

Your AI blueprint

How to build a transformational strategy from the ground up

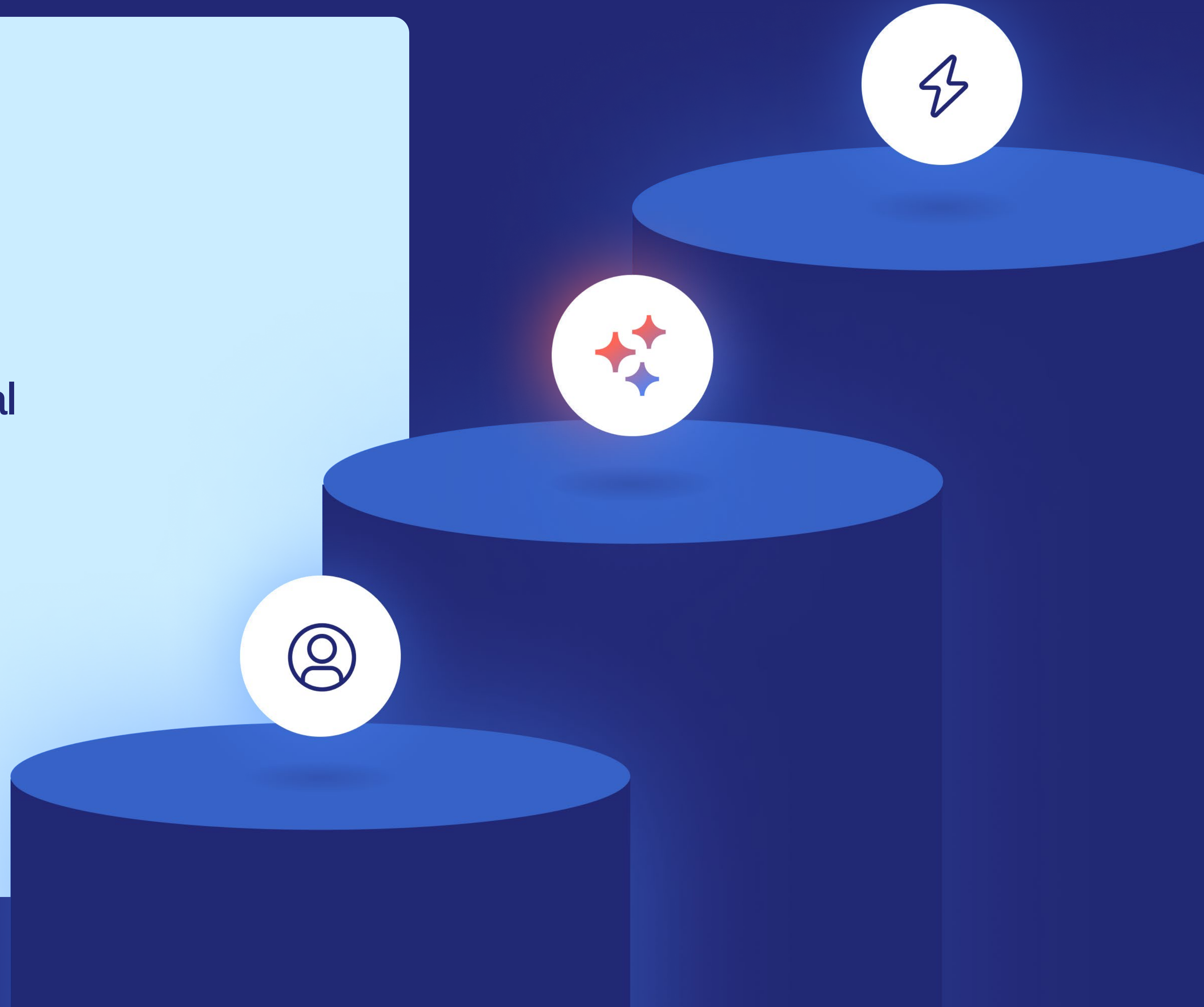


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INTRODUCTION

In today's digital landscape, AI stands as a transformative force for companies seeking to enhance their presence and efficiency. From elevating customer experiences to streamlining operations, AI empowers organizations to make confident, data-driven decisions that drive growth.

This roadmap guides you through the journey of AI adoption, balancing technical implementation with strategic vision. You'll learn to:

- 1 **Overcome challenges** by mastering AI's complexities and understanding its transformative role in your enterprise
- 2 **Integrate responsibly** by aligning AI implementation with ethical guidelines, governance frameworks, and industry standards
- 3 **Drive innovation** by fostering a culture where collaboration and continuous improvement become second nature

What's ahead is supported by research from our [Work Innovation Lab](#) in partnership with frontier AI safety and research company, Anthropic, and reflective of our overall philosophy toward AI at Asana, all with the goal of guiding you along a successful AI journey.



AI 101: The what, how, why, and ROI



Generally, generative AI provides computational models that mimic human cognition, enabling machines to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence. There are a few other terms you may have heard:

- ✦ **Machine Learning (ML)** is a subset of AI focused on building systems that learn from data to improve their performance over time without being explicitly programmed. Think of product recommendations or email spam filtering.
- ✦ **Deep Learning** uses neural networks with multiple layers to sift through data and spot patterns, making it a strong tool for deconstructing complex datasets. Think voice assistants like Siri and Alexa, or facial recognition used to unlock smartphones.
- ✦ **Natural Language Processing (NLP)** allows computers to understand, interpret, and generate human language, facilitating intelligent conversation and text analysis. Think of autocorrect and predictive text on smartphones, or customer service chatbots.

Together, these AI technologies form the backbone for developing innovative solutions that can drive significant advancements in various industries.

The 5 stages of AI adoption

As tempting as it is, you can't just turn on a switch and have AI seamlessly integrated into all your workflows, with employees effortlessly using it to increase productivity and deliver higher-quality work. But AI adoption is a journey, and there will be roadblocks along the way.

As long as you have a general idea of what to expect, it's easier to tackle each challenge one by one. In partnership with Anthropic, our Work Innovation Lab surveyed 5,007 knowledge workers to [identify the five stages of AI adoption](#):

1

AI skepticism

This is when organizations start to recognize AI's potential, and begin exploring its myriad applications.

2

AI activation

During this stage, teams launch various pilot projects to see what works, gaining insightful first-hand experience. Small-scale experiments help your employees understand both the implications and value of AI.

3

AI experimentation

After seeing what works, you'll start to ramp up implementation and scale AI initiatives. This critical phase addresses the challenges of broader, organization-wide AI integration.

4

AI scaling

Workflows and processes take a new shape as AI becomes integrated into your operations. At this stage, AI is no longer an auxiliary tool but a core component of operational strategy.

5

AI maturity

You're skillfully leveraging AI to drive transformative results. There is a deep, strategic alignment between your AI capabilities and organizational goals.

Progressing through to AI maturity involves more than just deploying the right technologies. It requires a holistic approach that tackles a complex set of factors, which we refer to as the five “Cs” of AI adoption.

The five “Cs” of AI adoption

Comprehension

How well do your employees understand how to use AI?

✦ Over half of workers (56%) have proactively engaged in AI learning through personal experimentation. To enhance AI literacy and understanding throughout their workforce, organizations need to invest more in formal education, training, and upskilling initiatives.

Concerns

What concerns are top-of-mind for employees regarding AI?

✦ When selecting AI tools, reliability is the primary concern for 69% of workers. But a lot of companies are jumping into AI with poor-quality data, which can lead to some pretty frustrating results.

Collaboration

How do employees collaborate— and want to collaborate—with AI?

✦ Companies need to invest in AI systems that can work alongside humans: Workers who see AI as a teammate rather than a tool are 33% more likely to report productivity gains.

Context

What AI policies, guidelines, and principles make up the organizational context around AI?

✦ Just 13% of organizations have developed shared AI guidelines. Robust AI policies and principles are essential to guide employees to use and deploy AI responsibly.

Calibration

How is AI effectiveness and value measured in your organization?

✦ It's crucial to measure AI's impact and value, yet 41% of organizations don't collect any employee feedback on AI tools. You can't improve what you don't measure.

Achieving true AI maturity demands a balanced focus on technology and organizational culture, ensuring harmonious integration that positions your enterprise for sustained innovation and growth. In short: There's no rushing this. Just like a quality relationship, it takes time for employees to build trust and gain confidence in AI.



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Organizations that are more mature in their AI adoption journey are harnessing AI differently, treating it as a collaborative partner rather than just a tool. They invest in resources, training, and robust policies, prioritizing safety, reliability, and a human-centric approach. These mature AI adopters are realizing greater productivity gains and more extensive AI usage across different use cases compared to their less mature counterparts. Our report highlights that successful AI integration is as much about change management as it is about technology.

Dr. Rebecca Hinds

Head of Asana's Work Innovation Lab at Asana



Pioneering the AI path

So many companies are already tapping into the power of AI to accelerate their goals. Take global financial organization Morningstar: Previously, their process for evaluating work requests involved manually reviewing each request, following up on missing information, and gathering additional context from stakeholders to decide if each task should be added to the roadmap.

By tapping into Asana AI Studio to build Smart workflows for work intake, Morningstar reduced timelines by an average of 10 days per completed workflow. Smart workflows minimize manual triage and provide recommendations based on the priority and scale of projects—getting the right work on the roadmap faster and reducing pre-development delays.

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Previously, it took two weeks to review a request and gather the information we needed to proceed. Now we can eliminate time spent on manual back-and-forth because Asana AI identifies and captures the information we need right off the bat.

Belinda Hardman

Director of Program Management at Morningstar

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AI in action: Benefits, barriers, and ROI

Along with Morningstar, 98% of Asana's top 500 customers use Asana AI¹, and continue to prove that its implementation offers significant benefits, including increased efficiency, cost savings, and enhanced decision-making through data analysis, potentially leading to a high ROI. However, challenges such as integration complexity, data privacy concerns, and workforce displacement can hinder its implementation. Addressing these obstacles requires careful planning and clear ethical guidelines.

¹As of May 2024, among customers who have AI enabled



AI advantages

AI can be a powerful ally, enabling teams to work more creatively by taking over mundane tasks, analyzing vast amounts of data, and surfacing key insights. The goal isn't to replace jobs but to assist human work. Of course, depending on the team, AI has different advantages.



Marketing

The Marketing AI Institute, an organization that we deeply admire for its commitment to making AI more digestible, has a framework for how AI can enhance every aspect of marketing, from planning to production, personalization, promotion, and performance measurement. In fact, evidence suggests that AI can enhance creativity when adopted with a human-centered approach.

This means encouraging teams to view AI as a partner; augmenting human decision-making into AI systems; and prioritizing transparency and explainability.



Information Technology

AI offers significant advantages to IT teams, including automating routine tasks like software updates and system maintenance, freeing them to focus on more complex challenges. It enhances cybersecurity by detecting threats in real time and automating responses, while predictive analytics help prevent system failures and minimize downtime. AI-powered chatbots improve IT support by managing common helpdesk requests, and its ability to optimize resource management—such as cloud usage and network performance—leads to more efficient, cost-effective IT operations.



PMO and Operations

For PMO and Operations teams, AI can drive improved decision-making through data-driven insights and predictive analytics, enhancing project forecasting. It automates repetitive tasks like scheduling and reporting, increasing efficiency and reducing errors, while optimizing resource allocation based on workload and timelines. AI also strengthens risk management by identifying potential issues early and enhances communication through real-time updates and automated status reports. Additionally, it boosts agility, allowing teams to adapt quickly to changing project requirements and business needs.

Potential ROI

AI is no longer a future state: It's happening right now, and what was once merely possible is now profitable. **Wayne Kurtzman**, Research Vice President, Collaboration and Communities at IDC, conducted a brand new research for the 2024 IDC Annual Collaboration Study, covering North America and Western Europe. "Revenue expansion will come from AI as well as the realization that every connected worker is a new era knowledge worker. Each person in the enterprise has valuable data to inform AI — the same AI you are using for decision-making," he says. "Artificial intelligence (AI) everywhere will expand your expectations. Intelligence is a primary source of value creation, and generative AI (GenAI) is emerging as a transformative, multimodal force with a potential to revolutionize the future."

The ROI of AI can include:

Financial	Non-financial
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Cost savings Reduced labor costs, lower operating expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Improved customer satisfaction Higher Net Promoter Score, reduced customer complaints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Revenue increase Increased sales, higher customer lifetime value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Enhanced employee productivity Faster decision-making, fewer errors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Improved efficiency Faster processing times, increased throughput 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Increased innovation New product development, process optimization

55%

of workers report feeling more optimistic about using generative AI at work compared to just six months ago

78%

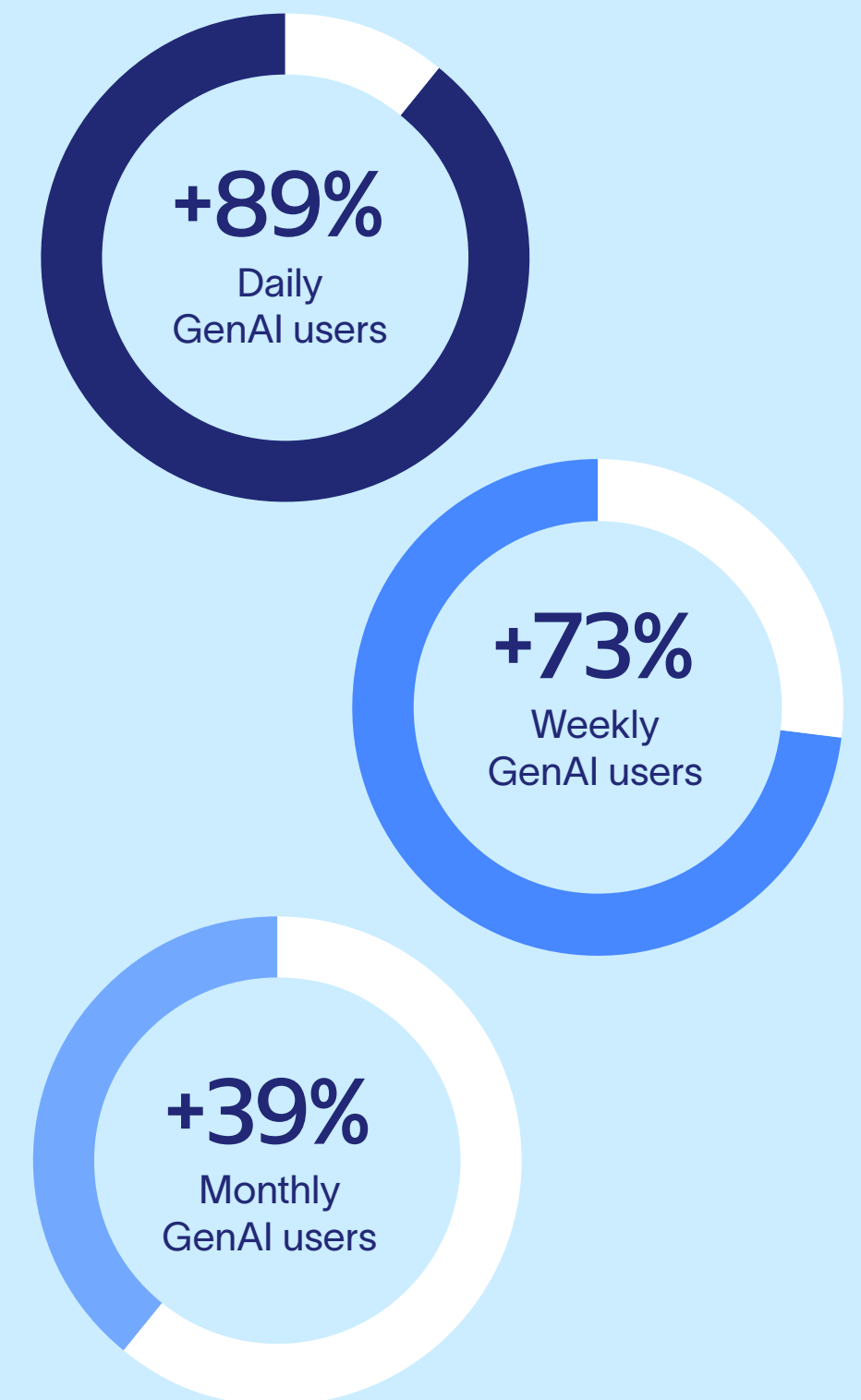
of executives believe combining AI with human expertise can result in better outcomes

89%

of daily generative AI users report productivity gains

Productivity gains by generative AI tool frequency of use

Percentage of workers who report increases in productivity as a result of GenAI



Common obstacles

The concerns associated with generative AI can be attributed to a fear of the unknown, which manifests differently depending on the stage of AI maturity. At Stage 1, with lower AI maturity, workers are primarily concerned about their limited understanding of how generative AI works, leading to the highest level of skepticism (55%) toward using AI at work. Data shows 29% of workers worry about being perceived as lazy, and 25% feel like frauds for relying on AI to complete tasks.

As familiarity and expertise with AI deepen, primary concerns shift toward the ethical implications. It becomes more important to ensure that AI tools prioritize transparency and provide insights into their decision-making processes.

As your employees embrace continuous learning and improvement, they'll become the AI enthusiasts needed to drive successful adoption of AI technologies in your workplace, ultimately positioning your enterprise for sustained innovation and market leadership. "AI is a competitive advantage," says Kurtzman, the IDC analyst. "Knowing how to use it empowers the advantage."



Keeping AI ethical, fair, and manageable



Well-defined AI policies and principles are vital for regulatory compliance and can be viewed as strategic assets that differentiate your organization. They provide employees with a clear framework for using AI responsibly and consistently, and demonstrate your commitment to ethical AI practices, fostering greater trust among customers, partners, and investors.

“Trust is central to digital work, yet it is complex as trust is gained in drops and lost in buckets,” says Kurtzman. Trust takes time, but to start, it’s important to make AI processes and decision-making criteria open and understandable to users and stakeholders, ensuring they’re aware of how decisions are made and on what basis. Moreover, accountability mechanisms should include clearly defined roles and responsibilities, enabling organizations to pinpoint accountability and take corrective actions if issues arise.

This transparency helps in identifying biases and preventing unintended consequences, while competent accountability protocols ensure that AI-driven decisions can be audited and justified.

Creating an AI ethics framework

As AI systems expand, it's essential to ensure they follow ethical guidelines around fairness, transparency, and accountability, adapting as regulations and technology evolve. A solid framework will help navigate ethical challenges and maintain stakeholder trust. Regular audits of AI models are crucial to confirm they perform reliably across diverse user groups and data environments, supporting broader scalability.

If this sounds like a lot, don't worry. You won't have to do this alone. Establishing a cross-functional AI governance committee or AI Council to oversee the responsible implementation of AI tools will ensure that AI is used in a way that aligns with your values and goals.

An AI Council typically comprises a multidisciplinary team of stakeholders from various departments and expertise areas. Here's a detailed look at who might be included.

Key members of an AI council:



Chief AI Officer (CAIO) or AI Lead

Typically the chairperson, the CAIO oversees all AI initiatives, strategy, and implementation.



Chief Information Officer (CIO) or Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

Provides insights into the technological infrastructure and integration, and ensures that AI strategies align with the broader IT strategy and infrastructure.



Chief Data Officer (CDO)

Overseeing data governance, quality, and strategy, the CDO ensures that the data used for AI models is compliant with privacy regulations and ethical standards.



Chief Compliance Officer (CCO) or Legal Advisor

Advising on legal risks and ethical considerations, the CCO ensures that all AI initiatives comply with relevant laws and regulations.



Ethics Officer or AI Ethicist

With a focus on the ethical implications of AI technologies, the Ethics Officer develops and monitors ethical guidelines and frameworks.



Business Unit Leaders or Department Heads

These members represent different business units or departments that will be directly impacted by AI initiatives. Their insights are invaluable when it comes to the practical applications and potential challenges within their areas.



Human Resources (HR) Representative

Involved in training, reskilling programs, and change management, HR oversees the impact of AI on the workforce.



Data Scientists and AI Engineers

These members ensure your AI plan is technically feasible, providing expertise on AI models, algorithms, and data analytics.



Marketing and Customer Experience Representatives

These team members provide insights into how AI can enhance customer interactions and marketing strategies.



External Advisors or Consultants

For help benchmarking and adopting best practices, these advisors could come from academia, industry, or consultancy firms to bring in external perspectives and expertise.

Once you have your council, they will serve to:

- ◆ Oversee the strategic implementation and governance of AI across your organization.
- ◆ Align your AI initiatives to your business goals, ethical standards, and any applicable regulatory requirements.
- ◆ Explore new and existing strategies and technologies that could supplement your operations.
- ◆ Manage budget and talent allocation when it comes to AI initiatives.



Focusing on data privacy and security

Your AI is only as good as the data powering it, and 31% of workers² are concerned that using AI will compromise their organization's data privacy. These concerns underscore the need to invest in AI technologies built on a strong, robust data model. This includes comprehensive data protection measures that safeguard sensitive information against unauthorized access and breaches. These concerns also highlight the importance of selecting tools that allow users to scrutinize recommendations and understand where the results come from. You want to enhance trust in AI and enable users to make more informed and effective decisions.

It's also imperative to ensure that AI systems comply with existing regulations, like GDPR or CCPA, and are prepared for future legislative changes. This includes regular audits, employing encryption technologies, and establishing protocols for handling data breaches effectively.

²State of AI at Work, Asana's Work Innovation Lab and Anthropic, 2024



From skepticism to support

Navigating change with your teams

There's a clear divide in how employees engage with AI. While some are eager, others are skeptical. Only 25% of U.S. and U.K. workers use generative AI daily, with 39% of executives adopting daily AI tools compared to 18% of individual contributors. Sectors like government and education are slower to adopt, while tech leads with 42% using AI regularly.

As organizations implement AI, they often overlook a critical factor: the human element. To unlock the full potential of AI, organizations must first convince their employees to use and embrace the technology. That's not a trivial task—and it's a challenge nearly every organization is grappling with.



Communication strategies: The power of the ‘AI Mindset’

The key to successful AI implementation lies in ensuring employees actively utilize AI to enhance their work. Rather than promoting AI for the sake of it, the real gains come when employees are engaged and integrate AI in meaningful ways. With 41% of employees expressing skepticism, transforming this skepticism into enthusiasm is crucial.

Our research investigated this through three “AI Mindset” interventions:

Enthusiast

Promote AI enthusiasm by highlighting productivity and creativity benefits

Skeptic

Value and address skepticism as a basis for safe AI adoption

Skeptic-to-Enthusiast

Attempt to shift mindsets towards enthusiasm for AI

The results revealed that changing employees’ AI mindset was possible, but only under specific conditions. The Enthusiast and Skeptic interventions both sustained positive shifts, effectively motivating employees to embrace AI use by highlighting benefits and addressing concerns. In contrast, the “Skeptic-to-Enthusiast” approach fell short, as it appeared too challenging for employees to adopt in their AI journeys. These findings suggest that focusing on either cultivating positive perceptions or directly addressing concerns is more effective than attempting dramatic mindset transformations. [Read more.](#)



Training and reskilling programs

As we mentioned, you can't just throw AI at your teams and expect results. You need to train your people and put thoughtful guardrails in place.

Marketers at organizations that have provided training on how to use AI effectively are 57% more likely to be enthusiastic about using AI at work.

Education and skill development are critical in fostering a positive attitude towards AI. We need more comprehensive training programs and cross-functional AI governance committees to ensure marketers have the chops and know-how to use AI effectively and ethically. And we need to lead by example from the top down, demonstrating a commitment to responsible AI use and actively participating in AI initiatives.

To bridge this gap, organizations should implement strategies fostering AI use across all workforce levels. Understanding employee enthusiasm and skepticism is crucial. Tailored training can demystify AI, empowering teams to see it as a tool for enhancement. Transparent communication and low-risk experimentation opportunities ease the transition, fostering a unified approach to AI integration.



A whopping 64% of knowledge workers have little to no familiarity with generative AI tools³. Encourage your employees to stay curious, ask questions, and explore new possibilities. To get you started:



Tailor your training programs

Design curricula addressing specific AI mindsets. Help employees overcome adoption barriers and build essential AI skills.



Develop resources

To make AI more tangible, develop and share role-based AI use case libraries that demonstrate how to use AI in various scenarios for departments across the organization.



Offer ongoing support

Offer continuous learning through workshops, seminars, and online courses. Create innovation spaces like hackathons. Set up AI “office hours” with subject matter experts to provide a space for specialized guidance.



Find your champions

The success or failure of your AI initiatives hinges on your people. Earn their buy-in and commitment, and you’ll be well-positioned to realize the full potential of this transformative technology. Identify internal AI champions, and empower them to share their knowledge and enthusiasm.



Praise the process

Instead of portraying AI proficiency as an innate trait, emphasize learning and improvement. Success with AI requires everyone in the organization to experiment with AI’s ever-evolving capabilities and to figure out how to put them to work most effectively. Celebrate the effort, strategies, and progress employees make in developing their AI skills. By praising the journey of continuous learning rather than just the end result, you create a culture that normalizes AI adoption challenges and encourages ongoing skill development.



Learn from setbacks

In fact, don’t call them setbacks at all. Frame them as valuable experiences and growth catalysts. Involve skeptical employees in analyzing what went wrong, identifying improvement areas, and planning the path forward. Create “safe zones” where employees can experiment without worrying about dropping the ball.



Monitor progress

Regularly assess training effectiveness using metrics like employee engagement, AI tool adoption rates, and productivity gains. Use these insights to refine your programs.

By integrating these approaches, you can foster a growth mindset that propels your organization forward in its AI adoption journey. As employees embrace continuous learning and improvement, they’ll become the AI enthusiasts needed to drive successful adoption of AI technologies in your workplace.

³AI Mindsets: The key to unlocking AI’s potential at work, Asana’s Work Innovation Lab, 2024

Measuring wins and pushing for improvement

Evaluating the effectiveness of AI implementation requires a combination of lenses and could include:

- **Technical performance metrics**
(like accuracy, latency, and recall)
- **Business impact metrics**
(such as ROI, cost reduction, and customer satisfaction)
- **User experience metrics, and ethical considerations**
(bias, fairness, and compliance)

By selecting the right metrics, you can track whether your AI solutions are meeting technical expectations and delivering business value. Establishing pre-AI performance baselines is critical for comparison. Make sure your leaders gather baseline data before rolling out AI and periodically reassess as systems are refined.

Feedback loops and iteration

With the rapid advancement of AI, feedback loops are essential. Yet, a significant 41% of employees say their leaders do not actively seek their feedback on using generative AI tools in their work. Frontline workers have invaluable insights into AI's effectiveness, so leaders should establish clear feedback channels (for example, surveys, focus groups, and check-ins) and ensure feedback is incorporated into the calibration process.



Your org's AI future is in your hands



By now, you should have a deep understanding of how to integrate AI in your business responsibly and effectively. Using these tools and strategies, you and your organization can:

01

Overcome initial skepticism and drive adoption through clear communication and robust change management.

02

Implement AI ethically and transparently, achieving compliance and fostering trust within the organization.

03

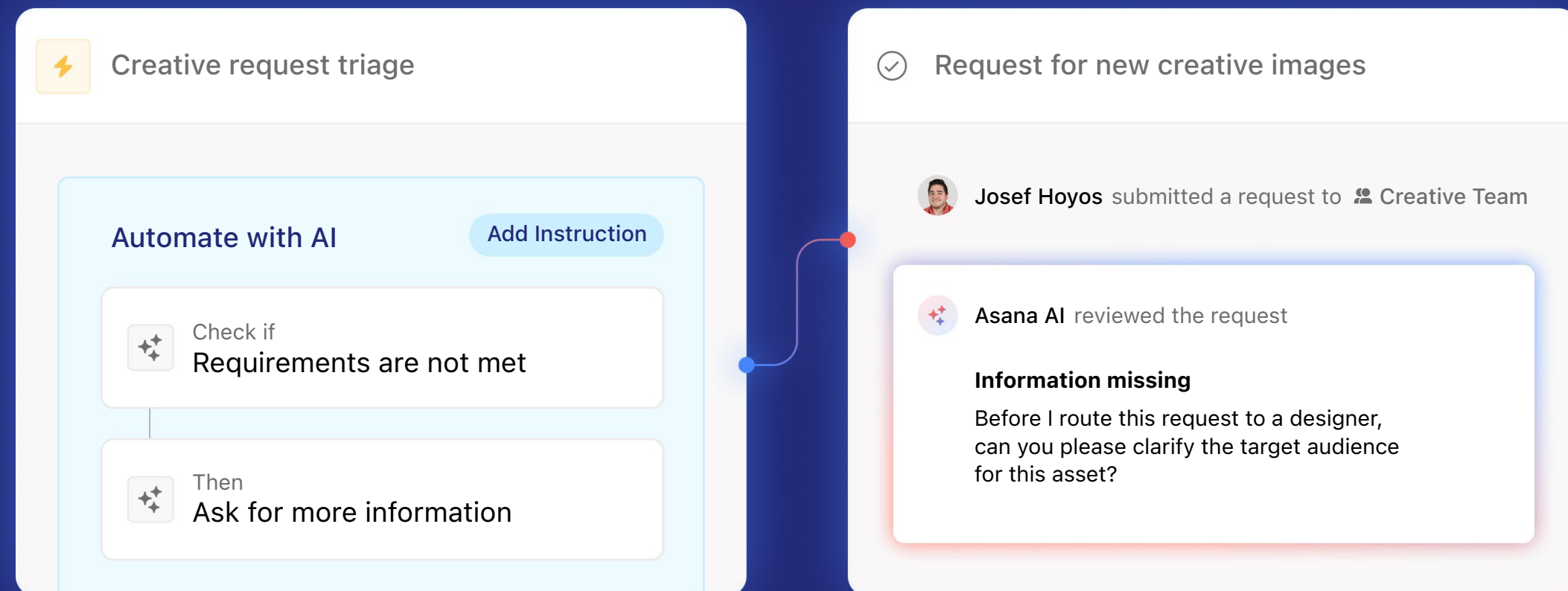
Utilize AI to eliminate mundane tasks, thereby allowing teams to focus on more creative, strategic, and impactful work.

Embracing AI doesn't just mean using cutting-edge technology—it means reshaping the future of your enterprise, making it more innovative, efficient, and human-centric. You'll unlock newfound creativity. Empower teams to reimagine how they work. Your organization will never be the same. It will be better.



AI Studio

Unlocking custom AI workflows
right in Asana



Our newly launched **Asana AI Studio** is a no-code workflow builder that empowers users to seamlessly integrate AI into their workflows, all within Asana itself. Workflow owners, such as program managers, operations, or IT, can design “Smart workflows” tailored to their unique processes, with AI agents embedded seamlessly.

These **Smart workflows** can be created for any typical business process, such as project intake, product launches, or resource management.

“

With AI Studio, AI can be embedded into teams’ existing workflows, so they don’t have to seek out a separate application or tool, like ChatGPT, to interact with it. It’s embedded where the work is already happening. And it works automatically,

”

Michelle Kim

AI Studio Product Manager at Asana

During the beta testing, customers like **Clear Channel Outdoor** saw promising time-saving results that are illustrative of what’s possible. “We were able to reduce the manual work in the intake stage of our creative production process by 60%, which equates to a time savings of 15 hours per request,” said Jennifer Kordosky, VP, Creative & Marketing Operations. “We’re eager to measure at scale when we roll out our Smart workflow to the entire creative team, which fields over 2,500 requests per month.” Conservatively, that has the potential to save thousands of days of work.

AI Studio makes it easier for everyone to delegate work and say goodbye to manual, repetitive tasks in favor of high-impact work. Examples of the improvements customers experienced during the beta program include:



Creative production

Instead of slogging through information and manual translations, teams enjoyed instant background research and automated translations



Campaign management

Teams shifted from drafting briefs from scratch to incorporating AI-generated content based on best practices



Project intake

Rather than manually gathering and categorizing requests, teams can instantly and consistently gather, triage, and structure information.



Product launches

Instead of suffering through inefficient cross-team coordination, AI automatically restructures work and ensures smooth hand-offs between departments.

Early access to Asana AI Studio is currently available to customers on our new Enterprise and Enterprise+ tiers. To get started, reach out to your admin and ask them to enable AI Studio in the admin console. [Learn more here](#). To get notified when general availability opens up to additional tiers, [join our waitlist](#).





Ready for even more?

Read through the 2024 State of AI at Work report.

EXPLORE NOW

Want to hone your skills?

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GET STARTED