Platned

A new chapter for construction and engineering

Key AI and ERP trends shaping 2026

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Industry change is accelerating

Construction and engineering organizations are navigating a period of sustained change. Market volatility, increasing regulatory pressure, supply chain disruption, and growing project complexity are no longer temporary challenges. They are now permanent features of the operating landscape.

What has accelerated more rapidly than anything else is interest in Artificial Intelligence. Over the last year, AI has moved from consumer experimentation into industrial, mission-critical environments. Like the internet and mobile technology before it, AI is now reshaping how organisations operate, plan, and compete.

Despite growing momentum, many leaders are still asking fundamental questions. Where does AI deliver real value? How should it be applied safely? And how can it be introduced without increasing risk?

This is where a practical, industry-led approach is essential.
Platned helps organizations apply AI and ERP capabilities in ways that strengthen control, predictability, and financial performance, using IFS Cloud as the digital foundation.

Growth pressures make AI unavoidable

Global investment in AI continues to rise sharply. Enterprises worldwide were expected to invest over $300 billion in AI solutions in 2025, with spending forecast to more than double by 2028.

At the same time, construction and engineering are entering a renewed growth phase. Large infrastructure programs, housing demand, renewable energy investment, and expansion in data-driven industries such as utilities and data centers are driving activity across the sector.

From Platned's experience, organizations that delay AI adoption beyond the next few years risk losing momentum. Not because AI is a trend, but because its use in forecasting, project control, resource optimization, and decision-making is already delivering measurable outcomes.

AI is proving most valuable when applied to long-standing industry challenges, including:

- Limited visibility and predictability across projects
- Fragmented enterprise-wide data
- Slow access to trusted, real-time information
- Workforce shortages and capacity pressure
- Increasing sustainability and compliance demands

These are operational realities. Embedding AI within IFS Cloud allows organizations to address them in a controlled, value-focused way.

Early results are shifting industry attitudes

In global research with construction and engineering leaders, artificial intelligence has emerged as the top technology investment priority for the year ahead.

Even so, the industry remains pragmatic. Organizations are not pursuing technology for its own sake. Adoption only occurs when value is clear, measurable, and aligned to operational outcomes.

This caution is understandable. Many firms continue to experience budget overruns, schedule delays, or both. What is changing is the evidence from early adopters. Organizations applying AI within core project and enterprise systems are seeing improvements in profitability, efficiency, and delivery control.

From Platned's perspective, the message is consistent. AI delivers results when it is embedded into the systems that already run the business, not layered on as a disconnected solution. This is why IFS.ai, embedded within IFS Cloud, is built around industrial use cases rather than generic automation.

Forecast one: industrial AI becomes the norm

91% of organizations will invest in Industrial AI, automation, and robotics

Understanding the role of industrial AI starts with defining it correctly. Unlike consumer-focused AI, industrial AI is built for accuracy, resilience, and mission-critical environments. It supports complex operations where decisions directly affect safety, margins, and long-term asset performance.

IFS.ai reflects this approach. Embedded directly within IFS Cloud, it combines machine learning, automation, and intelligent workflows to improve predictability and reduce risk across construction and engineering operations.

From Platned's delivery experience, industrial AI delivers the strongest results when applied to:

- Project and portfolio financial forecasting
- Detection of anomalies across cost, schedule, and performance
- Early identification and mitigation of delivery risks
- Predictive insights across assets, labor, and resources

These capabilities help organizations shift from reactive management to proactive control, which is essential in an industry where every project is unique.

AI applications that deliver measurable value

Industrial AI must be aligned to real operational needs. In construction and engineering, this often starts with addressing data-heavy, manual processes that slow delivery and increase risk.

One common application is automated data capture from documents. Construction projects generate large volumes of unstructured information, from invoices to delivery notes. AI-driven extraction reduces manual effort while improving accuracy and speed.

Payment behavior analysis is another high-impact use case. By analyzing historical patterns, AI can improve invoice payment prediction, supporting stronger cash flow forecasting and financial confidence.

Engineering and asset data visualization also plays a critical role. AI-supported integration of 2D and 3D data into IFS Cloud provides earlier insight into asset performance, maintainability, and lifecycle cost.

Platned's role is to ensure these capabilities are implemented with clear governance, transparency, and a measurable return on investment.

Robotics and automation move into live delivery

Robotics is gaining momentum across construction and engineering, particularly in hazardous, repetitive, or precision-driven tasks. From inspections to material handling, robotics combined with AI is improving safety, consistency, and efficiency.

IFS is advancing this space through partnerships with leading robotics innovators. When robotic data is connected directly into IFS Cloud, it can be integrated into enterprise workflows, enabling real-time visibility and faster decision-making.

From Platned's perspective, the value of robotics lies in integration rather than experimentation. When robotic and AI-generated data flows into core ERP, asset, and project systems, organizations gain a unified operational view that supports safer and more efficient delivery.

Forecast two: digital workers reshape capacity

71% of organizations will transform their workforce with agentic AI and digital workers

As AI investment accelerates, construction and engineering firms are facing a parallel challenge: workforce capacity.
71% of firms expect at least half their workforce will require retraining or reskilling in order to embrace AI. At the same time, 80% of construction firms struggle to find qualified hourly craft workers, which continues to drive higher costs and project delays.

To address this, organizations are increasingly adopting agent-based AI, often referred to as digital workers. They operate like virtual team members. They do more than automate repetitive tasks. They analyze information, make decisions, pursue goals, and take action across multiple systems with minimal human intervention.

At Platned, we see that the effectiveness of digital workers depends on how well they are contextualized within construction and engineering operations. When governed through a platform approach and connected to the right data, they help teams move faster without compromising control.

Spotlight: digital workers in practice

Digital workers can support a wide range of roles across construction and engineering organizations, improving productivity while allowing teams to focus on higher-value outcomes. Each digital worker boosts your team's efficiency by 30%.

COOs, CFOs, heads of operations or finance:

For executive, operations, and finance leaders, digital workers such as operational analysts consolidate information from multiple systems into actionable insights, while reasoning agents support complex decision-making.

Supply chain and procurement managers:

Within supply chain and procurement functions, AI-enabled assistants help ensure supplier orders are accurate, coordinated, and delivered on time. Inventory and material agents automatically monitor stock levels, reducing shortages and excess.

Service management leaders:

In service and compliance environments, digital workers can optimize field activity, support scheduling decisions, and accelerate quality and compliance checks by identifying anomalies early.

Compliance, risk management, QA leaders:

Quality analyst: speeds up QA processes by automatically evaluating compliance and identifying anomalies

From Platned's perspective, value is realized when these capabilities are deployed with clear ownership, strong governance, and integrated data foundations, rather than treated as isolated experiments.

Forecast three: strong data foundations take priority

60% of IT leaders will prioritize data consolidation and analysis

As AI adoption increases, organizations are placing greater emphasis on data quality, consolidation, and governance. As of February 2025, 33% of IT leaders across industries, are prioritizing initiatives that make data reliable, accessible, and usable at scale.

For construction and engineering, data remains one of the biggest barriers to successful AI adoption. Leaders are therefore asking critical questions: how can AI be trusted, how can it be governed responsibly, and how should data from multiple systems be brought together without creating complexity?

The answer lies in treating data as a core enterprise capability rather than a one-time IT project. To unlock the full value of industrial AI, data must be simplified. Information from different sources needs to be connected, organized, and analyzed within a single enterprise platform.

Trust in AI is closely linked to trust in data. Industry research reflects this connection, with confidence levels highest where organizations have invested in strong data foundations across strategy, operations, finance, and decision-making.

- **75%** of industry leaders trust AI in strategic decisions,
- **78%** in automation and operations,
- **75%** in budget allocation, and 80% in sales and marketing.

At Platned, this is positioned as a phased journey: establish reliable data foundations first, then scale industrial and agent-based AI with confidence.

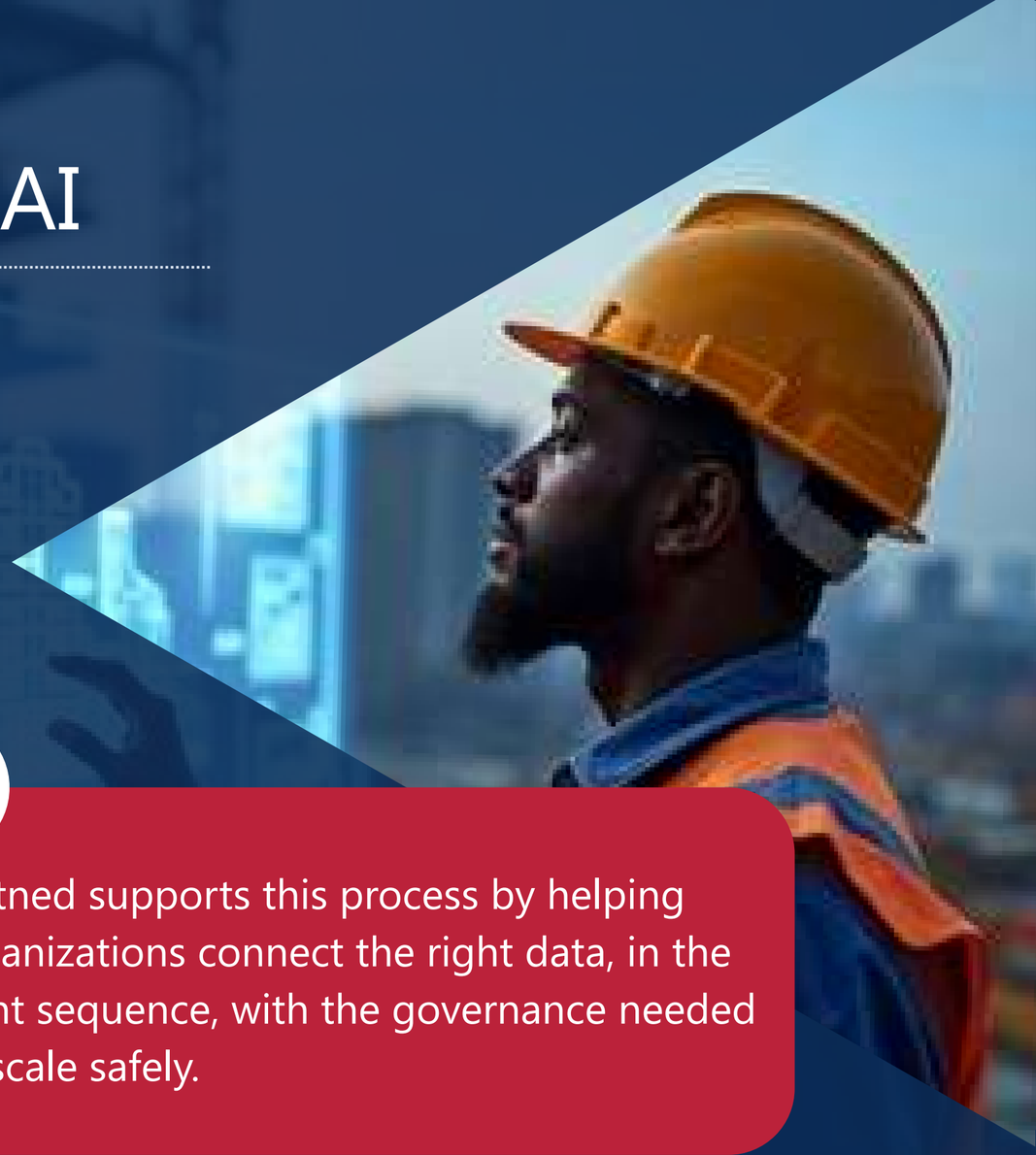
Focus area: getting data ready for AI

Construction and engineering leaders are preparing for AI-driven innovation by treating data management as an ongoing discipline across the full project and asset lifecycle.

Key priorities include standardizing project data through common data environments, establishing continuous governance and data quality programs, and integrating BIM and engineering data with enterprise systems to create a single source of truth.

Organizations are also building data foundations that support digital twins, improving real-time visibility across projects and assets, and modernizing platforms to ensure data remains trusted at scale.

To enable practical use cases such as predictive scheduling, procurement optimization, cost forecasting, and carbon tracking, CIOs are connecting ERP, finance, supply chain, and field execution systems.
A unified enterprise data model, supported by platforms such as IFS Cloud ERP, is widely recognized as essential for moving beyond isolated pilots.



Platned supports this process by helping organizations connect the right data, in the right sequence, with the governance needed to scale safely.

Forecast four: diversification drives system change

65% of CEOs will prioritize business diversification strategies as a pathway for future growth

IFS Industry research shows that diversification is becoming a short-term priority for many construction and engineering leaders. To increase recurring revenue, improve margins, and enhance long-term value, firms are pursuing both organic growth and acquisitions.

This shift often includes expanding into services such as asset operations, maintenance, facilities management, modular construction, or offsite manufacturing. Others are broadening their project mix across industries or entering new domestic and international markets.

To support this evolution, organizations need enterprise systems that maintain consistency across core processes while allowing flexibility in how work is delivered.

From Platned's perspective, diversification is not just a growth strategy. It is a systems and operating model challenge. As organizations expand into new services, sectors, and geographies, they require platforms that can support multiple business models without losing visibility or control.

Focus area: mergers, acquisitions, and integration

Mergers and acquisitions (M&A) are playing an increasingly important role in reshaping construction and engineering organizations. Deal activity has accelerated in recent years as firms seek scale, capability, and access to new markets. Since 2020, the average number of deals per year increased by approximately 60%.

Drivers include large infrastructure programs, housing shortages, energy transition initiatives, and investment in data centers and advanced manufacturing. At the same time, changing interest rate conditions are expected to stimulate renewed demand for housing and infrastructure investment. The United Nations estimates that approximately 1.6 Bn people lack adequate housing globally. In the US, the shortfall is estimated at 3.7 Mn units, while more than 15 per cent of the Eurozone population lives in overcrowded housing.

The operational challenge lies in integration. Without a strong enterprise backbone, acquisitions can introduce fragmentation and inefficiency. From Platned's perspective, success depends on having an ERP foundation that can absorb new entities, services, and operating models without disrupting visibility or governance.

Forecast five: sustainability becomes operational

75% of firms will commit to decarbonization sustainability targets to meet demand for net-zero energy buildings and infrastructure

Sustainability is now shaping decisions across every stage of the construction and engineering value chain. Environmental performance is no longer treated as a secondary consideration. It is becoming a core business requirement.

Organizations are responding by committing to decarbonization targets and adopting practices that support net-zero buildings and infrastructure. These include optimizing designs through BIM, improving water efficiency and climate resilience, and focusing on regenerative approaches that support biodiversity.

Technology is playing a critical role. IoT sensors, smart building systems, and data-driven monitoring enable organizations to track energy and resource consumption more accurately. Modular and prefabricated construction methods are also expanding, helping reduce waste and improve predictability.

With construction generating a significant proportion of global waste (1/3rd approximately of all global waste, which equates to 2 billion tons of construction and demolition waste every year), circular construction practices are increasingly being adopted to reduce environmental impact and support long-term sustainability goals.

Focus area: delivering on zero-carbon commitments

To remain competitive, construction and engineering organizations need systems that provide real-time visibility into sustainability performance across projects and portfolios. When environmental data is integrated directly into enterprise processes, firms can respond faster to regulatory requirements, secure green financing, and differentiate themselves in the market.

Across regions, governments, cities, and asset owners are moving from ambition to execution. Low-emission construction practices are increasingly mandated, including the use of electric and battery-powered machinery on sites.

Leading examples are already emerging. Some cities now report the vast majority of construction activity operating without fossil fuels. This shift highlights how sustainability is becoming operational rather than aspirational.

Beyond environmental responsibility, sustainability is also a commercial priority. Investors are placing greater emphasis on ESG performance, while reporting and disclosure requirements continue to expand. Construction and engineering organizations are increasingly expected to demonstrate traceability, accuracy, and control over emissions, materials, and asset lifecycle impact.

A leading example is Oslo, the Norwegian capital, which reported that 98% of its construction sites were free of fossil fuels last year.

Platned supports customers by helping embed sustainability into everyday operations through connected ERP and asset management foundations, ensuring decarbonization efforts are measurable, auditable, and repeatable.

Embedding intelligence for long-term advantage

Organizations that succeed with AI will be those that move beyond isolated pilots and embed intelligence into a connected enterprise foundation. Applying AI within core project, asset, and financial workflows enables teams to move faster while maintaining predictability and control.

As momentum builds behind industrial AI, digital workers, diversification, and sustainability, construction and engineering leaders must define a clear vision for how work is delivered and how systems support long-term adaptability.

Incremental improvement alone is no longer sufficient. Organizations need to rethink how data is used, how decisions are made, and how technology supports change without increasing risk.

Embedded industrial AI strengthens modern ERP by connecting intelligence directly to operational processes. While much AI investment to date has focused on office-based roles, the greatest opportunity lies in industrial operations, where most of the workforce operates and where the most critical decisions are made.

This is where industrial AI delivers the strongest return, supporting safer delivery, better margins, and more resilient organizations.

> Most AI effort to date has gone to the 30% of workers behind a desk. The real ROI is in the 70% out in industrial operations, that's why Industrial AI is the big opportunity ahead of us.
>
> – Jay Crotts, ex-CIO Shell

Rather than piloting AI in isolation, organizations that succeed will be those that embed intelligence into a connected ERP foundation. As an IFS partner, Platned helps construction and engineering organizations adopt IFS Cloud as that foundation, applying Industrial AI in a controlled, value-driven way that supports both immediate outcomes and long-term transformation.

About Platned

Platned is a global IFS Gold Services Partner supporting organizations across construction, manufacturing, energy, utilities, service industries, and more. With teams located in the United States, United Kingdom, Sri Lanka, and the Nordics, Platned combines deep technical expertise with practical industry experience.

Platned supports customers across the full lifecycle of IFS Cloud, from implementation and upgrades through to ongoing optimization and managed services. The portfolio also includes specialist capabilities such as automated testing, finance automation, proactive support services, integration platforms, and advanced analytics.

Organizations around the world trust Platned to deliver solutions that improve resilience, increase profitability, and support sustainable growth.

Learn more at platned.com