

**MAJOR
PLAYERS**



The Future of Work

AI in the Creative Industries



Certified



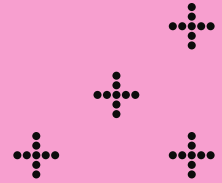
Corporation

AI in the Creative Industries

This report draws upon insights from across the breadth of the Creative Industries, with insights from 1002 professionals.

68,295

Data Points



32,000+

Employees Represented



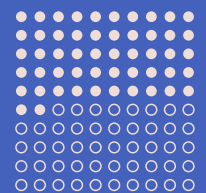
76% Agency

24% Brand



52% Permanent Employees

48% Freelance



Foreword

by Rosa Rolo

We are entering a new era of work. AI is reshaping how we learn, think, work and create, and its impact on the creative and marketing industries is already significant. The opportunities are huge, but the reality for many businesses and professionals is complex. The technology is moving faster than the skills, structures and support systems needed to use it well.

With so much noise surrounding AI, our aim at Major Players is to cut through hype with clarity. Using insights from more than 1,000 professionals and over 68,000 data points, this report offers a grounded, data-driven view of where brands, agencies and talent really are in their AI journey. It highlights how workflows are shifting, how roles are evolving, and where the biggest capability gaps lie.

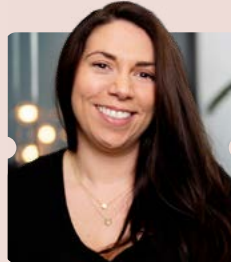
What we found is a widening gap between enthusiasm and execution. Adoption is high - with 94 percent of organisations already using AI in some way but many still lack the strategy, structure and measurement needed to turn that activity into meaningful impact. Even more concerning, few are investing in the training required to build confidence and capability across their teams.

This leaves a workforce that is curious but cautious. Most professionals believe AI will reshape their roles, yet they also worry about over-reliance, originality being diluted, or the devaluation of craft. These concerns are understandable when guidance from leadership is limited and many people are left to self-learn without support.

Real progress requires clear expectations, thoughtful deployment and open dialogue. AI should enhance human creativity, not replace it, helping teams generate stronger ideas, make better-informed decisions and deliver greater value. Organisations that invest in clarity, capability and culture will be the ones who turn early adoption into sustained advantage.

At Major Players, we have spent more than 30 years partnering with the creative and marketing industries. Our role is not only to connect businesses with exceptional talent but to provide the market intelligence, hiring guidance and strategic insight needed to build teams ready for what comes next. As AI reshapes the industry, we are committed to helping organisations navigate change with confidence and to supporting talent as their roles evolve.

If you would like to explore these findings further or request bespoke data for your organisation, we would be happy to help.



Rosa Rolo

Rosa Rolo,
Managing Director

Section 01

State of Play & Opportunities



State of Play & Opportunities

In recent years, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies have progressed rapidly, shifting from experimentation to strategic necessity. This momentum is reflected not only in industry behaviour, but also in major national investment, with Google recently committing £5bn to UK AI infrastructure and research over the next two years, signalling an accelerated push to embed these technologies at scale¹.

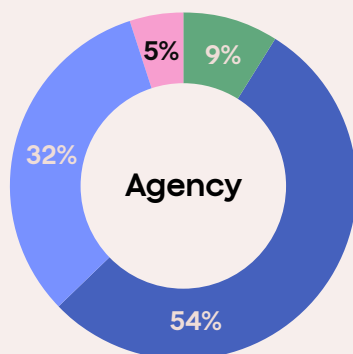
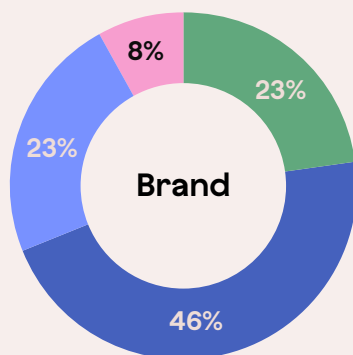
Our 2025 Salary Census², published earlier in the year, found that nine in ten business leaders now consider AI critical to their future success, and that belief has begun to translate into action. Almost all organisations report using AI across their teams and workflows, though the level of maturity varies significantly, highlighting the gap between ambition and capability.

But widespread adoption doesn't automatically translate into performance. Our findings reveal that although organisations are rolling out AI tools rapidly, most still lack the capability, structure and oversight required to turn usage into meaningful outcomes. The challenge has shifted from deciding if AI should be used to how it should be integrated - those that do it well can expect up to three times the growth in revenue per employee.³

Leaders are under growing pressure to improve productivity, unlock new efficiencies and respond to rapidly shifting customer expectations - areas where AI delivers a clear competitive advantage. But the shift isn't purely operational. Many organisations are also exploring AI as a springboard for innovation and creativity, experimenting with new ways of creating and generating ideas. It's no surprise, then, that creative teams are at the forefront of this movement, with 67% now using AI tools regularly to expand their capabilities.

By contrast, adoption is far lower in more data-driven functions. Performance Marketing teams report just 10% regular use, and E-commerce only 8%, suggesting that disciplines built on control and measurable returns are moving more cautiously.

AI adoption: brand vs agency



Key



“AI is the most profound technology humankind has worked on. We will have to work through societal disruptions, but this will create new opportunities. It will evolve and transition certain jobs, and people will need to adapt. Those who adapt to AI “will do better”.

-Sundar Pichai, CEO, Google

£47B

in additional annual revenue could be added to the UK economy if AI opportunities are fully realised⁵

The biggest drivers for businesses when adopting AI and emerging technologies

Productivity & Speed

Completing work faster and streamlining processes so teams can move with far greater efficiency.

76%

Innovation & Creativity

Experimenting with new ways of working or creating to unlock fresh ideas and more inventive output.

66%

Cost Efficiency

Reducing spend and optimising resources to deliver more impact with less waste.

43%

Leadership Vision

Driving a top-down push for digital transformation that sets the direction for the whole organisation.

43%

Competitive Pressure

Keeping up with peers and staying ahead of rivals by matching, or outpacing their capabilities.

39%

Talent Needs

Helping teams manage workloads and filling skills gaps without immediately expanding headcount.

15%

Client Demand

Responding to requests for AI-enabled services or cost reductions to meet rising client expectations.

15%

Regulation & Compliance

Improving accuracy, audit-ability, and risk control to keep pace with tightening regulatory demands.

3%

Beneath all of this lies a huge challenge for leaders. Nearly half (48%) of businesses fail to measure AI's impact, with a further 9% unsure how they might measure impact. Without clear metrics or defined outcomes, organisations risk moving fast without direction, unable to demonstrate return on investment or refine how AI is used.

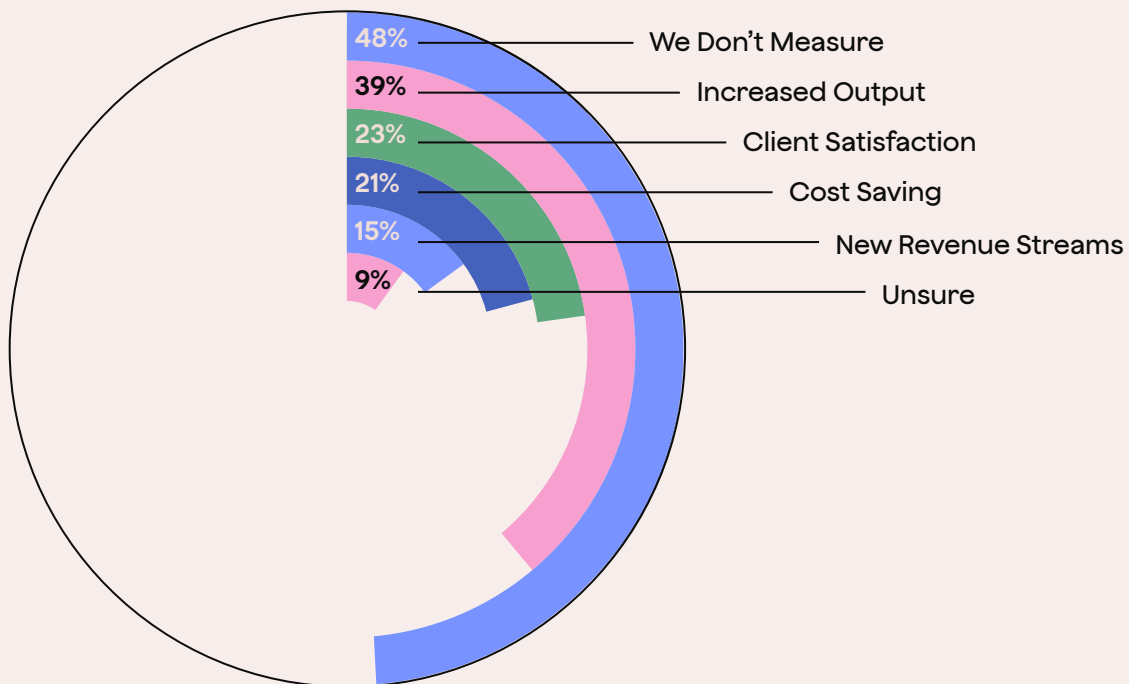
Another measurement metric focuses on increased output, but this doesn't automatically translate into greater impact. While AI has accelerated production, the real challenge is ensuring that what's created is original, effective and aligned with purpose. With 80% of consumers ranking narrative and creative quality as highly important in their purchasing decisions⁴, it's clear that success still hinges on how work resonates with its audience - not simply how fast it can be delivered.

WPP

(WPP²¹)

Across more than 20 recent pilots, we have seen an average of 48 per cent efficiency gains, freeing up valuable time for individuals to focus on higher-value strategic work.

How brands and agencies measure the impact of AI in their organisation



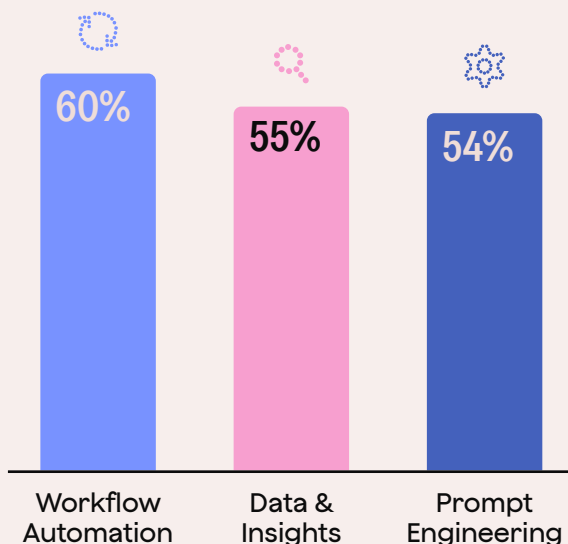
48% do not measure the impact AI is having across their business

The Investment Vacuum: Adoption without Enablement

Our findings show that the gap between tool deployment and workforce enablement was stark, and although creative and marketing teams appear to be adopting AI at pace, the processes and skills needed to embed it effectively remain underdeveloped.

Business leaders who completed our survey stated that the main barriers to adoption and scalability were a lack of skills and cultural resistance, yet few are taking meaningful action to address them. Over half (56%) have no allocated AI budget, while at least 40% have provided no training whatsoever. Instead, 60% of professionals report that their employers have simply encouraged self-learning - a hands-off approach that shifts responsibility onto individuals without giving them the support needed to succeed.

The top 3 most critical training needs stated by business leaders



This disconnect is creating a widening capability gap. As tools become more sophisticated, many teams lack the foundational understanding needed to integrate them meaningfully into their workflows. The outcome is fragmented adoption, inconsistent output and growing frustration among employees who see AI's potential but feel unprepared to harness it.

Freelancers face an even steeper challenge. Two-thirds currently fund their own tools, and only 6% receive client support for AI access or training. For a sector built on flexibility and innovation, this imbalance risks deepening inequality between in-house talent and the independent workforce - potentially limiting freelance talent, who represent a fifth of the UK's creative workforce.

Ultimately, without structured training and investment, organisations risk mistaking usage for capability. A recent IMF⁵ report highlighted that effective AI adoption could lift national productivity by 1.5% points - gains that, if fully realised, could add an estimated £47 billion to the UK economy over the next decade. So those that build the skills, governance and foundations to use AI well won't just keep pace - they'll add to their bottom line too.

Most AI journeys start as relatively unstructured and informal, and while it's great to encourage employees to experiment freely, it's important that they're also steered too. To take AI to the next level, we must formally integrate AI tools and workflows into our everyday.

-Phil Dean, Founder, Studio Certain

56% of businesses have no dedicated AI training or tool budget

The Adoption Curve: Tool Consolidation & Infrastructure Shift

Most used AI tools in the workplace



Despite these limited support structures, the creative workforce has rapidly consolidated around a handful of dominant platforms. Yet the mismatch between employer and employee adoption suggests employees are dipping in and out of multiple AI platforms rather than building fluency with any singular tool. Employers are consistently indexing higher across every tool category, pointing to a growing misalignment between organisational expectations and employee capabilities.

With ChatGPT as the near-universal entry point to AI, it's clear conversational AI and LLMs are still the default go-to across the sector, even as more advanced or specialised tools emerge. However, without proper alignment between employers and employees, businesses risk embedding tools that do not add value to their employees - wasting time, money and energy.

One of the significant statistics from our findings is the rise of proprietary systems.

Nearly half of employers (45%) have already built custom AI tools, and a further 19% are planning to do so in the near future. This rapid shift toward in-house innovation signals that AI is starting to evolve from external tooling into embedded infrastructure that is customised to fit specific workflows and brand requirements.

The real differentiator is how quickly teams can absorb these new tools and adapt their workflows. As AI shifts from being an add-on to becoming woven into the operational fabric, the skillset required to thrive is changing. This next frontier demands more than surface-level usage - it requires an understanding of how AI interacts with systems, data and creative processes; and with technology evolving faster than formal training can keep up, interpersonal skills are just as vital as technical ones. Workers with a strong adaptability quotient (AQ) - those who can adjust with intention, even under pressure - will thrive and keep pace with the relentless change defining modern work.

The Confidence-Anxiety Divide: A Workforce In Transition

It's unsurprising, that amid so much change, workers find themselves caught between optimism and uncertainty. Around 15% of the workforce reports that their roles have changed significantly, while nearly half say AI has already somewhat altered their work. Three-quarters (76%) believe the technology will fundamentally reshape the roles and skills required across the sector - a large consensus that creative and marketing work is on the brink of profound transformation.

Yet beneath this agreement sits a striking divide in how people feel about the shift. While 70% of employees are confident that AI will support their future roles, that confidence drops sharply among freelancers, with fewer than half (49%) sharing the same view. For many, excitement about the possibility coexists with apprehension about stability.

This unease is not entirely unfounded either; 11% of businesses report having made redundancies directly linked to AI, although employees feel this figure is closer to 20%.

🌱 **As business leaders deploy AI, they must balance efficiency gains with long-term effectiveness. Our latest research shows confidence grows when organisations use AI not just to cut costs but to elevate creativity, insight and customer experience - experimenting boldly, acting responsibly and keeping people firmly at the centre of every decision.**

-Rachel Aldighieri, CEO, DMA

37%

of permanent employees view AI as a potential threat to their career



51%

of freelancers view AI as a potential threat to their career



These are not abstract worries but existential ones - questions of integrity, craft, value and identity in an era where technology increasingly participates in the creative process. The concerns voiced by both permanent employees and freelancers reflect a shared unease about what AI might mean for their careers and the future of creative work. Whether it's the risk of over-reliance, the loss of originality, or the fear that work will be devalued, the sentiment is strikingly consistent across the workforce. Freelancers feel these pressures even more intensely, but the overarching message remains clear: the sector is energised by AI's potential, yet firmly protective of the craft at its core.

Biggest concerns around AI adoption

Over Reliance

74% Permanent Employees

67% Freelancers

Loss of Originality & Creativity

74% Permanent Employees

72% Freelancers

Devaluation of Work

68% Permanent Employees

76% Freelancers

Yet there are clear signs of practical benefits emerging from day-to-day use. Permanent employees and freelancers report remarkably similar experiences of where AI adds value, mainly around efficiency, research and communication. AI seems most effective for getting work done, as far fewer people see it as something to seek counsel from.

Only a small proportion benefits from using it for decision-making or career development. Interestingly, freelancers show a slight uptick in using AI for self-improvement - hinting at both their independent ambition and the desire to remain competitive in a changing market.

Creative workforce are feeling a blend of hope and hesitation as they think about what comes next. Artificial intelligence is reshaping the work people do and how they define their value within it, but the workforce has to navigate this revolution without a clear rulebook. The boundaries of AI-supported creative work, and the principles that govern its worth, are still being written - by marketing leaders, by creative teams and by the audience.

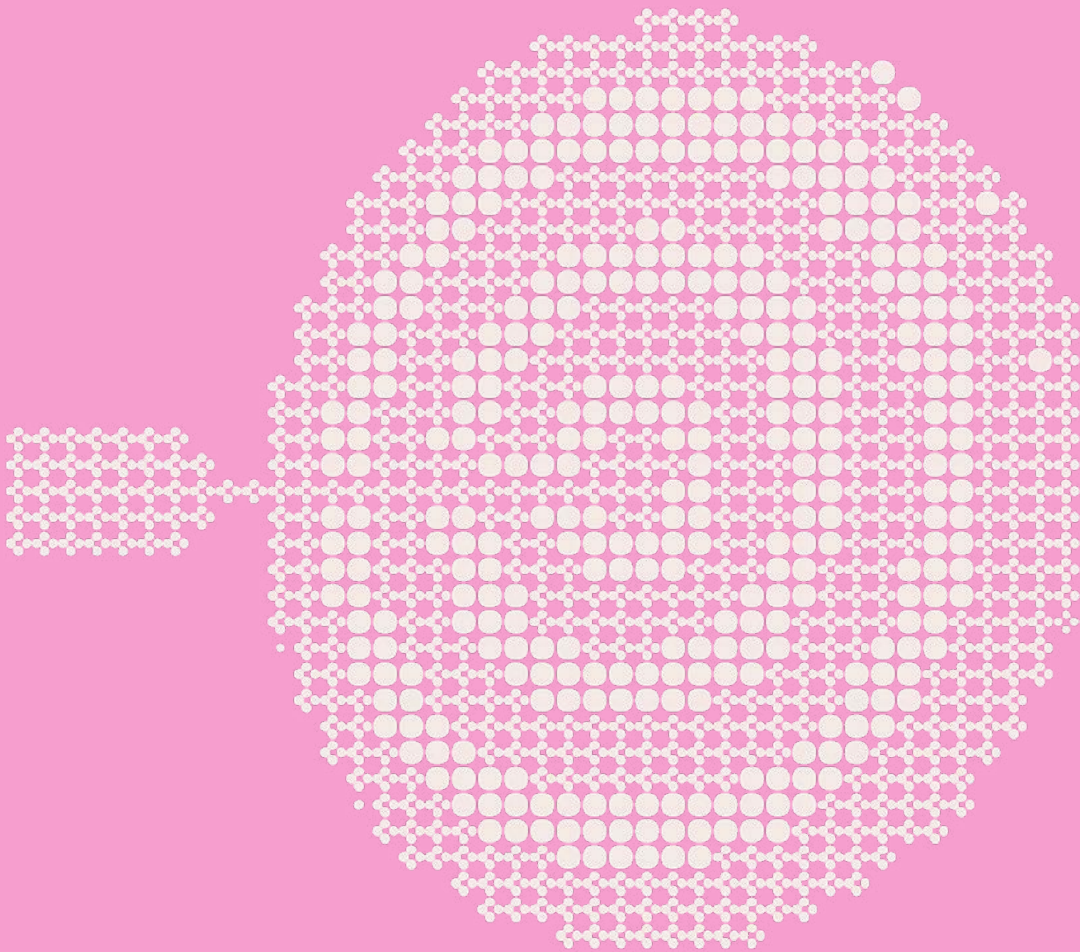
Top benefits when it comes to AI usage

Usage	Permanent Employees	Freelancers
 Efficiency & Productivity	82%	72%
 Research	56%	53%
 Better Writing & Communication	55%	47%
 Creative Inspiration & Brainstorming	48%	41%
 Learning & Development	17%	18%
 Decisions Support	15%	18%
 Content Creation at Scale	13%	16%
 Career Development	3%	9%

70% of permanent employees believe AI will positively support their future roles

Section 02

Value Creation Over Abundance



Value Creation Over Abundance

As AI accelerates the volume and speed of creative and marketing output, the challenge is not about producing more, but carving out value and creating original work that is strategic, distinctive and purposeful. Yet with 39% of businesses (see page 7) measuring the impact of AI by increased output alone, current use remains focused on doing more, faster - not necessarily better.

A recent report from creator-first social agency, Billion Dollar Boy⁶, revealed that four in five (79%) marketers have increased spend on GenAI content in the past 12 months, despite that only one in four (26%) consumers prefer it over “human” content. This exacerbates fears that “AI-slop” may become the new norm, fuelling already over-saturated marketing and social channels.

Currently, 7 out of 10 permanent employees are using AI at least a quarter of the week - mostly for:

65%
Research



65%
Productivity



59%
Content Creation



As consumers grow more discerning and are increasingly sceptical of AI-generated work, leaders have a responsibility to ensure their teams aren't adding to the noise. Instead, the goal should be to elevate their brand's presence with campaigns that are compelling, trustworthy, and resonate with their audiences. Failing to do so risks diminishing returns on marketing investment, eroding brand trust, and ultimately fatiguing audiences who may simply tune out.

(Forbes⁷)

55% of consumers feel uncomfortable when websites rely heavily on AI-generated content and **48%** don't trust brands that choose to advertise on those platforms

The gap between user curiosity and audience scepticism highlights an imbalance in how AI is currently applied. With 75% of respondents citing productivity and speed as their primary drivers for adoption, it's no surprise that many teams are slipping into cognitive offloading - delegating thinking to the tool rather than using the tool to elevate their thinking. Crucially, there's little evidence that the time saved through automation is being reinvested into deeper, more strategic creative work.

However, user cases show us that when used wisely, AI can enhance creative outputs, as seen with: Heinz's “AI Ketchup”⁸ campaign, where users prompted AI image generators to create images of “ketchup”, and then highlighting how AI defaulted to Heinz's iconic bottle shape; or Coca-Cola's “Create Real Magic”⁹, which allowed users to collaborate with AI to generate unique pieces of art, showcasing final pieces on digital billboards globally.

39% of businesses measure the impact of AI by increased output

The three biggest challenges when using AI:

Employers	Employees
1 Accuracy and reliability (60%)	Accuracy and reliability (71%)
2 Legal and IP concerns (50%)	Lack of Human Creativity (41%)
3 Loss of original work (43%)	Loss of original work (40%)

It's also not just solely creative that can benefit from these tools either, Spotify's "Wrapped" campaign creates personalised, shareable summaries of their music habits - all based on user data. One of AI's strengths lies in sharpening insights, refining ideas, and revealing patterns in audience behaviour - and Smartly⁴ found that 73% of consumers welcome AI personalisation when it improves relevance, and 84% prefer ads that update regularly over those that repeat. By testing variations and responding to real-time data, AI supports a feedback loop where insights shape better work - and better work generates stronger insights.

But caution remains justified, with concerns about bias, accuracy and hallucinations persisting, with error rates still high, averaging 8.2% in 2025¹⁰. As a result, employers are increasingly concerned about legal and IP risks, while on the other side of the spectrum, employees fear a decline in creativity. These concerns highlight a simple truth: AI adoption isn't only about embracing new technology - it's about safeguarding originality and avoiding hidden and nuanced risks.

AI works best when it supports people and expands their capacity - not when it's simply used to increase output. As AI becomes more valuable, the human qualities that matter most in creative work - judgement, curiosity, compassion, imagination - should be protected. When businesses focus on effectiveness rather than volume, they can charge for the strategic value behind ideas, opening up new commercial opportunities.

👤👤 **Everyone's using AI to make more, of what we already do, faster. But more is no longer enough. With around 34 million AI-generated images created every single day but no new eyeballs, more is just noise. The real value now is using AI to make what's never existed before, world-first ideas, world-first brand experiences, creating the new, not just replicating the old.**

-Vix Jagger, Head of Creative Innovation & AI, Droga 5

75% of respondents view productivity and speed as a key driver for AI adoption

Section 03

Leadership, Culture and Trust



Leadership, Culture and Trust

As AI rapidly reshapes the workplace, it's leadership and the conditions they create that determine whether an organisation moves forward with confidence. Even though 65% of leaders are already using AI to support their strategic goals, gaps in skills and culture remain the biggest barriers to scaling that ambition. When leaders push ahead without creating the conditions for people to adapt, organisations end up pursuing change they aren't equipped to deliver, heightening anxiety instead of enabling progress.

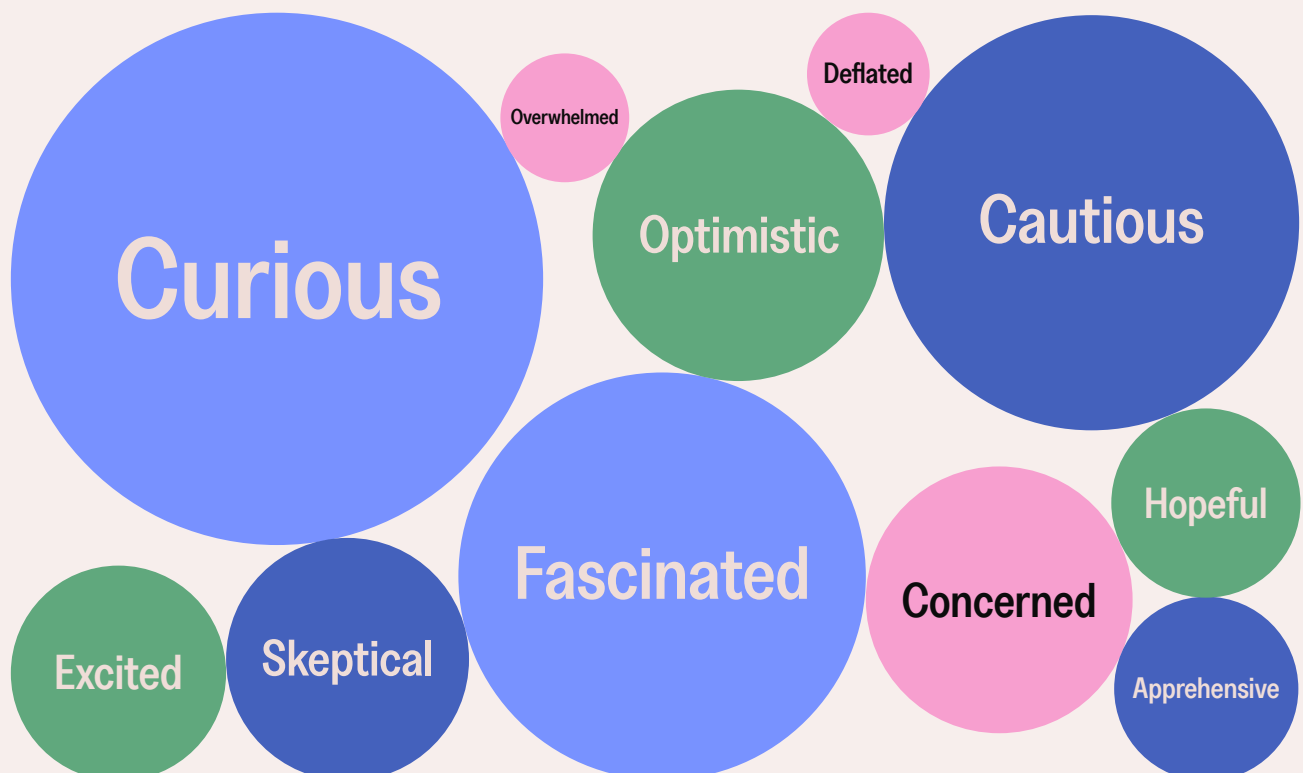
Trust becomes particularly vulnerable as leaders increasingly rely on AI for consequential decisions. People are uncomfortable with high-stakes calls like restructuring or redundancies being influenced by tools that lack the empathy to consider real-life impacts. A CIPD¹¹ poll found that 63% would trust AI to inform, but not make, important decisions at work, while 35% prefer to rely on human intelligence alone.

This scepticism extends beyond the workplace. KPMG's 'Trust in Artificial Intelligence' report¹² found that while 78% of Britons agree AI regulation is necessary, almost a third (31%) have no confidence in commercial organisations to safely govern AI usage. As technological advancement outpaces governmental oversight, leadership in the AI era will be defined by how effectively people and attitudes are managed over and above the tools themselves.

🧠🧠 **The reality is that we are in a time of incredible acceleration, particularly with Generative AI, so we must ensure the immense power of AI does not compromise ethical practices and consumer trust.**

-Laetitia Raoust, Chief Digital & Marketing Officer, L'Oréal UK & Ireland

Sentiment from survey respondents about AI



Beyond Tool Deployment

LLMs and generative models are only as strong as the input they're trained on.

BCG¹³ research demonstrates those: companies investing more in people have greater success with AI transformation efforts. Those that go beyond tool deployment and actively redesign their workflows around AI are 26% more likely to save time, 9% more likely to focus on strategic work, and 13% more confident in AI's ability to enable better decisions. Proof that a people-first culture drives performance. AI is only as responsible as its users. Leaders who balance ambition with empathy and transparency unlock real trust and engagement.

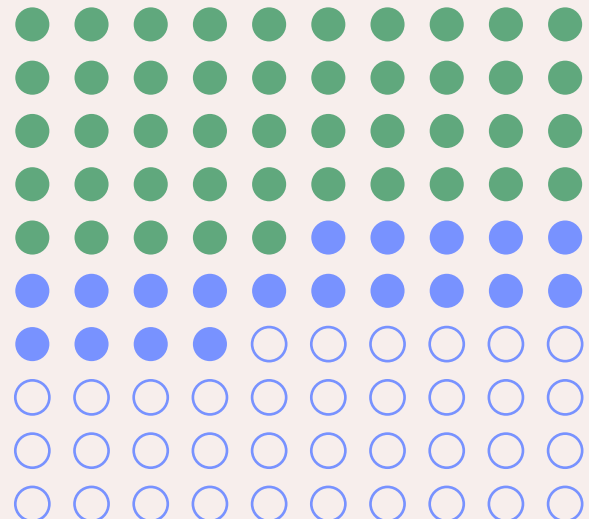
- Creating space for teams to adapt, not just mandating adoption
- Maintaining human judgment in high-stakes decisions, using AI to inform rather than determine
- Being transparent about how and why AI is deployed, particularly in decisions affecting people's livelihoods
- Investing in training and cultural readiness alongside technological capability

Leaders who treat AI implementation as purely a technical exercise will find themselves managing tools, not transformation. Those who recognise it as fundamentally a human challenge, requiring trust, capability-building, and cultural evolution, position their organisations not just to adopt AI, but to use it as the strategic advantage it promises to be.

4.7x

(Gallup¹⁴)

Employees who understand their organisation's AI adoption plan feel 4.7x more comfortable using it in their role.



Key



Already built



Plan to build

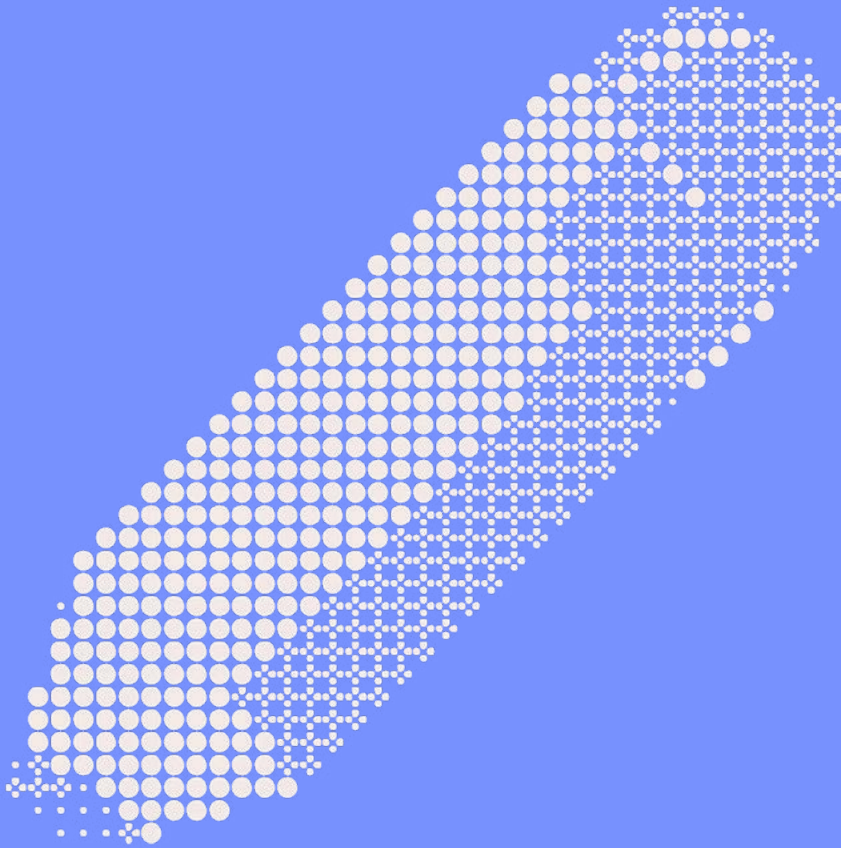


No plan to build

Nearly half of employers (**45%**) have already built proprietary AI tools, with **19%** more planning to

Section 04

The Human Touch & Skills Imperative



The Human Touch & Skills Imperative

Industries most exposed to AI are already seeing three times higher growth in revenue per employee, and skills in these roles are evolving 66% faster than in other jobs - a pace that has accelerated 2.5x in the past year.³ Yet many teams feel unprepared. While 60% of professionals say their employer encourages self-learning, over half have received no formal AI training at all. For freelancers, support is even thinner: two-thirds pay for their own tools, and only 6% get client support.

It's no surprise that 'lack of knowledge' is the biggest barrier to using AI, followed by 'lack of training' and 'ethical concerns'. With 40% of businesses providing no AI training and 56% operating with no dedicated budget, individuals are left to keep up with a rapidly shifting landscape on their own.

AI may be changing how work gets done, but it hasn't replaced the need for human expertise. As routine tasks are automated, the real value lies in judgement, creativity, and knowing when not

to use AI. It's the hybrid mix of technical fluency, interpersonal skills, and human judgment that determines whether AI elevates the work or dilutes it.

 **The real opportunity lies ahead - unlocking even greater value through workforce transformation and upskilling. By investing in AI skills training across all levels, organisations can not only outperform their peers but build a future-ready workforce that drives innovation and resilience.**

-Leon Butler, Chief Executive, IBM UK & Ireland

60%

of professionals say their employer has encouraged self-learning

The most important skills employers are currently looking for:

Technical Skills

1

Creativity

Developing original ideas and approaches that push creative boundaries and bring fresh thinking to briefs, campaigns, and strategy.

2

Data & Insights

Using AI and analytics to identify trends, understand audiences, and inform creative and commercial decision-making.

3

Automation & Workflows

Applying AI to optimise processes, improve efficiency, and streamline delivery across teams and projects.

Interpersonal skills

Creativity & Innovation

Bringing imagination, adaptability, and originality to every stage of the process, translating complex problems into meaningful, human ideas.

Communication

Clearly expressing ideas, collaborating effectively, and building understanding between teams, clients, and technology partners.

Problem Solving

Approaching challenges with curiosity and critical thinking, using both creative intuition and data-driven logic to find practical solutions.

Our report shows how people want to use AI, and it's now up to businesses and leaders to clearly explain how it should be used at work so people feel confident adopting it. With limited access to training and development currently holding the workforce back, there's a clear opportunity to invest in structured learning that helps them use AI to its full potential.

Employees receiving over **81** hours of annual AI training report an average productivity gain of **14** hours per week, well above the median of eight hours

(EY¹⁵)

The most desired formal training from employees and freelancers



Prompt Engineering

Writing effective prompts for tools



Creative & Visual Design

Creating images, videos, or design assets from prompts



Workflow Automations

Applying AI to streamline processes (emails, CRM, project management)



Data & Insights

Using AI to analyse trends, consumer behaviour, and performance



Copy & Content Creation

Producing written content, campaigns or messaging

AI is changing creative work fast, but most teams aren't asking for more tech. They're asking for practical help. Understanding where your organisation is on the AI adoption curve makes it easier to know what support and training comes next.

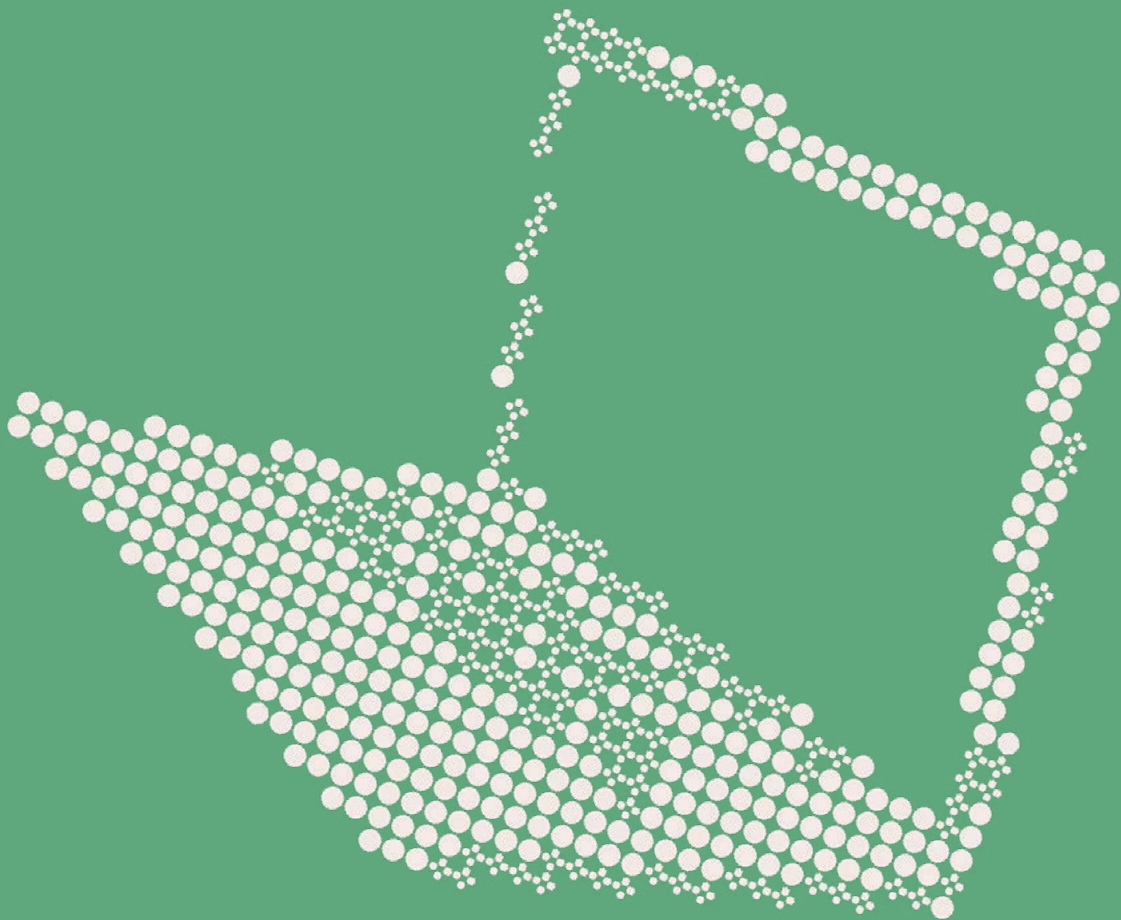
The AI adoption process:

	Exploration	Experimentation	Incorporation	Optimisation	Continuous Business Evolution
AI Vision & Leadership 	Leadership is aware but lacks AI vision and strategy.	Small AI initiatives exist but without long-term leadership commitment.	AI vision is defined, and leadership actively supports adoption.	AI is central to leadership decisions and company transformation.	Leadership continuously evolves AI strategy to maintain competitive advantage.
AI Culture & Adoption 	AI is unfamiliar and not seen as a business enabler.	Departments explore AI, but overall literacy remains low.	AI is integrated, with structured training and awareness programmes.	An AI-first mindset drives innovation across all teams.	AI is deeply embedded in company culture, driving continuous innovation.
AI Governance & Ethics 	No AI governance, compliance, or ethical considerations exist.	Basic AI governance principles are emerging without enforcement.	Governance frameworks ensure ethical AI and regulatory compliance.	AI governance continuously evolves for transparency and fairness.	Adaptive AI governance ensures real-time fairness, safety and compliance.
AI Strategy & Objectives 	AI is absent from business strategy and objectives.	AI initiatives are siloed and lack strategic alignment.	AI strategy is developed and aligned with business goals.	AI is central to market positioning and innovation.	AI strategy is continuously refined through adaptive leadership.
AI & Data Infrastructure 	Data is unstructured and lacks AI-ready infrastructure.	Basic AI tools exist, but data quality is poor.	AI infrastructure supports clean, accessible, well-governed data.	AI automates processes and enhances data-driven decisions.	Real-time AI infrastructure supports dynamic decision-making.
AI Skills & Workforce Capability 	Employees lack AI skills and training opportunities.	AI training emerges, but expertise is limited.	Structured AI training expands knowledge across teams.	Ongoing AI upskilling supports business transformation.	AI fluency and advanced skills are widespread across the organisation.
AI Integration in Workflows 	AI is absent, with manual, reactive workflows.	AI is piloted in select workflows with limited impact.	AI enhances workflows, improving efficiency and decision-making.	AI fully optimises workflows and predictive decision-making.	AI-driven workflows dynamically adapt and optimise in real-time.
AI Partnerships & Ecosystem 	No external AI partnerships or collaborations exist.	Initial AI partnerships emerge but remain transactional.	Strategic AI partnerships drive ecosystem collaboration.	Integrated AI partnerships foster co-development and innovation.	Agile AI ecosystems continuously advance organisational capabilities.

(Tiffany St James & Spencer Gallagher ¹⁶)

Section 05

AI Stewardship & Responsibility



AI Stewardship & Responsibility

As AI becomes part of everyday work, organisations need clear standards for how it is used and governed. This is no longer just a technical issue; it is a leadership responsibility. In creative industries, where brand, culture, and trust matter, poor AI stewardship carries risks that go far beyond efficiency.

The Trust Deficit

A study by Mountain Research¹⁵ shows that 75% of consumers want brands to be upfront about using AI in branded content, while 65% lose trust if a brand uses AI without transparency. These trends aren't merely a preference issue - it's a warning signal to marketers and creatives. When audiences sense inauthenticity, they don't just disengage from content; they reassess their relationship with the brand itself.

This concern is particularly acute given that 33% of businesses now face client concerns about AI use in projects. The real risk isn't just producing forgettable content - it's fundamentally altering how audiences perceive brand authenticity.

Strategy Over Speed

For AI to generate genuine value, leaders must first define the problem they want to solve. Generic application produces generic results - or worse. Harvard Business Review¹⁶ reports that 41% of people receiving poorly produced AI work spent an average of two hours fixing it. Without a clear strategy, teams duplicate efforts, lose time, and mistake activity for productivity.

The Economic Reality

The market's volatile footing only increases the urgency for responsible AI stewardship. While Morgan Stanley forecasts \$2.9 trillion in AI investment by 2028¹⁹, The Economist²⁰ estimates that actual revenue will be just \$50 billion in 2025 — a stark reminder that spending is racing far ahead of returns. This pressure is already reshaping commercial models: 19% of clients have changed their pricing strategies because of AI, and a further 40% are considering it, signalling growing uncertainty around how value will be captured in an AI-driven economy.

At the same time, AI systems consumed 1.5% of global electricity last year, a figure expected to rise sharply.¹ Leaders now face a dual challenge: balancing what AI promises with what it costs - financially and environmentally - making restraint as important as innovation.

Responsible Implementation

Effective stewardship is using AI with intention, and not as a blanket solution. This means:

- **Clear governance frameworks** - establishing when and how AI should be used, with human oversight ensuring outputs meet brand standards, not just efficiency targets.
- **Transparency protocols** - being upfront about AI involvement to maintain the trust that 75% of consumers demand, both externally with audiences and internally with teams.
- **Quality thresholds** - recognising that AI-generated work depends entirely on input quality. Despite being modelled on human efforts, AI output is innately artificial reproduction requiring skilled direction.
- **Strategic definition** - identifying specific creative challenges AI should address before implementation, ensuring technology serves the purpose rather than drives it.

The organisations that will thrive aren't those using AI most extensively, but most intentionally - understanding that in creative work under economic and environmental scrutiny, value comes from distinctiveness and responsibility, not volume and velocity.

🌱 **Mature brands understand that just because you can do something with AI doesn't mean you should.**

-Stephen Pretorius, Chief Technology Officer, WPP

Human-Led Approach

The Creative Industries have always thrived on adaptation and innovation, and the AI revolution demands no less. For all its processing power, AI still relies on something distinctly human: wise judgement.

The future of work is moving quickly. To stay ahead, businesses must be deliberate about how they deploy new tools. Chasing disruption for its own sake risks undermining creative work. Real progress comes from helping teams combine their natural creativity with the strengths of automation.

Our 'AI in the Creative Industries' report shows that even though AI is widely used, most teams and businesses still aren't ready for the changes it brings. To fix that, people need to understand both how AI fits into their work and the impact it has. Success now requires planning, not guesswork. Leaders must work with their teams to build a clear strategy that suits their organisation. That is how real transformation happens.

At Major Players, we're committed to ensuring that AI is used ethically and responsibly, supporting people rather than replacing them. Our principles are continually updated to ensure our transparency and accountability practices evolve with technology. Through these principles, we aim to foster trust, enhance efficiency, and promote fairness in every recruitment process we undertake, ensuring that AI is used as a tool for good.

 AI can help us move faster and dream bigger, but it's human-led judgment, empathy and imagination that make those ideas meaningful. The real magic happens when technology serves people, not the other way around. That's how we make innovation and creativity better. At Snap, that belief guides how we build, using technology to enhance human creativity, strengthen real connections and make the way we communicate more personal, more playful and more human.

-Kate Mellett, Head of Creative Strategy,
UK Benelux & Nordics

76% believe AI will fundamentally change the roles and skills required across the sector

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Talent Planning & Retention

Advice on culture, capability-building, EVP and the future skills your organisation will need.

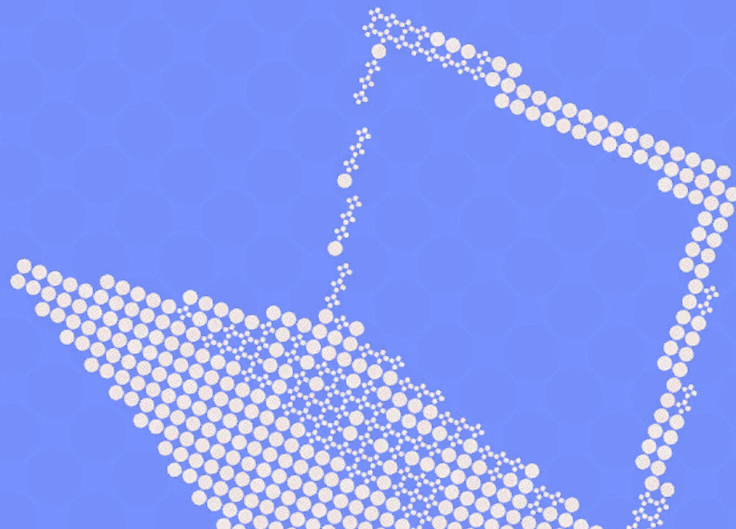
So, whether you're seeking specialist AI expertise or creative and marketing talent ready to evolve with new technology, we can help you build the team that takes you forward.

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