

# State of Design & Make

2024  
2025  
2026

## INTRO

### What is Design & Make?

Over the last 40 years, advancements in technology and methods have created a unique field known as Design and Make. This field influences the world around us by converting intricate ideas into impactful experiences, such as turning drawings into buildings, concepts into vehicles, or stories into films. Worldwide, Design and Make conservatively employs around 295.7 million individuals.

The State of Design & Make report can be a valuable resource for sales and customer success, helping to deepen relationships with existing clients or attract new ones. By customizing the report's insights to fit your specific audience, you can offer relevant industry knowledge that positions you as a trusted advisor, moving beyond just being a software provider.

## 01

### Digital transformation efforts have an overwhelmingly positive impact.

#### Insight

Implementation of new technology is a perennial challenge for leaders in Design and Make industries, but those who tackle the complexities of digital transformation are reaping the rewards of their efforts.

Digital maturity benefits the entire organization: In this report, "digitally mature" companies are defined as those that are approaching the goal or have achieved the goal of their digital transformation journey.

The rising cost of digital transformation is increasingly challenging organizations, posing risks to their digital initiatives despite proven high returns.

#### Finding

The majority of organizations benefiting from digital transformation are seeing more than **50% improvements** in categories such as customer satisfaction, innovation, and productivity.

Digital transformation report is having positive effects on

- Company reputation (**72%**).
- Expansion of products & services (**68%**).
- Improved data exchange (**67%**).

- **44%** of leaders cite cost as their primary barrier to digital transformation, up from **35%** in 2024.
- Organizations risk disproportionately negative impacts if cost-cutting affects technology initiatives, given the significant returns digital investments typically yield.

#### CUSTOMER QUOTE

**"Our digital transformation program today will create huge amounts of efficiency, allowing us to go 50% faster and 30% cheaper."**

#### NITESH ALAGH

Business Lead – Digital Engineering, Sustainability & Emerging Tech, Severn Trent Water, a water and wastewater utility company headquartered in the UK

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## 02 Sustainability transitions from pressure to profitability

### Insight

Business leaders increasingly view sustainability as a strategic opportunity rather than merely an obligation, driven by growing recognition of its potential to significantly boost revenue and business performance.

### Finding

- The number of executives globally who understand the business case for sustainability tripled between 2022 and 2023.
- **72%** of business leaders believe sustainability initiatives can generate **over 5% of their annual revenue**, slightly down from 79% last year but still robust despite recent cost pressures.

While organizations across Design and Make industries are still influenced by stakeholders to become more sustainable, that influence appears to be waning.

- **72%** of leaders say their sustainability initiatives were influenced by customers.
- **13%** year-over-year decline from a high of **83%**.

Businesses increasingly view sustainability as beneficial for both short-term and long-term strategies, recognizing its potential to boost revenue and business performance. Sustainability initiatives help digitally mature companies attract and retain talent, as younger skilled workers prefer companies that combine technological advancement with sustainability.

- The perception gap between sustainability as a short-term versus long-term strategy has narrowed significantly (**now at 12%**).
- **75%** report improved talent attraction and retention, versus **54%** at less mature organizations.

### CUSTOMER QUOTE

**"All the work that we're doing towards sustainability differentiates us with clients."**

#### MOHAMAD KASSIR

Global BIM Manager, Egis Group, an engineering and consulting firm headquartered in France

## 03 AI solidifies its place as the top sustainability enabler

AI is being applied to reduce environmental impact through flood modeling, energy optimization, material waste prevention, and product lifecycle assessment.

### Insight

As organizations increasingly prioritize sustainability, many are leveraging AI to drive sustainable outcomes.

In design and manufacturing, where 80% of a product's environmental impact is determined during the design phase, AI is enabling leaders to integrate sustainability from concept to production.

### Finding

**39%** of leaders say they use AI to be more sustainable, up from:

- **34%** in 2024
- **26%** in 2023.

More digitally mature and data-effective organizations are significantly more likely to use AI to support sustainability initiatives.

- **43%** of digitally mature organizations use AI for sustainability.
- **35%** of less digitally mature orgs use AI for sustainability.

### CUSTOMER QUOTE

**"AI holds incredible potential to transform how we predict and respond to challenges. While we, as an industry, are still on that journey, I am confident that our predictive capabilities will continue to evolve, enabling us to anticipate and address issues with greater precision."**

#### NITESH ALAGH

Business Lead – Digital Engineering, Sustainability & Emerging Tech, Severn Trent Water, a water and wastewater utility company headquartered in the UK

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## 04 The AI hype cycle meets reality

### Insight

AI hasn't yet lived up to the hype, according to leaders in Design and Make industries. Sentiment toward AI and other emerging technologies is down significantly year-over-year.

Leaders are increasingly concerned about AI's potential to disrupt and destabilize their industries, especially in digitally mature organizations.

As AI implementation becomes more complex, leaders are reassessing their progress and shifting their strategies, with digitally mature organizations leading the way in continued investment.

### Finding

- **69%** of business leaders say AI will enhance their industry— representing a **12%** drop from 2024.
- Nearly half (**48%**) of leaders and experts agree AI will destabilize their industry, up from **41%** in 2024
- Digitally mature companies are far more likely to say that AI will destabilize their industry (**56%**) compared to less digitally mature companies (**40%**).
- **77%** of leaders at digitally mature organizations say they will increase investment in AI, compared to **59%** at less digitally mature companies.
- There was a **37%** year-over-year increase in leaders who say they are in the early or middle stages of their AI journey.

### CUSTOMER QUOTE

*"When generative AI first appeared, there was an excessive sense of expectation towards generative AI and AI in general, and I think that we have just passed the peak of that."*

#### FUMIHIRO OJIMA

General manager,  
Digital Innovation Department, Value  
Creation Office,  
Tokyu Construction Co. Ltd.,

## 05 Cost, tech, and talent are top concerns

### Insight

In response to ongoing economic and geopolitical instability, leaders in Design and Make industries are prioritizing cost control, even at the expense of future investments.

As organizations face mounting pressure to implement emerging technologies like AI, cost control and talent shortages are creating significant barriers to progress.

Digitally mature organizations see cost as less of a challenge than other organizations.

Driving the point that digital transformation is a need to have.

### Finding

- **33%** of leaders cite cost control as their main business challenge.
- Reduced investment could worsen existing talent and technology challenges as organizations try to do more with fewer resources.
- **33%** cite Cost control & Mgmt as top concern.
- **31%** of leaders identify technological advances (including AI) as a top challenge.
- **26%** of leaders say talent is a top challenge at their organization.
- **26%** of Digitally mature orgs identify cost as a top concern.
- **35%** of less digitally mature orgs identify cost as a top concern.

### CUSTOMER QUOTE

*"I think our biggest issues now are cost and the new processes that we are trying to implement at the company."*

#### VINICIUS PRATA

Leader of the Power Generation BIM  
Committee, Eletrobras,  
an electric power generation and  
transmission company  
headquartered in Brazil

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## 06 Leaders are cautious in the near term

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- **35%** of less digitally mature orgs identify cost as a top concern.

### CUSTOMER QUOTE

**“Another key challenge is the cross-industry integration of technological advancements... Lack of cross industry technology integration capability could confine us to specific supply-chain segments, rendering us unable to offer comprehensive solutions to our clients.”**

#### WEI FENG LU

Senior Vice President, Morimatsu International Holdings Company Ltd., a global manufacturing and solutions company headquartered in China

## 07 The search for talent intensifies, with a focus on AI skills

### Insight

Design and Make industries have struggled in recent years to find skilled talent, and this year, that struggle has become acute enough to hinder growth.

Digitally mature companies report improved talent acquisition and retention as a result of digital transformation.

AI skills top the list of future hiring priorities.

### Finding

- **58%** percent of business leaders say that lack of access to skilled talent is a barrier to their company's growth.
- **27%** of digitally mature organizations.
- **18%** of less digitally mature organizations.
- **46%** of leaders say the ability to work with AI will be their top priority when hiring in the next few years, up from **41%** in 2024.

### CUSTOMER QUOTE

**“Finding the right talent is challenging. They have to know how to work with the software and have a technical understanding of the product we are designing.”**

#### CHRISTIAN AHLERS

CAD Systems Administrator, Lindner Group, an interior construction specialist headquartered in Germany

## 08 Investments remain strong but reflect uncertainty

### Insight

Future investment projections have fallen this year but are still robust.

Digitally mature organizations are significantly more bullish on the future.

Most leaders surveyed for the 2025 State of Design & Make report say their companies continue to invest in entering new markets and in offering new products and services but at a lower rate than the previous year.

### Finding

- **66%** in 2025 down 14 points from 80% in 2024.
- **80%** of 83 2025 STATE OF DESIGN & MAKE leaders are planning to increase future investments, compared to 53% at less digitally mature companies.
- **67%** of leaders say they will enter new markets this year, compared to **75%** in 2024. Enthusiasm for offering new services is also down, with **69%** of leaders this year saying they will offer new services, compared to **77%** previously.

### CUSTOMER QUOTE

**“Companies are all preparing for tougher times ahead and are thus avoiding blind expansion. Resources are limited, and there is increased uncertainty, so it is common for businesses to scale back operations to maintain security.”**

#### WEI FENG LU

Senior Vice President, Morimatsu International Holdings Company Ltd., a global manufacturing and solutions company headquartered in China