THE PREDICTIVE INDEX

WORK REDEFINED:

HR’s playbook for the AI era

A people-first guide to navigating AI adoption

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HR's **people-first** approach pays off.

Innovation is inevitably accompanied by some fear of the unknown. **No one understands the impact of change on people like HR professionals.** And no innovation has rocked the modern workforce like artificial intelligence.

Generative AI has eclipsed remote work, cloud storage, and even email as the most seismic future-of-work force this side of the internet itself. It's flipped nearly every business function—sales, recruiting, marketing and operations—on its head. Our survey of 1,000 employees and HR pros highlights both the opportunities and human risks of this shift.

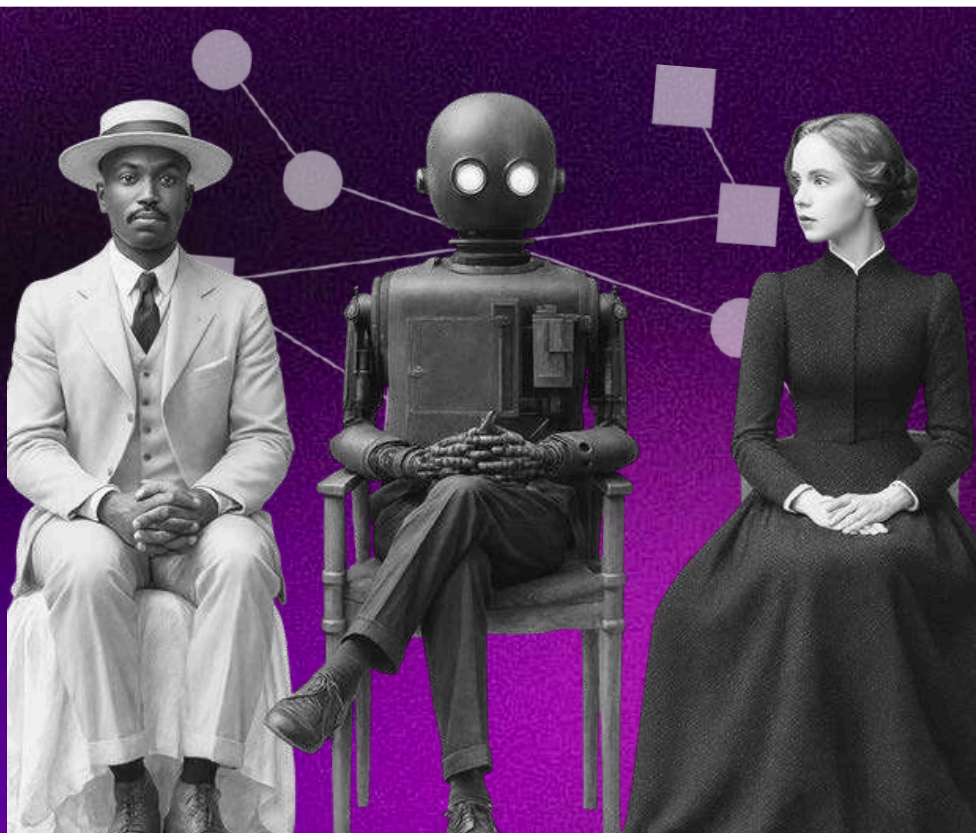
When technology takes the spotlight, the human element is often overlooked. Without consulting HR, companies risk rolling out tech without trust, clarity, or employee buy-in.

Too many executives are pushing AI strategies faster than people strategies. In the worst cases, they leave a trail of people problems in their wake. Efforts at productivity gains are negated by an avalanche of AI slop.

Business leaders agree that organizational buy-in is essential, but success is hard to quantify. Too many businesses are prioritizing rollout over role clarity. The message (or mandate) is too often centered around the 'what,' without adequately explaining 'how' or 'why.'

We do know this: The speed-over-everything strategy is shaking up too many cutting-edge companies who haven't involved all the right parties. That's how people get left behind.

HR can help **bring order to the chaos** by actively shaping a strategy that's more measurable, through **people data**.



HR can ensure culture doesn't crumble beneath **botched AI rollouts**.

Culture can't be a casualty of innovation. Hasty rollouts create fear, rather than confidence or efficiency. But when HR is involved early, the future of work can be shaped with trust. And make no mistake: The future of work is centered around AI.

Employee responses to pressing AI-related questions ranged from excited and ambitious, to cautious and skeptical. But one theme rose above the rest: **People feel better when HR is involved**.

HR's seat at the executive table is reserved for times like this. By identifying critical AI skills, HR is in position to enact strategic AI goals.

We're at a critical juncture in the modern workplace, one in which companies must find a way to optimize future currency (their tech stack) without leaving the greatest existing asset (their people) behind.

How can HR **bridge the gap**?

Upskill

employees by offering resources before expertise

Enhance

culture by leaning into AI as a unifier, not divider

Prioritize

adoption with a cautious, risk-aware approach

Focus

on trust and training over job security assurances

HR can keep its high performers through **AI upskilling**.

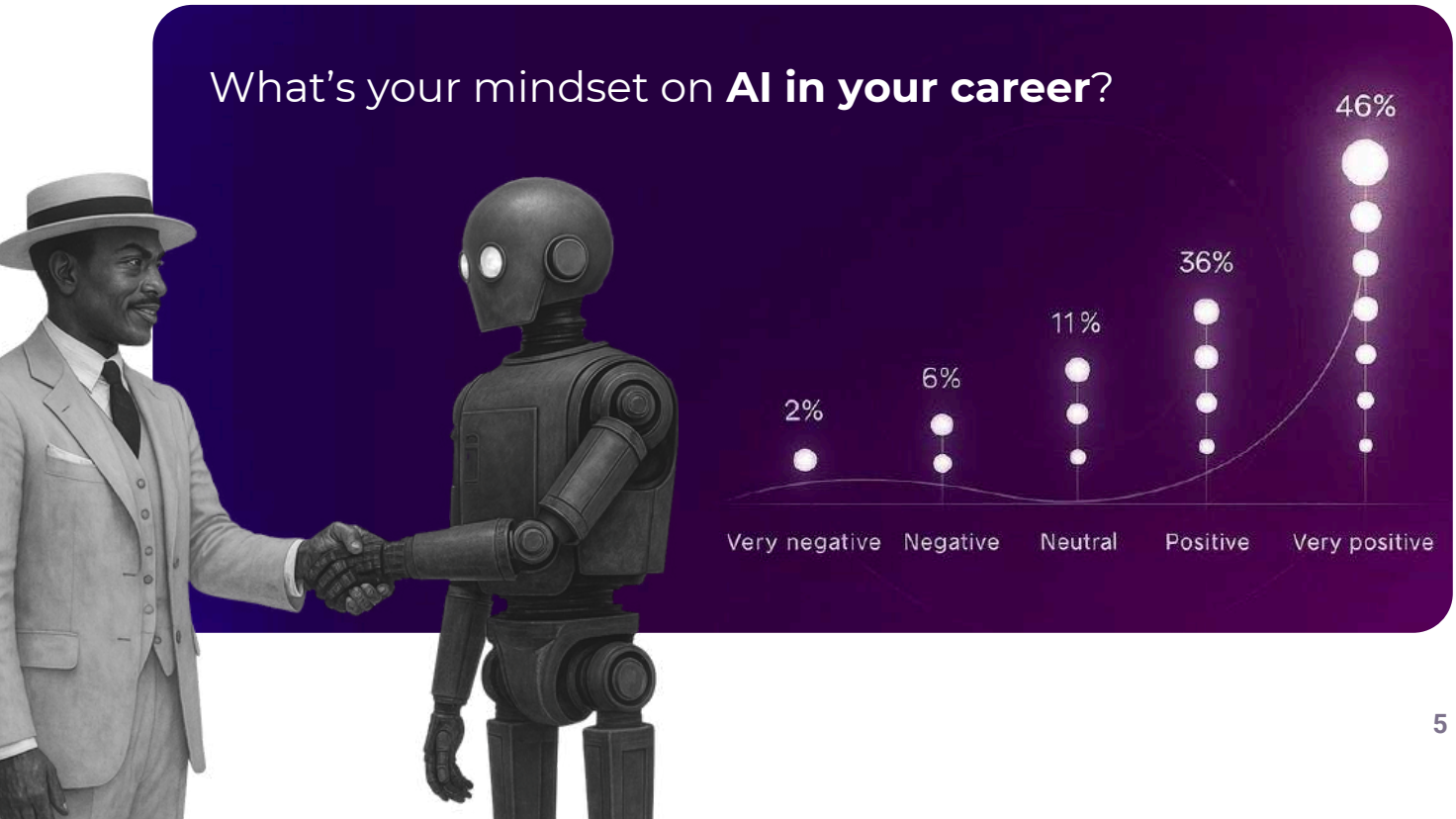
Employees, by and large, recognize the opportunity in front of them. **More than 70% of survey respondents categorized their mindset toward AI as either somewhat or very positive.**

Bear in mind, these are anonymous survey respondents - they have no reason to front for the sake of feigning enthusiasm about a company initiative. The data suggests they are genuinely excited about how AI tools can not only enhance their skill sets, but develop them further.

Are their employers listening? Many CEOs are finding out the hard way that there is no one-size-fits-all AI learning curve. Everyone adjusts at their own rate, and that includes C suite members whose time might be more compromised.

This is where a nuanced people strategy is imperative alongside your AI rollout. HR teams who use behavioral data better understand preferred work styles, communication tendencies, and individual learning paces. They can use those insights to help craft thoughtful, even customized, professional development plans for AI use.

In the process, you send a consistent message: *We're all upskilling together.* This is a companywide initiative, and we won't leave anyone willing to invest in their own development behind.



Earn trust through training, not empty assurances.

Scores of skilled workers - from content creators and financial analysts to engineers and developers - understand the threat AI could pose to their livelihoods if they don't adapt.

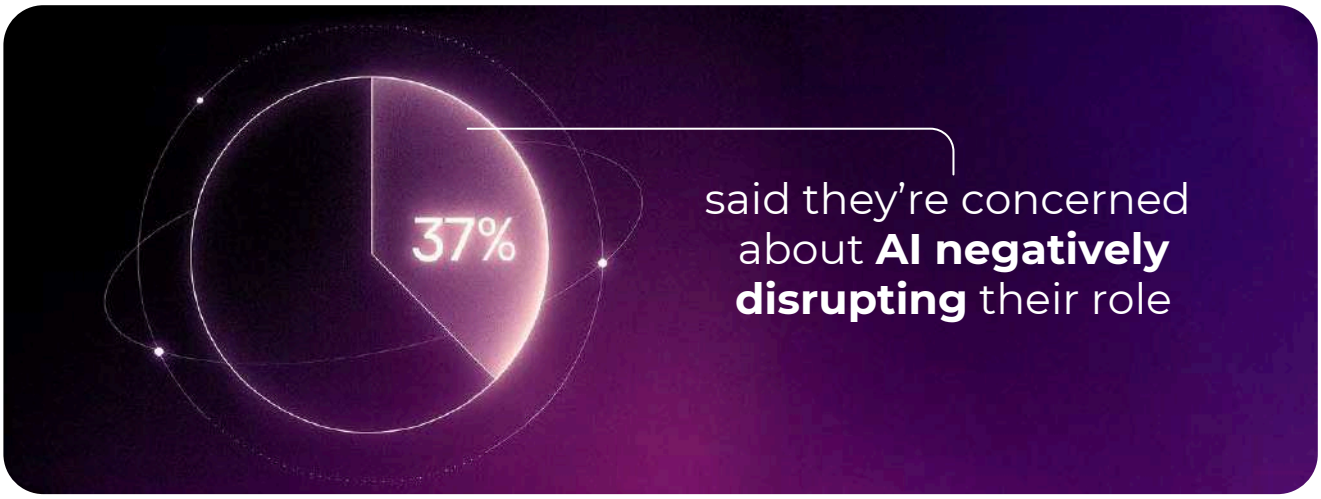
They're hanging onto jobs they don't love because they're afraid of a volatile job market still adjusting to AI's impact. They're comparing notes on rickety rollouts, and openly questioning whether AI adoption is worth the cost of organizational fealty.

For now, the workplace seems split on whether that threat is truly existential, or more of a short-term separator designated to distinguish the all-in from the in-for-now. Individual outlooks are often based on tenure and role: One study found that nearly half of individual contributors would prefer an AI manager. Another Gallup poll found 50% of U.S. adults viewed generative AI as a passing trend, rather than a novel threat.

Nearly 70% of employees said more training opportunities would make them feel more secure in their role - ahead of any job security reassurances, career pathing conversations, or involvement in the rollout discussions.

People see the writing on the wall. For many, job security discussions are secondary to the feeling that they need to get onboard, or get left behind. In fact, the data indicates those who fear AI encroachment most might actually be more likely to lean into it - a paradox exemplified by people embracing what they view as inevitable.

Making broad assurances is risky, since the impact will look different for each team. Your IT leaders are likely concerned with data privacy above all else. But everyone will be rightfully invested in the long-term outlook for their role. HR's perspective ensures these disparate yet equally valid concerns are all taken into account.



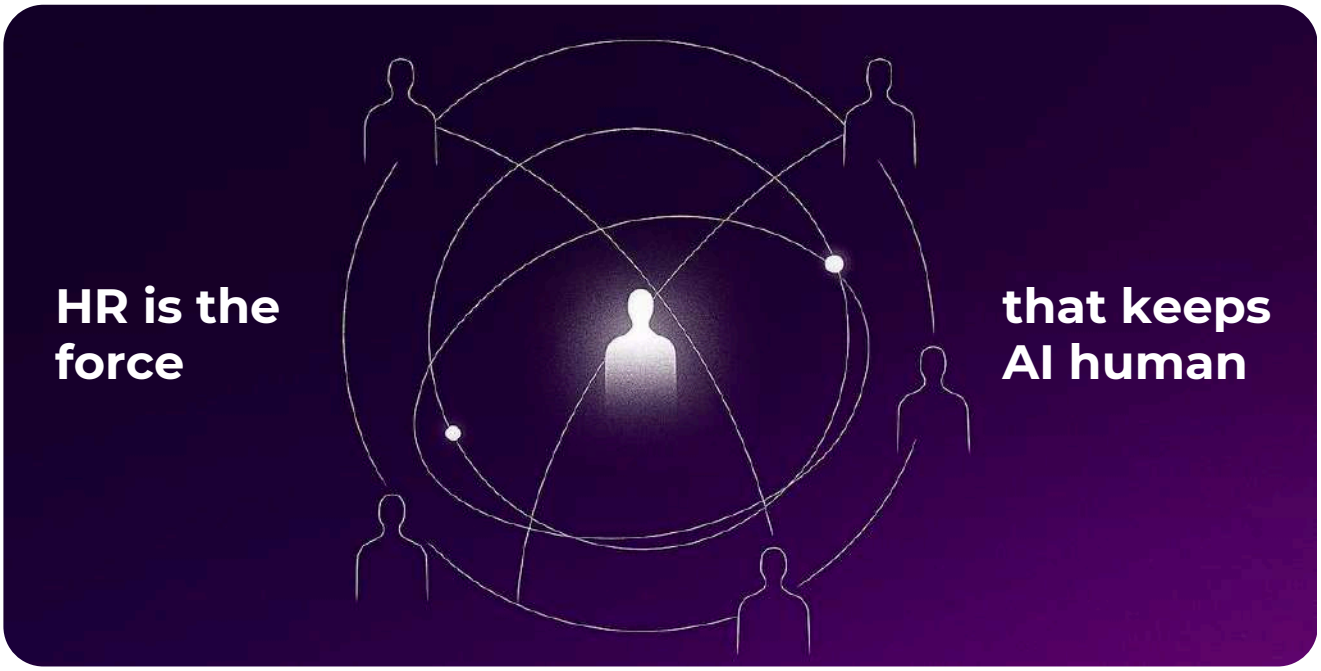
HR may not be AI experts, but they're **trusted sources** of AI information.

Trust is tough to quantify, especially as it pertains to something as abstract as generative AI. When it comes to the unknown, we tend to trust who we know. So perhaps it's no surprise employees cited HR and their immediate peers as **their most trusted sources of AI information**.

This represents an opportunity for HR to position themselves as key advisors - but not experts - who can guide employees' AI understanding and experience.

They can also serve as a key balancer when leadership projects confidence in AI tools they don't even fully understand themselves, since the downstream effects among employees can include imposter syndrome, insecurity, and outright panic.

Adoption speed can't supersede adequate education. In fact, leadership will engender greater trust by deferring to industry experts who can position new tech more objectively. Creating these open forums for discussion, inviting discourse and even skepticism, fosters a culture of psychological safety and further levels the playing field.



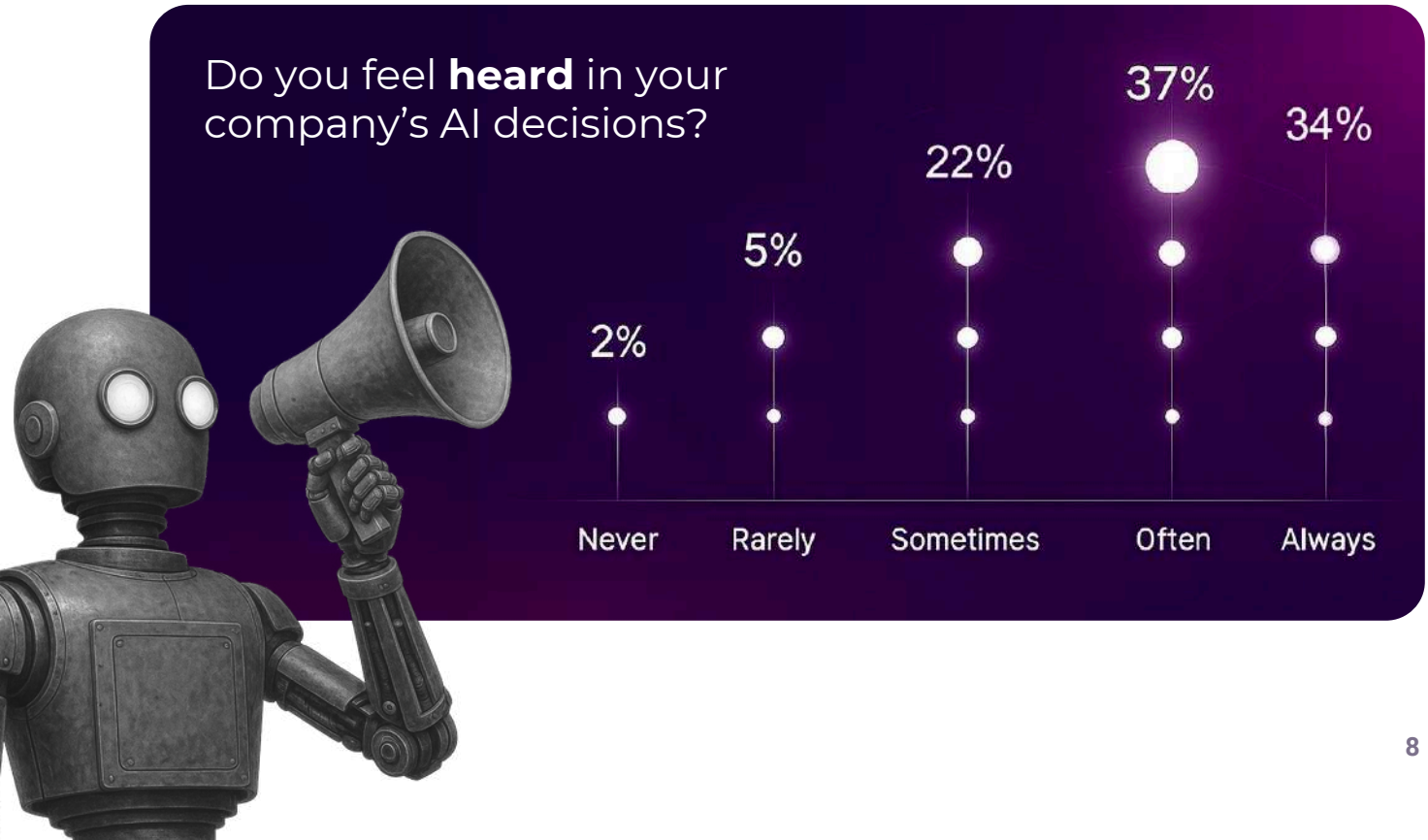
Amplifying employee voices helps ease AI transitions.

Psychological safety looks different for people with unique behaviors and work styles. Some might value an open-forum discussion on AI's environmental ramifications. Others will prefer to discuss tactical details with a direct manager or colleague they trust, one-one-one.

A majority of survey respondents (70%) agreed **psychological safety was key to successful rollouts** at any business. In this sense, AI isn't much different from any other workplace innovation. People want to feel they can ask questions and air concerns without fear of judgment or retribution.

Giving employees a voice in the process is another proven way of gaining buy-in. Our survey revealed that is happening more often than not. A sizable 34% of respondents affirmed their voice is "always" considered when it comes to such transitions, while another 37% said they felt heard "often."

Still, hearing employees' concerns and ideas is one thing; actually acting on them is quite a different story. At many organizations, HR serves as the bridge between understanding employee sentiment and taking company action. Measuring engagement doesn't necessarily require more resources - just intentionality and commitment.



Most people prefer a **cautious approach** to AI adoption.

We asked: If given the choice, would you prefer your company adopt AI quickly, cautiously, or not at all?

A resounding **61% of respondents said they would prefer to "adopt cautiously."** It makes sense that prioritizing thoughtful, measured guidance is preferable to the whirlwind pace that has defined too many haphazard AI rollouts from companies more concerned with keeping up than keeping their people informed and onboard.

"AI first" is not a strategy, and providing context for your approach is critical to gaining employees' understanding - and ultimately their trust.

Still, 29% said they would want to move quickly - and those who did were also more likely to list AI upskilling as a priority.

So there may be room for a multifaceted approach at some organizations - one in which those with greater AI acumen can experiment, tinkering with new use cases, while supported by guidelines.

HR and IT are the primary providers of that guidance. Perhaps no partnership is more important for mid-sized and scaling companies. By pairing with those who best understand your company's unique security risks, HR teams can install guardrails without stifling their employees' ambition or adoption.

People are bullish on AI's potential to actually ***enhance* culture**.

Most companies are still figuring out how to measure AI adoption success. The data remains murky, thanks to small samples and uneven opportunity across industries.

What one construction firm considers AI adoption might differ greatly from the potential use cases in fields like healthcare or legal. Everyone's risk mitigation approach will be unique.

It's equally difficult to measure impact on culture. But you can start with people data. Employee sentiment will tell you a lot about the correlation between your innovative efforts and the downstream effects on established culture.

Employee engagement *is* measurable, but the key is consistency.

So while an eye-opening **67% of respondents said AI adoption has the potential to actually strengthen company culture,** that optimism is moot without follow-up or validation.

Monitoring the cultural ripple effects means asking tough questions - repeatedly. The answers might be tough to absorb initially. For example, just 30% of respondents said they fully trust HR to manage AI adoption "fairly and transparently."

Success hinges on a mindset shift. One HR-specific study revealed that much of the negative employee sentiment toward AI adoption was actually misinformed. People too often mistook generative AI for some ambiguous monolith, overlooking its presence in their everyday work (already). Meeting people where they are, and helping them recognize their familiarity with AI, will go a long way toward normalizing AI, culturally.

This is **HR's moment** to manifest a mindset shift.

This is a critical juncture for the modern workplace. Accelerated AI adoption puts some workers at a crossroads: **Do they buy in, or opt out?** It also presents HR with a window to permanently alter the perception of its function - from tactical to strategic.

It's no easy task, but the HR and People Operations teams that convey to their people AI is not a cultural disruptor will not just salvage culture. They'll actually amplify its strengths.

Most employees want to be part of something special. HR can empower people to capitalize on the opportunity at hand, but only by separating the technical and tactical aspects from the human element.

The best AI integrations are buoyed by people who leverage its potential while providing human checks and balances. AI can't assess tone. AI can't offer true quality control, and it can't predict the human response to its output.

Through a careful, risk-aware approach to adoption, and a transparency-first communication strategy, you can create an environment that rewards innovative adopters without punishing more deliberate implementation. That sort of flexibility is at the heart of **talent optimization** - and the stuff of culture champions.

Turning change into **opportunity**

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AI is reshaping work, but its success depends on how people experience it. HR has the opportunity to guide adoption in a way that builds trust, prepares employees for what's next, and actually *strengthens* culture. These tips offer a practical resource for those focused on the human aspects of AI adoption.

1 Culture & guardrails

- Partner with IT to set clear guardrails on use, safety, and compliance.
- Position AI as a cultural enhancement that frees people up for more collaboration.

2 Trust through transparency

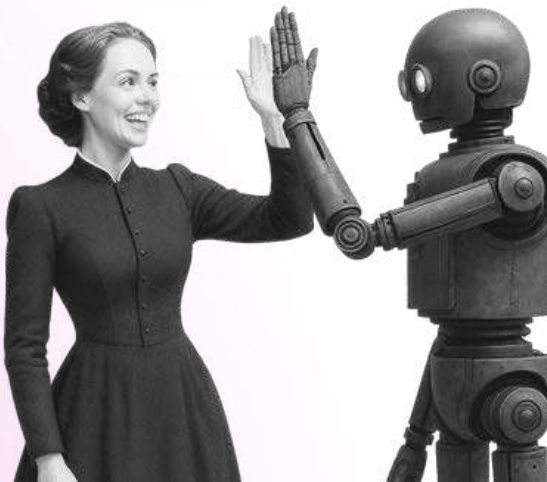
- Provide training opportunities instead of job security promises.
- Be upfront - and receptive to feedback - about potential role or process changes.

3 Clarity in communication

- Create forums where leaders and employees access the same information.
- Invite open dialogue and skepticism to build psychological safety.

4 Employee voice

- Ask directly about employee excitement, concerns, and workload impacts.
- Act on feedback to prove input shapes decisions and measure AI adoption success.

5 Upskilling & growth

- Treat upskilling as a shared journey so no one feels left behind.
- Offer a range of resources for different learning styles.