

# BUILDING AN AI-READY MARINE DEALERSHIP

Moving from Experimentation to Effective Organization-Wide Execution

## Why This Matters Now

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping how businesses operate, compete and serve customers across industries. From automotive to retail to financial services, organizations are moving beyond experimentation and embedding AI into core workflows, decision-making and customer experiences.

In the marine industry, AI adoption is emerging in dealerships, but readiness is lagging. Results from the MRAA State of AI Usage Survey indicate that while most dealerships recognize the potential of AI, relatively few have translated that belief into coordinated, operational use.

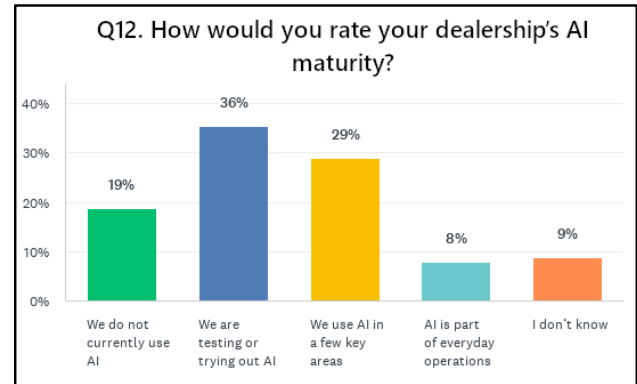
At the same time, external pressures, including margin compression, shifting consumer expectations and ongoing workforce constraints, are increasing the need for greater efficiency and smarter decision-making.

This creates a critical inflection point. The question is no longer whether AI will play a role in dealership operations. Rather, the ability to leverage AI thoughtfully and strategically may become an increasingly important component of dealership health and competitiveness. Therefore, the better question is: **How quickly and effectively can dealerships move from experimentation to execution?**

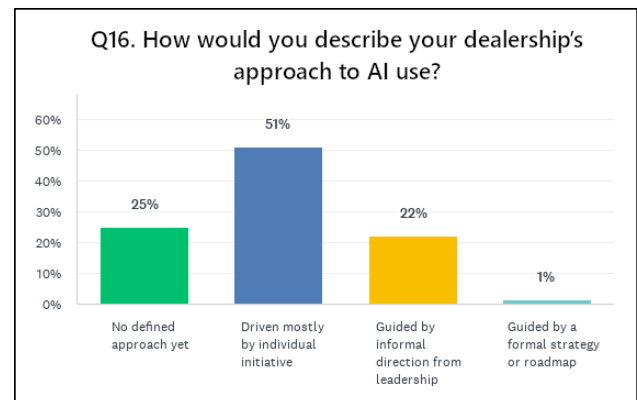
## Current State

AI is already present in many dealerships today, but most usage remains at an individual level, early, fragmented and informal, survey results suggest.

While a strong majority of respondents believe AI can create a competitive advantage, only a small percentage report that AI is coordinated across the dealership and embedded in everyday operations.



Most dealerships fall into first few stages of adoption, either testing tools or using AI in a limited number of areas, primarily through personal initiative, with minimal formal strategy or leadership alignment.



The most common applications are relatively low risk, highly accessible and easy to implement, such as:

- » Marketing and social media content creation
- » Product and inventory data development, such as descriptions and listings
- » Customer-facing tools like chatbots and automated lead follow-up

These use cases tend to support efficiency and visibility but are not deeply integrated into core operational workflows such as pricing, inventory strategy, service operations or financial decision-making.

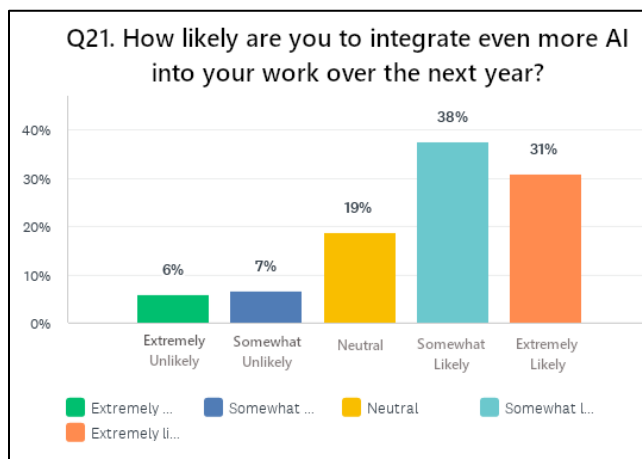
This results in a dealership landscape where AI tools are being used, but not consistently across teams; value is being created, but often not measured or tracked; and experimentation is happening but not scaled.

### Barriers to AI Readiness

While some barriers to AI adoption are technical, the primary challenges are organizational and cultural. Survey results point to several consistent barriers:

- » **Lack of internal expertise:** Many dealerships report not having the knowledge or resources required to evaluate, implement or manage AI tools effectively.
- » **Resistance to change:** As with many operational shifts, adoption can be slowed by hesitation at both the leadership and staff levels.
- » **Unclear use cases:** While awareness of AI is high, there is less clarity around where and how it can create meaningful value within dealership operations.
- » **Lack of technical readiness:** In some cases, existing systems, data infrastructure or processes are not yet well-positioned to support more advanced AI applications.

Together, these barriers highlight a key theme: The challenge is less about access to technology and more about capability, clarity and change management.



### Key Questions to Consider

#### For Dealers

- » What specific business outcomes could AI help us improve in the next 12–24 months, and how do we prioritize work toward them?
- » How do we acquire the internal knowledge and skills required to evaluate and implement AI safely and effectively?
- » What do we need to do to prepare our data, technology, people and processes so we can achieve maximum benefit from AI in the future?

#### For Manufacturers

- » What role can we play in improving data consistency, accessibility and integration across systems for maximum win-win benefit from AI-driven insights?
- » Where might manufacturer-dealer tools, platforms and programs be designed with AI to reduce complexity and inaccuracy and accelerate adoption and shared ROI?
- » Are there areas in which industry-wide collaboration around AI adoption could reduce duplication of effort, improve alignment, increase impact and support responsible and effective usage?