BCN

The Microsoft 365 Copilot Strategy Guide

White Paper

Microsoft Solutions Partner
Microsoft Cloud

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Executive summary

The benefits of Artificial Intelligence (AI) are no longer solely monopolised by big corporations. Slowly but surely, thanks to the advent of Microsoft and Open AI, the technology is being democratised. As a result of the rise in accessible AI tools we are now well on the way to mass consumer adoption.

In response, BCN has created a set of services to suit organisations of all sizes, sectors and levels of maturity that can be deployed to take you on your own AI journey.

We have focused these resources to specifically add value to Microsoft Copilot – the technology giant's cutting-edge AI platform that promises to revolutionise the way business gets done.

Whether you're already a Microsoft 365 licence-holder and are considering the adoption of Copilot services, or simply seeking to explore how Large Language Model applications are created, this paper makes the case for investing in AI.

Introduction

The recent flood of media coverage of Open AI technology has triggered a significant wave of FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) in the business community. Suddenly, the fourth industrial revolution seems to be upon us.

The availability, capability and utility of tools dealing specifically with language- or image-based AI services is driving the start of mass adoption. Hundreds of tech start-ups are coming to market, but these will likely be displaced as AI is embedded into enterprise-grade tools. What they demonstrate, however, is how quickly AI models can be built in response to a specific use case.

The technology is finally moving beyond its familiar, earliest forms of execution: intelligent search and recommendation models, chatbots, virtual assistants and smart home appliances. AI is shifting towards a commodity phase, making the technology available to much broader audiences thanks to the power of Large Language Models (LLMs), Pre-Trained AI and AI connectors.

AI's maturity is also giving big corporations a huge boost. We'll likely see them inject AI into as many areas of operation as possible. Microsoft is leading the charge with a significant focus on deploying AI to all Microsoft 365 (M365) customers: it is called Copilot.

This paper is focused on understanding the current and future impact AI will have on your organisation. Our goal is to identify the opportunities and challenges this new AI 'arms race' could bring for the businesses we serve.

The horse has already bolted towards the next exciting stage of AI development. Are you ready to go along for the ride?

Why AI?

AI is already big business – and it will continue to grow. In the next five years the generative AI space alone is predicted to expand to more than 35 times its current value.

Generative AI focuses on creating LLMs that are capable of generating original content. It involves training algorithms to understand and mimic patterns of data to create realistic versions of human outputs such as images, music or text. In simple terms Generative AI can understand what we say and respond in a human-like manner.

ChatGPT has become famous for its mainstream execution of Natural Language Generation using text input and output, but it is just one of many varieties of generative AI which also include generating images, videos and even software.
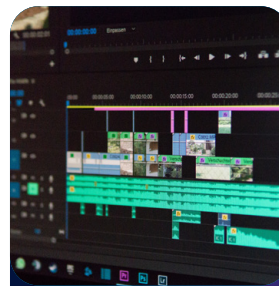
| Text | Code | Images | Video | Data |

Some examples of generative AI

Content generation:
Generative AI models assist by producing high-quality, relevant and contextual content, saving time and resources for content creators. This could include your sales and marketing materials, such as blog articles, social media posts, product descriptions and customer newsletters.

Data augmentation:
Machine learning models often require large amounts of labelled training data. Generative AI can help your business augment your existing datasets by creating synthetic data that mimics the characteristics and distribution of real-world data; enhancing the accuracy and robustness of machine learning models.

Customer support:
Automation of certain aspects of your customer support e.g. answering frequently asked questions, or providing basic troubleshooting guidance through chatbots or automated email responses.

Natural Language Processing (NLP):
NLP-powered tools can benefit your organisation if you deal with a significant amount of textual data, such as legal firms, market research agencies or content-based companies. Generative AI models can assist in tasks like sentiment analysis, summarising text, language translation and document generation.

Creative design:
Your business may require creative designs for branding, advertising or product packaging. Generative AI models can generate variations based on predefined parameters or specific inputs, providing designers with inspiration and speeding up the design iteration process.

Personalised marketing:
Generative AI can help your business create personalised marketing campaigns, analysing customer data and generating customised content or product recommendations based on individual preferences, browsing history or demographic information.

Product prototyping:
If your firm is involved in product development, generative AI can aid in generating virtual prototypes or 3D models. These models can be used to explore various design iterations and simulate product behaviour before physical production, reducing costs and time to market.
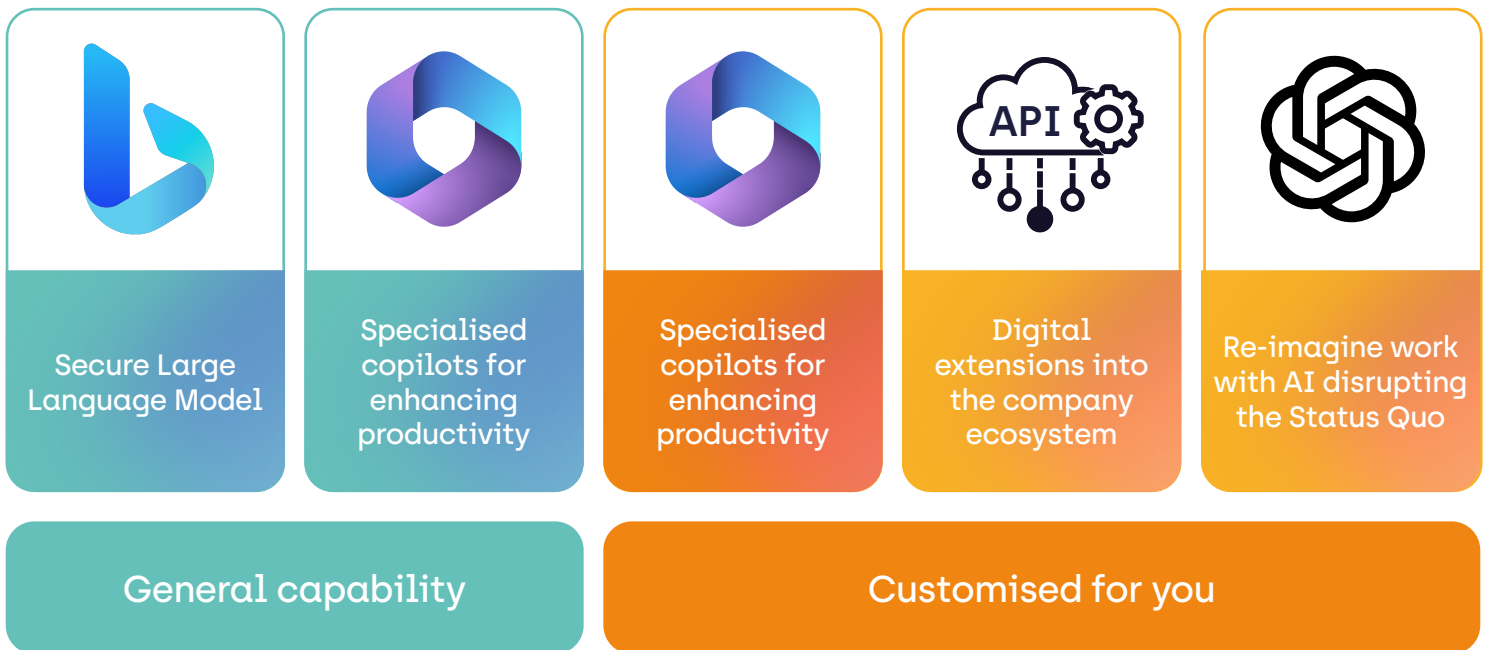
Fraud detection:
Another aspect you can leverage is models for fraud detection and prevention. By analysing patterns and anomalies in large datasets, the technology can identify potentially fraudulent activities at your firm, such as credit-card fraud, identity theft or abnormal behaviour in financial transactions.

What exactly is Microsoft doing?

Microsoft is a key influencer of AI. It began investing in Open AI in 2019 ($1bn), with its most recent major investment made in January 2023 ($10bn). This investment has allowed Microsoft to harvest and inject much more advanced AI into its core ecosystem, starting with generic AI capabilities built into Bing Chat, flowing through the M365 product portfolio.

Microsoft's approach is to provide a base generic capability open to everyone then layer in more complex AI's which can reach further into the business ecosystem. At the more 'art of the possible' end of the scale it offers a broad array of AI services which can be used to build custom applications.

| Secure Large Language Model | Specialised copilots for enhancing productivity | Specialised copilots for enhancing productivity | Digital extensions into the company ecosystem | Re-imagine work with AI disrupting the Status Quo |

| General capability | Customised for you |

# Bing Chat for the Enterprise – your secure Large Language Model

Microsoft has launched a Chat GPT-style experience allowing your business to access OpenAI LLM capabilities. It presents the additional benefit of being able to provide proprietary business information without data being shared externally. This enables you to provide context to prompts and generate content that is specific to your business.

Bing Chat for the Enterprise also has web access, allowing users to give prompts that require web searches to provide additional details. This enables use cases such as competitor comparisons from public-facing online information.

Bing Chat for the Enterprise is available to all users assigned who have M365 Business Standard, Business Premium, M365 E3 or M365 E5 licence. It will be enabled by default for all users unless an organisation explicitly opts out.

A key difference between Bing Chat for the Enterprise and Copilot, is that the former will only respond to context that is provided in a prompt; it will not search a business's wider M365 ecosystem for supporting data or information.
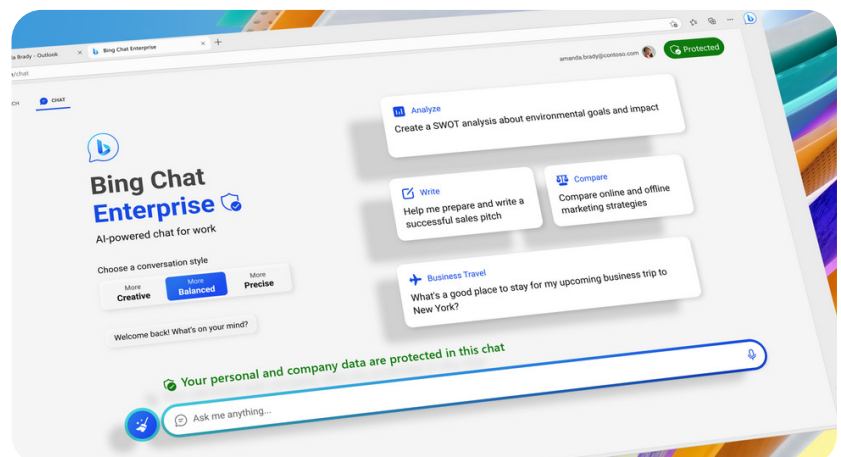
Your personal Copilot

Copilot for M365 is designed to provide an AI assistant for every M365 customer, laying a foundation for a service which can be expanded across the entire business data and internal application ecosystem. In other words, it is an 'internal' business-enablement AI service.

Copilot will be available for $30 per user per month, as an add-on to an existing M365 Business or Enterprise licence. This allows use of Copilot across all M365 apps with no limits.

Microsoft has created a centralised AI and workflow engine, which forms a productivity hub for an entire business ecosystem. Copilot integrates the Microsoft application portfolio, Microsoft Graph and AI LLM models.

This means the applications act as an interface for LLM requests and answers, tap into business data stored within the Microsoft Graph, and combine them with the AI models. Copilot can also perform actions based on user prompts to automate user activity across the M365 stack.
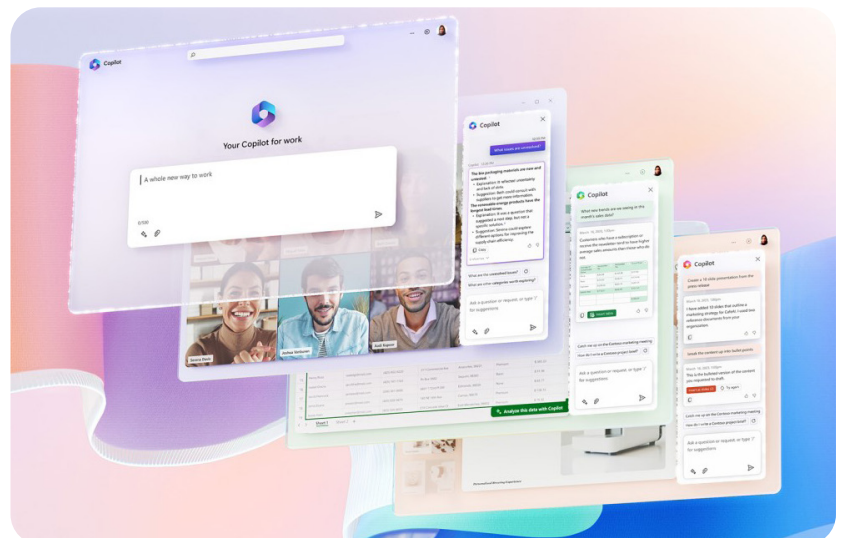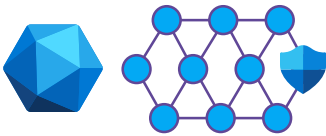
Microsoft 365 Apps

Microsoft 365 Copilot

Microsoft Graph

Foundation Models

This forms a new out-of-the-box, fully integrated AI experience for the M365 ecosystem. Through further work with partners, Microsoft has created a library of Copilot plug-ins to build out the ecosystem.

In addition, Microsoft has enabled customised content to be augmented into M365 Copilot bringing in ChatGPT, customised Teams extensions and Power Platform connectors. The Power connectors are key, since they bring in the business data stored within Dataverse . This gives Copilot increased capability as a user expands the software across the business ecosystem.

New & Existing Plugin Partners
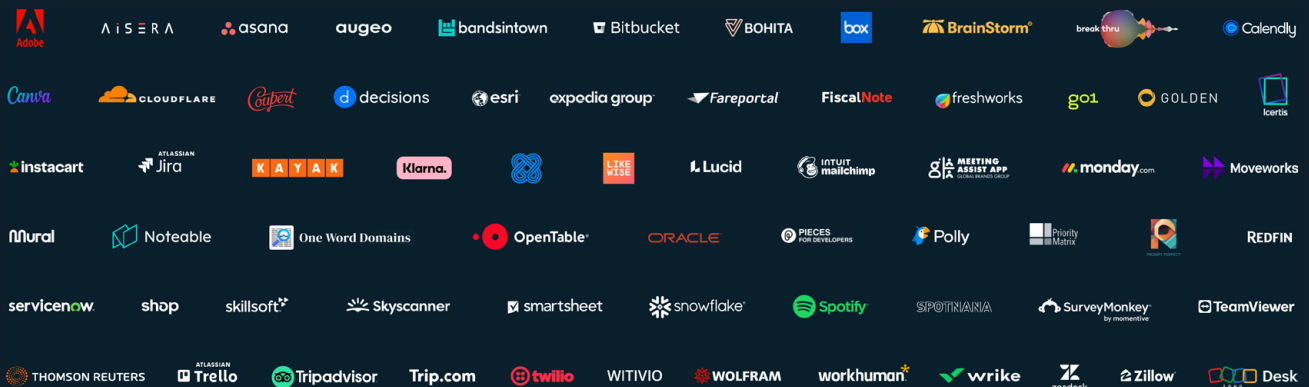
Microsoft OpenAI

Microsoft OpenAI is a suite of services which targets use cases spanning both internal and external requirements.

Open AI services follow the company's Responsible AI principles – meaning data is secure and properly managed at all times. No data is used to train foundation models.

Azure Open AI allows developers to use LLMs for enterprise-grade applications. Developers can apply the coding and language models for a variety of use cases, including:

— Writing assistance
— Content generation
— Code generation
— Text summarisation

Such releases come 'as a service', connected by Azure infrastructure and secure APIs, to form new applications or those which can be embedded into existing applications.

Secure by design

Microsoft has committed to working with AI responsibly, announcing and reinforcing its AI security principles:

— **Your data is your data** – inputs and outputs will not be stored anywhere outside of your organisation
— **Your data is not used to train AI models without your permission**
— **Rigorous Responsible AI Principle**s

As a signatory to the Microsoft Partner Pledge, BCN will follow Microsoft's responsible AI principles.

AI security principles

Secure **by design** and secure **by fault**

Your data is **your data**

Your data is **not used to train AI models** without your permission

Rigorous **Responsible AI** practices

[As a signatory to the Microsoft Partner Pledge, BCN will follow Microsoft's responsible AI principles.]

Get ready for AI

You might be right at the beginning of your AI journey as Microsoft switches on Copilot. But your firm will soon progress as your AI implementation matures and the technology is embedded into your business processes, providing greater levels of complexity and value.

The data journey

It's important to note that before a generative AI service can be deployed, the data that sits behind it must be put through a level of transformation. Failure to do this can result in a huge amount of wasted resources. If you plot your business on a data maturity curve, it will identify the extent to which AI can be applied.

Understanding where your business is on its data journey is key. AI can be applied at all levels, but its application and execution will differ. Your organisation will get greater value from AI as it achieves data maturity:

The Data Security Journey

| Reactive | Pro Active | Managed | Embedded |
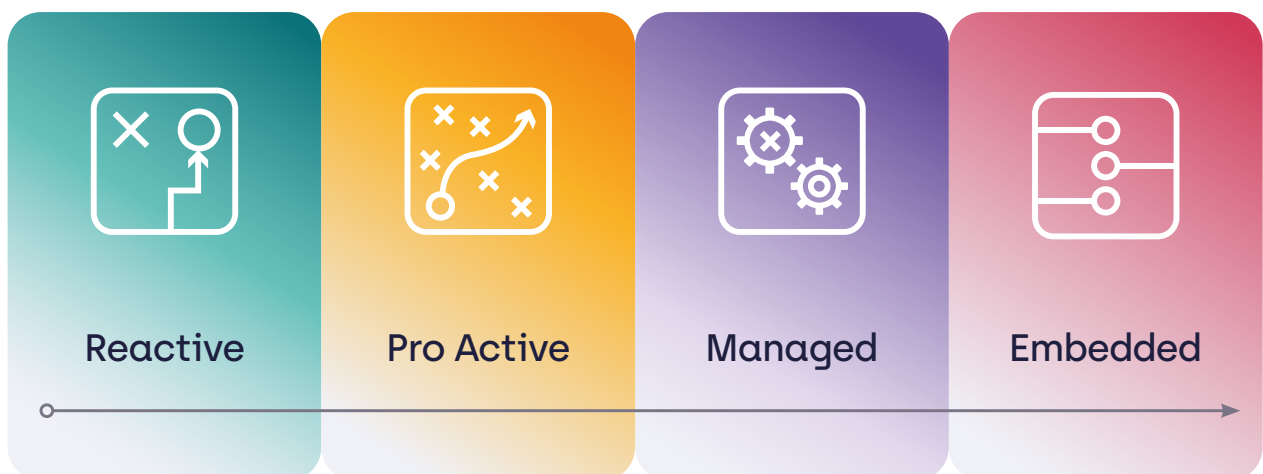
Reactive:

At this stage, the business is just getting going and wants to derive insights quickly from dispersed data sets. Here we bring data together and build the initial data bridges and reports to quickly get a foundation of business reporting. Data could be from Excel or other unstructured sources. The hosting of file data is unstructured with no governance, it may even be stored across multiple different platforms.

Proactive:

The business begins to take a more proactive approach to data, implementing standards and role-based access. Requirements are thought of in advance, & the wider business feeds them in. Decisions are made as to what to store where, clear data structures and basic Role based access. A maturing data strategy is being formed.

Managed:

The business now realises the value of data and increases the focus it is given, data governance models are implemented and resources identified to manage data systems. Data is modelled and prepared for use by different business units.

Embedded:

The business is run on data led decisions, there is a data strategy linked with the direction of the company that uses data to grow. Data teams are present at every business level & represented at the highest level.
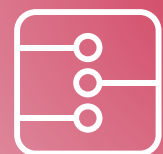
Get your foundations in place

Before installing Copilot it's important to begin with an audit of your existing data governance and security:

Permissions – 'just enough access'. Because Copilot will draw on any data its users have permission to access, it's vital that you lock these permissions down in advance of deployment (BCN can run a Sharepoint Permissions Audit to better understand these settings.) Ensure your data is in the right place on your server and is classified correctly to restrict access to any sensitive information.

Data governance – the effectiveness of Copilot will depend on the data sources that are indexed by M365. An abundance of data will mean better results. Incorrect or incomplete data will mean less accurate results.

Security – Copilot aligns to the privacy and security policies you have in place. Review your cyber security in advance of deployment to ensure your M365 environment is set up in the correct way.

BCN is uniquely placed to help introduce AI across your business.

Microsoft
Solutions Partner

Microsoft Cloud

As a Microsoft Solutions Partner for Microsoft Cloud, our relationship with Microsoft gives us access to its wide range of capabilities and new technology.

With our data scientists and full stack development team, we can help develop your future AI roadmap and customise Copilot for your business, creating brand new, AI infused applications to bring the power of automation to different functions across your organisation.

BCN

Are you ready to explore the potential of AI and Microsoft Copilot for your business?

Let's talk about how we can help you take your business to the next level.

Get in touch

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