The Future of Work:

Generative Artificial Intelligence Use, Employee Performance, and Employee Engagement

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What is the issue?

GenAI is rapidly becoming a day-to-day work tool, changing not only how employees complete tasks but also how they experience their jobs.

Why is it important?

GenAI use aligns with outcomes managers care about: higher employee job performance, job satisfaction, and work engagement. At the same time, adoption is uneven. Already high-performing and engaged employees are more likely to adopt and benefit from GenAI, which suggests a "virtuous cycle" for some and the risk of being left behind for others.

What can be done?

Employers need to carefully manage GenAI adoption because of its impact on employee engagement. Key initiatives should be to invest in reskilling/upskilling; actively address trust and psychological barriers so employees feel safe experimenting and learning; reinforce adoption through recognition; and measure not just tool uptake but downstream outcomes (efficiency, quality, engagement, and retention). In parallel, employers should mitigate predictable engagement risks such as job insecurity, lack of transparency/ accountability, and concerns about skill erosion.

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Executive Summary

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) uses machine-learning models trained on large amounts of data to create new content, such as text, images, or summaries, in response to prompts or instructions. Well-known examples of GenAI tools include ChatGPT by OpenAI, Claude by Anthropic, and Gemini by Google. GenAI is reshaping how employees work and how they feel about their work. Using data from a survey of 880 employees working across different industries, employers, and job types, and using research performed by others, we explore employees' use of GenAI, how they are using it, and what impact GenAI use has on their engagement at work and their work performance.

Summary of our findings:

- GenAI use has increased dramatically in 2025, compared to findings from other surveys in 2024.
- GenAI use is strongly associated with higher job performance, job satisfaction, and work engagement.
- Employees who report that their supervisors think positively about their reliance on GenAI are more likely to use GenAI.
- Employers who offer training/guidance on how to use GenAI encourage higher GenAI use among their employees and help their employees generate more productivity gains from GenAI use.

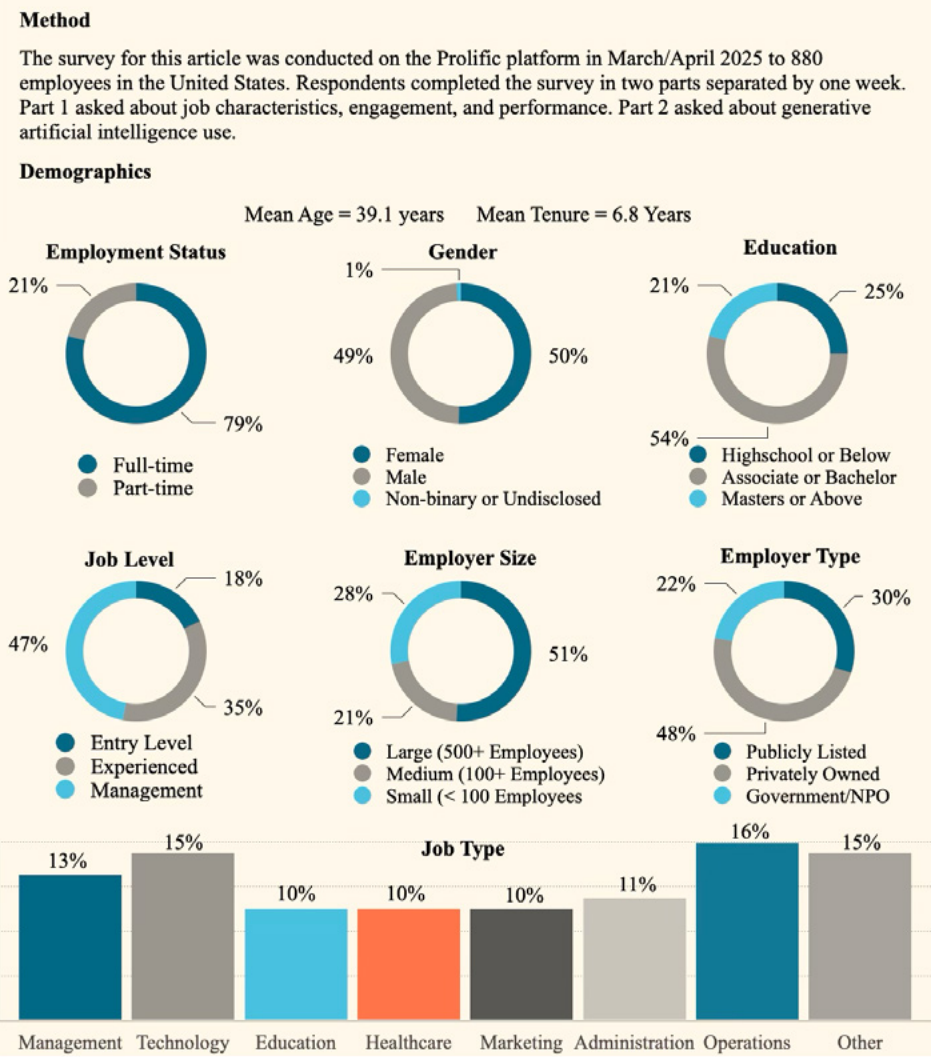
Our findings have important implications for employees and companies:

- Employees who are already high-performing and engaged are also the ones most likely to adopt GenAI and enjoy productivity gains, which suggests a "virtuous cycle" for some and the risk of being left behind for others. As GenAI becomes a core workplace tool, leaders need to think strategically about how to manage its adoption and ensure broad-based gains in employee engagement and performance.
- We identify three risks GenAI adoption has on employee engagement:
    - Job uncertainty and fear of job loss
    - Opacity and accountability
    - Employee skill reduction
- We offer five strategies to boost GenAI adoption in a way that enhances employee engagement and performance:
    - Prioritize reskilling and upskilling
    - Adopt employee-centric GenAI design
    - Address psychological barriers and build trust
    - Reward and recognize GenAI training
    - Measure outcomes associated with GenAI training and GenAI use

Current State of GenAI Use

It is not an understatement to say that GenAI is profoundly reshaping how employees work. We surveyed 880 employees in the spring of 2025 using the Prolific platform to understand the impact this has on their engagement and performance.[1] Respondents completed a two-part survey related to their job performance, engagement, and GenAI use at work.

FIGURE 1 Survey Overview

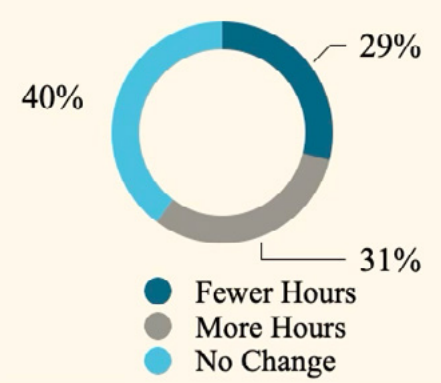


1 Part 1 of our survey asked about employer characteristics, job characteristics, work engagement, job satisfaction, self-reported work performance, and recent raises. Part 2 of our survey asked about AI use – whether the respondent is using AI tools for work, how often, for what purposes, and its perceived impact on work. We deliberately separated the two parts in time to reduce response bias and improve data quality.

Our survey across industries confirms that GenAI use has grown far beyond early adopters, and it is already influencing both how employees perform and how they feel about their jobs:

- **GenAI adoption rates are accelerating.** Seventy-six percent of employees reported using GenAI for work, more than double Gallup's 2024 estimate of 33 percent.[2] Nearly 60 percent use GenAI weekly, compared to Gallup's estimate of 10 percent just one year earlier.
- **Communication is the leading use case.** Most employees are using GenAI to draft emails, presentations, and reports (69 percent). Many also use it for research (42 percent), automation (38 percent), and data analysis (38 percent). More advanced applications such as decision support (26 percent) and customer service (29 percent) remain underutilized, suggesting room for growth as improvements in AI capabilities accelerate.
- **Demographics matter less than roles.** Age, gender, and education level show no significant association with GenAI use. Instead, usage is largely explained by industry and job type. Finance and information/communications lead adoption, while GenAI is more common among professionals in training, marketing/sales, and research roles. Surprisingly, use remains lower in accounting, legal, customer service, executive, and operations positions; these are sectors where productivity gains could be meaningful.
- **Perceptions are overwhelmingly positive.** Employees report that GenAI is helping them work more effectively and enjoyably:
    - Efficiency: 86 percent said GenAI improved their output, with half rating the improvement as moderate or significant.
    - Quality: 79 percent reported higher work quality; 43 percent said improvements were moderate or better.
    - Satisfaction: 63 percent noted greater job satisfaction.
    - Enjoyment: 55 percent said their work had become more enjoyable.
    - Time: Impacts on workload were mixed: only 29 percent reported fewer hours, 31 percent more hours, and 40 percent no change.

FIGURE 2 GenAI Impacts on Workload



2 Den Houer, K. (2024, October 8). *AI in the workplace: Answering 3 big questions*. Gallup Workplace. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/651203/workplace-answering-big-questions.aspx

Our survey findings are consistent with broader research findings that highlight the speed and scale of GenAI adoption worldwide:

- **Global adoption is surging.** A recent *Harvard Business Review* article reports that GenAI adoption has more than doubled in the past two years, with the market expected to grow about 40 percent annually through 2030.[3] Nearly three-quarters of business leaders believe GenAI gives teams a competitive advantage, while a similar proportion fear being left behind without it. Beyond productivity, leaders see GenAI as enhancing the employee experience by boosting their efficiency, engagement, and customer service.
- **Business adoption in Canada is understated and rising quickly.** Statistics Canada reported only 12 percent of Canadian businesses used GenAI in the 12 months prior to Q2 2025, up from 6 percent in Q2 2024. This number is likely dramatically understated as "shadow" GenAI use is widespread. An Ipsos poll conducted in the summer of 2025 found that 34 percent of employed Canadians use AI at work without their employer's awareness; among Generation Z employees, this figure jumps to 48 percent.[4]
- **Management-level employees are ahead in adoption.** Our survey findings indicate that management-level employees, encompassing lower to upper management, are more likely to use AI tools for work (88 percent) than non-management employees (65 percent). In contrast, according to McKinsey & Company, frontline adoption is three times higher than C-suite estimates.[5] The biggest barrier to scaling GenAI may not necessarily be employee readiness but C-suite hesitancy and employees having sufficient worktime, training, and incentives to learn these new tools. While 92 percent of companies plan to increase GenAI investments, only 1 percent believe they have reached true "GenAI maturity," where the technology is fully embedded in workflows.
- **The talent pool is shifting.** McKinsey & Company notes that only 12 percent of GenAI users are in technical roles.[6] The vast majority are non-technical professionals, including middle managers and healthcare workers, who use GenAI for routine tasks. Importantly, GenAI "power users" are at higher risk of leaving their

3 Harvard Business Review Analytic Services. (2024). *Artificial intelligence at work: Enhancing employee engagement and business success*. https://hbr.org/sponsored/2024/01/artificial-intelligence-at-work-enhancing-employee-engagement-and-business-success

4 Ipsos. (2025). *Nine in ten (87%) Canadians are comfortable using technology, but familiarity with AI remains limited*. https://www.ipsos.com/en-ca/nine-ten-87-canadians-are-comfortable-using-technology-familiarity-ai-remains-limited

5 McKinsey & Company. (2025). *Superagency in the workplace: Empowering people to unlock AI's full potential*. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/tech-and-ai/our-insights/superagency-in-the-workplace-empowering-people-to-unlock-ais-full-potential-at-work

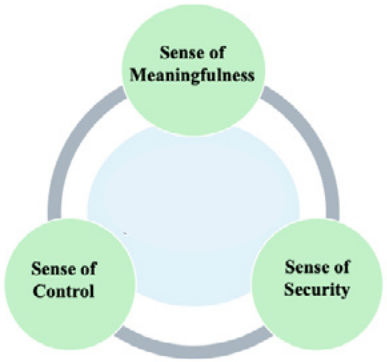
6 McKinsey & Company. (2024). *The human side of generative AI: Creating a path to productivity*. https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/the-human-side-of-generative-ai-creating-a-path-to-productivity

jobs, suggesting that relational and human-centred factors (meaningful work, caring leadership) that are central to employee engagement are becoming as critical as compensation levels.

Taken together, these findings point to a workforce that is not only adopting GenAI rapidly but also perceiving it as a net positive for both performance and well-being.

Employee Engagement: A Strategic Lever in Decline

FIGURE 3 Employee Engagement



Employee engagement is a proven driver of organizational performance. Gallup defines engagement as "the involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work and workplace," emphasizing that engaged employees are psychologically invested and consistently go beyond minimum expectations.[7] Academic research echoes this perspective, describing engagement as a fulfilling state marked by energy, enthusiasm, pride, and deep focus.[8] Engaged employees channel their mental, emotional, and physical resources into work they find meaningful, creating a sense of connection and purpose.

The well-established benefits of engagement are both individual and organizational. At the individual level, engaged employees put in greater effort, persist through challenges, and align closely with organizational goals – translating into higher performance and lower turnover.[9] At the organizational level, Gallup finds that companies with highly engaged workforces achieve 23 percent greater profitability, 18 percent higher productivity, and significantly lower absenteeism, turnover, and safety incidents.[10] These findings are reinforced by field studies: team-based recognition programs, for example, have

7 Gallup Workplace. (2025). *What is employee engagement, and how do you improve it?* https://www.gallup.com/workplace/285674/improve-employee-engagement-workplace.aspx?

8 Schaufeli, W. B., & Bakker, A. B. (2004). Job demands, job resources, and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, *25*(3): 293–315. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.248

9 Christian, M. S., et al. (2011). Work engagement: A quantitative review and test of its relations with task and contextual performance. *Personnel Psychology*, *64*(1): 89–136. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2010.01203.x; Rich, B. L., et al. (2010). Job engagement: Antecedents and effects on job performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, *53*(3): 617–635. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2010.51468988

10 Gallup Workplace. (2025). *What is employee engagement, and how do you improve it?*

boosted employee engagement and, consequently, customer satisfaction in industries as diverse as professional services and quick-service restaurants.[11]

Yet while the value of engagement is well established, engagement itself is slipping in North America. Gallup reports that engagement has fallen to a 10-year low, with only 31 percent of U.S./Canadian employees engaged and 17 percent actively disengaged.[12] Even so, the regions of the U.S. and Canada have the highest level of employee engagement compared to other regions such as East Asia (18 percent) and Europe (13 percent). Of concern, Gallup finds that younger workers under 35 years of age and those in sectors like finance, insurance, transportation, technology, and professional services report the steepest declines. Employees cite unclear expectations, lack of development opportunities, and the absence of supportive managers as drivers of disengagement. Other surveys echo this trend: HR Executive describes an "engagement gap" linked to limited learning and development offerings,[13] while Fortune reports that nearly four in five employees feel disengaged, attributing it to low pay, misaligned values, and uncertainty about the future.[14]

Our survey findings challenge this widely held belief about declining employee engagement and individual factors that affect it. We measure employee engagement in our sample using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES 3-item scale).[15] The scale averages responses to three questions on a 0 (Never) to 6 (Always) scale. Average engagement in our sample is 4.74.

FIGURE 4 Measuring Employee Engagement

4.36	4.72	5.15	4.74
Q1: At work, I am bursting with energy	Q2: I am enthusiastic about my job	Q3: I am immersed in my work	Mean Employee Engagement

11 Park, T. Y., & Shaw, J. D. (2013). Turnover rates and organizational performance: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *98*(2): 268. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0030723; Presslee, A., et al. (2023). Small sample field study: The effects of team-based recognition on employee engagement and effort. *Management Accounting Research*, *59*, 100829. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mar.2022.100829

12 Harter, J. (2025, January 14). *U.S. employee engagement sinks to 10-year low*. Gallup Workplace. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/654911/employee-engagement-sinks-year-low.aspx

13 Colletta, J. (2025, December 1). *Frontline burnout, turnover and the technology gap HR must address*. HR Executive. https://hrexecutive.com/frontline-burnout-turnover-and-the-technology-gap-hr-must-address/

14 Morse, B. (2025, February 18). *"The great detachment" has 79% of employees disengaged at work*. Fortune. https://fortune.com/2025/02/18/the-great-detachment-employees-disengaged-work-human-resources-survey/

15 Schaufeli, W. B., et al. (2019). An ultra-short measure for work engagement. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, *35*(4): 577–591. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19020890

While age is positively correlated with engagement in our sample, full regression that tests associations between several individual differences, job-related factors, and engagement, indicates that individual demographic differences such as age, gender, and education are unassociated with engagement. Instead, engagement is negatively associated with job-level factors such as professionals, administrative jobs, customer-facing jobs, and full-time employment. Engagement is positively associated with research jobs and higher-level positions. Our findings suggest those reported by Gallup earlier are incomplete: engagement is primarily explained by industry, position, and job nature as opposed to individual differences and demographics.

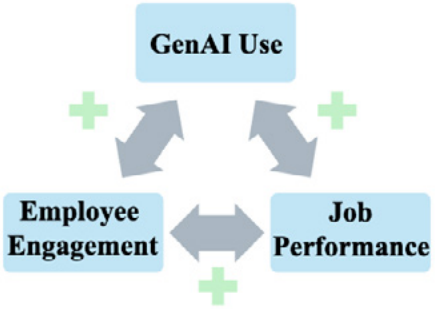
In 2019, Schaufeli et al. tested the same questions in five non-North American countries: Netherlands, Japan, Finland, Spain, and Belgium/Flanders.[16] Mean engagement in their study ranges from a high of 4.60 in Finland to a low of 2.86 in Japan.

The combination of two realities – engagement's powerful impact on organizational outcomes, and an ongoing debate over its decline – creates both risk and opportunity for Canadian organizations. As we will show in the following sections, the way organizations adopt and manage GenAI will be critical not just for productivity but also for how employees experience their work. Done well, GenAI integration can be a tool to re-energize and re-engage the workforce; done poorly, it risks widening the engagement gap.

GenAI and Engagement

Our survey findings reveal a close and reinforcing link between GenAI use, employee engagement, and performance. Rather than being a neutral tool, GenAI appears to contribute to a virtuous cycle where high-performing, engaged employees use GenAI more frequently, and that use further improves their performance and enjoyment at work:

FIGURE 5 The Virtuous Cycle



- **The virtuous cycle.** Employees who report greater GenAI use are also those with higher job performance, job satisfaction, and work engagement. Eighty-four percent of employees in the top quartile of job performance report using AI for work, in contrast to 66 percent of employees in the bottom quartile of job performance who report using AI for work. Similarly, 81 percent of employees in the top quartile of work engagement report using AI for work, in contrast to 63 percent of employees in the bottom quartile of work engagement who report using AI for work. This creates a positive reinforcing loop: high performers use GenAI to en-

16 Schaufeli et al. (2019). *An ultra-short measure for work engagement*

hance their work, which boosts their engagement and satisfaction, encouraging even more GenAI use. The flip side is concerning for employees who are already struggling – those with lower performance and lower engagement – where they are less likely to use GenAI and may miss out on productivity gains, deepening the divide between high and low performers.

- **Supervisors matter.** Forty-eight percent of employees say their supervisor views reliance on GenAI positively, of which only 12 percent say their supervisor views AI reliance very positively. Yet employees who perceive their supervisors as supportive of AI use are significantly more likely to adopt it themselves. Indeed, 37 percent of employees report AI use for work when supervisors view AI reliance very negatively, compared to 96 percent when supervisors view AI reliance very positively. Manager encouragement is therefore a critical lever for broader and more equitable adoption.
- **Training is a missing link.** Just 30 percent of employees report that their employer has provided at least a moderate level of training or guidance on how to use GenAI at work, and 50 percent of employees report that their employer has provided no training at all. Where training is provided, adoption is higher – and the efficiency and quality benefits of GenAI are amplified. When employers offer no training at all, 58 percent of employees report AI use. In contrast, 94 percent of employees report AI use when their employers offer AI training. This reinforces the importance of structured, organization-led training as part of GenAI integration.

GenAI has the potential to humanize work and strengthen engagement if adopted strategically.[17] By automating up to 30 percent of business activities by 2030, GenAI can shift employees' time towards cognitive, creative, and collaborative work – allowing them to focus on the human elements of their roles. Employees themselves recognize the rising importance of social and emotional skills in a GenAI-enabled workplace. HR Curator highlights opportunities for GenAI to streamline communication, eliminate repetitive work, enhance onboarding, and provide real-time feedback – all of which can make work more engaging if well executed.[18] Our survey findings are consistent with this broader research that highlights the importance of companies investing in training their employees on how to use GenAI at their work. In addition, supervisors' positive attitudes towards AI reliance, reflected through encouragement of AI use during performance evaluation/feedback and coaching, and the provision of AI resources/training are essential in promoting GenAI use among employees.

It is important that research continues to help determine the extent to which GenAI use increases job performance and satisfaction, and the extent to which better-performing/more satisfied employees lead to greater GenAI use.

17 Harvard Business Review Analytic Services. (2024). *Artificial intelligence at work*.

18 Kamil, T. (2024, February 1). *Impact of GenAI on employee engagement and retention*. HR Curator. https://hrcurator.com/2024/02/01/impact-of-genai-on-employee-engagement-and-retention/

GenAI Adoption Risks

As the prominent emerging technology researcher Dr. Theophanis Stratopoulous is known to have said, "We don't let planes fly without rigorous safety standards. We don't build bridges without engineering codes. Why should AI – a technology with potentially existential consequence – be any different?" When it comes to employee engagement, it is essential that firms balance the potential benefits of GenAI adoption with the considerable risks associated with technology, such as:

- **Uncertainty and fear of job loss.** When employees cannot predict how AI will change their roles, evaluation, or workplace, they can fill the gap with worst-case assumptions about devaluation of their expertise and their eventual replacement. A recent report from KPMG shows that 47 percent of employees expect GenAI to reduce job security, 41 percent worry it will limit development opportunities, and 39 percent fear it will reduce social interaction at work.[19] A recent *Harvard Business Review* article highlights uncertainty and fear of job loss as quickly becoming employee engagement problems if leaders don't address them directly.[20] This is particularly true of entry-level workers where nearly half of them believe GenAI has reduced the value of their post-secondary education and will lead to workforce reduction. Indeed, Chen Deli, a senior researcher from China's AI firm DeepSeek, is sounding the alarm about the long-term risks associated with AI adoption, predicting that most jobs in the next 10 to 20 years will be eliminated.[21] This belief, regardless of its accuracy, can intensify job insecurity and lead to employee disengagement.
- **Opacity and accountability.** If employees don't understand what GenAI influences and how it works, they may perceive GenAI as arbitrary or unsafe –especially for high-stakes managerial decisions around performance evaluation, scheduling, hiring, and promotions. Given such employee skepticism, it is essential that firms clarify boundaries and accountability in GenAI-supported decisions.[22] Indeed, the persistent GenAI risks that drive such skepticism (including black-box behaviour, security concerns, and misuse) can spill over into lower trust in management and lower willingness to engage in work. Thus, the dramatic change in job design and the potential lack of accountability around GenAI can reduce the meaningfulness

19 KPMG. (n.d.). *Generative AI has an increasing effect on the workforce and productivity*. Accessed January 19, 2026, https://kpmg.com/us/en/media/news/kpmg-genai-workforce-survey.html

20 Li, J., et al. (2025, November 11). Overcoming the organizational barriers to AI adoption. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2025/11/overcoming-the-organizational-barriers-to-ai-adoption?

21 Ming, L. (2025, November 10). DeepSeek researcher warns AI could wipe out jobs in 10 years – and tech companies should be "guardians of humanity." *Business Insider*. https://www.businessinsider.com/deepseek-researcher-chen-deli-china-jobs-ai-risk-tech-2025-11?op=1

22 Reichheld, A., et al. (2025, November 7). Workers don't trust AI: Here's how companies can change that. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2025/11/workers-dont-trust-ai-heres-how-companies-can-change-that?

and control employees have over their work, resulting in their disengagement.

- **Skill reduction.** Even when GenAI boosts efficiency and productivity, employees may worry that they are losing their craft, expertise, or distinctiveness – especially if GenAI becomes the default "answer engine." From a neuroscience lens, early evidence shows that working with GenAI can come with cognitive and attentional tradeoffs, raising concerns about what employees may lose as work becomes increasingly AI-mediated.[23] Emerging research suggests reliance on GenAI may erode the very higher-level cognitive skills that organizations need most. The MIT Media Lab project "Your Brain on ChatGPT" finds early evidence that frequent AI use can reduce deliberate critical thinking and problem-solving capacity.[24] Specifically, the authors find evidence that greater GenAI use decreased cognitive engagement, reduced memory, homogeneity in thought, and skill atrophy. Related research on knowledge workers offers similar concerns about deskilling and dehumanization as GenAI becomes embedded in everyday workflows, negatively impacting perceived competence and meaning at work.[25] By negatively impacting employees' skills and the quality of their work, GenAI can reduce the sense of control and meaningfulness employees get from working, which can lead to disengagement.

In addition to the calls for technology companies to take a proactive approach in addressing these risks around employee engagement, it is essential for business leaders to take responsibility for employee well-being in this period of GenAI adoption because employees are essential for driving firm value and executing firm strategy.

Five Practical Strategies to Boost Effective Employee GenAI Adoption

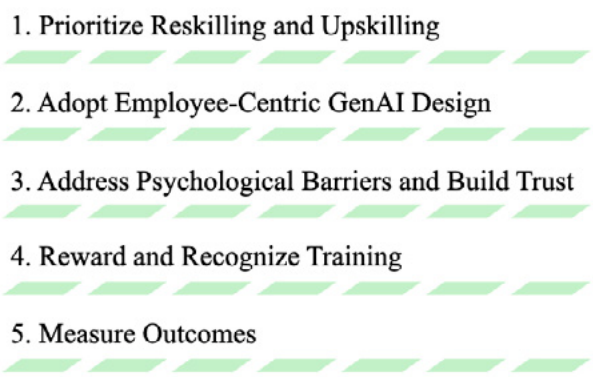
While GenAI adoption is spreading rapidly, the real performance gains come only when employees feel capable, confident, and supported in using these tools. Our survey, combined with our reading of the broader research, highlight several actionable strategies that organizations can use to boost adoption while strengthening employee engagement.

23 Rock, D. (2025, December 1). What's lost when we work with AI, according to neuroscience. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2025/12/whats-lost-when-we-work-with-ai-according-to-neuroscience?

24 Kosmyna, N., et al. (2025, June 10). Your brain on ChatGPT: Accumulation of cognitive debt when using an AI assistant for essay writing task. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2506.08872*, *4*. https://doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2506.08872

25 Lee, H. P., et al. (2025, April). The impact of generative AI on critical thinking: Self-reported reductions in cognitive effort and confidence effects from a survey of knowledge workers. In *CHI '25: Proceedings of the 2025 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems* (April 26–May 1): 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1145/3706598.3713778

FIGURE 6 Boosting Effective GenAI Adoption



1. Prioritize reskilling and upskilling as core business imperatives. Reskilling cannot be treated as a side project. Organizations must link GenAI capability-building directly to business goals and performance metrics. Research shows that the attitudes of supervising managers towards AI training strongly influence employee adoption and productivity.[26] Our survey finds consistent results that greater AI use at work is associated with more positive supervisor attitudes towards AI reliance at work and more employer-provided training. Our survey revealed that management-level employees are more likely to use GenAI than non-management employees – signalling future positive trends of GenAI adoption among non-management employees.

Companies like CVS and Ericsson embed reskilling outcomes into executive KPIs and make talent development central to leadership promotion. Netflix celebrates itself as a great company to have "on your resume," encouraging managers to release rather than hoard talent. For Canadian firms, this means every manager, not just HR, must be accountable for workforce development, including AI skills.

2. Adopt an employee-centric GenAI upskilling design. Upskilling programs work best when employees are co-creators, not passive recipients. Communicate clearly why GenAI adoption matters and involve employees in co-designing solutions.[27] This builds ownership, reduces fear, and fosters trust; all of which are shown to build employee engagement.

Forward-looking firms provide transparent career pathways tied to reskilling, such as AI-enabled internal talent marketplaces.[28] Training should emphasize creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking – skills GenAI enhances rather than replaces.[29]

3. Address psychological barriers and build trust. Even when training is available, employees may hesitate to embrace GenAI due to concerns about transparency, trust, job security, and skill erosion. Employers should:

- Provide clear, comparative explanations of how GenAI tools work and how decisions are made.

26 Tamayo, J., et al. (2023, September-October). Reskilling in the age of AI. *Harvard Business Review*. https://hbr.org/2023/09/reskilling-in-the-age-of-ai

27 DeFreitas, J. (2025 January-February). Why people resist embracing AI. *Harvard Business Review.* https://hbr.org/2025/01/why-people-resist-embracing-ai

28 Tamayo, J. et al. (2023, September-October). Reskilling the age of AI.

29 McKinsey & Company. (2024). *The human side of generative AI.*

- Position GenAI as a supportive assistant, not a replacement for human judgement.
- Guard against overreliance by designing workflows that preserve critical thinking and problem-solving.
- Selectively "humanize" GenAI (e.g., voice assistants, names) to make it more approachable where appropriate.

McKinsey & Company stress that psychological safety is crucial during role changes: employees must feel they can experiment, fail, and learn without penalty.[30] Moreover, GenAI-proficient employees report being motivated less by pay than by flexibility, belonging, and well-being. Companies that respond to these motivators will be better positioned to attract and retain AI talent.

4. Pair GenAI training with rewards and recognition. Acknowledge employees who model effective GenAI training and use to both to reinforce behaviour and to normalize adoption. Employees are more likely to adopt new practices when they are recognized and rewarded for applying what they have learned. This builds both confidence and motivation, and signals that leadership values the effort required to integrate GenAI into daily work.

- Research in management accounting and HR shows that recognition (whether from managers or peers) reinforces desired behaviours and accelerates habit formation. Employees who receive timely feedback and acknowledgement are more likely to continue experimenting with GenAI tools and refining their use.
- Many employees express interest in learning GenAI but hesitate to integrate it into real work. Recognition provides the social and psychological incentive to close that gap.
- By celebrating effective GenAI use, organizations send a clear message that experimentation and innovation are valued. This helps normalize adoption and reduce stigma or fear of "doing it wrong."

Driving AI Adoption through "Recognition Moments"

Deloitte has highlighted the role of "recognition moments" in driving technology adoption. When teams showcased successful applications of new digital tools, leaders publicly celebrated those achievements, encouraging broader uptake across the firm. Whether through formal rewards (badges, certificates, career opportunities) or informal praise, acknowledging employees who model effective GenAI use creates a powerful incentive for others to follow suit.

Source: Dragon, L. (2025, July 22). *Where is the value of AI in M&A*. Deloitte. https://www.deloitte.com/cz-sk/en/services/consulting/blogs/where-is-the-value-of-AI-in-MA-why-multi-agent-systems-needs-modern-data-architecture.html

30 McKinsey & Company. (2024). *The human side of generative AI.*

5. Measure outcomes associated with GenAI training and GenAI use. Track not only adoption rates but also impacts on efficiency, engagement, and turnover. Use these metrics to refine programs continuously. Rolling out GenAI without measuring its impact is like launching a new product without analyzing sales. Adoption rates matter, but what really drives organizational performance is whether GenAI adoption actually improves efficiency, engagement, and retention. It is essential to go beyond counting licences or logins, and track employee-level outcomes and organizational-level outcomes that show whether the technology is creating real value.

- Linking GenAI adoption to business outcomes ensures that investment decisions stay tied to strategy.
- Tracking employee-level engagement scores alongside AI usage reveals whether GenAI is energizing employees – or adding stress. This can prevent disengagement and "shadow AI" usage outside formal systems.
- Monitoring turnover, promotions, and role transitions among GenAI users shows whether certain groups are left behind. Since our survey suggests high-performing employees adopt GenAI faster, leaders must ensure that lagging employees are not further marginalized.

Tracking AI Proficiency

PwC's "AI Proficiency" tracking links employee participation in AI-learning modules to changes in project delivery times and client satisfaction scores. This ensures training programs are measured against both efficiency and quality outcomes. Metrics include project cycle time, number of hours saved, and changes in employee engagement scores from pulse surveys. This data is used to refine training modules and prioritize new AI use cases. Canadian banks (e.g., RBC and Scotiabank) have emphasized the need to measure AI trust and adoption readiness in regular employee surveys, tying outcomes back to both productivity and compliance.

Conclusion

GenAI is already reshaping how employees perform and how they experience work, but organizations will struggle to realize its benefits if adoption remains uneven and unmanaged. Business leaders should act now to scale reskilling, equip supervisors to actively support GenAI use, and build trust through clear accountability and psychological safety, all while mitigating job insecurity, opacity, and skill erosion. Finally, organizations should measure what matters beyond mere GenAI uptake – for example, work quality and efficiency, employee engagement and retention – and use those metrics to continuously refine GenAI integration, so that GenAI strengthens, and not fragments, their workforce.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies in the Manuscript-Preparation Process

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