



2024 GLOBAL AI WORKPLACE REPORT

# The new power of people + AI

Unlocking business growth, expanding  
human potential



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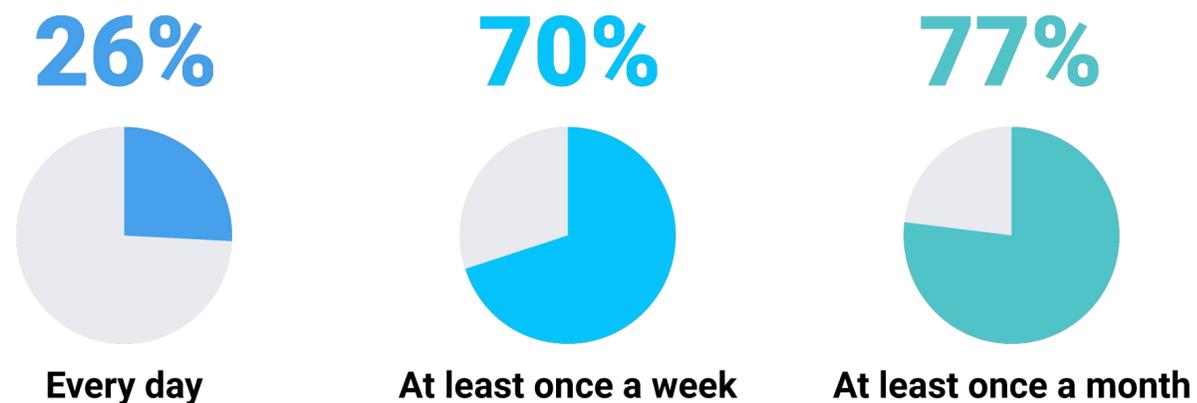
s businesses of every type and size expand their use of AI, a consistent drumbeat of workplace adoption studies has focused on some predictable outcomes: automation of tasks, changing roles, uncertainty about governance, reliability, and other risks.

Among the latest is a Brookings Institution study based on data from OpenAI, estimating that more than 30% of all workers will see at least 50% of their workloads disrupted by generative AI. A similar report by McKinsey estimates that by 2030, AI will force nearly 12 million global workers to shift into different lines of work.

A new global survey from Freshworks flips the script. Feedback from 4,000 knowledge workers and business leaders reveals employees as enthusiastic early adopters and beneficiaries of AI. Workers aren't just embracing AI in their jobs, they're demanding more: AI usage has grown across all core business departments over the last six months. AI is helping employees be more time efficient and cutting busywork (as our [earlier 2024 survey](#) showed); it is also boosting job satisfaction, job retention, compensation, and even career prospects.

## Growing confidence in AI

How often employees are using it



AI is freeing up time and resources for innovation and more strategic work.



**Mika Yamamoto**

Chief Customer and Marketing Officer, Freshworks

Consider how far we've come in just a few years: 38% of employees told us that AI has already helped them get a salary bump or a promotion, and even more (46%) said they would consider swapping their current jobs for roles that better harness AI. Our survey covered a wide range of roles—from individual contributors (23%) and managers (29%) to executives (15%)—in core departments, such as IT, finance, sales, human resources, customer service, and marketing.

What's driving workers' enthusiastic embrace of AI in 2024? It starts with understanding one big problem that most AI studies overlook: Despite having all the tools of digital transformation at their fingertips today, employees on average spend an astonishing amount of time—more than three hours per day, or nearly five working months per year—on frustrating, boring busywork.



**of workers say that AI is improving their workload and making their workdays more positive.**

This year, AI is providing more meaningful relief: It's saving people significantly more time, but it's also restoring purpose and positivity in people's work. Nearly every employee (98%) said they are already getting time back in their work day because of AI, and they're reinvesting that time in three ways: being more productive (71%), doing more creative or complex work (66%), and coaching or mentoring other employees (67%). No wonder, then, why nearly all workers (92%) say they want to offload some part of their workday to AI.

## What is 'people-first AI'?

"People-first AI" is a human-centered approach to AI implementation that places employees in partnership with AI to enhance their productivity, performance, learning, and decision-making.



People-first AI doesn't replace people—it works alongside them.

**Mika Yamamoto**

Chief Customer and Marketing Officer, Freshworks

Those are significant trends—not just for employees, but businesses weighing the economic impact of how workers spend their time. In the U.S., the average time currently spent on busywork—using the median full-time wage as a proxy—equates to \$25,637 per worker annually, or \$2.38 trillion applied across the professional workforce. As AI takes on more of that work, businesses will bank this AI dividend, as workers focus more on strategic tasks that drive results.

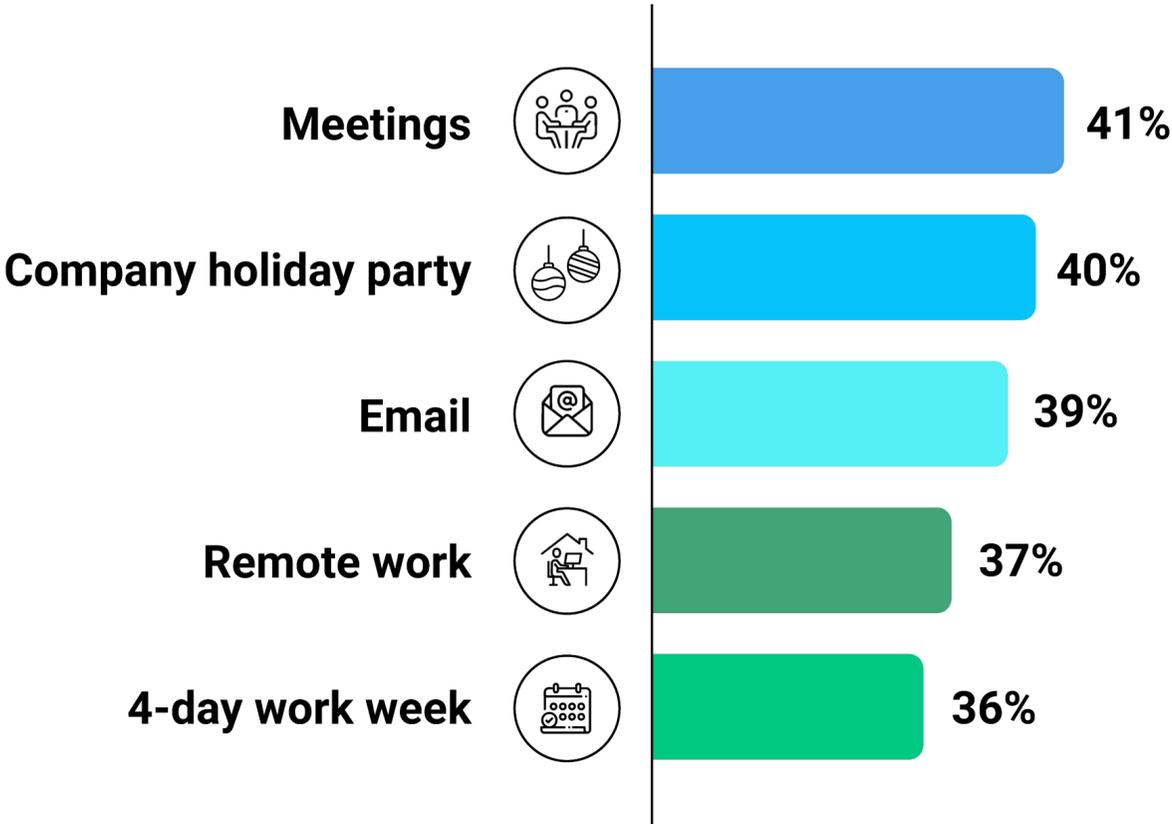
For mid-market companies especially—those with \$10 million to \$1 billion in revenue, who account for one-third of the United States’ private-sector employment and GDP—the AI dividend could be game-changing: 8 in 10 mid-market executives today say they plan to use AI, yet only 34% are doing so. The research underscores why the AI wait-and-see approach is no longer acceptable: Even modest investments in AI can rapidly redeploy talent to drive growth.

“Our survey suggests we’re shifting into a new phase of people-first AI,” says Mika Yamamoto, chief customer and marketing officer at Freshworks. “People-first AI doesn’t replace people, it works alongside them. It can transform organizations by removing busywork and accelerating productivity, enabling people to do more with less, improving both customer and employee satisfaction. AI is also freeing up time and resources for reinvestment in innovation and more strategic work.”

The survey findings, which follow in the sections ahead, cover business adoption of AI from three key perspectives: the rise of employee and organizational trust in AI; how AI is reshaping the employee experience; and the urgent opportunity for AI to help support teams improve customer experience. It concludes with essential takeaways and questions for business leaders to consider.

## What workers would give up for AI

Employees love their AI above other standards and perks



# Growing trust in an AI-powered business

Employee trust and positive perceptions of AI have surged in 2024

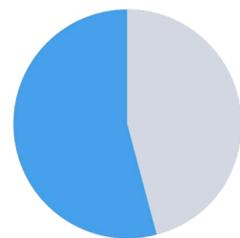
**O**ur [earlier survey](#) on AI in the workplace showed how employees—largely experimenting on their own with generative AI—found some initial success with new AI apps and tools. Even with just ad hoc trials, workers reported some immediate productivity gains, such as individual time savings of nearly four hours per week.

Businesses are now giving AI a deeper embrace because all that initial grassroots experimentation with gen AI has begun paying off more broadly. Three in five (61%) leaders say that their organizations have increased AI adoption over the last six months, and more than half (56%) of workers say their departments will be more successful in 2024 because of it.

## What's driving employee trust in AI?

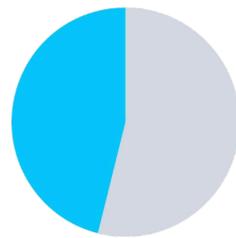
Top reasons workers say their view has changed in the last year

54%



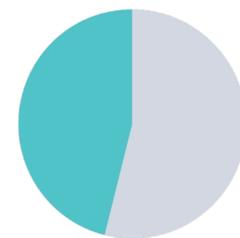
I understand AI better now

46%



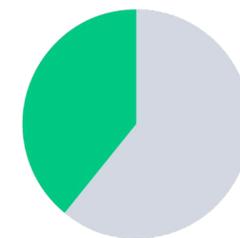
AI does more for us than before

46%



It's driving noticeable value

39%



It delivered what was promised

Many employees see AI not just as a handy time saver, but also a trusted ally in their work. More than half (53%) reported a shift in their opinion of AI for the better just since the beginning of 2024, primarily due to a deeper understanding of its capabilities and seeing increasing evidence of its quality and reliability.

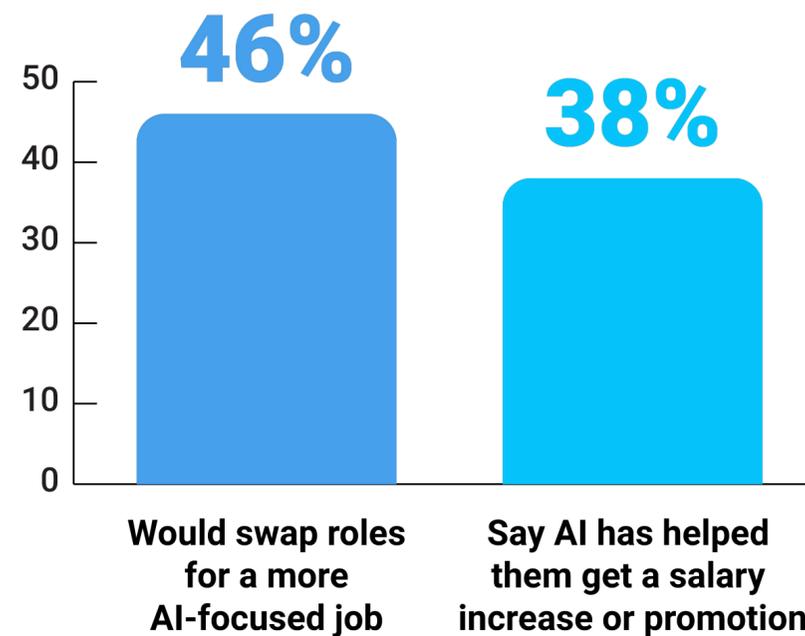
Our survey even attempted to quantify the value of employees' growing enthusiasm for AI. When asked what they would be willing to sacrifice in order to maintain access to AI on the job, workers said they would give up privileges like remote work (37%) or company holiday parties (40%). If it weren't for AI, more than a third (38%) said they would never be able to keep up with their workload.

Even legal departments—not known for being early adopters of new technology—are getting on board. Their level of trust in AI has nearly doubled since the beginning of 2024, from 31% to 59%, while trust has similarly increased (albeit more modestly) across all business departments.

That could be the start of a much deeper trend, says Josh Bersin, a longtime workplace technology researcher and advisor. "AI agents will soon be embedded across all business functions: customer service, HR, legal, finance, you name it," he says. "They'll streamline processes and allow companies to operate with fewer resources while improving speed and efficiency. We're just at the start of this revolution, and as these systems get smarter, they'll fundamentally change how we work."

### Career booster

Workers see AI as a key to upward mobility



AI agents will soon be embedded across all business functions—customer service, HR, legal, finance, you name it.



**Josh Bersin**

Workplace Technology Researcher and Advisor

# How employees currently spend an average workday

**4.9 hrs**  
Engaged work



**3.1 hrs**  
Busywork  
(feeling bored/frustrated)

# What they're doing with extra time gained through AI

**31%**

Coaching other employees

**43%**

Solving harder challenges

**44%**

Accomplishing more complex work

**54%**

Learning new skills

**53%**

Getting more done overall

**45%**

Doing more creative work

# 3 ways India is leading the world with AI

While our survey covered knowledge workers in seven countries—the U.S., U.K., France, Germany, India, Australia, and New Zealand—India stood out as a clear trailblazer, leading in many categories, such as AI adoption, usage, and trust. Here are a few highlights that define India’s full embrace of workplace AI.

1

**The world’s top (and most trusted) AI adopter.** Globally, just 26% of workers say they use AI every day. In India, that figure is more than triple, with 88% saying they use it at least once a week. Workers there also report the highest levels of comfort (91%), trust (89%), and expertise with AI (74%), compared to all other countries.

2

**All-in on AI-powered service.** The two departments responsible for delivering critical services for employees and customers—IT and customer support—will both lean heavily on AI in the coming years. But in India, businesses have a big head start: 88% of customer support and IT teams there already consider AI essential to their workloads. Less than half of U.S. (47%) and U.K. (45%) workers said the same.

3

**Making the shift to more impactful work.** Getting to spend more time on high-level tasks, while offloading busywork, is one of the huge potential benefits of AI in the workplace. In India, workers are again leading the way: As a result of their reliance on AI, more workers in India are spending that extra time on mentoring colleagues (83%) and on creative work and problem solving (79%), than in any other country.



# Reinvigorating the employee experience

Employees say they want more AI at their fingertips; IT and business leaders are committed to delivering it.



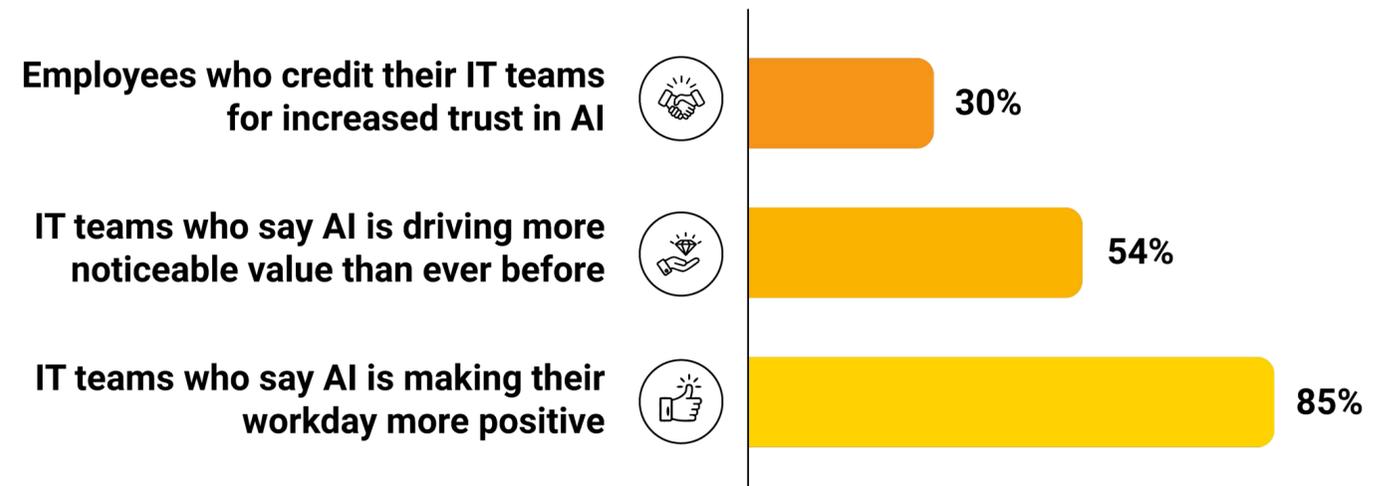
From a CIO's perspective, AI's most powerful capability is how it can directly improve the two most critical differentiators of business success today: customer and employee experience. And it can help them deliver dramatic, not just incremental, business impact.

One enabling force is IT teams. As the vanguard of tech deployment in any business, IT is leading AI adoption across departments, and clearly doing it well enough to earn the respect of all the different business teams they support. Nearly a third (30%) of employees say that their IT teams are to thank for rising workplace trust in AI.

Not only are they deploying the tools, they are helping business teams put them to work. Nearly three-fourths (73%) of employees say they trust their IT team to ensure their AI delivers quality results. There's a simple reason why IT workers are such effective advocates: 85% of them report that AI is improving their own workloads and making their days more positive.

## IT teams are internal AI champions

IT employees are leading AI adoption for themselves, and other business departments



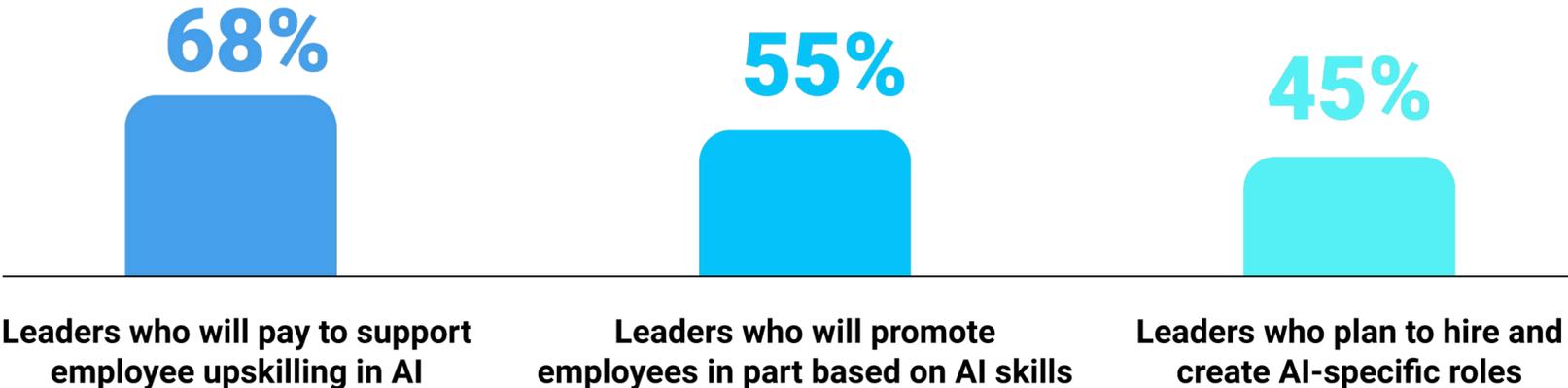
Leadership teams are the other driving force of AI adoption, of course, responsible for ensuring that capital investments in AI support business objectives and drive results. Having already made the initial technology outlays for AI, leaders are now shifting into different kinds of investments—in their current and future employees—to maximize the benefits of AI longer-term.

For example, more than two-thirds (68%) of leaders report that their organization will pay to support employee upskilling for AI—skills that will pay off in upward mobility, as more than half (55%) of leaders say they are looking for AI skills when considering promotions. In addition, 45% of senior leadership plan to create and hire AI-specific roles in their organizations. Just as employees say they want more AI, leaders say they want to deliver it.

That’s ambitious—and it will require closing some major skills gaps over the next few years: Most (90%) employees don’t yet consider themselves experts on AI, and 73% say training and onboarding is necessary to realize its benefits. Perhaps not surprisingly, 61% of business leaders say winning over remaining AI “holdouts” among employees will be a top priority in 2025.

### Leaders are investing in AI skills, not just AI

They’re making longer-term investments in realizing the benefits of it



It’s not about how much data you have or how big a model you build. It’s about human behavior.



**Laks Srinivasan**  
Co-Founder, Return on AI Institute

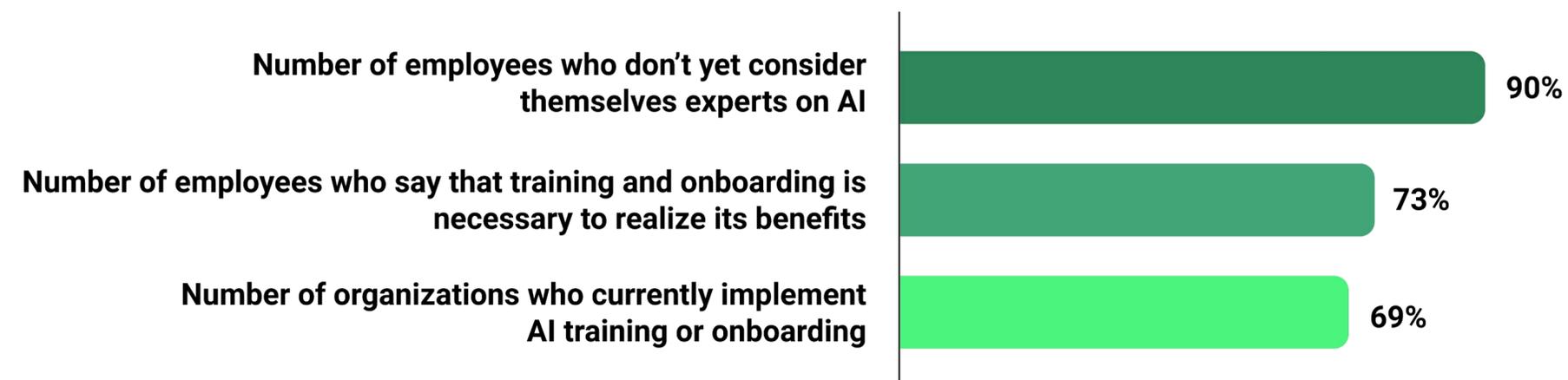
Companies are also rolling out a combination of mandatory usage, training, and job requirements with the aim of operationalizing AI-driven work. Marketing, IT, and customer support teams are among those who have been told they must use AI.

Efforts like this to improve the AI IQ of internal teams and talent is the best way to generate business value from AI, says Laks Srinivasan, co-founder of the Return on AI Institute, a research and advisory firm that helps companies implement and scale major AI initiatives.

“It’s not about how much data you have or how big a model you build,” Srinivasan says. “It’s about human behavior. How do you change the company, the way they think, the way they behave? That’s how to leverage AI for meaningful value.”

## Upskilling for AI

Prioritizing AI training to unlock workforce potential



61%

of leaders say winning over AI holdouts among employees will be a top priority for 2025

# An AI mandate for customer service

From chatbots to champions: With more investment and support, AI can supercharge customer experience



any customer service organizations are facing a painful disconnect. For years they have deployed mostly mediocre chatbots to handle bulk loads of customer queries, but they have been slow to implement more advanced AI tools that could dramatically improve customer experience as well as efficiency. For example, 83% of customer service teams want to give AI some of their work tasks, such as managing online self-service portals (32%) and monitoring customer interactions for quality assurance (31%).

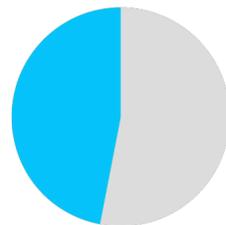
## AI adopters in customer support already see major benefits...

40%



Support agents using AI who say it is already invaluable to their workload

47%



Support agents who say that working alongside AI chatbots would transform their jobs

## ...but wider adoption faces big challenges

### Lack of policies

40% of support teams have no official AI-use policy.

### Lack of familiarity

Customer teams are the least comfortable using AI compared to all other departments.

Agents starting to put the tools in practice are seeing results. Two in five (40%) customer support agents currently using AI say that these AI bots and agents are now invaluable to their workloads. In particular, they note how AI is helping de-escalate tense situations (25%) and turn a poor customer experience into a good one (35%). What's slowing broader adoption? Lack of sufficient governance and employee training are two likely reasons. Customer support teams ranked last among all departments in deployment of AI-use policies; and overall lack of employee knowledge of AI.

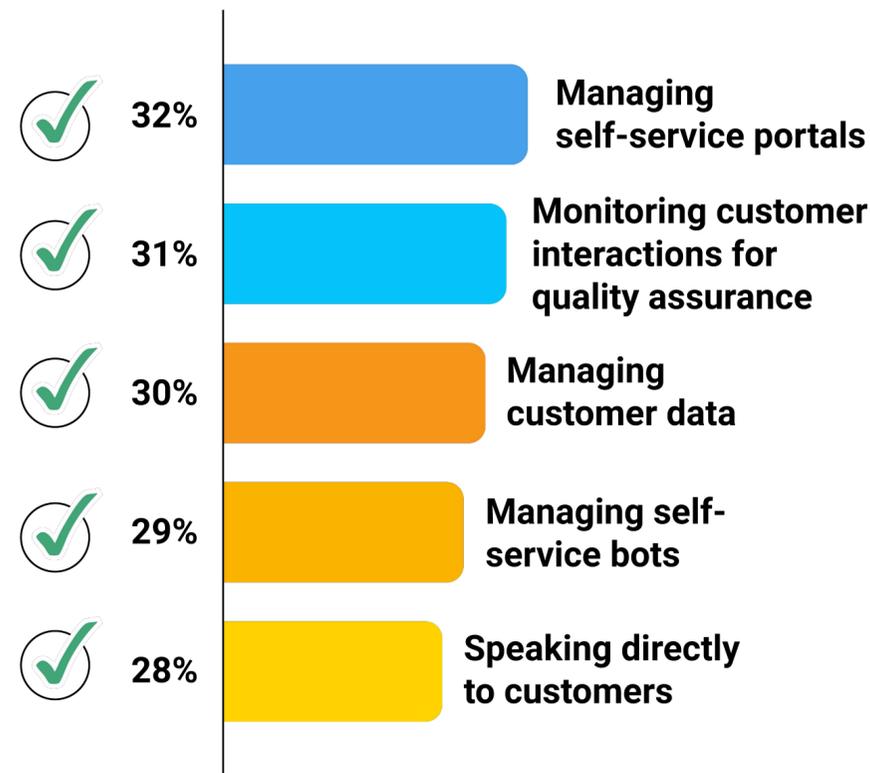
Longtime customer service researcher and author Shep Hyken has seen how AI agents operate in many different types of businesses, but notes some common threads. "AI agents are more efficient internally, just as they are externally for a customer, by allowing a company to reduce average handle time while maintaining and often even growing the customer relationship."

As the report shows, most customer support teams aren't yet reaping those benefits. Nonetheless, AI has

already delivered compelling results, and with increased focus from the top, along with budgets, policies, and plans to upskill workers, those gaps can close quickly.

## Service agents' AI wish list

83% of service teams are eager to hand off critical tasks to AI. Here are their top five:



“

AI agents allow a company to reduce average handle time while maintaining and often even growing the customer relationship.



**Shep Hyken**

Customer Service Researcher and Author

# Takeaways for leaders

Businesses succeeding with AI adoption are embracing people-first AI



As the findings in this study suggest, AI adoption for business is not merely a tactical strategy—it's bringing about a cultural shift that can elevate human potential by reducing routine burdens and enriching interactions with employees and customers.

That points to a future where service evolves from a reactive system to a proactive, empathetic engagement platform, transforming employee and customer service into more powerful levers of business growth. This dual focus—on operational efficiency and human connection—is why AI adoption is deepening, even if the initial hype has cooled off.

For business leaders, our report suggests several key takeaways, questions, and insights to consider as they plot next steps on the AI journey.



## **1 It's the leaders' turn to take AI adoption to the next level.**

Two years ago, employees kickstarted AI adoption by experimenting with gen AI and showing how powerful it could be to save them time and boost productivity. Now that every department is using AI, organizations need more top-down support to realize its potential. That means providing better governance and usage policies, more employee training and reskilling, and more advanced AI agents and tools that more directly improve employee and customer experience.

## **2 Businesses have an emerging 'AI dividend' they can realize—or squander.**

Our report documents the astonishing proportion of tedious busywork that employees are yearning to offload to AI, so they can shift into more strategic tasks and projects that drive results and restore purpose. That massive offload opportunity, which we call the “AI dividend,” raises an urgent question for CIOs and other leaders: How will you redeploy roles, teams, and talent to take full advantage?

## **3 IT teams are building invaluable trust in AI, and they deserve more investment and support.**

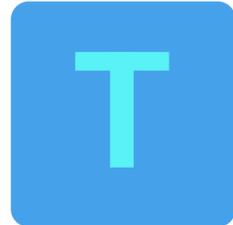
IT teams aren't just the deployment squads for bots and apps across the business; they've become highly valued, trusted advisors who assist every department in putting AI to work, from accounting and finance to marketing and sales. But IT employees need more support and reskilling to scale their efforts: 77% of IT employees say it's difficult to get an organization to fully integrate AI into their company workloads, and lack of upfront learning time and lack of expertise are the two biggest difficulties plaguing IT teams attempting to integrate AI support into their organizations (55%). Those are all solvable issues that can yield big returns.

## **4 Your customer service agents and teams deserve the same.**

Customer service departments lag behind others when it comes to AI adoption, but the path forward is to invest in and deploy better AI agents, not to replace the human ones: 40% of support agents using AI now say that AI bots and agents are invaluable to their workloads; even more (47%) say that working with AI chatbots would transform their day-to-day work.

## CONCLUSION

# A springboard for continuous growth



The greatest promise of AI lies in its collaboration with—not replacement of—people. Workers see AI as a tool to amplify their talents, not to diminish their roles. This is the mindset of people-first AI.

By investing in skill development, more comprehensive governance, and other trust-building initiatives, leaders can unlock AI's true potential and drive business growth with a model where technology augments human ingenuity, rather than competes with it.

Our report also suggests that next steps for leaders should be less about racing toward 100% adoption, and more about pacing for sustainable integration that supports employees and customers. By aligning employee aspirations with AI capabilities, companies can cultivate a workplace where innovation flourishes, and employees and customers thrive.

Based on what employees have told us over the course of a huge year of change, long-term success will likely favor organizations who see AI not as an endpoint but as a springboard for continuous growth.



# Survey methodology

Freshworks conducted this research using an online survey, prepared by Method Research and distributed by PureSpectrum, among 4,000 adults ages 18+ who are full-time salaried employees currently working in a desk job position, with 1,000 in the United States, 1,000 in the United Kingdom, and 500 within each of the following countries: Germany, France, Australia, New Zealand, and India.

Within each country, the sample balanced employees working in human resources, IT, customer services/support, finance/accounting, sales, marketing, and legal departments, including a sample of manager or above titles within each department. The sample was also balanced by gender, age, and company size, with an internationally representative geographic spread of respondents. Data was collected from September 11 to October 1, 2024.

Respondents were given this AI definition: “Software enhanced with AI that is capable of high-complexity tasks, like content creation, predictive analysis, decision-making, solving problems, and more.”

**Cover Image Source: AI Generated on MidJourney**

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