EMA IMPACT BRIEF

Flexera Expands Flexera One to Manage the Economics of Enterprise AI

Abstract

Building on the AI Cost Management capabilities it announced at FinOps X in June and subsequently made available through an early-access program, Flexera is expanding Flexera One with a broader AI Cost Management strategy designed to give enterprises visibility and control across the increasingly fragmented economics of AI. In a recent analyst briefing, Flexera outlined capabilities that span AI applications, agents, models, data clouds, compute, and supported AI platforms. The approach combines existing strengths in software as a service (SaaS) management, FinOps, IT asset management (ITAM), cloud optimization, and technology discovery with new AI consumption and cost controls. Flexera said its expanded AI Cost Management capabilities include token consumption visibility, AI spend attribution, usage trends, forecasting, and alerts. Flexera's broader message centers on a new management challenge: enterprises need to understand who consumes AI, what they use, how costs accrue, and where optimization can improve the economics of AI adoption.

AI Creates a New Technology Economics Problem

Enterprise AI introduces a cost structure that looks very different from traditional software licensing, and organizations are now facing a complex mix of AI pricing models. Customers may pay by seat for applications, by credits or workflow for agents, by token for foundation models, and by time or capacity for compute. Data platforms may use credits, while AI platforms may bundle models, data, infrastructure, and services.

Flexera positions AI Cost Management around that complexity. The organization treats AI spending as its own management domain and organizes it into six areas: AI applications, AI agents, AI models, AI data clouds, AI compute, and AI platforms. The aim is to connect the AI that business teams purchase with the AI infrastructure and services that technology teams build or operate.

Flexera One provides the underlying discovery, data enrichment, analytics, and automation capabilities. Its discovery layer brings together information across hardware, software, SaaS, cloud, and AI. A knowledge layer normalizes and enriches those records with business context, while an insights layer supports natural-language queries, dashboards, and reporting. Application programming interfaces (APIs), workflow automation, and Model Context Protocol (MCP) connectivity help teams use that intelligence in other systems and processes.

Flexera organizes its AI Cost Management approach around three actions: track, implement, and optimize. Tracking identifies which teams use particular applications, agents, and models, where licenses remain unused, and where token or credit consumption warrants attention. Implementation supports model selection, cost allocation, and adoption decisions. Optimization applies Flexera's existing capabilities to the infrastructure and services that support AI.

Key Impacts

Flexera's approach has four implications for how enterprises manage AI consumption, financial accountability, and optimization.

AI spend management expands beyond token counting.

Tokens represent an important AI cost unit, but Flexera's model recognizes that enterprise AI economics extend well beyond model consumption. Organizations may pay through seats, credits, workflows, compute hours, data-platform consumption, and bundled platform charges. Flexera's value proposition centers on connecting those different mechanisms so financial and technology teams can get a more complete view of AI costs across applications, models, data platforms, and infrastructure.

AI attribution becomes essential to cost control.

Flexera's capabilities answer three basic questions: who is consuming AI, what are they consuming, and how much does it cost? Flexera demonstrated spend attribution across users, service accounts, business units, tools, and cost centers. That gives enterprises a way to connect usage with organizational ownership. Usage analytics reveal underutilization; forecasts and alerts flag spending changes and potential overruns.

Existing technology-management disciplines support AI financial governance.

Much of AI's cost structure sits within established technology domains. Enterprises purchase many AI applications through SaaS subscriptions, consume models through usage charges, and support AI workloads with data platforms and cloud infrastructure. Flexera can apply ITAM, SaaS management, and FinOps practices to identify ownership, allocate costs, monitor consumption, and guide optimization. These practices strengthen financial accountability, while broader AI governance also requires controls over security, data access, decision quality, and operational authority.

Optimization moves from visibility toward operational action.

Flexera's strategy connects cost visibility with model evaluation, cloud commitment management, and workload optimization. During the briefing, Flexera reported implementing 43 optimization recommendations in its own Databricks environment in under 10 days and tracking approximately $816,000 in annualized savings. The example reflects Flexera's existing Data Cloud Optimization product, separate from the updated AI consumption capabilities. The broader opportunity lies in turning attributed spending into measurable corrective action.

Translating visibility into operational control also requires integration with the systems that govern AI consumption. AI gateways and routers are emerging as important control points for managing AI spend. Flexera's approach emphasizes integration with open-source and commercial gateways and routers, including relationships with providers such as Revenium, alongside native capabilities.

EMA Perspective

Flexera addresses a problem that will become more difficult as enterprise AI adoption expands: organizations cannot govern AI effectively if they cannot see its economic footprint. AI spend increasingly crosses procurement, ITAM, FinOps, SaaS management, cloud engineering, data platforms, and individual business units. Those groups often view technology through different systems, ownership models, and cost measures.

EMA's 2026 ITAM research illustrates why convergence matters. Among organizations that EMA's ITAM maturity benchmark classifies as AI-ready, 77.8% reported fully integrated FinOps and ITAM practices, compared with 28.3% at the Optimized level, the tier immediately below.[1] That difference demonstrates a strong association between AI-ready ITAM maturity and integrated FinOps and ITAM practices.

Flexera One's combination of ITAM, SaaS management, cloud cost management, and technology discovery aligns with that integration pattern. The new AI taxonomy strengthens that position by recognizing that enterprises buy, build, and consume AI through fundamentally different economic models. The ability to link consumption with business context may prove particularly important. Knowing that token usage increased provides limited management value by itself. Enterprises also need to know which application or agent created the consumption, which team owns it, which model supported it, what business purpose it serves, and whether another configuration could deliver the same outcome more efficiently. Flexera is building its AI Cost Management story around that broader context.

[1] EMA, *ITAM in the Age of AI: EMA's 2026 Maturity Benchmark*, 2026.

This also moves Flexera into the emerging discussion around AI value. Cost management alone cannot determine whether an AI investment succeeds, but organizations cannot calculate meaningful return on investment without a credible view of what AI actually costs. Flexera's ability to combine consumption, attribution, forecasting, optimization, and existing technology-management data could help establish that economic baseline.

Flexera's breadth gives it a credible foundation for managing AI economics across technology domains. Its execution will depend on how consistently it connects consumption to ownership and business purpose, turns that context into actionable controls, and demonstrates savings while preserving workload performance. Enterprises should evaluate coverage, attribution accuracy, availability, and integration with gateway and observability tools that support real-time monitoring and control of AI consumption between users and models. The underlying principle holds: visibility must precede control.



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