VANGUARD
CLOUD CONSULTING

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The Platform Isn't Dying.

The Way We Implement It Is.

Why Salesforce will outlast the SaaSpocalypse, why "build your own CRM with AI" misses the point, and why the future of Salesforce consulting is outcomes, not days.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ten seconds of reading, if that's all you have

In 2026, a wave of AI anxiety wiped hundreds of billions off software valuations. The story was simple: if AI agents can build software on demand, who needs a CRM platform? Many organisations are now asking whether they can build their own with AI, and skip Salesforce altogether.

This paper argues the opposite. The platforms are not dying; they are reinventing themselves faster than ever. What is dying is the way most organisations are sold the work of implementing them: by the day, with change requests, months before anything works.

40.9%
fall in Salesforce's share price in H1 2026, amid "SaaSpocalypse" fears[1]

$1.5bn+
Agentforce ARR, up over 240% year on year (Q2 FY27)[2]

56%
less value than predicted delivered by large IT projects[3]

Our position in three lines

- **The platform wins.** Twenty-seven years of heritage, three upgrades a year and a vast customer base cannot be vibe-coded over a weekend.
- **Headless is the way.** AI agents should sit on top of a trusted platform, not replace it. Salesforce has now opened its entire platform to them.
- **Time and materials is dead.** The future of systems integration is a scope, a prototype and a price. Then iteration, with no change requests.

PART ONE

The SaaSpocalypse that wasn't

Early in 2026, the software market panicked. In February, new industry plugins for Anthropic's Claude were read by investors as AI moving into traditional software territory, and selling spread across the sector.[1] Salesforce fell 40.9% in the first half of the year, even though it beat revenue and earnings expectations in each of its reports.[1] Commentators had a name ready: the SaaSpocalypse.

Then look at what actually happened inside the business. In its second quarter of fiscal 2027, Salesforce reported revenue of $11.3 billion, up 11% year on year, and raised its full-year guidance.[2] Agentforce and Data 360 annual recurring revenue reached nearly $3.9 billion, up more than 210%.[2] Remaining performance obligations, the contracted revenue still to come, stood at $66.3 billion.[2]

> ***Share prices tell you what investors fear. Revenue tells you what customers do. And customers are doubling down.***

This is the pattern of every platform that has lasted. It doesn't blow up when the ground shifts. It turns, through acquisition, through innovation, and through a loyal customer base that has grown up with it, from SaaSy to Astro.

PART TWO

Meet Colin and Vinny

Every organisation now has one of each. **Colin** is the newly minted AI architect who has seen what a large language model can produce in an afternoon. **Vinny** is the vibe coder who has already built a working CRM prototype on his laptop. Both are talented. Both are right that AI changes everything.

And both are missing something. A CRM that demos well on a Tuesday is not a business platform. A modern platform, one that can carry agentic AI and deliver the efficiency gains it promises, needs three ingredients that Colin and Vinny cannot generate from a prompt.

01
Legacy

For once, legacy is a strength. Since 1999, Salesforce has built a technology heritage around trust, security and the customer. That authenticity can't be copied.

02
Relentless renewal

Three seamless upgrades a year, shaped by feedback from more than a million customers: the good, the bad and the ugly.[4]

03
Depth by acquisition

MuleSoft, Tableau, Slack and Informatica, adopted correctly, give a strength and depth that hardly any organisation can build for itself.[5,6]

1. Legacy, the good kind

In technology, "legacy" usually means the on-premise server nobody dares switch off. This is different. Salesforce launched in 2000 under the banner "The End of Software", and the principles it set out then are the ones every AI-native start-up now claims as new: subscription, the cloud, and the customer at the centre.[4] Twenty-seven years of running mission-critical systems for regulated industries is not something a model can generate.

2. Renewal at a scale no one can match

Every year, Salesforce ships three major releases to every customer at once, without a migration project. Each one is shaped by the feedback of a community that runs into the millions.[4] Colin's platform has one customer and no release cycle. When Vinny moves on, so does the roadmap.

3. Depth that took billions to build

Salesforce has spent more than $60 billion on acquisitions to build out the platform, including MuleSoft for integration ($6.5 billion, 2018), Tableau for analytics ($15.7 billion, 2019), Slack for collaboration ($27.7 billion, 2020) and, most recently, Informatica for data management (around $8 billion, completed in November 2025).[5,6] Adopted properly, that depth is available to every customer from day one.

The hidden cost of building your own

Independent research testing more than 100 AI models found that around **45% of AI-generated coding tasks introduced security flaws**.

A home-grown CRM built this way carries that risk, plus every upgrade, every regulation and every integration, for ever. On a platform, they are someone else's full-time job.

PART THREE

Headless is the way

None of this means organisations should ignore the AI revolution. Quite the reverse. The question is not whether to use AI agents, but where they should live.

In 2026, Salesforce answered that question with **Headless 360**: its entire platform opened up so that any authorised AI agent, whether Agentforce, Claude, ChatGPT or Cursor, can discover and use Salesforce capabilities through open standards such as MCP.[8] One early adopter launched a customer-service agent in 12 days that now resolves half of its chat conversations without a human.[8]

> ***The future isn't build versus buy. It's agents on top of a platform you can trust.***

That is the best of both worlds. Colin and Vinny get to build with the AI tools they love. The business keeps the security, the data model, the upgrades and the depth it can't afford to rebuild. Salesforce remains the CRM market leader, with an estimated 34.1% share.[8]

PART FOUR

The real problem: how Salesforce gets implemented

If the platform is this strong, why do so many organisations struggle to get value from it? In our experience, the answer is rarely the technology. It is the commercial model wrapped around it.

Most Salesforce implementations are still sold on time and materials. Discovery workshops, design sessions and build sprints are billed by the day. Then comes the change request, every time the customer discovers what the platform can actually do, which they could not possibly have known at the start.

45%
average budget overrun on large IT projects[3]

7%
average schedule overrun[3]

56%
less value delivered than predicted[3]

Research by McKinsey and the University of Oxford, covering more than 5,400 IT projects, found exactly this pattern.[3] The customer carries all the risk. The partner is paid for effort, not results. And every new idea becomes a new invoice.

> ***Time and materials is dead. If you are still buying Salesforce projects by the day, you are burning cash and resources.***

PART FIVE

Introducing the Vanguard Intelligent Engine™

We believe the platform is the right foundation. That is exactly why we built the Vanguard Intelligent Engine, VIE for short.

VIE distils **over 100 years of combined consulting experience, more than 1,000 Salesforce projects and millions of lines of requirements** into an agentic experience. It takes an organisation struggling to realise value through time and materials and moves it to outcomes.

1
Scope
One scoping session. VIE turns the conversation into a clear Statement of Work and solution blueprint.

2
Prototype
A working prototype built in your own sandbox, so you see the solution before you commit.

3
Price
One fixed price for the outcome. Then iterate, without change requests.

What changes for the customer

- **Outcomes, not days.** You pay for what gets delivered, not for the hours it took.
- **No more change requests.** You couldn't know what the platform could do on day one. Now you don't pay a penalty for learning.
- **Weeks, not months.** A working solution to test, fast, with support that keeps improving it as your business changes.
- **People in charge.** Certified Vanguard consultants check every build, and nothing goes live until you have tested and approved it.
- **Your data stays yours.** We build on your configuration, not your customer records.

> ***Anyone can buy the AI. Nobody else has our playbook in it.***

PART SIX

The future of systems integration

We think the consulting industry is about to change as profoundly as the platforms did. Here is what we believe the next decade looks like:

- **Outcomes replace effort.** Customers will buy results at a fixed price. Day rates will survive only where nothing else is possible.
- **Knowledge becomes the product.** The partners who win will be the ones who have captured what they know and made it work at machine speed.
- **Change becomes continuous.** Implementation and support merge into one ongoing service. The platform improves every month, not every project.
- **Humans move up the value chain.** Consultants stop typing configuration and start doing what machines can't: judgement, design and trust.

The platform has already made its turn. Now it is the partners' turn.

ABOUT US

Vanguard Cloud Consulting

Vanguard is a Salesforce Summit partner and OSP, founded in 2019 by people from across the Salesforce ecosystem. We are one of a small number of partners recognised by Salesforce as a Navigator Expert for Managed Services, and an Agentforce Expert, working with organisations across the UK and Ireland.

1,000+ Salesforce projects delivered	**4.95/5** average CSAT on AppExchange	**150+** Salesforce certifications	**100%** year-on-year growth in FY26

Salesforce Summit Partner. Navigator Expert. Agentforce Expert.

See it for yourself

Book your free evaluation. Bring us a requirement and we will show you what outcomes look like.

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