

The Builder in the Room.

SPEAKER

Matt Cooper

ORGANIZATION

Volta

EVENT

AICON 2026

LOCATION

Halifax, NS

TEN YEARS AGO · TO BUILD \$1M IN REVENUE

Time to build

2015

3.5 years

People on the team

2015

30+

Capital raised

2015

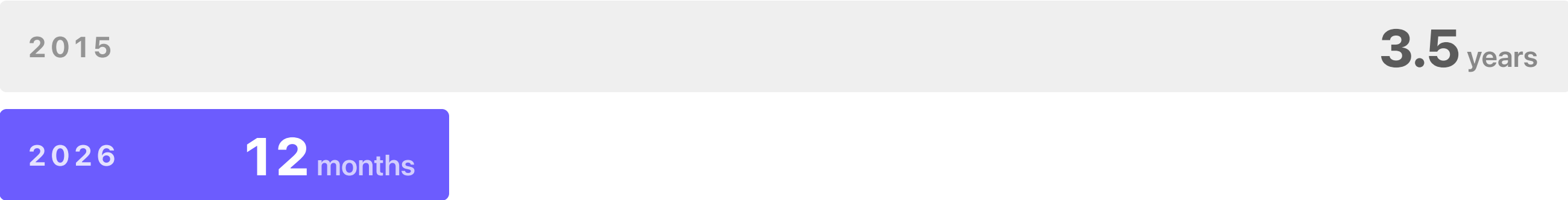
\$5M

One million dollars in revenue.

TODAY · SAME ONE MILLION DOLLARS IN REVENUE

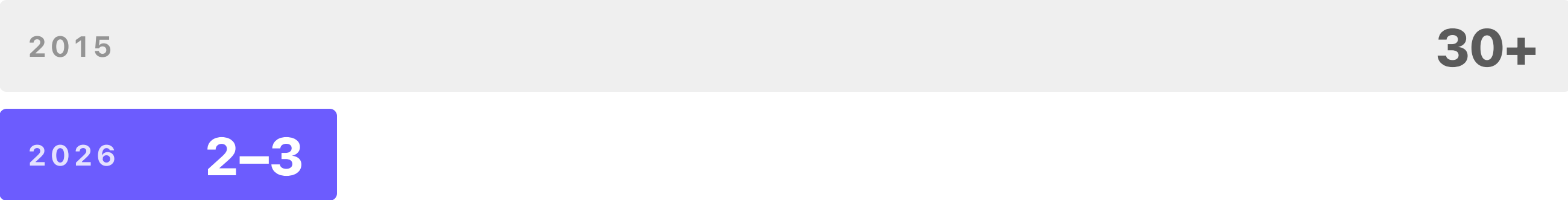
Time to build

3.5 YRS → 12 MO



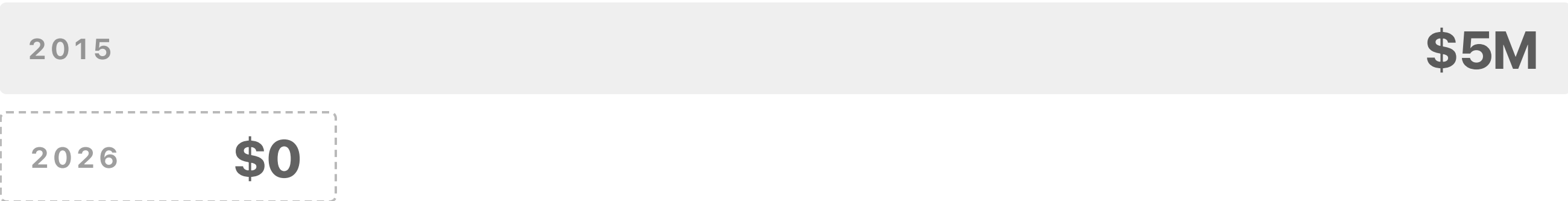
People on the team

30+ → 2-3



Capital raised

\$5M → \$0



Same revenue. **Ten years apart.**

WHAT CHANGED

The prerequisite for building has changed.

YESTERDAY

~~Technical-first~~



TODAY

Domain-first

The person closest to the problem is now closest to the solution.

How is this possible?

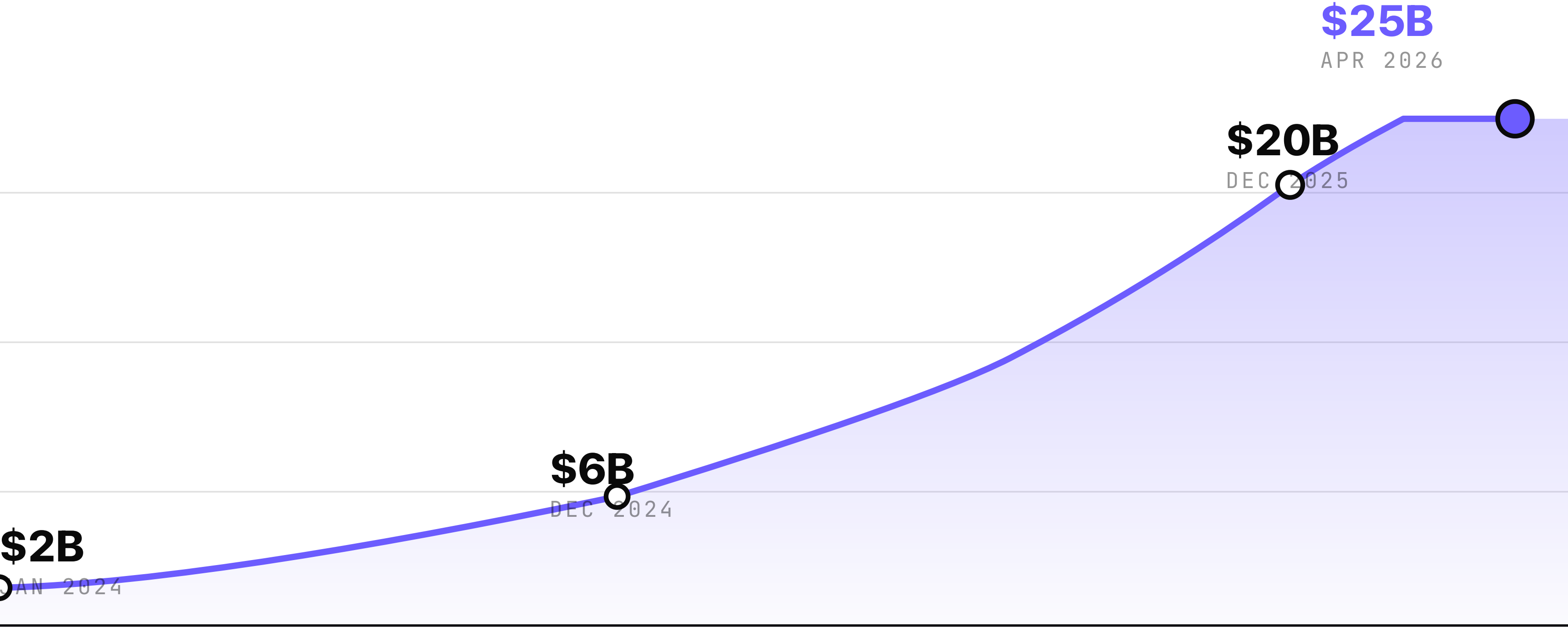
TIME TO 100M USERS · SELECTED TECHNOLOGIES



These tools weren't built for **developers**.

Underneath, the foundation.

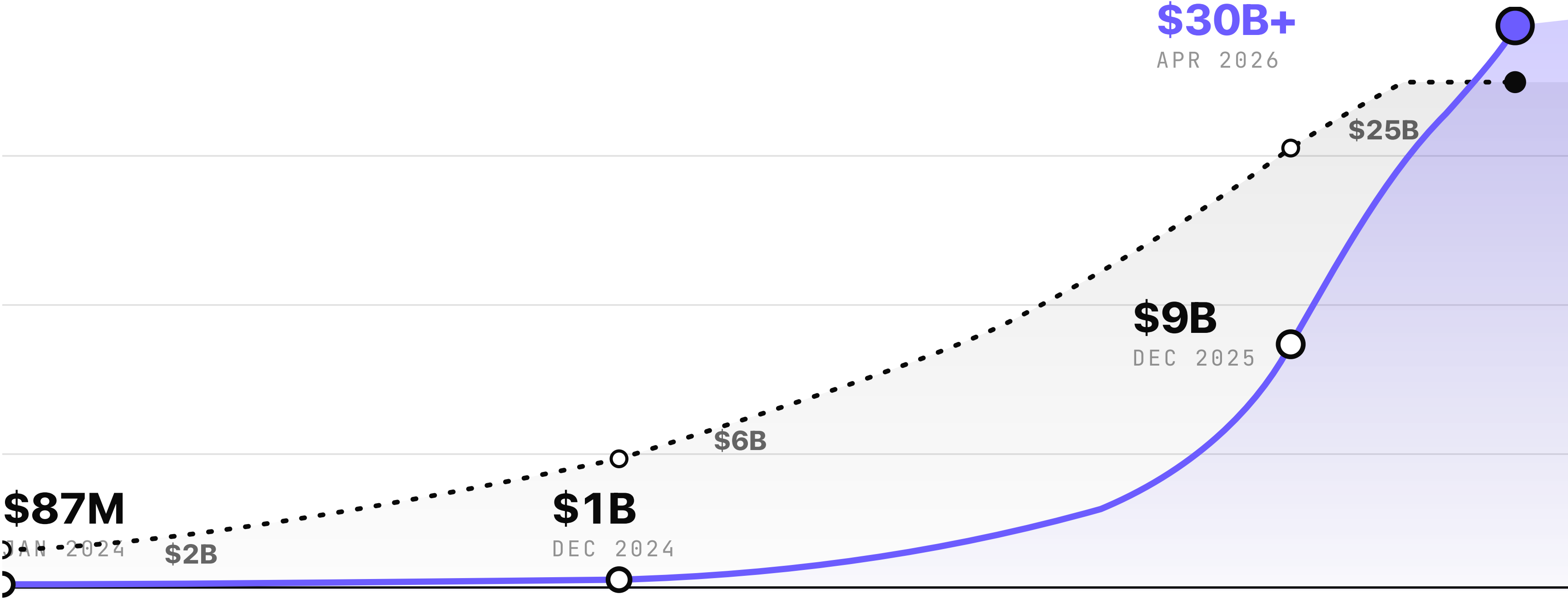
OPENAI ANNUALIZED REVENUE · 28 MONTHS



Every interface you've seen so far **runs on a foundation model like this.**

And Anthropic grew even faster.

— ANTHROPIC ---- OPENAI



Anthropic just surpassed OpenAI.

BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION

On top • a new market.

Slack

30 months

to \$100M ARR

FOUNDED 2013

Held the SaaS record for a decade.

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Mercor

21 months

to \$100M ARR · \$10B valuation
today

LAUNCHED SUMMER 2023

Founders, all 22 · youngest self-
made billionaires in history.

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12 months

to \$100M ARR · \$2B ARR ·
\$50B+ valuation

FOUNDED 2022

Fastest B2B software to scale in
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Fastest B2B software to scale in history.

Lovable

8 months

to \$100M ARR · \$400M ARR · \$6.6B valuation

FOUNDED 2023

Fastest software company in history.

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FOUNDED 2023

Fastest software company in history.

Replit

5.5 months

\$10M → \$100M ARR · \$9B valuation today

POST-AI AGENT · 2024

Fastest 10x scale in B2B software history.

The builder market didn't exist 24 months ago. **It does now.**

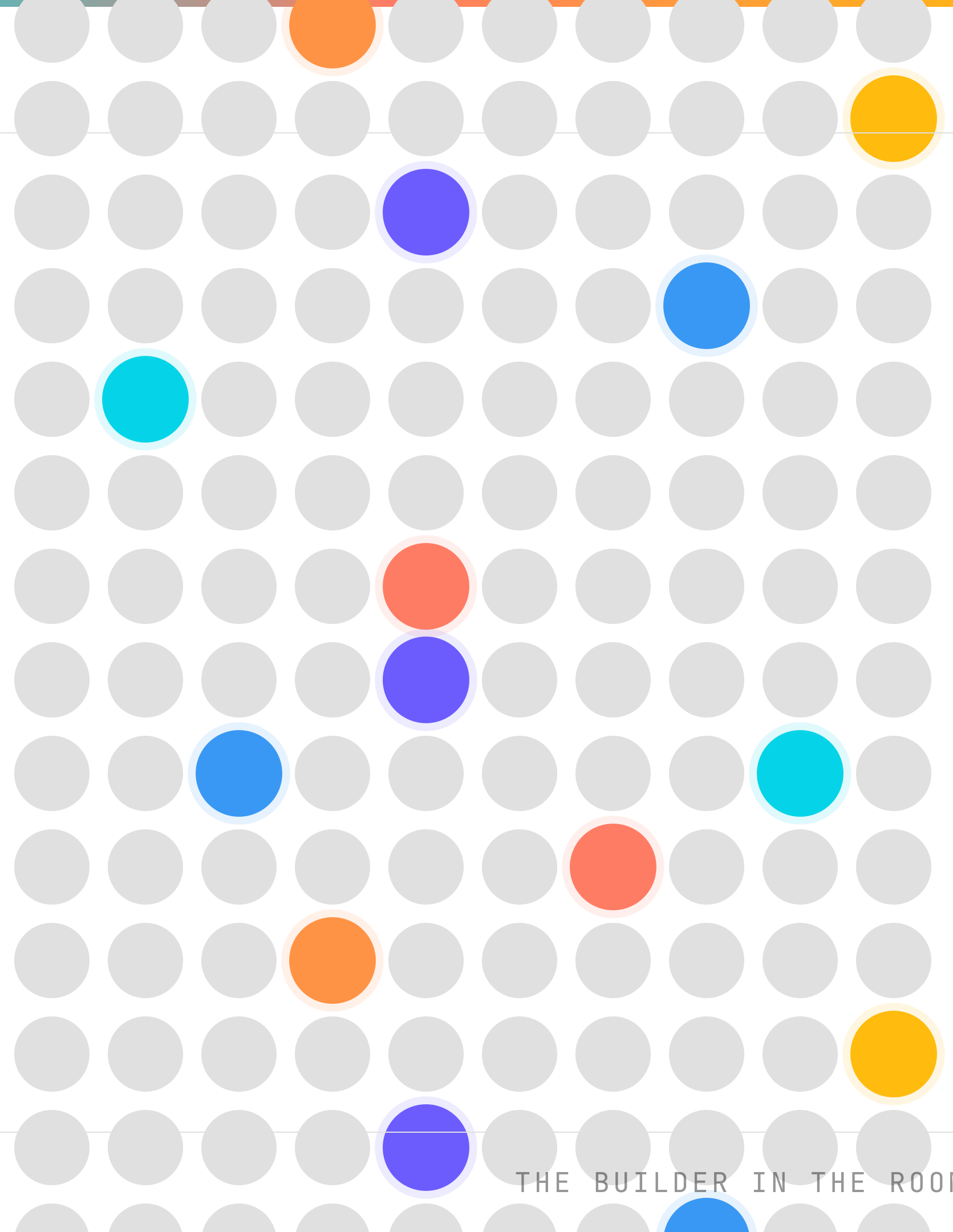
60 YEARS OF RESEARCH

2-16/100

Innovation is a mindset.

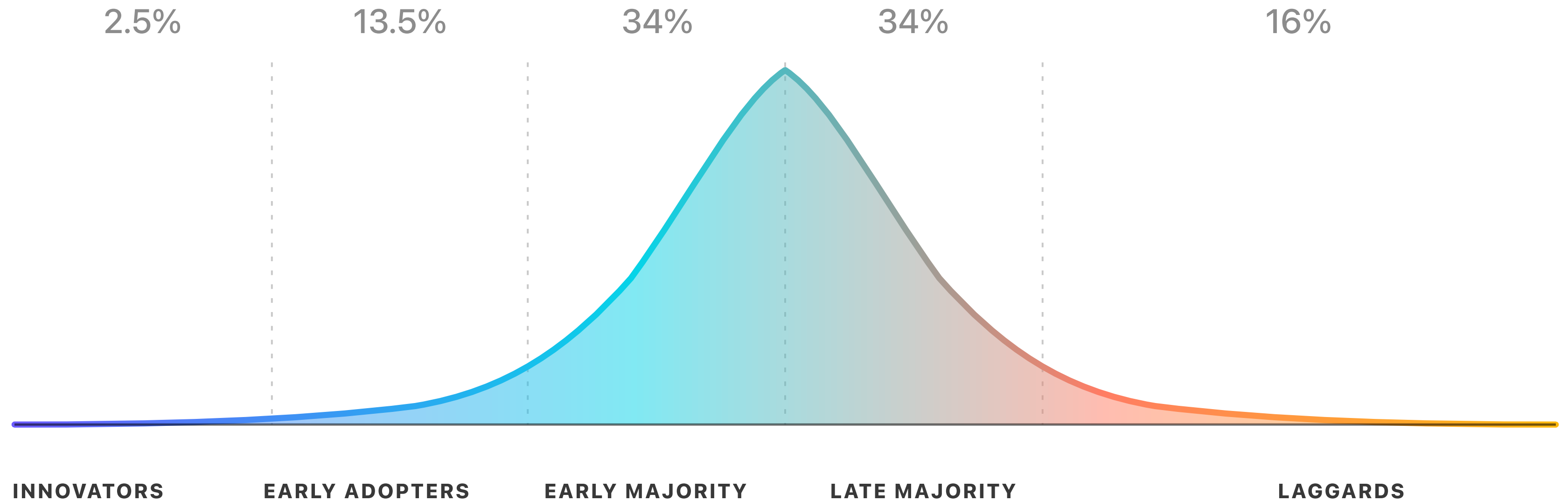
Their common trait: dissatisfaction with how things work
and a pull toward making it better.

ROGERS • DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS • 1962 → 2003



60 YEARS OF RESEARCH · ROGERS, 1962

The diffusion of innovation.



Your builders are the **first 16%**. The rest of the curve follows them.

WHAT DO BUILDERS LOOK LIKE?

You already know who they are.

01 They create workarounds for the constraints in the business.

02 They learn new tools on weekends · nobody asked them to.

03 They're the person you call when something needs to ship.

04 They've been using AI for months · and quietly outperform their peers.

05 They keep proposing solutions. You sometimes find it tiring.

Most of them are **not on your tech team.**

Scenarios for the Global Economy Dialogue Series

Four Futures for Jobs in the New Economy: AI and Talent in 2030

WHITE PAPER · JANUARY 2026

SOURCE · WEF, 2026

THE SHIFT

The workforce is splitting in two: those who build with AI, and those who don't.

The tools exist. The jobs are changing. The only question is whether you develop the capability now or play catch-up later.

85%

of employers now hire for demonstrated skills, not degrees. What you can build matters more than what you studied.

65%

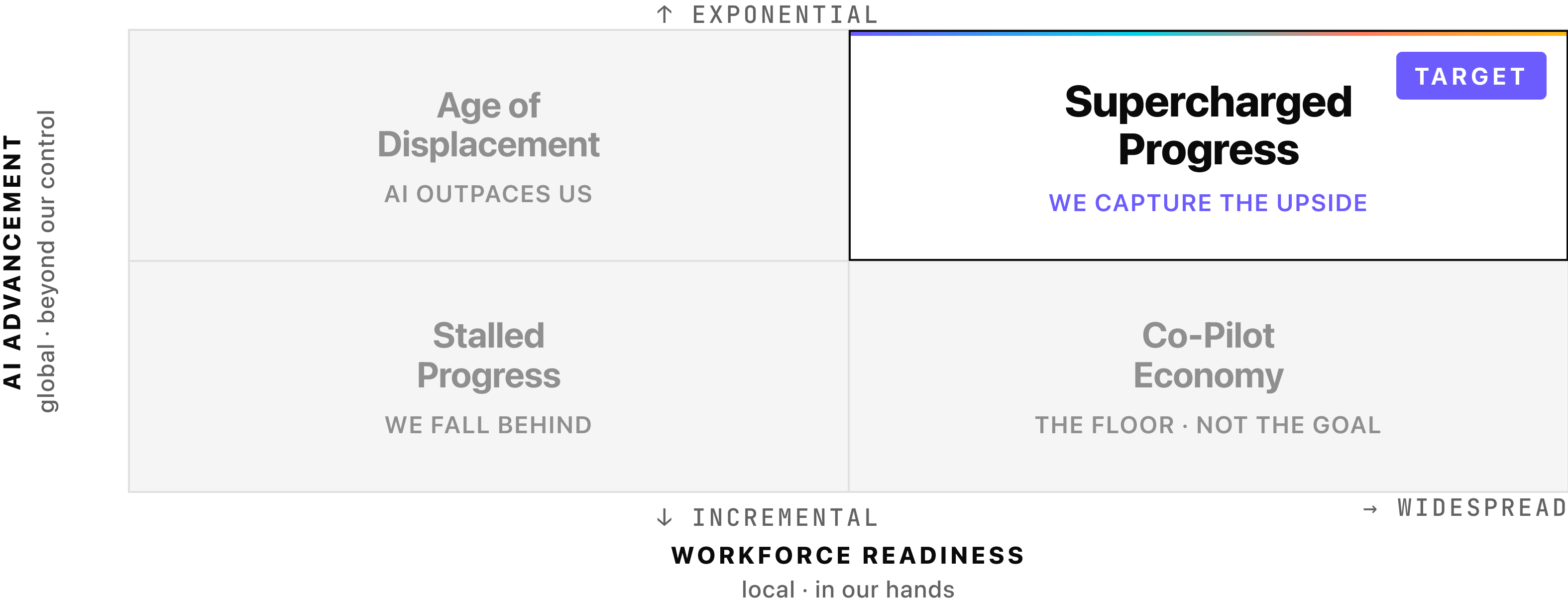
of professionals are actively reskilling right now · investing real time and money to stay ahead of the shift.

170M

new jobs will be created by 2030, most requiring skills that didn't exist five years ago. Readiness is the differentiator.

We need to land here.

WEF · FOUR FUTURES FOR JOBS IN THE NEW ECONOMY



THE OPPORTUNITY IS LOCAL

Atlantic Canada has every input.

99.8%

of Atlantic businesses are SMBs · the ideal audience for expert-led builders.

ACOA · 2023

\$15.7M

committed to the Regional AI Initiative by ACOA.

\$8.5M DEPLOYED · 40 PROJECTS

6

research universities plus applied training across the region.

EDUCATION · APPLIED SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Workforce readiness is the **only variable left.**

WE'VE GOT MOMENTUM

Where to plugin.

01 · Build a startup

For founders ready to ship.

Volta AI Residency

Accelerator for AI-first founders.

Dal AI2Market

AI entrepreneurship for students.

02 · Train your team

Build internal capacity.

DNS Microcredential

Practical Utilization of AI · with St. FX.

NSCC AI Programming

Technical AI certificate.

Volta community

6+ AI events every month.

03 · Apply AI to grow

Move on existing problems.

Volta SME AI Lab

Applied AI projects · 50+ companies.

DeepSense

Applied AI/ML partnerships · Dalhousie.

DNS AI Digital Adoption

Grants up to \$8,500.

DNS AI for Export Bootcamp

6-week training for export-ready SMBs.

None of this needs to be built. **The next move is yours.**

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A FOUR-STEP PLAYBOOK

What you do Monday.

01

Start with a problem you're already focused on.

Not "where can we use AI?" · that's why most initiatives fail. Pick something multiple people are already trying to solve.

02

Find an innovator inside that problem.

Technical or not. What matters is they're already close to it · and pulled toward solving it.

03

Make them responsible.

Give them permission, ownership, and a sanctioned space to experiment. Default-yes, not approval-by-approval.

04

Sponsor the learning · not just the wins.

The goal is to be less wrong over time. Resource the misses out loud. That's how you signal the rules have changed.

Less wrong over time. **Not perfect from day one.**

**Thank
You.**

Let's Chat!



connect.voltaeffect.com