



AI ON WEBSITES

Where Is Your Organization on the Maturity Model?





“We should incorporate AI!”
your senior executive tells your team.

“Absolutely,” you respond.
But what’s running through your mind is,
“Where do we even start with AI?”



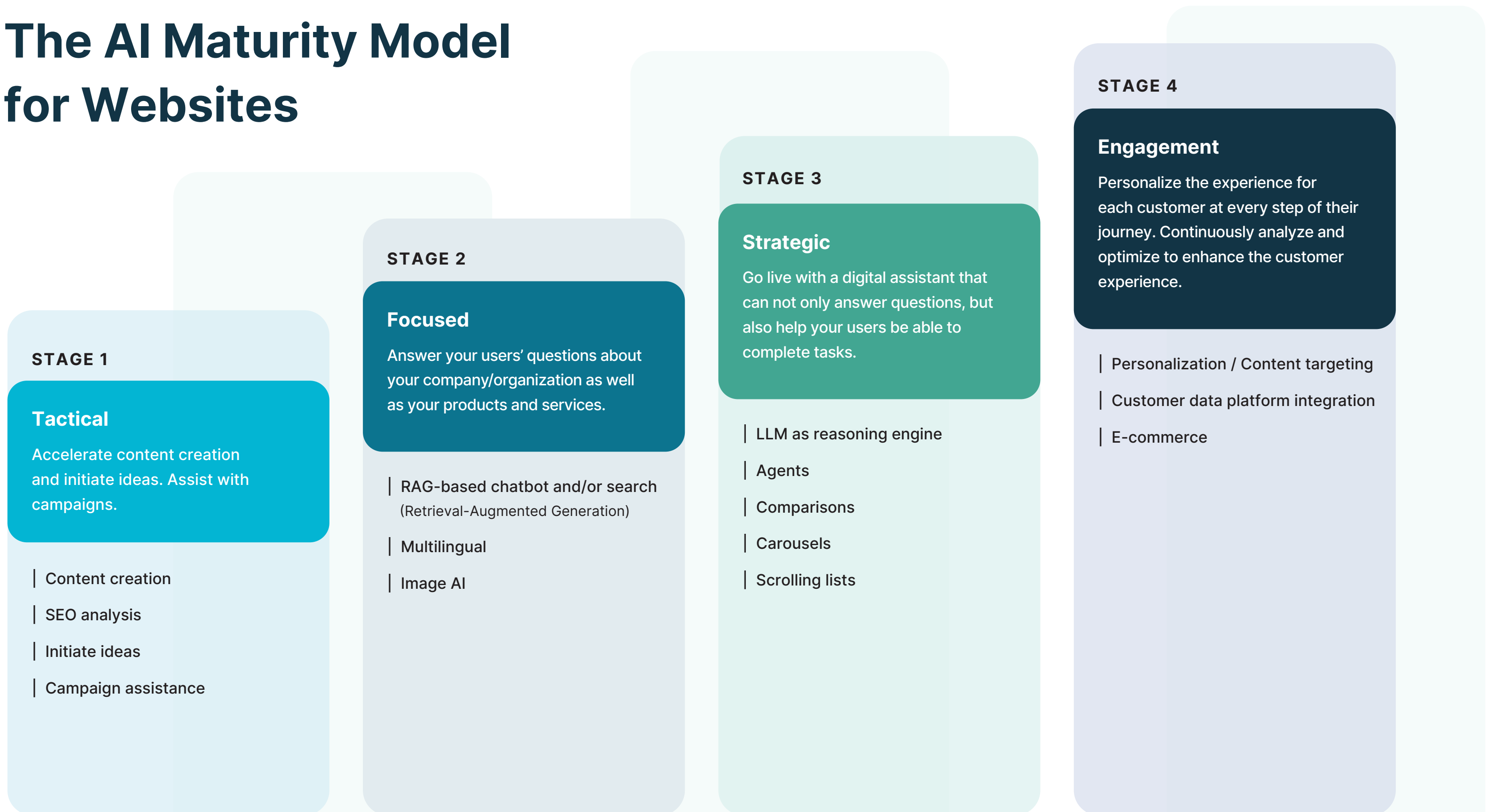
Our recommendation: **your website.**

Your website is where your customers and prospects come every day to get information and to complete tasks. If you want to convert your prospects faster and satisfy your current customers’ needs, it’s essential to answer their questions and make it easier for them to move forward in their customer or buyer’s journey.

AI can be used in a variety of ways on your website to help with this. For example, you can use it within your content management system (CMS) or digital experience platform (DXP) to aid in your marketing efforts, employ it within your search toolbox to bring users more focused results, or use it to create a digital assistant or concierge to lead users directly to what they want. Different use cases require different applications of AI.

ai12z has created a maturity model to help digital strategists, technologists, and marketers assess where their organization is in utilizing AI on their website and where it should strive to be to meet its business goals. By progressing along each stage, organizations can further drive their business outcomes and achieve increases in sales, customer loyalty, and satisfaction.

The AI Maturity Model for Websites



Why Websites Need AI

Before we go into detail about the model, let's set the stage by looking at what's taking place right now on websites.

People visit websites to find information or to complete tasks. But it takes website visitors a lot of time to find what they're looking for, and let's face it, they sit through endless browsing, scrolling, and searching for what they need.

What's an AI assistant?

It can take the form of a chatbot or a search bar on your website. But unlike the poor experience people are used to having with those, an AI assistant can actually answer your users' questions. It can also be known as a **copilot**. The technology that allows a company to go live with an AI assistant is a **copilot platform** – just as the technology that allows you to go live with a website is called a web content management platform. For the purposes of this eBook, at times we'll refer to the AI assistant as an **AI chatbot** and/or **AI search**.

The Search Experience

The search bar on a website was meant to help visitors find answers. If your website has a search function, a user types in a query and receives a long list of links. Sometimes hundreds of links. They then navigate to the first three to five links to get their answer. If they don't find it, you may lose them as a potential customer.

The Chatbot Experience

Many websites have employed chatbots to try to make the experience more personal. But using a chatbot is often frustrating because chatbots usually don't understand the question. Users are then put in a queue to wait for a human representative to answer their question. We've all been there, and if your company's website has a chatbot, the same thing is happening to your site visitors.

You may have been involved in creating a chatbot for your organization's website (or for your client's website if you work at an agency). You may have used Microsoft Bot Framework, Google Dialogflow, or Amazon Lex. If so, you know that chatbots take months to build because they rely on predefined conversation flows, also known as decision tree logic. They're intent-based and require lots of entities and training data. You have to program every potential question variation, which comes to a very long list. In addition, traditional bots can't handle changes in the chat conversation such as when users switch topics or change their minds mid-chat. And finally, it's difficult for chatbots to talk to third-party systems.

Generative AI Offers a Better Way

You're likely using generative AI (GenAI) every day, whether by asking questions to OpenAI ChatGPT or searching on Google and reading the "AI Overview" above the long list of links. GenAI understands queries and generates text to answer them. In a business setting, it can be used to help draft an email, an article, or an ad. That's helpful for you; less so for your website visitors.

But a large language model (LLM) that is necessary for generative AI, such as OpenAI GPT, Meta Llama, Anthropic Claude, or Google Gemini, can also be used as a reasoning engine in a different role. That means it can understand the context and meaning behind a request. It's able to analyze the task at hand and determine whether it needs to get information from other data sources before responding.

In other words, when you combine an LLM – which understands context and meaning – with your organization's content, you get a reasoning engine that can answer questions and help your site visitors complete tasks. This in turn leads to greater conversion rates, customers who spend more money, and customers who don't leave your website and go to your competition. In addition, satisfied customers lead to repeat buyers.

That reasoning engine can also be called the "LLM agent" or the "AI assistant." An AI assistant is like a bot that is actually helpful. It can appear as a search bar on an organization's website or as a chatbot. When a user asks an AI assistant a question that it can't answer, rather than telling the user that it can't answer the question, the AI assistant will call on different "agents" for help. Agents are tools that can access data from third-party systems and provide that data to the AI assistant (and receive data back from it). The AI assistant will then use that information in its response to the user.

Stage 1: Tactical

This is where companies are using generative AI within their web CMS or DXP. Think of Optimizely, Sitecore, Magnolia, RWS Tridion, and others. Today, these vendors are incorporating generative AI to help create content for blogs, landing page copy, titles, and product descriptions. In addition, they're using it to optimize for SEO, where AI suggests titles, keywords, and meta descriptions. AI can help in automating A/B and multivariate testing by generating multiple variations of headlines, calls-to-action, or copy to test what performs best.

In this stage, marketers can use generative AI to initiate ideas to help them develop campaigns. They can describe their product solution(s) to an LLM and ask it for ideas about who are the right buyer personas, what are the use cases in a particular vertical, or what problems they solve for those buyers within a specific vertical. But AI should simply provide a spark; it is not a substitute for human creativity!

A vector database stores uploaded content as vectors, which represent words, images, and other data. When someone asks an AI assistant a question, the database understands the context and meaning of the query and retrieves the most relevant results to answer it.

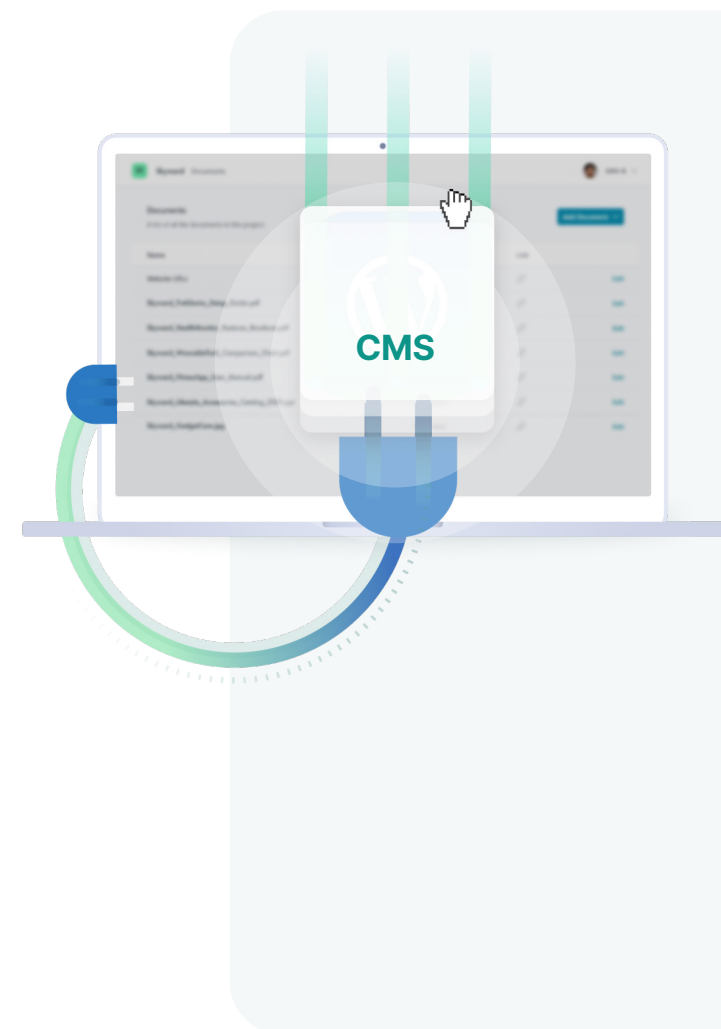
Stage 2: Focused

This is where companies go live with an AI chatbot or search solution on their website that can answer users' questions about the company and its products and services by leveraging **retrieval-augmented generation (RAG)** technology. RAG combines an organization's content (such as website content, user manuals, call center documents, marketing brochures, datasheets, etc.) with an LLM and a vector database. When a website visitor asks a question, the reasoning engine can understand it and find the answer in the content that has been uploaded into the copilot platform; it then returns an answer using that content. So, instead of developers and content authors creating Q&A pairs for all the possible questions their customers could ask and all the variations in wording, they can go live with a Q&A bot in a short timeframe.

Organizations have customers all over the world, so having **multilingual** capabilities is important. Brands in this stage have AI search and/or an AI chatbot that understands and responds in the customer's language of choice. Even if all the content uploaded is in English, if an individual asks the AI assistant a question in French, the assistant will respond in French.

In addition, the AI assistant can detect the user's language from their browser settings so that the web control (the chatbot or the search bar) will show up in the same language as their browser and the text within that assistant (such as an introduction to what it does) will display in that language.

This stage is also where companies go live with **Image AI** in their AI assistant. When customers ask the AI search or chatbot a question, they get a text response and, when appropriate, an image. A picture is worth a thousand words. This image comes from the materials that were uploaded into the copilot platform, so it may be from a user manual or a web page, for example.



Connect to a CMS

Once authors publish content in their CMS, it can automatically update to a copilot platform through a CMS connector. This will ensure that a brand's AI assistant will have the latest and greatest content to answer their customers' questions.

Whether that content is in a CMS like Optimizely, Sitecore, RWS Tridion, Progress Sitefinity, or Magnolia, or within a content cloud such as Box.com, Dropbox, Google Drive, SharePoint, etc., organizations in this stage will connect their CMS to a copilot platform.

Stage 3: Strategic

This is where organizations go live with an AI chatbot or search that can not only answer questions but also help users complete tasks.

This AI assistant differs from all the other RAG-based chatbots out there. It has features including comparisons, carousels, scrolling lists, voice, structured data, call-to-action buttons, and forms.

What makes an AI assistant shine in this stage is its ability to call upon agents. **Agents** can interact with third-party systems, retrieve real-time data, and execute specific operations, enabling the assistant to handle a wide range of scenarios. There could be agents such as the following:

Email sending agent Compose and send emails with specified content.	Google search and web scraping agent Search the web, retrieve and summarize relevant content for user queries.
SMS agent Send and receive text messages.	Math agent Perform complex calculations and provide instant results.
Google Maps (Directions) & Google Places agent Offer directions and location details through Google Maps.	Stock agent Access up-to-date stock market data.
CRM integration agent Personalize interactions by accessing customer data.	Weather agent Deliver current weather conditions and forecasts.
Salesforce case management agent Check on the status of your cases.	Date/time agent Provide accurate date and time information.
	Custom agents for data parsing Extract and manipulate data from GraphQL, JSON, XML, or other formats.

An organization in this stage could also have custom agents; for example, it could build an agent that connects to one of its backend systems such as for reservations or bookings. Organizations could also connect their backend systems to an AI assistant via a JSON REST API or GraphQL, empowering users to complete tasks through AI chatbots and AI search in ways that were not previously possible.

Let’s look at an example, with you as the customer:

Imagine you visit a hotel website. You’re interested in booking a room. You type into the AI chatbot, “I’d like to book a room for my family the week of July 20.” In this case, you can imagine the AI chatbot being like your personal concierge. It will know that you’re a returning customer and know your preferences (such as that you like water views and you always book the family suite), and could answer, “We have your preferred room available: the family suite with an ocean view. Would you like to proceed with booking for that week?” For this example, the AI chatbot is talking to the CRM agent to find out what you’ve booked in the past or any preferences you have.

If you decide to reserve a room, it will connect to the reservations agent to make the booking, and then the email-sending agent to send you a confirmation email.

Let’s say you’re a couple of days away from your trip and your two kids want to take surf lessons. You could ask the AI chatbot, “What’s the best day this week for my kids to take surf lessons?” It can then tell you the best date and time based on the weather forecast, and enable you to book that time slot.

features within an AI chatbot or AI search solution on their website such as the following:

Comparisons allow your site visitors to ask the AI assistant to compare products, services, programs, places, etc. so they don’t have to do research on your website themselves. This can save them time and lead them to make a purchase faster. Imagine a user on a retail site where they want to purchase a coffee machine. They can ask the AI chatbot to compare a specified number of random coffee machines, or they can ask for a recommendation by giving it specific criteria (drip coffee maker or fully automatic espresso machine, capacity, certain brands, and more). Or they may have already narrowed their choices down to four, so they ask the AI chatbot to compare those four.

Carousels allow you to show images with descriptions in a slider view, and **scrolling lists** allow you to show a list of items with an image and description – think of a list of theater performances, or retail products, or restaurant recommendations that you could display back to your user in an AI assistant. This makes the response more engaging to your site visitor and allows them to see visuals versus text.

Voice within an AI assistant lets your customers ask questions out loud if they prefer that over typing a query. They can speak in their language of choice and also hear the assistant’s voice response in that language.

Call-to-action (CTA) buttons within an AI assistant can be integrated into a text response to prompt customers to take action. Examples are “Book Now” for an activity, “Reserve” a table, “Sign Up” for a campus tour, “Schedule” a demo or an appointment, “Watch trailer” for a movie or “Donate” to a cause. This convenience increases conversion rates and sales, memberships, donations, and more.

A call-to-action at times will lead customers to fill out a **form**. Rather than being directed to a landing page, they can fill out the form right within the AI assistant. It then confirms that they signed up and sends them an email and even a calendar invitation.

It’s good to note that using agents means queries can be answered using structured data, unlike with purely RAG-based chatbots that can only handle unstructured data.

Structured data is information organized in a specific way to make it easy to search and process, like data in tables in a database or arranged in an Excel spreadsheet. This kind of organization allows digital tools to quickly find and use the data, which is especially helpful for tasks such as managing product inventories in retail, navigating course catalogs at universities, or optimizing supply chains in manufacturing. If a customer is searching with specific criteria, the AI assistant can leverage structured data to retrieve relevant products.

Stage 4: Engagement

This is where organizations provide relevancy and personalization to each customer. It could even connect to a customer data platform (CDP) which is a system that collects and manages customer data from various sources (CRM, marketing automation, transactions, etc.) to create a unified customer profile that businesses can use to deliver personalized recommendations within an AI chatbot based on the customer’s past behavior, purchase history, and preferences. For example, a theater site will know what shows a user has attended already and that they always go to ballets. The AI chatbot will then recommend upcoming ballets that the user hasn’t seen and can book their preferred seat.

This is also where organizations incorporate e-commerce into their AI assistant. Customers can ask the AI chatbot for product recommendations and then click on the “Buy Now” button to purchase directly from the assistant.

This stage will continue to evolve, and the AI assistant will become more like a “personal shopper” on retail sites or a “personal concierge” on travel and hospitality sites. You can imagine all the possibilities across various industries.

Next Steps

ai12z recommends that organizations:

- Assess how they’re using AI to benefit their customers today
- Identify their stage in the maturity model
- Outline their business goals to understand what they want to achieve
- Consider going live with an AI assistant on their website

Everyone wants a personalized experience, and that’s exactly what a copilot platform delivers. Instead of users struggling to find information or complete tasks on a website or mobile app, an AI chatbot provides immediate support. This leads to more satisfied customers and increased sales, bookings, memberships, and success for your business.

Many organizations are in Stage 1, the tactical stage, and likely want to move ahead. We recommend that you examine your business objectives and consider how an AI chatbot and/or AI search solution on your website could move your prospects and clients forward in their journeys.

Technology evolves quickly, so it’s important to work with a company that can keep up. In going live with an AI assistant, consider a copilot platform that has more capabilities than just RAG technology, offers additional features and out-of-the-box agents, and continues to bring new technology to market.

To see a live demo of ai12z’s Copilot Platform:

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)