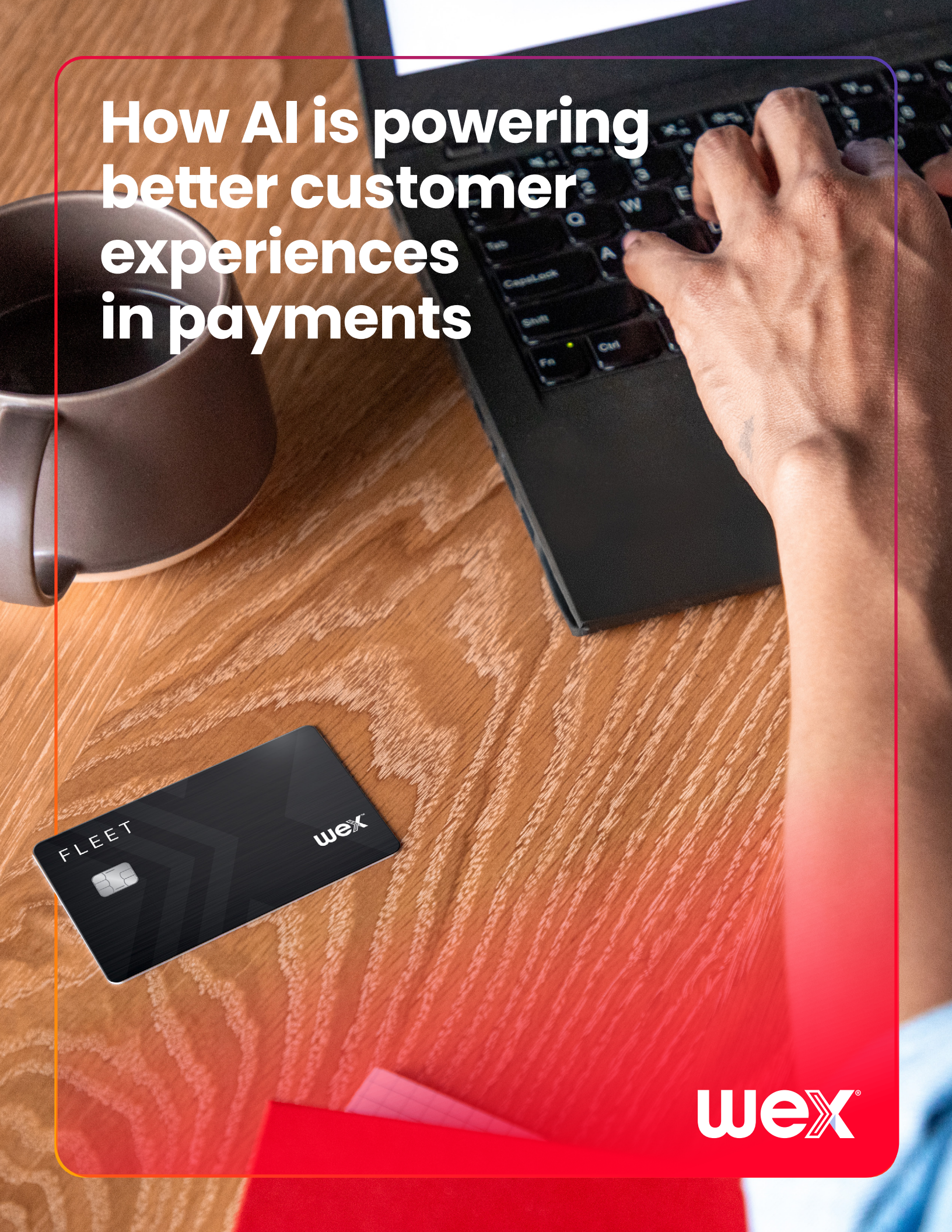
How AI is powering better customer experiences in payments





Artificial intelligence is transforming industries worldwide, and the payments industry is no exception. By streamlining product design and optimizing operations, AI is empowering manufacturers and fleet managers to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing market. According to a recent Crunchbase report, AI accounted for close to 50% of all global funding to startups in 2025. This is an increase from 34% in 2024. A total of $202.3 billion was invested in the AI sector in 2025 as of Crunchbase's December 2025 analysis.

For fleet card providers, AI offers new opportunities. AI can help companies solve long standing customer problems in new ways – new technology allows businesses to design faster, remove the work from work, and help accelerate growth.



Using AI to transform the customer experience for fleet card customers

Karen Stroup, chief digital officer at WEX, oversees the company's product experiences, enabling capabilities, design, data and analytics, and AI. "On my team, we start with customer needs — understanding the friction in their workflows, the decisions they're trying to make, and where complexity gets in the way. From there, we reimagine future experiences, anticipate how market trends are evolving, and determine what we should build next. At the same time, we steward WEX's products in the near term, making sure what we deliver today solves real problems and builds trust for the long term." With all of these imperatives, Stroup's team is building WEX's product and design capabilities and elevating them to enhance the customer experience and unlock growth.

AI Delivering more customer benefit through AI

Across WEX, Stroup's team begins with direct customer feedback and workflow insights, identifying pain points and determining whether AI is the right tool to reduce friction and improve outcomes. One example comes from WEX's Health & Benefits line of business. This part of WEX's business offers complete benefits administration, including benefits accounts such as HSAs, FSAs, HRAs, LSAs, and COBRA. Daniel VanderMeer, principal data scientist on Stroup's team, led a project that trained AI to serve as a "Benefits Assistant," for WEX's Health & Benefits customers. As Stroup saw it, "Open enrollment can feel overwhelming, and about 50% of people finish their enrollment, unsure if they made the right choices. We built this AI assistant to simplify the experience and provide personalized support. It's like having a trusted guide helping you every step of the way." The tool provides users with, as Stroup describes it, "a healthcare professional in your pocket."

> "You've got all the data underneath, and what this enables us to do is create that human interaction for our customers where a customer can ask questions specific to their individual needs and get responses in a conversational workflow."
>
> **Karen Stroup**
> Chief Digital Officer, WEX

2732366597(03/26)

Benefits Assistant is an on demand guide for anyone who has to make changes to their benefits. Using generative AI, the assistant plunks a new and unique interface right on top of the large language model (LLM). "You've got all the data underneath, and what this enables us to do is create that human interaction for our customers where a customer can ask questions specific to their individual needs and get responses in a conversational workflow," says Stroup. Behind the scenes, WEX's AI analyzes all the data about the customer and responds to their questions using the information it's already analyzed.

Likewise, in WEX's Mobility business, the team is embedding intelligence directly into fleet solutions to help customers operate more efficiently and confidently. Recently, we sat down with VanderMeer to talk about how his team thinks about AI in the fleet industry and how AI is helping to improve WEX's fleet management products. "We saw embedding intelligence into our products as a giant opportunity to improve the lives of our customers and to add to the value in our products. We want to delight our customers, and we achieve that by helping them quickly solve the problems that they care about. When AI is deployed effectively it can reduce the friction present in our lives and free us to do our important work."

The advent of machine learning and AI and how payments tools were built at WEX

VanderMeer helped design and architect ClearView, the WEX fleet manager analytics platform. "It was while building ClearView that I became obsessed with machine learning and AI. The ability for systems to learn and improve over time was compelling."

In 2024, VanderMeer partnered closely with WEX health product managers to reimagine the company's benefits product using AI and was instrumental throughout the process all the way to its launch. His process of developing the idea for the Benefit Assistant sheds some light on how Stroup's team works.

The path to new product ideas can happen while we're just living our lives

VanderMeer often comes up with ideas for new products in unexpected places. For the Benefits Assistant, he was at the airport flying home after a WEX event and ended up chatting with another WEX employee, an expert in health and benefits, who was waiting for the same flight. The two ended up discussing WEX's health insurance benefits. VanderMeer realized he could learn a lot from WEX experts about how to maximize his health benefits. "This colleague was telling me all about HSAs and how you can use your health care dollars as an investment vehicle and I quickly realized that I'm not even close to optimizing my medical benefits. We then very naturally stumbled onto the idea, 'Wouldn't it be fantastic if everybody had an expert in their back pocket? If we made an AI that's like a real-life expert … and available during open enrollment, they could just talk to this AI and get answers to all their benefits questions.



WEX CEO Melissa Smith happened to be waiting for the same flight and joined the conversation. After an energetic impromptu brainstorming session, VanderMeer says, they unanimously decided to explore this idea. "We have something very interesting and potentially disruptive here …" The following week, VanderMeer partnered with a team at WEX to create the first in a series of prototypes of what would become the WEX Benefits Assistant. This

project marked the beginning of an extensive and educational journey toward developing a production-grade medical benefits AI. The development of the tool involved rigorous AI training and fine-tuning, thorough evaluation in partnership with WEX benefits experts, exhaustive testing, and close coordination with WEX's AI engineering partners. This was all done to ensure scalability while addressing critical privacy, compliance, and legal considerations.

"It's relatively easy to build a prototype of an idea using foundational models, but it's actually very difficult to build robust AI solutions that are highly accurate, that can operate at high scale and that are deeply personalized to each individual customer. The true power of AI is unlocked when you can produce technology that your customers can deeply trust to produce insights and to take action on their behalf."

AI-driven telematics and fleet management

The fleet segment also provided opportunities for innovation leveraging AI. "We are now embedding sophisticated intelligence directly into fleet management processes." WEX supports more than 600,000 businesses and nearly 20 million vehicles fuel with WEX nationwide. Leveraging AI at that scale for those customers has a significant impact.

The innovation team's latest AI initiative, "Actionable Insights," leverages advanced algorithms that seamlessly integrate fleet payment information with real-time telematics data collected directly from vehicles. This powerful combination provides fleet managers immediate, actionable intelligence, making it easier to understand what is happening within their complex workflows, to be able to face challenges head-on, and make adjustments to optimize operations.

Instead of overwhelming managers with more dashboards, these systems continuously analyze financial transactions and vehicle performance in the background, prioritizing what requires attention. The goal is not simply visibility, but confidence — giving fleet managers clear signals about where to intervene and the insight to make informed decisions without second-guessing.

AI for optimizing the user experience

The primary focus of this innovation is to embed intelligence seamlessly into the user experience, automating mundane tasks and presenting insights clearly. This intuitive approach reduces complexity and helps fleet managers effortlessly manage their day-to-day operations without bogging them down in tedious manual processes.

"The true power of AI is unlocked when you can produce technology that your customers can deeply trust to produce insights and take action on their behalf."

Daniel VanderMeer
Principal Data Scientist, WEX



2732366597(03/26)

Ultimately, by automating routine tasks and enhancing data visibility, VanderMeer's AI allows fleet managers to dedicate more time to address critical issues, plan strategically, and make informed decisions. Like the Benefits Assistant AI, this new fleet technology prioritizes seamless scalability, compliance with rigorous privacy standards, and adherence to essential legal considerations. And it does all of this while providing confidence and peace of mind to fleet operators.

How the tool works

Actionable Insights organizes information into three categories: fleet operations, optimization, and driver anomalies. But its real value lies in how it translates that information into prioritized insights. Rather than asking managers to interpret raw data, the platform highlights what matters most and why.

Actionable Insights allows fleet managers to see overall operations in a clear and easy-to-access tool. They can look at their KPIs and better understand where they're hitting targets, where they're not, and why. Questions such as the following are answered by the tool:

- How many gallons of fuel am I buying a month?
- How many transactions occurred yesterday?
- What different product types are my drivers buying?
- What am I buying across my company by functional area?
- What is the average price I'm paying?

One of the tool's most valuable capabilities is identifying emerging patterns before they become costly. Instead of requiring managers to manually analyze spending trends, the tool forecasts likely outcomes and quantifies potential impact. This enables proactive decisions — adjusting purchasing behavior, accurately planning budgets, and preventing avoidable overspend.



The second functionality within the tool focuses on fleet optimization. Managers can see where they have drivers buying at a high price. They can also easily see where drivers are buying products they shouldn't be buying. This data includes which drivers are buying mid-grade fuel and which are purchasing premium. It then calculates how much this behavior is costing the business.

WEX's data shows what the expected fuel price is in every geography. As VanderMeer describes it, "WEX has some of the best fuel price data in the world, and so we can compare transactions against that index. And that allows us to understand, oh wait a minute, my driver is paying 75 cents above the average and he does that repeatedly. The tool can then calculate how much a business saves if they can change that behavior."

Budgeting and forecasting is important to fleet managers - they want to know what they're spending on fuel, and what those trends are. Questions like, "What is the average fuel price that I paid this year? How many gallons am I pumping in a given week?" The data helps them make projections about what will happen in the months to come, and accurately budget for the future.

The third type of data the tool surfaces is driver anomalies. One responsibility of a fleet manager overseeing a large fleet is to make sure drivers are compliant. When your fleet is typically engaged in 100,000 transactions a month that's a lot of information to parse. Actionable Insights quickly shows fleet managers what's of primary importance to them.

2732366597(03/26)

The tool makes it easy to pull up and review the information, and it's all powered by AI. As Vandermeer describes it, "There are a lot of algorithms that sit behind the scenes and surface these insights, and there's a lot of data cleansing and enrichment that happens. But then we also have AI built into the platform so fleet managers can ask questions in plain English and the tool will answer those questions based on the associated data."

These question and answer sessions are powered by LLMs, and as Vandermeer describes it, "You should just be able to ask a question, for instance, 'Which drivers are buying premium?' Then our tool can intercept that question, understand it, and respond with data analytics compiled by AI."

"We've co-built this product with customers right from the start." Customers helped shape the product and by building in collaboration with end-users, the product is in tune with their needs.

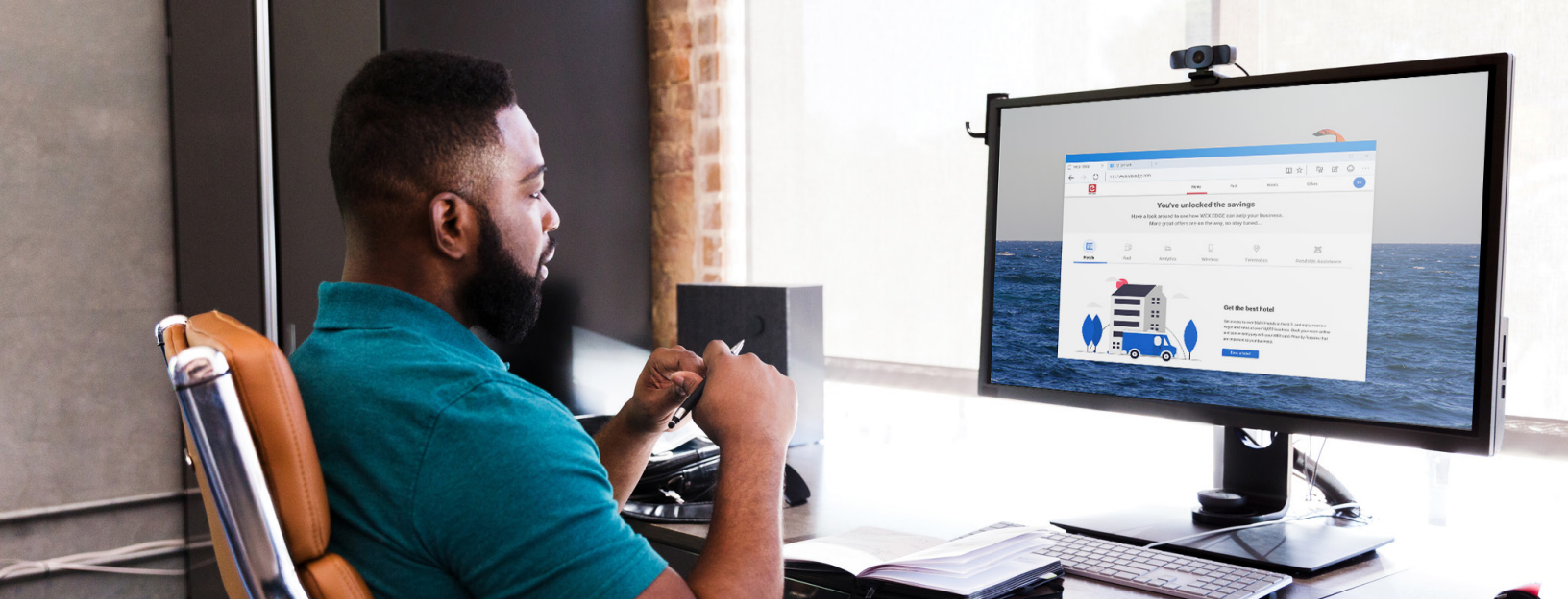
What's the technology behind the Actionable Insights tool?

The technology behind the tool is a mobility signal hub. "You can think about this as kind of the brains behind the insights." The data comes into the signal hub and the next thing to happen is a lot of data cleansing and enrichment. WEX conducts business with approximately 140,000+ merchants. Not all of those 140,000 merchants actually provide the right information. This is where data cleansing, using machine learning and data enrichment, becomes really important so WEX can avoid false positives for its customers.

"We have some of the best fuel price data in the world. We know what the fuel price is at all of those 140,000 stations. So we use that data in each geographic location to create fuel price indexes to use as benchmarks." As an example, WEX knows what the expected fuel price is in Louisville for gasoline and for diesel. With that information, the company can look at all the transactions happening in that area and see which ones are out of sync with expectations. This can be used to target which drivers are misusing their fuel card. Then fuel managers can work to change that behavior.

> "WEX has some of the best fuel price data in the world, and so we can compare transactions against that index. And that allows us to understand, oh wait a minute, my driver is paying 75 cents above the average and he does that repeatedly. The tool can then calculate how much a business saves if they can change that behavior."
>
> **Daniel VanderMeer**
> Principal Data Scientist, WEX

2762906541 (03/26)



Using AI to surface discounts

The mobility signal hub sits behind the merchant network as well. This is where WEX can surface discounts for its customers within the Actionable Insights tool. WEX EDGE® discounts and merchant network discounts are surfaced so fleet managers can more easily and efficiently take advantage of those discounts. The question that is asked of the tool is where are there discounts the driver is not taking advantage of. The signal hub uses the fuel price index and looks at where the customer is buying fuel, where in close proximity to that purchase were there discounts that could have been used, and then all that data is compiled in a clear way so the customer understands how much they can save in the future. The customer can see that in aggregate across their entire fleet and see how much value there is to be gained.

Building reports with Actionable Insights

Prior to Actionable Insights, when a customer wanted to surface data - let's say they just want to see which drivers were fueling on the weekend and after hours - they would have to download an Excel spreadsheet, sift through pages of data, and create a report to share. Now, AI eliminates the manual effort and delivers immediate clarity. What once required hours of spreadsheet analysis is translated into clear answers enabling managers to take action immediately, whether that means addressing weekend fueling behavior, tightening controls, or adjusting policy.

AI for simplifying tasks for the customer

Actionable Insights can help fleet managers with the simplest of tasks. If a customer needs to add or replace a card, the system guides them through the process and completes the task within defined guardrails. With multimodal AI and VIN decoding, what once required multiple steps and manual entry becomes a streamlined interaction. The assistant does more than answer questions, it helps execute the task, reducing friction while keeping the customer in control.

The tool's sophistication has exciting implications. When it receives the same question from customers repeatedly, it adapts its pool of responses to include this new question that keeps popping up. As a result, those commonly asked questions become easier for fuel card customers to resolve.

With AI, the customer's information is at the ready, reducing what is required of them when filling out a form online. For many fleet card users who work for themselves or have just a few employees, the CEO, the driver, the CFO, the customer service rep, and the salesperson are all the same person. Many small businesses use fuel cards. Taking complexity out of administrative tasks by incorporating today's LLM technology makes the administrators' job easier.

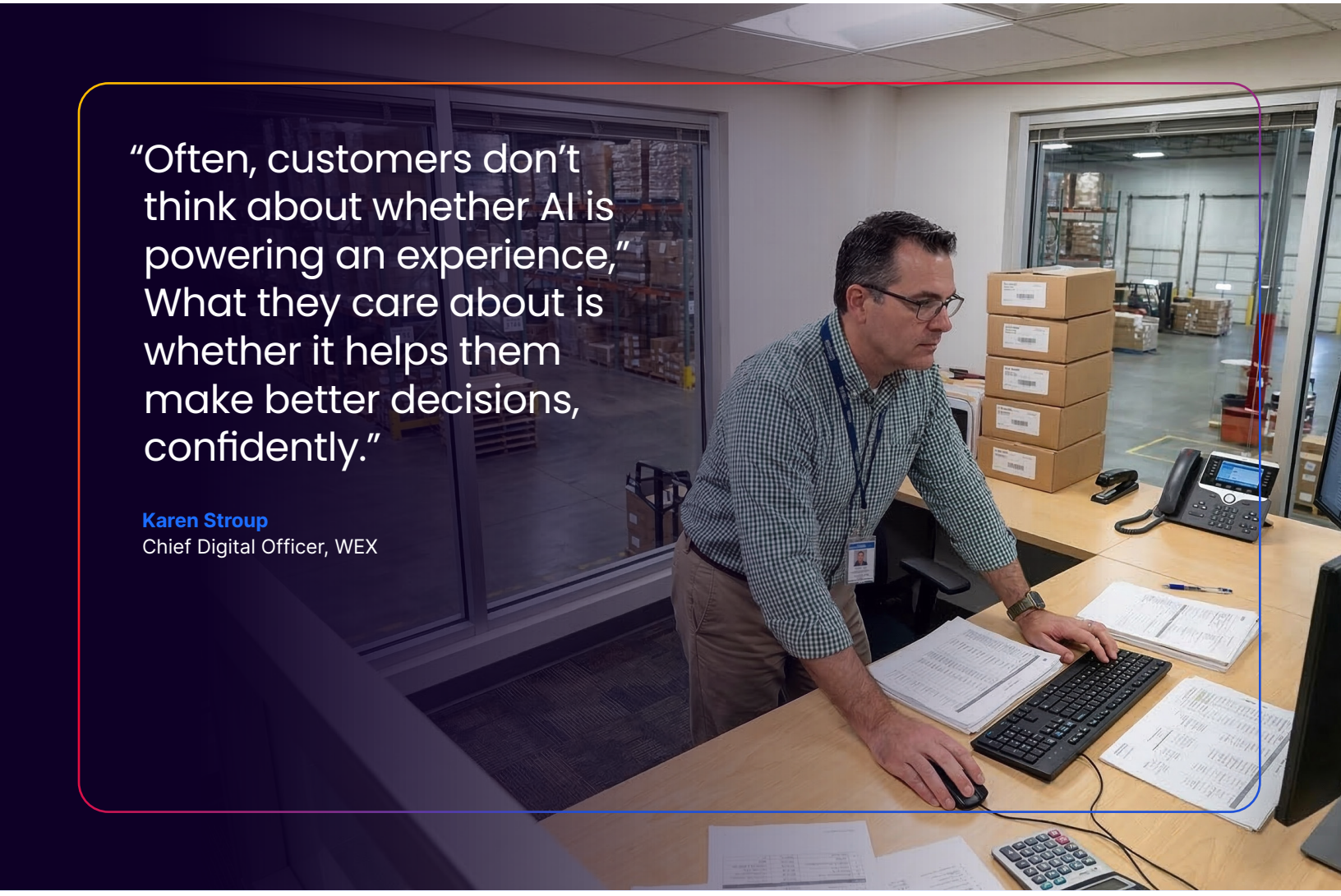
Transforming the online experience with AI technology

Stroup describes AI at WEX in two primary ways, both grounded in a simple principle: start with the customer problem first.

When designing AI-powered experiences, Stroup's team begins with a fundamental question: What challenge is the customer trying to solve at this moment? From there, the focus becomes how to deliver the right support at the right time, whether that means surfacing a potential fuel misuse issue before it becomes costly, highlighting a discount opportunity in real time, or simplifying a complex administrative task.

Because WEX serves organizations ranging from small businesses to global enterprises and public agencies, every solution must scale across use cases while preserving clarity, security, and trust.

"Often, customers don't think about whether AI is powering an experience," Stroup says. "What they care about is whether it helps them make better decisions, confidently." For fleet managers, that confidence might mean quickly identifying unusual driver behavior, understanding where fuel spend is trending, or resolving an issue without calling for support. AI plays a role behind the scenes — analyzing patterns, surfacing relevant context, and, where appropriate, prompting the next step — but always within guardrails and with human oversight.



2732366597(03/26)

Easing the burden for call center staff so that customers get what they're looking for faster and easier

We've all experienced the deepening pain of being passed from one call center representative to another. What's really frustrating is when each person you speak to asks you to repeat account information to verify who you are. With AI that process is streamlined and not only will the pass-offs be minimized, but ideally you'll only be asked once who you are and why you're calling. Not only that, but many issues that you might have called the call center for in the past will now be solved through the AI in your app and in the self-service entities that fleet card companies have developed and implemented using LLMs and generative AI.



How AI can improve employee performance and engagement

Within WEX, AI-enabled experiences are enhancing both employee performance and customer outcomes. By equipping frontline teams with clearer context and faster access to relevant information, AI reduces repetitive tasks and improves response accuracy helping employees resolve issues more confidently and efficiently.

In customer support environments, this shift is especially meaningful. Instead of navigating multiple systems or asking customers to repeat information, employees are supported by AI that synthesizes relevant account details and surfaces what matters most in the moment. The result is not just operational efficiency, but smoother interactions and stronger customer trust.

"Statistically, we know that we are answering customer questions with more accuracy," Stroup says. "The opportunity we've discovered is that it's not just about the data, it's about the customer experience."

Training and adoption have also evolved alongside the technology. These are not static chatbots of the past. Modern large language models enable more conversational, contextual interactions that feel intuitive and responsive. As these experiences become more familiar in the broader marketplace, employee confidence increases and so does an ability to deliver high-quality service.

When routine tasks become easier, teams have more capacity to think critically, solve problems creatively, and serve customers with clarity and confidence.

AI as a transformative operational tool

When Stroup began leading WEX's AI strategy, the goal was simple but ambitious: embed AI into how the company builds, serves, and operates.

Today, that shift is visible across the enterprise. AI is embedded into how WEX builds products, analyzes data, and serves customers, not as a side initiative, but as part of how work gets done. In 2025, more than 80% of employees self-reported using AI regularly, integrating it into daily workflows to improve quality and accelerate decision-making. On average, teams are reclaiming an estimated three hours per week — time that can be reinvested into higher-value, customer-focused work. Across the enterprise, AI-driven initiatives are freeing thousands of hours, helping teams move faster and deliver stronger outcomes.

2762906541 (03/26)



The path forward with AI and benchmarking progress so far

AI adoption is accelerating across industries, but the organizations that are likely to win are those that move beyond experimentation and into measurable impact.

For leaders, the priority is not simply access to tools. It is creating an environment where people feel supported in experimenting, learning, and applying AI meaningfully in their roles. The competitive advantage will not come from AI alone. It will come from how confidently and creatively people use it.

Driving adoption requires more than tools. It requires visible outcomes. At WEX, the focus has been on building confidence and fluency at scale. In 2025, 77% of salaried employees completed AI education, and globally, more than 13,500 training hours were logged. The AI Accelerators community (an employee group built to foster AI adoption) grew by 700% in 2025, creating peer-led innovation across geographies and functions.

Training has evolved as well. Instead of theory-heavy sessions, teams engage directly with AI tools in role-specific workshops designed around real work scenarios. The emphasis is not on simply trying AI, but on applying it in ways that drive measurable results.

"When people see how AI improves their actual work — not hypothetically, but practically — that's when adoption becomes sustainable," Stroup says.

AI is not a side initiative at WEX. It is part of how the company builds, serves, and grows.

AI as the future of customer-forward product design

The integration of artificial intelligence in product design is no longer a futuristic concept—it is a present-day reality. AI-powered innovations are reshaping telematics, fleet management, and the customer experience, enabling organizations to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and drive strategic decision-making.

At WEX, AI is embedded into product development to deliver smarter, more intuitive solutions that meet the evolving needs of fleet operators. From AI-driven fraud detection to intelligent data analytics tools like Actionable Insights, WEX is leveraging AI to streamline operations and improve customer experiences. Under the leadership of industry experts like Karen Stroup and Daniel VanderMeer, AI is used to reimagine digital experiences, empower customers, and make operations more efficient across WEX's product portfolio.

As AI continues to advance, businesses that embrace these innovations will gain a competitive edge. The ability to leverage AI for predictive analytics, real-time decision-making, and automation will likely define the next era of fleet management. Organizations that integrate AI into their core business processes now can be better positioned to navigate industry disruptions and capitalize on new opportunities.

AI is not just a technological shift, it is a transformational force that is redefining how industries operate. Now is the time for businesses to adopt AI-driven strategies and position themselves at the forefront of this era of change.

As Stroup sees it, AI will continue to transform WEX's product development space and she and her team will continue to encourage innovation and creativity.

2762906541 (03/26)



WEX is a leading, global fintech solutions provider

WEX simplifies payments and back-end business processes in the fleet management, benefits management, and corporate payments areas. To learn more, please **visit the company's About WEX page**.

©2026 WEX Inc. All rights reserved.
The information in this document is subject to change without notice.