SESSION SUMMARY | 3:00 PM | JOE C. THOMPSON CONFERENCE CENTER, UT AUSTIN

SACC Texas & Triathlon Group Executive Pulse 2026: Survey Results

Gustav Karlsson Head of Pace, a Triathlon Group company specialized in AI

The session in brief

Gustav Karlsson presented results from the Executive Pulse survey of business leaders at U.S. and Canadian companies and contrasted them with what AI-native startups are already doing. His conclusion: the barrier is not the technology but skills, change management and speed of decision-making.

Key takeaways

- Startups are moving fast: AI agents are solving previously unsolved mathematics problems, leading AI labs write most of their own code with AI, and small teams are reaching significant revenue with very few employees.
- Large enterprises have barely scratched the surface. In the survey, about six in ten leaders believe AI investment can affect their business, but only about half of those can measure the improvement.
- AI capabilities and process automation are where companies invest most (around 40% of respondents). By far the biggest obstacle cited was skills and capabilities.
- Giving people access to AI is one thing; helping them understand when, where and how to use it is another. This is a change-management challenge, not a technical one.
- Three consequences of recent AI progress: the cost of building software is collapsing, almost any task can now be automated, and the line between business and IT is disappearing.
- Six recommendations: (1) move beyond individual productivity and embed AI in core processes and products; (2) build applications tailored to your needs; (3) shift resources from exploitation to exploration; (4) revise your product development model so business people can build; (5) speed up decisions and push them closer to the teams; (6) shift people from execution to leading, including leading AI systems.

Action points for attendees

1. Define how you will measure the financial impact of each AI initiative before you fund it.
2. Pair every AI tool rollout with training on when, where and how to use it.
3. Identify one core process or product, not just a personal productivity use, to embed AI into this quarter.
4. Let a business-side team member build a small internal tool or prototype with AI.
5. Review your planning cadence: if a solution can be built in days, a ten-week decision cycle is too slow.
6. Ring-fence budget and time for exploration, not only for optimizing what already works.

In their words

> *“Giving people access to AI is one thing, and helping them understand when, where, and how to use it is another.”*
>
> Gustav Karlsson

Prepared by SACC Texas from the session recording for in-person attendees of the SACC Summit 2026. Points are paraphrased and condensed; they are not a verbatim transcript. Speaker names and titles as listed on the official Summit agenda at sacctx.com.