Growth Performance

THE HUMAN ADVANTAGE PROGRAMME
ADOPTION

Leading AI Adoption Reference Card

A one-page reference for the manager's role in turning AI availability into embedded team practice. Use it alongside the Adoption Condition Diagnostic to focus your development.

The line leader is the decisive variable in AI adoption. Organisational factors such as culture and manager support account for roughly twice the AI impact of individual effort, yet most employees do not describe their manager as an AI champion (Microsoft, 2026). Most organisations experiment with AI; few see bottom-line impact, because adoption stalls at individual use rather than embedded team practice (McKinsey and Company, 2026).

THE SIX ADOPTION LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS

1. **Narrate the change credibly.** Give a clear, honest account of why AI matters, what it means for the work, and what is still unknown. Test it against sceptical questions before you deliver it.
2. **Model visible use.** Use AI openly in your own work and show your team how, including your failures. What they see you do matters more than what you say you support.
3. **Make experimentation safe.** Give explicit permission to try and to fail, and treat failed experiments as learning data rather than performance problems.
4. **Support individual adoption.** Locate each person on the readiness spectrum and tailor one-to-one support, including honest conversations about role uncertainty.
5. **Set team norms and guardrails.** Co-create explicit norms for responsible use covering data, quality, disclosure and escalation, then put them into visible use.
6. **Reinforce and remove barriers.** Recognise adoption behaviours, track real usage honestly, keep AI visible in routines, and escalate systemic blockers to your sponsor.

THE ADOPTION READINESS SPECTRUM

Adoption is uneven across a team. Locate each person, then tailor support rather than broadcasting one message (World Economic Forum, 2026).

- **A** **Enthusiast.** Already experimenting. Channel their energy into sharing and team norms; guard against reckless use.
- **B** **Pragmatist.** Willing if it helps the work. Show a concrete, relevant use case and a quick win.
- **C** **Cautious.** Interested but unsure. Offer structure, a safe first experiment, and a peer to learn alongside.
- **D** **Fearful.** Worried about role and job security. Address the fear directly and honestly before asking for adoption.
- **E** **Resistant.** Actively sceptical. Listen for the legitimate concern underneath, and avoid shaming the slow adopter.

MAKE EXPERIMENTATION SAFE

Every team experiment needs five things:

- [ ] A clear hypothesis (what we expect AI to improve)
- [ ] A chosen tool and a bounded task

- [ ] A success signal agreed in advance
- [ ] Explicit permission to fail without blame
- [ ] A whole-team debrief that captures the learning

> Psychological safety is the strongest predictor of a team's willingness to try and to learn (Edmondson, 1999). Respond to a failed experiment as learning data, not a performance problem, and interrupt quiet pressure on slower adopters.

RESPONSIBLE USE NORMS (CO-CREATE WITH THE TEAM)

- [ ] **Data.** What may and may not be entered into AI tools
- [ ] **Quality.** How AI output is verified before it is used
- [ ] **Disclosure.** When AI involvement is declared, and to whom
- [ ] **Escalation.** Who to raise concerns with, and how

EMBED AND SUSTAIN (FIRST 90 DAYS)

- [ ] Recognise adoption behaviours, not just adoption outcomes
- [ ] Track real usage honestly rather than assuming adoption is happening
- [ ] Keep AI visible in team routines and rituals
- [ ] Remove local blockers and escalate systemic ones with a specific ask

Based on: Microsoft (2026); McKinsey and Company (2026); DDI (2026); Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2026); World Economic Forum (2026); Edmondson (1999). Growth Performance © 2026.

Want help putting this into practice?

Growth Performance builds the human advantage in an AI-driven world, with people, teams and leaders.

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