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AI in M&A 2026

Expert perspectives on how
dealmaking is evolving

JANUARY 2026



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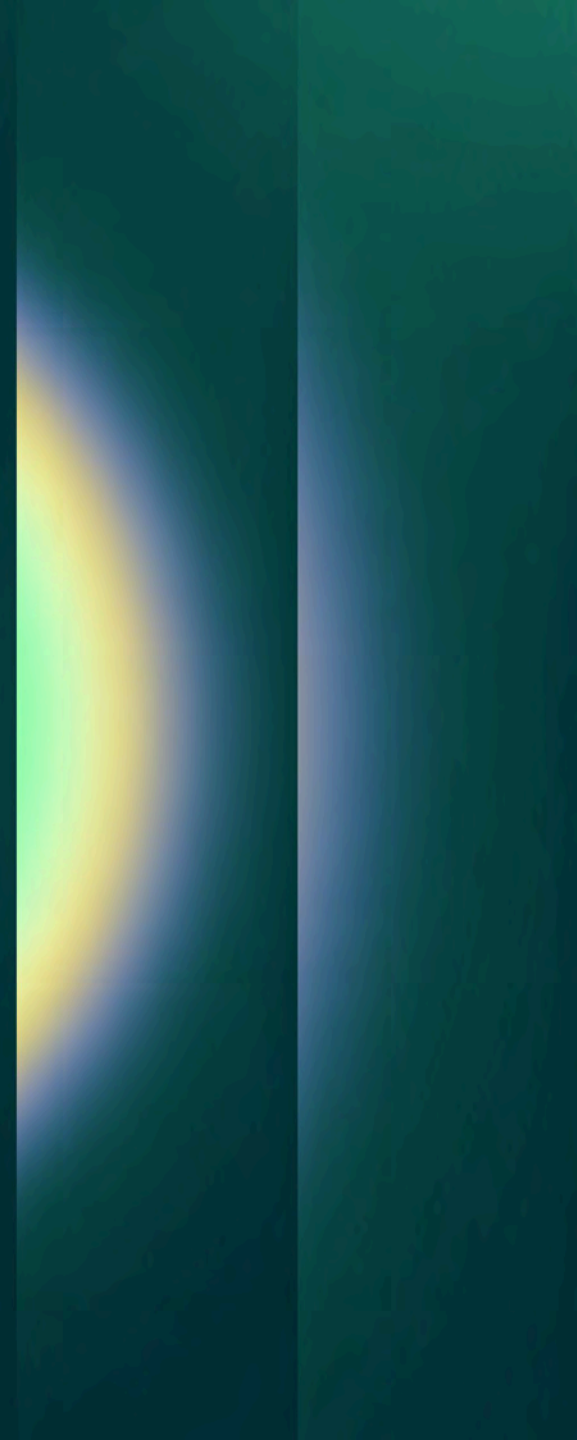
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Where AI meets high-stakes dealmaking

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01

Introduction



AI presents a huge opportunity for dealmakers. In an industry defined by tight deadlines, deep analysis, and high stakes, it promises faster execution and stronger results.

More than half of companies expect to integrate AI into their M&A processes by 2027, according to [Bain & Company](#). Those that do effectively could identify targets faster, underwrite value with greater confidence, and execute deals more efficiently than their competitors.

But how are dealmakers actually using AI today, and where is it already giving them an advantage?



INTRODUCTION

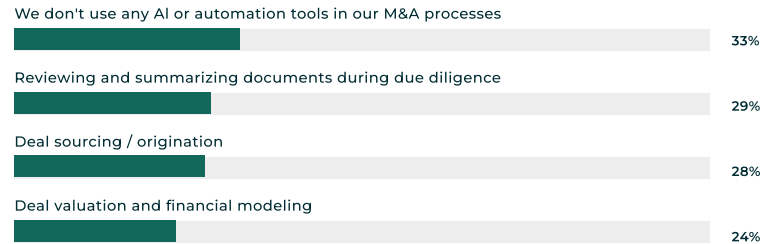
How M&A professionals are using AI

To better understand AI adoption in M&A, we surveyed over 100 professionals between August and October 2025. About a third reported not using AI or automation tools, meaning roughly two-thirds are leveraging the technology in some form.

Among adopters, the most common applications include document review and summarization, deal sourcing, and valuation and financial modeling.

AI's strength in reviewing and summarizing information is demonstrated at scale in the banking sector. At [Citi](#), more than 180,000 employees use AI tools, the most popular of which performs tasks traditionally done by junior bankers, pulling data and producing presentations for client meetings, peer comparisons, and deal preparation.

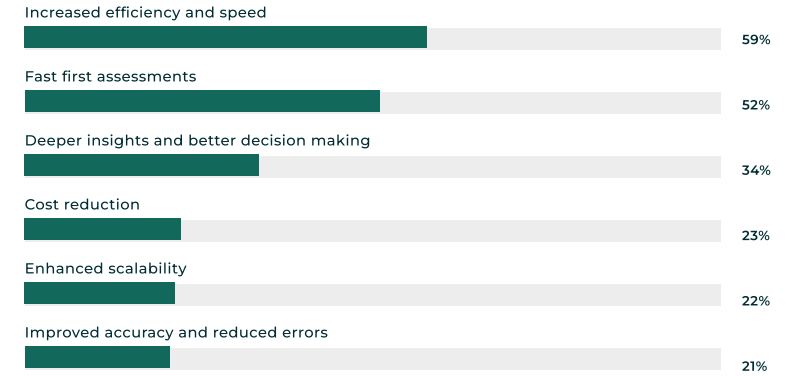
Which of the following tasks across the M&A deal lifecycle are currently supported by AI or automation tools?



Source: Ideals AI in M&A survey



What are the main benefits you have observed with AI tools in M&A?



Source: Ideals AI in M&A survey



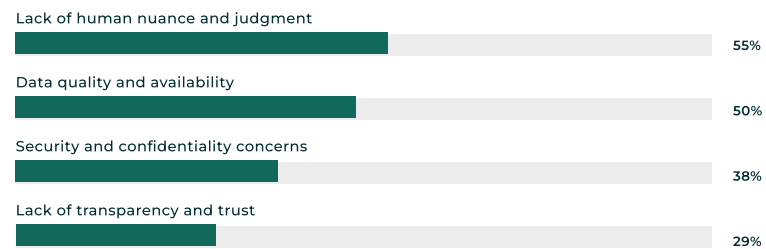
Efficiency was cited as the top benefit of AI, closely followed by fast first assessments. Respondents also highlighted deeper insights, better decision making, cost reduction, and enhanced scalability.

Improved accuracy fell outside the top five benefits, suggesting that M&A processes are already rigorous and that AI still needs human oversight to catch errors.

When asked about limitations, familiar themes emerged. More than half of respondents pointed to a lack of human nuance and judgment as the biggest constraint, followed by concerns around data quality, security, and transparency.

These findings reinforce a central point: AI is only as effective as the data it uses and the oversight guiding its application.

What are the main limitations you have observed with AI tools in M&A?



Source: Ideals AI in M&A survey

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INTRODUCTION

Voices from the deal room

To complement our findings, we spoke with leaders across investment banking, private equity, corporate development, advisory, and AI technology. They shared firsthand experiences of applying AI in M&A workflows.

Dealmakers in high-activity sectors like energy told us that AI can surface insights earlier in due diligence, flagging risks sooner and speeding up time-intensive review processes.

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The breakthrough comes when teams realize they can handle more transactions. True success comes from the ability to close more deals.



Marta Vizcaino Martín
CEO at TetraxAI

Private equity professionals are automating target identification and evaluation. In a high-volume PE market, where [EY](#) reported US\$310 billion in deal value in Q3 2025, the ability to analyze opportunities efficiently is critical.

AI enables teams to accelerate early-stage assessments and devote more time to strategic planning and relationship-building.

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What used to take days with a full deal team, I can now do solo.



Neal Monga
Principal
at NMS Capital

Regional differences are also emerging. In the US, AI adoption is progressing more rapidly than in Europe, supported by a robust ecosystem and a culture that encourages technology investment. This raises the question: could faster adoption give US dealmakers a competitive edge?

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Some European dealmakers avoid AI entirely to prevent any compromise of data. In the US, the attitude is more opportunistic.



Sabine Schilg
VP of Corporate Development
at Ideals

These examples represent just a small slice of the perspectives we heard. The interviews that follow provide a broader view of how AI is influencing decisions, workflows, and strategy across M&A.

02

Sabine Schilg

VP of Corporate Development at Ideals

Sabine Schilg is responsible for driving growth and strategy at Ideals, bringing deep expertise in M&A, integration, and customer success in the technology and security sectors.

How AI is setting the pace in global M&A





In M&A, speed matters. Moving quickly can create opportunity, but without thorough analysis, it can also increase risk. AI promises to help dealmakers bridge that gap, enabling faster and smarter decisions.

But not everyone is moving at the same pace. “US dealmakers are integrating AI more readily than their European counterparts, where concerns around privacy and data security still hold teams back,” says Sabine Schilg, VP of Corporate Development at Ideals.

What long-term impact might this have on the M&A market and Europe's competitiveness on a global stage?

The transatlantic deal divide

The global M&A market is diverging sharply. Transactions in the Americas totaled \$1.26 trillion over the past nine months, up 26% year to date, while European deals fell 5% from 2024 levels. The UK, Europe's largest market, experienced an even steeper 35% drop, as reported by [BCG](#).

AI could widen this gap further if US deal teams adopt it faster, giving them an edge in identifying opportunities and executing transactions.

Why Europe is lagging in AI adoption

Regulation is a major factor in Europe's slow pace of adoption. Laws such as GDPR demand full transparency in data handling, making the use of AI during due diligence more complex.

"Some European dealmakers avoid AI entirely to prevent any compromise of data," says Sabine. "In the US, the attitude is more opportunistic. People are less concerned because the productivity gains are so significant."

Historically, Europe has been slower to embrace new technologies. The region's productivity stands at 76% of US levels, with underinvestment in technology cited as a key factor, based on research from [Accenture](#).

The dawn of AI has followed the same trend, with [McKinsey](#) finding that European organizations lag US counterparts by 45-70% in AI adoption.

Culture and investment also play a role. The US benefits from a deep tech ecosystem, exemplified by the 'Magnificent Seven', which creates a receptive environment for AI. By mid-2024, US investors had funneled 20 times more capital into generative AI startups than any other country, according to [Fortune](#).

"The gap in AI adoption across regions is stark, and it could influence global dealmaking," adds Sabine.

* Data from Ideals' AI in M&A survey

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Some European dealmakers avoid AI entirely to prevent any compromise of data. In the US, the attitude is more opportunistic.



Sabine Schilg

VP of Corporate Development
at Ideals

A true deal accelerator

AI is streamlining M&A in two main areas, says Sabine. "One is sourcing, comparing capabilities across companies and identifying potential targets. The second is diligence, from pre-due diligence through detailed analysis."

Tasks that once took weeks can now be completed in hours. "You can feed multiple companies' data into AI and get comparisons almost instantly," she explains. "It saves money and time, and provides a deeper view into risks."

For deal teams, that means sharper decisions, stronger outcomes, and more time to focus on integration and value creation.

The risk of falling behind

AI is expected to reshape every stage of M&A within five years, from market sensing to post-close integration, according to [Bain & Company](#). As the technology becomes ubiquitous, speed and efficiency will define competitiveness, leaving slower adopters at a growing disadvantage.

Effective integration, however, takes time. Firms must experiment, iterate, and pinpoint where AI adds the most value, embedding it throughout their deal processes.

"It's clear AI's role in dealmaking will only grow," Sabine concludes. "The sooner M&A teams start using it, the faster they'll learn and the more value they'll unlock."

The question might no longer be whether AI will transform dealmaking, but whether Europe can catch up.

39% of M&A professionals cite security and confidentiality concerns as the biggest limitation of AI tools.*

03

Bethany Winsby

Senior Consultant, Deal Origination at Deloitte

Bethany Winsby specializes in mid-market deal origination, matching sponsors with opportunities and driving private equity transactions. She is also the founder of The M&A Forum, a network that mentors and develops private equity professionals.

How AI helps M&A advisors assess the signals behind mid-market deals





Private equity is increasingly focused on the mid-market. [Schroders Capital](#) research shows that small and mid-sized buyouts are valued 40–50% below larger deals, attracting investors as competition for large-cap transactions rises and firms seek more stable, diversified returns.

Bethany Winsby, Senior Consultant at Deloitte, works in this space, leading mid-market deal origination for the firm's business services practice. Bethany connects private equity (PE) firms with potential acquisition targets, tracking opportunities across industries and international borders to help investors identify the right 'fit' for their strategies.

AI has become a valuable tool in her work, with Bethany noting that "in the mid-market, there are countless signals — such as changes in company structures — that can be overlooked. AI helps me discover and track these more consistently."

From scattered data to actionable insights

A key challenge in mid-market deal origination is managing unstructured information. News articles, sector updates, and fragmented financial data all need to be analyzed to identify promising opportunities.

Bethany explains that "AI helps by extracting comparable metrics and spotting patterns, like unusual growth or potential customer concentration. Where there are gaps, it can even build proxy assumptions by analyzing similar businesses and adding broader market context."

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In the mid-market, there are countless signals — such as changes in company structures — that can be overlooked. AI helps me discover and track these more consistently.



Bethany Winsby

Senior Consultant, Deal Origination
at Deloitte

Rather than replacing human judgment, AI serves as a first pass. "It standardizes information, helping us identify promising opportunities sooner," Bethany says. Recently, she mapped themes across a niche market with around 200 publicly available reports. "The technology shows exactly where it pulled each piece of information from."

After reviewing outputs, Bethany can feed them directly into her workflow. Market updates, sector commentary, and financial snapshots are compiled into PowerPoint decks, providing a clear starting point for client conversations. "It cut what would have taken days down to a few hours," she notes.

Enabling deeper client conversations

With routine tasks automated, Bethany can focus on building relationships with PE sponsors. "Rather than getting stuck in spreadsheets, I can spend more time speaking with PE houses and understanding their objectives," she says. These conversations help her shape a tailored approach for each engagement.

AI also surfaces less obvious opportunities for discussion. "By synthesizing signals from fragmented data, we can identify non-obvious targets that spark productive conversations with sponsors," she explains. This helps reinforce Deloitte's position as a proactive advisor.

*Data from Ideals' AI in M&A survey

Cutting through cross-border complexity

Bethany's deal opportunities often span multiple countries, and differences in regulatory environments, local market dynamics, and reporting standards make research challenging.

Using AI, she can scan local press, review and summarize regulatory updates, and consolidate deal flow across geographies. "It ensures the team has a consistent view of the market and that no insights are missed," she says.

22% of M&A professionals use AI sourcing tools to identify and evaluate potential acquisition targets.*

She also uses the technology for predictive analysis. "We can model trends across regions, compare sector performance, and highlight patterns that would be hard to calculate manually. This gives a clearer understanding of where clients might want to focus," Bethany notes.

Balancing technology with talent

Bethany emphasizes that AI is a supporting tool, not a replacement for human judgment. "Any tasks that handle confidential information should remain free of AI, and for strategy discussions or bid positioning, human insight is key," she says.

Deloitte's guidelines reinforce this approach. "We review all outputs because they are only as good as your inputs. Learning to use AI effectively takes time, and we do a lot of internal training."

She also emphasizes considered use among junior team members. "When mentoring new joiners, I encourage curiosity. Not just using AI outputs, but understanding how they are generated and recognizing their limitations. That builds the foundation for asking good questions and layering outputs with commercial judgment."

Spotting the signals that drive deals

For Bethany, the ultimate value of AI is surfacing hidden opportunities: early-stage businesses, unusual growth patterns, and off-market targets that might otherwise go unnoticed. "The signals are there; you just need the right tools to reveal them," she says.

By combining AI's analytical power with hard-earned expertise, Bethany accelerates deal origination, turning disjointed data into a pipeline of promising opportunities. This approach also frees up time to focus on the relationships that underpin successful transactions.

04

Niko Nalli

Co-founder and CEO of Comparables.ai

Niko Nalli co-founded Comparables.ai, an AI-driven platform for M&A deal analysis used by professionals in over 30 countries. He previously worked in mid-market M&A at PwC, advising on transactions exceeding \$4 billion.

The AI CEO driving smarter M&A deal sourcing





M&A is “gambling with the highest stakes in business,” according to Niko Nalli, co-founder and CEO of [Comparables.ai](#), an AI deal sourcing platform.

Around 70% of deals fail to deliver the expected value, yet when one succeeds, the payoff can be transformative. Consider Google’s acquisition of Android, now the world’s leading mobile operating system.

Niko was inspired by that potential. Having completed over 25 transactions worth more than \$4 billion at PwC, he recognized a problem: “I loved making deals happen, but the tools we were using weren’t scalable, and opportunities were being missed.”

Building on better data

Access to robust company data is a familiar challenge in M&A, as many platforms rely on limited or outdated datasets.

“Most well-known databases cover a few million companies globally,” Niko explains. “Comparables covers around 400 million.”

65% of M&A professionals say ‘limited or inaccurate information’ is their biggest challenge when sourcing deals.*

But coverage alone isn’t enough. Traditional databases classify companies under broad categories like “software development”, resulting in long, unfocused lists. “Out of hundreds of companies, only a few may actually be relevant, and you have to review each manually,” he says.

Comparables.ai takes a more nuanced approach, using natural language processing (NLP) and contextual search to match companies by both qualitative and financial criteria. Dealmakers can filter by growth, profitability, geography, and other key metrics, producing faster, more precise analyses.

“When we benchmark against standard research methods, our customers find that Comparables delivers 110% more relevant results and cuts analysis time by up to 20x,” Niko notes. “But speed means nothing if the data isn’t right. Our north star is always relevance and accuracy.”

Augmenting expertise

Niko views AI as an enabler for M&A professionals. “For the foreseeable future, AI will augment expertise,” he says. “It helps users reach better insights and outcomes, and raises the bar for what’s possible in M&A analysis.”

He believes the industry is approaching a point where AI can perform human-level analysis, setting a new baseline for quality. “Once AI can match or exceed what a person could do, that becomes the standard, and M&A professionals will then build on top of it.”

Niko compares AI to an analyst: it generates first-pass insights, and professionals review its reasoning and refine the conclusions. He notes that the “seniority” of these systems will grow over time. “Maybe they’ll reach manager or partner-level performance eventually. I don’t know what the ceiling is,” he says.

“The key will always be transparency: you need to understand why it does what it does, so you can communicate with the system and trust its conclusions.”

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AI raises the bar for what’s possible in M&A analysis.



Niko Nalli
Co-founder and CEO
of Comparables.ai

Making M&A more successful

The ultimate goal, Niko says, is to increase the success rate in M&A. “Most deals fail before reaching closing,” he notes. “We want to help teams fail less often by identifying stronger targets earlier.”

He believes this approach can also reduce post-merger underperformance. By finding the most relevant, well-matched targets from the outset, acquirers naturally increase the likelihood of long-term success.

For Niko, that’s the real promise of AI in M&A: not just more deals, but better ones. “Success in M&A won’t come from working harder,” he says. “It will come from making smarter decisions earlier, and that’s exactly where AI can have the biggest impact.”

*Data from Ideals’ AI in M&A survey

05

Emre Ertürk

Associate Director at Odin Financial

Emre Ertürk has extensive experience in M&A and strategic consulting, advising clients on deal origination, post-merger integration, and corporate strategy to drive value across complex transactions.

Outsmarting the market: How AI uncovers hidden M&A opportunities





Identifying the right acquisition targets and investors can feel like searching for a needle in a haystack. They're spread across regions and sectors, each with distinct investment criteria, making manual research a painstaking process.

Emre Ertürk, Associate Director at Odin Financial, knows this challenge all too well. To overcome it, his firm has developed an AI-driven approach that has proven transformative. "It's precise, reliable, and aligned with what our clients need," he says.

This approach has helped Emre build a stronger opportunity pipeline, accelerate deal origination, and dedicate more time to client engagement.

Start with structure

AI is powerful when used intentionally. Yet many professionals treat large language models (LLMs) as a "black box", feeding in data and hoping for useful outputs. This often leads to inconsistent results and little understanding of how answers are generated, which poses a major risk in high-stakes M&A.

Odin Financial recognized that successful AI implementation begins with a clear structure. The firm designed workflows combining datasets from financial data providers with [LLM APIs](#) (application programming interfaces) to generate highly-targeted results. Emre says the key is controlling the AI's context window, which is the information the model "sees" when generating a response.

"The value comes from creating guardrails and training people to use AI in a structured, repeatable way," he adds. "Without that, you're just handing them a tool and hoping for the best."

50% of M&A professionals cite data quality and availability as the primary limitation of using AI tools.*

*Data from Ideals' AI in M&A survey

While OpenAI's ChatGPT has the largest user base, Odin Financial leverages DeepSeek for large-scale analyses. "It's significantly cheaper to do mass prompt outputs with DeepSeek than ChatGPT," Emre explains.

For acquisition targeting, this scalability is crucial. Emre's team can review up to 2,000 companies, surfacing businesses that meet specific growth or sector criteria.

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The value comes from creating guardrails and training people to use AI in a structured, repeatable way.



Emre Ertürk
Associate Director
at Odin Financial

Turning insights into opportunities

Emre's sell-side projects require mapping financial investors across multiple regions, including Turkey, the Middle East, North Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe. "It's difficult to check every fund's criteria or geographic mandate manually," he says. "AI helps us craft prompts that match the right funds with the right opportunities."

The technology is also used to explore early-stage startup ecosystems. "There are thousands of companies in accelerators and corporate innovation programs," Emre notes. By sending precise prompts to DeepSeek, Emre's team can identify those that have matured past incubation. "This gives us an edge in building a whole new deal pipeline," he adds.

The result is an automated process that moves Emre's team from manual research to higher-value strategic analysis and client advisory work.

Enhancing client engagement

While Emre is an advocate for AI, he emphasizes the need to balance automation with human oversight. "Trust but verify is our mantra," he says. This involves reviewing system outputs to ensure no company or investor is overlooked, and data is interpreted correctly.

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Trust but verify is our mantra.



Emre Ertürk
Associate Director
at Odin Financial

AI has freed Emre from routine tasks, allowing him to focus on what matters most in dealmaking: relationships. "I used to spend weeks on manual research. Now I'm spending more face time with investors and less time in spreadsheets," he notes.

This has made his role more people-focused and personally rewarding. "Those relationships are what create opportunities, and being able to dedicate time to them makes my role more fulfilling," Emre reflects.

Odin Financial's strategic use of AI demonstrates how technology can be a true force multiplier, enabling employees to double down on the high-impact activities that drive successful deals.



06

Marta Vizcaíno Martín

CEO at TetraxAI

Marta Vizcaíno Martín is a renewable energy M&A lawyer with 17+ years' experience, specializing in large-scale transactions, PPAs, and corporate advisory. She worked at DLA Piper and Hogan Lovells before founding TetraxAI.

The energy M&A lawyer powering due diligence with AI





The global transition to net zero is accelerating dealmaking across the energy sector. [McKinsey](#) estimates that more than \$100 trillion in corporate assets will need to shift to low-emissions models, and this massive reallocation is already driving a surge in renewables M&A.

While this growth is positive, it also brings new challenges. Heightened regulatory scrutiny, evolving legal frameworks, and fast-changing market dynamics make thorough due diligence essential to every transaction.

Marta Vizcaíno Martín, a seasoned energy M&A lawyer and now CEO of TetraxAI, is helping dealmakers meet this challenge. “In renewables M&A, even a small overlooked detail can sink a deal. Tetrax gives teams the speed and insight to spot risks before they become problems,” she says.

How small details can derail deals

Energy M&A due diligence is notoriously labor-intensive. Deals can involve hundreds of legal, technical, and financial documents, span multiple jurisdictions, and require rigorous regulatory oversight.

In her previous role as an energy M&A lawyer, Marta recalls long nights in data rooms reviewing every clause. “One of the best uses of AI is ending the need for 24/7 document review,” she says.

53% of M&A professionals find evaluating information and identifying data gaps the most frustrating part of due diligence.*

Marta advised on Spain’s first power purchase agreement (PPA) for Project Goya, managed major corporate reorganizations, and oversaw complex international transactions. Across these experiences, she learned that even the smallest oversight can determine whether a deal succeeds or fails.

She recalls one project that collapsed the day before closing because trucks could not access the construction site. “The developer, buyer, and investor should have known months earlier, but they missed a note about access roads buried in the data room. A tool like Tetrax would have flagged that immediately,” she explains.

*Data from Ideals’ AI in M&A survey

From insight to innovation

Those experiences inspired Marta to found TetraxAI, a platform that uses artificial intelligence to automate renewable energy project due diligence. It delivers insights up to 100 times faster and at a tenth of the cost of traditional manual reviews.

The platform produces auditable reports for shareholders, bankers, and financiers, integrating legal, technical, and financial data to uncover risks that would otherwise take weeks to identify.

As the renewable energy M&A market continues to grow, tools like TetraxAI are becoming increasingly valuable. According to a 2025 [DLA Piper](#) survey, 91% of respondents identified renewable energy projects as the most active segment for M&A, surpassing other areas of the energy transition. At the same time, transaction timelines are lengthening in the sector, with [Ideals](#) reporting that Environmental & Utilities deal durations increased by 21% year over year in 2024.

These delays reflect growing regulatory and operational scrutiny, as due diligence now spans far beyond financial and legal review. Marta cites a real-world example that underscores this broader approach:

“The [Iberian blackout](#) demonstrated that renewable energy expansion is outpacing grid readiness. It was a wake-up call for the European energy sector, and a reminder that M&A professionals must now examine infrastructure as part of comprehensive due diligence.”

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M&A professionals must now examine infrastructure as part of comprehensive due diligence.



Marta Vizcaino Martin
CEO at TetraxAI

Scaling M&A success

TetraxAI sits squarely in this space, empowering deal teams to assess opportunities from every angle and close transactions more efficiently.

For Marta, the ultimate value of TetraxAI isn’t just faster analysis; it’s enabling dealmakers to pursue more opportunities.

“The breakthrough comes when teams realize they can handle more transactions,” she says. “Time and cost savings matter, but true success comes from the ability to close more deals. That’s what drives real impact.”

Achieving that potential requires a cultural shift. “CEOs and innovation leaders need to champion technology and AI readiness. When management is fully engaged, that’s when we see the strongest results,” Marta adds.

07

Neal Monga

Principal at NMS Capital

Neal Monga is a private equity investor with over a decade of experience in investment banking and private equity, specializing in deal sourcing, due diligence, and portfolio management.

Turning AI efficiency into stronger PE partnerships





Valuation and financial modeling are key to private equity success, but they are only part of the equation. At the heart of every effective transaction is a partnership between investors and management teams.

After more than a decade in investment banking and PE, Neal Monga, Principal at NMS Capital, knows that relationships drive results. “Private equity is a people business on steroids,” he says.

So where does AI fit in? Interestingly, Neal believes it has put greater emphasis on the human side of dealmaking by freeing teams from the grinding work of data analysis.

Finding targets faster

AI is transforming how deal teams identify and evaluate opportunities. Tasks that once required hours of manual effort, such as scanning databases, scraping websites, and building target lists, can now be automated.

“Before AI tools, for a sell-side pitch we had to identify all potential acquirers and gather data on past acquisitions using manual keyword searches and databases like CapIQ,” Neal explains. “AI now handles a lot of that.”

On the buy-side, keeping up with sectors and competitors has traditionally been labor-intensive. “We’re always looking to invest in new themes,” Neal says. “To do that, you need to know the players in your geography, their offerings, and where they compete. AI speeds up this process.”

39% of M&A professionals say the biggest challenge they face in sourcing targets is too much competition.*

The result, Neal concludes, is a shift in how his team allocates its time. “There are only so many hours in the day and a lot of potential deals to consider. We now focus less on finding opportunities and more on evaluating the ones worth pursuing,” he says.

* Data from Ideals' AI in M&A survey

Applying judgment where it counts

Significant efficiency improvements are also evident in due diligence. “Everything from starting a CIM (confidential information memorandum) review to analyzing a data room can now be processed much faster with AI,” Neal explains. “What used to take days with a full deal team, I can now do solo.”

With routine tasks managed, Neal dedicates more time to strategic decisions. While AI can flag risks and highlight areas requiring deeper review, it can’t judge whether a company aligns with the firm’s strategy or how it might perform under different scenarios. “That’s where human judgment remains essential,” Neal says.

On the portfolio side, NMS Capital uses AI to improve the performance of existing companies. “We work with vendors and platforms and ask, ‘Where can automation add value?’ Then we deploy the appropriate tools through our portfolio team. That approach has proven incredibly valuable,” Neal explains.

Building personal connections

Many acquisitions Neal works on are founder- or family-owned businesses, where strong personal connections are critical. By using AI to accelerate tasks, he can dedicate more time to nurturing these ties, which often form the foundation of successful deals.

“AI is a tool that makes things more efficient,” Neal says, “but at the end of the day, you need to spend time with people to learn the intricacies of their business.”

Working closely with business owners, Neal focuses on understanding their key objectives. Whether it’s preserving company culture, protecting employee jobs, or driving long-term growth, having time for these conversations is crucial.

“The insights we gain directly inform deal structure, governance, and value-creation plans,” Neal explains. “Those are the elements that often determine the success of the transaction.”

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AI is a tool that makes things more efficient, but at the end of the day, you need to spend time with people to learn the intricacies of their business.



Neal Monga

Principal
at NMS Capital



08

**Nataliya Nagorna**Senior Product Manager
at Ideals**Dragan Minic**Senior Product Manager
at Ideals

Nataliya Nagorna and Dragan Minic help shape Ideals' market-leading virtual data room (VDR) platform, driving product innovation, refining features, and ensuring a seamless, secure experience for high-stakes transactions.

AI in the VDR: Accelerating due diligence for M&A teams



Navigating vast datasets and complex documentation makes due diligence one of the most challenging parts of M&A. At Ideals, Senior Product Managers Nataliya Nagorna and Dragan Minic work closely with dealmakers to identify where AI can streamline workflows, reduce errors, and save time.

Nataliya engages with professionals across the industry to understand how they are using AI and where they need support. Dragan develops AI features for Ideals' virtual data room (VDR), leveraging client feedback and usage data to guide product innovation and functionality.

Reclaiming time

Nataliya's research reveals a common challenge in due diligence: searching through hundreds of documents to review and validate information.

"People want AI to help them find information more easily across messy or inconsistent VDRs," she explains. "Features like intelligent search, document summarization, and file cross-checking come up constantly in my conversations. It's all about helping deal teams save time and reduce manual effort."

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People want AI to help them find information more easily across messy or inconsistent VDRs.



Nataliya Nagorna

Senior Product Manager
at Ideals

She notes that cross-checking capabilities could also help with the trickier parts of legal and financial document review. "For example, a prompt for an AI assistant might be: 'Check this contract under European Union law and flag any inconsistencies.' Tools like this can dramatically speed up the review process."

29%

of dealmakers

use AI to review and summarize documents during due diligence.*

*Data from Ideals' AI in M&A survey

Streamlining complex workflows

Dragan sees this need for efficiency reflected in product usage. Features like intelligent search and in-product translation are already helping teams process information faster.

“M&A professionals spend long days in meetings and late nights reviewing documents,” he says. “They want tools that reduce that load. AI isn’t exciting because it’s ‘AI’. It’s exciting because it saves hours of tedious work.”

Translation has become one of the most widely adopted AI features in Ideals, particularly for cross-border transactions. “Around 40% of our clients work on international deals, so this capability helps teams stay aligned,” Dragan explains. It allows users to highlight text in any VDR document and read it in their preferred language, making collaboration across borders seamless.



It’s not exciting because it’s ‘AI’. It’s exciting because it saves hours of tedious work.



Dragan Minic

Senior Product Manager
at Ideals

AI tools also play a crucial role in managing sensitive information. “Clients rely on our redaction feature, particularly the PII detection function,” he says. This automatically identifies and removes personal data such as names, emails, addresses, and passport numbers, helping teams prepare materials faster before sharing them with counterparties.

“We first released PII detection in English and Spanish, and soon after saw demand for German, Italian, and other major languages,” he notes. “About half of all PII detection use now happens in non-English documents.”

Given the confidential nature of due diligence, trust and oversight remain central. “Clients have full control over when and how AI features are used, ensuring sensitive information is handled according to their policies,” he adds.

Transparency around data handling is also key. “Clients sometimes ask how AI queries are processed,” he explains. “Everything runs within our isolated infrastructure. It’s encrypted, vectorized, and never leaves our environment. That level of transparency reassures users.”

Finding opportunities faster

Beyond due diligence, Nataliya notes that professionals are exploring how AI can enhance other areas of the M&A workflow, such as deal sourcing and analysis.

“Advisory teams are interested in how AI can support market mapping, surface off-market data, or identify opportunities before competitors do,” she says. “Off-market information is the most valuable, but it’s hard to find. AI solutions that help uncover this are in high demand.”

34%

of M&A professionals

cite deeper insights and improved decision-making as the main benefits of using AI tools.*

Dragan adds that clients are thinking even bigger. “They want tools that can analyze entire data rooms, extract key financials, and flag potential risks automatically.”

As AI capabilities in the VDR continue to advance, deal teams can shift their focus from time-intensive tasks to higher-value activities such as strategy, risk assessment, and uncovering new opportunities, driving stronger outcomes across the deal lifecycle.

*Data from Ideals’ AI in M&A survey

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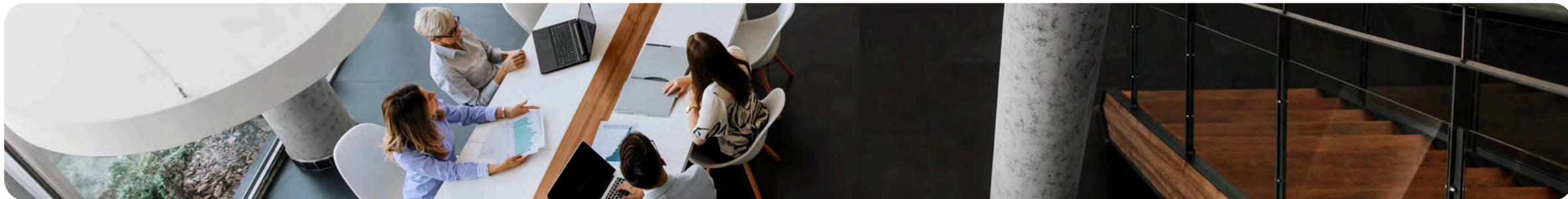
Adam Carte

Co-founder of Fairlead Advisors

Adam Carte has more than 15 years' experience advising on acquisitions, mergers, and strategic restructurings across diverse industries, driving value creation and successful outcomes for investors and companies.

How Fairlead Advisors helps companies tie AI to business value





AI is increasingly being used by companies to enhance business processes. But how does it actually impact a firm's value? If a company is more advanced in its adoption of AI, does that make it more attractive to potential investors?

While AI promises efficiency gains, cost reductions, and new revenue streams, many organizations struggle to quantify its impact. A [KPMG](#) Pulse Survey found that only 15% of US business leaders have formal metrics for AI returns.

Adam Carte, co-founder of Fairlead Advisors, helps companies close that gap by working with leadership teams to link AI applications to measurable value. These insights are essential for investors assessing potential deals.

Structuring AI initiatives for measurable impact

Use cases for AI in business processes are virtually endless, but according to Adam, that breadth is part of the problem. Many companies try to apply AI everywhere instead of focusing on targeted programs that deliver tangible results.

"One of the biggest challenges is focus," Adam says. "AI has so many possibilities that companies can get distracted. If it doesn't save costs, improve efficiency, or generate recurring revenue, it will not strengthen your valuation."

By prioritizing metrics such as revenue generation, profitability, and operational efficiency, Fairlead helps management teams translate technical projects into meaningful business insights. This allows investors to assess potential impacts on future cash flows, making AI adoption a measurable driver of valuation.

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If [AI] doesn't save costs, improve efficiency, or generate recurring revenue, it will not strengthen your valuation.



Adam Carte

Co-founder
of Fairlead Advisors

The firm's work is especially relevant today. Just two years into the generative AI era, companies are still learning how to deploy these tools effectively. Investors want to know whether these initiatives are creating defensible value or remain unproven experiments.

AI's impact across industries

Global AI investment is surging. According to [IDC](#), worldwide spending on AI is expected to more than double by 2028, with software companies accounting for over half of that total.

Adam is witnessing this trend across his firm's client base. "Software companies are seeing AI's impact immediately, and expectations around efficiency and capability are shifting fast," he says.

In other sectors, such as industrial or energy firms, AI adoption tends to be less visible but equally important. "In these industries, AI is often focused on improving internal processes or reporting. But investors need that translated into bottom-line impact. They want to understand how it lowers costs or enables better decision-making."

For example, if a company deploys AI to optimize a back-office sales function, leaders must be clear on the process it's replacing, the money it saves, and how it improves key value drivers such as accuracy, speed, or customer experience.

*Data from Ideals' AI in M&A survey

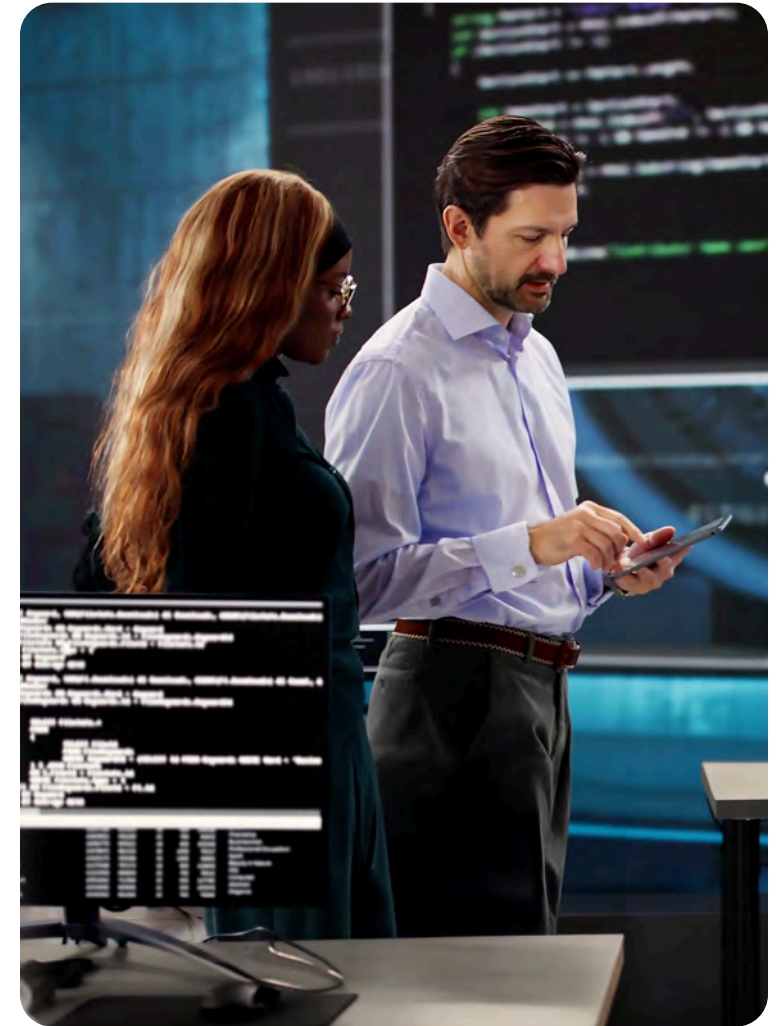
Using AI to enhance advisory capabilities

AI isn't just a tool for Fairlead's clients; it's also transforming how the advisory firm operates. "We use AI to research competitive landscapes and case studies, which is time-consuming when done manually. It helps us synthesize data quickly," Adam says.

57% of M&A professionals believe AI could improve how industry trends are analyzed.*

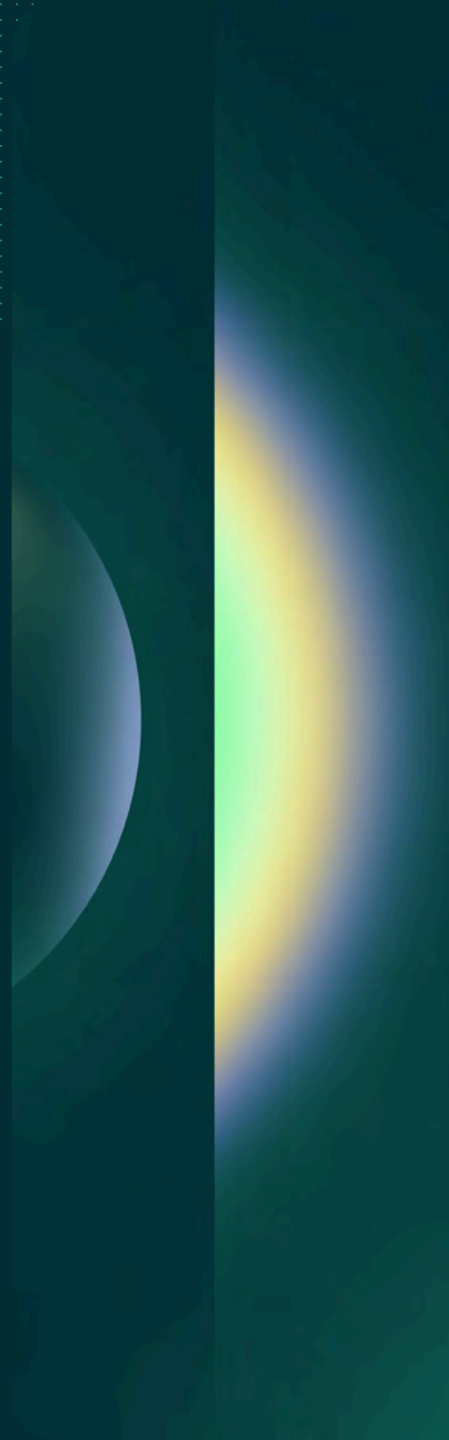
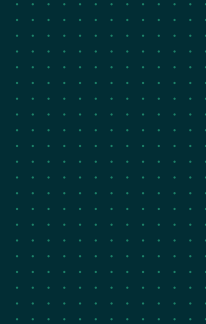
The team is experimenting with tools that combine multiple data sources and produce real-time visual reporting. This is particularly useful for companies with complex operations or multiple facilities.

However, Adam offers a word of caution about its limitations. "The world is too complex for any model to fully capture, which makes AI an aid, not a replacement, for the foreseeable future."



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Where AI meets high-stakes dealmaking



Adoption patterns vary, but the direction is clear: AI is improving how deals are sourced, evaluated, and executed. Users are benefiting from stronger assessments, more efficient workflows, and greater focus on the strategic decisions that shape deal success.

At the same time, AI cannot yet replace human judgment, and dealmaking still depends on negotiation and nuanced insight. The firms that gain the greatest advantage will be those that combine AI-driven speed with the deep experience of their teams.

The future of dealmaking

As deal volumes increase, teams need technology that helps them scale without adding risk. Our virtual data room brings advanced AI capabilities into M&A, helping speed up deal processes while maintaining the highest levels of security and accuracy.

Automated redaction removes sensitive information in seconds, eliminating hours of manual review. In-product translation accelerates cross-border collaboration, while AI-powered search uncovers insights by meaning rather than keywords.

As AI reshapes dealmaking, the tools teams rely on must evolve as well. [Ideals](#) is built for this new era: Secure, intelligent, and designed to accelerate critical decisions.



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Where vision meets precision

Use a data room with purpose-built AI that streamlines every stage of your deal.



AI-powered redaction

AI detects PII in documents, streamlining review and reducing manual effort



In-product translation

AI-powered translation makes document review faster, easier, and multilingual by default



Intelligent search

Use AI-powered document search to gain insights quicker and accelerate documentation review

[Get started](#)

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