work is **one** set of hours.

AI is changing all our pieces!

VDI → VDI

(used by humans) → (used by humans & AI)

AI is not eating **all** software

Shallow



Zapier, Canva, Figma, Resend

Middle

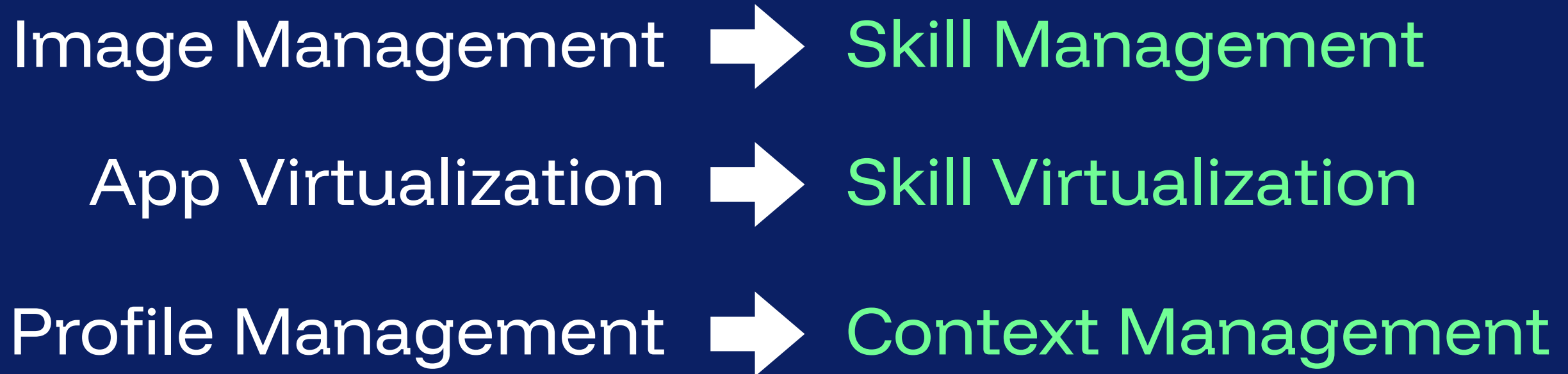


Salesforce, Workday,
Snowflake, Box

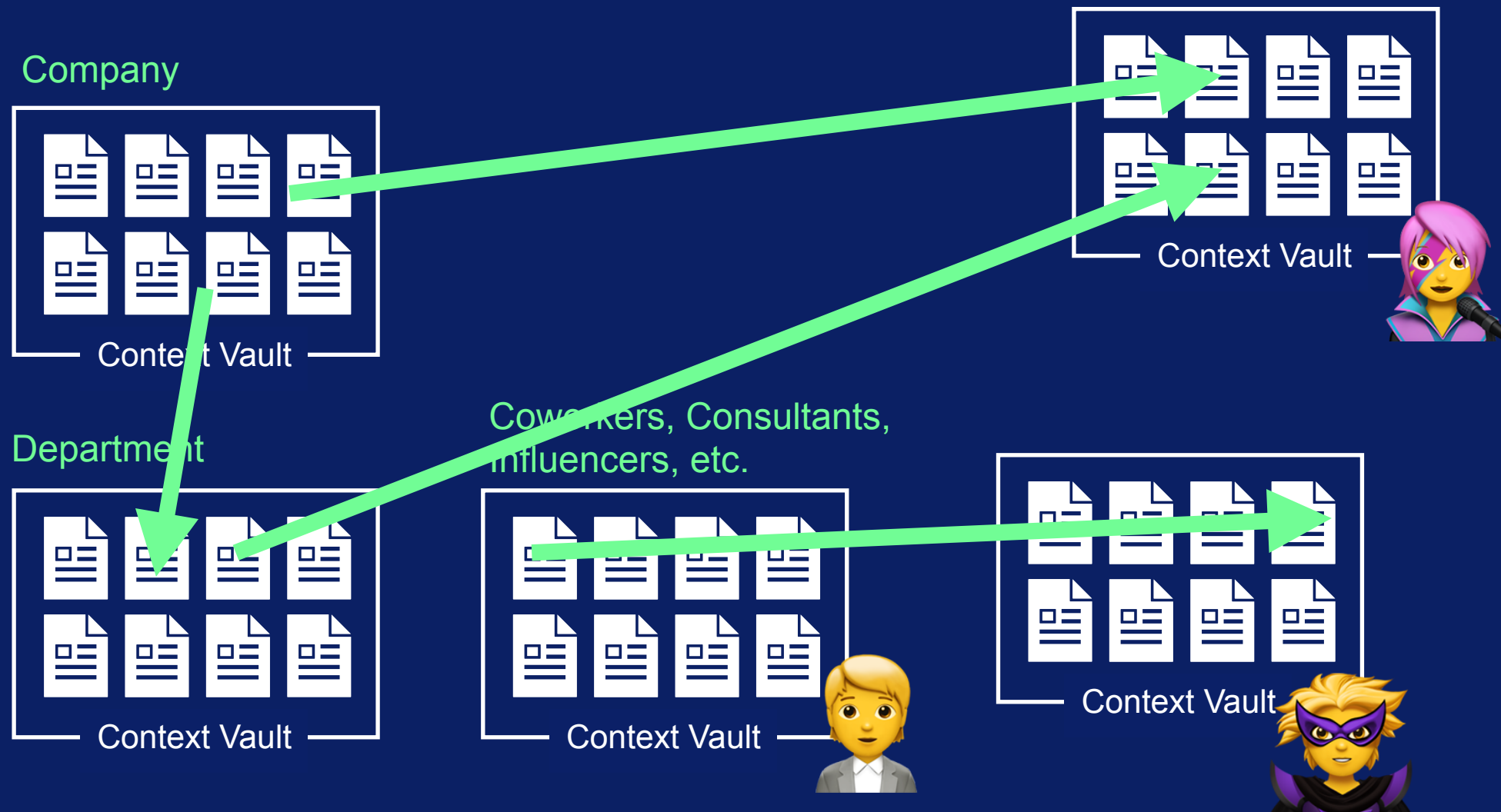
Deep



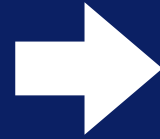
Epic, SAP, Oracle,
Guidewire, Fiserv,
Amadeus, industrial
control systems,
mainframes



Skill & Context Management

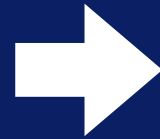


Group Policy



Agent Policy

Session Recording



Agent Observability

Session Recording



Cognitive Observability

Performance Mgmt ➡ Token Management



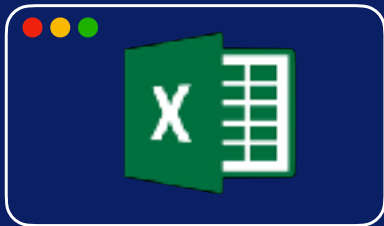
200K 🏆1



10K 🥈2



2K 🏆1



100K 🏆1



5K 🥉3



0 ❤️

citrix®

Every worker is somewhere on here



1. Faster Search



2. Thinking Partner



3. Cognitive Extension



4. Multi-Tool-Using Agent



5. Fleet of Agents



6. Self-Running Pod of Agents

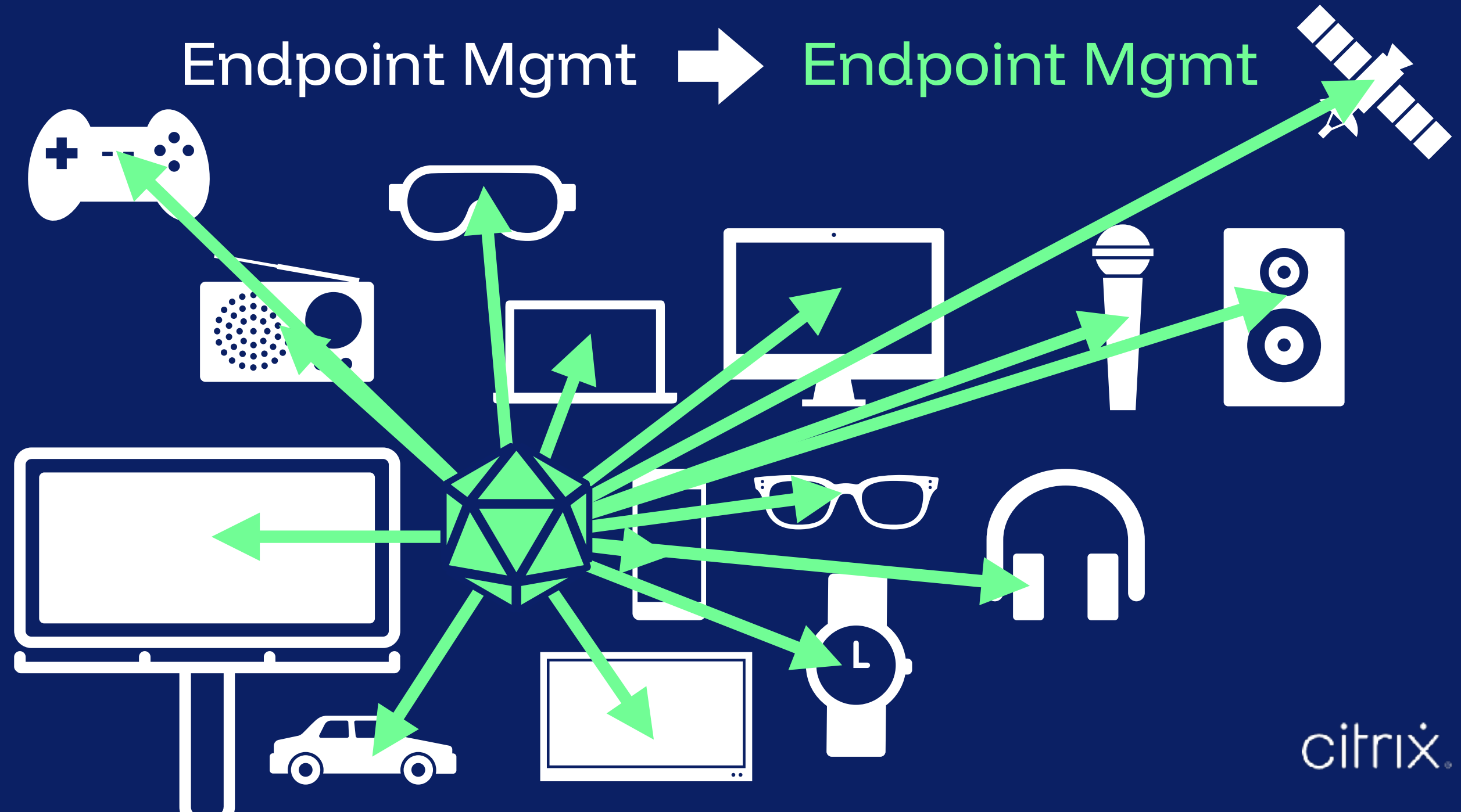


7. Published Self

Every worker raises system benchmarks



Endpoint Mgmt → Endpoint Mgmt



Endpoint Mgmt ➡ Endpoint Mgmt

Receiver / Workspace ➡ Cognitive Workspace

Control Plane ➡ Control Plane

VDI	Agent VDI
Image Mgmt	Skill Mgmt
Profile Mgmt	Brain Mgmt
App Virt	Skill Virt
Group Policy	Agent Policy
Perf Counters	Token Counters
Session Recording	Cognitive Observability
Endpoint Mgmt	Cognitive Endpoint Mgmt
Workspace	Cognitive Workspace
Control Plane	Control Plane

What we do
gets bigger

Workers still need to work.

Work still needs to happen
somewhere.

Somebody has to make that
somewhere work.

Safely, observably,
cost-effectively.

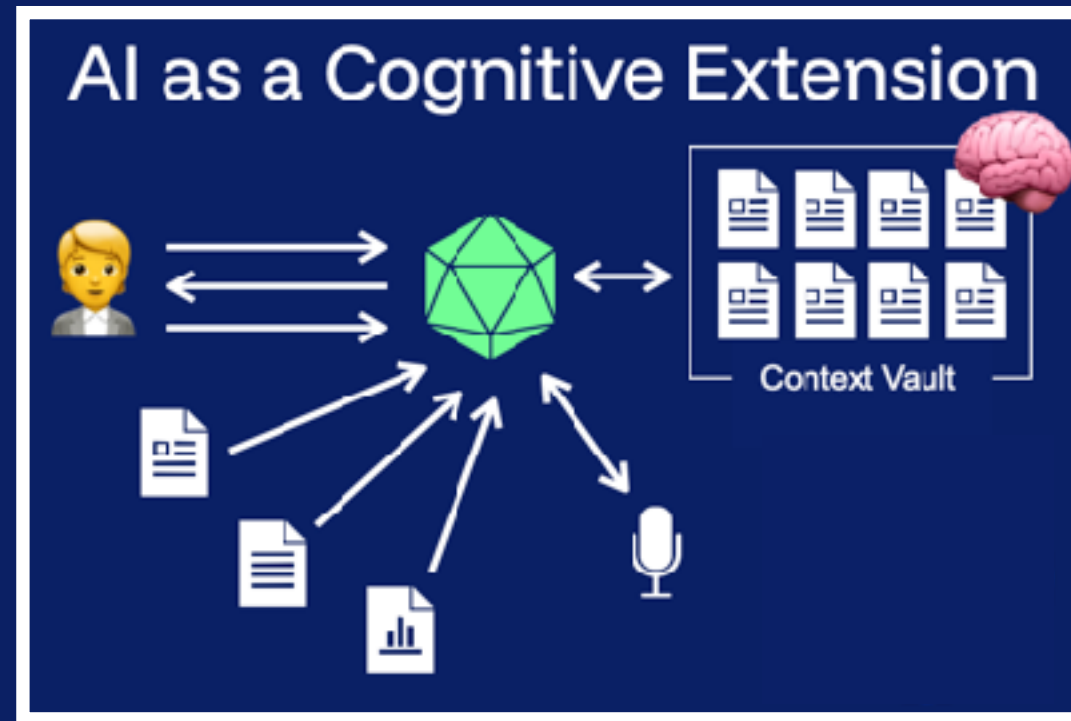
What next?

Make the jump to Stage 3.

Build your own brain.

You have to feel it before you can govern it.

You have to have one before you can manage thousands.



What do we know about the next five years?

1. Sonnet / GPT-5.5 class models will be available
2. AI second brains is transformational
3. Company knowledge factory pattern
4. FDE-type approach is needed

Resources



Citrix AI Hotsheet Podcast

citrix.com/blogs



bmad.com



Second brain starter prompt



bmad.com

