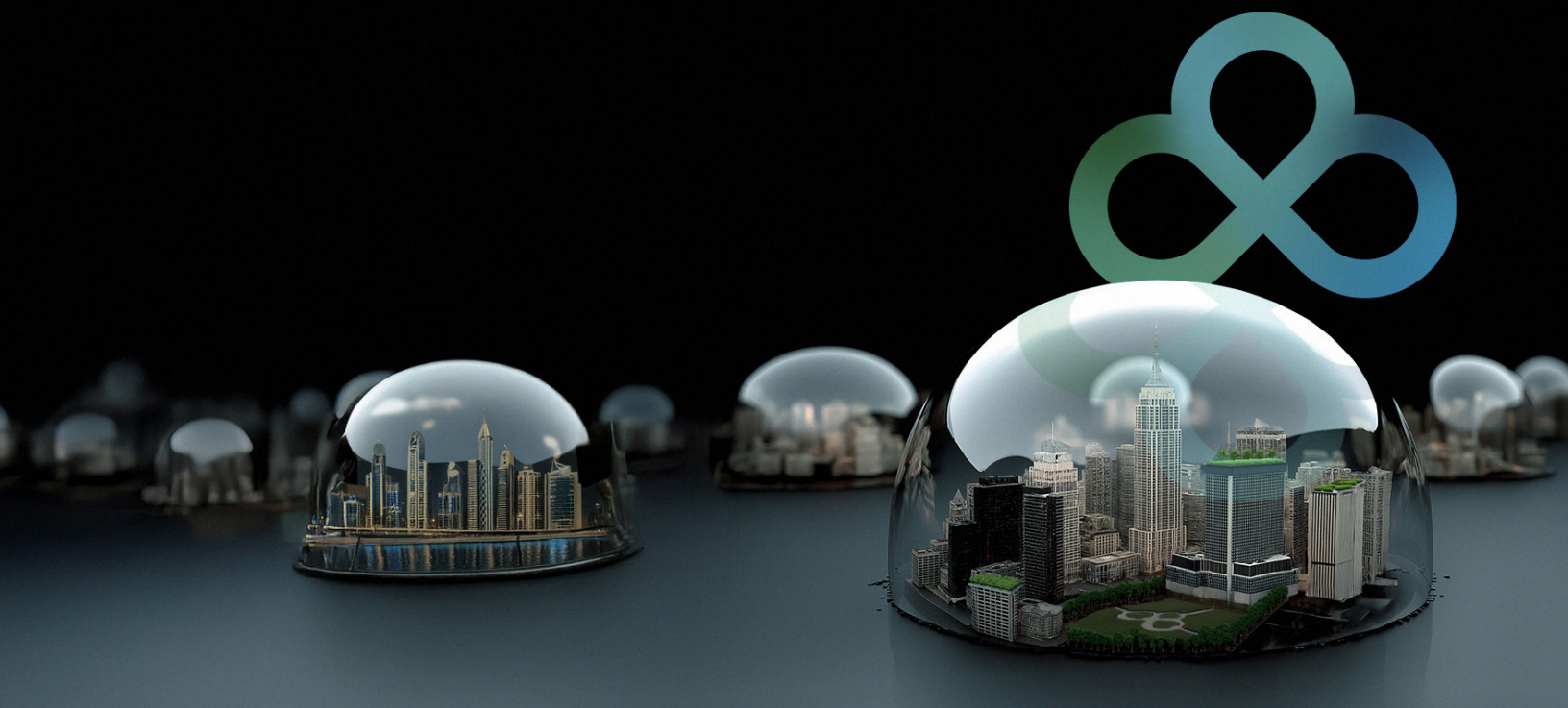
EDB POSTGRES AI

26 Predictions for 2026: **The Year AI and Data Take Flight**

From the experts leading AI and data sovereignty



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Creating a new vision of your world in 2026

2025 was the year of AI and data gravity—we've landed on a new world and taken one small step. **2026 will be a giant leap.**

The end of 1968 brought us the *Earthrise* moment, when Apollo 8 captured that iconic view of our planet from lunar orbit. At the same time, Stanford's AI Lab was publishing early research that explored how machines could understand and reason with the real world.

One year later, the human species landed on the moon. Now, if you haven't yet taken your own small step toward understanding the natural gravity of AI and data in 2025, the giant leaps available in 2026 may pass you by.

2026 will offer a **360-degree view** of what's possible—a chance to see how AI, data, and sovereignty together can unlock extraordinary new capabilities for enterprises, governments, and societies alike. The possibilities are nearly limitless for those willing to take that leap.

The explosion of data, the rise of agentic and generative AI workloads, and the global build-out of new data centers and energy infrastructure will make 2026 our era's "space race"—and not between just two nations but including every major economy on the planet.

These predictions—from experts at EnterpriseDB (EDB), our partners, and colleagues—represent a collective vision of that future. Three threads run through them all:

- AI and data are sovereign assets.
- 2026 marks escape velocity for intelligent systems.
- These 26 predictions only begin to reveal what's possible for enterprises that take deliberate steps toward sovereignty and control of their AI and data.

Across these predictions runs a single theme: We are crossing the chasm, moving from experimentation to **mainstream adoption of sovereign AI and data**. These perspectives explore sovereignty, governance, new career definitions, and the evolving meaning of AI and data for enterprises worldwide.

As you read this, I hope it inspires your own vision—your own **sovereign future**—in this intelligent systems age.

Sincerely,

Kevin Dallas
CEO, EnterpriseDB

Business predictions:
How AI will reshape strategy, talent, and governance

01 Blueprinting the future

2026 is the year to turn AI and data architecture from pilots into production. Sovereign control, open source foundations, and agentic factories will define the next frontier of intelligent enterprises—where data governance and economic performance converge.

02 Prometheus Unbound

AI and data have become the new fire—an unstoppable force for political, economic, and social reinvention. Sovereignty is the formula; platforming is the highway. In 2026, the benefits far outweigh the risks.

03 The cloud's confidence test

In 2026, the cloud must evolve from storage to sovereignty. Hybrid, distributed models will replace centralized systems as enterprises demand agility, security, and control across their AI and data platforms.

04 Sovereignty gives you wings

True AI sovereignty delivers five times the ROI of legacy systems. By 2026, 30% of enterprises will achieve it, uniting data and intelligence into a single, self-determining force.

05 Platforming becomes the norm

By 2026, nearly every major enterprise will become its own AI and data platform. Platforming isn't just a tech strategy—it's the defining organizational evolution of the next decade.

06 The two-track year of AI

2026 splits between hype and real value. Some will chase inflated dreams; others will quietly build enduring success by blending AI with human judgment, upskilled teams, and strong design.

07 The shift to reasonable privacy

After "peak privacy," 2026 brings balance. Regulators and enterprises converge on **reasonable privacy**—models that protect individuals while enabling responsible AI innovation.

08 Common sense over regulation

In 2026, governance leadership shifts to the private sector. The best companies won't wait for new rules; they'll act with integrity, transparency, and common sense to define ethical AI.

09 Dynamic skills passports

Resumes are obsolete. By 2026, AI-driven skills passports will track real experience, guide career growth, and redefine fairness and mobility across every enterprise.

10 AI copilots for managers

AI becomes every manager's partner—spotting burnout, surfacing talent, and guiding leadership decisions. The result: more equitable, proactive, and data-informed management at every level.

11 The end of "good enough"

2026 ends the era of empty slogans about "data as an asset." Leaders must show measurable returns on AI and data—or be left behind by those who can.

12 Certified stacks take the lead

Integration beats isolation. Certified, interoperable stacks become the foundation of AI success, proving that value comes from how systems connect, not how big they are.

13 We'll blame AI for everything

In 2026, AI becomes so embedded in daily life we'll start blaming it for everything—from ticket prices to misunderstandings. Humanity enters a new era of digital communication and accountability.

14 Vibe coding becomes a way of life

"Vibe coding" enters the mainstream, symbolizing how humans and AI cocreate. Prompting, tone, and intuition become the new professional fluency of 2026.

Technical predictions:
The architecture behind the leap

15 Agents are data hogs

AI agents push databases and hardware to their limits. Performance, scalability, and GPU optimization will drive a new era of codesigned, data-hungry systems.

16 Agent-to-agent becomes the norm

2026 marks the tipping point for agent-to-agent automation. From claims to billing, machines will transact with machines—creating an invisible layer of autonomous enterprise.

17 Analytics' Crick-and-Watson moment

Analytics evolves from prediction to reasoning. GenAI and agentic systems turn static data into interactive discovery, reshaping how industries understand and act on insight.

18 The rise of local models

In 2026, sovereign, self-hosted AI overtakes the cloud. Smaller, localized models deliver performance, privacy, and innovation for regulated industries and edge deployments.

19 Transactional data reclaims its crown

The next AI wave runs on live, structured data. Transactional systems—banking, logistics, e-commerce—become the core engines of agentic value creation.

20 Observability and governance go core

Governance and observability move from afterthought to architecture. In 2026, visibility and control over AI systems become the engines of trust, compliance, and performance.

21 We cook AI and data differently

AI and data blend like sous vide cooking—retaining the best of every ingredient. Unified modalities across voice, image, and text unlock unprecedented business insights.

22 The pressure for AI safeguards

As automation scales, AI security and governance innovation become essential. Reliable, trusted deployment of agentic systems defines who can operate—and who cannot—in 2026.

23 GenAI and databases

GenAI reshapes how we interact with data, but not the database core. PostgreSQL remains the foundation—extensible, adaptable, and ready to store AI's next generation of knowledge.

24 Small models, big impact

The future of AI is right-sized. Smaller, purpose-built models outperform massive ones on cost, speed, and relevance, proving that efficiency beats excess.

25 Automation gets a power-up

Generative AI injects intelligence into automation, bringing autonomy to systems from factories to finance. Compliance, efficiency, and user experience all accelerate in this new era of intelligent automation.

26 Three phrases for every organization

By 2026, the language of data changes: *AI-ready databases*, *named agents*, and *databases as gravity centers* define how enterprises organize people, systems, and intelligence.

01 Blueprinting the future: By December 2026, you should have your own agentic factories in place

Kevin Dallas, CEO, EDB

By December 2026, every serious organization and enterprise will be running at least one agentic 'factory' directly tied to revenue growth or risk reduction. Domains of focus include claims, billing, supply chain, or underwriting.

The future demands a **deliberate architectural strategy** for your AI and data. In 2026, experimentation gives way to execution; agentic systems move from pilot to **mainstream production**.

Data will become a competitive moat, not a compliance burden. With that power comes the responsibility to embed governance by design, baked into architecture and process, not bolted on after the fact.

Enterprises and governments are redefining success through sovereign infrastructure that delivers secure, compliant access to data anywhere, anytime. Interest in sovereignty has surged more than 400% in the past year, reflecting a global shift toward control and resilience.

Blueprinting this future is no longer optional—it's existential.

By the end of the year, leading enterprises will:

1. Have **sovereign control** of their AI and data (deployment flexibility, observability, and governance through a single pane of glass).
2. Build on an open source foundation to improve agility and solidify the economic future.
3. Run at least one agentic factory that produces measurable value (revenue, cost, or risk).
4. Show tangible **economic gains** from AI in audited metrics (e.g., return on AI (RoAI), return on data (RoD)).

Kevin Dallas
CEO, EDB

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02 The AI and data platform as Prometheus Unbound happens in 2026

Hervé Timsit, Chief Revenue Officer, EDB

Predicting markets is outside our boundary. What we do know is that the gravitational pull of AI and data is here to stay, because it clearly has deep and well-perceived political, economic, and social value.

These forces will continue to fuel the rise of AI and data platforming, the essential infrastructure—the highway—that makes this transformation real. The formula is sovereignty; the outcome is reinvention. Every day, the potential of this convergence refreshes itself, driven by global-scale diversity and demand.

Yes, there are risks. But the calculus remains clear: The benefits vastly outweigh them. It's as though every day we're discovering fire—a power that can't be un-invented, only harnessed.

Hervé Timsit
Chief Revenue Officer, EDB

The formula is sovereignty; the outcome is reinvention.

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03 In 2026, big enterprises will stop trusting a single cloud with their AI and data risk

Chad Crook, Chief Customer Officer, EDB

Cash used to be the world's universal currency—until digital banking made it more distributed and controlled by the user. The same shift is coming for the cloud. To realize the promise of AI and data, enterprises will need access to all their data and AI wherever it lives, without being locked into a single "cloud wallet."

Outages, geopolitical risk, and cost volatility are already exposing the limits of centralized models. That's why nations including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, and Germany are investing in sovereign and hybrid architectures to secure their digital economies.

By 2026, we expect a decisive shift back toward more predictable CapEx in a new kind of CFO–CIO conversation about agility, control, and trust—and away from overdependence on any single hyperscaler. By then, we anticipate that a majority of our customers will have moved their most sensitive AI workloads to sovereign or hybrid architectures.

The new value equation requires enterprises to hypermodernize their data, applications, and foundational AI and data factories.

2026 is the year enterprises take back control of their AI and data foundations so they can finally deliver on AI's promise, on their own terms.

Chad Crook
Chief Customer Officer, EDB

The new value equation requires enterprises to hypermodernize their data, applications, and foundational AI and data factories.

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04 Sovereignty gives you wings: 2026 is the year to achieve the power of flight with your AI ... or you could be too late

Michael Gale, *Wall Street Journal* and Amazon best-selling author on digital transformation, host of EDB's *AI & Data Horizons* podcast, and CMO at EDB

The evolution of powered flight was incredibly fast, from the first fragile flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903 to the world's first commercial airline, the St. Petersburg–Tampa Airboat Line, just 11 years later.

The story of AI and data sovereignty is moving at a similar pace. In 2024, it was a fringe conversation. By 2025, it had become a prescient board-level issue as enterprises raised flags around geopolitical challenges, compliance demands, and a growing awareness of what true sovereignty makes possible.

Enterprises that brought their AI and data into the same gravitational field—secure, accessible, and fully under their control—discovered remarkable advantages. Only one in seven (13%) achieved this in 2025, yet these early winners saw five times the ROI of their peers.

In 2026, that number will rise sharply. We expect that close to 30% of enterprises will achieve true sovereignty, where AI and data operate together as a single, intelligent, self-determining force. If you haven't yet made sovereignty a strategic priority, expect that nearly one-third of your competitors will have taken flight while you're still on the runway.

Michael Gale
Chief Marketing Officer, EDB

If you haven't yet made sovereignty a strategic priority, expect that nearly one-third of your competitors will have taken flight while you're still on the runway.

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05 Platforming becomes the norm, not the exception, in 2026

Michael Gale

Globally, 97% of major enterprises aspire to operate as their own AI and data platforms within three years, mirroring the autonomy and scale of digital giants such as Amazon.

It's a heady vision, and it's shared by the C-suites of the largest enterprises around the world, from STC to JPMorganChase to Bang & Olufsen, Bostik, Aviva India, Santander Bank, and Zuellig Pharma. The full list is long—of a total of 134,000 major enterprises, more than 132,000 of them hold that goal.

We predict that, in 2026, one of the most common questions around boardroom tables will be not if but how these enterprises are going to become their own AI and data platforms. This platform evolution is likely the number-one or number-two request from the board to the CTO, CIO, CDO, and all those who bridge business and technology functions. True platforming demands openness, adaptability, and vision. It's not just a technical architecture; it's an organizational evolution, and those who master it will define the competitive landscape of the next decade.

06 The two-track year of AI—where exuberance meets execution

Faisal Hoque, founder of Shadoka and NextChapter, #1 *Wall Street Journal* best-selling author of *Reinvent*, *Transcend*, and more

2026 will be the year of "two-track AI."

On one track, irrational exuberance will create multiple layers of bubbles. There will be inflated company valuations, unreasonable vendor hype about products, and massive spending on AI infrastructure. How, when, and with what effect those bubbles pop will be fundamentally unpredictable.

On the other track, companies will quietly go about the practical business of delivering real value with this new technology. But AI itself won't be the major business differentiator here—the technology will tend to create uniformity across offerings. The real advantages will accrue to those businesses that focus on the organizational design needed to stand out in the market.

Successful AI implementers will empower and upskill their middle management layer instead of seeking to remove it. They will stand up new hybrid roles that blend innovation, transformation, and human judgment with tech capabilities. And they will treat AI as an augmentation that can help solve old problems in fields such as knowledge management, rather than as a panacea that will replace everything that has gone before.

Faisal Hoque
Founder of Shadoka and NextChapter

Successful AI implementers will empower and upskill their middle management layer instead of seeking to remove it.

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07 Breaking down traditional notions of data privacy: The shift from peak to reasonable privacy becomes real in 2026

Rob Feldman, Chief Legal Officer, EDB

For the last 20 years, regulators have built increasingly intricate walls around data privacy—a worthy goal, to be sure. But in the age of AI, where data is created and consumed at maximum volume and speed, those walls are bound to crack under the pressure of innovation.

The question for 2026 is, "How will we navigate the twin imperatives of privacy protection and the promise of AI innovation?"

The answer is that we've achieved "peak privacy," which will now swing back like a pendulum to reasonable privacy, due to the forces of AI.

In many ways, the American privacy regime has advantages over the privacy frameworks painstakingly developed by European regulators. Think of it like the early internet: Europe wrote the protocols, America built the platforms—and the U.S won the economic game.

Rob Feldman
Chief Legal Officer, EDB

The future isn't about dismantling privacy; it's about evolving it to keep pace with intelligence itself.

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The future isn't about dismantling privacy; it's about evolving it to keep pace with intelligence itself. Anonymization, legitimate business purpose, and data security will lead the tsunami, triggered by the tectonic shift introduced by the advent and power of AI.

08 Commonsense approaches eat regulatory solutions for lunch: The private sector's defining test

Rob Feldman

Two hundred years ago, farmers laughed at the idea of closing the barn door after the horse had bolted. Today, I'm sure, regulators are feeling something similar as they watch individuals and businesses rapidly adopt AI technologies.

There are plenty of existing regulatory regimes that provide clear guidance for those building and adopting AI technologies: Respect intellectual property, safeguard privacy, confront bias, and never outsource judgment to a machine. These are the moral and operational baselines that smart organizations already follow.

Eventually, regulators will codify them. But by then, the leaders will have moved on—building intelligent, ethical systems guided less by compliance checklists and more by **common sense**, **curiosity**, and **courage**.

The lesson is simple: Don't wait for permission to be responsible. The future of AI governance will be written not in statutes but in how we choose to act now.

09 Dynamic skills passports will replace resumes and job descriptions

Einav Lavi, Chief Human Resources Officer, EDB

In the last 75 years, most people worked 1.5 careers across some 5 to 10 organizations. That is a world we are rapidly leaving. By 2050, 60%–80% of today's jobs will be automated. We each may have 20 to 30 roles in potentially 10 or more organizations. Keeping and re-skilling people on an ongoing basis will be the new currency for success.

By 2026, we expect every major enterprise to shift from static resumes and job descriptions to dynamic, AI-generated skills passports that are continuously updated based on real work: projects, achievements, certifications, peer feedback, and on-the-job learning.

The impact of what this shift unlocks is profound: AI will proactively match employees to internal roles, stretch assignments, and create learning paths before a manager ever starts the traditional hiring process. Opportunity will be driven by skills and impact, not visibility or bias.

For HR, this will reshape mobility, succession, and workforce planning. For employees, it will unlock transparency and fairness.

Einav Lavi
Chief Human Resources Officer, EDB

By 2026, leading organizations will shift from static resumes and job descriptions to dynamic, AI-generated skills passports that are continuously updated based on real work.

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But governance will matter. Employees will expect control over what data is captured, how it's interpreted, and who can access it. The companies that get this right will build a culture where every employee can see a future, not just a job.

10 AI copilots become every manager's leadership tool

Einav Lavi

By 2026, every people leader, especially frontline managers, will have an AI-powered "people insights copilot."

Instead of relying on instinct or hindsight, managers will receive real-time guidance: early burnout signals, recognition of emerging high performers, workload imbalances, sentiment shifts, or risk of attrition.

This will redefine leadership as coaching becomes proactive, data-informed, and more equitable. It will make great managers even stronger, and it will expose gaps by spotlighting those who rely solely on intuition or proximity. Imagine having Carol Dweck, Michael Porter, and John Kotter guiding you and your teams through what will become a world of choices and learning to manage them.

However, this will only work with trust. Employees will expect transparency about what data is used and why. HR will play a critical role in designing these systems, with psychological safety and consent at the center. AI will not replace managers—it will raise the bar for what good leadership looks like.

11 The end of "good enough": Return on data becomes a 2026 imperative

Michael Schrage, research fellow at the MIT Sloan School of Management's Initiative on the Digital Economy

By 2026, executives who've long sworn that "data is an asset" will finally be forced to prove it—with real KPIs for return on data and return on AI. That accountability gap between what leaders say and what they measure will close fast, exposing just how much value leaks out through imitation without introspection.

Forward-thinking organizations will operationalize virtuous cycles, aligning self-awareness (what they must attend to) with situational awareness (what's emerging next).

Simple examples—recording meetings, interrogating transcripts, synthesizing decisions, and auto-drafting the next agenda—will shift from novelty to norm, delivering outsized productivity.

Michael Schrage
Research Fellow, MIT

Forward-thinking organizations will operationalize virtuous cycles, aligning self-awareness with situational awareness.

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This shift will reveal a deeper reckoning: a crisis of capability. In 2026, "good enough" won't be. The best companies will use AI not to automate who they already are but to annihilate the average—building cultures where curiosity, humility, and purposeful self-awareness drive performance.

12 2026 will be the year of certified stacks that deliver value greater than the sum of all the parts

Avijit Sinha, SVP, Corporate Development, EDB

In 2026, the idea that you can build it all yourself disappears. The world of AI and data is too complex. The speed of the shift to open source, data, and AI platforming is too fast to have a singular choke point for innovation and delivery. This applies as much to how you design your own AI and data infrastructure as it does to the broader technology ecosystems you depend on. Every blueprint for success should be integrated with certified components that are proven to work together. Major enterprise environments need to be the same.

Your AI and data platform build-out and its success will be heavily determined by your ability to integrate key components into a coherent, certified stack. The value you create will need to be greater than the value of all the parts put together to deliver it. Open source and sovereign control are your foundations. In 2025, 23% of the world already knows this.

Avijit Sinha
SVP, Corporate Development, EDB

Open source and sovereign control are your foundations. In 2025, 23% of the world already knows this.

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In 2026, the only way to deliver on the promise of your AI and your data will be to run platforms and architectures that can deliver on that promise, because their certified components integrate end to end.

13 We will blame AI for everything, from overpricing World Cup tickets to misunderstanding us

Tatum Pollard, VP, Communications & Amplification, EDB

Every new technology reaches a moment when it shifts from **exotic** to **expected**. Remember the first iPod you held, the first electric car you drove, or the first time you spoke a command to your dashboard? They're all ordinary now.

In 2026, GenAI and agentic systems will make the same leap, becoming everyday companions we both rely on and, inevitably, blame. From overpriced World Cup tickets to misunderstood requests, AI will take the heat for errors born of unclear nuance, tone, and translation.

As these systems become woven into our daily lives, we'll need to evolve, too—learning new ways to express intent, negotiate meaning, and sense emotion without gestures or inflection.

We are entering a new era of digital lexicography, one in which humans must learn to speak clearly to their intelligent counterparts.

Tatum Pollard
VP, Communications & Amplification, EDB

AI will take the heat for errors born of unclear nuance, tone, and translation.

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14 Vibe coding hits the mainstream—and it's not just a moment; it's a way of being

Tatum Pollard

Vibe coding was named Collins Dictionary's Word of the Year for 2025, joining the ranks of past cultural milestones such as *information superhighway* (1993), *World Wide Web* (1995), and *bailout* (2008). Some words capture a fleeting moment; others define an era. Vibe coding joins the latter camp.

It reflects how agentic and generative AI have moved from tools to tone—shaping our language, creativity, and daily behavior at home and at work.

By 2026, most of us will be AI prompters, whether by hobby or necessity. Prompt-crafting will join writing and coding as a core professional skill, creating new career paths and new fluencies.

As a Forbes profile of Texas A&M student Hannah Ward (2023) revealed, what started as curiosity is fast becoming a vocation. Vibe coding isn't a fad; it's the cultural shorthand for how humans and AI now create together.

17 Agents will prove to be data hogs, accelerating database + hardware codesign

Doug Flora, VP, Product GTM, EDB

AI agents won't just think fast; they'll demand infrastructure that can keep up.

AI agents thrive on context. To deliver personalized, relevant experiences, they depend on databases that can store and retrieve vast amounts of dynamic data in real time. The more dynamic these agents become, the more users engage with them, and the more relevant data they will have to store.

In 2026, that virtuous cycle will expose a new bottleneck. Systems that performed well during the incubation days (often traditional relational databases or simple key-value stores) will run into critical performance and scale issues. Developers will be seeking options that can better support availability and scalability for large "data hungry" agents, for example with GPU performance optimization.

Winning systems in this new paradigm will be codesigned with AI accelerator providers, such as NVIDIA, to provide orders of magnitude better performance.

Doug Flora
VP, Product GTM, EDB

Winning systems in this new paradigm will be codesigned with AI accelerator providers, such as NVIDIA, to provide orders of magnitude better performance.

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They will also implement query acceleration to better keep up with extensive agent queries (sometimes thousands of queries per second), often by separating compute from storage to provide elasticity, and by implementing intelligent routing of data to reduce bottlenecks.

18 Agent-to-agent is not a super spy thriller, but it could be the new norm

Doug Flora

Ninety-eight percent of all stock trades already run on machine learning. Your 401(k)? It's largely managed by machines. We've trusted algorithms with our retirement—now we're about to trust agents with the daily operations of business.

What once required a hundred global exchanges will soon happen across tens of thousands of enterprises. From supply chains to customer service, the tipping point is here.

By 2026, fully autonomous agent-to-agent workflows—systems that resolve escalations, process claims, or manage billing without human intervention—will become commonplace. In 2025, only 13% of companies were close; by 2026, nearly everyone will experience at least 10 agent-to-agent interactions each week in their professional lives.

This is Malcolm Gladwell's "tipping point" year for AI, when automation stops being a feature and becomes the fabric. For those with sovereign, secure systems, the possibilities are as limitless as imagination itself.

17 Analytics takes a huge leap from inferring to reasoning with GenAI and agentic, in a Crick-and-Watson moment

Franck Sidi, VP, Field CTO, EDB

Analytics workloads have for decades been using predictive machine-learning algorithms to build and assess patterns across huge data sources, from NOAA weather models to the complex GIS for energy. Humans defined what was logical and ML shaped it. Data was structured and outputs were data and charts. It was almost a passive, read-only world. Now, GenAI and agentic AI enable interactive reasoning with text, code, images, and recommendations in a multimodal heaven for multiple dimensions.

AI workloads will integrate seamlessly into CI/CD pipelines, transforming analytics from a linear process into a three-dimensional exploration. What once felt like reading data will now feel like discovering it.

It's a modern Crick-and-Watson moment: All the data has been here, but only now can we perceive its double helix—its living, connected form.
The combination of GenAI and agentic reasoning will redefine analytics in 2026, opening a new century of discovery for data-driven industries.

Franck Sidi
VP, Field CTO, EDB

What once felt like reading data will now feel like discovering it.

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18 The most important breakthroughs in 2026 will come from sovereign/local models, not monolithic cloud LLMs

Benjamin Anderson, SVP Technology/CTO Cloud, EDB

In 2026, the frontier of AI will expand from **only** massive cloud-hosted models to a mix of sovereign, self-hosted systems and cloud-native AI.

While 2025 saw significant growth in cloud-hosted models, excelling in agentic workflows and coding, 2026 will be the year local models (e.g., Llama, DeepSeek) catch up in capability to become true production peers.

This advancement will dramatically improve the cost/benefit of self-hosting smaller models and unlock a new frontier of agentic workloads currently hindered by the cost and limitations of relying on large providers such as OpenAI or Claude.

Specifically, regulated industries such as banks and healthcare, alongside businesses demanding edge deployments, will finally be able to leverage highly capable, self-hosted AI agents—while still integrating with cloud-hosted LLMs where they make sense—driving a massive wave of new and interesting applications.

Benjamin Anderson
SVP Technology/
CTO Cloud, EDB

The frontier of AI expand from only massive cloud-hosted models to a mix of sovereign, self-hosted systems and cloud-native AI.

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19 In 2026, transactional data will reclaim its crown as the most valuable asset for AI

Jozef de Vries, Chief Product Engineering Officer, EDB

After a few years dominated by unstructured data and RAG-powered creativity, 2026 will mark the return of transactional data as AI's most valuable asset.

While 2024's generative AI explosion was fueled by unstructured data (the backbone of RAG and initial LLMs), the next wave is driven by agentic workflows and unified MCP interfaces into everything.

As the industry masters the safe and secure integration of agents with core transactional systems (e-commerce, banking, logistics), economic value will concentrate there.

Providing AI agents access to live data in structured transactional databases—enabling them to act rather than just answer—is where the significant financial and operational gains will be realized.

Jozef de Vries
Chief Product Engineering Officer, EDB

2026 will mark the return of transactional data as AI's most valuable asset.

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20 Observability and governance—the engines that make AI value real—will be even more essential

Jozef de Vries

If AI and data are your competitive moat, then observability and governance are the mechanisms that make that moat real and defensible.

These aren't new ideas—but 2026 will mark the first time they're baked into open source, enterprise-grade platforms, not bolted on as afterthoughts. In a world that's increasingly sovereign and hybrid, where AI and data must work in concert across boundaries, observability and governance become essential for agility, compliance, and trust. Enterprises that treat them as strategic capabilities—not compliance checkboxes—will unlock compounding value: faster innovation, safer automation, and greater resilience.

The future of AI performance isn't just about smarter models. It's about seeing, understanding, and governing the systems that make them possible.

21 In 2026 we will cook AI and data differently—we go sous vide with our data and AI

Torsten Steinbach, VP, Chief Architect for Analytics & AI, EDB

Cooking generally removes some of the power of the ingredients. Sous vide cooking keeps all the ingredients together, and all the goodness of the ingredients is kept. That is what it will look like in 2026 for your AI and data.

There will be a new wave of data insights, because very different modalities of data will become more and more compatible with each other through AI. With LLMs becoming more pervasively available and accessible in data-driven solutions, it becomes less of a problem to bridge between structured, unstructured, video, image, and voice data—and this will be automated and done in real time.

This will unlock unseen data insights for businesses. It will drive a trend and need for business owners to adopt and exploit these insights to be and remain competitive in a market that is increasingly accelerating.

Torsten Steinbach
VP, Chief Architect for Analytics & AI, EDB

There will be a new wave of data insights, because very different modalities of data will become more and more compatible with each other through AI.

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22 There will be massive pressure for AI security and governance innovation for AI-based business automation

Torsten Steinbach

The rise of agentic AI models, application frameworks, and solution patterns has sparked a lot of innovation for business process automation in all industries, for countless use cases. There are seemingly no limits on creativity in this space. But LLMs are nondeterministic by nature, and with fewer humans in the loop for business processes, with a broader automatic integration of business data and services, and with even physical AI that directly affects the real world, there is a massive need for safeguards that will allow the deployment of such agentic AI solutions reliably, at scale, and with trust.

23 The impact of GenAI on relational databases may not be what you expect in 2026

Robert Haas, VP, Chief Database Scientist, EDB

While GenAI can help produce database recommendations, its real strength lies in understanding language, not in math or statistics. Perhaps someday AI will surpass traditional algorithms in optimizing database operations, but that day hasn't arrived.

In addition, storing AI-related data, such as vectors, is a real and growing use case. Thanks to open source foundations and indexing systems, new data types and operator classes can be added with minimal impact—driving innovation without reshaping the core database.

Finally, storing inputs or outputs from LLMs requires no special support. Conversations, prompts, and responses can be stored like any other text. In the end, large language models are simply another way of generating data—and an open source system remains the top solution to store, index, and retrieve it.

Robert Haas
VP, Chief Database Scientist, EDB

Thanks to open source foundations and indexing systems, new data types and operator classes can be added with minimal impact—driving innovation without reshaping the core database.

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24 Small models, big impact—the rightsizing of AI in 2026

Matt Yonkovit, VP Product Management, EDB

While enterprises burned millions in training models that could write Shakespeare and debug COBOL simultaneously, the real work of the future will be done by purpose-built, small language models that excel at specific tasks. Agentic AI doesn't need a model that knows everything—it needs one that does its job without requiring a power plant. We predict that 40% of new AI deployments in 2026 will use models under 10 billion parameters, purpose built for specific workflows.

These smaller models will deliver 3x–5x better ROI than their bloated predecessors simply by matching the right tool to the task. The winners in 2026 won't be those with the biggest models but those who figured out you don't need a flamethrower to light a candle. Efficiency beats excess. The developer-scale, sovereign GPU pods are the perfect personification of this idea. Imagine every one of your thousands of developers able to deliver secure, sovereign AI with cost controls and maximum opportunities to create remarkable things.

Matt Yonkovit
VP Product Management, EDB

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25 Automation gets a power-up in the era of intelligent autonomy

Rob Gibbon, Staff Product Manager, EDB

Computer-empowered automation has been an evergreen topic for the last three decades or more. But given the recent advances of generative AI within the last 18 months, we're about to witness a massive advancement in systems integration—one that will transform how automation functions across industries.

From security orchestration, automation, and response (SOAR) to site reliability engineering and from factory manufacturing lines to agricultural procedures, supply chain management, and forecasting, automation is about to gain progressively higher levels of intelligent autonomy. Further, sophisticated technology integrations will simplify and streamline enterprise compliance while improving operational efficiency and delivering better end-user experiences.

Rob Gibbon
Staff Product Manager, EDB

We're about to witness a massive advancement in systems integration—one that will transform how automation functions across industries.

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26 By the end of 2026, three phrases should be common in every organization

Nancy Hensley, Chief Product Officer, EDB

1. **AI-ready databases:** Databases won't just *store* data; they'll orchestrate it across warehouses, lakehouses, and real-time pipelines. Expect conversations to shift from capacity and compliance to value creation and activation. The database becomes a living participant, not a passive repository.
2. **Agents get names:** By 2026, agents will appear on org charts and in daily workflows—complete with personalities shaped by how they interact with us. It may feel odd, like naming a car or a house, but it signals a pivotal shift: agents with identity, purpose, and influence.
3. **Databases become the gravity center:** No longer outposts for regulation, databases will become the core of enterprise gravity. For DBAs, this is a rare renaissance, with new paths emerging as agent managers, data strategists, data fabric operators, even data fabric prompters. The data profession is about to get exciting again.

Nancy Hensley
Chief Product Officer, EDB

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About EDB Postgres AI

EDB Postgres AI is the first open, enterprise-grade sovereign data and AI platform, with a secure, compliant, and fully scalable environment, on premises and across clouds. Supported by a global partner network, EDB Postgres AI unifies transactional, analytical, and AI workloads, enabling organizations to operationalize their data and LLMs where, when, and how they need them.

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