



FOR HEADS OF AI & AI TRANSFORMATION LEADERS

# The 1-Year AI Enablement Checklist

A practical guide to moving your organization from “we need an AI strategy” to measurable AI adoption in the next 365 days.

# 52%

of employees feel  
anxious or overwhelmed  
by AI's implications

# 85%

only use AI as a search  
or summarization tool —  
not for real workflows

# 3%

are truly AI proficient  
with the skills needed  
to capture full value

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Building a AI-powered company probably feels like gearing up to eat an elephant, especially if you're a "Head of AI" team of one.

But the organizations getting this right aren't doing anything magical. They're following a repeatable sequence: understand where you are, build the conditions for change, activate the transformation, and sustain it.

This playbook breaks that sequence down step by step, with real examples from companies that have already made the journey.

Start by plotting where your company is on the **30 / 90 / 365 roadmap**, and pick a few tasks to cross off your list this month. And as you go, share with us what you learn, and how we can help.

# Your 30 / 90 / 365 Roadmap

Every organization will have to move through these stages to set up a successful AI transformation. And the good news is, you can do it in just one year.

Note: You don't have to approach these stages sequentially. If you're ready, you can start all of them at once - but be sure not to skip any.

## First 30 Days: Set the Strategic Foundation

### • Your Goal

**Radical** alignment from the company on your vision for AI

### • What Success Looks Like

An **AI Manifesto** with your "why of AI," an initial suite of AI tools, and clear structure / ownership for your AI executive team

## First 90 Days: Activate the Transformation

### • Your Goal

Established baseline of organizational AI usage and proficiency, and managers empowered to lead

### • What Success Looks Like

90% of employees logged into your LLM, baseline and KPIs established, and 90% of managers-and-above trained on leading in the age of AI

## Next 365 Days: Drive Sustained AI Use

### • Your Goal

AI-powered orgs

People and processes running on AI, and AI embedded in your organization's workflows

### • What Success Looks Like

80% weekly (then daily) active AI use of primary AI, and 80% AI proficiency (depth and sophistication of use)

## Setting the Strategic Foundation

Your first job is simple but hard: Get everyone at your company **radically** aligned on your vision and expectations for AI. That requires starting with your leadership team. In organizations we work with, most leadership teams have not aligned on their AI ambition or their “why of AI” - this is your first step.

### COMMON PAIN POINT

“If you ask five leaders at our company what our AI strategy is, you’ll get five completely different answers.”

Build your AI executive team - it should include your CEO, your Head of AI, and your CIO/CTO (a separate person)

Write an AI manifesto — including your organization's "why of AI" — so employees understand the purpose, not just the mandate

Align on the ambition and speed of your transformation: Based on your risk and opportunity, how fast will you move?

Choose your AI tools, including a best-in-class LLM (our favorites are Claude and ChatGPT)

Commit to “Cut vs. Create” - using AI primarily to drive efficiencies or drive growth

Allocate capital according to your ambition - aka, don't commit to a 1-year transformation on a \$150,000 budget

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE DONE WELL

**Sidearm Sports** is a strong example of this done right. President George Scott got deeply fluent in AI himself before asking anyone else to engage — taking classes, attending summits, and demoing tools live in front of his team.

Critically, he didn't just mandate AI adoption — he established the why. He framed AI proficiency as a career imperative for employees (“this will come up in your next job interview”) and a business imperative for the company (“every client asks us about AI — now we have a real answer”). That dual framing — what's in it for me, and what's at stake for us — is what separates AI programs that stick from ones that stall.

## Activating the Transformation

Before you can start truly transforming your business, you need to understand where you are on AI - and do a few simple things to activate your employees, managers, and executives. In most organizations, AI transformation dies at the manager level, so set clear expectations and provide coaching on leading in the age of AI, which is no easy task.

### COMMON PAIN POINT

“Our executives talk non-stop about AI, but at the manager level people are silent. They’re afraid to push AI use on their teams when everyone is so busy.”

Establish governance and responsible use guidelines - simple, specific, and easy-to-find guardrails and expectations

Baseline your AI proficiency and usage as an organization - you can start with self-reporting before tools are set up

Launch your LLM with a kickoff event (but don't assume you're done after one)

Establish your initial metrics as the head of AI (e.g., targets for usage, proficiency, agent-to-employee ratio, etc.)

Communicate clearly and repeatedly about your AI tools, and make them painfully easy to access

Activate your VPs and managers with hands-on coaching on leading in the age of AI

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE DONE WELL

**Autodesk** learned early that benchmarking done right becomes the foundation for everything that follows. When Leo Casado and the marketing operations team assessed their global marketing organization, the results reframed the entire program: 61% of marketers were already confident AI users — but 80% couldn't articulate how AI applied to their specific role.

That gap between general capability and role-specific readiness is exactly what most organizations miss when they skip the diagnostic step. Rather than launching training into the void, Autodesk used that data to design targeted learning pathways, build an AI Center of Excellence, and stand up a Slack community where marketers share prompts and real-world applications week over week.

## Driving Sustained AI Use

Once you've launched your AI tools and trained managers, the challenge becomes a long game: Creating a culture of deep, sustained AI use across your entire organization. For a large organization, this is simply an exercise in repetition and consistency - running the programs, week in and week out, to make AI "how work is done" in your company.

### COMMON PAIN POINT

"We rolled out Microsoft Copilot and saw an initial spike of activity, but six months later, usage has dropped off and we're not seeing much business impact."

Deploy role-specific coaching - highly personalized training on building AI skills and finding use cases

Recruit, manage, and deploy your AI champions, ideally chosen by your manager population

Run quarterly hackathons where your team has dedicated time to build AI automations together

Run workflow automation pilots and build your use case library internally

Host weekly lunch and learns for employees to show off what they've built, teach a new skill, or share what's working

Track usage and ROI on an ongoing basis, keeping in mind your Head of AI KPIs

### WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE DONE WELL

**Horizon Media's** AI deployment shows how sustained use gets built into the fabric of an organization. They didn't launch a training program and hope people showed up — they engineered the conditions for follow-through at every stage.

Cohorts had dedicated calendar blocks, managers reinforced deadlines at each milestone, and completion was tracked in a unified dashboard precise enough that employees were checking their own progress daily. Critically, they made finishing feel like something worth doing: certified employees earned physical rewards — branded mugs, stickers, a LinkedIn credential — and the "wings" designation became a genuine cultural marker, not a checkbox. Bob Lord, President of Horizon Media, publicly earned his own wings, which changed the dynamic from mandate to shared commitment. The result is that AI proficiency stopped feeling like a training program and started feeling like something employees were doing for themselves.

# Benchmarks

These leading indicators apply across all three stages — track them continuously, not just at the end. They're the leading indicators that you're building AI into every aspect of your organization.

Adoption

# 80%

Weekly active users of primary AI tools — then push toward daily active use

Proficiency

# 80%

Certified as AI proficient, with 20% of those qualifying as "experts" building real workflows

AI Champions

# 5%

Of the workforce — embedded across every function and business unit as active advocates

Agent Ratio

# 1:1

Agents to employees — at minimum. Advanced orgs are moving toward 3:1 as automation matures