What if everything you've been told about AI ROI Is wrong?

Wednesday 10 June, 2026

Three quarters of UK businesses now use AI. Only 31% have seen any return. But the problem isn't the technology and it isn't the investment - it's the expectation.

Edinburgh, Scotland - June 2026

New research from Studio Graphene, surveying 500 senior decision-makers across UK businesses, found that while over three quarters of UK businesses now use AI tools, only 31% have seen a positive return on their investment. Less than half can even define what success would look like.

But what if that's because they've been told to expect the wrong thing entirely?

"Businesses are expecting AI to generate ROI directly," says Angus Hay, CEO and Founder of Edinburgh-based AI agency Vereus. "That's the wrong expectation entirely. AI doesn't close deals, win clients or grow revenue. But it can free up the people who do - and that's where the real return lives."

The distinction sounds simple. In practice, it changes everything.

Most businesses deploy AI where it's visible and easy to point to: content generation, customer-facing chatbots, sales tools. These feel productive. But they rarely move the needle, because they're not addressing the real drag on performance. The real drag is the hours that skilled, experienced people lose every week to work that is necessary but low-value. Research. Reporting. Administration. Compliance. The work that fills the diary and empties the capacity for the things that actually matter.

AI, deployed correctly, takes that weight off. It gives people back their time, their focus and their energy, and it directs all three toward the activities that genuinely drive business outcomes.

Vereus is deliberate about this. The Edinburgh-based agency describes itself as AI-sceptic: selective about where AI gets deployed and always starting with the business rather than the technology. "We look at where time is being lost, where decisions are being delayed, where talented people are stuck in the weeds," says Hay. "Then we ask whether AI can fix that. Sometimes it can and sometimes it can't. We're very clear on both."

When it does fit, the results are tangible. Vereus has seen an investment firm reduce a six-day intelligence process to under two minutes. A rental company reclaim eleven days of manual reporting work per cycle. A telecoms business shave more than £30,000 per month from expansion costs. In none of these cases did AI directly generate revenue. In every case, it gave people back the capacity to generate far more of it themselves.

The KPMG finding that 65% of UK businesses would continue investing in AI regardless of tangible ROI suggests that, on some level, business leaders already sense this. They know something valuable is there. They just haven't been given the right framework for finding it.

"The question to ask isn't: what will the AI earn?" says Hay. "It's: what will our people be able to do that they couldn't before? When you answer that honestly, the ROI becomes very obvious, very quickly."

Related Sectors:

Business & Finance :: Computing & Telecoms :: Construction & Property :: Education & Human Resources :: Manufacturing, Engineering & Energy :: Media & Marketing :: Transport & Logistics :: Travel & Tourism ::

Related Keywords:

AI ROI :: Artificial Intelligence Return On Investment :: AI Investment UK :: AI For Business UK :: AI Deployment Strategy :: AI Productivity :: Human-Centred AI ::

Scan Me:

Company Contact:

_

Vereus

T. 0131 560 2648
E. hello@vereus.co.uk
W. https://www.vereus.co.uk/

Additional Contact(s):
Angus Hay, CEO & Founder

View Online

Newsroom: Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
https://www.vereus.pressat.co.uk