VML

AI AT WORK: FROM ADOPTION TO ACTION

Analysing AI's implementation within organizations through the lens of those experiencing the revolution first-hand, to help inspire more effective AI strategies.

Contents

3 **Introduction**

4 **Top 10 headlines**

5 **SECTION 1:** Current sentiment towards AI

8 **SECTION 2:** Usage of AI

10 **SECTION 3:** AI and the organization

13 **SECTION 4:** Changing roles, responsibilities and benefits

18 **SECTION 5:** Integrating AI at work

20 **Conclusion**

21 **How VML can help & About WPP Open**

Introduction

Artificial intelligence's transition from theoretical concept to business necessity has been remarkably swift. As we enter 2025, AI has evolved from a strategic consideration to an operational imperative, fundamentally changing how businesses operate, compete, and deliver value. However, a critical question emerges: are organizations truly optimizing their AI investments and implementation?

This report – based on independent research involving 2,500 professionals across multiple organizational levels – provides a detailed analysis of current AI adoption, implementation challenges, and operational impact. Our findings reveal both encouraging progress countered by significant areas for development, as whilst 61.3% of employees report active AI usage, the depth of this implementation varies considerably, and likely includes the use of widely unauthorized genAI tools such as ChatGPT. The average frequency of AI tool usage by workers – 11 times per month approximately – suggests that many are still in the early stages of true integration.

Most notably, our research has uncovered a significant 'perception gap' across organizational hierarchies. While 68% of respondents claim strong AI understanding, this varies dramatically between C-suite executives (42%) and entry-level employees (13%). This disconnect between strategic vision and operational reality emerges as a consistent theme, presenting both challenges and opportunities for business leaders.

This report moves beyond surface-level analysis to provide actionable insights and practical recommendations. By examining current usage patterns, implementation challenges, and successful strategies, we offer a comprehensive framework for organizations seeking to enhance their AI capabilities. Our findings are particularly relevant for business leaders working to bridge the gap between AI's theoretical potential and its practical application.

The following analysis will examine key areas including current adoption rates, organizational readiness, implementation challenges, and strategic recommendations in order to provide business leaders with the insights needed to optimize their AI strategies and implementation approaches.

Shalina Ganatra
Head of eCommerce Consultancy

Methodology

The research was conducted by Censuswide, on behalf of VML, using a sample of 2,500 employees of B2C or B2B enterprises with more than 10,000 employees across the US, UK, Germany, Netherlands and France. The data was collected between 07.11.2024-15.11.2024. Censuswide abides by and employs members of the Market Research Society and follows the MRS code of conduct and ESOMAR principles. Censuswide is also a member of the British Polling Council.

Top 10 Headlines

UNDERSTANDING OF AI:

AI understanding is high but differs according to levels of seniority:

68% claim 'good to excellent' understanding

Only **13%** of entry-level (vs 42% of C-level executives) claim to understand AI

AI OPTIMISM ABOUNDS:

The majority of employees are optimistic about AI, but, again, a senior-junior divide is apparent:

55.7% overall are optimistic

69.3% of business owners vs 35.6% of entry-level employees feel optimistic

BUT CONCERNS REMAIN:

Despite the optimism, trust issues persist, with the majority concerned about AI risks:

60% worry about AI-associated risks

52.4% distrust AI outputs

61.8% have ethical concerns

CURRENT AI ADOPTION IS HIGH:

Current AI adoption is already high with future growth expected:

61.3% of workers are currently using AI

Only **9.4%** have no plans to adopt it

FREQUENCY OF USAGE REMAINS LOW:

Although adoption is high, frequency of usage remains modest:

Employees use AI on average 11 times per month

BELIEF IN AI'S BENEFITS IS HIGH:

There is a strong belief in the business benefits of AI, particularly at senior levels, but again hierarchy has an impact:

85.3% of business owners vs 51.1% of entry-level employees have faith in AI's beneficial nature

61.5% of business owners believe AI will benefit their business

AI IS IMPACTING ROLES TODAY:

AI has already changed roles significantly:

54.3% say AI is already changing their job roles

64.9% say AI helps complete tasks more efficiently

QUALITY OF WORK IS BEING IMPROVED:

AI appears to be improving the quality of work, especially at entry-level:

62.3% say AI improves work quality

69.3% of entry-level workers report quality improvements

TIME SAVINGS ARE BEING REALIZED BUT THERE'S A WAY TO GO:

There is widespread evidence for time saving thanks to AI, but a lot of room for improvement:

While **41%** of employees report some time savings, only 13% claim significant time savings

TRAINING GAP NEEDS TO BE FILLED... AND QUICKLY!

Though training is crucial and businesses must do more, leadership's enthusiasm should be tempered by employees' practical realities.

Only **46.5%** say their organization provides adequate AI training

74% of business owners vs 27.4% of entry-level employees report adequate training

SECTION 1:

Current sentiment towards AI

1. Most employees claim to understand AI

A surprisingly high 68% of respondents claim to have a ‘good to excellent’ understanding of artificial intelligence, which is pretty good going for such a relatively new technology. However, this is tempered by the notable 32% who remain less confident, highlighting a knowledge gap and the need for ongoing education and demystification of AI to empower employees. Clearly “AI training” will be a constant and visible activity throughout 2025 and beyond.

68% of employees claim to have a good understanding of artificial intelligence.

But understanding differs according to the level of seniority of the respondent. Perceived AI understanding increases with seniority, with C-level executives (42%) and senior management (31%) expressing the most confidence, compared to just 13% of entry-level employees.

13% Just 13% of entry-level employees claim to have a good understanding of AI.

However, we shouldn’t necessarily accept these claims at face value. There may be a reluctance among senior leaders to admit unfamiliarity, while junior employees – who are dealing with AI’s practical implementation – may possess a more nuanced understanding and one which has a more realistic grasp on its usage.

2. AI positivity and benefits

It's clear that the overarching sentiment in regard to AI is positive. When asked how optimistic they feel about AI, 55.7% of all employees expressed optimism about its impact, although a much smaller – but not insignificant – 16.8% feel pessimistic.

55.7% of employees are optimistic about AI.

The most striking finding is the substantial gap between the sense of optimism amongst senior leadership and junior staff, with 69.3% of business owners expressing optimism compared to just 35.6% of entry-level employees. Could this indicate that junior staff feel that AI is more likely to take all, or part of their role? Or is it that senior level executives just feel more confident given that their hands are on the reins?

The percentage of business owners who feel optimistic (69.3%) Is almost double that of entry-level employees (35.6%).

3. But issues of mistrust prevail

While general optimism surrounds AI's potential, significant concerns regarding risks, trust, ethics, and data privacy exist. Whilst seemingly a contradiction, this highlights the complex and nuanced view of AI held by many, alongside a lack of knowledge regarding exactly what AI is and how it works.

A significant 60% of workers worry about AI-associated risks, with over half distrusting AI outputs (52.4%), and nearly two-thirds harboring ethical concerns (61.8%), particularly regarding data privacy. This apprehension is likely fuelled by a combination of fears, including job displacement, algorithmic bias, and data misuse. It's also representative of the way in which workers are currently engaging with AI, as the majority of interactions are happening at a conversational chat interface level with little or no knowledge of the inner workings of AI. Unsurprisingly, together this is adding momentum to widespread support for banning the unofficial use of genAI tools such as ChaptGPT within organizations.

60% of employees worry about risks associated with AI.

Once again, we see a hierarchical divide. Business owners, focused on practical applications and ROI, demonstrate the highest levels of trust in AI outputs (74.7%) and the lowest levels of ethical concerns (57.5%), while C-level executives also show high trust (65.7%). Conversely, middle management and intermediate-level employees express the most apprehension, potentially due to perceived threats to their job s also show higher levels of concern (67%).

Business owners have the highest level of trust in AI outputs.

Recommended Actions

1. Create an "AI Education Strategy" which bridges the knowledge gap between senior leadership and entry level staff

- Ensure there are tailored training programs that address different roles' specific AI interactions and concerns, and which focus on practical, role-specific usage rather than theory.

2. Develop Clear AI Trust & Ethics Frameworks

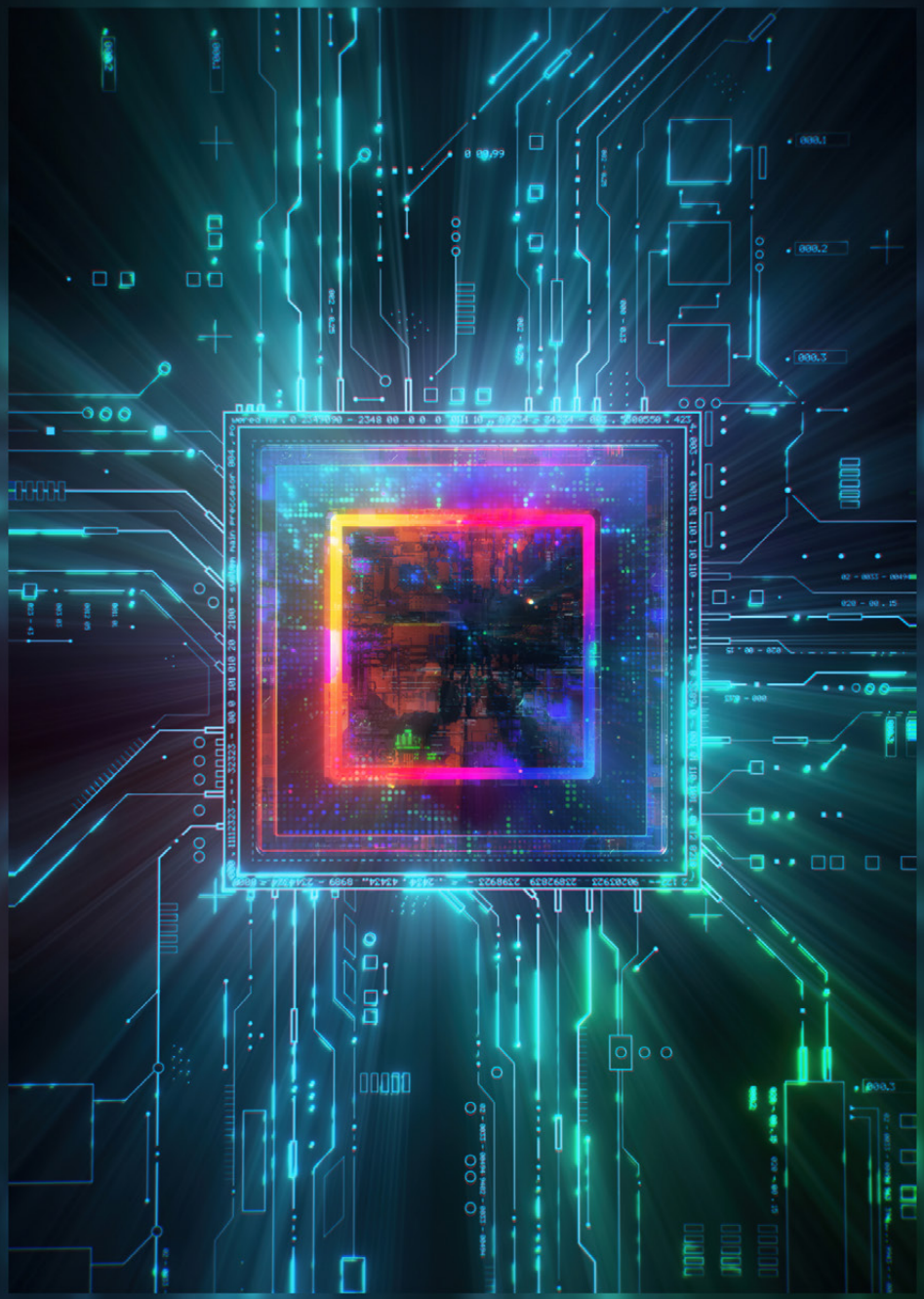
- Create clear guidelines on data privacy and ethical AI use.
- Establish verification processes for AI outputs to build confidence across all organizational levels.

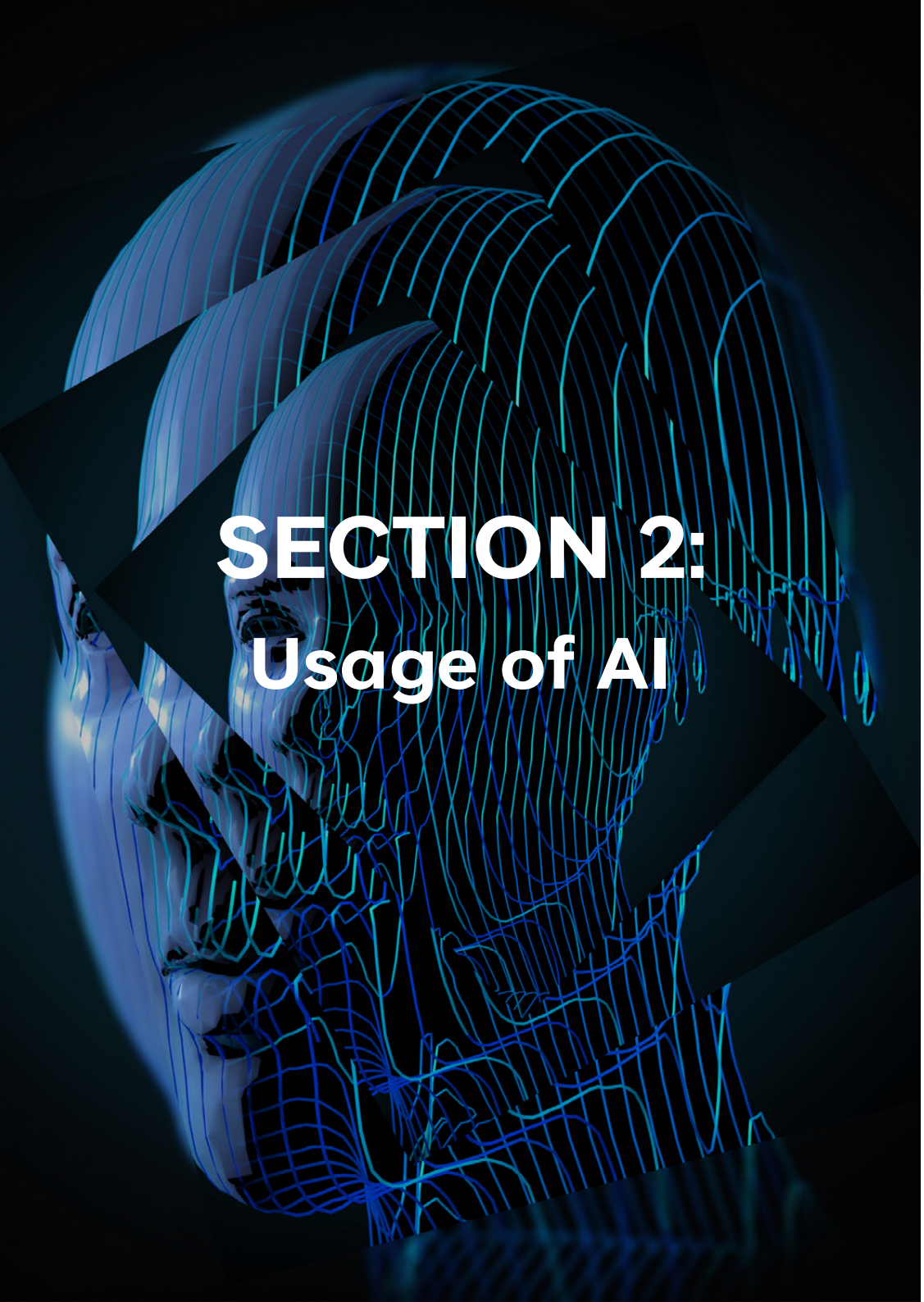
3. Create an AI Change Management Program

- Focus on addressing the stark optimism gap between different hierarchies within businesses.
- Develop career progression pathways that incorporate AI skills development.

4. Establish AI Champions at Middle Management Level

- Create a network of AI-positive influencers who can bridge the gap between senior leadership vision and ground-level execution.
- Many of the past entry-level tasks could shift to AI-enabled, so consider how entry level roles will evolve, and how teams will master the skills needed for their role/task/craft.





SECTION 2:
Usage of AI

1. Usage of AI

What about current usage? To what extent is AI currently being used?

61.3% of respondents are presently using AI technologies (with 22.2% using them often), while 29.2% plan future adoption, and only 9.4% have no plans to adopt. This indicates strong current adoption and future intent, suggesting that AI has moved beyond early adoption and into mainstream business use.

A striking adoption gap exists across seniority levels: C-level executives (89.7%) and business owners (84%) report high AI usage, while entry-level (37%) and intermediate positions (39.3%) show significantly lower rates.

2. Popularity and usage of AI tools

Currently, the most used AI tool is ChatGPT, with 35% of respondents claiming to use it. For many, ChatGPT is synonymous with AI, and therefore its position as leader is not surprising. But business owners and directors need to be wary, as concerns exist around how safe and compliant ChatGPT's usage is with many businesses' policies. Indeed, generative AI has become a concern not just for organizations but for several countries too, with many already outlawing its use based on the potential spread of misinformation, data breaches, and internet censorship implemented at governmental levels.

The second highest usage is for Microsoft's CoPilot. Given its integration with MS Office, Microsoft will certainly be hoping that its adoption increases in the near future.

When talking about third party AI tool adoption, we should also acknowledge that IT and development teams may create their own POCs and applications, adding AI to the mix in some processes and/or introducing completely new ways of working. Indeed, there is a potential future state where organizations have their own operational AI models across their businesses.

35% of respondents currently use ChatGPT at work.

3. Frequency of AI use

How often is AI actually being used? With such a high percentage of respondents professing to be comfortable with AI, and with so many claiming that their roles have already changed, it would stand to reason that usage was very high. However, our data tells us a slightly different story.

On average, usage is just under 11 times a month - that's 3 times a week. This would certainly back up the assertion that, at present, AI usage is not fully integrated into workflows, despite the current view being that around 30% of work should be done through AI.

Recommended Actions

1. Develop an AI Tool Standardization Strategy and AI Governance Framework

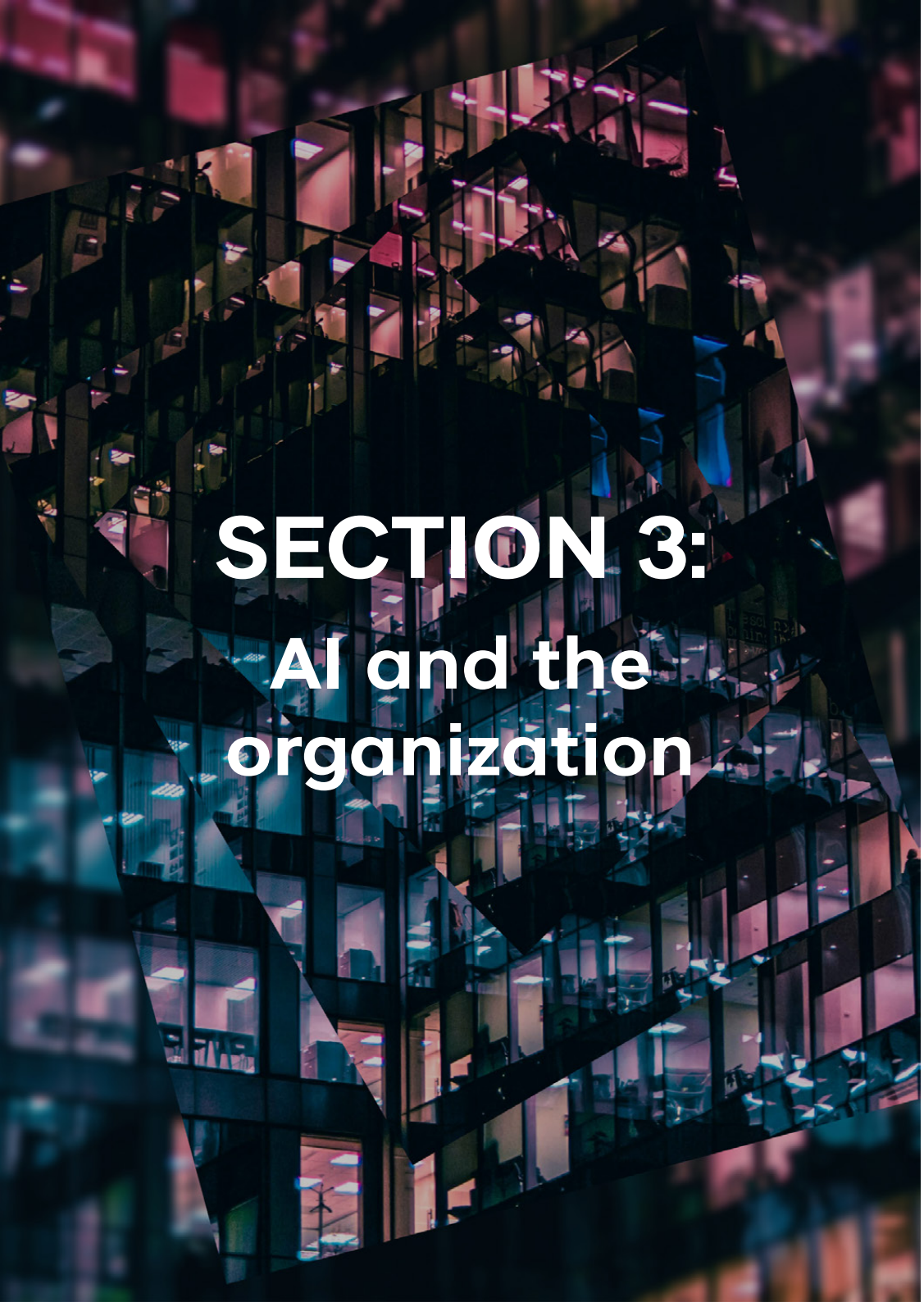
- Move beyond ad-hoc ChatGPT usage to enterprise-grade AI solutions.
- Create clear guidelines on approved AI tools and their specific use cases.
- Implement security and compliance protocols for AI tool usage.

2. Bridge the Organizational Usage Gap

- Create role-specific AI implementation plans that demonstrate clear value for each level.
- Set usage targets and KPIs to drive adoption across all organizational levels.

3. Integrate AI into Daily Workflows

- Move beyond current limited usage to achieve the target of 30%-40% AI-assisted work.
- Identify and document specific processes where AI can be embedded.
- Create standard operating procedures that incorporate AI tools into regular work patterns.



SECTION 3: AI and the organization

1. Business benefits of AI

Much of the noise about AI's impact has been focused on the individual rather than the collective. So, do business owners really believe that AI can bring benefits to their businesses?

The answer is a strong 'yes', with 61.5% believing that AI will benefit their business, while only 7.7% disagree. Clearly, in the eyes of our respondents, AI is going to make their businesses better, which is great news!

61.5% of respondents believe that AI will benefit their business.

But once again, we see big differences in the views of workers dependent on their seniority.

Business owners believe most strongly in the transformative powers of AI (85.3%), while entry-level employees have the weakest belief (51.1%). C-level executives show strong optimism (57.7%), with agreement levels gradually declining down the organizational hierarchy.

85.3% Unsurprisingly, business owners believe most strongly that AI will benefit their businesses (85.3%).

This "optimism gradient" might reflect access to strategic information, control over implementation, and job security. Due to this, it could be that senior staff are more likely to see AI as an opportunity rather than a threat, possibly because they're more involved in strategic decision-making and thus are less likely to face direct job displacement.

2. Business readiness for AI

But are businesses ready to take advantage of these potential benefits? When asked whether their business is ready for AI, a healthy 58.8% of respondents believe that their organizations are ready for AI adoption, while a notable 26.1% remain neutral and 15.1% disagree.

58.8% of workers believe their business is ready for AI.

There's a striking readiness perception gap across organizational levels. Business owners (80%) and C-level executives (62.8%) show high confidence, while entry-level employees (42.2%) and intermediates (49.2%) express much lower confidence. Senior leaders – with their broader organizational view and control over resources – naturally feel more prepared than those on the front lines who may lack visibility into AI strategies.

80% of business owners believe their business is ready for AI adoption vs just 42.2% of entry-level respondents.

3. AI alignment with organizational goals

Does AI align with organizations' goals? Overall, 58.2% of respondents agree that AI initiatives do align with their organizational goals, with 23.1% strongly agreeing and 35.1% somewhat agreeing. Nearly one-third (29.8%) remain neutral, while only 12% disagree. Interestingly, this reveals a clear majority supporting AI alignment, though a significant portion remains uncommitted, suggesting potential uncertainty surrounding AI's organizational role.

58.2% of respondents believe that AI initiatives align with their organizational goals.

As we have come to expect by now, a clear hierarchy emerges in AI alignment perception, with 75.3% of business owners and 64.2% of C-Level executives agreeing, compared to just 34.8% at entry-level positions. This stark contrast suggests that those making strategic decisions see AI's value more clearly than those potentially affected by its implementation. The gap might indicate communication issues between leadership and front-line staff about AI's role and impact or possibly reflect concerns about job displacement among junior employees.

4. Leadership support for AI

And, of course, key to the successful implementation of any new initiative or technology is leadership support. 59.2% of respondents believe that leadership supports AI initiatives, with 24.3% strongly agreeing and 34.9% somewhat agreeing. A significant 29% remain neutral, while only 11.8% disagree. This suggests generally positive leadership support for AI initiatives.

But, once again, a striking disparity exists between business owners (77.3% agreement) and entry-level employees (37.8%). This 40-percentage point gap reveals a potentially troubling disconnect between leadership vision and ground-level perception. The steady decrease in agreement as we move down the organizational hierarchy (C-level: 67.6%, Senior Management: 59%, Middle Management: 61.3%) suggests communication challenges or possible resistance to change at lower levels.

37.8% of entry level workers believe that senior leadership supports AI initiatives, versus 77.3% of business owners.

Recommended Actions

1. Launch an "AI Vision" Communication Campaign

- Create clear, role-specific messaging about how AI aligns with organizational goals.
- Establish regular updates on AI initiatives and successes across all levels.

2. Develop a Bottom-Up Readiness Assessment, pairing tech/data/AI SMEs with teams to bridge the knowledge and skills gaps

- Move beyond senior leadership's optimistic readiness view to understand ground-level reality.
- Conduct detailed capability assessments across all organizational levels including audits of current datasets and readiness for AI models; current tools and tech stack; ways of working and processes; KPIs.
- Create department-specific readiness improvement plans.

3. Implement an AI Benefits Realization Program

- Document and communicate tangible AI wins and success stories.
- Create metrics to track and share AI's impact on business performance.

4. Establish a Cross-Hierarchical AI Steering Committee

- Include representatives from all organizational levels.
- Create feedback loops between strategic decision-makers and front-line implementers.
- Ensure AI initiatives reflect both strategic vision and operational realities.

SECTION 4: Changing roles, responsibilities and benefits

1. AI's impact on roles and responsibilities

If we're to believe what we're being told, then AI will significantly change job roles and responsibilities. But how much is this change already being felt?

Just over half (54.3%) of respondents agree that AI is already changing their job roles and responsibilities, with 20.2% strongly agreeing. Considering how early we are in the adoption cycle, this figure is quite surprising.

54.3% of respondents say that AI is already changing their job roles and responsibilities.

2. The view on AI's impact on efficiency

But with this change, do benefits come too? The evidence is that AI is already making a tangible impact on workplace productivity, with nearly two-thirds (64.9%) of respondents agreeing that AI helps them to complete tasks more efficiently, with just 8.9% disagreeing with this statement.

But where are these changes being felt the most?

C-level executives (73.8%) and business owners (67.5%) show higher agreement rates compared to entry-level positions (64.7%), suggesting that those with strategic oversight are more likely to recognize AI's benefits. Interestingly, middle management shows the lowest agreement rate (56.4%), possibly indicating a "squeeze" effect where they're caught between the strategic vision and practical implementation challenges.

3. AI benefits – a closer look

The top three perceived AI benefits are efficiency (31.7%), data analysis (29.8%), and quality control (24.6%), forming a clear hierarchy of operational priorities. Strategic benefits like innovation (18.9%) and personalization (18.5%) rank notably lower, suggesting that organizations are still focused on foundational AI applications.

As one might expect, business owners and C-level executives show stronger interest in strategic benefits (innovation: 24%, scalability: 21.2%), while intermediate and entry-level employees focus more on operational benefits (efficiency: 39.7%, data analysis: 32.1%). This split reflects different organizational perspectives and responsibilities, with leadership more focused on long-term transformation while operational staff prioritize immediate process improvements.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF AI IN THE WORKPLACE?

Efficiency: Automates routine tasks	**32%**
Data Analysis: Processes large data sets quickly	**30%**
Quality Control: Detects defects and ensures standards	**25%**
Cost Savings: Reduces operational costs	**23%**
Customer Support: Improves service with chatbots	**22%**
Innovation: Enables new products and services	**19%**
Risk Management: Identifies and mitigates risks	**19%**
Decision-Making: Provides data-driven insights	**19%**
Personalization: Enhances customer experiences	**19%**
Scalability: Easily scales solutions	**15%**
No benefits of AI are (or would be) relevant to my role	**3%**
Unsure	**2%**

4. AI's core benefit – still a matter of time?

The obvious benefit of using AI is time saving. But so far, when it comes to our respondents' usage, the jury's out on the time it saves. While 13% claim to have saved a lot of time and 41% claim that they've saved some time, there is still a sizeable percentage who don't believe it's saving them much – or any – time at all.

This could be put down to how early we are in the adoption phase, with workers still trying to understand how best to integrate it into their everyday work, alongside a lack of knowledge of how to effectively use it.

HOW MUCH TIME IS AI SAVING EMPLOYEES?

13.3%
A lot of time saved

40.7%
Some time saved

31.3%
Not very much time saved

14.7%
No time saved

5. More AI, better output?

But greater efficiency doesn't necessarily mean better quality work. We also wanted to know about AI's impact on work quality.

It would appear that AI is already having a positive impact, with the majority of our respondents (62.3%) agreeing that AI improves their work quality, with 23.2% strongly agreeing. Only 10.6% disagree, while 26% remain neutral.

62.3% of respondents believe that AI improves the quality of their output.

And where in the organization is this felt most? At entry-level, where 69.3% point to AI improving their quality of work. This suggests that AI tools are particularly effective at helping less experienced employees produce higher quality work, potentially democratizing workplace excellence.

6. More AI, more time for higher value work?

One of the “big sells” of AI is that it’s not going to replace humans, but that it will free us up to engage in higher value activities. Is this just bluster, or are users currently experiencing this benefit?

Well, if our respondents are to be believed, this is true. Nearly two-thirds (64.9%) of respondents agree that AI integration allows them to focus on higher-value activities, with 25.2% strongly agreeing, and only 9.1% disagreeing.

64.9% of workers believe that AI frees them up to focus on higher-value activities.

C-level executives believe this most strongly (80.2%) compared to entry-level employees (59.6%), suggesting a potential disconnect between strategic vision and ground-level implementation. Business owners (64.9%) and middle management (69.8%) demonstrate strong positive sentiment – possibly because they directly experience both the strategic benefits and practical applications of AI in their daily operations.

We dug into this a little deeper and asked those respondents who agreed that AI was freeing them up to focus on high value engagements to tell us what they were being freed up to do.

Creative problem solving emerges as the dominant higher-value activity (46.7%) that AI enables, followed by strategic decision-making (39.2%) and complex analysis (37.7%). This suggests that AI is primarily freeing up professionals to engage in more innovative and strategic work rather than them engaging in more routine tasks.

THE TOP ACTIVITIES THAT AI IS FREEING UP THE WORKFORCE TO DO

Creative Problem Solving	46.7%
Strategic Decision Making	39.2%
Complex Analysis	37.7%
Business Growth & Development	36.9%
Team Development	34.4%
Other	1.1%

Recommended Actions

1. Develop Role-Specific AI Implementation Plans

- Create clear pathways for transitioning routine tasks to AI.
- Establish metrics to track efficiency gains and quality improvements.

2. Launch a "Time-Saving Optimization Program"

- Address the gap between current time savings and potential.
- Document and share successful time-saving use cases across departments.
- Create standardized processes (prompts/agents) for common AI-assisted tasks.

3. Implement a "High-Value Work Transition Strategy"

- Build on the 64.91% who report focusing on higher-value activities.
- Prioritize Creative Problem Solving (46.7%) and Strategic Decision Making (39.2%).
- Create structured programs to help employees transition to more strategic work.

4. Design an Entry-Level AI Enhancement Program

- Create mentorship programs pairing AI-proficient and less proficient.
- Develop clear guidelines for AI-assisted quality improvement.

SECTION 5: Integrating AI at work

1. Integration of AI into workflows

Overall, 56.2% of respondents express confidence in their ability to integrate AI tools into their workflow. A quarter (25.6%) remain neutral, while 15.7% disagree. This reveals a moderate level of confidence in AI integration, though the significant neutral response suggests widespread uncertainty about how to effectively harness the powers of AI into work.

41.3% of employees are unconvinced of their ability to successfully integrate AI into their workflows.

A stark confidence gap exists between business owners (74.7%) and entry-level employees (48.9%). This 25.8 percentage point difference could be due to senior level staff having better access to AI training and resources. The steady decline in confidence down through the organizational hierarchy (C-level: 54.7%, senior management: 55.6%) indicates a potential problem which needs to be strategically addressed via training and resource access.

2. Leveraging tools to enhance work

Overall, 52.9% of respondents agree that AI can be effectively leveraged to enhance their work, with 27.1% neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and 16.8% disagreeing. This reveals a generally positive – but not universally enthusiastic – reception to AI tools in the workplace.

A clear correlation exists between seniority and agreement with AI's effectiveness. C-level executives (72.7%) and senior management (56.7%) expressed the strongest agreement, while intermediate (43.5%) and entry-level (37.5%) employees showed less enthusiasm. This could be due to senior leaders having a broader strategic view of AI's potential benefits, while junior employees may be more concerned about its impact on their specific roles. Additionally, senior roles may involve more complex tasks that benefit from AI assistance, while entry-level positions might be more susceptible to automation.

3. Comfort with adopting new AI technologies

53% of respondents feel comfortable adopting new AI technologies, with 26% remaining neutral and 18.7% expressing discomfort. The relatively high neutral response suggests significant uncertainty about AI adoption, while the majority's comfort level indicates a generally positive disposition towards new AI technologies.

Business owners (74%) and C-level executives (54.1%) show significantly higher comfort levels with AI adoption compared to entry-level employees (47.4%). This "seniority comfort gap" might reflect several factors, including senior leaders' strategic view of AI's potential, better access to AI training and resources, and possibly less fear of job displacement.

4. Key drivers in integrating AI better

Training tops the charts. The strongest demand is for more AI training (31.2%), followed by workflow integration (27.7%) and access to tools (27%).

31.2% of employees want more AI training.

Intermediate level employees show the strongest desire for training (43.1%), while C-level executives prioritize regular updates on AI advancements (36.7%). Business owners show more interest in practical tools and integration (31.3%). This pattern reveals a "skills anxiety" at operational levels, while leadership focuses more on strategic awareness. The significant drop in training demand at C-level (20.8%) suggests a potential disconnect in understanding ground-level needs.

Recommended Actions

1. Launch a Comprehensive AI Training Framework

- Create role-specific training paths addressing different needs:
- Entry-level: Basic AI integration and tool usage.
- Middle management: Workflow optimization.
- Senior leadership: Strategic AI implementation.

2. Develop an AI Confidence Building Program

- Create mentorship programs pairing AI-confident leaders with less confident staff.
- Establish "AI Champions" at each organizational level.

3. Implement a Structured AI Integration Process

- Create clear, documented processes for AI tool adoption.
- Develop standardized workflows that incorporate AI tools.

4. Create an AI Comfort Enhancement Strategy

- Target the 26% neutral and 18.7% uncomfortable with AI adoption.
- Implement "safe-to-fail" environments for AI experimentation.

Conclusion

The findings of this report paint a clear picture of AI's current state in business: a critical juncture where enthusiasm meets reality.

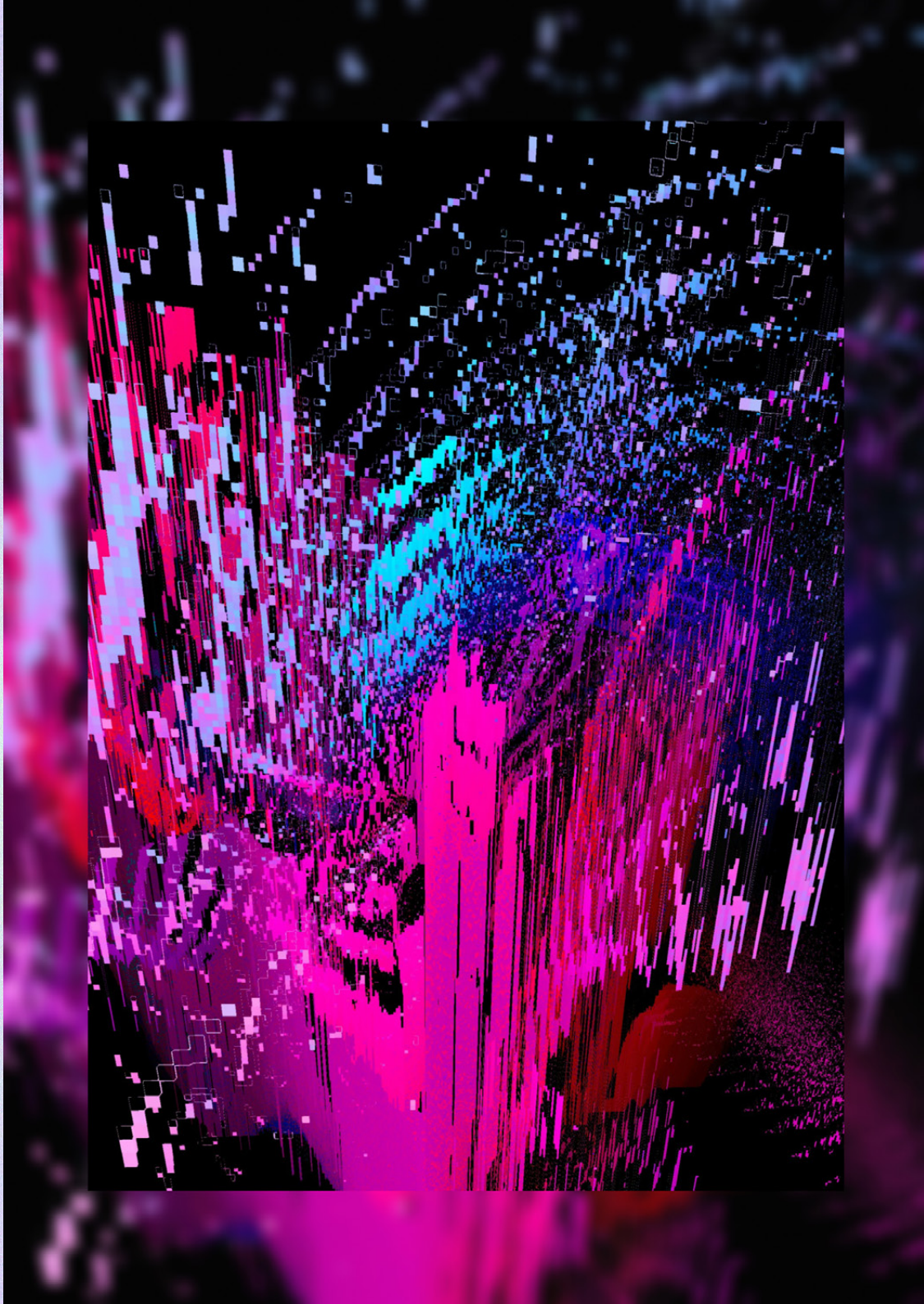
Whilst there is widespread recognition of AI's potential – with 61.5% believing in its business benefits and 64.9% reporting it enables higher-value work – there's also a stark divide between senior leadership's optimism and front-line employees' cautious approach. This "hierarchy gap" in perception, understanding, and implementation represents perhaps the most significant challenge organizations face in their AI journey today.

The data reveals several paradoxes that need addressing. While adoption is high (with 61.3% currently using AI), actual usage remains modest (averaging just 11 times monthly). Similarly, while 68% claim to understand AI, only 46.5% say their organization provides adequate training. These contradictions suggest that while businesses are eager to embrace AI, they haven't yet developed the comprehensive frameworks needed for successful integration. Also of concern is the fact that many organizations have yet to establish guidance or regulations on the compliant use of genAI tools across their business.

The path forward is clear. In addition to establishing compliance on the business-wide usage of AI-based chat functionality, organizations must bridge the hierarchical divide through targeted training, clear communication, and structured implementation programs that address both strategic vision and operational realities.

The next 12-24 months will be crucial in determining whether organizations can transform their AI potential into practical reality. Success will depend not just on technological implementation, but also on organizations' ability to address the human elements of AI adoption, particularly the significant gaps in confidence, understanding, and support between organizational levels.

Those who can effectively bridge these gaps while maintaining their current momentum will be best positioned to realize AI's transformative potential.



How VML can help

Our comprehensive suite of AI services can be tailored to help you achieve your desired outcomes, taking into account your organization's culture, digital and AI maturity, and preferred pace for change.

Our services include:

- AI policy creation / refinement and communications plan
- Governance set-up to ensure proactive management
- Business case creation to secure investment for genAI tooling to promote productivity
- GenAI tooling evaluation and selection
- AI education and training online with your policy to make your colleagues aware of the pros and cons of using genAI tools at work
- Application of a case-driven pilot to identify and measure how the use of genAI tools in regular activities can positively impact productivity

In addition, we support clients via further AI services that include:

- AI consulting - strategy and roadmap development - enterprise to specific area(s) / use case(s)
- Technical and Data consulting
- Custom AI development - Proofs-of-concepts, prototyping
- Open.VML, VML's global workspace within WPP Open - WPP's intelligent marketing operating system powered by AI. (More details opposite).

About WPP Open

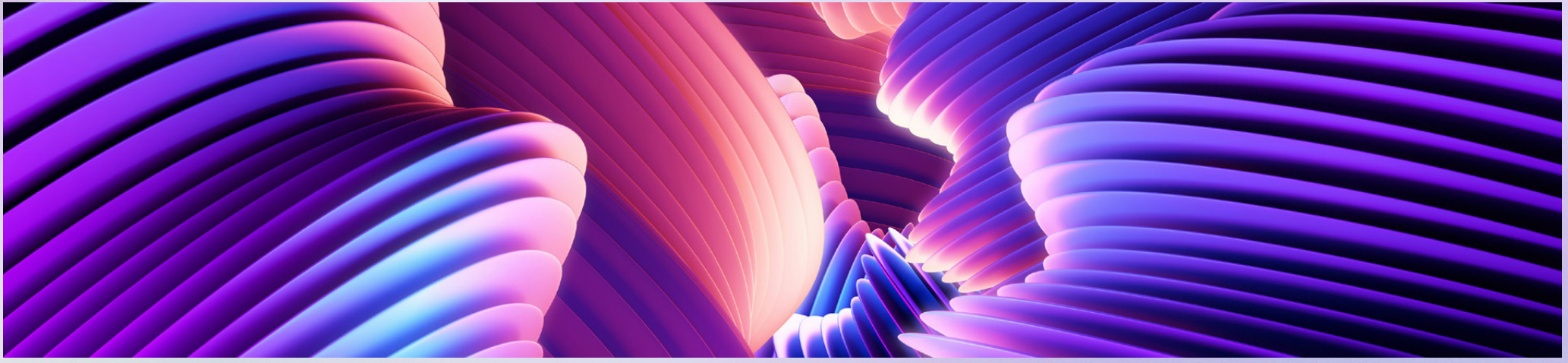
Open is the world's most powerful AI-driven operating system for marketing transformation, and enables global marketers to transform their process, enhance efficiency, and accelerate business growth.

Open puts KPIs and goals front and center, providing real-time data and strategic insights across all marketing efforts. It offers intelligent suggestions that augment creativity, elevate customer experience, and optimize work processes.

For clients, Open introduces a new AI-enhanced creative process, transforming marketing with unparalleled levels of efficiency, creativity, and growth through:

1. Intelligent workflow and operations
2. Augmented capabilities, enhanced creativity and strategy
3. Automated media and content at unprecedented scale

More information here.



About VML

VML is a leading creative company that combines brand experience, customer experience, and commerce, to create connected brands that drive growth. The agency is celebrated for its innovative and award-winning work with blue chip client partners including AstraZeneca, Colgate-Palmolive, Ford, Microsoft, Nestlé, The Coca-Cola Company, and Wendy's. VML is recognized as a Leader by Forrester Wave™ reports for Commerce Services, Marketing Creative and Content Services, and is a Strong Performer in the Forrester Wave™: CX Strategy Consulting Services. It was also named a Leader in IDC MarketScape: Adobe Experience Cloud Professional Services and a Visionary in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for Digital Experience Services. VML's specialist health network, VML Health, is also one of the world's largest and most awarded health agencies. VML's global network is powered by 26,000 talented people across 60-plus markets, with principal offices in Kansas City, New York, Detroit, London, São Paulo, Shanghai, Singapore, and Sydney.

VML is a WPP agency (NYSE: WPP). For more information, please visit **www.vml.com,** and follow along on **Instagram, LinkedIn,** and **X #WeAreVML.**

Connect with us

T: **UK** +44 (0)20 3858 0061 **NA** +1 816 283 0700

E: AI-Consulting@vml.com