Putting people & change at the heart of AI projects

Key themes & takeaways

1.

ADOPTION & TRAINING

Whether your organisation has officially rolled out an AI tool or not, studies are showing that your workforce are using it. A recent CMI poll found that 58% had used ChatGPT for work, but 86% had never received any formal training from their employers. To get ahead of this, it's important to start putting guidelines in place now.

It's important to remember however, that AI is not just another tool that you can train your workforce in using step-by-step walkthroughs and guides. AI requires conceptual, outcome-based thinking for effective prompt engineering - an entirely new skill set for many in the workforce. Investing in training programmes that develop employees' critical thinking skills, creativity and emotional intelligence will support this.

2.

ADDRESSING FEAR AND UNCERTAINTY

To overcome resistance to AI, it's important to understand the root cause of the fear; which will be different from individual to individual. Are they worried about accidentally causing a data breach? Concerned about how their role and workload will change? Are they hesitant because of a skills gap, or uncomfortable with using a tool whose inner workings are a bit of a mystery? Identifying the root cause of the fear will help you to address it much more effectively.

3.

UNDERSTANDING YOUR WORKFORCE & DEFINING YOUR USE CASES

To deliver on the full potential of AI, you must understand your workforce and their use cases. Central decision-making will not yield the desired results unless you have scoped out where and how AI can be useful to those on the ground - they are the ones who can show you where it can add value.

Step into their shoes, participate in day-in-the-life activities, job mapping exercises and let them play with tools in a sandbox environment to uncover the AI use cases we couldn't have imagined. Encouraging employees to experiment and be creative with AI during its implementation, and giving them the right space and psychological safety to do so can foster innovation, engagement, and practical insights into how AI can improve processes and solve problems on the ground, moving you beyond simple productivity gains into the realm of radical transformation.

4.

KEEPING UP WITH THE PACE OF CHANGE

The rapid pace of change in the AI ecosystem makes it challenging to select the right suppliers and quickly renders long-term technology plans out of date. Additionally, the fast adoption of GenAI by both consumers and suppliers is driving a sharp evolution in user expectations.

The current period should be seen as a dynamic, long-term transition—a paradigm shift that impacts not only technology, skills, and how work is structured, but also the broader business environment in which companies operate. We should follow that line of thinking through to the way we structure and manage AI projects. It is not a case of establishing a time-boxed project and drawing a line under it once it has been implemented, but rather a continuous period of iteration and development.