

WELEARN

THE HUMAN SIDE OF AI ADOPTION:

# A Guide for L&D Leaders

Thought Leadership from WeLearn  
and Simply Innovative Consulting

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Sean Stowers**

Sean founded WeLearn because he believes workforce education should put humans at the center. Over his career spanning corporate learning, workforce development, and strategic consulting, he's worked with global organizations to design learning strategies that deliver real results.

His journey started at IBM Learning Services, where he built expertise in strategic learning before leading award-winning training programs at a global education consulting firm. Connection and engagement drive everything he does. That's why he launched WeLearn — to redefine corporate learning with modern, practical solutions that actually work.

Today, Sean serves as a trusted thought partner to organizations implementing learning strategies that support business transformation. He collaborates on content development standards, AI adoption, and L&D governance.

**Diane Gaa**

With over 20 years in human performance consulting, talent strategies, and HR transformation, Diane knows what it takes to build workforce capabilities that drive business success. She's a SHRM-Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP), Certified Training Management Professional (CPTM), and Lean Six Sigma Green Belt.

Diane designs impactful learning experiences and leads human capital system implementations, role-based onboarding, and custom content development.

Digital accessibility isn't just a checkbox for her—it's a passion. She educates audiences on creating inclusive learning environments that ensure equal access for all.

## INTRODUCTION:

# The Imperative of AI in the Modern Workplace

Artificial Intelligence is reshaping how we work. By 2030, 70% of businesses will undergo transformation because of AI (World Economic Forum, 2025). Organizations across industries are embracing its potential to enhance efficiency, boost productivity, and spark innovation.

But AI only delivers its full benefits when employees actually adopt and integrate these tools into their daily work.

That's where L&D comes in. Learning and Development leaders must guide employees through this transition, and the approach matters. A human-centric strategy ensures employees don't just understand how AI works — they feel confident and supported using it.

The role of L&D has evolved. It's no longer just about training people on AI skills. It's about creating an environment where workers trust AI and see it as a tool that enhances their capabilities rather than threatens their jobs.



## SECTION 1

# Understanding the Need for AI Adoption in the Workplace

The data on AI's impact is compelling. Brandon Hall Group (2025) found that 86% of executives believe AI literacy will be essential for most roles by 2030. AI tools improve workflows, automate tedious tasks, and create personalized employee experiences — all of which boost productivity.

But there's a significant gap between AI's potential and current reality. Only 25% of workers have received relevant AI training (Pew Research Center, 2025). This skills gap blocks adoption and holds organizations back from realizing AI's benefits.

Learning and Development leaders have an opportunity to close this gap. Creating effective learning paths means building the broader competencies employees need to navigate AI-enhanced environments. The goal? Set people up for genuine success in an AI-driven world.



## AI Adoption by Industry

Not every sector moves at the same pace. McKinsey & Company (2025) reports that information technology, finance, and healthcare are racing ahead with AI integration, while education, government, and retail lag behind.

AI Adoption by Industry (% of Companies Implementing AI in Some Form by 2025):

- Information Technology: 91%
- Finance & Banking: 87%
- Healthcare: 79%
- Manufacturing: 72%
- Retail: 64%
- Education: 54%
- Government: 48%

## SECTION 2

# The Current State of AI Adoption in the Workplace

AI technology is growing rapidly. Employee adoption? Not so much.

52% of workers worry about how AI will impact their jobs, and 32% believe it will reduce their future opportunities (Pew Research Center, 2025). This anxiety stems from a fundamental lack of understanding about how AI can actually benefit them. When people don't see the upside, fear fills the vacuum.

Consider the current usage patterns: 63% of American workers report barely using AI in their jobs, if at all. Only 16% have woven AI into their daily tasks (Pew Research Center, 2025).

This low adoption rate represents both a challenge and an opportunity. L&D departments can bridge this gap, but it requires going beyond traditional training. Mindset shifts matter.



Emotional readiness matters. Programs that reduce fear and resistance matter. When employees feel more at ease with AI tools, adoption follows.

"52% of employees are worried about the impact of AI on their jobs. L&D must help mitigate these fears through transparent communication and emotional readiness training."

Source: Pew Research Center, 2025

## SECTION 2



### AI Literacy and Employee Confidence

The literacy gap is real. Pew Research Center (2025) found that:

- 25% feel unprepared and need extensive training to use AI effectively
- 40% feel somewhat confident but want additional training
- 35% feel confident using AI tools

Notice that only about a third of employees feel truly confident. Structured AI literacy programs need to address both technical skills and the softer elements — confidence and trust in AI-powered systems.

Source: Pew Research Center. (2025). U.S. Workers Are More Worried Than Hopeful About Future AI Use in the Workplace.



### Employee Anxiety vs. Optimism Toward AI

Employee sentiment splits in multiple directions. According to Pew Research Center (2025):

- 52% worry about AI's impact on their jobs
- 36% feel hopeful that AI will improve their work
- 33% feel overwhelmed by AI integration
- 29% feel excited about AI's potential

Some see opportunity. Others see displacement. Many just don't know what to think. L&D professionals must address these mixed feelings head-on through clear communication, thoughtful change management, and practical reskilling programs.

Source: Pew Research Center. (2025). U.S. Workers Are More Worried Than Hopeful About Future AI Use in the Workplace.



## SECTION 3

# The Role of L&D Leaders in Supporting AI Adoption

L&D leaders play a pivotal role in supporting AI adoption, but training alone won't cut it anymore. The human factors that affect AI integration need to be addressed.

Companies with strong change management strategies see six times more success in their AI transformation efforts (McKinsey & Company, 2025). That success connects directly to how well L&D fosters environments where employees build both competence and confidence with AI tools

The most effective approaches are human-centric.

They address AI anxiety directly.

They build trust.

They help people see AI as an ally in their work, not a threat to their livelihood.

## What does this look like in practice?

Personalized learning paths that meet people where they are. Clear, honest communication about what's changing and why. Consistent feedback and support during the transition. The goal is making AI adoption feel like a natural evolution rather than a disruptive upheaval.

"L&D is not only responsible for teaching employees how to use AI tools, but also for fostering a culture where AI is seen as an enabler, not a disruptor."

"Organizations that implement strong change management strategies see six times more success in AI transformation."

Source: McKinsey & Company, 2025

## SECTION 3

## The 5 Stages of AI Adoption

AI adoption doesn't happen overnight. It unfolds through five stages, and recognizing where your employees are in this journey makes all the difference.

### 1 Awareness

People become aware of AI's role in the organization but don't fully grasp what it means for them.

### 2 Understanding

Employees start recognizing AI's benefits and how it might support their specific work.

### 3 Experimentation

Early adopters begin testing AI in controlled scenarios, often with guidance from L&D.

### 4 Adoption & Integration

AI becomes part of daily workflows. Confidence grows as people engage with AI-powered tools regularly.

Meet people where they are in this progression. Tailor strategies accordingly. The result? Smoother transitions and higher engagement.

Source: Adapted from Brandon Hall Group. (2025). The Definitive Guide to Building the Business Case for AI in Corporate Training.

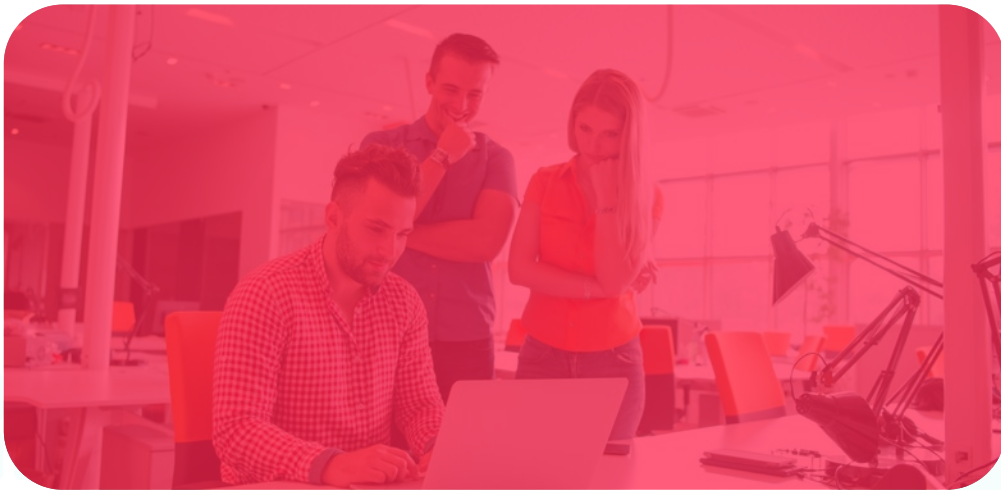


## SECTION 4

# Best Practices for L&D Leaders in AI Adoption

Effective AI adoption starts with genuine literacy. Create learning modules that explain how AI works while giving people hands-on opportunities to engage with the tools in practical scenarios.

AI-powered learning platforms can personalize experiences that adapt to individual needs, creating more engaging learning environments (Brandon Hall Group, 2025). But don't stop at technical training.



Emotional readiness deserves equal attention. People need help navigating the psychological aspects of AI integration. Consider offering:

- AI champions who model effective use
- Mentorship programs connecting experienced users with learners
- Workshops on AI ethics that address real concerns

These programs should tackle genuine fears while building real competence. When people feel confident and prepared, they're far more likely to embrace new tools.

**“AI literacy is not just about understanding technology — it's about preparing employees emotionally and mentally for a shift in how they work.”**

## SECTION 5

# Overcoming Resistance to AI Adoption

Fear drives resistance. Fear of job loss, fear of being replaced by machines, fear of an unknown future. These concerns aren't irrational — 52% of workers worry about AI's impact on their jobs (Pew Research Center, 2025).

Transparent communication helps. Be honest about AI's role. Frame it as a tool that enhances human work rather than replaces it. Help people see the value in embracing these changes rather than fighting them.

Pilot programs work particularly well for reducing resistance. When employees experience AI's benefits firsthand in low-risk environments, many of their fears dissolve. Success stories from early adopters become powerful testimonies that encourage others to try.

Design these pilots carefully. They should demonstrate tangible improvements in work quality or efficiency, not just check a box.



## Employee Use of AI Tools

Current usage patterns reveal significant room for growth. Pew Research Center (2025) reports:

- 16% use AI tools daily
- 24% use them weekly
- 22% use them occasionally
- 38% rarely or never use AI tools

Nearly 40% of employees rarely or never engage with AI tools. Structured training programs combined with compelling real-world use cases can shift these numbers dramatically.

Source: Pew Research Center. (2025). U.S. Workers Are More Worried Than Hopeful About Future AI Use in the Workplace.

## SECTION 6

# Measuring the Impact of AI Adoption Program

Measurement matters. Track key performance indicators like employee engagement, productivity, and AI tool adoption rates to demonstrate value.

Organizations that adopt AI-powered learning solutions see up to a 41% reduction in training costs alongside improved learner engagement (Brandon Hall Group, 2025). Those are compelling numbers, but look beyond simple usage statistics.

Assess emotional and behavioral shifts too. Are employees' attitudes toward AI changing? Are they more willing to integrate AI into daily tasks? These qualitative insights reveal whether adoption is sustainable long-term or just surface-level compliance.

Gather feedback about confidence levels, perceived value, and ongoing barriers. This comprehensive view shows both immediate impact and areas needing additional support.



## SECTION 7

# Future-Proofing Your Organization's Approach to AI

AI technology evolves quickly. Your training strategies should too.

By 2025, 89% of organizations expect AI to significantly impact learning and development (Brandon Hall Group, 2025). Staying ahead means continuously updating AI adoption programs to reflect new developments.

Keep an eye on emerging trends

- Autonomous AI assistants
- AI-powered virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) tools
- Predictive analytics in skills development (Brandon Hall Group, 2025)



More importantly, ensure AI adoption aligns with your organization's strategic goals. Foster a culture where continuous learning and adaptation feel natural rather than forced.

Organizations that succeed will view AI adoption not as a one-time initiative but as an ongoing evolution of how work gets done. Equip employees with skills and mindsets that can flex as technology advances.



## CONCLUSION

# The Path Forward for L&D Leaders in AI Adoption

The future of workplace AI adoption depends on L&D leadership.

A human-centric approach ensures employees gain technical AI skills while receiving the emotional and psychological support they need during this transition. Focus on trust-building, emotional readiness, and continuous learning. These human elements, combined with solid technical training, lead to higher adoption rates, greater satisfaction, and more successful AI integration overall.

The opportunity is clear. Lead this transformation by putting people at the center of your AI adoption strategy.



# About WeLearn

WeLearn is a learning services, consulting, and custom content provider that creates behavior-changing solutions alongside you. Our commitment? Exceptional partnerships and exceptional learning experiences. No matter what.

Based in Chicago, WeLearn serves global corporations including Fortune 500 companies. Learn more at: [www.welearnls.com](http://www.welearnls.com)





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