

AI Adoption Is Outpacing Leadership Readiness as New Research Finds Only 3% of Organizations Say Their Leaders Are Fully Prepared to Lead AI-Enabled Teams

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Part II of The New Talent Equation research series finds workforce confidence, leadership capability, and employee trust are determining which organizations realize value from AI and which fall behind.

MILWAUKEE, July 22, 2026 /PRNewswire/ -- As organizations accelerate investments in artificial intelligence, ManpowerGroup [Talent Solutions](#) today released new research finding the biggest barrier to AI transformation is no longer technology adoption. It is workforce readiness and leaders' ability to guide people through change. Only 3% of organizations say their leaders are highly prepared to manage AI-enabled ways of working, even as 78% report employee concern about how AI will affect their jobs.

[The New Talent Equation: Activating Workforce Confidence at Scale](#), a new report commissioned by Talent Solutions and developed with [Everest Group](#), is the second report in a two-part research series examining how organizations can turn AI investment into business impact. Building on the first report's focus on fragmented talent systems, this edition explores the human side of transformation, finding that leadership capability, employee trust, and workforce adaptability increasingly determine which organizations realize AI's full value.

"The conversation around AI has fundamentally changed," said Caroline Pfeiffer Marinho, Global Business Leader, Talent Solutions RPO & Right Management. "Most organizations have made significant progress deploying AI. What we're seeing now is that technology is no longer the primary challenge. Leaders are asking how to build workforce confidence, prepare managers, and help people adapt as work changes. The organizations creating lasting advantage are investing in both system transformation and workforce transformation."

"The first phase of AI transformation has been defined by adoption. The next phase is likely to be defined by adaptation," Silesh Hota, Vice President, Everest Group, said. "As AI becomes embedded across talent processes and workforce systems, the ability to redesign how work is organized may become a more important determinant of success than technology deployment alone."

The research draws on a survey of 80 C-suite, CHRO, and senior talent acquisition leaders across the United States and United Kingdom, spanning healthcare, life sciences, manufacturing, and technology.

Key Findings

- **Workforce Readiness Is Falling Behind AI Adoption**

Organizations are deploying AI faster than they are preparing people to use it. Only 17% of organizations report advanced or transformational workforce readiness, where AI capability is deeply embedded into workflows and linked to measurable business outcomes.

- **Leadership Readiness Has Become AI's Biggest Bottleneck**

Just 3% of organizations describe their leaders as highly prepared to manage AI-enabled ways of working, while nearly half say their leaders are only moderately prepared. The findings suggest leadership capability may now be a greater barrier to transformation than technology itself.

- **Trust Is Becoming a Business Performance Issue**

Nearly 78% of organizations report employee fear of job displacement, while 63% report workforce resistance to adopting AI tools after deployment. Workforce confidence now influences adoption, engagement, and how quickly organizations realize value from AI. Without employee trust, organizations will struggle to scale AI, regardless of the technology they deploy.

- **AI Is Reshaping Jobs, Not Eliminating Them**

Despite widespread concern about job displacement, organizations are responding to AI by redesigning work rather than reducing headcount. Nearly 63% identify reskilling and redeployment as the most common outcome for employees whose roles are significantly impacted by AI, while 86% rank AI-focused upskilling and reskilling among their top workforce priorities over the next 12 to 18 months.

- **The Best Results Come from Human and AI Collaboration**

Organizations achieve their greatest productivity gains when AI augments human work rather than fully automating it. Thirty-four percent of organizations report their greatest productivity improvements in AI-augmented roles, where people and AI collaborate through redesigned workflows, compared with just 8% reporting their strongest gains from fully automated roles.

Together, the two reports point to two equally important priorities for organizations navigating AI transformation. Organizations must build integrated talent systems that enable AI while also building the workforce confidence, leadership capability, and trust needed to sustain change. The next phase of AI transformation will be defined less by how quickly organizations deploy AI and more by how effectively they prepare people to work, adapt, and

succeed alongside it.

The New Talent Equation: Activating Workforce Confidence at Scale is available now at mpgtalentsolutions.com/the-new-talent-equation, along with the first report in the series, *The New Talent Equation: Building Better Talent Decisions*.

ABOUT MANPOWERGROUP TALENT SOLUTIONS

[Talent Solutions](#) combines RPO, TAPFIN-MSP, and Right Management to deliver end-to-end, data-driven capabilities across the talent lifecycle. Drawing on deep industry expertise and a genuine understanding of what talent wants, we help organizations address complex workforce needs, from attraction and acquisition to upskilling, development, and retention. Through seamless delivery, best-in-class technology, and extensive workforce insights, we serve clients across multiple countries and at scale. Talent Solutions is part of the [ManpowerGroup](#)® (NYSE: MAN) family of brands, which also includes [Manpower](#) and [Experis](#).

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34% vs. **8%**
augmentation **outperforms**
automation

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