

# The State of Work Innovation

📍 AUSTRALIA



Insights and actionable strategies from experts at Asana's Work Innovation Lab.

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## Work Innovation Lab

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# Innovation at a crossroads

Australian businesses—with a workforce renowned for its skill, diversity, and innovative spirit—have been known for punching above their weight on the world stage. Today, more than one-third (36%) of Australian workers say that Australia is the most innovative country in the world.

Yet Australian businesses are at a crossroads. Amidst shifts to and from flexible work, market fluctuations, and evolving consumer expectations, leaders must make critical decisions that will define the trajectory of their organisations for years to come.



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Australian businesses have historically been some of the most innovative in the world. Yet, today, many of their workplace practices are decades-old. Our latest research offers strategic guidance for how to update these outdated practices for the next era of work.

Dr. Rebecca Hinds, Head of Asana's Work Innovation Lab

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Our **State of Work Innovation: Australia 2024** report is powered by a comprehensive survey of 2,015 Australian and 2,010 US knowledge workers, along with insights from leading experts at [Asana's Work Innovation Lab](#) and its research partners. The report delves into four key inefficiencies that are not just decelerating innovation but actively obstructing it:

01

## Broken meetings

Time and resources wasted in unproductive meetings.

02

## Outdated collaboration practices

Inefficient collaboration and communication methods.

03

## Fragmented technology

Disjointed use of technology and tools.

04

## Lack of AI fundamentals

Slow development of AI fundamentals, despite significant workforce enthusiasm.

After unpacking these pivotal challenges, we offer strategic guidance on how Australian businesses can navigate—and conquer—them.



# Broken meetings

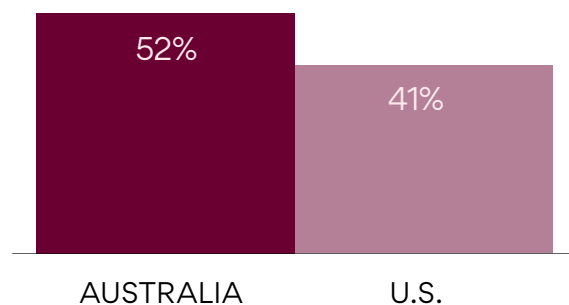
Meetings are organised to help move work forward, to collaborate and come to decisions. Yet our research uncovered an unfortunate truth: in Australian workplaces today, meetings are a masterclass in inefficiency and a significant drain on both productivity and morale—so much so that we found that **Australian managers and individual contributors dread about two-thirds of their meetings**. Meetings are seen as an ineffective use of time—like being stuck on a hamster wheel, running fast and getting nowhere.

In Australia, meetings are contributing to unmanageable workloads at a rate double that in the US.

The crux of the issue is that so many meetings lack a clear purpose, relevance, and actionable outcomes, and are overrun with aimless chatter.

52%

of Australian workers say their workload is unmanageable enough that they've needed to take a day off at least once a month for the past six months.



# Top drivers of ineffective meetings for Australian workers

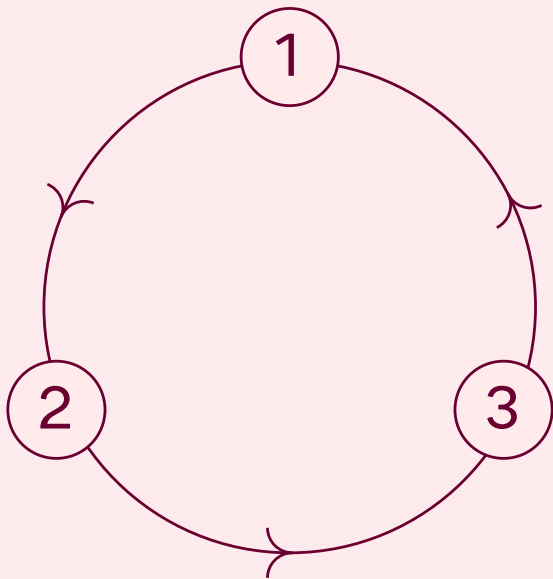


Executives are at the epicentre of this storm—squandering up to 9 hours a week in these black holes of productivity, meaning they lose more than an entire workday every week due to ineffective meetings. This isn't just about lost time; it's about the lost opportunity for meaningful work and innovation.

**Executives waste 9 hours per week due to unproductive meetings—more than an entire workday each week**



# How to repair broken meetings



1

## Establish clear objectives for every meeting

Every meeting should have a clear purpose that's communicated to all participants well in advance. If the purpose can't be succinctly articulated, cancel the meeting.

2

## Quantify meeting efficacy

Adopt a systematic approach to evaluating meetings via feedback mechanisms, like surveys, productivity metrics, or interviews. This isn't just about identifying time sinks; it's about creating a meeting culture where meetings are anticipated for their value rather than dreaded for their inefficiency.

3

## Conduct a Meeting Doomsday

Consider launching a "Meeting Doomsday," where employees are instructed to delete all their recurring meetings for 48 hours. This calendar cleanse jolts organisations out of inertia and motivates workers to rebuild a meeting schedule that maximises their time and productivity.



# Outdated collaboration practices

In the wake of the pandemic, Australian businesses eagerly accumulated an array of collaboration tools. Yet they were so eager to help teams sustain connectivity that they didn't do enough to update their collaboration practices. This led to a fragmentation in how these tools are used across teams, creating inconsistencies and disconnects.

Alarming, 40% of Australian workers say that lack of clarity in roles, responsibilities, or task ownership is one of their top three challenges in collaborating with colleagues.

Additionally, with the shift to more distributed work, Australian businesses have attempted to balance real-time (synchronous) and delayed (asynchronous) communication. This has led to a complicated hybrid model: about half of the Australian workforce (51%) is navigating an environment with an equal mix of synchronous and asynchronous communication methods—

making it easier than ever for information to slip through the cracks and for work to veer off course.

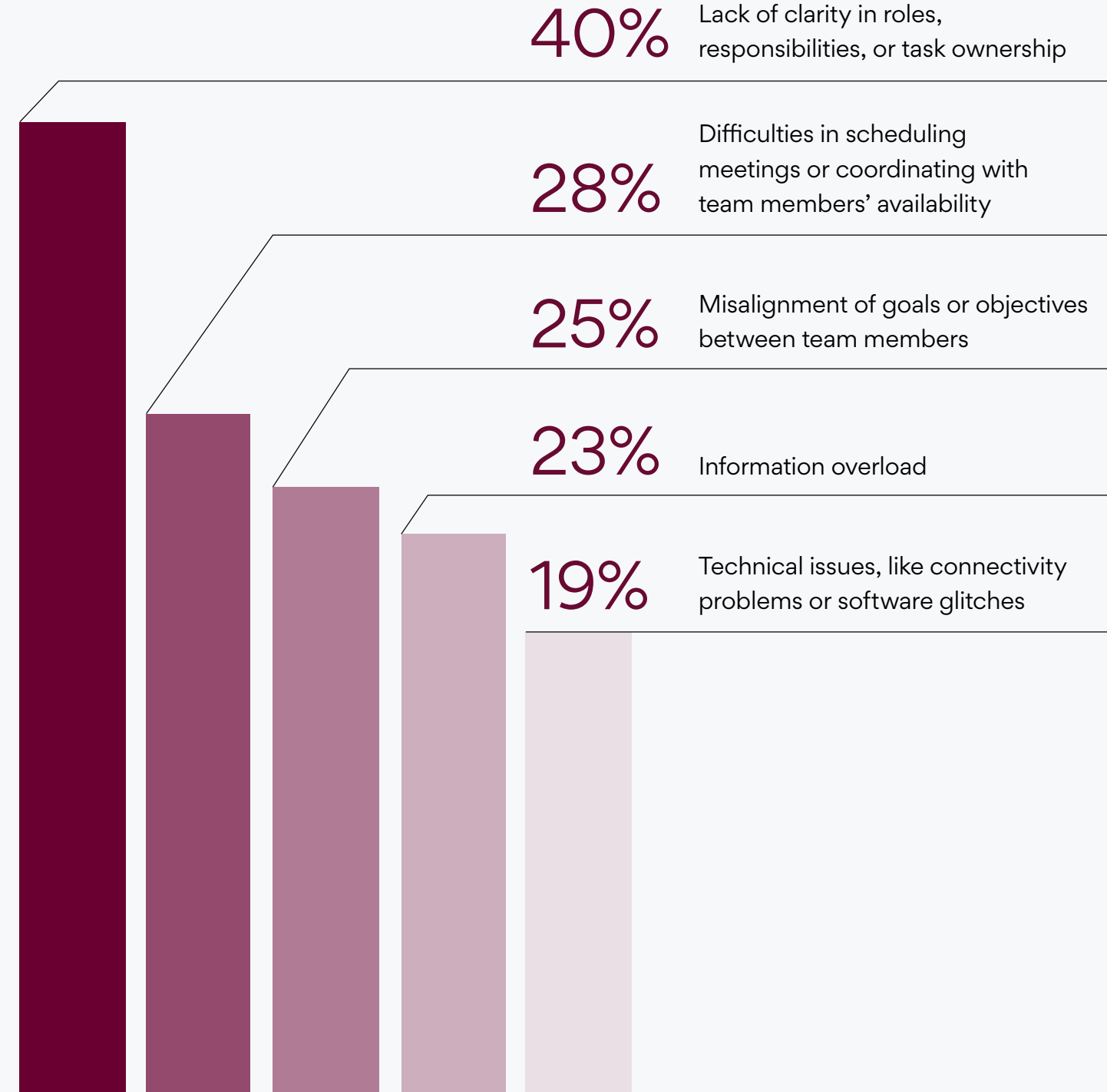
Nearly all Australian workers (95%) believe their organisations need to innovate how they communicate and collaborate. Addressing this is imperative for any organisation aiming to thrive in today's dynamic business environment.

# 95%

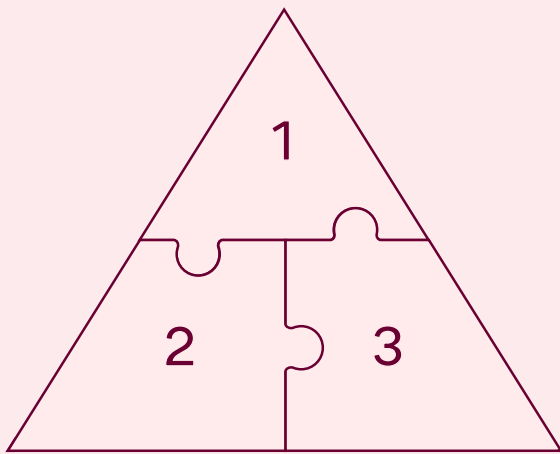
of Australian workers believe their organisations need to innovate how they communicate and collaborate



# Top challenges that Australian workers face when collaborating



# How to update collaboration and communication for today's dynamic work environment



1

## Prioritise role clarity

Start with crystal-clear definitions of each team member's roles and responsibilities. Use tools like Areas of Responsibility (AoRs) and frameworks such as RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) to delineate responsibilities clearly. Work management platforms can also enhance role clarity by directly linking work to individuals and teams and ensuring everyone knows their part.

3

## Establish and document collaboration norms

Establish clear guidelines on using synchronous (e.g., meetings, phone calls) versus asynchronous (e.g., emails, work management tools) communication methods. Document these guidelines to ensure that everyone knows the best way to communicate and which technology to use for which type of work. This makes collaboration more purposeful, less time-consuming, and ensures everyone has the information they need to work with one another.

2

## Invest in collaborative intelligence

Embrace technologies that deliver insights into how your team collaborates, identifying both strengths and areas that need improvement. Tools that analyse collaboration patterns—like the [Work Innovation Score](#)—can reveal bottlenecks and highlight efficient practices, guiding you toward better ways of collaborating.

# Fragmented and fatiguing technology

The rapid pace of technological change presents a significant challenge for Australian businesses, highlighted by a landscape of fragmentation. Too many teams operate in silos, each with their own preferred tools. When companies lack a centralised system for managing work, cross-functional initiatives are plagued with inefficiencies, limiting an organisation's ability to hit its key objectives.

It's clear that the current state of digital infrastructure in Australian businesses is not just inadequate; it's a significant impediment to innovation. Technology is so broken that it's causing digital exhaustion.

This issue is compounded by employees' perceptions that their organisational leaders are not doing enough to mitigate this exhaustion, with 55% of workers saying that their organisational leaders don't do enough to help employees reduce digital exhaustion.

The time loss is staggering. Australian workers **waste half their days (4 hours per day) trying to regain focus lost due to broken collaboration tools, significantly higher than US workers.**

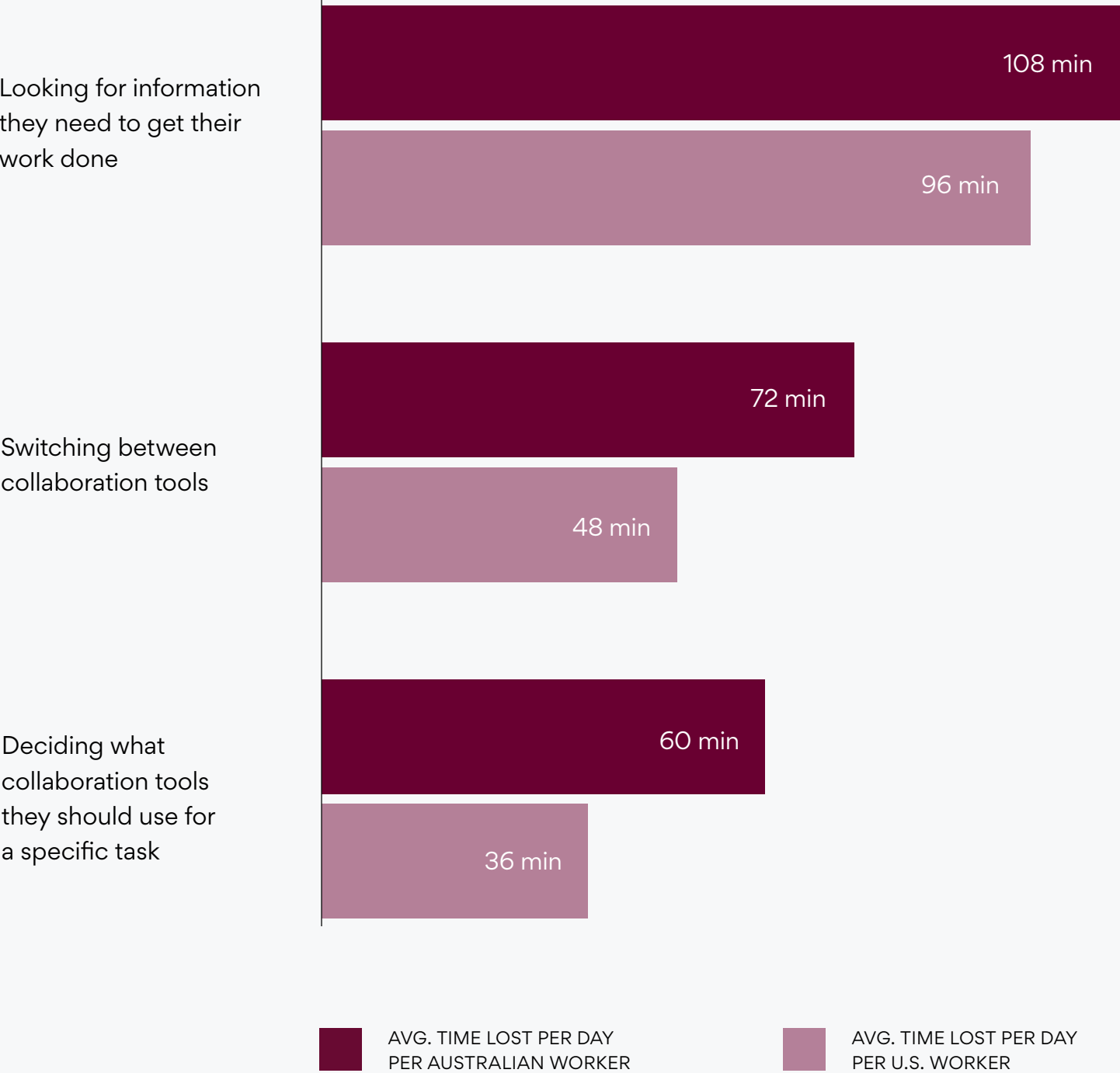
95%

of Australian workers say their organisation's technology and tools are in need of innovation

89%

of Australian workers experience digital exhaustion from using collaboration technologies

# Time wasted due to broken collaboration tools for Australian workers



# How to overcome digital clutter and fragmented tech stacks

1

## Conduct a tool audit

You need to understand the breadth and depth of your current technology landscape. A thorough tool audit helps identify redundancies, gaps, and opportunities for optimisation. You should evaluate tools based on several key factors to optimise productivity, including how often the technology is being used and by whom and the impact the tool has on your company objectives.

2

## Develop an organisation-wide standard tech stack

Australian workers are craving standardisation of technology. Sixty-eight percent of Australian workers say they prefer that everyone in their organisation use the same set of collaboration tools. Developing a standard tech stack not only facilitates more efficient collaboration but also streamlines training, cuts costs, and reduces the overwhelm associated with having too many tools.

3

## Integrate to simplify

An effective tech stack is not just smaller; it's smarter. Focus on how well your tools integrate with each other. By enhancing connectivity through integrations, you can reduce the need to constantly switch between applications, creating a more unified and efficient digital workspace.

# 68%

of Australian workers say they prefer that everyone in their organisation use the same set of collaboration tools



# Lack of AI fundamentals despite enthusiasm

There's a lot of optimism surrounding AI in the Australian workplace and its potential to enhance work. This is especially true among Australian executives, 63% of whom are enthusiastic about AI.

**Australian executives are even more enthusiastic about AI than their U.S. counterparts. They are:**

More enthusiastic about employees using AI at work (63% versus 52%).

More likely to use AI on a weekly basis (75% versus 68%).

More likely to say their organisation has a dedicated budget for AI-specific investments (24% versus 18%).

## Comparing AI excitement:

% of Australia versus U.S. executives who say the following is true

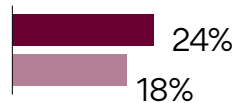
THEY ARE ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT USING AI AT WORK



THEY USE AI ON A WEEKLY BASIS



THEIR ORGANISATION HAS A DEDICATED BUDGET FOR AI INVESTMENTS



AUSTRALIAN EXECUTIVES

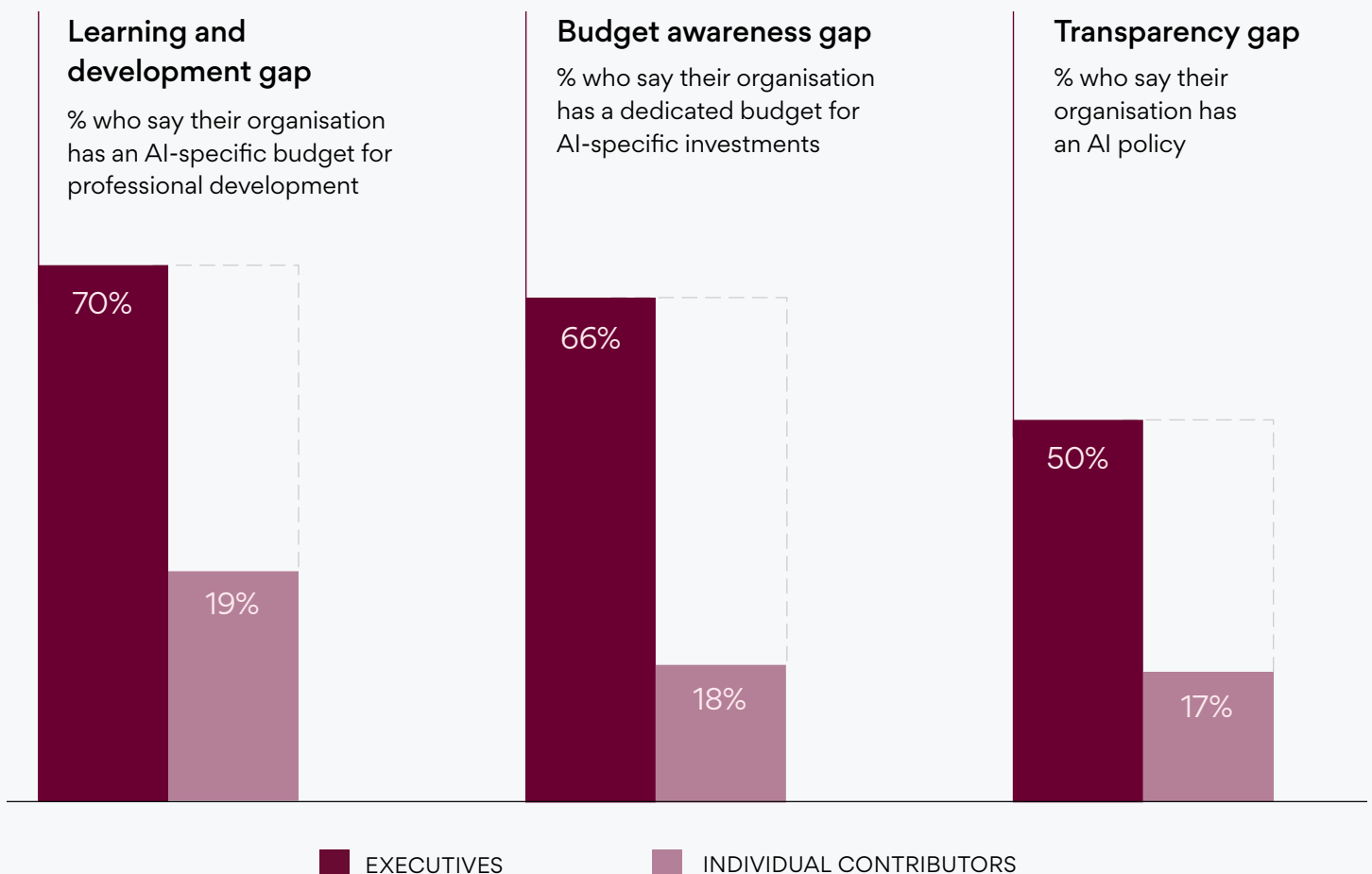
U.S. EXECUTIVES

Despite this excitement and optimism, some of the fundamentals around AI are lacking. In particular, our research finds disconnects between executives' perceptions of AI adoption and the perceptions of individual contributors. Executives are much more likely than individual contributors to say their organisation has an AI

policy, an AI investment budget, and an AI-specific professional development budget.

To ensure that organisations get the most out of the promise of AI, it's crucial that employees are taken along on the journey and know the resources available to support their AI adoption.

# Gaps in AI adoption: Australia executives versus individual contributors





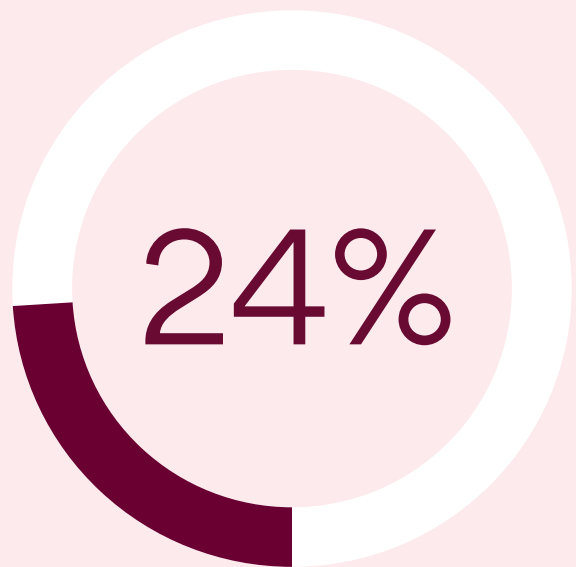
# How to develop the right foundations and fundamentals for AI

## 1 Champion ethical AI

Less than one-quarter (24%) of Australian knowledge workers say their organisation has guidelines around the acceptable use of generative AI. You need to set clear principles and values that guide AI deployment, ensuring it's used responsibly and fostering transparency and trust.

## 2 Select AI vendors carefully

Partner with AI vendors who are committed to strict ethical principles. This will help ensure that AI solutions are developed and implemented in ways that are ethical, transparent, and aligned with your organisation's norms and values.



**Less than one-quarter of Australian knowledge workers say their organisation has guidelines around the acceptable use of generative AI**

### 3 **Develop transparent communications and policies**

Develop and communicate clear policies on AI use within your organisation. This involves not just drafting policies but ensuring they are accessible, understandable, and relevant to all employees. This will also help address concerns employees have about AI impacting their roles, creating an atmosphere of optimism and enthusiasm instead.

### 4 **Invest in AI literacy**

Broaden AI understanding across your organisation through targeted education programs. Workshops, seminars, and practical projects can equip employees with the knowledge they need to effectively engage with AI technologies, enhancing overall AI fluency.

### 5 **Lead by example**

Leaders must not only advocate for AI but also demonstrate its application in strategic decision-making and daily operations. By actively using AI in strategic decisions and everyday operations, leaders can demonstrate the practical benefits of AI, encouraging its adoption and integration across the organisation.

## CONCLUSION

# Leading innovation from the front: A blueprint for Australian business leaders

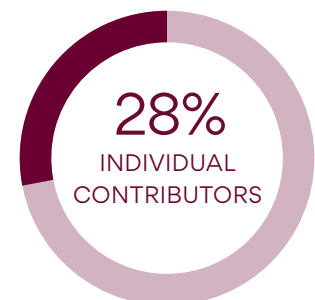
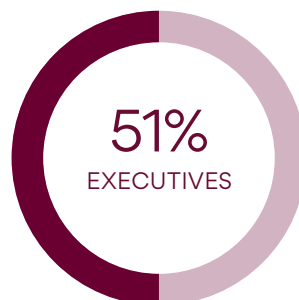
Our State of Work Innovation: Australia 2024 report illuminates the pressing challenges and unique opportunities Australian businesses encounter in today's dynamic environment. It's clear: the path to innovation for leaders is not paved with incremental changes or lukewarm efforts. Individual contributors, especially, are calling for more innovation leadership.

Innovation leadership requires more than foresight; it demands action, resilience, and an audacious spirit to challenge the status quo and

outdated ways of work. It's about reimagining broken meeting cultures, overhauling your collaboration practices, prioritising connected technologies, and investing in AI change management.

By championing these transformative actions, Australian business leaders have the opportunity not only to inject innovation into Australian businesses but also to send reverberations across the global stage.

**% of Australian workers who say Australia is the most innovative country in the world**



# Research methodology

This research from Asana's Work Innovation Lab surveyed 2,015 professionals in Australia and 2,010 professionals in the United States in February 2024. The survey was administered via Qualtrics and did not target Asana customers or employees. Respondents were all employed knowledge workers. Leaders included in this research were defined as Director role levels and above.

# More top insights for Australian leaders

Learn about the Work Innovation Lab at [workinnovationlab.com](https://workinnovationlab.com)

Read our other reports designed to help leaders lead their organizations through the next era of work.

## The State of AI at Work

Uncover actionable insights you can implement today to help your organization better understand and use AI.

[Download report](#)

## The State of Collaboration Technology

Learn how to rid your organization of digital clutter and drive more impact.

[Download report](#)

## Fixing Meetings Playbook

Discover research-backed strategies to eliminate low-value meetings, and gain back time for the work that matters most.

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