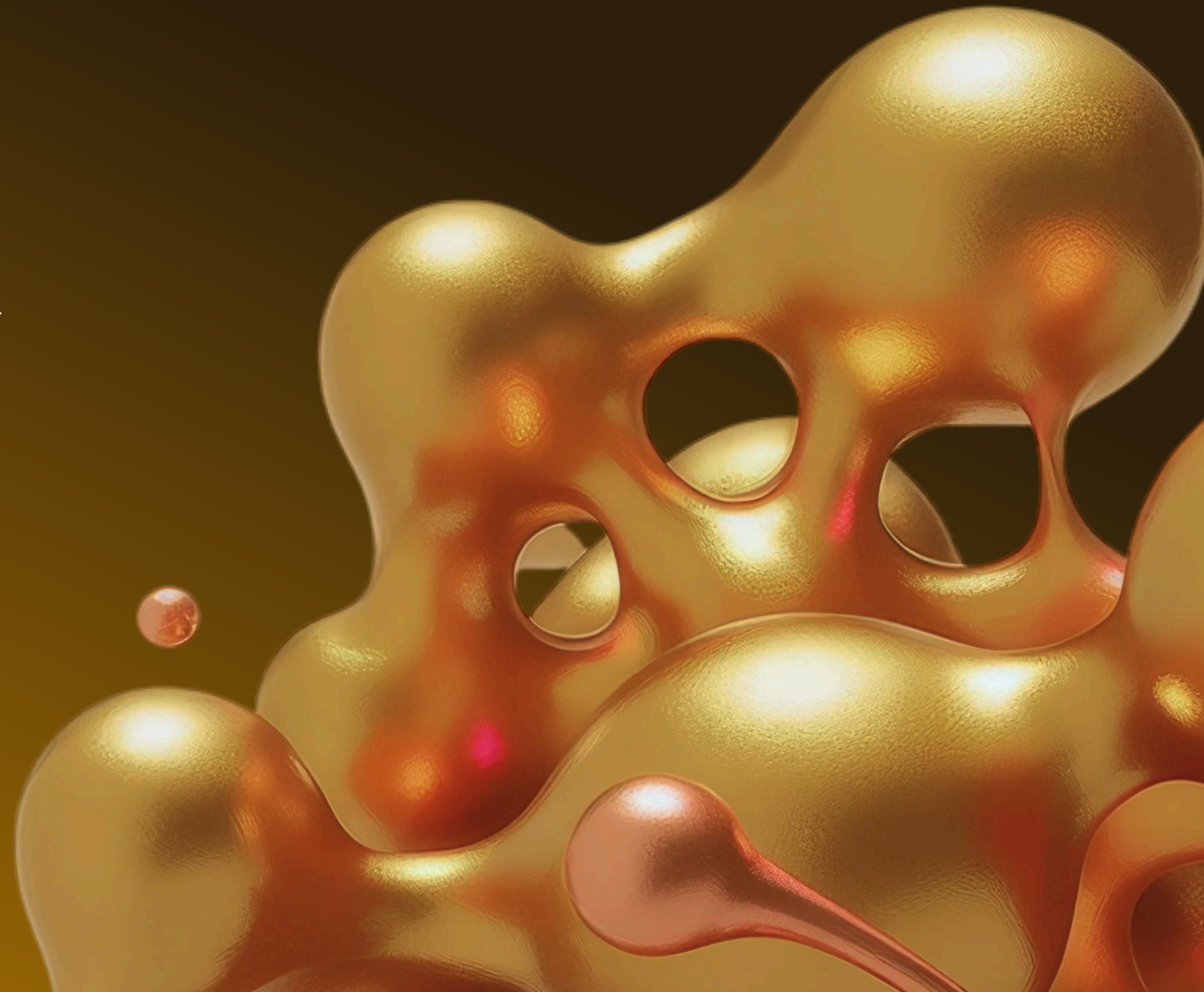


How CHROs lead AI change through communication



What determines how employees perceive AI? Leadership does.

If a person believes and trusts their leaders, they are 46% more likely to believe their company is augmenting their skills with AI, rather than automating their job away.

A manager who makes time for a difficult conversation with their direct report about AI integration signals that the organization is open to navigating the issue together. A manager who relegates that task to a learning module and never follows up signals that the organization doesn't value collaboration on that topic.

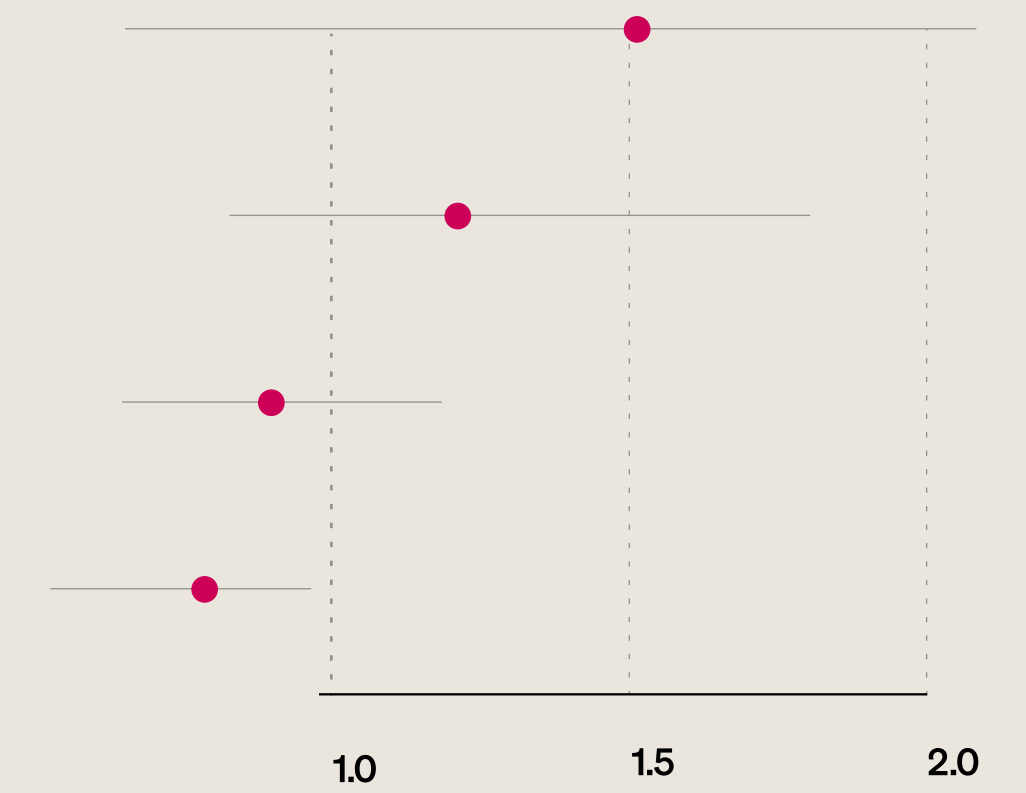
Those unspoken signals reach employees long before any corporate communication plan does, and they set the terms for how formal communication lands.

Feeling about leadership

Feeling about org

Feeling about coworkers

Intent to leave



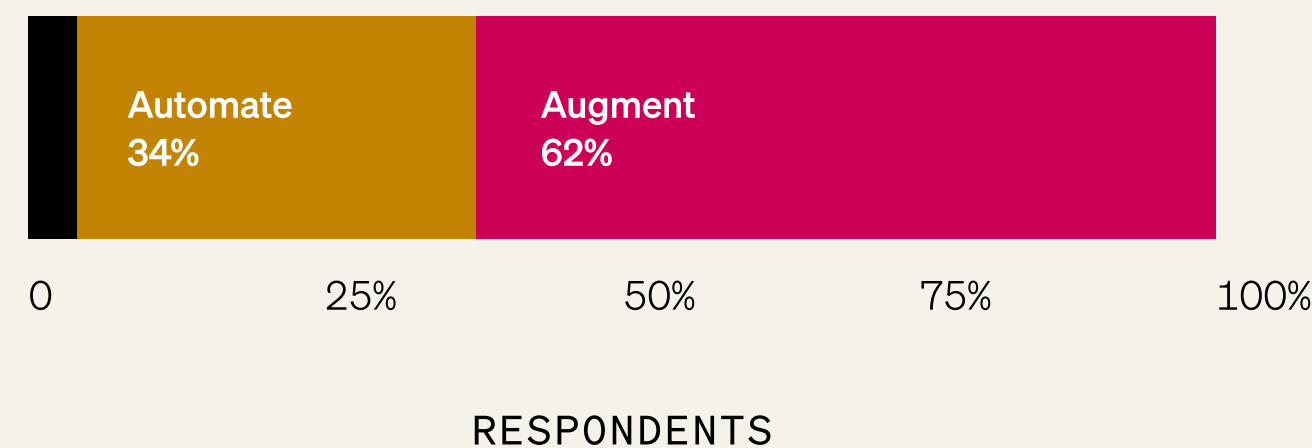
A 1-SD increase in positive feelings about leadership is associated with 46% higher odds of believing their org is using AI to augment rather than automate.

A third of your employees already believe the goal is to replace them.

Currently, 34% of employees believe their organization's primary motivation in using AI is to automate. 62% believe it is to augment their skills. The longer organizations wait to address misperceptions, the more they calcify.

Employees read every signal leaders send about AI as a statement about whether they have a future in that organization. How it's announced, how it's rolled out, how leaders themselves use it. Those signals accumulate into a belief about organizational intent, and that belief shapes how people engage with the tools.

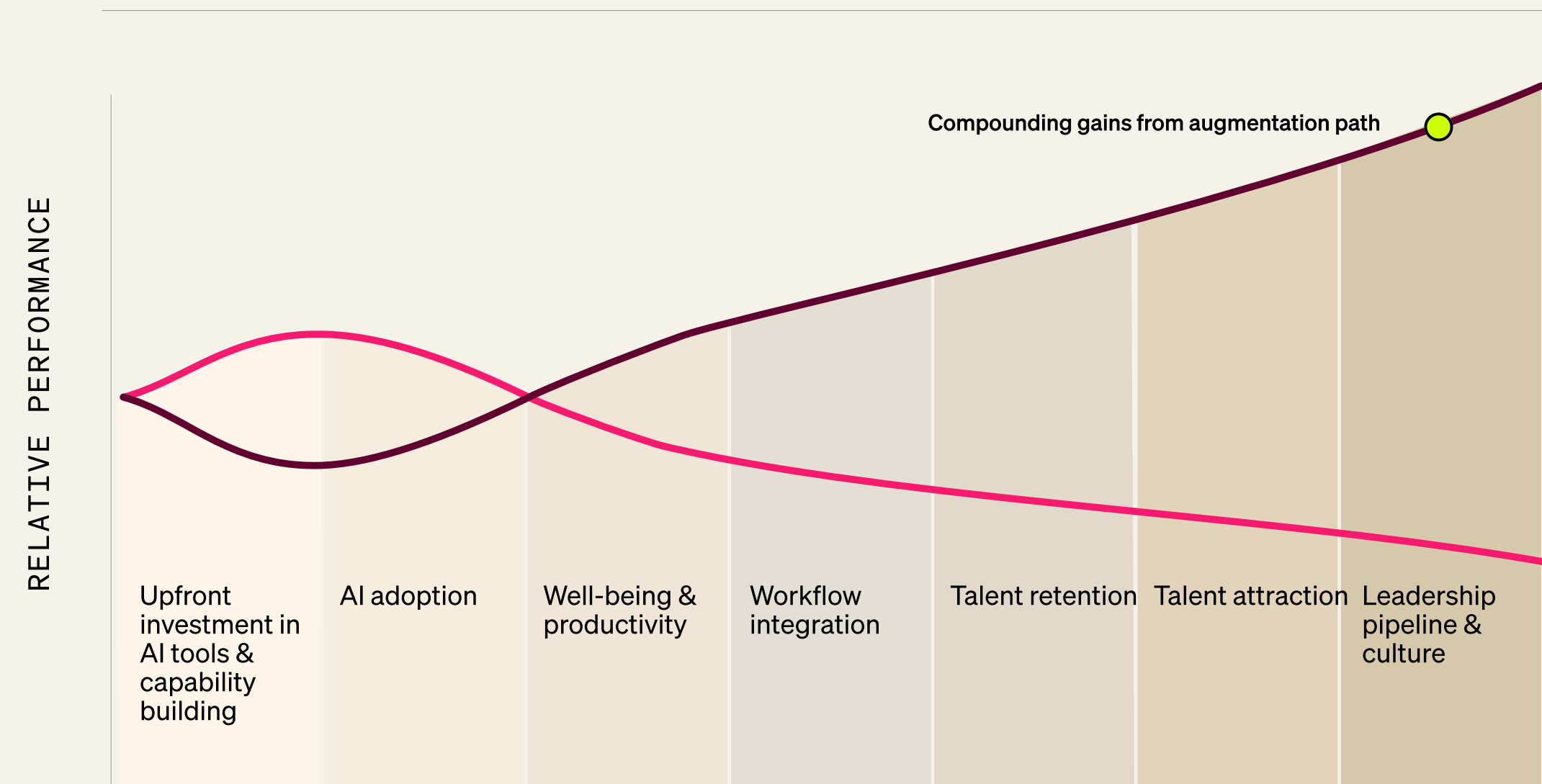
What do you think your organization's ultimate motivation is?



And the consequences are real, not just perceptual. Organizations on the automation path see predictable declines in wellbeing, rising worklopp, talent flight, and erosion of the developmental relationships that hold teams together. Organizations on the augmentation path see the opposite: sustained engagement, stronger retention, and teams that develop genuine capability with AI over time.

The trajectory your organization is on right now is partly shaped by whether your people believe you're investing in them or planning around them. And that belief is shaped, more than anything else, by what they hear and see from their managers.

Augmentation vs. automation



Five communication dimensions predict whether healthy AI norms take hold. They don't all do the same work.

Different conversations drive different outcomes. Most organizations default to explaining "why we're doing this" and stop. The data says that's just the starting point.

Satisfaction (how people feel about the change) is driven most by explaining personal impact and giving people a voice.

Adoption norms (whether people actually use AI) are driven by two things: making leadership support visible and building confidence through training.

The sequence is critical: satisfaction first, then adoption. You can't mandate the second without building the first.

Communicating framework prediction org AI outcomes

	DRIVES SATISFACTION	DRIVES ADOPTION
Why adopt AI?	●	
What's in it for me?	●	
Can we do it?		●
Who's behind this change?		●
Does my voice matter?	●	

When communicating AI, three conversations build trust:

01 Why are we doing this?

Answer "why" before "how." Give people the strategic rationale before rolling out tools or policies. Organizations that lead with purpose see higher communication satisfaction.

02 What does this mean for me?

Create feedback loops early. Let employees shape how AI gets implemented on their teams. The data shows that when people are mandated to use AI without being empowered to make decisions, they produce more workstop. When people have a voice in how AI rolls out, they feel ownership rather than resistance.

03 Does my voice matter?

Make personal stakes explicit. Address role impact, job security, and growth paths directly. This is the single strongest predictor of whether employees feel good about AI communication. Silence gets filled with worst-case assumptions.

Questions to pressure-test your communication

- + Have we explained how AI affects each role specifically?

- + Have you discussed both the advantages and limitations of AI?

- + Do employees have a channel to ask questions and push back?

- + Are we addressing security and career concerns head-on or hoping people don't ask?

When communicating AI, two conversations help adoption

04 Can we do this?

Build confidence before issuing an AI mandate. Provide real training. Share success stories from inside the organization, not vendor case studies. The data shows that reinforcing people's confidence that they can navigate AI is one of the strongest predictors of usage norms across the organization. You can require the tool, but building confidence leads to the full embrace of it.

05 Who's behind this?

Make AI leadership visible. Employees need to see their leaders using AI, talking about it openly, modeling the behavior they're asking for. An email from the CEO is a start. A manager who preps for a one-on-one with AI and says so openly sends a signal that changes behavior from avoidance to adoption without the mandate. This dimension is the strongest driver of organization-wide AI usage.

Questions to pressure-test your communication

- + Are managers visibly using AI themselves?

- + Do we share success stories from our own teams or just external benchmarks?

- + Have we distinguished between encouraging experimentation and mandating usage?

- + Have we distinguished between encouraging experimentation and mandating usage?

How do your employees perceive your company's AI adoption journey?

	DIMENSION	FROM EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVE	ASSESSMENT
<p>Most organizations have done better with some of these conversations than others. To find out where your gaps are, step into your employees' shoes: for each dimension, rate how you think they would describe your organization. If you're uncertain, that uncertainty is itself a signal that the communication hasn't happened or has been inconsistent.</p>	We provide a strategic rationale for using AI	Before being asked to change how they work, employees understand the business problem AI is meant to solve and the outcomes expected.	1 2 3 4
	We openly discuss how AI impacts the employee	Employees have been told, without having to ask, how AI affects their specific role, including job security, day-to-day work, and career development.	1 2 3 4
	We give employees a voice in AI adoption	Employees have structured ways to raise concerns and shape how AI is used in their teams, not just a place to submit feedback.	1 2 3 4
	We help everyone build their AI capabilities	Employees have received training that builds genuine confidence with AI, not just access to tools, and someone has checked whether they actually feel equipped.	1 2 3 4
	Our leaders publicly demonstrate a growth mindset toward AI	Managers and senior leaders visibly use AI themselves and talk about it in ways that model what they are asking of employees, including acknowledging what they are still learning.	1 2 3 4

1 = Hasn't happened
 2 = Isolated instances only
 3 = Inconsistent across leaders or teams
 4 = Consistent, visible practice organization-wide

The next conversation

Based on your answers on the last page, find the pattern below that best describes where your organization is and the conversation you need to be having next.

The Buy-In Gap

Low on the first three questions, high on the last two.

Your people are going through the motions, using AI because they've been told to. But they're not bought in. Not really. Your conversations should be about purpose and stakes: why AI matters for the business, what it means for each role, and whether employees can shape how AI is implemented.

The Readiness Gap

High on the first three questions, low on the last two.

Your people understand what's happening and feel reasonably good about it. But understanding isn't usage. Your conversation should center on helping people feel capable with AI and encouraging leaders to use it visibly.

The Foundation Gap

Low across all five questions.

Your AI communication hasn't really started. The conversation your organization needs to have is: "Why are we doing this, and what does it mean for you?" Every day without that conversation is a day your managers are fielding questions they're ill-equipped to answer. Everything else builds from here.

The Future Gap

High across all five questions.

You've been having the right conversations. The next conversation you need to have is about measuring success and optimizing. Are the behaviors showing up in the work? To what degree are employees experimenting with AI? Are employees pushing the boundaries of the possible?

These five conversations are measurable. The conditions they create are buildable.

The gap between organizations that get stronger from AI and those that struggle with it often comes down to the conversations no one thought to have.

BetterUp helps organizations see what their dashboards miss: the psychological terrain, manager behaviors, and developmental relationships that determine how AI plays out across your workforce.

[Request a demo →](#)