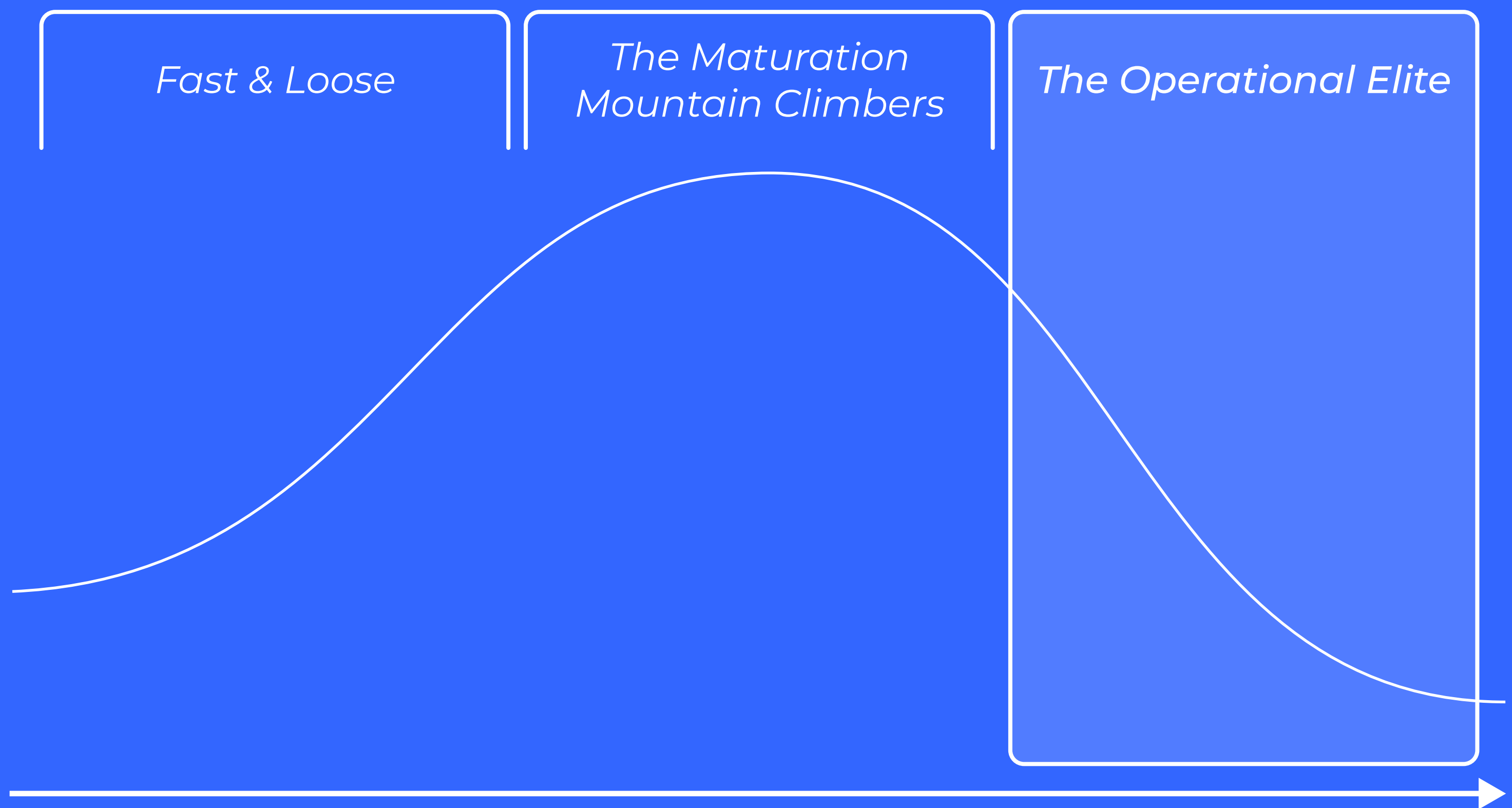


The 2026 Supplier Data Benchmark

The Quality vs. Speed Paradox & What Separates
the Operational Elite From Everyone Else



Executive Summary

Despite years of digital transformation investment, procurement teams remain trapped by a fundamental conflict: the faster they move, the less they trust their data — and the more they trust their data, the slower they move.

In late 2025 and early 2026, my team conducted a proprietary analysis of nearly 70 procurement organizations. It revealed a critical "Productivity Paradox." Organizations currently using AI to assist with supplier onboarding often experience slower onboarding times than those that don't. The explanation is simple: AI applied to a broken data foundation creates friction, not velocity. Garbage in, garbage out.

But a small, elite group of organizations has broken through. These teams achieve both high speed and high data quality simultaneously — we call these teams the "Operational Elite" — through a fundamentally different approach to supplier data management.

This report maps the path from where most teams are today to where the Operational Elite already operate — and shows you exactly what it takes to join them.

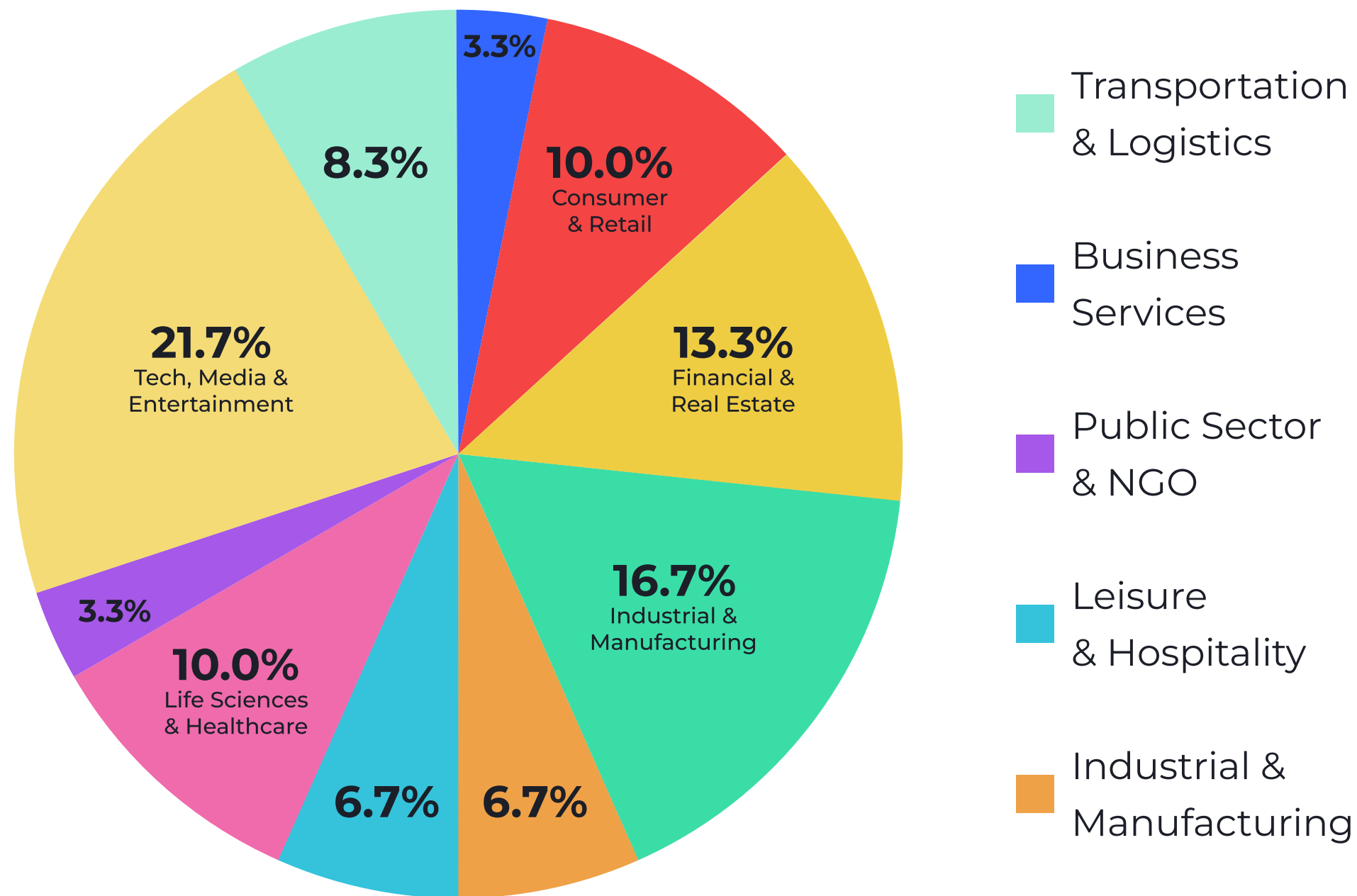


Conrad Smith
Co-Founder & CEO of Graphite

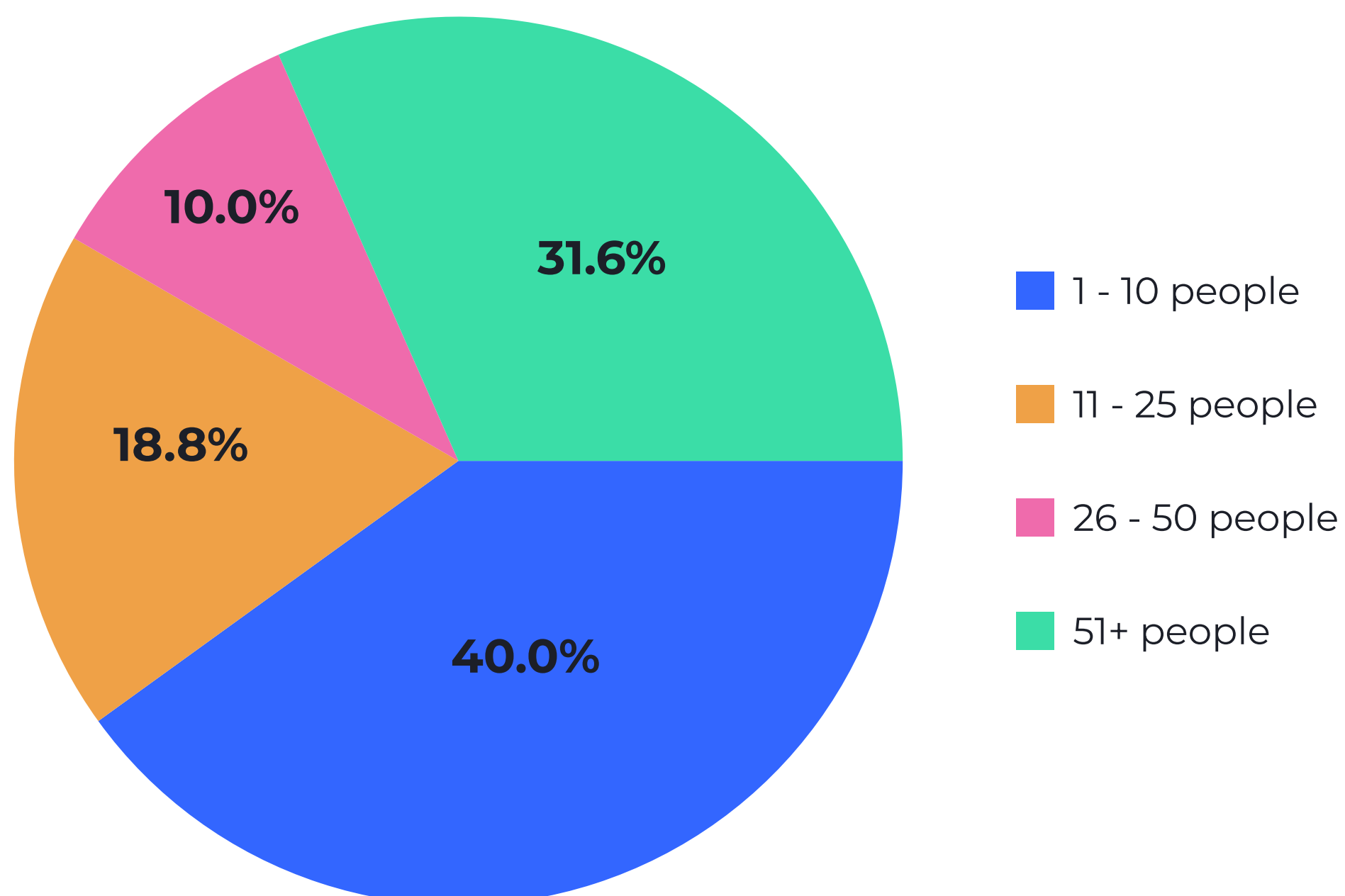
Methodology

This report draws on a survey of nearly 70 procurement organizations across North America and Europe. The data paints a clear picture: most procurement teams are drowning in manual work and don't trust their own data.

Respondent Profile



Team Size



Notable Benchmarks

47%

of respondents rate their data quality confidence as “neutral” or lower.

18.8

days average onboarding time — but the range spans from under 3 days to over 91.

8.14

hours/week spent on onboarding tasks alone.

8.89

hours/week spent fielding supplier questions.

For nearly half the market, the foundation required for advanced digital transformation — clean, reliable data — simply isn't there.

Chapter 2: The Cost of Bad Data

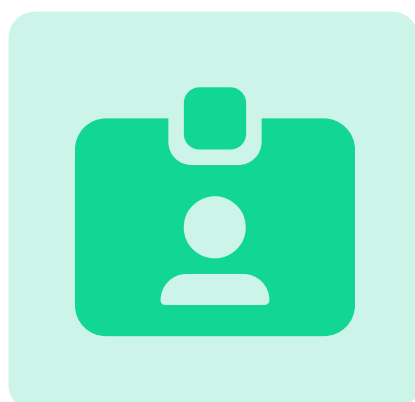
To understand why procurement teams are stuck, we looked at where the pain actually lives — from the team's perspective, from their stakeholders', and from their suppliers'.

2.1 What Keeps Procurement Up at Night

When asked to rank their biggest obstacles, respondents pointed to a clear chain reaction: dirty data drives risk.

Procurement Biggest Obstacles		
■ Risk ■ Dirty Data ■ Efficiency Challenges		
	Challenge / Pain Point	Impact
●	Increased risk exposure	55%
●	Duplicate or inconsistent supplier records	50%
●	Inefficient procurement or payment processes	41.7%
●	Supplier relationship management	36.7%
●	Delays in onboarding new suppliers	36.7%
●	Manual workarounds to correct or validate supplier data	36.7%
●	Inaccurate spend reporting	35%
●	Difficulty consolidating data across systems	31.7%
●	Poor supplier communication	28.3%
●	Confidence issues in data-based decision making	21.7%
●	Supplier regulation compliance issues	20%

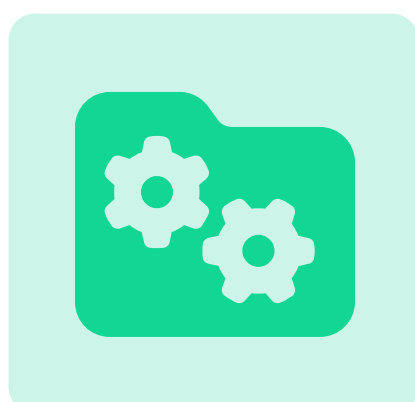
The relationship between the top two challenges is not coincidental — it's structural. Duplicate and inconsistent records (#2) directly fuel risk exposure (#1). When supplier records are scattered across systems with conflicting names, addresses, and statuses, organizations lose the ability to:



Verify identity — confirming beneficial ownership and ultimate parent entities becomes unreliable.



Assess total exposure — financial and operational risk to a single supplier gets hidden across business units.



Ensure compliance — sanctions screening and regulatory checks miss records that aren't properly linked.

In short: no single source of truth means no reliable view of who you're doing business with.

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2.2 What Stakeholders and Suppliers Actually Complain About

The data problems aren't abstract. They translate directly into complaints from the people procurement is supposed to serve.

Top Stakeholder Complaints	
Challenge / Pain Point	Impact
Slow onboarding	56.7%
Delayed payments or invoice issues	33.3%
Inaccurate or outdated supplier records	26.7%
Too many systems to manage	23.3%
Difficulty accessing or updating supplier data	23.3%
Compliance or documentation delays	21.7%
Confusing or inconsistent communication	20.0%
AI review process	1.7%

57%

of internal stakeholders say procurement is a bottleneck

33%

tie onboarding delays directly to payment friction.

Top Supplier Complaints	
Challenge / Pain Point	Impact
Requests for information already provided	33.3%
Delayed payments or invoice issues	33.3%
Slow onboarding	30.0%
Confusing or inconsistent communication	26.7%
Compliance or documentation delays	26.7%
Difficulty accessing or updating supplier data	11.7%
Inaccurate or outdated supplier records	6.7%
Too many systems to manage	5.0%
System too complex	1.7%
Too many security/privacy questions	1.7%

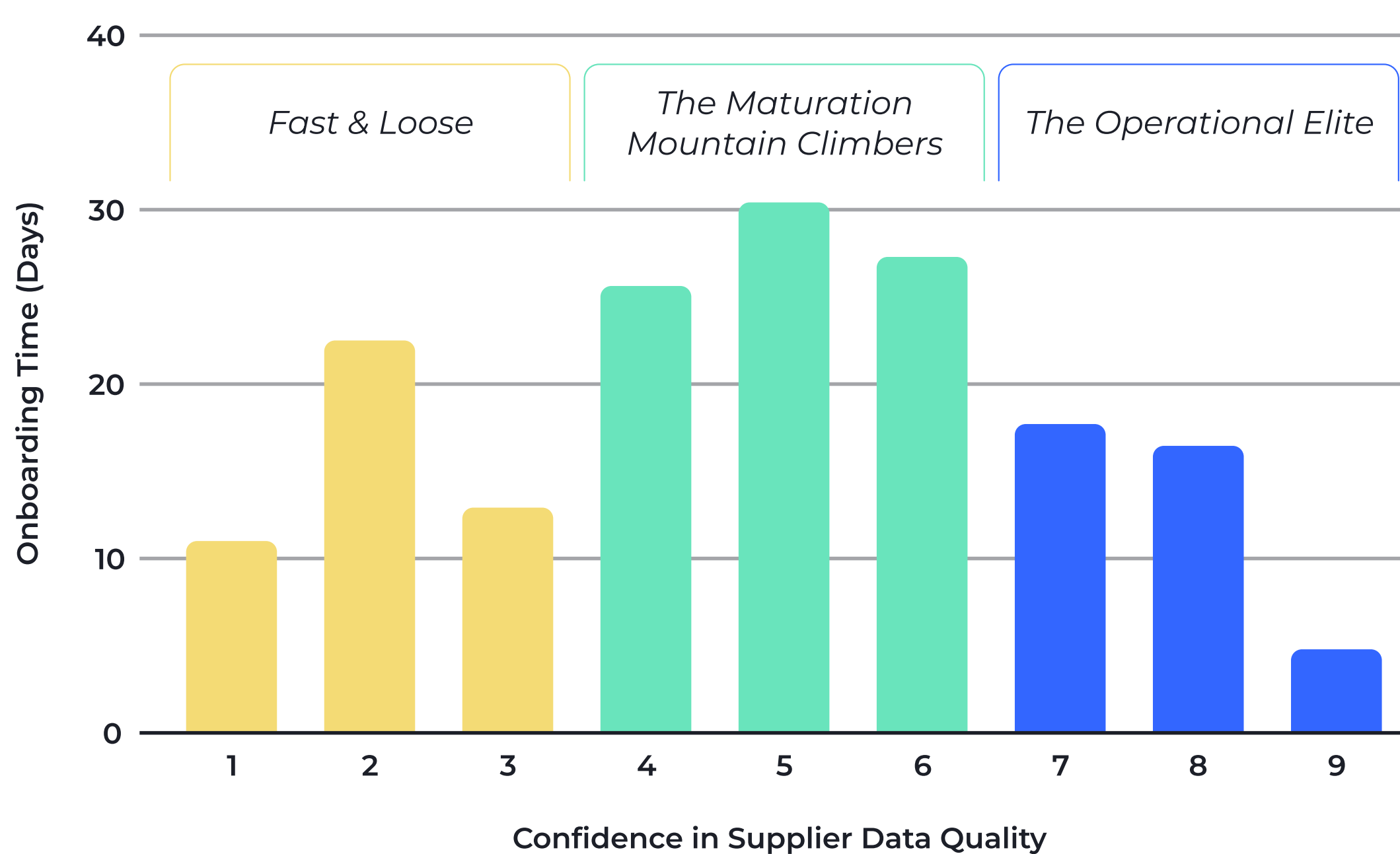
Suppliers mirror the frustration. A third complain about being asked for information they've already submitted — the hallmark of legacy portal-based processes that force redundant data entry and likely contribute to the 27% citing compliance and documentation delays.

1 in **3**

suppliers complain about being asked for information they've already submitted

Chapter 3: The Procurement Maturity Curve

Speed and security don't have to be at odds — but for most organizations, they are. The data reveals three distinct phases of procurement maturity, with the Operational Elite occupying a class of their own at the top.



Group 1: The Fast & Loose

These organizations boast fast onboarding — but their data confidence is dangerously low. Speed comes from skipping checks, not from having better processes.

Vulnerability to fraud: Rushing through validation leaves the door open for sophisticated fraud to go undetected.

Compliance exposure: Poor data quality makes reliable regulatory adherence nearly impossible, risking fines, restrictions, and reputational damage.

Group 2: The Maturation Mountain Climbers

As organizations mature, they add controls — and slow down. Data confidence goes up, but onboarding time goes up with it. These teams are safe, but they're not fast.

The drag typically comes from:

- Rigid, outdated portals that lack automation
- Manual validation workflows requiring human intervention at every stage
- Cumulative friction that punishes both the organization and the supplier

These organizations have solved the risk problem but created a speed problem. They need a way to maintain high data quality without the punitive delays.

Group 3: The Operational Elite

Only a small segment of respondents has earned their way into the Operational Elite — the organizations that have achieved the ideal state: high speed and high data quality. They've broken the trade-off entirely. These aren't just well-run teams. They operate on a different model.

What sets them apart:

Holistic data governance: Supplier records are treated as a shared, trusted asset — not siloed by department.

Continuous vetting: Compliance isn't a one-time onboarding gate. It's an automated, real-time loop of monitoring and validation.

Standardized workflows: Manual workarounds are eliminated. Technology handles the repetitive checks firm-wide.

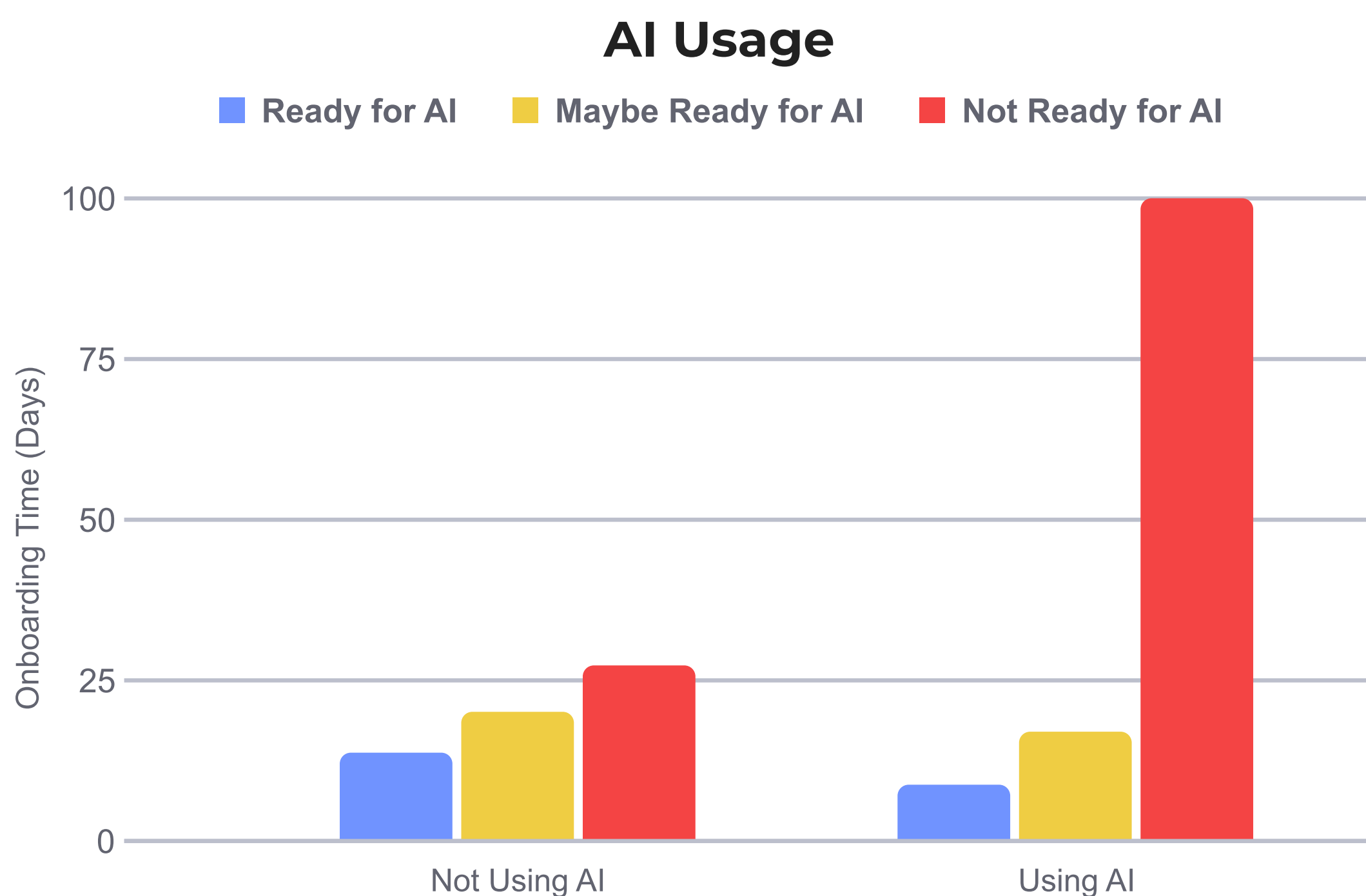
The Operational Elite achieve speed and assurance through network-based supplier management — a fundamentally different architecture from the portal model. If you're still running on legacy portals, you're not in this group yet.

Chapter 4: The AI Productivity Paradox

The most counterintuitive finding: **AI doesn't automatically make things faster.**

In many cases, it makes them slower.

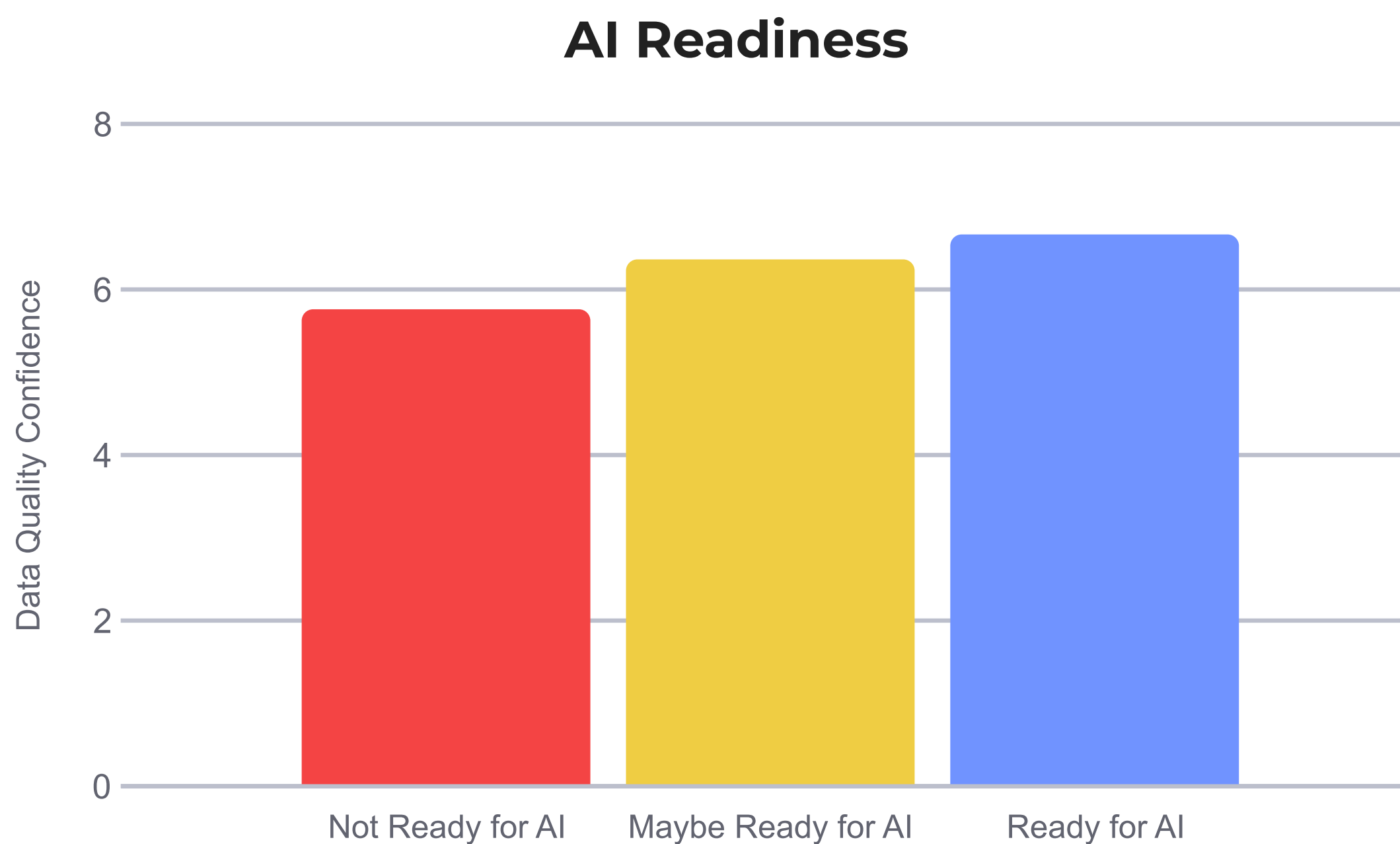
Usage vs. Readiness



Organizations using AI for supplier onboarding can actually experience longer onboarding times than those that don't. The key variable isn't whether a team uses AI — it's whether their data and process is ready for it.

- Teams that report AI readiness and use AI see faster onboarding.
- Teams that report "maybe" ready see diminishing returns.
- Teams that adopted AI before they were ready see their performance worsen.

The same pattern holds for data confidence. Ready teams using AI report higher confidence. Teams that aren't ready report lower confidence after adopting AI.



4.2 Why It Happens

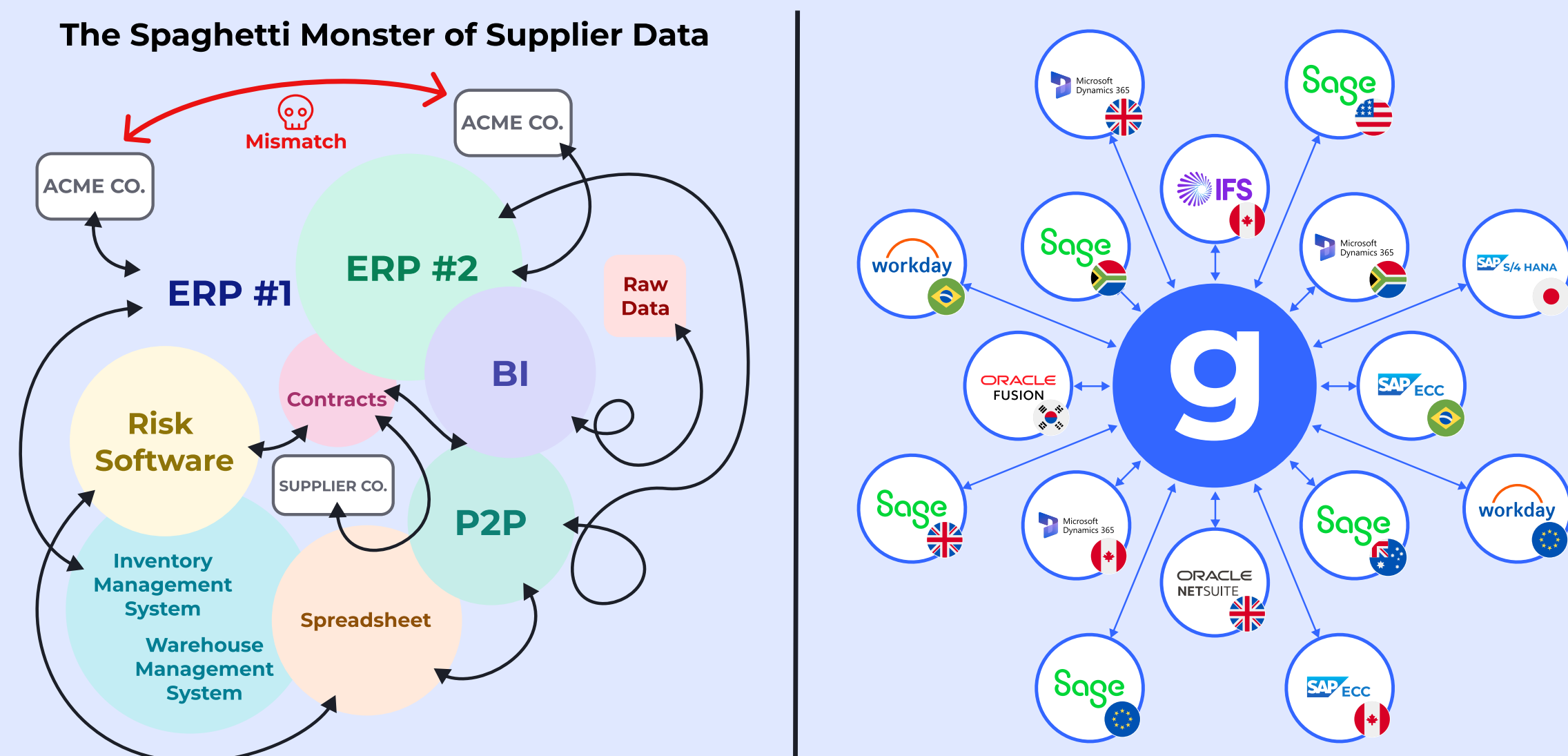
The explanation is straightforward: garbage in, garbage out. AI layered on top of duplicate records and unstandardized workflows doesn't create efficiency — it amplifies the mess.

AI is a multiplier. Applied to clean data and standardized processes, it accelerates everything. Applied to chaos, it accelerates the chaos.

How Air Liquide Solved Their Data Quality & Vendor Master Challenges

Air Liquide is a global powerhouse in gases and technology, with approximately **62,000 employees** across 75 countries and an annual revenue of nearly **€28 billion**.

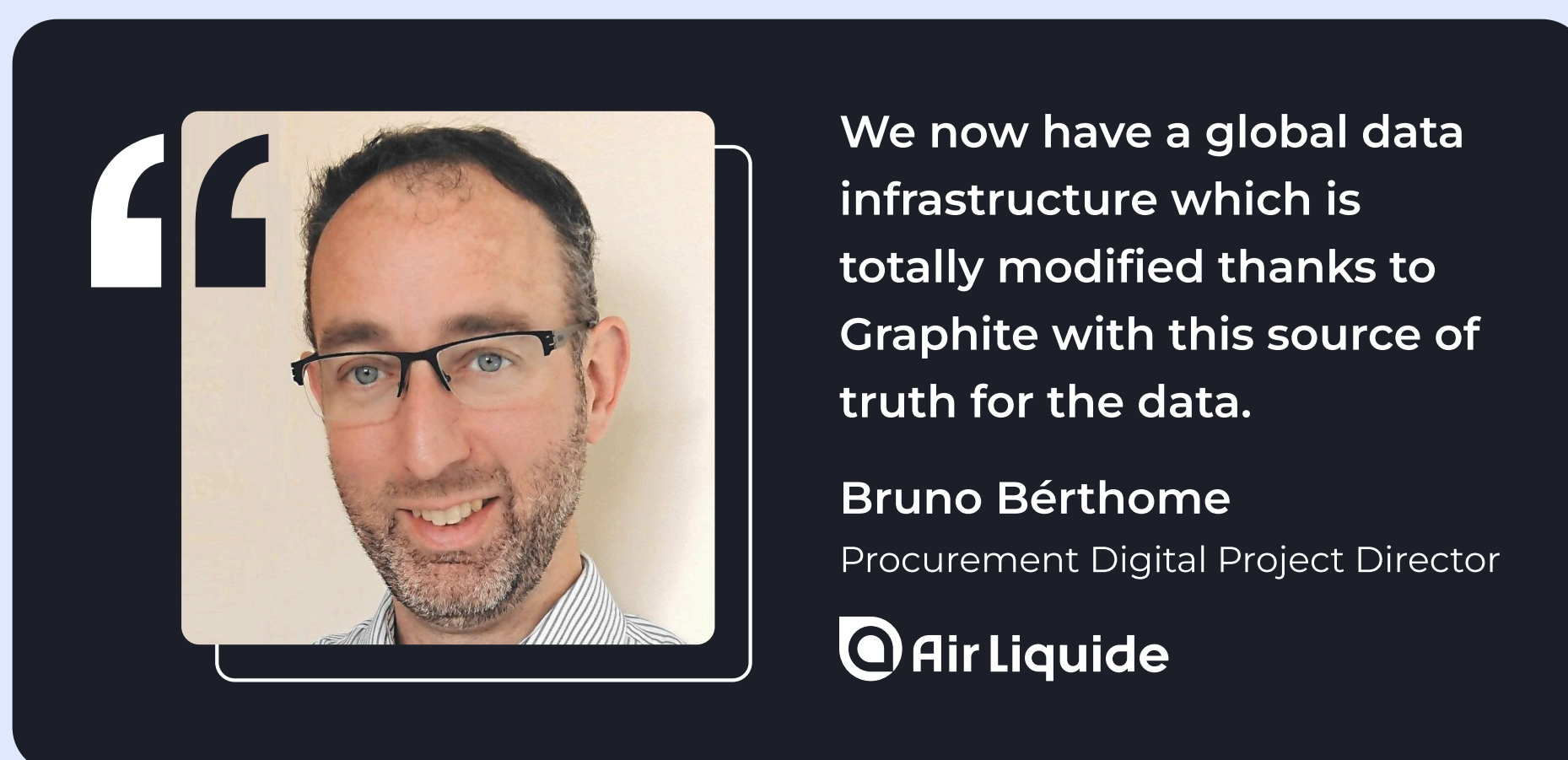
When the initiative with Graphite starts in 2024, Air Liquide's Procurement department is focused on addressing a structural challenge due to successive waves of external growth —particularly within the Healthcare sector. Air Liquide's IT architecture was fragmented into nearly 40 disparate ERP systems



In 2025, Air Liquide implemented Graphite to serve as its **Supplier Information Management (SIM)** platform. The goal was to centralize their systems and create a Golden Record for all supplier data. This was done by implementing the following steps.

1. They needed a unified workflow that other divisions could follow and iterate upon.

Graphite provided a single portal for supplier onboarding and qualification globally. The introduction of Graphite has helped Air Liquide reduce the number of ERPs, ensuring that data flows seamlessly from the "source of truth" to the transactional systems.



2. One Golden Record to Rule Them All

Graphite has provided global visibility to their suppliers by using a unique **Supplier Key**. Air Liquide now sees a global picture of its relationship with suppliers, including **Mutualized Qualifications** such as total spend and hierarchy. This visibility is now seen across different suppliers and their associated industries. Now if a supplier is qualified by one business unit (e.g., in Europe), other global teams can leverage that existing data instead of starting from scratch.

The “Operational Elite” Playbook

Based on the data and best practices from the report, here's the playbook for joining the Operational Elite.

Step 1: Fix Your Data Foundation

The AI Paradox proves it: adopting tools without readiness slows you down. Before deploying any AI, cleanse your master data with a solution like Graphite Connect. Deduplicate records. Resolve inconsistencies. The foundation has to be solid before anything built on top of it can work.

Step 2: Break the Speed/Security Trade-off

If your compliance controls are slowing onboarding to a crawl, you're in the Maturation Trap. Don't accept the trade-off as inevitable. Seek out approaches — like network-based supplier management — that improve speed and data quality at the same time.

Step 3: Measure Readiness, Not Just Usage

Stop tracking AI success by adoption rates. As this data shows, usage alone correlates with slower processes. Instead, regularly assess the cleanliness of your data and the standardization of your workflows. When readiness is high, speed follows.

Conclusion

This study is a reality check for procurement. The path to speed isn't paved with more AI tools — it's paved with better data.

The Operational Elite — the organizations with the lowest risk and the fastest onboarding — aren't the ones with the most complex technology stacks. They're the ones who solved the data quality problem first. They earned the right to move fast by fixing the foundation. The question isn't whether your organization can join them. It's whether you're willing to do the work.

The mandate is clear: fix the foundation, and the Operational Elite is within reach.