DECISIONS YOU CAN TRUST

A strategic guide to trustworthy data and AI decision making

sas viya

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AI-driven decisions

Data, analytics and AI are the new value drivers. Many organizations realize this and are aligning their enterprise strategies, technology platforms and AI initiatives.

But it's like putting together a puzzle that includes pieces like tech stacks, innovation, risk management and data-driven decisions. Plus, there are new puzzle pieces: autonomous decisions and humans. What's the common thread? **Decision intelligence.**

And decision intelligence matters more than ever. "You're not looking for just any decision. You need a decision that delivers outcomes that outperform. You need a decision that helps you compete to win in the market. You need a decision advantage," says Bryan Harris, Executive Vice President and Chief Technology Officer at SAS, regarding the successful use of agentic AI.

Unlike traditional AI, which primarily assists humans by providing insights, AI agents go a step further: They make decisions. As they gain autonomy, the ability to make informed, strategic decisions becomes crucial. And this new autonomy raises a key question: How do we ensure that AI agents make the right decisions?

The answer lies in decision intelligence – the discipline of designing, modeling and optimizing decision-making processes. It ensures AI agents make efficient, effective, ethical and explainable decisions.

Organizations looking to scale decision making with speed and precision find AI, specifically agentic AI, appealing. Why? AI agents can sense changing environments, make nested decisions and take fast action on behalf of humans. As force multipliers, they will become indispensable.

But it's more than just deploying AI agents; decision intelligence demands transparency, governance and scalability. It will require AI agents that act on intent, context and business policy to deliver transparent, auditable outcomes.

In this guide, discover how to strategically put the pieces together by advancing agentic AI in ways that empower data and AI teams to augment and automate decisions.

74% of companies struggle to achieve and scale value from their AI initiatives.

BCG: AI Adoption in 2024

By 2028, **at least 15% of day-to-day work decisions** will be made autonomously by agentic AI.

Gartner: How to Implement AI Agents to Transform Business Models

Only 16% of AI leaders surveyed approach AI strategically, integrating governance, transparency and trust from the outset.

SAS global GenAI study

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What’s holding you back?

Executives aren’t just curious about AI anymore; they are positioning their organizations for the technology’s future. The problem? Most organizations aren’t ready. Despite the urgency of the mission to drive confident, data-driven decisions at every moment – and safely deploy trusted AI agents – organizations are holding back for various reasons.

Fragmented data

Disconnected data silos, poor data quality and outdated systems prevent organizations from delivering the unified, real-time intelligence needed for effective decision making. Without modern platforms and clean, accessible data, both human and AI agents are operating in the dark.

Lack of strategic decisioning frameworks

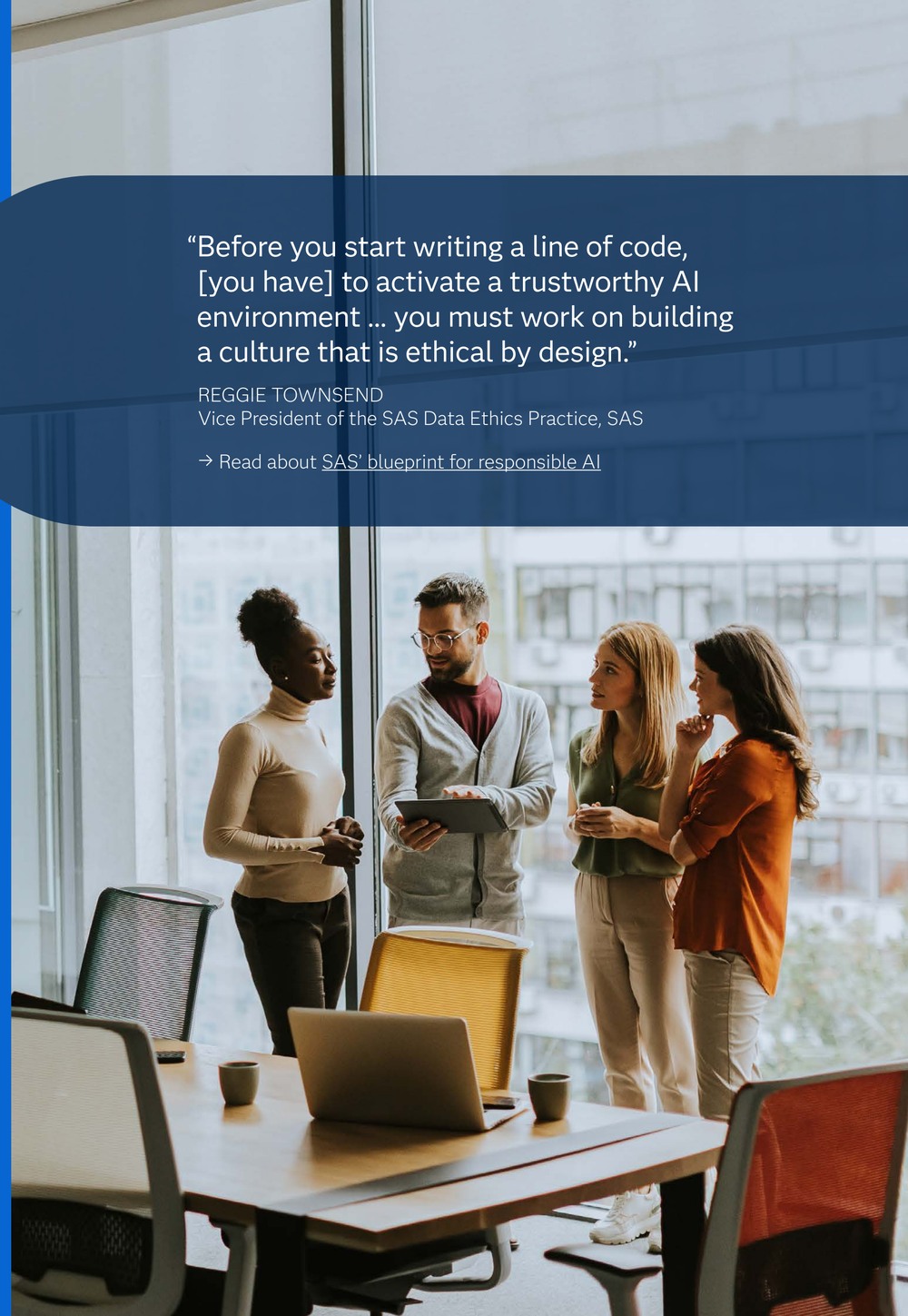
Most enterprises lack a coherent, scalable approach to decision making. Ad hoc processes, inconsistent policies and the absence of decision intelligence frameworks make it hard to embed smart, repeatable decisioning across the organization.

Cultural, ethical and skills barriers

Concerns around transparency, fairness and accountability – combined with skills gaps and resistance to change – limit the adoption of autonomous decisioning. Many organizations are also navigating increasingly complex regulatory and ethical expectations without clear governance structures.

Bridging these gaps requires more than just new tools — it demands a unified vision that connects data, technology, people and governance to enable trusted, scalable decision making.

Gartner analysts indicate that robust data management, agentic analytics, AI agents and decision intelligence platforms are among the top trends – and ones that organizations should tackle.



“Before you start writing a line of code, [you have] to activate a trustworthy AI environment … you must work on building a culture that is ethical by design.”

REGGIE TOWNSEND
Vice President of the SAS Data Ethics Practice, SAS

→ Read about SAS’ blueprint for responsible AI

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Overcome the complexities

Whether you're looking to automate thousands of decisions using AI agents or augment human-led decisions with AI insights, ask yourself:

- Do we have a strategy that aligns with our business objectives and integrates existing business rules?
- Is our enterprise data aggregated, accessible and AI-ready for business and IT professionals to efficiently train models?
- Can our technology stack handle rules-based, machine learning-based, and agentic AI-based decisions effectively?
- How will we ensure model transparency, explainability and governance, including continuous monitoring to detect and address model drift post-deployment?
- How will we surface insights to the right people at the right time to maximize productivity?
- How will we manage the risks associated with AI agents making independent decisions, and can we explain and audit these decisions?
- Do we have feedback loops to continuously improve decision quality and AI performance?

"AI decisions impact people, industries and society. Decision intelligence ensures these decisions are robust, ethical and aligned with long-term goals."

MARINELA PROFI
Global AI and GenAI Marketing Strategy Lead, SAS

→ Learn more

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A decision intelligence platform is essential

Transitioning from a data-driven to a decision-centric vision is crucial. What's required is a single platform from which your business and IT teams can access the right data, develop a trusted model, and rapidly deploy agents to automate and augment decisions made in the processes that employees execute every day. This approach enables the decision velocity, volume, flexibility and integrity needed to scale trustworthy analytics and agentic AI-enabled decisions where they are needed most.

With a decisioning platform

- ✓ Create AI agent workflows and triggers for required actions, embedding decision logic for insights.
- ✓ Automate tasks for variable mapping, decision validation and deployment.
- ✓ Monitor decisions to react faster and test scenarios for better outcomes.
- ✓ Collaborate easily at any point in the data and AI life cycle, protecting sensitive data and ensuring secure access.
- ✓ Build and deploy models using preferred languages and integrate with various data sources and end points.
- ✓ Manage AI agents with a low-code interface and ensure trustworthy, transparent and bias-free decisions.
- ✓ Apply analytics and AI to update decisions as needs change.
- ✓ Maintain model governance for consistent and transparent decisions.

Without a decision intelligence platform

- × Lack of automation for scalable enterprise decisioning, requiring rapid agent deployment and management.
- × Integration difficulties with AI agents and data sources, leading to poor transparency and ethical issues.
- × Insufficient governance for monitoring and governing analytic models, increasing risk and model drift.
- × Low developer productivity due to a talent shortage and complex project demands.
- × Rising costs and performance issues in the cloud, delaying insights and increasing ownership costs.
- × Lack of trust in agent outcomes from siloed data scientists, creating inconsistent results.
- × AI trust issues due to manual builds lacking explainability and transparency.
- × Compliance risks and challenges from regulatory scrutiny and ethical concerns, requiring rigorous governance.

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Manage, model and deploy

All in a single, unified platform

SAS® Viya® breaks down the barriers preventing you from operationalizing intelligent decisioning. This next-generation platform unifies the complete data and AI life cycle into one governed, scalable and efficient decisioning environment that:

Empowers employees across your organization to make better, data-driven decisions, faster and with confidence.

Enables agentic AI to drive better decisions by embedding the intelligence, data access and governance needed for autonomous, real-time decisioning – all without losing control.

With agentic AI supported by Viya, SAS delivers a powerful extension of decision intelligence that automates the right decisions, at the right time, with full oversight.

As shown in Figure 1, SAS Viya enables you to manage data, develop models and deploy insights – all in one platform. Powerful tools, integrations and automations equip you to go from transforming data to making decisions faster and more efficiently, resulting in more models getting deployed and delivering value to your business. All work is transparent and connected, and all decisioning is fully traceable, explainable and understandable. Once deployed, models are continuously monitored and retrained, ensuring they continue to power the best decisions.

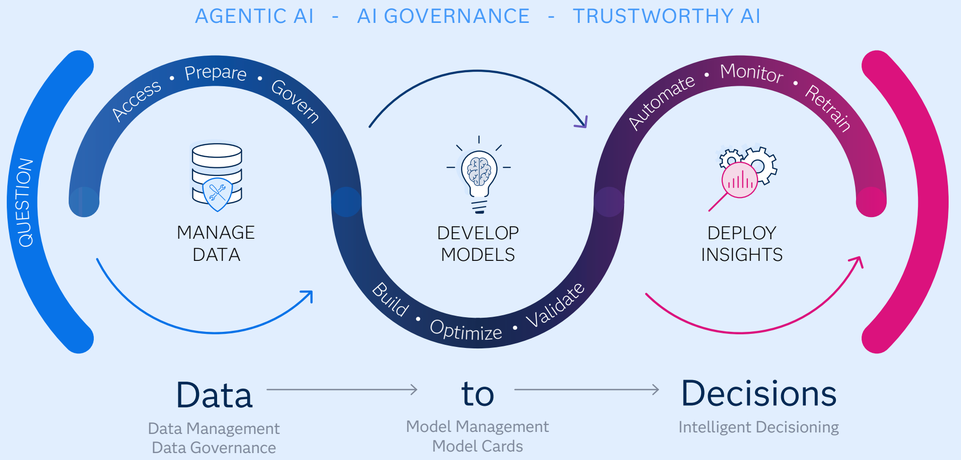

Figure 1: SAS' data and AI life cycle supports the entire decisioning process for humans and AI agents.

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A closer look: The data and AI life cycle

When you apply modern data management practices and a data and AI life cycle in a single platform, you gain confidence knowing that all work is transparent and connected, and all decisions are fully traceable, explainable and understandable.

The SAS data and AI life cycle includes data ingestion, preparation, exploration, algorithm application and model deployment. It supports the entire decisioning process for humans and AI agents.

Let's look at the three stages of the data and AI life cycle.

SEE THE SAS DATA AND AI LIFE CYCLE IN ACTION

How does SAS Viya help organizations drive greater productivity, performance and ROI?

Jared Peterson, Senior Vice President of Platform Engineering, guides you through the full depth and breadth of our software portfolio and shows how it supports the data and AI life cycle.

→ Watch video

MANAGE DATA

A lack of data – said no one ever. If your organization is like most, you likely suffer from data paralysis. If this is where you are, or your data's not ready for AI, start at the manage data step in the life cycle.

Access

Regardless of the data source, not limited to RAG and Vector data stores, and regardless of its size, format or complexity, you need one view of all your organization's data.

→ A single, self-service interface lets you find what you need quickly and easily.

Prepare

Data prep with centralized data and AI streamlines the process and can enable your team to build robust data pipelines to ingest, transform and serve the highest-quality data to analytic and AI models.

→ A low-code or no-code environment gives everyone access to AI and machine learning in a visual, easy-to-use environment. It embeds profiling, semantic tagging and lineage tools to ensure data is analytics and AI-ready.

Govern

While some platforms bolt on governance, you need one that builds trust into every layer – from profiling to lineage to impact analysis.

→ Open up the data management process for transparency. It's scalable and natively tied into the analytics and AI life cycle, enabling trusted, end-to-end processes without the complexity of other platforms.

DEVELOP MODELS

Managing your data well lays the foundation for developing quality models that drive the best decisions (remember, garbage in, garbage out).

Build

What if you could easily collaborate with your team, learn from one another and acquire new skills while creating high-performance AI models? It's possible.

- Build model pipelines using statistics, machine learning (ML), deep learning, natural language processing, computer vision, forecasting and optimization. Python, R, Java, REST APIs and other open source tools seamlessly integrate. Best practice templates, interactive decision trees, autotuning and automated ML save time and costs.

Optimize

The ability to continuously monitor your models is a must for decision-making intelligence. Getting alerts when your models start to drift is critical to their health.

- Easily embed models into line-of-business operational systems. You can also bring your own large language models and catalog them. Model managers get alerts when models need to be retrained or replaced.

Validate

Model inputs and outputs must align with organizational expectations.

- Viya, unlike competitors, provides robust model governance, bias detection and explainability tools.

DEPLOY INSIGHTS

It's time to share what you've discovered – including the solutions to problems – and how Viya can help you deliver decisions you can trust.

Automate tasks

Standardize assets for repeatable, customizable automation and build scalable, augmented and automated decision-making processes.

- Operationalize analytics at scale by automating tasks, governing decisions, and deploying any model type with speed and transparency.

Monitor models

Assess AI model accuracy, fairness and transparency with descriptive visuals and built-in explainability. Monitor model inputs, outputs and performance over time with built-in alerts.

- Keep models performing and business outcomes on track with built-in real-time monitoring capabilities.

Retrain models

Enable ongoing model improvement with automated pipelines, performance monitoring, adaptive learning and scalable retraining. Integrate with existing workflows, ensuring models remain accurate and relevant as new data becomes available.

- Use built-in pipelines to ensure optimal performance.

Deploy AI agents

By combining large language models with decisioning and analytics, organizations can transform the SAS data and AI life cycle into an adaptive system where agents continuously learn, optimize, automate and enhance business decisions.

- AI should match task complexity and risk, handling routine tasks while humans oversee ethics and strategy. Governance ensures ethical standards, compliance, data privacy and alignment with business values.

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Trust is earned. Performance is proven.

Don’t take our word for it. According to recent studies commissioned by The Futurum Group, Viya improved productivity at each stage of the data and AI life cycle compared to other platforms.

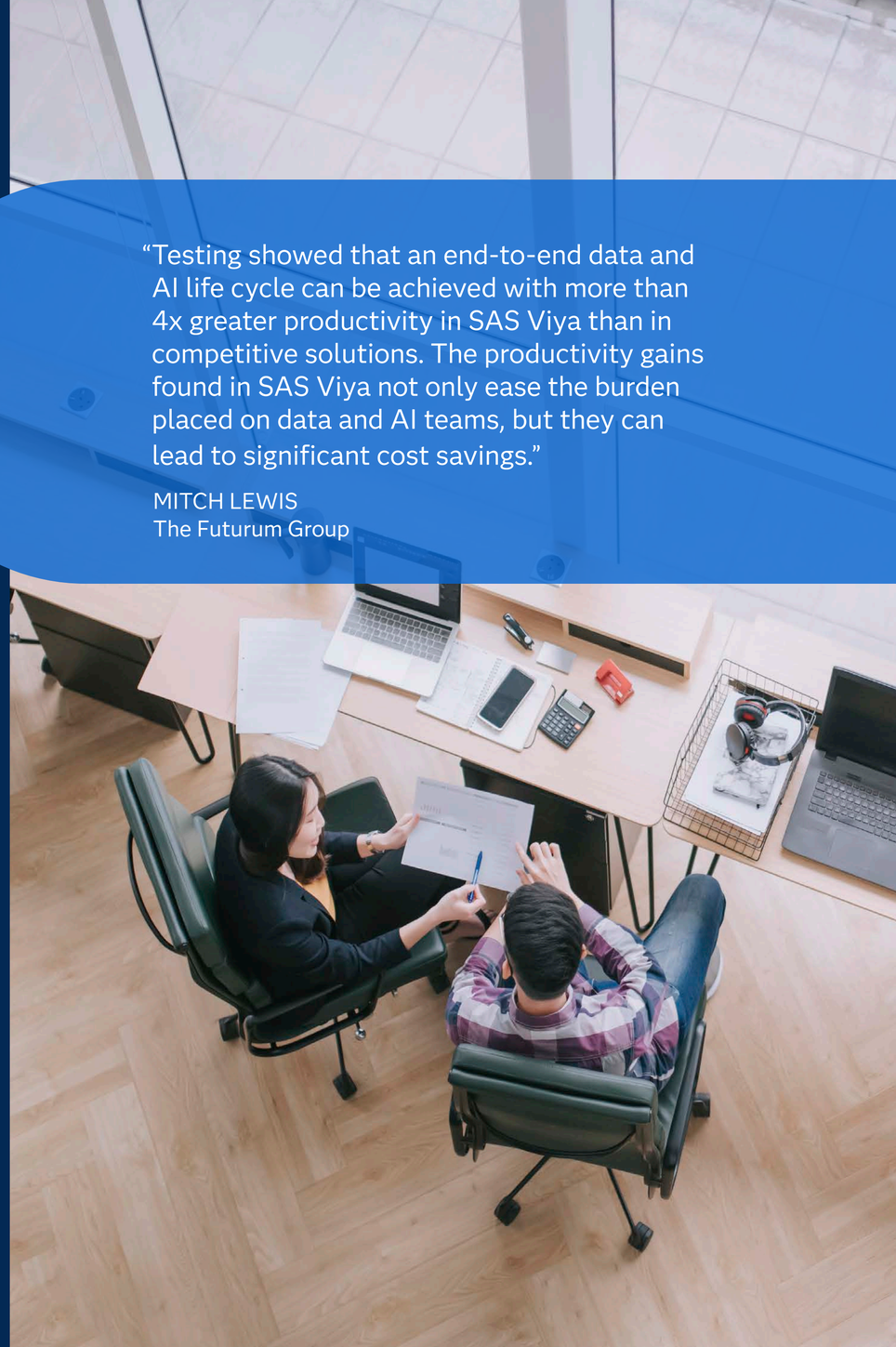
30x increase
in model performance.

4x improvement
in productivity, with:

- Data engineers 16x more productive.
- Data scientists 3.5x more productive.
- MLOps engineers 4.5x more productive.

“Testing showed that an end-to-end data and AI life cycle can be achieved with more than 4x greater productivity in SAS Viya than in competitive solutions. The productivity gains found in SAS Viya not only ease the burden placed on data and AI teams, but they can lead to significant cost savings.”

MITCH LEWIS
The Futurum Group



The proof is in productivity. Organizations of all sizes are working smarter with Viya.

University of North Texas

CHALLENGE

Fundamental issues with data integrity, management and governance plagued the university's analytics department, relegating data to silos and making enterprise analytics difficult.

INNOVATION

Use data to drive business and academic outcomes, like student retention rates and student transportation costs, and create an analytics culture.

RESULTS

US$1+ million saved through efficiency gains.

MANAGE DATA

Dompé farmaceutici

CHALLENGE

In the fast-paced pharmaceutical industry, faster, more effective drug development is crucial to delivering solutions to patients.

INNOVATION

Tansform the way Dompé collects and models data to accelerate predictive medicine efforts.

RESULTS

Rapidly put new analytical models into production and get new drugs to market faster.

DEVELOP MODELS

Shawbrook Bank

CHALLENGE

The bank needed to modernize its on-site risk platform to improve agility and scalability and better meet customers' evolving needs.

INNOVATION

Apply analytics and new modeling techniques to understand customer needs and mitigate risks.

RESULTS

End-to-end platform increases speed and productivity.

DEPLOY INSIGHTS

CAN YOU PUT A PRICE ON PRODUCTIVITY?

Turns out the answer is yes – and the three use cases are just a few examples of the value and performance you can expect with Viya. Check out the SAS Viya Value Calculator, an interactive tool that estimates potential ROI based on your data inputs into the calculator.

AI MAY EVOLVE FAST,
BUT SAS CAN HELP YOU EVOLVE FASTER.

Learn more about how to unify data, models and insights for intelligent decisions.

Visit sas.com/Viya.

To contact your local SAS office, please visit **sas.com/offices**

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