MAKERS

THE AI TRANSITION PLAYBOOK

PRACTICAL STEPS TO MAKE IT STICK

A guide for employers navigating disruption, skills gaps, and what comes next.

WE'RE PAST THE HYPE. NOW COMES THE HARD PART.

In boardrooms across the UK, the AI strategy is set. The tools are bought. The pilots are running. **But adoption is stalling.**

Not because the tech doesn't work, but because the people behind it weren't set up to succeed.

At Makers, we've spent over a decade helping organisations lead through change. What we've learned is simple: AI transformation isn't a technical problem. It's a people problem.

The businesses that will thrive in the AI age aren't the ones with the biggest budgets. They're the ones with the highest Learning Quotient (LQ) teams that can adapt, unlearn old habits, and embrace new ways of working.

This guide shares what we've learned from inside UK businesses, across sectors, and on the ground with the teams doing the work.

THE TWO-SPEED ECONOMY IS HERE

Real companies are already making the choice: **adapt or get left behind**.

ocado

While some companies experiment cautiously, others are moving decisively. **Ocado** has reduced order picking time from 25 minutes to 10 minutes through AI and robotics but this efficiency gain meant 500 fewer workers needed this year, following 2,300 job cuts in 2023.

Schroders

Meanwhile, **Schroders** is taking a different approach: using AI to amplify their workforce capacity, making staff more productive and driving more higher-value work rather than cutting headcount.

The choice is stark: Companies that invest in AI-ready teams are pulling ahead. Those that don't risk being left behind in what experts call "a two-speed economy."

THE STATE OF PLAY

AI is reshaping work faster than most organisations can adapt.
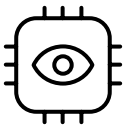
Only 22.7% of UK businesses have adopted AI tools as of early 2025.

OxLEP Business: "Exploring AI Adoption Across UK Businesses" (2025)

35% of UK businesses cite lack of expertise as the top barrier to AI adoption.

techUK: "Major Barriers to AI Adoption Remain" (2025)

Less than half (44%) of UK firms are actively helping staff gain AI skills.

Staffing Industry Analysts: (2024)

AI-skilled workers earn 56% more than those without AI knowledge, up from 25% the previous year.

PwC Global Workforce Report (2024)

Only 1 in 10 UK employers feel confident their teams can adapt to fast-moving AI tools.

CIPD, 2024

The reality:

==“This latest generation of AI could change every job. I don't think that is too much of an exaggeration.”==

Peter Cheese, CEO of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development.

WHY AI ADOPTION FAILS

1. LEARNING QUOTIENT IS MISSING

The problem: Buying tools is easy. Building the ability to learn and adapt is hard.

Most teams lack what we call Learning Quotient (LQ) the humility to start as beginners, the insight to distinguish between difficult and novel tasks, and the courage to persist through failure.

Without LQ, teams fall behind every time AI evolves. And it evolves fast.

The evidence: The mix of capabilities sought by employers is changing 66% faster in AI-exposed occupations than in traditional roles, making it harder for workers to keep up, especially mid-career professionals who aren't "AI natives."

Our latest survey of Makers alumni reveals that while 4 in 5 feel confident using AI tools, only 1 in 4 feel very confident. Even those who have been trained still need ongoing support to transition from exposure to deep capability.

2. THE SKILLS GAP IS ACCELERATING

The problem: AI isn't just changing what people do, it's changing how fast they need to learn.

Linkedin

LinkedIn data shows explosive growth in roles like "prompt engineer" and "head of AI," while traditional roles like financial analyst and legal associate are growing more slowly than before.

Biggest career accelerator in the next decade: get really good at learning.

– Figure out your learning style
– Use AI to convert material into that format (e.g. podcasts, quizzes)
– Apply knowledge
– Repeat

Learn fast, grow fast
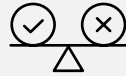
Mustafa Suleyman, CEO, Microsoft AI

3. ROUTINE DISRUPTION GOES UNMANAGED

The problem: AI adoption requires people to fundamentally change their daily routines.

Klarna

For many, their workday habits have been established over years. Disrupting these routines can trigger genuine grief and loss. The energy required to reshape routines feels overwhelming.

4. THE PLEASURE IN WORK CHANGES

The problem: AI doesn't just change what people do, it changes how work feels.

Companies like Klarna saw their AI assistant handle two-thirds of customer service queries, drastically cutting human involvement. But as the CEO later admitted, such stark automation often lowers quality and job satisfaction.

60% of UK workers say digital training hasn't improved their day-to-day work.

Learning & Work Institute / NFER, 2024

5. LEADERS FEEL UNPREPARED

The problem: Senior teams know AI matters but don't feel ready to lead it.

ANTHROP\C

Yet as Anthropic's CEO Dario Amodei warns: "AI is going to get better at what everyone does, including what I do, including what other CEOs do."

pwc

Only 21% of UK leaders say they feel "very prepared" to manage the impact of AI on their workforce.

PwC UK, 2024

WHAT MOST ORGANISATIONS MISS WHEN DEPLOYING AI

THE HIDDEN RISKS

THE TWO-SPEED ECONOMY RISK

Some teams race ahead with AI while others get left behind, creating internal inequality and resentment. This mirrors what's happening across entire industries.

THE GENDER GAP RISK

Women hold a higher share of AI-exposed jobs than men, yet research shows significant disparities in AI tool adoption, with some cohorts showing a 70/30 split in usage.

THE EXPERIENCE PARADOX RISK

Your most experienced people, the ones with the deepest expertise, may resist new ways of working most strongly. Yet these are often the people you need leading the transition.

THE DISPLACEMENT VS. DISRUPTION RISK

Will you follow the Ocado model (fewer people, same output) or the Schroders approach (same people, more capacity)?

THE QUALITY VS. EFFICIENCY TRADE-OFF RISK

As companies like Klarna discovered, optimising for AI-driven efficiency without considering human elements can damage service quality and employee satisfaction.

A NEW VISION OF HR

Will agents become part of the company org chart, as Moderna is now experimenting with?

INTRODUCING THE MAKERS SHIFT FRAMEWORK™

Because real transformation doesn't just happen, it requires a **shift in mindset, tools, culture,** and **capability.**

SET THE FOUNDATIONS

ASSESS & PREPARE

Build the foundation for sustainable AI adoption

WHAT TO DO:

Set out the vision for AI and its potential in the business.

Build a cohort of champions from across departments to lead the change ensuring gender balance and diverse experience levels.
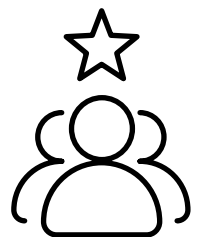
Communicate clearly and transparently to colleagues. Set out what you are doing, the fact that this is a learning journey for everyone. Lean into the fear people might feel for their jobs and how you will handle any job losses.

Set the right culture for change. Think hard about psychological safety. Honour existing expertise while creating safe spaces for experienced staff to be beginners again.

Get clear on how to identify the best use cases. Distinguish between efficiency oriented use cases (run processes quicker and better), revenue oriented (train AI to drive performance of important tasks) and complexity oriented (use AI to solve business problems that were not possible before AI - the AlphaFold opportunity).

KEY INSIGHT:

Understand that colleagues come to this with concern and sometimes active resistance. **Lean into the complex emotions in teams and deal with this on explicitly as a leadership team.** Show the opportunity and build excitement. Be as clear and transparent as possible about your process.

HARNESS AI SAFELY

DEPLOY WITH GUARDRAILS

Launch AI tools with clear boundaries and support

WHAT TO DO:

Set out guardrails for AI use in line with company ethics and data security, making clear to the teams the security created by enterprise level tools and key risks.

Launch an ' AI Mastery' training programme for teams (at Makers this is the first part of our AI Essentials course). Start off with real challenges to baseline expertise (e.g., build a chatbot). Come together to discuss how these challenges were solved, and what was learned - establishing an AI learning toolkit as well as an AI toolkit.

Help individuals understand how to use AI for all core work tasks: research, analysis, content creation, coding and communication.

Create an AI Corner for those who are curious to come together and share learnings.

KEY INSIGHT:

Get teams using the tools quickly. Using the tools and debriefing on the experience will enable teams to build their AI learning toolkit as well as build their AI competence.
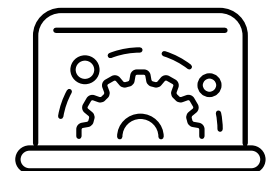
INTEGRATE LEARNING IN THE FLOW

## Embed AI learning where the work happens

WHAT TO DO:

Get teams using AI to address real use cases - both individual and cross-team.

Run an 'Automate' training programme for the team (this is the second module of the Makers AI Essentials course) to support delivery of use cases and share learnings as learning is blended with real work.

Allow team members to use any tool for free for a period of time to really understand its potential but require a business case after a set period (6-8 weeks) to either drive broader use of the tool across the business or end its use.

KEY INSIGHT:

To get real sticky change, learning needs to happen in situ in the job.
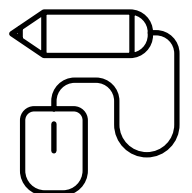
FUEL
EVOLUTION

SCALE & EVOLVE

Turn early wins into organisation-wide capability

WHAT TO DO:

Celebrate wins in team events, allowing champions from across the business to show what they have done and built.

Kick off a 'Reimagine' training programme (the third module of the Makers AI Essentials training).

In this module, first focus on encouraging people to imagine their work AI-first. What would the company trying to disrupt yours do? How can you get the same outcomes with a completely new AI first process.

Reflect further on agentic management. Do you have the skills to quality control AI-driven work that you need. What more is required.

Create pathways for role transitions (from displacement to new value creation).

Monitor for internal inequality and provide targeted support where needed.

KEY INSIGHT:

Celebrating wins and showcasing progress drives momentum and inspires others. The capability gap between AI-exposed and traditional roles is widening 66% faster, stay ahead of the curve.
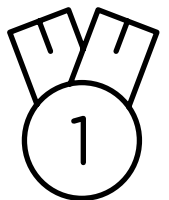
TRACK MOMENTUM AND PROGRESS

The SHIFT Framework is your roadmap for making AI adoption sustainable, inclusive, and human-powered

WHAT TO DO:

Be clear about whether time savings are being captured in slowed hiring or freed time.

If freed time, be clear about how that time is being spent.

Monitor adoption rates across teams, roles, and demographics to spot gaps early.

Run quarterly LQ pulse checks to track adaptability and confidence.

Encourage teams to self-report AI wins and friction points.

Use insights to course-correct: refine training, address blockers, and re-engage lagging teams.

KEY INSIGHT:

Tracking the right metrics - not just tool usage, but confidence, capability, and outcomes - turns experimentation into lasting change.
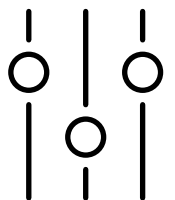
WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE

When teams build Learning Quotient, they handle whatever comes next, whether it's AI agents, new regulations, or technologies we haven't imagined yet.

REAL-WORLD SUCCESS INDICATORS:

Strategic workforce planning: Like Moderna, combining HR and technology functions to enable automation.

Value amplification: Following Schroders' model of making staff more productive rather than cutting costs.

Quality maintenance: Avoiding Klarna's initial mistake of optimising for efficiency at the expense of service quality.

Skills evolution: Teams naturally rotating toward human-centric capabilities that AI can't replicate

Competitive advantage: Joining companies experiencing 3x higher revenue per employee growth.

BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS OF SUCCESS:

Proactive experimentation: People suggest AI applications before being asked.

Open learning culture: Failures are shared and learned from openly.

Cross-team collaboration: AI insights flow between departments naturally.

Smooth transitions: Routine disruption is managed without productivity loss.

Sustained engagement: Job satisfaction remains high despite workflow changes.

Continuous adaptation: Teams adjust quickly as AI capabilities evolve.

Strategic thinking: People connect AI opportunities to business outcomes.

Confident leadership: Managers feel equipped to guide AI adoption in their teams.

The choice is yours.
But the window is closing.

"A two-speed economy is emerging between the companies investing in AI and those that are not. The dividing lines are not traditional. This is not about innovative industries versus not. This is about companies and cultures that are able to make this huge and decisive shift."
Claudia Harris, CEO of Makers

Your AI success depends on your people's ability to learn and adapt.

The companies already moving, from Ocado's efficiency gains to Schroders' capacity amplification, aren't waiting for perfect solutions. They're building Learning Quotient now.

We build the learners.
They build your business.

The future won't be led by those with the best tools - it will be led by those with the best learners. At Makers, we help you build them.

Ready to join them? Let's talk about what sustainable AI adoption looks like in your organisation.

BOOK YOUR STRATEGY SESSION

contact@makers.tech   0203 817 8870   in @makers-academy   www.makers.tech

IS YOUR WORKFORCE AI-READY?

We've mapped AI opportunities to real business outcomes	
We've identified team leads with high Learning Quotient	
We have a plan to support routine disruption + change fatigue	
Training is role-specific, not one-size-fits-all	
Our leaders feel confident driving AI transformation	
We're monitoring for adoption gaps (e.g. gender, seniority, function)	
We've shared internal success stories to scale wins	
We've decided our approach: displacement vs. disruption strategy	
We're tracking revenue per employee in AI-exposed departments	