
Artificial Intelligence Industry Developments – February 2026

CAPABILITY IMPROVEMENTS

- Anthropic reported, without sharing its data, that its Claude Code product experienced record growth during a viral period in January 2026 as users recognized significant developments in AI tools’ potential to expand their coding capabilities. [Link](#)

BUSINESS MODELS

- In January, OpenAI announced it would start testing advertisements as part of its free and lowest-cost subscription tiers. [Link](#)
- In an escalation of Anthropic’s and OpenAI’s rivalry, Anthropic, which committed to remaining “ad free,” released a Super Bowl commercial that mocked OpenAI’s decision to allow advertisements. [Link](#)

REGULATORY AND SAFETY

- In a standoff between the U.S. Department of War (DoW) and Anthropic, at the time the only AI developer whose models were available in the military’s classified systems, Anthropic required contractual restrictions to prevent the DoW from using Anthropic’s models for domestic surveillance or the operation of current-generation fully autonomous weaponry. The DoW insisted that the military needed to be able to use any AI vendor’s products for “all lawful purposes.” After Anthropic rejected the DoW’s proposed terms, President Trump publicly criticized Anthropic and directed all federal agencies across the U.S. government to immediately stop using Anthropic models. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth simultaneously announced that DoW would designate Anthropic a supply chain risk, a

designation previously used for companies believed to be collaborating with foreign adversaries such as Russia and China. Under this designation, Hegseth declared that “no contractor, supplier, or partner that does business with the United States military may conduct any commercial activity with Anthropic.” Anthropic called the designation “retaliatory and punitive” and promised to challenge such a designation in court. [Link](#)

- Anthropic announced updates to its Responsible Scaling Policy, a set of public but non-binding safety commitments, including that it would no longer commit to unilaterally delaying certain research and development it considered potentially dangerous if it believed it lacked a significant lead over a competitor. [Link](#)
- The International AI Safety Report, the largest global collaboration on AI safety to date, released its updates and recommendations for 2026, reviewing the capabilities and risks of general-purpose AI systems. [Link](#)

COMPETITION

- Amidst increased excitement for AI coding tools, frontier AI labs have competed to win over developers to use their models, with Anthropic and OpenAI launching competing new models on the same day. [Link](#)
- Google’s Gemini app reported increasing from 650 million to 750 million active users in the final quarter of 2025, narrowing its gap in active users with OpenAI’s ChatGPT, which reported over 800 million active users in October. [Link](#)
- Google unveiled several AI partnerships and updates targeting students and educators. [Link](#)

- Chinese TikTok developer ByteDance released Seedance, an AI video model that attracted viral interest for its ability to generate videos comparable to other top AI video models at a low cost. [Link](#)

LITIGATION

- Universal Music Group, Concord, and ABKCO sued Anthropic for over \$3 billion for allegedly misusing their songs to train Anthropic models. [Link](#)
- A U.S. District Court judge will allow a jury trial on Elon Musk’s claims alleging that OpenAI illegally restructured from a non-profit to a for-profit entity. [Link](#)

M&A

- SpaceX, the rocket and satellite company led by Elon Musk, announced that it had acquired xAI, the AI company controlled by Musk, making SpaceX the world’s most valuable private company with a value estimated by the company at \$1.25 trillion. [Link](#)
- Moreover, xAI and Apollo Global Management are reportedly finalizing a roughly \$3.4 billion loan to an investment vehicle that plans to buy Nvidia chips and lease them to Elon Musk’s xAI. [Link](#)

MARKET REACTIONS

- As Big Tech companies announced over \$600 billion in AI-related spending planned for 2026, markets reacted with modest selloffs reflecting some skepticism about whether such capital expenditure will return commensurate earnings. [Link](#)

- Simultaneously, markets reacted to AI tool announcements from frontier AI labs like Anthropic, OpenAI, and others by selling significant amounts of stock in established technology services companies such as Salesforce under the thesis that increasingly powerful AI will enable new entrants, potentially including the frontier AI labs themselves, to build software products that can compete with products from established software companies. [Link](#)

AI EXPERIMENTS

- Despite widely publicized concerns about reliability and security, a free, open-source AI agent tool called OpenClaw gained popularity as a “digital personal assistant” capable of performing tasks on personal devices, such as reading and sending messages and using the internet to make purchases, revealing a glimpse into the future of potential consumer AI agent tools. [Link](#)
- Moltbook, a Reddit-like online social network that only OpenClaw AI agents are allowed to join, quickly amassed over 1.6 million non-human AI agent “users” and 7.5 million AI-generated posts and responses, stimulating intense debate among AI enthusiasts and researchers about the future of AI agent collaboration and capabilities. [Link](#)
- Shortly after the explosion of OpenClaw and Moltbook usage, OpenAI CEO Sam Altman announced that OpenAI had hired OpenClaw founder Peter Steinberger and would support OpenClaw as a non-profit foundation. Altman stated that OpenAI expected “very smart agents interacting with each other to do very useful things for people ... will quickly become core to our product offerings.” [Link](#)