

REPORT

AI IS CHANGING YOUR CULTURE

Here's How to Get Ahead of It

Most companies are rolling out AI tools.
Far fewer are ready for what happens *next*.

A guide for HR leaders and managers navigating the human side of AI transformation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research in this report confirms what many of us have suspected: the gap between organizations thriving with AI and those simply spending on it has very little to do with which tools they've introduced to their teams.

Across every major study, including EY, Perceptyx, BCG, and Microsoft, the differentiator is culture. **Only 28% of organizations are seeing transformational results from AI**, and the common thread among that group is that they treated AI adoption as a human leadership challenge first and a technology rollout second.

Three dynamics stand out as the most urgent for us to get right.

First, psychological safety breaks down during AI transitions.

When employees are left to fill information vacuums on their own, anxiety about job security shapes how they contribute, how they collaborate, and whether they're willing to take the risks that drive innovation. Employees in high-safety environments are 72% more motivated than those in low-safety ones. That's a performance metric, and it's ours to protect or lose.

Second, the social fabric of teamwork is thinning in ways that don't show up in productivity dashboards. **AI is absorbing the routine interactions that used to create human connection at work**, and the result—documented in a longitudinal study across CMU, MIT, Stanford, Penn, and Emory—is lonelier teams that are more fragile, even when output looks efficient. Connection doesn't regenerate on its own. We have to build it back in deliberately.

Third, there's a real paradox in our training investments: **AI-trained employees are 55% more likely to leave**. That means every upskilling cohort we run has an exit risk baked in unless we pair it with compelling internal career pathways and compensation that reflects what AI-fluent talent commands in the market today.

What the research calls "Talent Advantage"—the foundation of the 28% seeing real transformation—comes down to five things done with intention: leadership that communicates honestly about what AI changes and what it doesn't; psychological safety that's actively protected, not assumed; training that's substantial and paired with retention conversations; human connection that's deliberately preserved as AI absorbs more routine work; and recognition that makes the uniquely human contributions visible. The organizations leading the AI era are treating their people and their technology as an integrated system, with the understanding that when the human foundation is weak, EY's data shows AI productivity gains lag by over 40%.

My ask of every leader in this organization is to take that seriously. Not because it's the responsible thing to do (though it is), but because it's where the results come from. **The companies that look back on this era as one of genuine transformation will be the ones that invested in culture with the same seriousness they invested in tools.** That's the work in front of us, and it starts with the conversations we're willing to have with our teams right now.



Charles Hough
CEO, Bonusly

THE CONVERSATION MOST AI ROLLOUTS SKIP

AI is everywhere. But the promised transformation of supercharged individuals hasn't arrived.

In any organization that's paying attention right now, AI is already embedded in daily work with 88% of organizations reporting regular AI use. Marketing teams are drafting with it, recruiters are screening with it, and analysts are querying with it. Managers are asking it to summarize everything from performance reviews to meeting notes. The tools are deployed, and the enthusiasm at the leadership level is real.

And yet, only 28% of organizations are seeing transformational results from AI. The rest are watching usage dashboards tick up as they wait for the promised productivity revolution to materialize.

The individual productivity gains from AI are real. LLMs are saving workers an estimated 40–60 minutes per day on tasks they've already been doing. What's not happening, in most organizations, is the translation of those individual gains into team-level performance, culture health, or organizational transformation. That gap can't be solved with more tech. It needs to come from humans.

The organizations that are pulling ahead are treating AI as a cultural shift instead of a software rollout. They're leading with transparency about what changes in people's roles with the addition of AI and what doesn't. They're protecting conditions like psychological safety, human connection, and a shared sense of purpose that make people willing to contribute, engage, and take risks at work. And the results are dramatic.

7.9X

Employees in organizations with structured, leadership-driven AI adoption are 7.9x more likely to say AI has positively impacted their culture vs. those without. (Perceptyx, 2025)

This ebook synthesizes the latest academic research and workforce data across three dimensions of culture that AI is reshaping: psychological safety and organizational trust, collaboration and human connection, and learning and career development. For each, we'll map what the research shows is going wrong and right, and what HR leaders and managers can do to increase the percentage of workforces experiencing transformational results from AI.

Tool selection explains surprisingly little of the variance between organizations where AI delivers and organizations where it doesn't. Culture, readiness, and trust explain a lot more.

WHAT AI DOES TO COMPANY CULTURES

How AI performs in an organization has a lot to do with what was already true before it arrived. Strong cultures get stronger while fragile ones get more complicated.

The research consistently shows that AI adoption affects workplace culture across multiple dimensions at once: Psychological safety, organizational trust, and creative confidence. When AI is introduced without deliberate intention, or just left to the individual employee to figure out, the damage runs deeper than most organizations realize.

Psychological Safety and Trust

The most documented cultural risk of AI adoption is its effect on psychological safety, which is the shared belief that a team is safe to take risks, speak up, and contribute without fear of punishment or humiliation. A 2025 study published in *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* found that AI adoption has a significant negative impact on psychological safety, which in turn increases levels of depression and disengagement among employees.

AI triggers precisely the anxiety that psychological safety is designed to counteract: fear about whether contributions are valued, whether roles are secure, and whether it's safe to show uncertainty. When more than one in three employees (37%) report that AI threatens their job security, that anxiety has organizational consequences; it shapes how people contribute, how they relate to colleagues, and how willing they are to engage with new ideas.

AI also presents a trust problem. Harvard Business Review's Amy Edmondson, writing on AI and team dynamics in February 2026, identified what she calls "trust ambiguity": the state teams enter when AI provides confident but incorrect outputs. When a human makes a mistake, teams ask questions to understand the

underlying context, and rebuild a shared understanding from there. When AI makes a mistake, that process breaks down. And the doubt spreads—not just in the AI, but in employees' own judgment. Research shows that sustained AI use undermines professionals' confidence in their ability to challenge AI recommendations, even when they have the expertise to do so.

There are big cultural risks. Employees with high psychological safety are 72% more motivated than those with low safety, a direct line from culture health to performance. And only 56% of workers currently feel safe trying new approaches at work. With AI being the new approach, that gap in safety translates to a gap in adoption, engagement, and better results.

72% more motivated — employees with high psych safety vs. low (PwC 2025)

37% of employees say AI threatens their job security (Perceptyx 2025)

56% of workers feel safe trying new approaches at work (PwC 2025)

Knowledge Hiding and Collaboration

When employees feel insecure about their jobs, they do something predictable: they protect what makes them irreplaceable. Research published in *ScienceDirect* identified a direct link between AI-induced job insecurity and "knowledge-

hiding behavior,” the practice of withholding information that colleagues ask for.

It's a survival strategy that feels rational at the individual level. If your expertise is what might be automated, keeping it to yourself can certainly feel like job security. But at the organizational level, knowledge hiding weakens creativity, degrades team performance, and creates cycles of distrust that compound over time. The employees most likely to hide knowledge are often the most experienced, whose institutional knowledge is most valuable to the team and most at risk of being undercut by a tool.

“When employees feel their job is at risk, they protect what makes them valuable. Keeping information to themselves can feel like a way to stay irreplaceable — but this behavior ultimately harms the teamwork AI was meant to improve.”

— ScienceDirect, 2024

Creativity, Innovation, and Organizational Identity

Beyond safety and collaboration, AI adoption raises a deeper cultural question: what does this organization believe humans are here to do?

When AI is introduced without a clear answer to that question, employees fill in the blank themselves, and often with anxiety. AI is saving workers 40–60 minutes a day on routine tasks, but for employees in creative or non-routine roles, that time savings rarely translates into measurable productivity gains. Efficiency and impact are not the same thing and those minimal productivity improvements from AI are creating a divide between those who see AI as an enabler and those who experience it as irrelevant or threatening to their identity at work. The concern isn't replacement in a literal sense; it's displacement of meaning; the worry that the work that made someone good at their job is being handed to a tool.

The good news is that this dynamic is reversible. The same research shows that when AI is introduced alongside a clear organizational narrative about human value — one that positions AI as expanding what people can create, rather than narrowing what people are for — employees engage with AI as a genuine creative partner. The Microsoft New Future of Work Report (2025) frames this as the augmentation opportunity: organizations using AI to amplify human creativity and judgment generate far more value than those using it to automate existing

tasks. The former creates new categories of work and meaning. The latter just reduces costs while quietly eroding the culture that drives performance.

The cultural ambition, then, isn't just to protect employees from AI's risks. It's to build an environment where AI gives people more room to bring their curiosity, empathy, and creativity to work — not less.

What this means for your org

- Make AI's impact on roles explicit and honest. The anxiety employees experience filling information vacuums on their own is more damaging than an uncomfortable truth stated clearly.
- Frame AI integration as a learning process, not an execution mandate. Psychological safety isn't rebuilt by telling people AI is fine — it's rebuilt by making it safe to say when it isn't.
- Give employees a story about their creative and human value. AI should expand what people can bring to work, not shrink it. That narrative needs to come from leadership.
- Watch for knowledge-hiding signals: declining cross-team collaboration, reduced peer contributions, increased siloing. These are early-stage culture costs of AI anxiety.

COLLABORATION LOOKS DIFFERENT NOW

A critical byproduct of AI is that when it comes to company culture, it has changed what teamwork and collaboration look like.

A longitudinal study out of Carnegie Mellon, MIT, Stanford, Penn, and Emory followed employees at a distributed software organization from 2023—immediately after ChatGPT’s release—to 2025, after generative AI had become deeply embedded in daily workflows. What they found is that AI didn’t actually fix the hardest problems teams hoped it would.

Performance accountability in distributed teams? Still a human problem. Communication breakdowns, misaligned expectations, fragile interpersonal dynamics? Still human problems. AI-generated meeting summaries offered surface convenience but did not create shared understanding or build trust across groups. In 2023, participants imagined AI as an intelligent team coordinator that could track project momentum, flag when a colleague was disengaging, surface team sentiment, and catch collaboration risks before they escalated. By 2025, what they had was a fast personal assistant for individual tasks. The social and relational dimensions of teamwork remained entirely out of AI’s reach.

What AI did change was the cultural norms around collaboration. By 2025, efficiency became a baseline. Not using AI was seen as falling behind. Transparent AI use had become the professional standard; the violation wasn’t using AI, it was concealing it. And all of this happened through a bottom-up movement never written in policy.

The Loneliness Chain

There is a consequence of AI-driven work that most organizations have not yet accounted for. A 2025 study in Behavioral Sciences via PMC examined what happens to

employees emotionally when their day-to-day work interactions shift from human colleagues to AI systems. As employees spend more of their working day collaborating with AI and less with people, they get lonelier.

Not surprising, right? Humans replenish emotional resources through the reciprocity, warmth, and feedback of human interaction. The small exchanges we are usually quick to take for granted—the check-in before a meeting, the moment of collaborative problem-solving, the back-and-forth of genuine conversation—are the social fabric of work. When AI absorbs the tasks that used to require those interactions, the fabric thins.

**“The magic of collaboration is still human.
AI just changed what the stage looks like.”**

— CMU / MIT / Stanford / Penn / Emory, 2025

Loneliness doesn’t stay contained either. The study found a statistically significant chain: loneliness leads to emotional fatigue, and emotional fatigue leads to counterproductive work behavior: disengagement, reduced quality, tardiness, and, in more serious cases, behaviors that actively harm the organization. The employees experiencing this are depleted by AI, and no one is replenishing what it’s taking.

The study found a solution via strong emotional support from leaders. This could look like genuine care, active listening, and the visible investment in employees as people, not just contributors. Leaders who check in on how people are doing (not just what they’re delivering), who make space for honest conversation, who treat their teams’ emotional reality as

organizational data, interrupt the loneliness chain before it reaches disengagement.

The Silicon Ceiling

BCG's 2025 AI at Work Survey identified what they term a "silicon ceiling," a growing structural divide within organizations. Frontline AI adoption has barely moved in two years — stuck at 51% despite surging investment and more than 77% of leaders and managers using generative AI several times weekly.

77%

of leaders use AI regularly vs. 51% of frontline workers — the "silicon ceiling" (BCG 2025)

40%

of employees received AI-generated content that was inaccurate or hollow in the past month (Microsoft 2025)

45%

of employees now use AI at work at least a few times per year (Gallup Q3 2025)

The gap compounds over time. Leaders make faster, more informed decisions with AI-enhanced insight. Frontline employees execute that strategy without the same tools or context. The result is growing misalignment between how leadership experiences AI and how the rest of the organization does.

Microsoft's New Future of Work Report (2025) adds a related finding: while AI has improved individual productivity, it has not yet done the same for teams. AI lacks the understanding of interpersonal dynamics and shared group context that real team coordination requires. The individual gains are real. Translating them to team-level performance—and closing the silicon ceiling—requires deliberate investment in frontline-specific tools, training, and use cases, not just enterprise rollouts designed around knowledge worker workflows.

What this means for your org

- Build intentional time for human connection into team rhythms. One-on-ones, team rituals, and informal check-ins are no longer nice-to-haves. They're the replenishment mechanism for what AI collaboration depletes.
- Train managers to recognize loneliness as an organizational risk signal, not a personal matter. Personal check-ins are a great place to start
- Invest in frontline-specific AI tools and use cases. A silicon ceiling that widens every quarter eventually becomes a fracture in your culture.
- Normalize transparent AI use explicitly. Waiting for employees to drift toward transparency is damaging to company culture.

LEARNING IS THE LEVER, BUT IT CUTS BOTH WAYS

Training is the single biggest driver of AI productivity gains. It is also the biggest retention risk.

EY's 2025 Work Reimagined study, drawing on 15,000 employees across 29 countries, found that training accounts for nearly 50% of an organization's "AI Advantage" score. Employees with 81 or more hours of AI training per year save 14 hours per week. Employees with fewer than 4 hours of training save just 3. That's a full day and a half of recovered capacity per week available for organizations that choose to invest in genuine AI skill development rather than one-off sessions.

14 HRS

saved per week with 81+ hours of AI training (EY 2025)

3 HRS

saved per week with less than 4 hours of training (EY 2025)

5%

of employees qualify as advanced AI users who treat it as a thought partner (EY 2025)

The Retention Paradox

Most AI ROI conversations treat training as a pure win. More training, more productivity, better outcomes. The math is clean and the case is easy to make.

Here's what that conversation leaves out.

**AI-trained employees are
55% more likely to quit**

— EY Work Reimagined, 2025

The same investment that drives your biggest productivity gains is accelerating your highest performers toward the exit. The more capable someone becomes with AI tools, the more valuable they become on the open market — and the less tethered they are to the organization that trained them.

This is not a training problem. It's a retention problem wearing a training costume.

Organizations that treat AI upskilling as a standalone initiative — disconnected from compensation, career development, and culture — are not building capability. They are building the exit ramp. Every cohort they train, they are making their best people more attractive to competitors who didn't have to pay for the development.

The fix isn't to train less. It's to close the loop.

Substantive AI training needs to be paired with three things: visible career pathways that make internal growth more compelling than external options; compensation that reflects what AI-skilled workers now command in the market; and a culture where the best people consistently find their most interesting, meaningful work inside the organization — not somewhere else.

Training is the accelerant. Culture is what determines whether it works for you or against you.

What this means for your org

Make every AI upskilling cohort a retention conversation too. The question isn't just "what will this person be able to do?" — it's "why will they want to do it here?" Audit whether your compensation reflects AI market rates. The external value of AI-skilled talent has moved faster than most internal pay bands. If there's a gap, your competitors will find it. Design career pathways before the training begins. Internal growth needs to feel more compelling than external options before someone gets the skills that make both possible.

Culture as the Multiplier

Research published in ScienceDirect (2024) found that organizational culture acts as a multiplier on AI skills, for better or worse. The study examined what separates organizations seeing real innovation from AI from those experiencing modest results. Turns out technical AI skills matter, but managerial AI skills matter much more.

Managerial AI skills—the ability to strategically plan, resource, and direct AI initiatives, assess risk, redesign processes, and create the conditions for AI-assisted work to succeed—have a greater impact on organizational innovation than technical capability alone. Knowing how to build AI isn't the differentiator. Knowing how to lead people through AI adoption is.

The cultural multiplier activates when an organization combines AI skills with a digital culture: one that values experimentation, treats failure as learning, makes data-driven decisions, and permits people to try new approaches. When both are present, innovation impact is multiplicative. When culture is weak, even strong technical capability produces limited and fragile results.

A Frontiers in Psychology study (2025) reinforces this from the employee level: AI tools don't automatically make people share knowledge and contribute more to their teams. That chain runs through learning. Employees who use AI to develop new skills feel more capable and more inclined to engage with colleagues. But it only works when leadership creates safety for experimentation, and when employees have genuine confidence that the organization supports their growth.

What this means for your org

- Treat AI training as a strategic investment, not a compliance requirement. The productivity difference between 4 hours and 81+ hours of training is transformational, not marginal.
- Every AI upskilling cohort needs a paired career conversation. Make internal growth the most compelling option for your best AI-trained people.
- Develop managerial AI fluency with the same urgency as technical fluency. Leaders who understand AI strategy have more impact on innovation outcomes than individual contributors who can build it.
- Create a culture that rewards experimentation. Celebrating smart experiments that didn't pan out is the cultural prerequisite for AI-driven learning to take hold.

WHAT GOOD ACTUALLY LOOKS LIKE

The 28% of organizations seeing real results from AI are simply doing the basics—with intention.

EY's Work Reimagined study introduces the concept of "Talent Advantage" to describe what separates transformational AI organizations from the rest. The answer is very similar to the managerial AI skills listed in the above section: strong talent health, genuine AI adoption, continuous learning embedded in operations, a culture that makes experimentation safe, and reward systems that reflect what AI-skilled workers actually value. In other words, a superior human infrastructure.

The Perceptyx data makes this concrete. In organizations with structured, leadership-driven AI strategies, 62% of employees are fully engaged—the highest of any group studied across the research. Those employees are 1.2 times more likely to say their teams work well together and 7.9 times more likely to say AI has positively impacted their culture. Same tools, different foundation.

62%

full employee engagement in organizations with structured, leadership-driven AI strategies — the highest of any group studied. (Perceptyx 2025)

The Five Conditions That Drive Success

LEADERSHIP

Sets a clear, human-centered vision for AI. Models its use.
Communicates honestly about what changes and what doesn't.
Addresses anxiety directly rather than dismissing it.

PSYCH SAFETY

Protected, not assumed. Failure is reframed as learning.
Concerns about AI are surfaced, acknowledged, and resolved.
Contributing and engaging with new ideas is explicitly rewarded.

TRAINING

Substantive and ongoing. Paired with clear career pathways so that well-trained employees have a compelling reason to stay.

CONNECTION

Deliberately preserved as AI absorbs more routine interaction.
Managers provide emotional support as a structural priority.

RECOGNITION

Employees feel seen for their unique human contributions.
Recognition reinforces that people remain the differentiator in an AI-augmented environment.

When the human foundation is weak, productivity gains from AI lag by over 40% compared to organizations that invest in both technology and culture together. This is nearly half the value of an AI investment left unrealized because culture was treated as a secondary concern.

The organizations winning the AI era are not choosing between people and technology. They are treating them as a single integrated system, with the understanding that one without the other consistently underperforms.

BUILDING THE CONDITIONS: A PRACTICAL GUIDE

The previous sections map what the research shows is going wrong during AI transitions. This section is about what to actually do.

The organizations seeing transformational results from AI aren't running exotic programs. They're being deliberate about five conditions that most organizations leave to chance: psychological safety, human connection, learning paired with retention, managerial capability, and visible recognition of human contribution. What follows is a practical guide to each.

1. Protect Psychological Safety — Actively

Psychological safety doesn't survive an AI transition on its own. Left unattended, AI anxiety — about job security, about relevance, about whether contributions still matter — fills the silence faster than any communication campaign can counteract it.

WHAT TO BUILD:

Regular, structured "AI reality checks" at the team level.

Not all-hands announcements — those are too easy to optimize for optics. Small group conversations, led by managers, where the actual questions employees have get actual answers. What's changing in this team's work? What isn't? What does this organization believe humans are here to do? The goal isn't to have all the answers. It's to make it safe to ask the questions.

A "safe to fail" norm around AI use.

Experimentation requires permission to get it wrong. Teams where managers explicitly celebrate a failed AI experiment by extracting the learnings, sharing them openly and building the muscle of AI use faster than teams where AI is expected to produce clean results immediately. Make the norm explicit. Name it. Repeat it.

Manager check-ins that go beyond task status.

PwC's 2025 data shows only 56% of employees feel safe trying new approaches at work. That gap lives at the manager level. One-on-ones are the most underused psychological safety tool in most organizations. A standing question — "what's feeling uncertain right now?" — signals that uncertainty is expected, not disqualifying.

2. Build Team Habits That Preserve Human Connection

The CMU/MIT/Stanford longitudinal study found that AI absorbed the tasks that used to require human interaction — the small exchanges, the collaborative back-and-forth, the informal problem-solving — without replacing what those interactions were actually doing for people. The result is lonelier teams producing work that looks efficient but is quietly more fragile.

Human connection doesn't regenerate automatically. It needs to be designed into team rhythms deliberately.

WHAT TO BUILD:

Protected counter-AI time in meetings.

The first ten minutes of a weekly team meeting, reserved for genuine human exchange — not status updates, not agenda previews — creates a rhythm of connection that doesn't disappear as AI absorbs more of the work itself. It sounds small. The PMC loneliness research suggests it matters more than most leaders realize.

Peer-to-peer recognition as a team ritual.

When recognition flows laterally — not just top-down — it does something specific: it makes the connective labor of teamwork visible. The colleague who brought someone up to speed, who

flagged a problem early, who held the team together during a difficult sprint. That work doesn't show up in a productivity dashboard. A regular, lightweight peer recognition practice makes it visible and keeps human attention circulating in an AI-heavy workflow.

Deliberate cross-functional touchpoints.

The silicon ceiling BCG identified — 77% of leaders using AI regularly versus 51% of frontline workers — widens partly because information and insight stop flowing across levels. Short, informal sessions where teams share how they're actually using AI (what's working, what flopped) rebuild the shared context that AI-generated summaries don't create.

3. Pair Every Training Investment With a Retention Conversation

EY's finding that AI-trained employees are 55% more likely to quit is a structural risk, not an individual one. It means every training cohort an organization runs has an exit probability baked in — unless something else changes alongside the skill development.

WHAT TO BUILD:

Career pathway conversations before training begins, not after.

Before someone enters an AI upskilling program, they should have a clear answer to the question: what does being good at this make possible for me here? If the answer is vague, the external market will provide a clearer one.

Compensation audits tied to AI skill development.

The market rate for AI-fluent talent has moved faster than most internal pay bands. If there's a gap between what your trained employees are worth externally and what they're earning internally, your competitors will surface it before you do. Quarterly audits of market rates for AI-proficient roles in your sector are a reasonable operational practice for any organization running serious AI training programs.

Internal visibility for AI-skilled employees.

One of the least utilized retention tools is internal recognition of AI capability — making it visible across the organization that certain people are doing sophisticated things with AI, and that the organization values and rewards it. This signals to trained employees that their development is seen and that growth inside the organization is real.

4. Develop Managerial AI Fluency

ScienceDirect's 2024 research found that managerial AI skills — the ability to strategically plan, resource, and direct AI initiatives — have a greater impact on organizational innovation than technical capability alone. Most organizations are inverting this: they're training individual contributors on AI tools while leaving managers to figure out the leadership dimension themselves.

WHAT TO BUILD:

Manager-specific AI fluency programs.

Not technical training — strategic fluency. How do you redesign a workflow around AI? How do you assess which tasks in your team are candidates for AI assistance and which aren't? How do you lead a team through the anxiety that comes with AI adoption? These are managerial skills. They need dedicated development.

Real-time culture signals for managers.

Managers can't lead what they can't see. Building lightweight, ongoing mechanisms for managers to understand how their teams are actually experiencing AI — pulse surveys, structured retrospectives, simple sentiment checks — gives them the data to intervene before loneliness becomes disengagement or knowledge-hiding becomes entrenched.

Manager modeling of AI use.

The Perceptyx data shows that employees in organizations where leaders visibly model AI use are 7.9x more likely to say AI has positively impacted their culture. Modeling isn't announcing that AI is great. It's managers sharing what they tried, what worked, what didn't, and what they're doing next. It normalizes the learning curve for everyone below them.

5. Make Human Contribution Visible

As AI handles more routine tasks, the remaining human work — the judgment calls, the relationship-building, the creative problem-solving, the knowledge that crosses silos — becomes more valuable and less legible to traditional performance systems. Productivity dashboards don't capture it. Most review processes don't either.

Recognition is how organizations make that work visible — and it's the fastest way to signal, repeatedly and publicly, what the organization believes humans are here to do.

WHAT TO BUILD:

A peer recognition practice with participation.

Not an annual awards program. A lightweight, habitual practice — weekly at least — where employees can name specific contributions from colleagues. The research on psychological safety and loneliness both point to the same mechanism: people need to feel seen by other people, not just evaluated by systems. Frequent, specific peer recognition does that at scale.

Recognition tied explicitly to human skills.

During an AI transition, the content of recognition matters as much as its frequency. Recognition that names the empathy, creativity, judgment, or relational skill behind a contribution reinforces the organizational narrative that these are the qualities that matter — not despite AI, but alongside it.

Manager acknowledgment as a structural priority, not an instinct.

The PMC loneliness study found that leader emotional support — genuine acknowledgment, encouragement, and visible investment in employees as people — is the most effective circuit breaker between AI collaboration and disengagement. This isn't about being warm. It's about treating acknowledgment as a leadership responsibility with the same weight as strategy and execution.

The short version

The organizations winning the AI era are not choosing between people and technology. They're treating them as a single integrated system. The conditions above aren't soft additions to an AI strategy. They are the AI strategy — because when the human foundation is weak, EY's research shows productivity gains from AI lag by over 40%. The technology is table stakes. Culture is the differentiator.

As AI handles more routine tasks, the remaining human work becomes more complex, more collaborative, and less visible in productivity dashboards. The connective labor of building trust, supporting colleagues, maintaining the social fabric of a team, carrying knowledge across silos, is precisely what AI cannot do. It is also exactly what most organizations have no formal way of seeing or rewarding.

Recognition is how organizations make that work visible. It directly addresses the three cultural risks most acute during AI transitions: job insecurity (employees reminded, publicly and repeatedly, that their contributions are valued), isolation (peer recognition preserves human attention in AI-heavy workflows), and disengagement (employees who feel unseen are the employees who quietly check out).

The organizations that will thrive in the AI era are the ones that understand what AI cannot do, and invest with equal seriousness in the human practices that make the difference.

In Summary

AI is not a culture problem you solve once and move on from. The three dynamics documented in this ebook—eroding psychological safety, a collaboration landscape shifting under everyone's feet, and a training investment that cuts both ways—are new operating conditions. Organizations that recognize this earliest and invest in culture with the same seriousness they invest in technology are the ones that will look back at this era as a period of transformation. The difference between the 28% of companies that experience transformation results from AI and everyone else is not tools. It is company culture. 🔄

Bonusly is built on the belief that people who feel recognized, supported, and connected are the foundation every organization runs on — and that this is more true, not less, in the age of AI.
bonusly.com

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