stripe

February 24, 2026

Dear Stripe community,

Last year, businesses running on Stripe generated $1.9 trillion in total volume, up 34% from 2024, and equivalent to roughly 1.6% of global GDP. Our programmable financial services now power more than 5 million businesses directly or via platforms, including all of the top AI companies, many of the largest blue-chip companies (90% of the Dow Jones Industrial Average), most of the biggest tech companies (80% of the Nasdaq 100), and a significant fraction of freshly minted startups (25% of all Delaware corporations are now created with Stripe Atlas). Beyond payments, these businesses are using Stripe to accelerate their growth with billing and subscription management, tax compliance, fraud prevention, embedded finance, global treasury management, and much besides. Link, the easiest way to pay online, is now used by more than 200 million people.

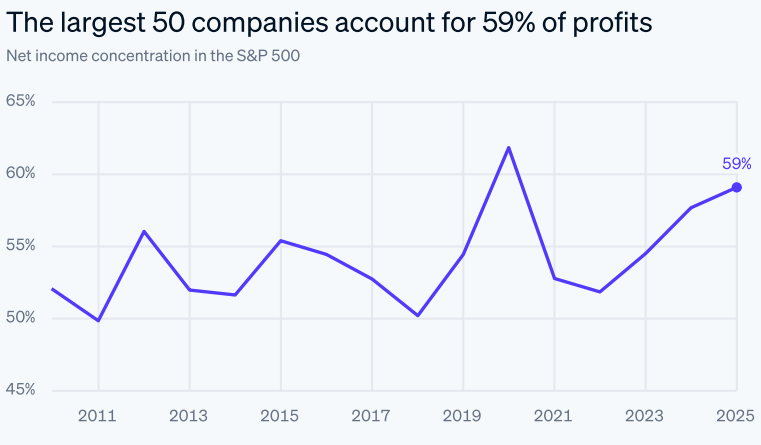
Stripe remained robustly profitable, allowing us to continue investing heavily in product development (with more than 350 product updates last year) as well as acquisitions. Since our last update, we acquired Privy, which powers more than 110 million programmable wallets, and Metronome, which powers the intricate usage-based billing models used by companies like OpenAI, Anthropic, Confluent, and NVIDIA. Metronome joins our Revenue suite, which is on track to hit an annual run rate of $1 billion this year.

All in all, 2025 was a strong year for the internet economy, and we're delighted to see so many of Stripe's customers do so well.

The sorting machine

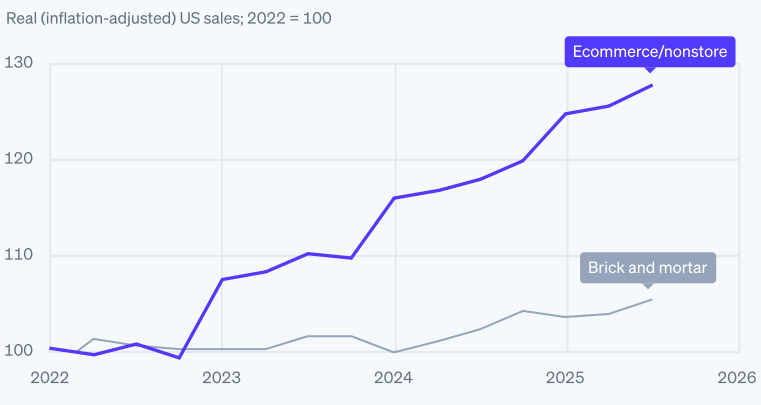
At heart, competitive markets are a sorting machine. They direct profits, capital, and talent to the places of greatest impact, as determined by customers voting with their wallets. Historically, this sorting happened methodically. It typically took decades for a household name to be unseated or for a new entrant to reach meaningful scale.

The sorting machine is now whirring faster: winners and losers are being anointed more quickly and more intensely. Today, the most profitable third of publicly listed companies in the US account for two-thirds of total market capitalization, the highest share since data began in 1963. And much of this is a story of profit concentration, not just valuations: the top 10% of the S&P 500 by market cap now account for roughly 59% of the index's total profits, which is elevated relative to recent history.

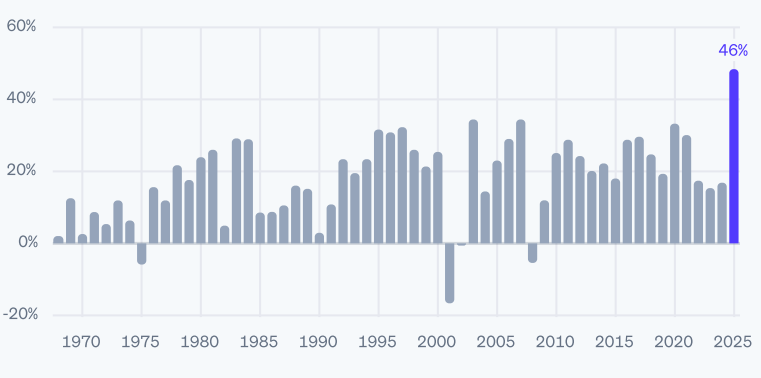


Source: FMP

Much of this is driven by bifurcation within industries. In retail, for example, US brick-and-mortar sales grew just 5% over the past 3 years, whereas ecommerce sales grew 30% over the same period (both in inflation-adjusted terms). In air travel, the "big 3" of American, Delta, and United all increased their share of industry revenues and profits over the past decade. (Indeed, Delta and United accounted for nearly all US airline profits in 2025.) In healthcare, hospital and insurer profit shares have contracted significantly since 2019, but health tech is on track to exceed $110 billion in EBITDA by 2029. Each sector has its own particular dynamics, but the pattern is clear: a cohort of companies is pulling away. Economy-wide, demand for software, computers, and data center investment drove nearly half of all US GDP growth in 2025 and will likely soon be the majority of US growth.



Source: Stripe analysis of Bureau of Economic Analysis data



Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Congressional Budget Office, Stripe analysis

Based on what we can tell from the set of businesses that started on Stripe in 2025—a remarkable cohort—there are no signs of the sorting machine slackening. In 2025, many more new companies joined Stripe than ever before, with more than half of them (57%) based outside the US. This new cohort is by far the highest performing and fastest moving we've ever seen, growing around 50% faster than the 2024 cohort. The number of companies reaching $10 million ARR within 3 months of launch was double the 2024 count.

This seems to be part of a larger expansion and acceleration in our industry. After years of relative calm, the number of iOS apps released in December 2025 jumped by 60% year over year. (Someone should check the App Store review team's sleep scores.) Even code production is accelerating: pushes to GitHub, which grew roughly 10%–12% in prior years, surged 41% between Q3 2024 and Q3 2025.

As building gets easier, we're working on making Stripe even simpler to integrate—including for the agents. We recently introduced claimable sandboxes, which let you start using Stripe directly from your AI coding tools like Manus, Base44, Replit, and Vercel. When you're done with v1 and your product is ready to launch, that sandbox converts into a live Stripe account with its configuration intact. More than 100,000 sandboxes have been created this way.

We're also improving Stripe Atlas, the world's easiest way to incorporate a business, which saw a 41% increase in company formations last year. Atlas companies are monetizing sooner: in 2025, 20% of Atlas startups charged their first customer within 30 days, up from 8% in 2020.

As we look at these figures, there is an obvious question: is 2025 an anomaly or the beginning of a new regime? Time will adjudicate, but our best guess is that the 2025 acceleration is the start of a larger inflection in entrepreneurship and creativity facilitated by advances in large language models. We have an ambitious roadmap of improvements planned. Stripe will be the best way to build a business in the era of AI.

Global by default

For those with aspirations to "go global," the conventional playbook used to be a steady, sequential progression: win at home, then push abroad. It took Coca-Cola 20 years to bottle its first soda in Cuba, while McDonald's and Starbucks waited 27 and 16 years, respectively, to serve their first customers in Canada.

After the arrival of the World Wide Web, free services tended to launch globally, but their monetization machinery still operated with a time delay. When Facebook changed from a college-only network to a public platform in 2006, anyone with a browser could create an account, but anyone with money couldn't necessarily advertise. Support for international currencies didn't arrive until 2009, five years after the company was founded. For its part, Google only accepted its first GBP payment from an advertiser in the UK (a live lobster mail order firm!) in 2002, four years after launching its search product globally.

Over the last few years, the country-by-country expansion model has melted away. The "domestic market" for a new generation of internet businesses is the internet itself. Nearly every AI product you've heard of is all the rage in every country you've heard of. ChatGPT, Claude, Replit, Lovable, Base44, Vercel, Cursor, Midjourney, and many more launched globally by default.

This isn't merely about incremental revenue from a "long tail" of international users. In many cases, the "long tail" is much of the dog. Among Stripe businesses with mostly international revenue, 30% of that revenue comes from countries that are neither their home market nor one of the top 10 global economies.

This is possible largely due to infrastructure that no longer makes foreign demand feel foreign. Last year, we enabled businesses to launch a localized checkout in more than 100 countries simultaneously, complete with localized pricing to maximize conversion, more than 120 payment methods, and local tax compliance supported out of the box.

Sometimes improved infrastructure is only felt after decades; other times, pent-up demand reveals itself overnight. Gamma is a California-based AI platform used by 70 million people to create presentations. When Gamma joined the first cohort of businesses on Stripe to accept UPI payments in India, its Indian revenue leapt 22% that same month.

Ironically, the tech companies most constrained by barriers of financial geography have tended to be fintechs themselves. Twelve years after Chime launched, you can only open a new Chime account from inside the US. Nubank, founded in 2013, served only Brazil for its first six years and added only two other countries in the last six. Even at Stripe, our Issuing product is available in only 22 countries some 7 years after launch—faster than most, but not as fast as we would like.

This is also changing. The latest cohort of fintech companies—Sling Money, DolarApp, Félix, and KAST, to name a few—are building global financial apps right out of the gate. Similarly, last year we launched our first globally native product, Financial Accounts, which businesses can use to hold, send, and receive funds. We made it available to businesses in more than 100 countries on day one. The progress is in large part due to stablecoins, whose borderlessness allows fintechs to set up infrastructure that works everywhere. Global-by-default financial services are, for the first time, a real possibility.

Stable progress

It may be a crypto winter, but it's a stablecoin summer. After a decade of stablecoin volumes tracking the undulations of crypto asset prices, last year saw a clear divergence. In 2025, the price of Bitcoin dropped precipitously (and is now down 50% from October), but stablecoin payments volume doubled to around $400 billion, 60% of which is estimated to represent B2B payments. Bridge, the stablecoin orchestration platform we acquired, saw volume more than quadruple. Stablecoin payments are advancing quietly and inexorably as real-world uptake continues apace.

This growth has been catalyzed by a profusion of new capabilities. A Y Combinator founder can now receive funding in stablecoins, hold them in a Stripe financial account, and use them to pay their first engineers, who could be anywhere in the world. SaaS platforms are using stablecoins to collect recurring payments, thanks to a new smart contract that obviates the need for wallet owners to manually sign each transaction. Enterprises leaning on stablecoins to expand internationally now have better tools to embed digital wallets directly into their core products. With Privy, companies like Ramp and Deel have a single API to provision easy-to-use wallets in both custodial and noncustodial models. This makes it possible to build fully global products on day one.

The interoperability between crypto and fiat is also rapidly improving. In April, Bridge partnered with Visa to introduce cards that allow businesses and consumers to spend their stablecoins just like any other card. The payment is deducted from a stablecoin balance and automatically converted to the local currency; the business receives the funds just like any other payment, serenely insulated from the underlying stablecoin mechanics. Phantom, one of the most popular crypto wallets with 20 million monthly active users, is using Bridge to roll out stablecoin-backed cards to its customers.

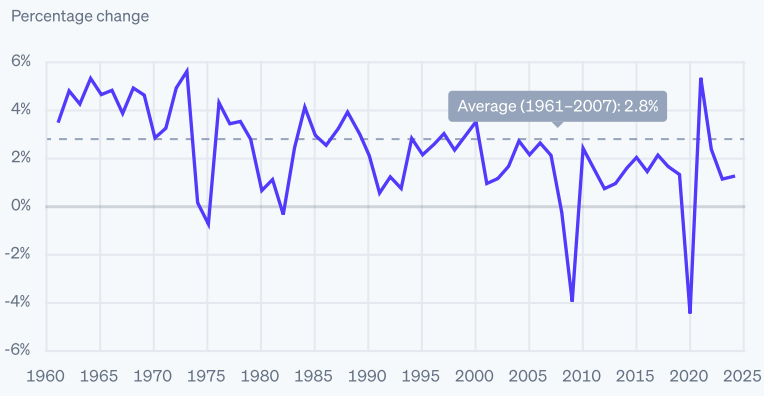
As we prepare for a world of massive stablecoin adoption, we spent time last year thinking about blockchains. Today's blockchains have been designed for trading and DeFi, and the attributes that matter for payments (including throughput, reliability, cost predictability, and privacy) have not been a significant focus. Bitcoin processes fewer than 10 transactions per second. Last year, a memecoin trading frenzy on one of the major blockchains delayed payouts for one Bridge user by over 12 hours and spiked per-transaction prices 35×. While such operational issues are already significant, they will only intensify, for we expect the appetite for transactions to grow a great deal. In our view, agents will most likely soon be responsible for most internet transactions, and we will likely need blockchains that support more than one million—or even one billion—transactions per second.

In September, we unveiled Tempo, a blockchain purpose-built for payments, incubated together with Paradigm. With Tempo, businesses get dedicated payment lanes, sub-second finality, opt-in privacy, and interoperability with compliance and accounting systems. These features may sound prosaic, but they matter a great deal for infrastructure that supports real-world economic activity. Companies like Visa, Nubank, and Shopify are already testing Tempo for a number of use cases, including global payouts, embedded finance, and remittances. Klarna, whose CEO was once a self-proclaimed crypto skeptic, became the first bank to launch a stablecoin—KlarnaUSD—on the Tempo testnet, using Bridge's Open Issuance to facilitate faster and cheaper cross-border settlement. Tempo's architecture is also particularly well suited to agentic payments and microtransactions. Tempo's mainnet will be launching soon, and we look forward to seeing what ambitious businesses decide to build with it.

Working capital's working. Capital!

Since 2008, GDP per capita growth has been a sluggish 1.0% in OECD countries—down from 2.8% a year, on average, for the 46 prior years (when data begins). It's tempting to reach for local explanations (Japan's aging workforce, Brexit, Europe's energy mix, and so on), but there is good evidence that a significant culprit is the sharp, global drop in the availability of capital.

Sluggish 1.0% GDP growth in OECD countries since 2008

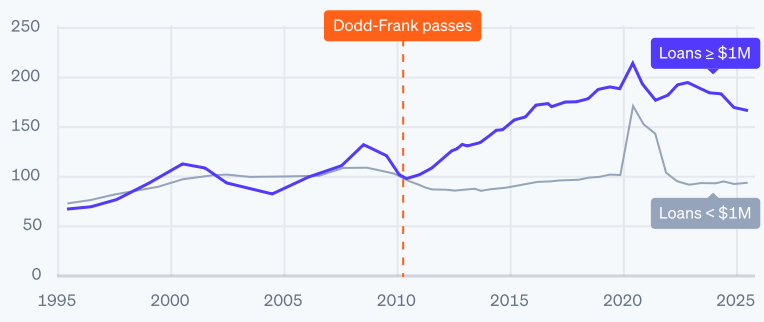


Source: OECD, Stripe analysis

Indeed, in most OECD countries, capital requirements for banks went up and capital access for small businesses went down following the Global Financial Crisis. Basel III reforms raised capital standards for large banks around the world. In Ireland, bank lending to small businesses dropped by more than 66% between 2011 and 2019. In the UK, small business lending contracted in 2012 and remained weak thereafter.

The US fared slightly better, with easier access to capital from nonbank lenders and 1.7% per capita GDP growth over the last 15 years. But the broad trends, post-Dodd-Frank, are the same: tightening of bank rules and reduced access to capital for small businesses. Since 2010, loans above $1 million are up 68%, while loans under $1 million are down 5%. Only 41% of small business loan applications were approved in the US last year, down from 50% in 2015.

US business loans under $1M are down 5% since 2010

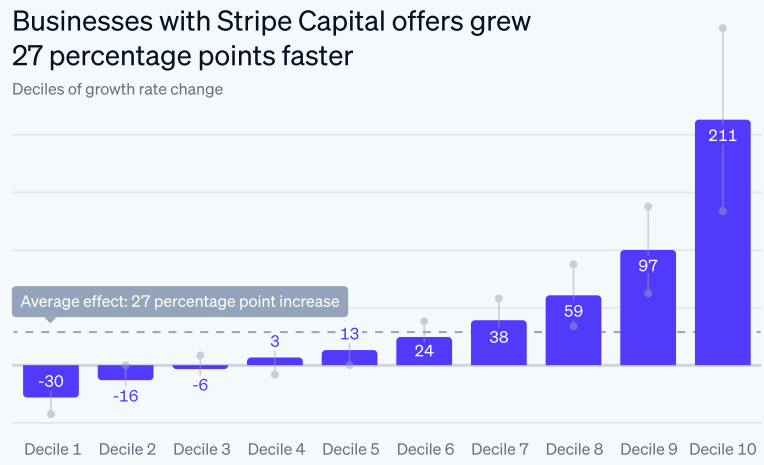


Source: Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Bureau of Economic Analysis, Stripe analysis

We created Stripe Capital to help solve the global paucity of access to capital, especially for small businesses. For businesses that use Stripe to accept payments, their real-time revenue data makes for a simple input to a lending decision. Businesses pay back loans as a small percentage of their subsequent sales, effectively drawing working capital forward from their own growth. Funding volume grew 45% from 2024 to 2025, with Stripe Capital supporting more than 81,000 businesses. (Many of these businesses had access to Stripe Capital funds directly through the vertical SaaS platform on which they run—GlossGenius for beauty salons, Tekmetric for auto shops, Pixieset for photographers, and so on.)

Over the last two years, we ran a randomized study to understand the impact of Capital: when we help businesses grease their wheels, how fast can they grow? Turns out, a lot faster. Businesses that accepted Capital offers grew 27 percentage points faster over the following year than comparable businesses that didn't.

Businesses with Stripe Capital offers grew 27 percentage points faster



Source: Stripe data

The averages conceal a wide spread. The fastest-growing decile of financed businesses grew more than 3× faster than comparable peers; the next decile grew nearly 100 points faster. A representative example: Xirsys, a server hosting business based in California, used financing from Stripe Capital to set up additional servers in China, India, and Japan, subsequently doubling its revenue. Notably, even businesses with low credit scores grew 11 to 18 percentage points faster after receiving financing.

It's speculative, but we wonder whether access to capital will become a more important factor in economic outcomes over the coming years, as advances in artificial intelligence increase the returns on investment.

Escaping from low revenue mode

For mature businesses, there are notoriously few guaranteed growth levers hiding in plain sight, and the most enticing don't always work out.

Take advertising. In 2019, Gillette won a Silver Lion at Cannes for its ad, "The Best Men Can Be." Later that year, P&G took an $8 billion write-down on the business, as the award-winning campaign failed to ignite growth. More recently, a campaign for Indian Railways won a Grand Prix and 6 Gold Lions at Cannes in 2025 for its golden-ticket-style daily lottery (each day, 1 train ticket number was eligible to win 10,000 rupees), but the campaign was shut down after 8 weeks with "no discernible increase in ticket sales."

This is why, 15 years in, we remain so evangelically animated about payments. Unlike more speculative paths to growth, optimizing your payments setup is almost guaranteed to yield extra revenue and to be among the highest-ROI growth activities you could undertake.

Microsoft, for example, evaluates the precise performance of each of its payment service providers on a monthly basis. Between June 1 and October 1, Stripe delivered a meaningful increase in authorization rates for Microsoft using a combination of Adaptive Acceptance, card account updater, network tokens, and more. As a result, Microsoft is now routing a larger share of its payments through Stripe.

Gatwick Airport had been dealing with a string of failed payments, disputes, and customer complaints under its previous payment provider. After switching to Stripe, payment acceptance rose by 2.5 percentage points. Following an A/B test against its former payment provider, FICO implemented Stripe and saw a 1 percentage point increase in authorization rates. Telehealth company Ro saw a 2% increase in auth rates and a 3% decrease in dispute activity over the last 12 months with Stripe, resulting in tens of millions of dollars annually.

Most businesses are today operating in what we call low revenue mode, running on unoptimized payments infrastructure that's leaking dollars left, right, and center through conversion, auth, and fraud prevention rates that should be *so* much better.

High revenue mode looks like a checkout that adapts differently to each customer. You should be pricing your products in local currency, and offering the right set of the hundreds of local payment methods that are most relevant. Presenting BLIK payments to your customers in Poland drives an average 46% increase in checkout conversion; offering Pix does the same for customers in Brazil, with a 31% average conversion uplift. This is all powered by a decade-long investment in AI, including our Payments Foundation Model and AI-powered services like Stripe Radar, Optimized Checkout Suite, and Authorization Boost that quietly optimize billions of dollars of transaction volume every day.

Yet there's still so much more room for improvement! Last year, we began testing a new authentication method that lets customers tap their card against their phone. The tap validates the card's NFC chip, effectively proving the cardholder has the card in hand. DoorDash, a partner in this trial, has seen meaningful increases in conversion versus previous fraud checks, while reducing chargeback rates. We also built new models for Radar to handle a wider range of fraud vectors emerging in response to the AI boom—in particular, the very common attempts to steal AI inference through abusing free trials or similar mechanisms.

CEOs: splashy ad campaigns are good fun, but don't overlook the revenue growth right under your nose. Your heads of payments almost surely deserve more recognition. Let's consider throwing them an awards ceremony in the south of France for payments optimizations. (Or for a foggier alternative, we'd love to see them in San Francisco this April.)

The five levels of agentic commerce

Much of the recent excitement in AI has been around some form of tool use: models able to not only cogitate on data in the pretraining corpus, but to go out and search the web, use a browser, deploy code, or similarly take action on the wider internet. The form of tool use most relevant to our world is agentic commerce: the idea that your AIs will soon be buying stuff on your behalf.

Like much in AI, agentic commerce suffers from having been overhyped too early in some corners. People paint a utopian picture of autonomous agents planning and executing all your commerce by knowing your every whim. We find it helpful to build up to a broader vision of agentic commerce in small chunks:

Level 1: Eliminating web forms

You research and decide what to buy. But filling out web forms is no one's favorite way to spend a few minutes. It would be handy if you could simply send the URL to your agent and have it fill out your payment and shipping details, coming back to you with the confirmation.

The system isn't making any decisions for you. It's just typing and clicking "buy" on your behalf.

Level 2: Descriptive search

You stop searching for products or specific attributes and start describing situations.

> *I need back-to-school supplies for a third grader in Chicago, including clothes (nothing too itchy or tight!), pencils, notebooks, and a lunch box. My son likes KPop Demon Hunters and tennis. School starts in late August.*

The system reasons across weather, materials, sizes, durability, taste, reviews, and delivery timelines. Specialized and long-tail products become easier to find. Annoyingly blunt keyword search is no longer a thing.

Level 3: Persistence

You stop reintroducing yourself.

> *Find me options for back-to-school clothes for Bobby.*

The system already knows your preferences and remembers any requirements, inferred from your previous conversations and purchases. You're still deciding what to buy, but you are choosing from a set of options that already reflects your taste and budget.

Level 4: Delegation

You stop choosing altogether.

> *Get the back-to-school shopping done. Keep it under $400.*

The system handles the search, the evaluation process, and the purchases on your behalf. You trust it will weigh trade-offs as you would and choose things your son will like. All you do is determine the budget. (This is what most people mean today when they talk about agentic commerce.)

Level 5: Anticipation

There is no prompt.

The system already knows the school calendar, your son's preferences, and your typical budget. All you do is receive a notification: here's the back-to-school list of everything that's been purchased. This is the most futuristic vision, where the things you need show up right before you need them, without you having to ask.

Today, the industry is hovering on the edge of levels 1 and 2.

We're reminded of those few years in the mid-90s when the structure of the internet we use today was hashed out. Netscape developed graphical web browsers. HTTP and HTML became the shared application layer. URLs and DNS gained prominence. At the time, no one knew exactly which protocols or players would win out. There was an AltaVista for every Google.

We're in a similarly rare moment now with agentic commerce, which has the potential to be generationally impactful. As with the early internet, the future success of agentic commerce is contingent on universal interoperability. Our ascent through the five levels depends on our ability to work together.

To that end, we've been busy! A few highlights from the last year include:

- With OpenAI, we developed the Agentic Commerce Protocol (ACP) to establish a shared technical language between AI platforms and businesses. It's open by design, working across payment providers and AI platforms.

- We introduced Shared Payment Tokens, a new payment primitive that lets agents initiate payments without exposing credentials. Even businesses that don't process payments with Stripe can forward these tokens to their own vaults or other processors as secure credentials.

- We launched an Agentic Commerce Suite, which provides tooling for businesses to sell across multiple AI interfaces and protocols (including ACP and, soon, the Universal Commerce Protocol that Google unveiled last month) with a single integration. Checkout, payments, and fraud protection continue to work predictably underneath. Brands already onboarding to our Agentic Commerce Suite include Anthropologie, Urban Outfitters, Etsy, Coach, and Kate Spade.

- We launched machine payments, a way for developers to charge agents directly for API calls, MCP usage, and HTTP requests using stablecoin micropayments. (Autonomous agents, themselves, are emerging as a new customer type for internet businesses to sell to.)

- We partnered with OpenAI to power the first shopping experiences inside ChatGPT. We are also collaborating with Microsoft to bring similar capabilities to Copilot.

There's no forecasting exactly where agentic commerce will be by the end of 2026, but it's clear we've already moved well beyond pure hype into a phase of building and real-world experimentation. The pace of change will likely only accelerate from here.

If all goes well, the little critters won't be cooped up in walled gardens, but will be zooming down the wide-open protocol highways.

A Republic of Permissions

Today's entrepreneurs and innovators have tools and reach that prior generations of industrialists could not have fathomed. We will hopefully soon witness the combinatorial effect of human ingenuity paying out in the form of productivity gains and improved living standards everywhere.

Last year, Joel Mokyr was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences. Mokyr is widely known for emphasizing the importance of culture relative to the traditional economic inputs of capital, labor, and technology. Eighteenth-century industrialists didn't just have coal or geography on their side. They had a new culture—an "improvement mindset" that saw the status quo as imperfect and correctable.

In *The Political Economy of Technological Change*, Mokyr also observed that new technologies have in the past often failed, despite their economic superiority, because technological decision-making implicates not only suppliers and customers, but also a broad variety of nonmarket "aggregators" (regulators, committees, courts) that influence what is adopted.

As AI and the internet expand the scope of what's possible, synthetic impediments to adoption and adaptation will become increasingly costly. Our bifurcating economy shows that growth is contingent on the application of useful knowledge and not some preordained result of its abstract availability.

AI harbors the promise of enormously improving drug discovery... but the potential will only be realized if we make the regulatory process, including clinical trials, faster and cheaper. Entrepreneurs in Europe can boost tepid economies with new tools... but only if well-intentioned yet counterproductive burdens such as the EU AI Act are curtailed. Next-generation approaches to nuclear energy could usher in energy abundance... but only if we overhaul vetocratic regulatory regimes. Autonomous transport and logistics—from long-haul trucking to drones—could dramatically reduce the cost of physical goods... provided we don't let a slurry of local ordinances harden into a blockade.

Mokyr wrote about the importance of the Republic of Letters in catalyzing the industrial revolution. Today, we inhabit a Republic of Permissions: a filtering sieve of nonmarket aggregators. While many of our strictures are sensibly motivated, it's more important than ever to ensure that they carefully balance the benefits achieved with the possibilities foreclosed.

We're privileged to support many businesses with the tenacity to show what's possible. Mistral AI and Bending Spoons are proving that world-class European talent can puncture the regulatory permafrost; Zipline and Varda are earning permissions for intricate new hardware inch by inch; while Spring Health and Maven Clinic are stitching together a new software layer for modern healthcare.

We continue to believe both in the importance of ideas in fueling economic progress and that many of the best ideas are undervalued. The Stripe Press catalog is home to many of the people, stories, and models we think can contribute to the next set of improvements. The team recently celebrated one million books sold. *Works in Progress*, our magazine of underrated ideas to improve the world, has also recently branched out into print subscriptions. (Get yours over at worksinprogress.co/print. We highly recommend it.)

Much of this letter has been dedicated to advances in AI, which can sometimes seem hard to keep up with. The qualitative difference between just-released products and last year's state of the art is stark.

We're reminded of the phenomenon of falling into a large black hole. If you ever experience that particular misfortune, you won't actually feel anything special at the moment you cross the event horizon: the path is locally smooth, even though the space of possible futures changes irrevocably upon crossing the threshold.

We write this letter at what may well turn out to be the advent of a different and hopefully much more beneficent singularity. While much around us in 2026 feels similar to prior years, it is also clear that the next decade will look very different to those just gone by.

We are as enthusiastic as ever about how vibrant entrepreneurship and wise cultures can contribute to more successful future societies, and we hope that Stripe can play a small role. And if you're propelling economic growth yourself—whether as an entrepreneur, business leader, or financial infrastructure builder—we hope to welcome you to Stripe Sessions in April. As always, there's much to discuss.

Until next year,

Patrick and John