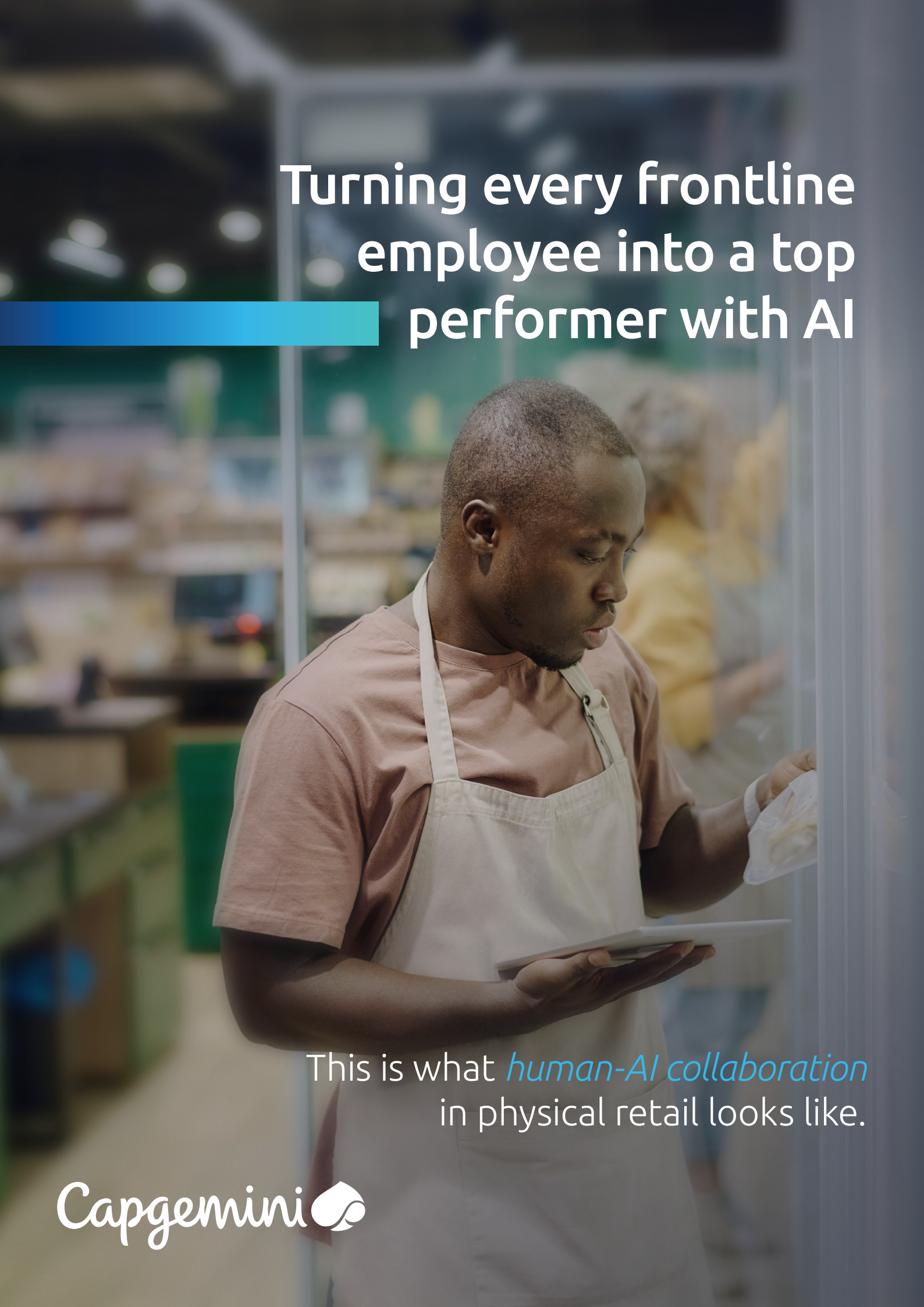
Turning every frontline employee into a top performer with AI



This is what *human-AI collaboration* in physical retail looks like.

Capgemini

Exceptional frontline performance isn't hired—it's honed. See how AI is enabling every in-store employee to become an incredible performer.

Introduction

62% of frontline hiring managers cite applicant quality as their biggest challenge. With the candidate pool unlikely to change, the question facing leaders isn't how to find better talent, but how to enable every employee to perform at the highest level.

Retailers may not be able to control the talent pool, but they can remove the structural barriers standing in the way of great performance: inconsistent training, fragmented systems, and complex tools that make it difficult for employees to access the information and support they need to perform at their personal best.

AI is emerging as a powerful solution, serving as the connective intelligence layer that links systems behind the scenes while serving up real-time, contextual answers for frontline workers. By surfacing the right knowledge and next steps in any scenario, AI is making top-tier performance achievable for every employee. Let's see how.

> *When you level the playing field across the workforce with AI, you uplevel performance and productivity for the entire organization.*

Mark Ruston
Global Retail Lead, Capgemini

Key retail challenges to address

Cost pressure:

Retailers face ongoing cost inflation, but have limited room to pass it on, as consumers struggle with their own high cost-of-living pressures.

Attrition:

Turnover among in-store staff is rising, with attrition rates exceeding *60% for retail* and many times higher for QSR.

Employee enablement:

Store teams often struggle with inconsistent training, limited coaching and fragmented access to SOPs, product information, pricing, and inventory data.

Customer experience:

Stores find it difficult to meet customers' heightened expectations for instant information, personalization, and omnichannel consistency.

Exceptional frontline performance, powered by AI

Top frontline performers move faster because they know what to do—and where to find answers when they don't. AI brings that same capability to every employee, guiding actions, surfacing information, and enabling confident decisions in real time.

While the applications for AI within retail stores are virtually limitless, here we explore three examples of frontline enablement in practice and how intelligent tools can help associates answer questions, complete tasks, and resolve issues quickly and confidently, without relying on extensive specialist knowledge.

1 **Customer service and sales**

2 **Operations and administration**

3 **Predictive maintenance and self-service resolution**

1. Customer service and sales

Human interaction is the foundation of in-store shopping. According to our most recent consumer trends report, *What matters to today's consumer*, 3 in 4 shoppers welcome assistance from employees while in the store—but their satisfaction hinges on how well-equipped employees are to serve.

The challenge today is that many of the in-store tools retailers deployed in recent years are difficult to use and disconnected, making it difficult for in-store employees to answer questions quickly, accurately and completely. For example, a store associate helping a customer may need to switch between multiple systems to check inventory, locate a product in another store, or review promotions—often while managing several other tasks at the same time.

AI can serve as a unified interface, providing employees with instant access to knowledge from multiple systems, enabling them to serve customers more quickly and confidently. Instead of navigating multiple platforms via mobile app, manual stockroom checks, or desktop computer, employees could simply ask a question, via voice-enabled headset tool and instantly receive one complete answer with information from all three systems.

Used this way, AI doesn't just provide answers in the moment, it helps employees build knowledge over time. With consistent use, these tools can help people build the expertise and experience they need to function with greater confidence.

74% of shoppers value human interaction during in-store shopping

Source: *What matters to today's consumer, 2026*

2. Operations and administration

Not every challenge on the store floor is customer-facing. Frontline employees also spend valuable time each day on administrative tasks, such as logging help desk tickets, requesting shift changes, or searching for the right procedures.

Advanced agentic AI tools can move beyond simply providing answers to employee questions to taking action on their behalf.

For example, instead of requiring staff to log into the help desk portal to report an issue with their timecard, an AI agent can be directed to do so via an intelligent mobile chat tool. Or, if a POS system stops working, a store associate could explain the issue to the AI assistant and let the in-system agent diagnose the issue and notify the appropriate support team.

By automating or eliminating administrative tasks, employees can focus on customer interactions, driving measurable improvements in the performance metrics that matter most to the business.

3. Predictive maintenance and self-service resolution

In retail, system downtime means lost sales. Another area where AI technology could create a big impact is by predicting equipment issues before disruptions occur.

But knowing *when* something will happen and knowing *how* to fix it are two very different things. In fact, for many new or relatively inexperienced employees, even common technical issues may be a first-time encounter.

AI can help in two ways. First, it can predict when service needs to occur, identifying potential issues before they cause downtime or interrupt store operations. Second, it can guide employees through the resolution process step-by-step, helping them troubleshoot problems without the assistance of specialized support teams.

For example, if a POS printer stops working, an AI assistant could immediately detect the issue, surface likely causes, and walk the employee through simple steps—such as checking the paper feed, replacing the receipt roll, or restarting the device. If the problem persists, the system could automatically log a help desk ticket, notify IT support, and provide the store team with clear next steps.

Over time, this experience helps employees cultivate a greater sense of confidence and ownership in their work, empowering them to anticipate needs, solve challenges, and take on new tasks.

3 best practices for enhancing frontline performance with AI

To successfully introduce AI in stores, retailers should focus on three key principles that prioritize usability, value, and scalability.

1

Design for speed and simplicity: When tools are easy to use, adoption follows—and adoption is what ultimately drives value for the user and the business. For many retailers, this means enabling a voice-first system that allows employees to access information instantly through a hands-free headset. For more detailed or visual tasks, a lightweight companion app can provide deeper functionality without disrupting the flow of work.

2

Start small and prove value with an MVP: The most effective approach is to begin with a focused MVP that delivers basic information and simple tasks directly to employees on the store floor. Once adoption and measurable value are established, the solution can expand—integrating with additional digital systems and evolving into more advanced, agentic capabilities across the enterprise.

3

Rationalize store applications to reduce complexity: Point solutions may be effective, but they often create complexity within the employee experience—especially for new hires. Retailers should focus on unifying fragmented in-store tools into a single, AI driven cohesive platform that simplifies daily workflows for frontline teams. By reducing the number of systems and log-ins required, retailers can minimize tech fatigue, improve usability, and drive more consistent operations across every store.

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Steve Hewett

Global Leader - Technology & Data, frog - Capgemini Invent

Case study: Using AI to reduce equipment downtime

Challenge

Across retail and service environments, equipment breakdowns are a common operational challenge. When critical equipment fails, managers are pulled off the floor to troubleshoot, service slows down, and pressure builds.

One global organization turned to Capgemini to see how AI could be used to help frontline teams resolve equipment issues quickly without relying on specialist support or technical manuals.

Solution

Working with Capgemini, this client introduced an AI-powered mobile assistant that transforms dense technical documentation into clear, step-by-step guidance, enabling employees to diagnose problems and perform basic fixes in the moment using their smartphone. Developed in close collaboration with frontline teams, this assistant reflects the realities of daily operations and offers and intuitive, practical solution for fast, high-pressure environments.

Impact

- Shorter equipment repair and maintenance times > More time for customers
- Less down time and disruptions > More reliable service for customers
- Clear, intuitive service instructions > Stronger learning opportunity for employees
- Self-service capabilities > Improved morale and entrepreneurial spirit on-site

What's next

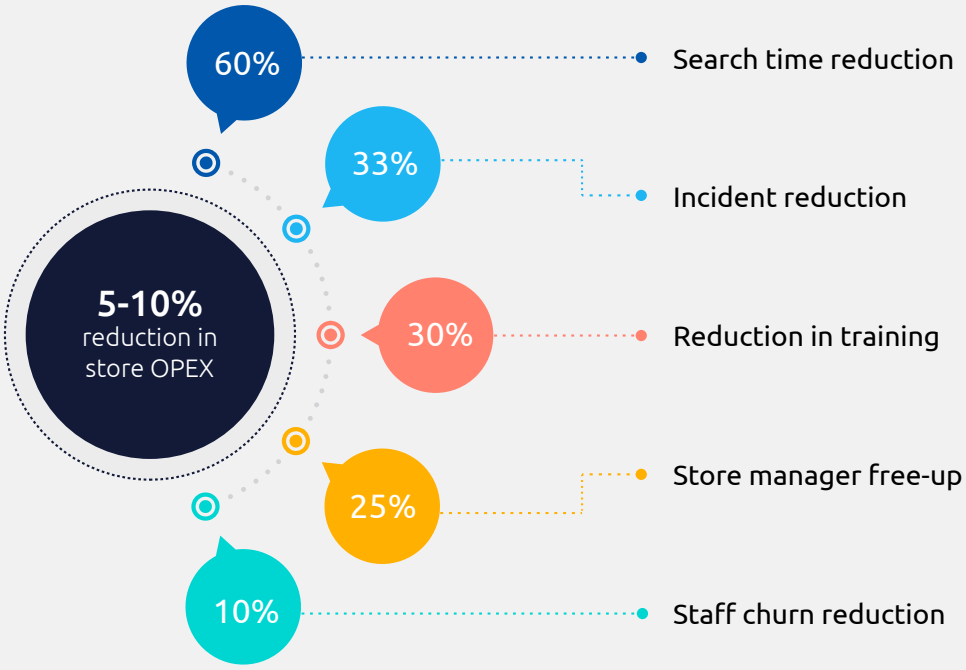
This capability is now forming the foundation for a broader set of AI-powered operational tools that support frontline teams and help create more responsive, efficient store environments.

The answer: Frontline AI from Capgemini

With the right support, every in-store employee can become an incredible performer. Frontline AI is an intuitive, voice-first assistant from Capgemini that puts real-time intelligence directly into the hands of associates, arming them with the insights and guidance they need to navigate internal systems, serve customers with confidence, and build expertise over time.

Designed specifically for in-store teams and pressure tested in real working environments, our market-leading solution activates store intelligence through real-time data, ready-to-deploy AI agents, and an intuitive intelligence layer, helping frontline employees dramatically improve productivity and increase “heads up” time, while lowering staff turnover and operating expenses.

Frontline AI: Results that drive retail excellence



Frontline AI: Ready-to-deploy use cases for the entire retail workforce

Frontline AI use cases span the entire in-store retail team and stakeholders, from store associates and managers to regional leaders. Key use cases include:

In-store associate tasks

- Product info and price lookup
- Inventory checks
- SOP guidance
- Restock task notifications

Associate experience and training

- Training and onboarding support
- Compliance training
- Voice-to-system incident logging

Customer service enablement

- Customer Q&A support
- Next best product recommendation
- Promotion checks

Store operations and performance

- Real-time data directly from store floor
- Live visibility of shift status
- Auto-scheduling
- Gamification opportunities to boost engagement and morale
- Alert notification

Leadership

- Early risk identification via predictive insights
- Visit planning
- Executive coaching assistance based on performance
- Real-time insights to drive operations, strategy and investments

Frontline AI: 4 key components to enhance employee performance

1 Intelligence layer

- **Real-time conversational interfaces:** Accelerators and white-label assets that enable low-latency voice assistants and chat-based AI for frontline teams.
- **Immersive experience integrations:** Prebuilt integrations with advanced technologies such as Unreal Engine and retail headsets to support immersive AI assistants and metahuman avatars.
- **AI UX design frameworks:** Design systems and frameworks that help create intuitive, effective experiences for frontline employees.
- **Retail rollout methodologies:** Proven approaches to deploy AI solutions in stores and drive adoption successfully at scale.

2 Pre-built store agents

- **Starter agents:** Starter AI agents designed for common frontline retail roles.
- **Optimized prompt architectures:** Preconfigured prompts tailored to store workflows and tasks.
- **Content generation pipelines:** Agentic pipelines that generate role-appropriate store content.
- **Deployable integrations:** Ready-to-use AI integrations with real-time enterprise services such as ServiceNow.

3 AI Infrastructure

- **Proven AI core:** Infrastructure built on a trusted Google AI foundation to support secure, high-performance AI solutions.
- **Model orchestration:** Dynamic layer uses the right models for the right agents across a broader ecosystem of AI technologies.
- **AI content development:** Scalable infrastructure to build and manage AI-generated content and capabilities.
- **Built-in guardrails:** Frameworks for responsible AI, including fact-checking, protection against manipulation, and role-based response filtering.

4 AI data ingestion

- **Secure data pipelines:** Robust and high-performance pipelines to ingest data from enterprise platforms.
- **Enterprise connectors:** Prebuilt connectors that integrate AI systems with core business applications.
- **Context enrichment:** Data ingestion that provides models with the context needed for accurate responses.
- **Real-time enablement:** Supports real-time data flows to power agentic behaviors and dynamic AI actions.

From idea to pilot in 8 weeks—Start your Frontline AI journey today

Phase 1: Pilot

8-12 weeks

3-5 use cases across several stores

Phase 2: MVP

2 months

- Additional use cases deployed to 10-15 stores
- Validate business case assumptions and harden solution for scale

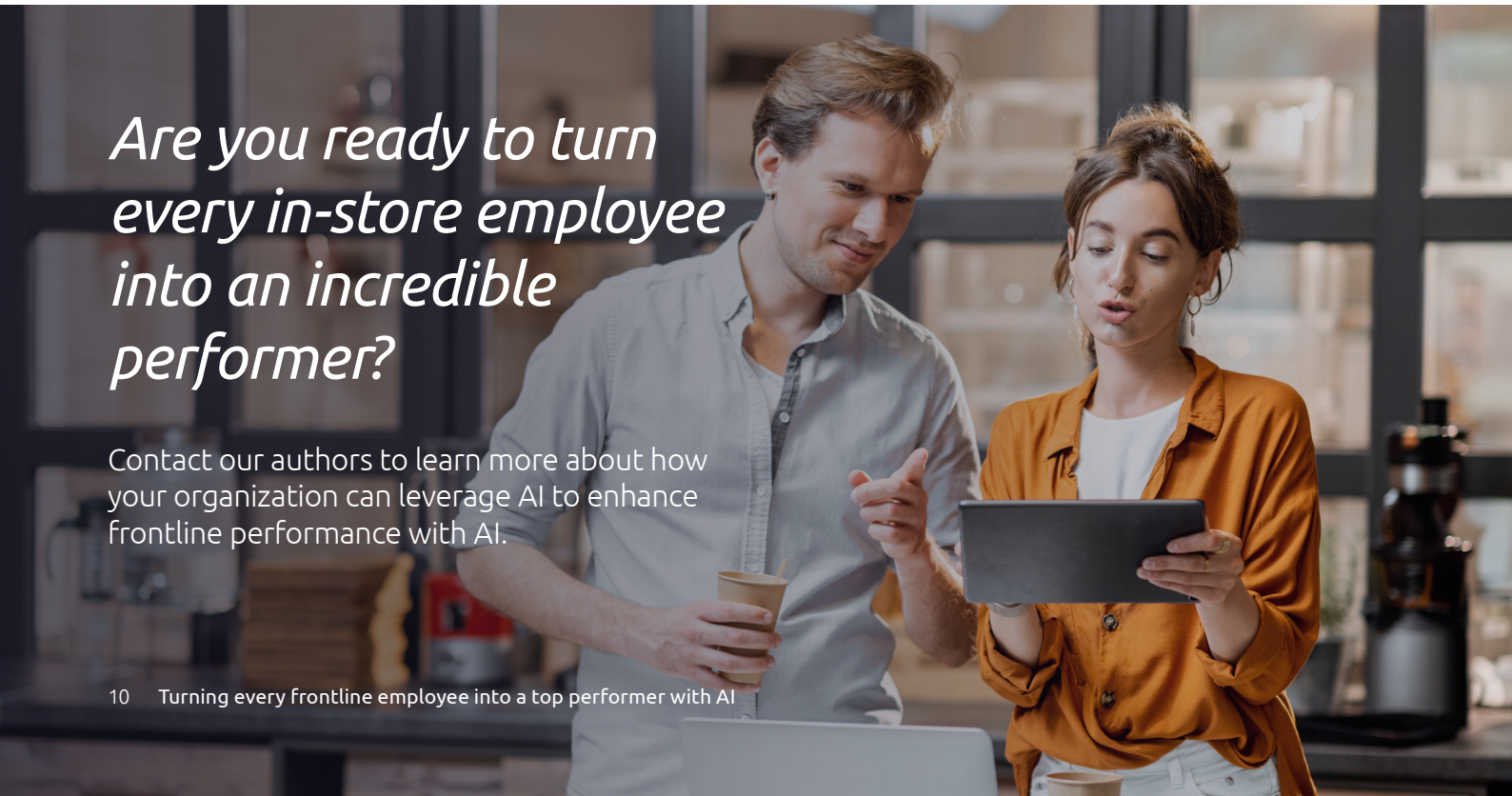
Phase 3: Scale

7-12 months

- Scale to all remaining stores
- Develop additional use cases

This is what human-AI collaboration in retail really looks like.

When you level the playing field across the workforce with AI, you elevate performance and productivity for the entire organization. With Frontline AI, every employee has access to the insights, guidance, and support they need to perform at their best—and because the system enables continuous learning, the best keep getting better.



Are you ready to turn every in-store employee into an incredible performer?

Contact our authors to learn more about how your organization can leverage AI to enhance frontline performance with AI.

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About Capgemini

Capgemini is an AI-powered global business and technology transformation partner, delivering tangible business value. We imagine the future of organizations and make it real with AI, technology and people. With our strong heritage of nearly 60 years, we are a responsible and diverse group of over 420,000 team members in more than 50 countries. We deliver end-to-end services and solutions with our deep industry expertise and strong partner ecosystem, leveraging our capabilities across strategy, technology, design, engineering and business operations. The Group reported 2025 global revenues of €22.5 billion.

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