



# Frontier firms aren't adding more AI. Here's what they're doing instead.

Why the operating system is now the most strategic decision in your AI stack

E-book



# Introduction

Microsoft sees a fundamental shift: the companies realizing the biggest returns from AI aren't adding more tools—they're the ones who stopped adding them.

Microsoft refers to these organizations as [Frontier Firms](#), and what sets them apart isn't the breadth of their AI portfolio. It's the depth of their integration. Rather than layering new applications on top of existing workflows, they've taken a fundamentally different approach: embedding intelligence directly into the work itself, so AI becomes part of how people work rather than one more thing layered on top of it.

That distinction matters. The organizations pulling ahead are the ones that stopped treating AI as something separate from the work. And increasingly, that shift starts with Windows 11.

The data makes the stakes concrete. According to the [Microsoft 2025 Work Trend Index](#), **80% of the global workforce** currently lacks the time or energy to complete daily tasks, yet **53% of leaders** insist productivity must increase anyway. To bridge that gap, **82% of executives** plan to deploy AI agents to generate new workforce capacity.

But adding more capability without reducing friction risks making the problem worse: **51% of managers** expect AI training and upskilling to become a primary responsibility within the next five years.

The answer isn't more AI; it's AI that works where people already are. That means the operating system is now a strategic asset, and Windows 11 is an intelligent canvas that brings AI capabilities directly into familiar experiences.

Windows 11 brings AI into everyday work in three key ways:

1. Enable people to interact with AI naturally,
2. Get to what matters faster, and
3. Keep intelligence in the flow of work.

Together, these principles help Windows 11 ensure AI empowers people to work more productively—without introducing added complexity or extra work.

## Most organizations are approaching AI governance backwards

Many organizations deploy first and govern later, and then wonder why adoption stalls, shadow IT proliferates, and employees lose trust in the tools they're given. The organizations that are scaling AI successfully have realized that governance isn't a guardrail on innovation. It's what makes innovation possible at scale.

Windows 11, together with management tools such as Microsoft Intune and Agent 365<sup>1</sup>, gives IT the ability to define exactly how AI shows up across the organization before it ever reaches an employee's desktop. IT leaders can establish clear boundaries up front to determine what capabilities are enabled, where they run, and

how they evolve over time. This proactive approach helps reduce the chaos of tool sprawl and supports intelligence scaling with confidence on IT's terms.

When governance is built into the execution layer from the start, something important shifts: IT stops being a bottleneck and starts being an enabler. Employees get AI experiences that are consistent, trustworthy, and already cleared to use, so they can focus on the work—not the tools. By aligning closely with how people work each day, Windows 11 becomes the trusted canvas for secure, scalable intelligence.



Microsoft Agent 365



Microsoft Intune

<sup>1</sup>Microsoft Intune and Agent 365 are sold separately and may require additional licensing.

# From intent to action, without breaking focus

People are most productive when their tools fit naturally into how they work. Windows 11 offers users a range of intelligent, intuitive ways to interact with AI, including natural language, voice, and embedded AI agents, all directly within their familiar desktop environment. Whether an employee is using voice to work hands-free or running supported multi-step tasks in the background, they can easily go from having an idea to getting it done with minimal disruption—staying focused on the work at hand.

## Voice in Microsoft 365 Copilot<sup>2</sup>

### Turn conversation into productivity.

Interacting with AI is now built into the way work gets done. With hands-free activation using “Hey Copilot,” workers can stay in the flow, with AI alongside to listen, create, and help move work forward in real time. By removing complex prompts or scrolling through menus, Voice in Microsoft 365 Copilot<sup>3</sup> helps turn AI into a natural extension of focus rather than another tool demanding attention.



How can I help you?

List ideas for fun remote team building event

Summarize my last recorded meeting with key takeaways

Help me prepare for my day



## A day in the life: Status updates without the scramble.

After a full morning, a **Project Manager** needs to send a status update before signing off for lunch. Using Voice in Microsoft 365 Copilot, they say this prompt:



“Hey Copilot. Give me a summary of today's milestone review meeting and pull the key action items from the notes.”

In moments, they have a set of next steps, owners, and due dates. The **Project Manager** reviews, makes a quick edit, and shares the update, keeping the team aligned without losing momentum.

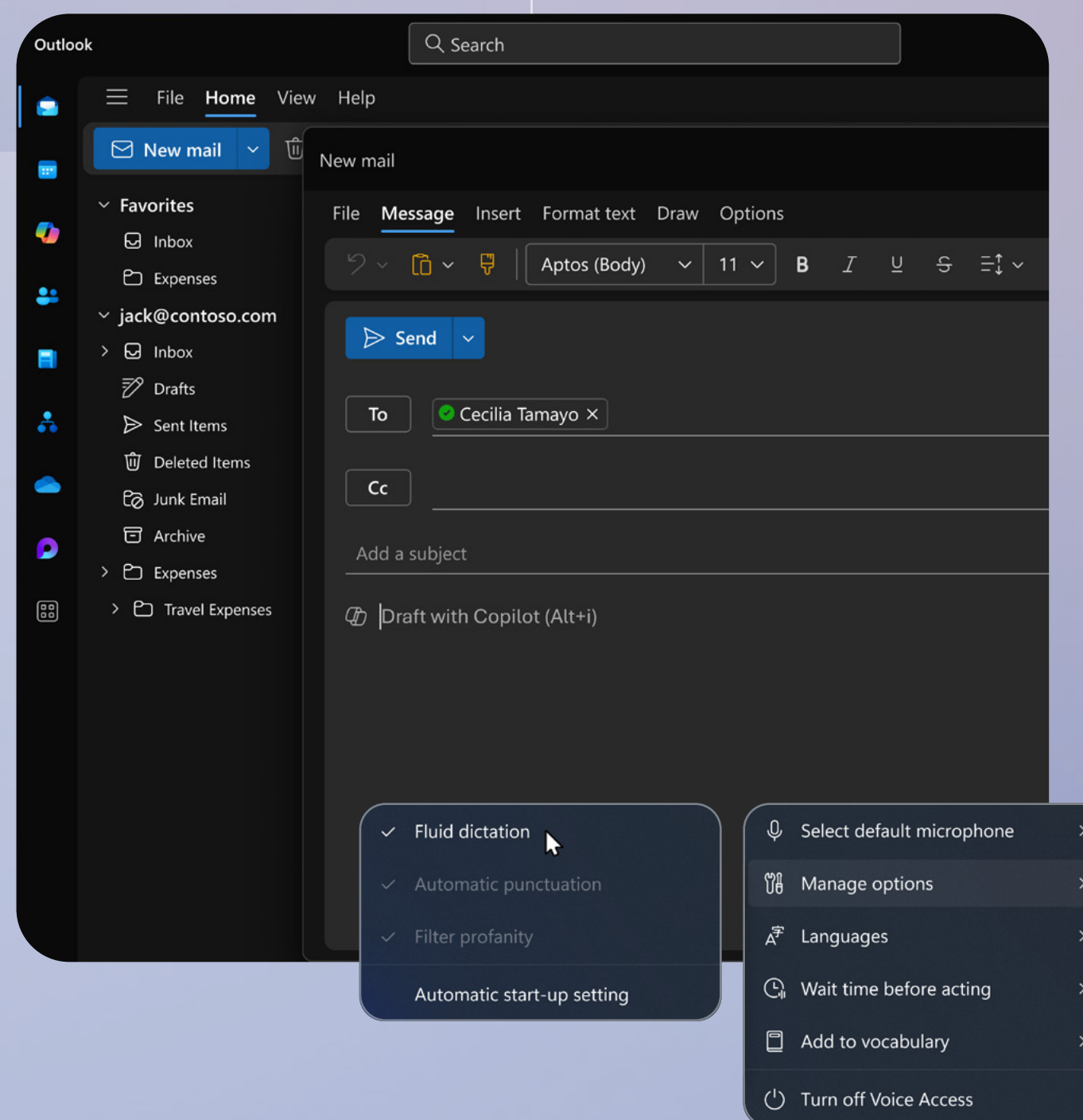
<sup>2</sup>Microsoft 365 Copilot requires a separate subscription

<sup>3</sup>Voice experiences are delivered through Microsoft 365 Copilot and are available across supported platforms.

"Hey Copilot"



Say "voice access wake up" or press the mic button to activate voice access.



## A day in the life: Ideas first. Sentences later.

The discussion ends. The **Financial Analyst** does not start typing. They speak. While everything is still top of mind, they use **fluid dictation** to talk naturally about key findings, risks, and next steps. As they talk, on-device AI models interpret their words in context, shaping natural speech into clear, structured digital text.

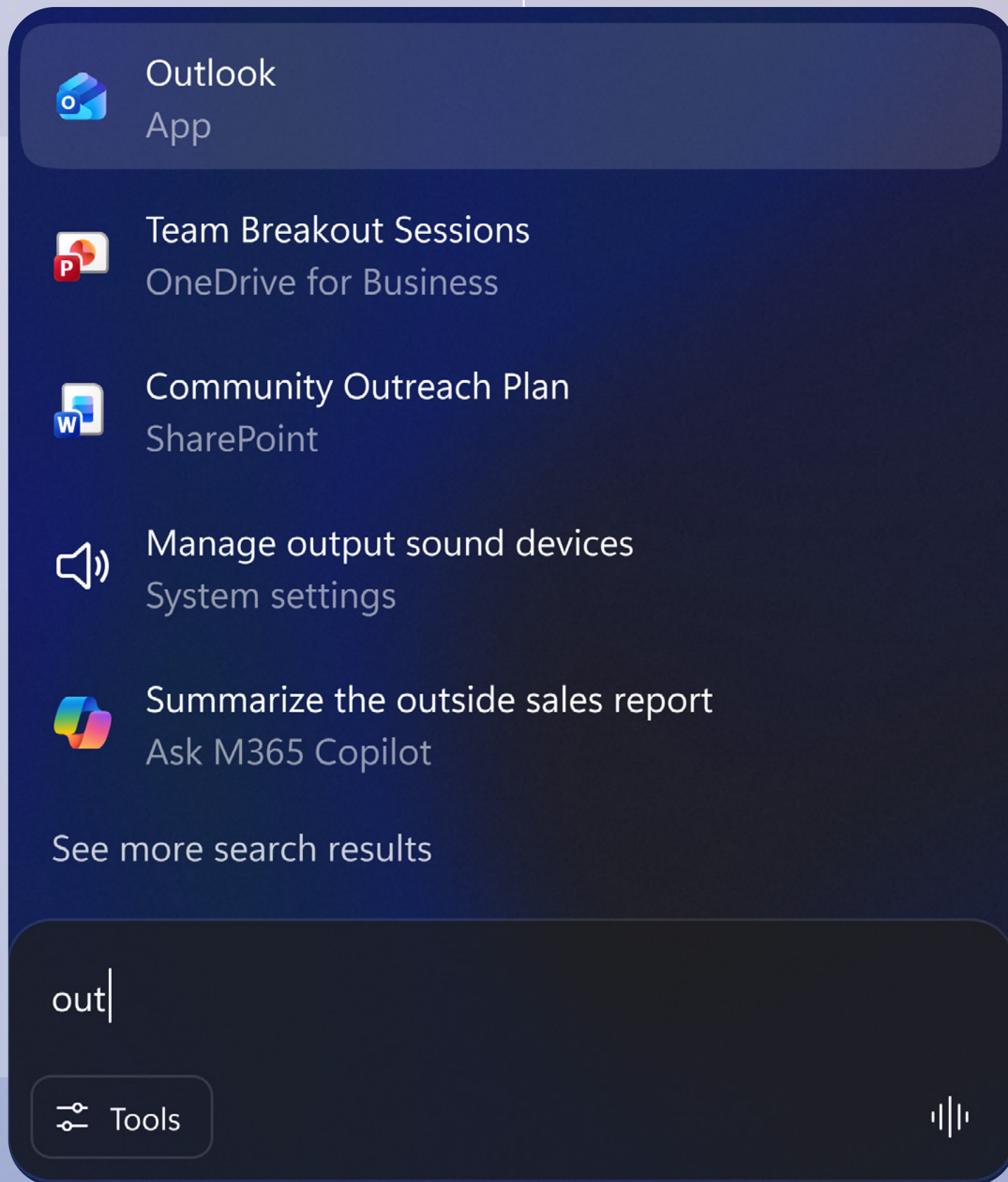


By the time the analyst finishes speaking, the documentation is largely complete, requiring minimal cleanup and allowing them to move quickly to the next task.

## Fluid dictation

**Transform speech into polished text in real time.**

When thoughts flow faster than typing, productivity breaks. Give people the ability to draft emails and documents at the speed of thought. By quickly turning a stream of spoken words into clean, formatted text with minimal cleanup, workers save valuable time on manual typing and get their ideas down faster.




A screenshot of the Windows search interface. The search bar contains the text 'out'. Below the search bar, several search results are listed, each with an icon and text: Outlook App, Team Breakout Sessions (OneDrive for Business), Community Outreach Plan (SharePoint), Manage output sound devices (System settings), and Summarize the outside sales report (Ask M365 Copilot). At the bottom of the search results, there is a 'See more search results' link. Below the search results, there is a dark bar with the text 'out' and a 'Tools' button with a microphone icon.

## A day in the life: Progress without the pivot.



A **Compliance Lead** reviews policy updates, open issues, and upcoming audits. Instead of jumping between documents and dashboards, they open **Ask Copilot** from the taskbar and ask a few focused questions—about recent policy changes, outstanding compliance items, and upcoming deadlines. In moments, Copilot surfaces the relevant policies, highlights open actions, and flags what's coming next—all without leaving the current view.

 Work stays focused, with clear visibility and control throughout.

## Ask Copilot on the taskbar<sup>4</sup>

### Leverage AI assistance in everyday workflows.

Increase worker productivity by reducing the number of places they have to look for their tools. Windows brings Microsoft 365 Copilot and AI agents directly into the taskbar and Start menu through the new Composer experience. This means faster action, less context switching, and AI that feels like a natural part of Windows.

<sup>4</sup>This capability is not yet generally available and is expected to come mid-2026. Timing and availability are subject to change.


## Agents on the taskbar<sup>5</sup>

**Stay informed while AI works on long-running tasks.** Waiting is a hidden drain on productivity. By letting long-running agents run in the background while progress stays visible at a glance, Windows removes the need to pause, check in, or lose focus. Time is reclaimed, interruptions fade, and attention stays where it matters most.



## A day in the life: AI that works while you do.

An **Engagement Manager** starts a **Researcher agent** in Microsoft 365 Copilot to gather information for an upcoming project. While the **agent** works in the background, they begin outlining the project plan in PowerPoint. Updates appear in real time via **Agents** on the taskbar. New insights appear right when they're ready.

 Without breaking concentration or switching tools, it's easy to keep up with the agent's progress, reviewing findings as they arrive.



<sup>5</sup>This capability is not yet generally available and is expected to come mid-2026. Timing and availability are subject to change.

# Cut the friction between information and action

Every extra click introduces friction that gets in the way of real work. Windows 11 is designed to help people get from intent to action quickly. By leveraging embedded AI to surface what matters most, workers can cut through tedious manual steps and accelerate everyday workflows.

## Click to Do (table to Excel)<sup>6</sup>

### Act on what's on screen instantly.

Manually retyping information that's already on screen slows progress. Click to Do<sup>7</sup> on [Copilot+ PCs](#), a category of Windows PCs designed for AI, helps turn on-screen data into action by recognizing static tables on screen and converting them directly into usable Excel spreadsheets with a single action, reducing friction between information and action.

**Portfolio Overview**


This report summarizes the design, financial status, and project tracking to ensure alignment with client objectives, design quality, budget compliance, and risk management.

Project Name	Client Sector	Design Fees
Project Atlas		\$85,000
Project Haven		\$60,000
Project Ember		\$95,000
Project Nova	Retail Flagship	\$70,000
Project Grove	Co-Working Space	\$65,000
Project Lunar	Education Campus	\$80,000
Project Drift	Transportation	\$75,000
Project Solace	Wellness Retreat	\$90,000



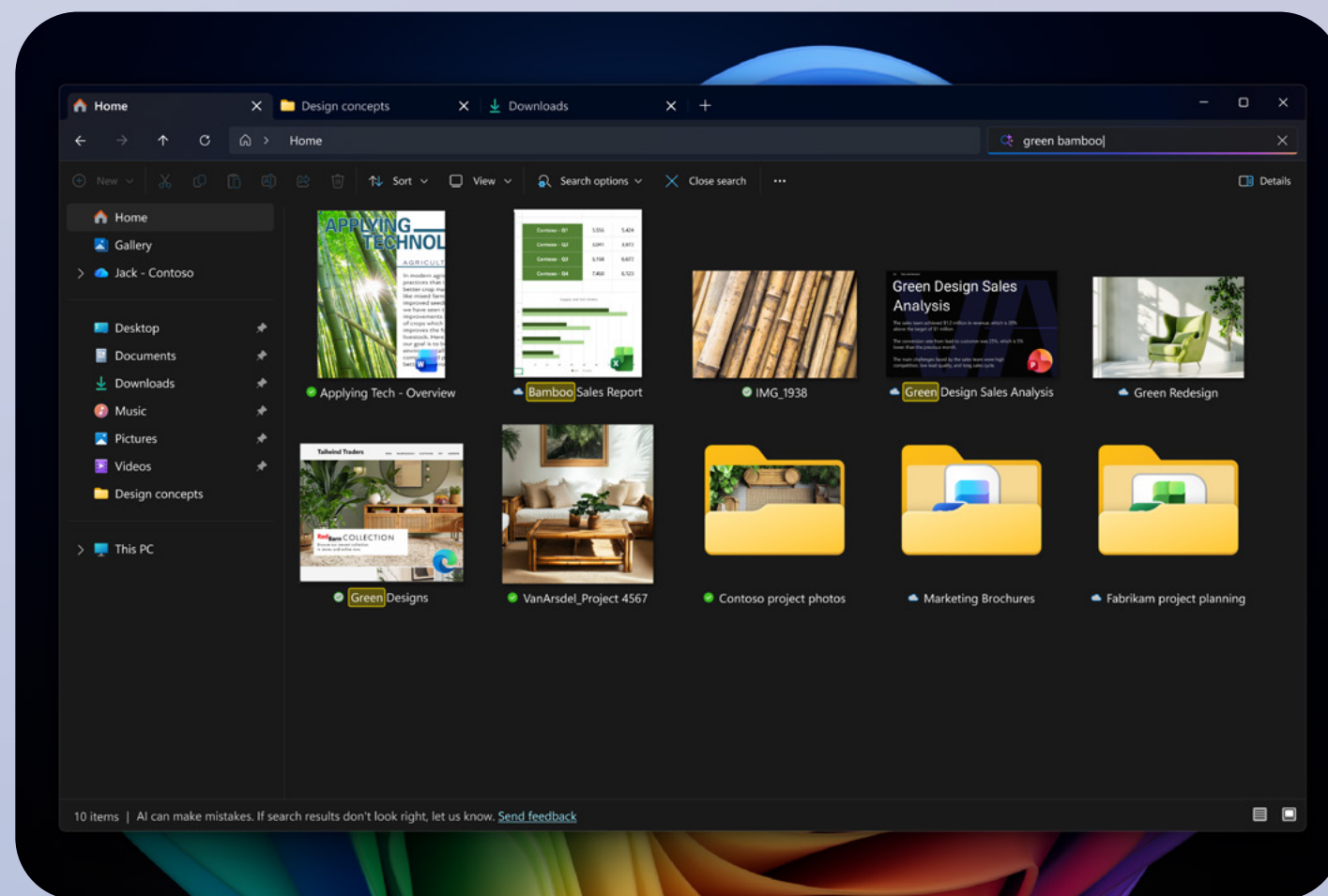
## A day in the life: See it. Use it. From screen to action.

An **Operations Specialist** reviews a supplier report in the browser, where key metrics are locked inside an image. Instead of rebuilding the table by hand, they use **Click to Do** to select it on screen and convert it directly to Excel. In seconds, the data opens as a structured spreadsheet—ready to use for a cost estimate.

 No retyping. No copy-paste errors. What was once a tedious task becomes a single, precise action.

<sup>6</sup>This capability is not yet generally available and is expected to come mid-2026 to Copilot+ PCs. Timing and availability are subject to change.

<sup>7</sup>Actions vary by device, region, language, and character sets. Subscription required for some actions. See [aka.ms/copilotpluspcspro](https://aka.ms/copilotpluspcspro)



## A day in the life: Search by intent, not file name

A **Marketing Manager** prepares for a campaign performance review by opening Windows Search and describing what they need in **plain language**—no folder digging or file-name guessing. Draft slides, performance data, and budget notes surface instantly across local files and OneDrive, already grouped and ready to use.



Preparation moves forward smoothly, without breaking focus or slowing momentum.

## Improved Windows search<sup>8</sup>

**Find what matters – faster with semantic, meaning-based search.** Too much time is still wasted remembering where work lives instead of doing the work itself. Find what matters quickly, without remembering filenames or folders, with semantic, meaning-based search on Copilot+ PCs. Semantic Search understands intent to surface the right files across multiple sources, spanning files stored locally on the device and cloud storage through OneDrive.

<sup>8</sup>Optimized for English text prompts and requires an Entra ID and internet connection to access cloud services that help ensure the responsible use of AI. See [aka.ms/copilotpluspcspro](https://aka.ms/copilotpluspcspro)

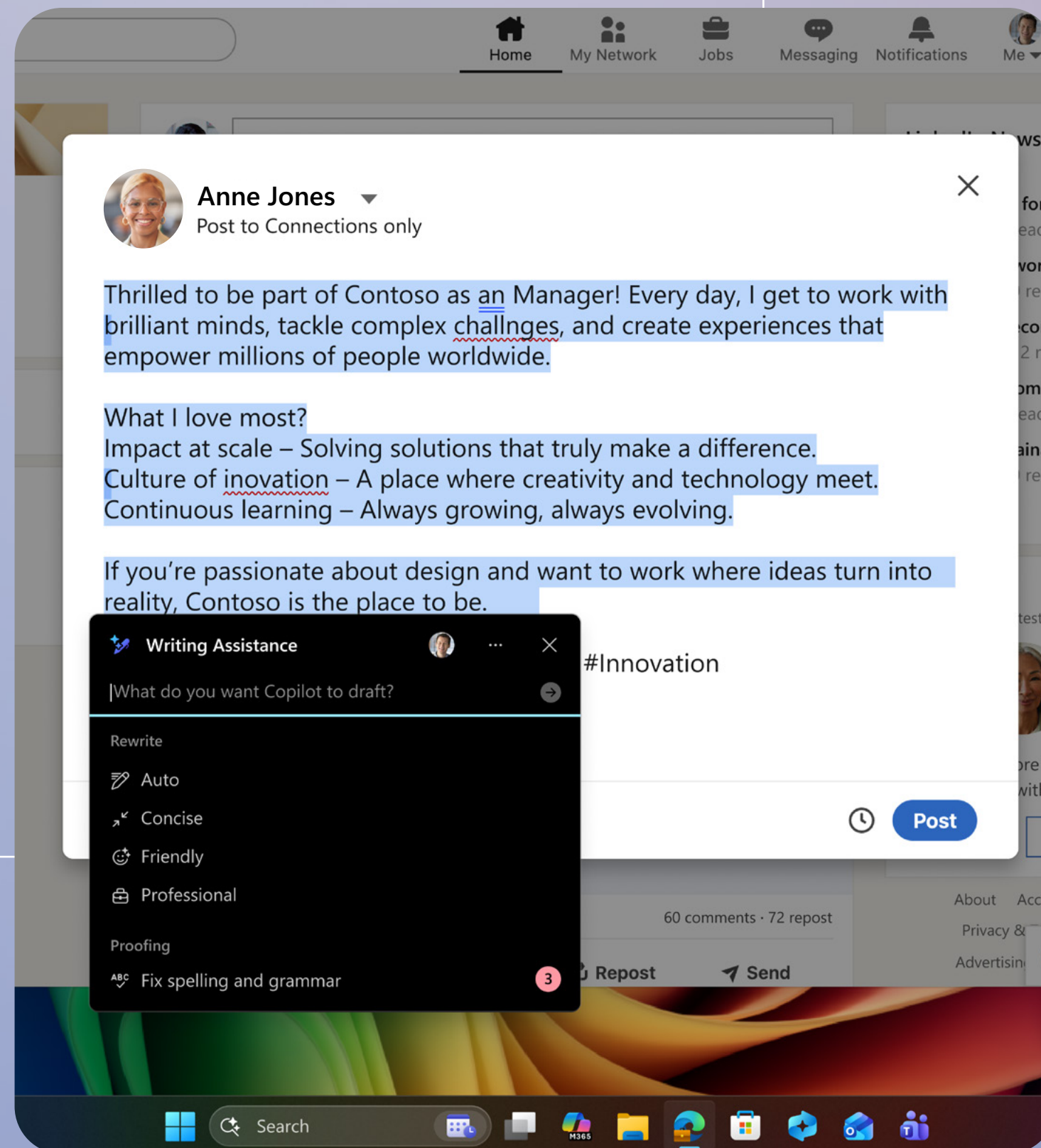
# AI that meets work where it happens

Adopting new technologies usually means a steep learning curve. However, employees can quickly invoke Windows 11 AI features to complete tasks in their natural flow of work, helping them produce higher-quality output with almost no friction.

## Writing assistance<sup>9</sup>

### High-quality writing, done.

Composing professional communication shouldn't be a bottleneck. Writing assistance with Microsoft 365 Copilot<sup>10</sup> helps produce clear, polished writing in the moment, so ideas move forward with clarity. On Copilot+ PCs, this happens locally on the device, ensuring people maintain high-quality, secure output even when not connected to the internet.



## A day in the life: When your words need a quick lift

Early in the day, a **Group Manager** must post a job opening on their team. They prepared a rough draft the night before. Without switching tools, they invoke **writing assistance** and ask

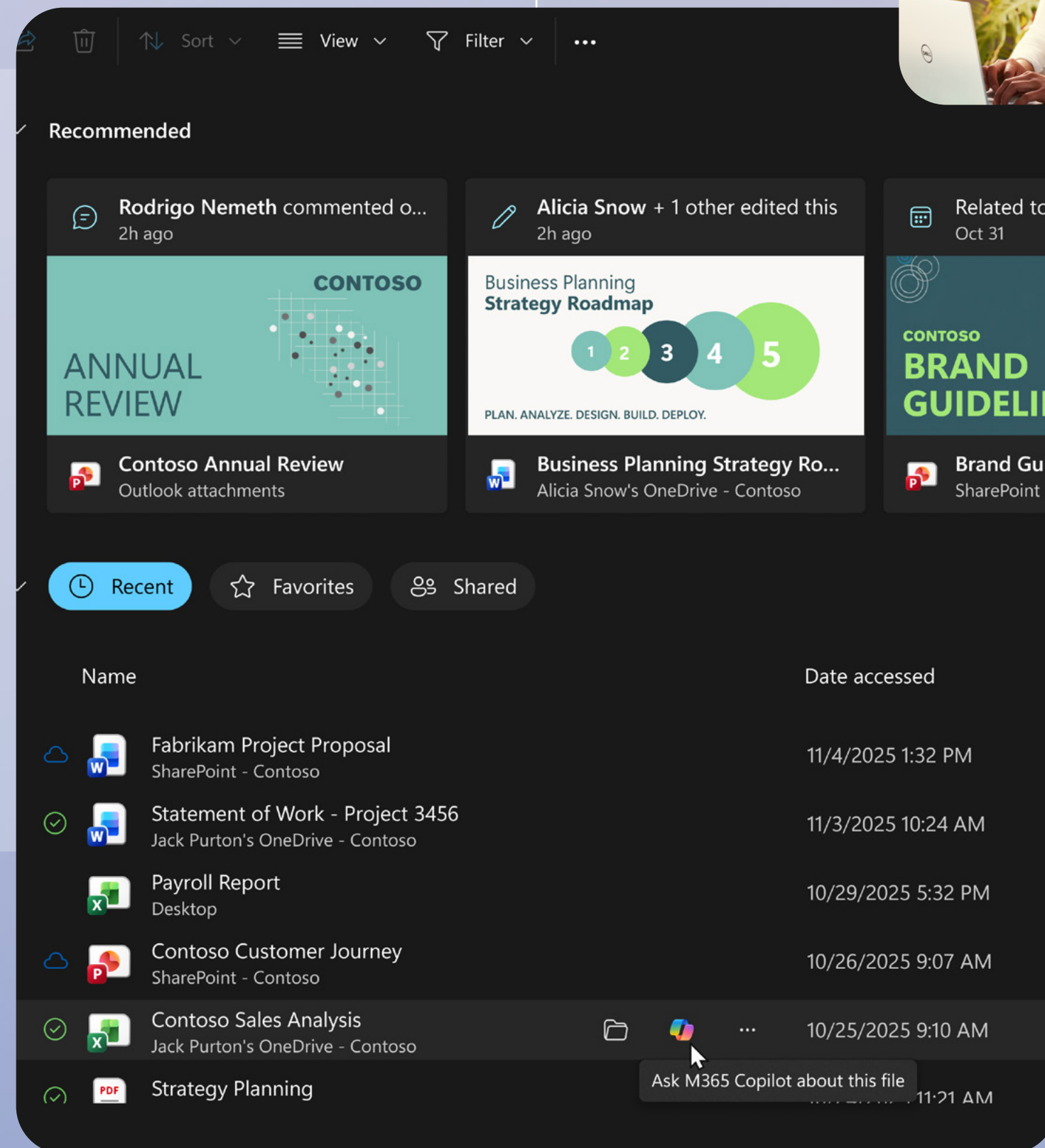


"Tighten this social post and make the action clearer."

The language sharpens, the tone adjusts, and small errors are corrected. The message is ready to send, with no interruptions to the flow of work.

<sup>9</sup>Writing assistance is available only in supported languages. This capability is not yet generally available and is expected to come mid-2026. Timing and availability are subject to change.

<sup>10</sup>Microsoft 365 Copilot requires a separate subscription.



## A day in the life: Insight before you open a file

In the afternoon, the **Project Manager** reviews a shared folder ahead of a team check-in. They hover over **key files in File Explorer** to get quick summaries of what's inside such as scope changes, open questions, and next steps.



Combined with intelligent suggestions for recent files, this makes it easy to identify important documents without wasting time repeatedly searching, opening, or closing files.

## Ask Copilot in File Explorer

**Turn files into decisions – without opening them.**

Too often, decisions slow down because insight is buried behind clicks. Windows brings context forward in File Explorer by surfacing summaries and relevant files as soon as attention lands on them. This cuts through digital clutter before a file is even opened, helping teams spend less time searching and more time deciding.

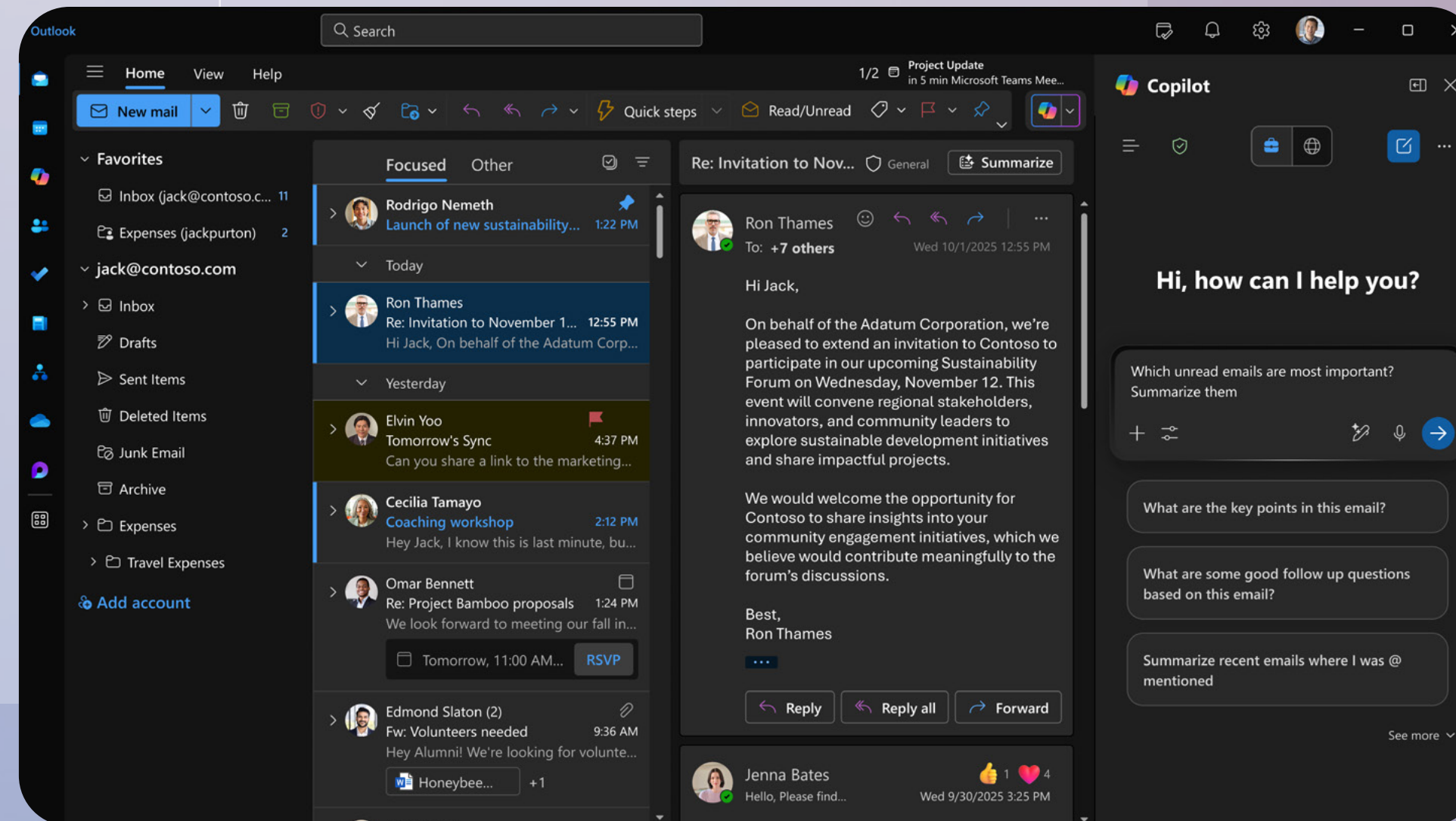


## A day in the life: From inbox overload to next steps

At the end of a busy day, a **Program Manager** opens Outlook to find a long email thread with dozens of replies. Instead of scrolling, they use **Outlook Summary** to quickly see essential updates, decisions made, and action items.



With clear context, the Program Manager sends a quick response to confirm next steps. The inbox stays manageable, and work moves forward without extra effort.



## Outlook summary<sup>11</sup>

**Turn email overload into clear action.**

Untangling long email chains can be complex and time-consuming. Outlook Summary cuts through email noise by distilling long email threads into clear and actionable summaries instantly—running locally on Copilot+ PCs with no reliance on internet connection.

<sup>11</sup>Available now on Copilot+ PCs with Snapdragon® X Series processors.



# Conclusion: Get started now

The companies that will win with AI aren't waiting for a better tool. They've already made a different decision: to stop treating AI as something that sits alongside work and start making it part of how work happens.

That's the Frontier Firm advantage. And it doesn't come from the breadth of an AI portfolio. It comes from the depth of how intelligence is woven into the everyday; into the operating system, the workflows, and the moments that used to slow people down.

Windows 11 was engineered with this exact principle at its core. Not as an add-on to your AI strategy, but as the execution layer where that strategy becomes real.

The question isn't whether your organization will make this shift. It's whether you'll be among the ones who get there first.

## Ready to see what's next?

- Join the [Windows Insider Program](#) to preview the latest Windows AI features and help shape what becomes standard for modern work.
- Visit the [blog](#) for announcements, best practices, and deep dives on Windows AI.
- Watch the [video](#) to learn more about how people can be productive without changing how they work with Microsoft 365 Copilot and AI experiences on Windows.
- Learn how [Frontier Firms are transforming their organizations](#) with AI.

