

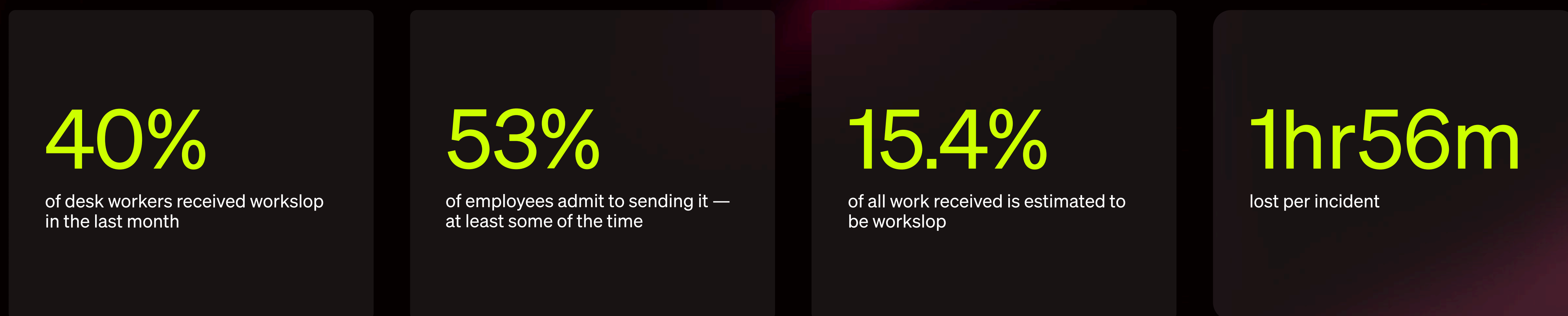
The hidden cost of workslop: What the numbers mean for your organization

RESEARCH BY BETTERUP LABS × STANFORD SOCIAL MEDIA LAB | 1,150 US DESK WORKERS

What is workslop?

AI-generated work content that masquerades as good work, but lacks the substance to meaningfully advance a given task. It looks finished. It isn't.

The scale of the problem



The math for your organization

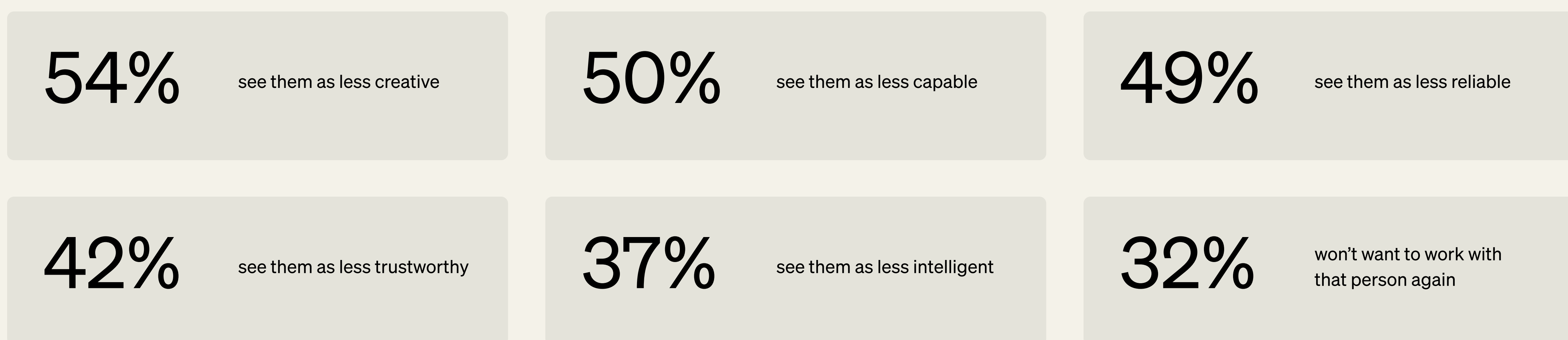
\$9 million

Each workslop incident costs \$186/month per affected employee. Scaled across a 10,000-person organization — and accounting for the 40% prevalence rate — that's \$9 million per year in lost productivity.

This is a floor, not a ceiling. It doesn't account for the cost of damaged relationships, increased turnover, or eroded trust.

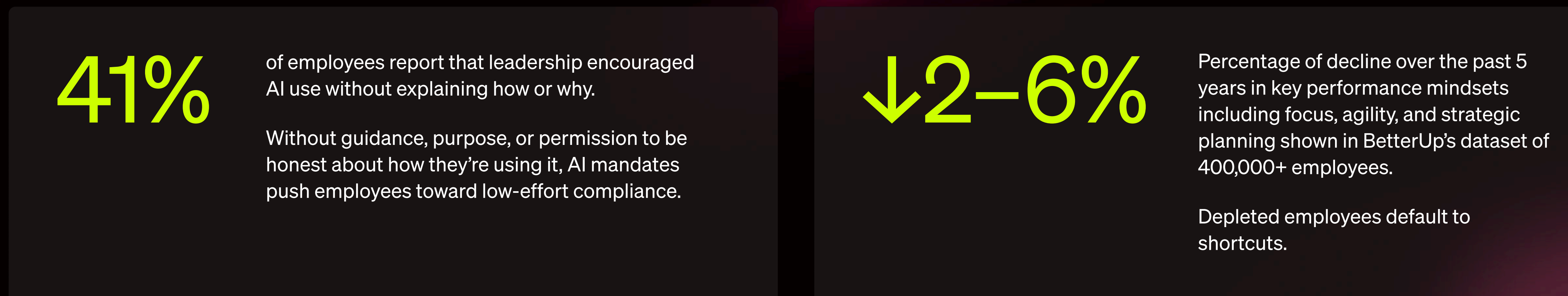
THE HIDDEN COSTS OF WORKSLOP

When employees receive workslop, here's how they see the person who sent it:



Why it's happening

The research points to organizational design, not individual laziness, as the root cause.



What prevents workslop

Two factors from the BetterUp × Stanford research predict significantly lower workslop:

- 1 Team trust reduces workslop by 61%.** When people feel safe admitting AI use, asking for feedback, and raising quality concerns, work improves.
- 2 An agentic AI mindset cuts workslop in half.** Employees who feel confident and in control of AI tools — “Pilots” rather than “Passengers” — are half as likely to send low-quality AI work.

Both can be developed. Neither comes from a better AI tool.

AI will increase productivity. The research confirms it. But that outcome depends entirely on how people use it — and the human capabilities they bring to the technology.

The organizations that see real ROI on AI investment aren't the ones with the most tools. They're the ones where leaders understand employee bandwidth, set clear expectations for AI use, and build review processes that reinforce human judgment rather than bypass it. Both are leadership problems. Both are solvable.

That's what BetterUp is built for.



BetterUp's Human Transformation Platform turns AI investments into real performance gains — embedding development into daily workflows, scaling the mindsets and skills that fuel sustained growth.

[Learn more →](#)