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Aldaron launches AI transformation fund as few PE portfolios see gains

Executive Summary

A new private equity firm launched with nearly $900 /million to fund AI-driven turnarounds, underscoring how seriously the industry is taking tech-led value creation. Yet a fresh survey indicates that despite broad adoption of AI across portfolios, measurable financial gains remain elusive, emphasising that real value comes only with provable results.

Palantir veterans launch AI transformation fund

A group of former Palantir and Carlyle executives has officially launched a new private equity firm, Aldaron, to focus on “transformation equity” - combining world-class AI engineering with control-style investing (finance.yahoo.com [1]). On 15 October, Aldaron announced a majority investment in Oak Point Partners and the close of its debut fund at roughly $885 /million in commitments (dealroom.co [2]). The fund will back mid-market companies and embed technical teams to build the systems that “drive equity value creation through applied AI” (finance.yahoo.com [3]).

Half of Aldaron’s 12 initial employees are software engineers working directly with portfolio management teams to develop AI solutions (www.privateequitywire.co.uk [4]). The strategy prioritises revenue growth and operational improvements in businesses that have yet to fully exploit advanced automation and data. The model echoes moves by other sponsors to boost in-house tech capabilities: In August, Partners Group reported that an AI transformation programme linking two of its portfolio companies - a US insurance brokerage and a UK analytics firm - cut policy processing times by 94%, doubled sales close rates, and delivered a 120-basis-point margin uplift equating to an extra $10 /million in annual EBITDA at the insurer (www.partnersgroup.com [5]). These initiatives illustrate the push to inject specialist AI expertise into portfolios in pursuit of measurable performance gains.

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Few PE portfolios see revenue gains from AI

Beneath the enthusiasm for AI, new data suggest a sizable gap between adoption and actual financial results in PE portfolios. Grant Thornton's 2026 AI Impact Survey, released this month, found that 46% of private equity firms are now piloting or scaling AI initiatives across their portfolio companies - yet only 24% of PE leaders report any AI-driven revenue growth so far (www.grantthornton.com [1]). Likewise, 45% of those surveyed admit their firms are still stuck in the pilot stage, 11 percentage points more than the cross-industry average (www.grantthornton.com [2]). And just 9% of PE respondents said they are "very confident" their organisation could pass an independent AI governance audit on short notice (versus 22% of executives in other industries) (www.grantthornton.com [3]). The findings underscore that significant bottom-line gains from AI remain the exception, not the rule, in typical buyout portfolios.

Other industries appear further ahead. A parallel Grant Thornton study of insurers found over half (52%) of insurance executives are already seeing revenue increases from AI, though only 24% of them felt fully prepared for an audit of their AI governance (www.insurancejournal.com [4]). The contrast suggests many PE-owned companies have yet to capture similar value, making it critical for sponsors to refocus their approach. The emphasis is now squarely on moving from isolated pilots to scaled solutions that demonstrably improve revenues or productivity - and on implementing the governance needed to withstand investor and regulatory scrutiny of those AI benefits.

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Blackstone's $200bn AI infrastructure push

Industry giant Blackstone provided a reminder that private equity's pursuit of AI advantage isn't limited to software experiments inside portfolio companies. The firm - which already has stakes in OpenAI and Anthropic - this week highlighted how it has built one of the industry's broadest AI bets, extending across physical infrastructure and new analysis tools (finance.yahoo.com [1]). Blackstone's data centre investments (including related debt financing and projects in development) have swelled to $200 /billion in value as of July, up from $55 /billion in 2024 (finance.yahoo.com [2]). It has partnered with Google to launch a new cloud computing venture and is financing semiconductor deals and power projects that support AI growth (finance.yahoo.com [3]). The firm has even launched an internal large-language model to help screen potential acquisitions (finance.yahoo.com [4]).

For dealmakers, Blackstone's full-stack approach is a sign of how AI's risks and opportunities are being priced into transactions and strategic plans. Ivan Farman, Bank of America's co-head of global M&A, noted that in any new deal, one of the first questions sponsors ask is "what is the impact of AI on this company?" (finance.yahoo.com [5]). Similarly, Josh Smigel, who leads PwC's US PE deals practice, observed that the most attractive targets are increasingly in sectors "that can't be AI'd out of existence," such as healthcare and industrials (finance.yahoo.com [6]). In other words, buyers are weighing both the upside of AI capabilities and the downside of potential AI disruption. These realities reinforce the need for sellers to present solid evidence of AI-driven resilience and profit improvement when pursuing exits.

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Key Statistics

- USD 10 /million - EBITDA added at Partners Group’s Foundation Risk Partners via an AI programme (Press release, Aug 2026)
- 24% - Share of private equity leaders reporting AI-driven revenue growth in portfolio companies (Grant Thornton, 2026 survey)
- 9% - Share of private equity leaders "very confident" in their firm’s AI governance (Grant Thornton, 2026 survey)
- 77% - Share of fund groups that started or increased AI use in valuations in the past year (Deloitte, 2026 survey)

KEY TAKEAWAY

Insist on concrete ROI evidence for every AI initiative in your portfolio. Ensure management can back up AI-driven gains with hard data and sound governance, because buyers and regulators will demand proof of value.

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