



EBOOK

AI Adoption: Overcome 5 Barriers to Empower Your Workforce

Actionable Strategies for Your Teams in the Age of AI

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Actionable Strategies for Empowering Your Teams in the Age of AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) holds the transformative power to fundamentally reshape the business landscape, creating unprecedented opportunities for established firms and fostering the rise of AI-native companies.

However, while the promise of AI is immense, its integration into the workforce is complex and fraught with challenges. [A study conducted by Microsoft and LinkedIn revealed](#) that 75% of global knowledge workers now use AI in their jobs, yet 45% harbor fears that AI will replace them. Compounding this, 60% of leaders are concerned that their organizations lack a clear plan and vision for adopting AI effectively. These statistics underscore both the rapid proliferation of AI and the palpable anxiety and uncertainty that accompany its adoption.

For business leaders, these insights highlight an urgent need to not only implement AI technologies but also address the multifaceted concerns of their workforce. AI adoption is not simply a matter of procuring advanced tools; it involves reshaping business processes, retraining employees and aligning organizational vision towards a new technological paradigm.

Over the past few years, EPAM has seen first-hand the challenges associated with AI adoption both as early adopters of AI in our own business and through our work with clients. In this eBook, we walk through five AI adoption barriers we've experienced in our own journey and seen with multiple clients. For each, we offer actions to address these challenges.



Barrier 1: AI Anxiety

ACTION

Create transparent communication campaigns that showcase AI as a supportive partner for employees, emphasizing how it enhances their roles.

Wariness or even outright fear of AI is a significant adoption barrier, primarily due to misconceptions and a lack of understanding. Employees worry about job displacement and question the reliability and fairness of AI systems, resisting these tools out of concern that they will make roles obsolete or lead to biased decisions. A recent article from Fast Company highlights how employees are increasingly resisting and [sabotaging workplace AI efforts](#), with a staggering 36% of workers admitting they would actively undermine AI initiatives if they believed the technology posed a threat to their jobs. This anxiety has led to behaviors such as withholding critical data or actively trying to derail AI projects. The issue is often worsened by a lack of transparency and communication from leadership, which fosters mistrust and skepticism about AI's role.

Companies must invest in education and transparent communication. Training programs can demystify AI, showing it as a tool to enhance human work. Involving employees in AI projects fosters a sense of control. Highlighting AI's ability to handle mundane tasks allows employees to concentrate on more creative and strategic activities. When designed correctly, using AI tools fosters a positive employee experience.



EPAM recently surveyed more than 7,300 business leaders, engineers and developers from nine countries and eight industries about AI and driving real business value. [Read the report](#) for a wealth of insights.

Barrier 2: Change Fatigue

ACTION

Demonstrate quick wins with real-life examples where AI has successfully improved workflows and made jobs easier for employees.

Like running a marathon, fatigue is a natural step in completing the race. Employees are rightfully overwhelmed with weekly headlines on AI, all while forming their own opinions on its appropriate use cases in their personal and professional lives.

Many employees feel fatigued by frequent AI initiatives that often fail to deliver tangible value. To address this, organizations should adopt a bottom-up approach, empowering internal innovators, actively listening to employee concerns and gradually building a culture of change readiness that prioritizes collaboration and meaningful impact.

Companies must clearly—and continuously—communicate the long-term vision and benefits of AI adoption. This includes a roadmap for your AI adoption marathon that shows employees the mile markers for the race. For example, convey *when* and *how* employees should be using AI solutions, such as search, generative AI and agentic AI. Leadership should emphasize how AI tools are integral to the organization's future and demonstrate their commitment to these technologies through consistent investment and support. Providing examples of successful AI applications and illustrating their positive impacts on productivity and job satisfaction can help shift perceptions.

Encouraging a culture of continuous learning and adaptability is also crucial. Offering incentives, recognition and support for employees who embrace new tools can drive broader acceptance. Creating an environment where change is seen as an opportunity rather than a threat involves regular training sessions, open forums for discussing concerns and clear pathways for feedback and improvement.



[Building an AI- & Data- Literate Culture](#)



Barrier 3: Ineffective Training & Skill Gaps

ACTION

Design role-specific, hands-on training sessions that focus on practical use cases and let employees experiment with AI tools in a low-risk setting.

Training is an essential foundation for AI adoption, but many training programs are ineffective because they are too generic, inadequately foster practice or are not supported by a broader development effort.

Effective AI training is comprehensive and tailored. It should begin with building general AI literacy, helping employees understand the fundamentals and relevance of AI in their roles, as well as explaining the vision for how AI will enable the business and employee success. Following this, detailed introductions to specific tools like [Microsoft Copilot](#) are necessary, ensuring employees are well-versed in their functionalities. Training must then dive into very specific use cases, customized by tool and audience, to illustrate practical applications in day-to-day tasks.

Moreover, a hands-on approach that emphasizes practice and feedback is essential. Providing opportunities for employees to experiment with tools in a low-risk environment, coupled with timely feedback, will build confidence and competence. Support from a community of practitioners can reinforce learning, offering avenues for sharing experiences, troubleshooting issues and celebrating successes. Implementing short feedback loops allows training teams to consistently reflect on the response of learners, share lessons learned and continuously refine their approach.



[Empowering Employees
with EPAM's AI Games](#)



Barrier 4: Unhelpful AI Tools

ACTION

Choose AI tools that are easy to use, genuinely helpful, and involve your team early to ensure they solve real problems and gain trust.

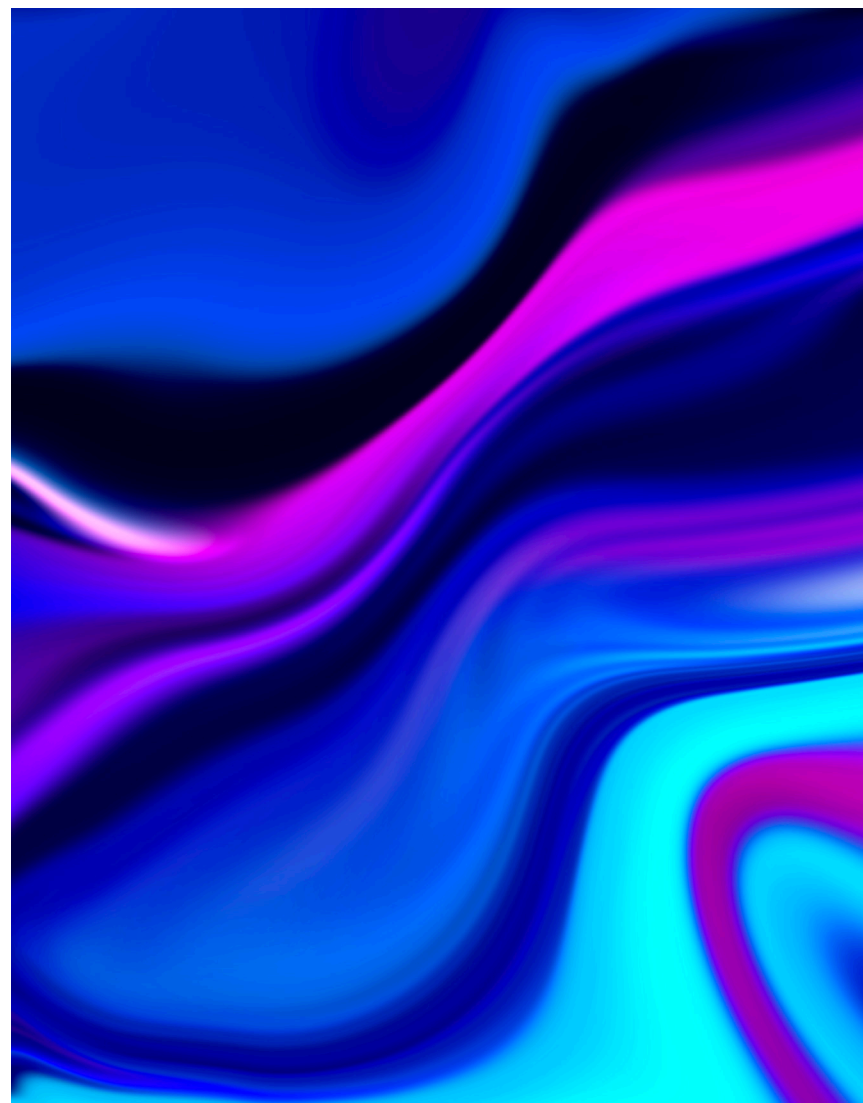
Sometimes adoption rates are low for a good reason—the AI tool isn't helpful. Poorly designed AI tools that are difficult to use or produce unreliable results make employees wary of integrating AI into their workflows. Likewise, we often see AI tools that are only valuable for small segments of the organization, useful in uncommon scenarios or are inconsistent with regimented workflows. If the tools don't seamlessly fit into existing processes or fail to deliver on promises, employees quickly lose trust and resist further usage.

To avoid this, companies must prioritize quality and value when selecting or developing AI tools. To find out what might meet your team's needs best, consider:

- Conducting workshops involving cross-functional teams to identify use cases that will lead to productivity gains
- Ensuring teams have the adequate resources, trainings and guidelines to further test and scale solutions

By involving team members early, organizations can ensure that the AI tools implemented are practical, user-friendly and address real-world challenges.

In addition, the identification of early adopters and change agents is crucial. These individuals can pilot AI integrations in areas showcasing immediate needs, illustrating quick wins and setting a precedent for broader adoption. Leadership must commit to dedicating resources and time specifically for fostering innovation.



Barrier 5: Imbalance of Safety & Experimentation

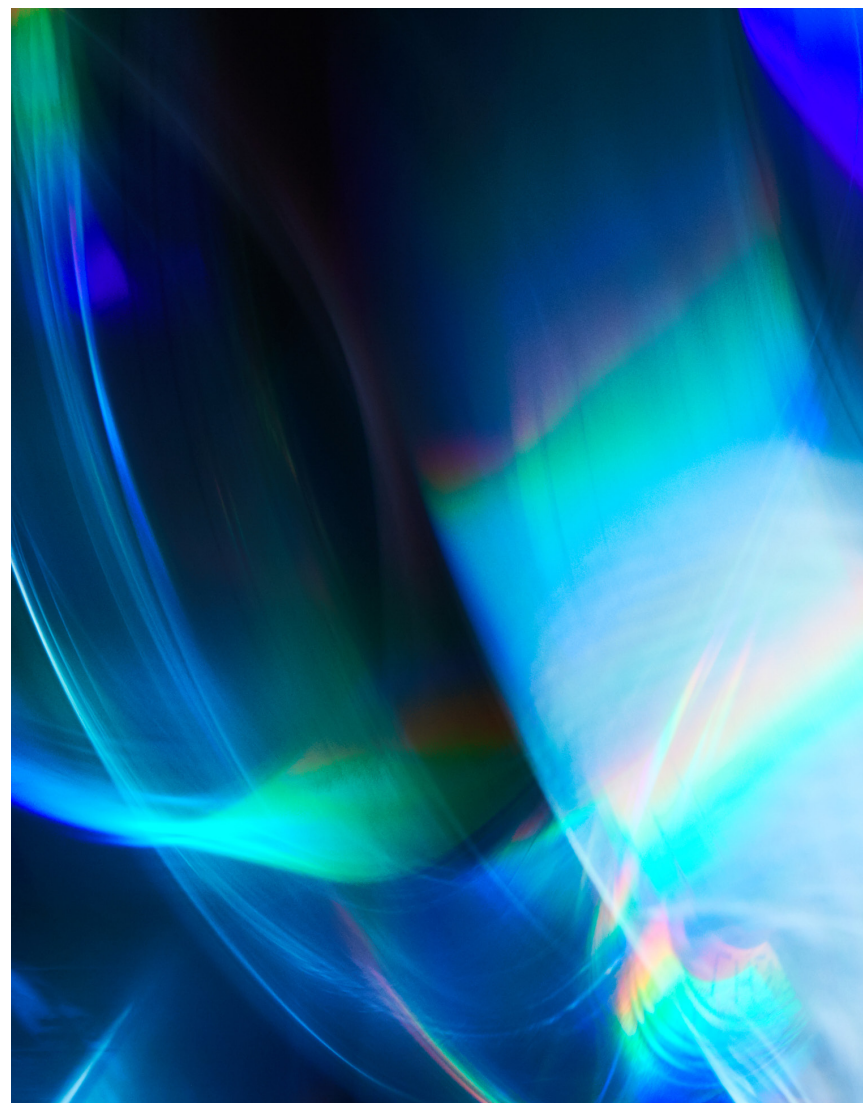
ACTION

Set up secure sandbox environments where employees can safely innovate and explore AI applications without risking sensitive data.

Low adoption of AI tools can stem from leaders overly restricting experimentation due to fears of data leakage or security breaches. These concerns, while valid, can stifle innovation and prevent employees from exploring the full potential of AI technologies, leading to a lackluster adoption rate.

To address this, companies must develop a [Responsible AI](#) approach that prioritizes security and ethical use of AI while fostering a culture of innovation. This involves leadership alignment, shared visioning and joint implementation planning. Clear guidelines and regular training on data security best practices can empower employees to innovate within safe boundaries, and the use of secure sandbox environments allows employees to safely experiment with AI tools without the risk of exposing sensitive data.

Communication from leadership is also critical to promoting a culture that values both security and experimentation. By articulating the importance of both innovation and data protection, leaders can create an environment where employees feel confident to explore AI technologies. Encouraging safe experimentation and rewarding innovative uses of AI can drive greater adoption while maintaining the necessary security standards.



Conclusion: Removing Barriers Creates a Path to AI Success

Our experience indicates that not all five adoption barriers are present at the same time (see chart). Each organization is different depending on its industry, size and experience with implementing new technology. Organizations with AI literacy programs and clearly defined use cases are accelerating timelines and seeing the best success.

Client Experience Spotlights

AI Adoption Barriers	1, 2, 3	4 & 5	1, 3, 4
Industry	Payments Industry	Professional Services	Insurance
Annual Revenue 2023 (USD)	\$25b	\$6b	\$49b
Employees	25,000	~21,400	~40,000

Leaders must see their people as another asset that requires strategic modernization. To be successful, both the technological and people side of adoption must be phases of work addressed in parallel, rather than a hand-off. Although new technology provides opportunity for change, people ultimately determine if the change will be successful.



[Learn More](#) about EPAM’s consulting services, which can meet you where you are in your AI journey.

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