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Is AI causing 'brain fry' among fund staff?

Despite technology promising to cut down on mundane tasks, workers feeling mentally fatigued

By Robert Van Egghen | 24 March 2026

Asset managers are investing heavily in AI in the belief that the technology can make the business more efficient and productive.

But a recent study by executives at **Boston Consulting Group** warns that the push towards AI, as well as the technology's own flaws and inconsistencies, may be taking a toll on the brains of human workers.

The research, published in the Harvard Business Review, finds that workers in many industries are suffering from "AI brain fry" – a form of "mental fatigue that results from excessive use of, interaction with and/or oversight of AI tools beyond one's cognitive capacity".

Feelings of fatigue are most commonly reported by professionals working in marketing, human resources, operations and finance, while those in leadership and compliance roles are less likely to suffer, according to the study.

AI brain fry also appears to be spreading across the asset management industry. An Ignites Europe poll of some 187 fund professionals found 51 per cent of respondents report suffering from AI-induced mental fatigue.

Virginie O'Shea, founder of **Firebrand Research**, a capital markets technology consultancy, says the negative impact of AI on the workplace has become a common complaint among many investment operations teams.

"AI does seem to cause some degree of fatigue [...] firms are downsizing at the same time, so these team members are also doing more work and overseeing more AI tools," she says.

"Individuals feel they have to demonstrate their embrace of AI as much as possible and therefore are pushing themselves harder."

Adrian Whelan, global head of market intelligence at **Brown Brothers Harriman**, adds that the use of AI can be a "catch 22 situation" for many fund industry roles.

"People are feeling pressure to use AI but at times are unsure how to use it or don't want to disintermediate themselves from their own job function and the value they provide," he says.

Whelan adds that the push of AI tools in the workplace can spark a range of emotions among employees from resentment to frustration.

"If the AI is purported to be 'better' at the task than you are, that can naturally raise jealousy or resentment in a

worker who might have spent years building up their skill or knowledge base," he says.

But some fund professionals also find that AI can be "more trouble than it is worth sometimes" due to the amount of oversight the technology requires, including checking for inconsistencies and mistakes, according to Whelan.

A key challenge for professionals experimenting with AI in their work is that it can force changes in the way individuals think, particularly for those working in roles where the use of technology is fairly limited.

"AI forces people to think like coders. This is the challenge and where the burnout comes from," says **Attilio Veneziano**, founder of regulatory boutique **Veneziano & Partners**.

Oskar Åslund, chief strategy officer at **AKJ**, a tokenised investment platform, adds that workers are likely to experience burnout as "AI changes how you work".

"The expectation of higher productivity and less time for gathering info [...] could likely produce a more stressful work environment," he says.

Åslund adds that as AI becomes increasingly embedded in the workplace it will become more important for fund professionals to "get some quality human interaction during your workday", including "asking colleagues about their opinions and input [rather than] only [large language models]."

But others warn that flaws in the workplace itself are causing burnout, rather than AI.

"AI itself is not the problem. The problem is badly designed human-AI workflows," says **Greg Davies**, chief science officer at **Oxford Risk**, a behavioural finance software provider.

"Used well, AI should reduce complexity, improve clarity, and support better decisions for both adviser and client. Used badly, it just accelerates noise."

He says the best processes are those that take a hybrid approach, or so-called "centaurs" – those that combine both human thinking and AI.

One fund professional tells Ignites Europe that rather than causing brain fry, the technology is causing her to "stop critically thinking".

"I've started using it much less and much more carefully to avoid this," she adds.