



AI Speeds Up Returns in Private Equity as M&A Becomes Top Value Generator for Firms

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FTI Consulting's 2026 Value Creation Index Shows Faster Time-to-Value Across Levers, But Execution Gaps Persist

WASHINGTON, June 04, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- FTI Consulting, Inc. (NYSE: FCN) today released its [2026 Private Equity Value Creation Index](#), a global survey of more than 550 senior private equity leaders, which found that artificial intelligence ("AI") is accelerating the speed of value creation, while mergers and acquisitions ("M&A") has emerged as the industry's top value driver despite taking longer to deliver results.

"Private equity leaders can no longer rely on a single lever for value creation. The data shows that AI is delivering faster outcomes, but it's most effective when embedded into core operational and commercial initiatives," said [Scott Bingham](#), Global Co-Leader of Transactions at FTI Consulting. "At the same time, M&A has re-emerged as the leading value driver, rewarding firms that treat integration and execution as a core capability."

Overall, private equity firms are delivering results more quickly, with 63% of respondents achieving measurable impact within 12 months, up from 41% last year. This shift is attributed to the need to generate value faster which is leading to earlier execution during diligence and the increased use of standardized playbooks and technology.

AI: Time-to-Value Doubles as Firms Move from Experimentation to Execution

The survey found a significant increase in the speed of AI-driven results, with 66% of respondents reporting AI-related benefits within 12 months, up from 34% last year. This improvement reflects a shift toward applying AI to a narrower set of established use cases tied to core value creation levers.

Despite faster results, implementation remains uneven. Only 31% of firms report efficient or mostly efficient AI implementation, while the majority describe outcomes as mixed or difficult.

M&A: From Lowest Priority to #1 Value Lever

M&A recorded the most notable shift in this year's survey, rising from the lowest-ranked lever in 2025 to the top priority for private equity firms in 2026. With organic growth harder to come by, strategic acquisitions have become a primary growth engine. In fact, 51% of respondents report exceeding their M&A business case, one of the top-ranked levers to do so. Respondents who ranked M&A as the top value generator also increased from 7% to 24% year over year.

Yet, M&A remains the slowest value creation lever, with only 25% of firms achieving results within 12 months. Execution also remains a constraint, with just 35% of firms describing M&A implementation as efficient or very efficient, the lowest among all levers.

High Performers Show Consistent Outperformance Across AI and M&A

This year, the report identified a high performer segment representing approximately 40% of respondents. These firms are defined as those that reported exceeding expected returns over the past 12 months. Across both AI and M&A, high performers report stronger outcomes than their peers.

"The firms outperforming in today's environment are those taking an increasingly active, structured approach to value creation", said [Diederick van der Plas](#), EMEA Co-Chairman and Head of EMEA Corporate Finance. "The results show that high performers deploy growth levers at nearly twice the rate of their peers, alongside AI-enabled execution and disciplined M&A."

Key findings include:

- 46% of high performers rate their M&A implementation as smooth, compared with 29% of other firms, reflecting stronger execution from deal thesis through integration.
- This execution advantage is associated with better M&A outcomes, underscoring that performance is driven by post-close delivery rather than deal volume.
- In AI, high performers are not adopting at materially higher rates, but they are more effective in generating results, with 19% of high performers reporting exceeding their AI business case, compared to 5% of others.
- The data suggests high performers apply AI more deliberately, embedding it into core value creation levers rather than treating it as a standalone initiative.

Read the full report [here](#).

About the 2026 Private Equity Value Creation Index

The 2026 Private Equity Value Creation Index is based on a global survey of 555 senior private equity leaders across 14 countries, between January 19 and February 17, 2026. Respondents assessed nine commercial and operational value creation levers and two enablers, including artificial intelligence, across dimensions such as frequency of use, implementation, time-to-value, performance against business case and 2026 priorities.

About FTI Consulting

FTI Consulting, Inc. is a leading global expert firm for organizations facing crisis and transformation, with more than 8,100 employees located in 32 countries and territories as of March 31, 2026. In certain jurisdictions, FTI Consulting's services are provided through distinct legal entities that are separately capitalized and independently managed. The Company generated \$3.8 billion in revenues during fiscal year 2025. More information can be found at www.fticonsulting.com.

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