acorn

THE 2026 STATE OF LEARNING FOR AI FLUENCY REPORT

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Organizations have invested in and built employee development for years, and findings from **The 2026 State of Learning for AI Fluency Report** of more than 1,200 global professionals show that most still cannot measure whether any of it worked.

Development plan data underscores the scale of that shortfall. Formal development plans exist in every organization, but almost 60% of respondents describe them as less than completely effective, meaning the majority of organizations are sustaining ongoing investment in something they admit is not producing the right results. Plans are built without measurable, role-level capability standards, so completion gets recorded but the impact on performance does not. Despite 89% of respondents saying capability and competency projects are worth doing, most organizations lack the infrastructure to run them at scale or connect them to business outcomes.

A capability

is a combination of personal and technical skills, knowledge, processes, tools and behaviors that are critical to an organization's success and future needs.

That same issue has followed organizations into AI adoption. Half of respondents indicated AI competency/skills expectations are not reaching employees at the individual role level.

Organizations are deploying AI tools without defining what AI capability looks like at the role level, leaving employees with no target to train toward and no reliable way to know whether any of it is working. What the data makes hardest to ignore is the distance between what executives believe is happening and what employees are experiencing when it comes to AI readiness.

Across AI communication, manager preparedness, and workforce sentiment, executive confidence and the individual contributor's reality diverge by fifty points or more, describing two workforces experiencing the same AI deployment from fundamentally different positions.

These disparities are the predictable consequences of deploying AI strategy without the capability layer that would make it tangible at the individual level, resulting in organizations that are measuring the wrong things and creating a false sense of confidence.

Key Findings

The Broken Promise of Development Plans

Development plans are universal and mostly useless, because organizations are tracking activity, not capability.

58% of organizations report their development plans are either somewhat effective, not very effective or not effective at all at improving performance and building capability.

61% of organizations struggle to connect learning activity to measurable improvement in job performance.

80% C-suite respondents say managers are very prepared to have meaningful conversations with employees about their capabilities, while only 25% of individual contributors agree.

83% of the respondents report there is a disparity between what employees in their organization report about their job capabilities and what they observe them demonstrating in practice.

64% aren't completely confident their company's approach to measuring learning can answer one basic question: are employees getting better at their jobs?

AI Adoption Without Infrastructure

Organizations are deploying AI tools without defining what AI capability looks like at the role level, leaving employees and managers with no target to train toward, and leaving individual contributors directionless and anxious about AI's impact on their role.

72% of executives believe they have given their employees a clear and actionable path to use AI, but 53% of individual contributors disagree, saying they either received no direction at all or it lacks actionable next steps.

58% of individual contributors say they are not confident they know how to apply AI in their job role, while 96% of executives state they are confident they know how to apply AI.

82% of executives report being excited about AI while 58% of individual contributors state they are slightly skeptical and 28% are scared or disillusioned.

The AI Capability Assessment Void

Most organizations cannot define, communicate or measure AI competency at the individual role level, making measurement impossible. Employees are not confident their organizations are properly preparing them for the impact of AI.

77% of executives believe managers are very prepared to have meaningful conversations with employees about their AI capability, while more than half (55%) of individual contributors disagree.

78% of executives say AI competency expectations are communicated very well at the role level, **but only 19% of individual contributors agree.**

61% of companies are not at all confident or only somewhat confident that their current approach to developing and assessing AI competency/skills will prepare their workforce for the AI-driven role requirements in the next three years.

78% of executives are very confident their current approach to developing and assessing AI competency/skills will prepare their workforce for AI-driven role requirements in the next three years, **while 41% of individual contributors are not at all confident.**

Chapter 1

The Broken Promise of Development Plans

Development plans are commonly promised to employees by many organizations, but are rarely designed to drive real capability growth without ties to role-level capabilities.

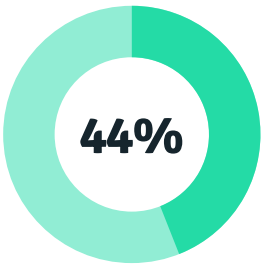
Investment in development infrastructure hasn't produced the returns organizations expect because the design is flawed. Plans are built without measurable role-level standards, so measurement stops at training completion. There are no follow-ups or benchmarks, and as a result, development plans exist on paper and nowhere else.

TOP FIVE REASONS DEVELOPMENT PLANS FALL SHORT

1. Employees don't see a clear link between their plan and career advancement
2. Plans are created but rarely referenced after the initial conversation
3. Capabilities or expectations are too vague to be actionable
4. Managers don't have a consistent framework to guide development conversations
5. There is no accountability for following through on development commitments

Development plans are a box-checking exercise and don't drive tangible capability growth. They're created, but rarely revisited and are not tied to measurable capabilities

Fifty-eight percent of respondents describe their organization's employee development plans as somewhat effective, not very effective or not effective at all at improving performance and building capability. This means nearly six in ten organizations are running development programs they consider either partially or wholly insufficient.



of organizations say development plans are created, then rarely referenced after the initial conversation.

Capability standards at the role level are what separate plans that drive performance from plans that collect digital dust. Among organizations whose employee development plans work, 56% said the reason they are effective is because they're tied to specific, measurable capabilities for each role.

The top two reasons development plans fall short is because employees don't see a clear connection between their plan and career advancement. Moreover, their plans are rarely referenced after they are created because they are too often designed for a single annual conversation. Without a system that facilitates consistent check-ins and tracks development mapped to the employee's role, the plan becomes a document rather than a process to improve employee skills and advance careers.

The measurement system is broken because the design is flawed

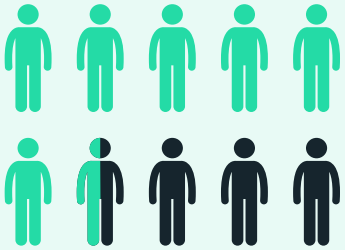
Despite development programs, organizations are still struggling to properly assess and identify traditional and AI-related employee capabilities.

Over half (53%) of organizations are not confident or only somewhat confident they can accurately assess an employee's competencies/skills as part of a promotion decision. When organizations can't reliably answer "what can this person do?" they can't make capability-based decisions and may end up promoting employees based on perception, not performance.

Additionally, only 33% of respondents are very confident their current performance or capability data reflects what their employees can do rather than how they are perceived. Notably, this confidence rises sharply when an organization has systematized capabilities into its training framework.

Of the organizations that have fully systematized capabilities and built them into their company's training and professional development programs, **73% are very confident they can accurately assess an employee's competencies and skills as part of the promotion decision.**

Sixty-one percent of organizations struggle to connect learning activity to measurable improvement in job performance, 44% track completion rather than capability improvement and an additional 17% don't have a meaningful mechanism to make this connection at all.

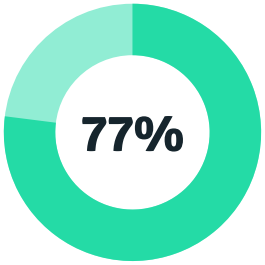


More than six in ten organizations cannot answer whether their development plans are producing a measurable improvement in job performance.

Companies are investing in development without knowing whether it's working, and this is a problem because the system they use to measure development wasn't built to measure what actually matters.

The completion of AI training does not equal capability, but organizations are still using completion metrics because they have no alternative system.

This completion-capability conflation is operating as organizational policy and is the single most direct expression of why the measurement system fails. In reality, only 36% of respondents are very confident their current measurement approach can tell whether employees are improving in their roles.



of organizations treat training completion as evidence of capability

Professional development plans: managers can't guide what they can't measure

Development plans depend entirely on the manager-employee relationship, and the data shows this relationship is under-equipped. Managers and employees are both navigating it without the tools or frameworks to make it successful.

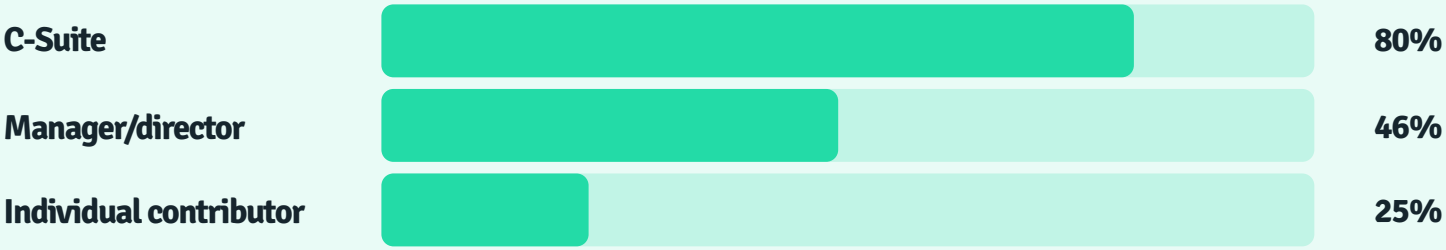
Half of respondents say two-way development conversations at their organizations happen quarterly or less, including 17% who say these conversations only happen once a year or never occur on any regular cadence. Employee development is not effective when it's only an annual conversation.

Overall, 53% of respondents say their managers are not prepared or only somewhat prepared to have meaningful conversations with employees about their capabilities, including where they need to develop and what 'good' looks like.

Compounding the issue, 41% don't think it is possible for a manager to regularly talk with an employee about and document their proficiency across every skill in their role, especially when 42% of respondents think their job has between 11-20 applicable skills. At that volume, capability tracking becomes an infrastructure and tooling challenge.

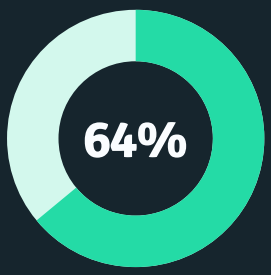
However, leadership isn't aware of this breakdown. Eighty percent of executives state their managers are 'very prepared' to have conversations with their employees about their capabilities, while only 25% of individual contributors agree.

% WHO SAY MANAGERS ARE 'VERY PREPARED' FOR TRADITIONAL CAPABILITY CONVERSATIONS



The 55-point divide between the C-suite and individual contributors is striking. Executives are rating a system they don't participate in firsthand, while individual contributors, whose career trajectory is directly impacted by the quality of development plans, express the least confidence in manager preparedness.

The manager preparedness problem is not new to the AI era, but AI is exacerbating it. When the same population is asked about manager preparedness for AI capability conversations, 64% report managers are not prepared or only somewhat prepared to have meaningful conversations with employees about their AI capabilities. This means a majority of organizations are running development programs through a channel that isn't properly equipped and is only getting worse with the introduction of AI.



of organizations indicate they are either not prepared or only somewhat prepared to have meaningful conversations with employees about their AI capability, including where they need to develop and what "good" looks like.

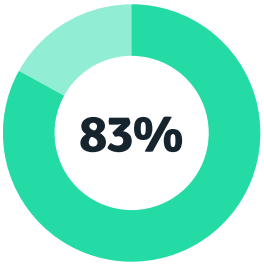
While this infrastructure failure has been inherited and compounded, not created by AI, scale magnifies the consequences. Manager preparedness for AI conversations drops across the board for organizations of all sizes with the largest organizations reporting they are the most unprepared to have AI conversations.

Among large organizations (10,000+ employees), 46% say their managers are not prepared, more than double the rate of small and mid-size companies. Only 18% of large organizations say their managers are very prepared.

Surprisingly, the organizations with the most resources, the largest L&D budgets and presumably the most formal AI programs are the ones whose managers are least prepared to have conversations about AI capabilities. At enterprise scale, AI strategy is mandated at the top, but the infrastructure to support capability conversations isn't reaching the front lines.

Employees don't know what good looks like in their role

There is a measurable difference between self-reported capability and demonstrated performance.



of the respondents report there is a disparity between what employees in their organization report about their job capabilities and what they observe them demonstrating in practice.

Executives see the most dysfunction with 31% saying there's a significant difference in what employees report about their job capabilities and what they demonstrate in practice. Managers are less likely to report a difference with 64% saying they only see a small gap.

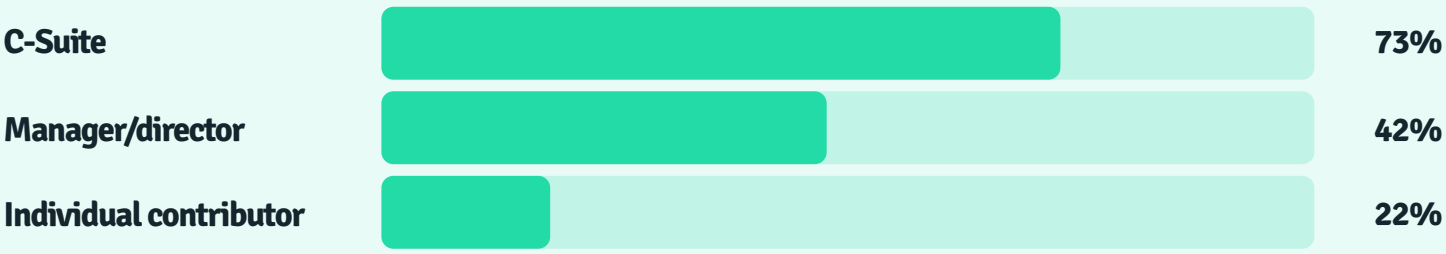
This is likely because employees, including the C-Suite, managers and individual contributors, don't understand what proficiency looks like in their role:

- Overall, 45% of respondents say employees only somewhat understand what proficiency and 'doing well' in their role looks like in concrete, measurable terms.
- An additional 13% say employees have a poor understanding of it or don't understand it at all.

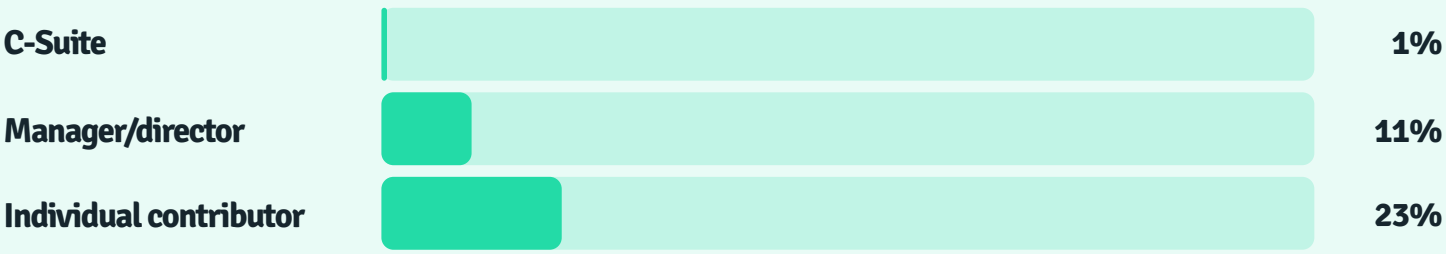
When the standard is unclear, development becomes aspirational rather than directional.

Nearly a quarter of individual contributors (23%) say expectations are poorly defined or not defined at all versus 1% of executives who say the same. Organizations are holding employees accountable to standards that have not been clearly communicated.

% WHO SAY PROFICIENCY EXPECTATIONS ARE CLEARLY DEFINED AND COMMUNICATED



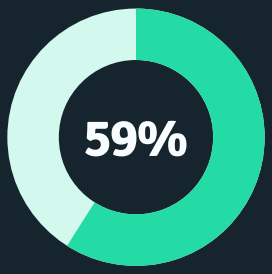
% WHO SAY EXPECTATIONS ARE POORLY COMMUNICATED OR NOT COMMUNICATED AT ALL



Capability frameworks exist in isolation

A majority (77%) of organizations say they have systematized capabilities into their training and development programs or are in the process of doing so, demonstrating that frameworks exist. What's missing is the connection between those frameworks and the business decisions they're supposed to inform. Capability/competency programs remain predominantly an L&D function, disconnected from the strategy.

The data confirms the infrastructure linking individual capability development to organizational strategy is largely absent. Only 41% of organizations have built a direct, systematic link between what employees are expected to develop and what the business needs to achieve.



of organizations report that individual employee capability expectations are not connected or minimally or partially connected to their organization's objectives and key results (OKRs) or business performance goals.

Even when a formal connection exists between employee capabilities and business goals, it is rarely maintained. A quarter of organizations never or rarely review employee capabilities when a new business objective or OKR is set, and an additional 47% say changes in business goals only sometimes trigger a review. Organizations are setting strategy without knowing if their workforce can execute it.

Organizations understand the value in competency projects, but struggle to execute them

Nearly nine in ten companies see the value in skills and competency projects. The challenge is the absence of infrastructure to make them effective.

Due to these challenges, organizations increasingly appear to struggle with capability frameworks. The share of organizations with no capability infrastructure grew from 1.2% in 2023 to 23% in 2026.

As AI raises the stakes for defining capability, the infrastructure necessary to support these initiatives is going backwards, a trend that runs directly counter to what AI adoption demands.

TOP REASONS SKILLS/COMPETENCY PROJECTS FALL SHORT

1. Keeping skills/competency data up to date is too cumbersome/time consuming
2. No clear process for how to apply competencies in day-to-day work
3. Inadequate training and communication about the program

Chapter 2

AI Adoption Without Infrastructure:

Companies Are Rolling Out AI Tools Without Clarity.

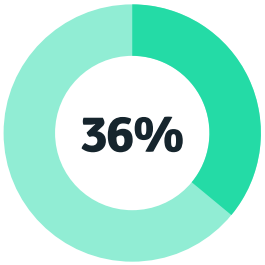
Organizations are deploying AI tools into a workforce with no agreed definition of what AI capability looks like at the role level, leaving employees and managers without a target to work toward. Until organizations define what AI competency looks like in each specific role, AI readiness remains aspirational.

Budget is being spent on AI deployments without the infrastructure to support them and the ROI isn't materializing

AI adoption has outpaced enablement. According to Gartner*, AI-related spending is growing at a 50%+ CAGR, with indirect AI services alone expected to reach $255.9 billion in 2026. Gartner also reports only 28% of AI use cases fully succeed and meet ROI expectations. The market is seeing an unprecedented level of loosely governed AI spending as companies deploy AI without giving employees meaningful guidance on how to effectively use AI.

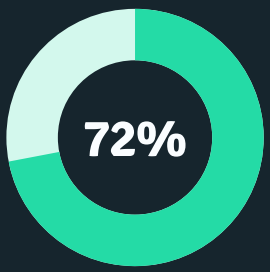
There are two fundamentally different organizational realities playing out simultaneously: Executives remain bullish on AI, while individual contributors are dubious about the technology and are not receiving direction on how to use AI successfully.

Most employees don't know how to apply AI at work: 64% state they need clarity and guidance on how to use AI in their role.

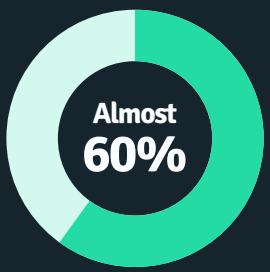


of individual contributors have received zero direction from their organization on how to use AI in their role.

Executives are confident their teams have the direction they need to effectively use AI in their role, but employees strongly disagree.



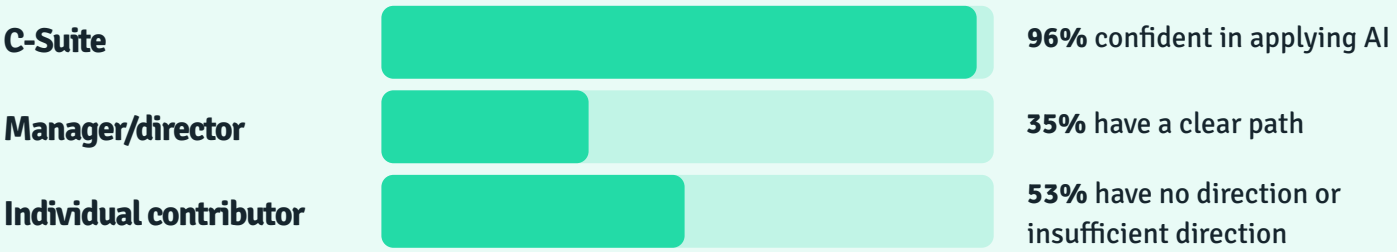
of executives believe they have given employees a clear and actionable path to use AI. Fifty-three percent of individual contributors disagree, saying they've received no direction at all or direction that lacks actionable next steps.



of individual contributors say they are not confident they know how to apply AI in their job role, contrasting starkly with 96% of executives who state they are confident they know how to apply AI in their role.

*Source: Gartner, *Forecast: AI Spending, 4Q25* (2025); *AI Projects in I&O* (2026)

% WHO SAY THEY HAVE RECEIVED A CLEAR, ACTIONABLE PATH TO APPLY AI IN THEIR ROLE



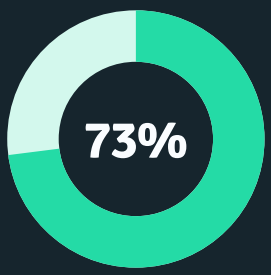
MANAGERS ARE SPLIT AND STRUGGLING

35%
say they have a clear path

24%
say they have no direction or no actionable next steps

AI strategy is declared, but not delivered

Overall, 52% of companies report they are still in early exploration and have no significant AI adoption yet or are piloting AI tools in specific areas without a unified workforce approach. However, the C-suite is bullish and, in contrast, individual contributors are cautious.

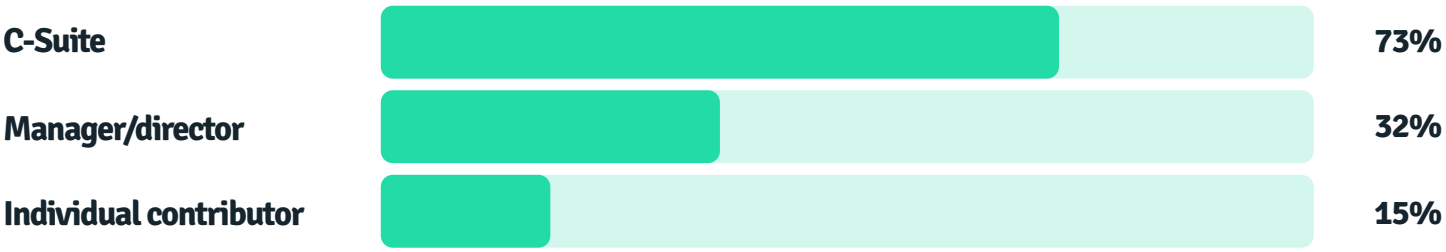


of executives say they have a clear, organization-wide AI strategy actively being executed, but 41% of individual contributors say their organization is still in early exploration with no significant adoption.

Only 32% of managers say there is a clear organization-wide strategy for AI adoption, meaning more than two-thirds of managers are navigating it without a unified framework. This makes it challenging for managers to communicate expectations they haven't received and employees cannot develop capability toward a standard that hasn't been defined for their role.

AI training 'strategy' is more like decentralized improvisation for most organizations who have announced AI transformation without defining what AI capability looks like at the role level.

WE HAVE A CLEAR, ORG-WIDE AI STRATEGY ACTIVELY BEING EXECUTED



The primary way organizations measure whether employees are using AI is by tracking tool usage frequency. They do not track productivity gains or capability change. Meanwhile, 1 in 5 companies (21%) are not measuring employees' AI use at all. The measurement failure that undermined traditional L&D credibility is now, unfortunately, repeating itself in AI capability development. Self-paced and formal training deliver general fluency, but without role-level capability targets, employees have nothing to develop toward.

TOP THREE WAYS ORGANIZATION TRAIN EMPLOYEES ON AI TOOLS AND CAPABILITIES:

1. Self-paced e-learning or online courses
2. Clear, role-specific guidance on what tools to use
3. Formal structured training programs (instructor-led, cohort-based)

TOP THREE WAYS COMPANIES TRACK IF THEIR EMPLOYEES ARE USING AI:

1. Track tool usage frequency
2. Identify specific job functions/repetitive tasks that have been automated
3. Assess capability through structured evaluation

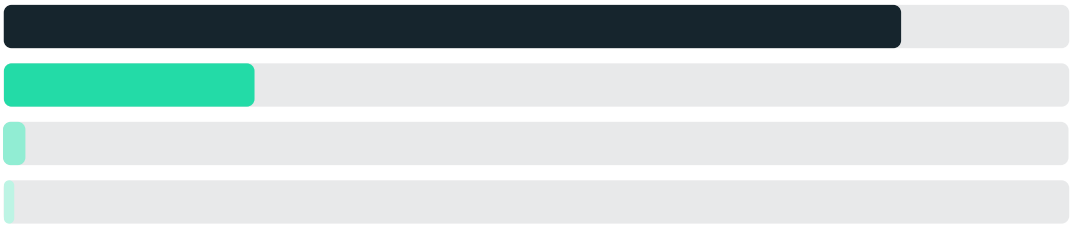
The emotional reality of AI in organizations: executives are excited, employees are anxious

Overall, 44% of respondents describe the general sentiment of AI in their organization as slightly skeptical.

By role, executives are overwhelmingly more optimistic about AI compared to managers and individual contributors.

Eighty-two percent of executives describe AI sentiment in their organization as excited compared to only 14% of individual contributors. In fact, 58% of individual contributors are slightly skeptical and 28% are scared or disillusioned. Each step down the org chart, negative AI sentiment roughly doubles.

C-Suite



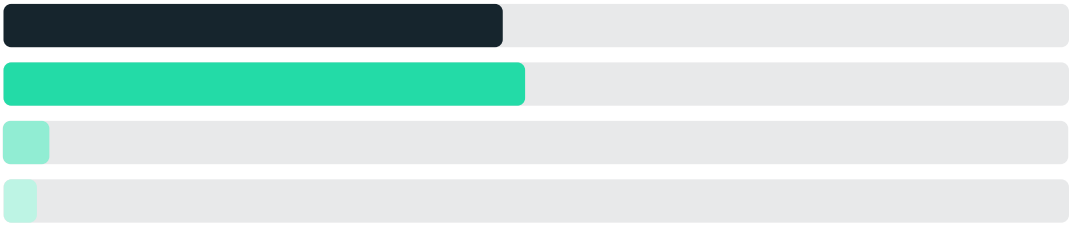
82% are excited

17% are slightly skeptical

2% are disillusioned

0.3% are scared

Manager



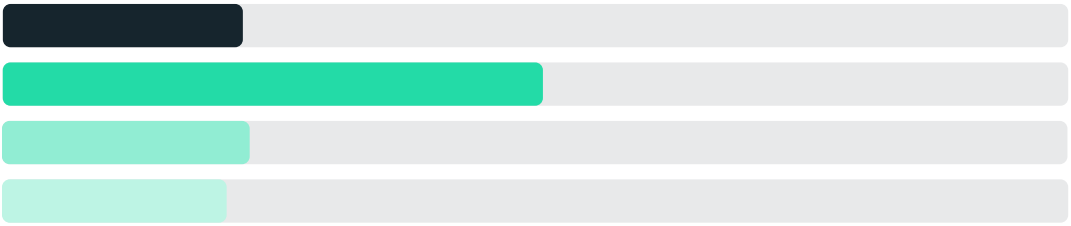
41% are excited

48% are slightly skeptical

7% are disillusioned

5% are scared

Individual contributor



14% are excited

58% are slightly skeptical

16% are disillusioned

12% are scared

The dominant media narrative communicates AI fear and AI excitement, but the data shows many employees fall into a third category: skeptical and under-supported. Meanwhile, leaders are selling an 'AI is exciting' story that frontline employees simply don't share.

AI's impact on the job market

Over a third of companies (34%) report they're changing hiring headcount because of AI and more than a quarter of respondents (27%) indicate someone in their immediate team has been replaced with AI.

Nearly a quarter (24%) of respondents report their organization announced job decreases (e.g., layoffs, role eliminations, hiring freezes) in the past two years that were publicly or internally linked to "AI efficiency" or AI-driven productivity gains and they believe AI was a genuine, primary driver of those decreases. Another 22% do not believe or are not sure if AI was the true driver. The problem is that AI-linked workforce decisions are being made without the right evidence or infrastructure to capture it.

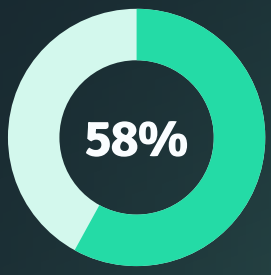
AI fluency isn't translating into role performance

With no foundation for how to properly apply AI tools, AI proficiency is not translating into meaningful productivity gains. Despite executives mandating a strategy, the data shows AI does not yet have a significant impact on performance or productivity. Overall, seventy-five percent of employees say AI has made them less than 25% more efficient.

Executive optimism about AI outpaces every other group in the organization with 48% reporting AI has either made them noticeably (up to 50%) or significantly (more than 75%) more effective. While 59% of individual contributors indicated AI has only made them slightly more efficient (less than 10%) in their roles.

This struggle to apply AI meaningfully is indicative of the fact that general AI proficiency isn't the same as role-specific AI competency, and this distinction is why AI ROI fails to materialize.

"Employees know how to use AI tools but cannot apply them to their specific role requirements" is among the top AI competency challenges.



of companies report seeing employees who are proficient at using AI tools in general but who struggle to apply AI meaningfully to the specific requirements of their role.

The data indicates that until companies can give their employees clear direction and a system for measuring progress, employees will continue to struggle to use AI meaningfully in their role.

Chapter 3

The AI Capability Assessment Void

The AI Capability Blackbox: Organizations can't measure AI capability at the role level because they haven't defined it.

Organizations are investing in AI training without knowing whether it's working, because they have not defined AI competencies at the role level. There is frequently no clear ownership of who defines AI capabilities and no framework for managers to assess AI competencies.

Lack of definition prevents measurement

Most organizations have no formal mechanism to define, assess or track AI capability at the individual employee level.

No definition: 34% of companies have not defined AI competencies at the role level.

No ownership: 23% percent of organizations report that no one in their organization is primarily responsible for defining what AI competency looks like for specific roles.

No tracking: 47% of companies have not included AI capability in formal performance reviews and 30% have no formal mechanism to assess and track AI capability at the individual employee level.

The reasons organizations are struggling to assess AI competency comes down to this: without a defined role-level standard, assessments have nothing to measure against, general fluency doesn't translate into application and managers have no criteria to judge performance.

CHALLENGES FACED BY ORGANIZATIONS IN AI COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT

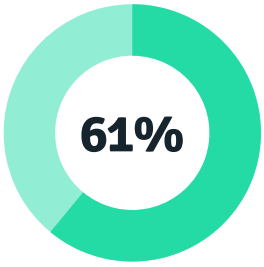
1. AI capability is improving so fast that assessments become outdated quickly
2. Employees know how to use AI tools but cannot apply them to their specific role requirements
3. Managers don't feel equipped to assess AI capability in their teams
4. No agreed definition of what AI competency/skills means for specific roles

Employees are generally overconfident about their job capabilities, AI or otherwise

Employees consistently rate their AI skills as higher than their managers do, but organizations lack an objective and consistent way to measure AI capability.

If employees don't know what 'good' looks like for AI in their role, and managers can't assess it, organizations are flying blind on the most consequential and unprecedented workforce transition.

Organizations lack a way to address the disparity between perception and performance: 64% say they are either not prepared or only somewhat prepared to have a meaningful conversation with employees about their AI capability, including where they need to develop and what “good” looks like.



of companies report a difference between what employees claim about their AI capability and what they actually demonstrate in practice.

Employee's rating

of their own AI skills

Manager's rating

of their employee's AI skills

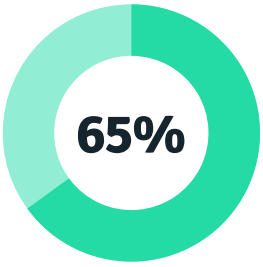
Manager readiness is 3.5 times worse for AI than for traditional skills development

When it comes to traditional capability conversations, 8% of organizations say their managers are not prepared, this figure jumps to 31% for AI capability conversations.

When looking across the organization, 55% of individual contributors say their managers are not prepared to have AI capability conversations compared to only 15% when asked about manager preparedness for general capability conversations. Meaning the AI capability conversation problem is roughly 3.5x worse than the traditional capability conversation problem from the individual contributor's perspective.

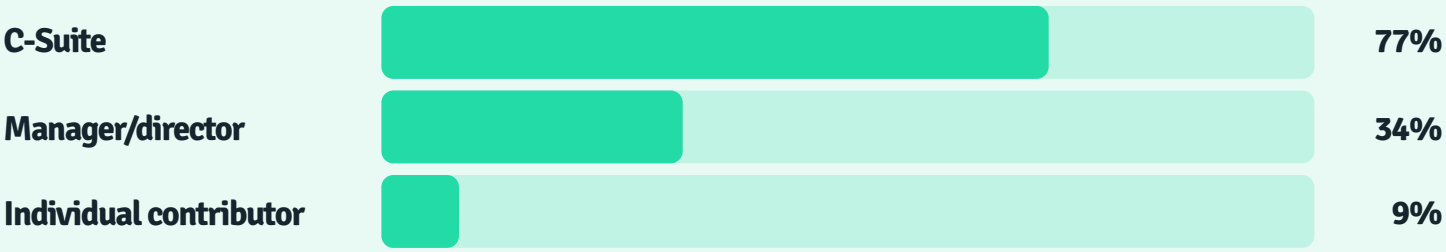
This contrasts sharply with executive confidence: 77% of executives think their managers are very prepared compared for AI conversations, but only 34% of managers feel prepared and 9% of individual contributors agree.

Managers sit at the execution layer and if they can't have the conversation, the system cannot function.



of managers report they feel only somewhat prepared or not prepared to have meaningful conversations with their employees about the individual's AI capability.

% WHO SAY MANAGERS ARE 'VERY PREPARED' FOR AI CAPABILITY CONVERSATIONS



Traditional capability conversation readiness

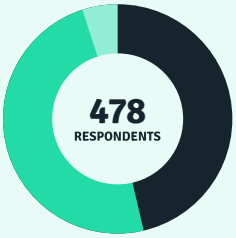
VS

AI capability conversation readiness, broken out by seniority

"How prepared are your managers to have a meaningful conversation with an employee about their capabilities?"

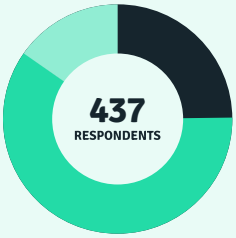
C-Suite/Executive

- **80%** are very prepared
- **19%** are somewhat prepared
- **>1%** are not prepared



Manager/Director

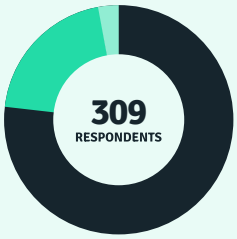
- **46%** are very prepared
- **49%** are somewhat prepared
- **5%** are not prepared



Individual contributor

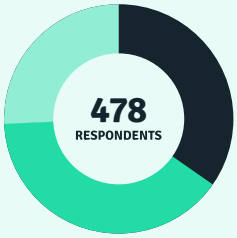
- **25%** are very prepared
- **60%** are somewhat prepared
- **15%** are not prepared

"How prepared are your managers to have a meaningful conversation with an employee about their AI capability, including where they need to develop and what 'good' looks like?"



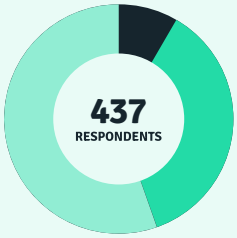
C-Suite/Executive

- **77%** are very prepared
- **20%** are somewhat prepared
- **3%** are not prepared



Manager/Director

- **34%** are very prepared
- **40%** are somewhat prepared
- **26%** are not prepared



Individual contributor

- **9%** are very prepared
- **36%** are somewhat prepared
- **55%** are not prepared

Organizations are failing at preparing their workforce for what's coming

Sixty-one percent of companies are not confident or only somewhat confident their current approach to developing and assessing AI competency will prepare their workforce for AI-driven role requirements in the next three years.

Again, the data reveals in parallel executive overconfidence and employee doubt. Seventy-eight percent of executives are very confident current approaches will prepare their workforce while forty-one percent of individual contributors are not at all confident.

This 65-point delta reflects something more than skepticism. Employees, the people these programs are built for, do not believe they will work.

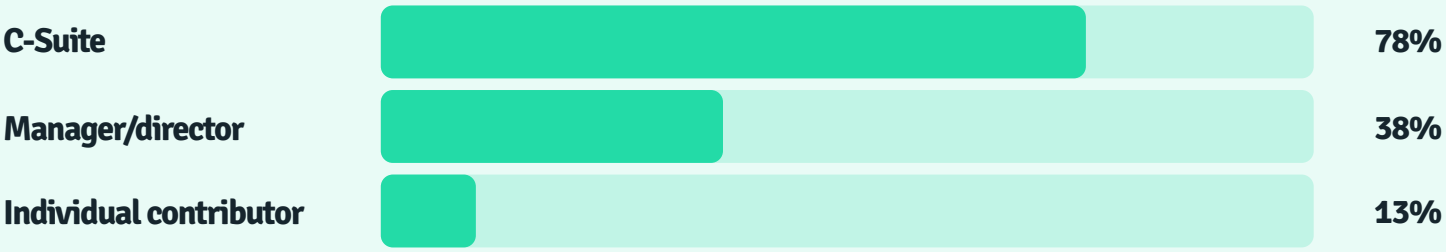
40%

of companies are "somewhat confident"

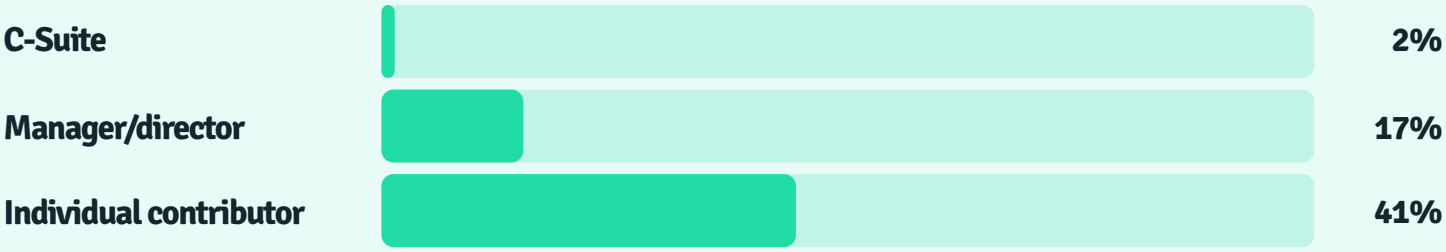
22%

of companies are "not confident at all"

% WHO ARE 'VERY CONFIDENT' CURRENT APPROACHES WILL PREPARE WORKFORCE FOR AI IN 3 YEARS



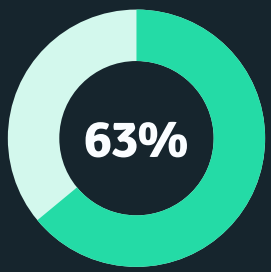
% WHO ARE 'NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT' CURRENT APPROACHES WILL PREPARE WORKFORCE FOR AI IN 3 YEARS



It is clear companies need a path forward, but the road ahead is unclear.

Sixty-three percent of companies admit developing AI competency expectations is very or somewhat difficult. Building those frameworks is proving expensive and resource intensive.

As a result, almost half (49%) of organizations who've defined a set of AI competencies/skills say these AI competency/skills expectations are only partially, minimally, or not at all communicated to employees at the individual role level.

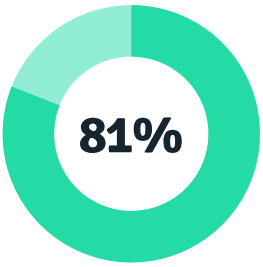


of companies say the process of developing their organization's AI competency/skill expectations is very difficult or somewhat difficult, requiring significant time, multiple stakeholders and sometimes external support.

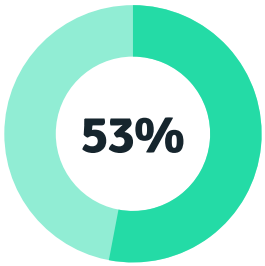
The pattern holds: confidence at the executive level and uncertainty among employees.

Seventy-eight percent of executives say AI competency expectations are communicated very well at the role level, but only 19% of individual contributors agree, a stark 58-point difference.

The primary contributor to organizational AI misalignment is the absence of a foundation that can keep pace AI's rapid changes.



of individual contributors say role-level AI expectations are partially, minimally or not communicated at all.



of individual contributors report they've received no direction or no actionable path on AI strategy.

> **AI capability is improving so fast that assessments become outdated quickly**
>
> is the #1 cited AI competency challenge.

Organizations are instituting AI strategies that haven't been defined; building AI training programs without role-level targets; and measuring AI adoption by tracking usage.

The individual contributors existing inside these L&D programs don't have the right direction or infrastructure to prepare them for the AI workforce.

From Findings to Fluency

The data in this report is consistent on what isn't working. It's also consistent on what is.

A handful of organizations break the pattern. 56% of organizations with effective development plans say the reason is the same: plans tied to measurable role-level skills. These organizations aren't doing more. They're doing four things differently.

1. They define skills at the role level before they train for them: No training program can deliver against a target that hasn't been set. The organizations getting this right define what good looks like in each role first, then build development against it. This is the single biggest difference between plans that build skills and plans that exist on paper.

2. They connect skills to business outcomes, not training catalog: Only 41% of organizations have built a direct link between what employees are expected to develop and what the business needs to achieve. The ones who have are the ones who can answer whether learning is working, because they're measuring against something the business already cares about.

3. They equip managers with a framework, not a feeling: Manager preparedness collapses from 80% at the executive level to 25% at the individual contributor level for traditional skills conversations, and from 77% to 9% for AI. The organizations closing that gap have given managers the same defined standard to anchor the conversation to that employees see too.

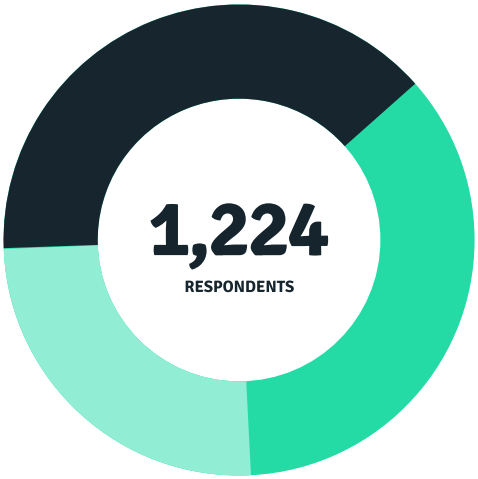
4. They measure skills change, not training completion: Forty-four percent of organizations treat completion as evidence of skill. The ones who don't have built a separate measurement layer that asks whether the person can now do the thing, not whether they finished the course. This is what makes ROI visible, and it's why 73% of organizations with systematized skills frameworks are confident in their promotion decisions.

> **AI fluency belongs to the organizations building the skills infrastructure now.**

Survey Methodology

The 2026 State of Learning for AI Fluency Report is based on a survey of 1,224 professionals across C-suite, director, manager and individual contributor roles at organizations in the United States, Canada and Australia with 1,000 or more employees, conducted in April 2026.

Respondents by role



Manager / Director	39.0%
Individual contributor	35.7%
Executive (VP or C-level)	25.2%

Respondents by company size

1,000–1,499 employees	12.5%
1,500–2,999 employees	11.8%
3,000–4,999 employees	21.7%
5,000–9,999 employees	22.4%
10,000+ employees	31.7%