

Plain: Report AI Adoption Attitudes and Uptake follow-up on MAD//Fest 2024

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Welcome to Plain:ai this report shares our findings on AI adoption, primary source data was taken from audits in June-July 2024 with initial summary reporting shared at MAF//Fest 2024. Here we dig deeper into the findings, sharing commonalities with what we are finding in the adoption of AI, primarily in the UK marketing, brand and advertising audience. To start you'll find a brief summary of our own AI Maturity model that guided both the audit questions and the presentation of the findings.

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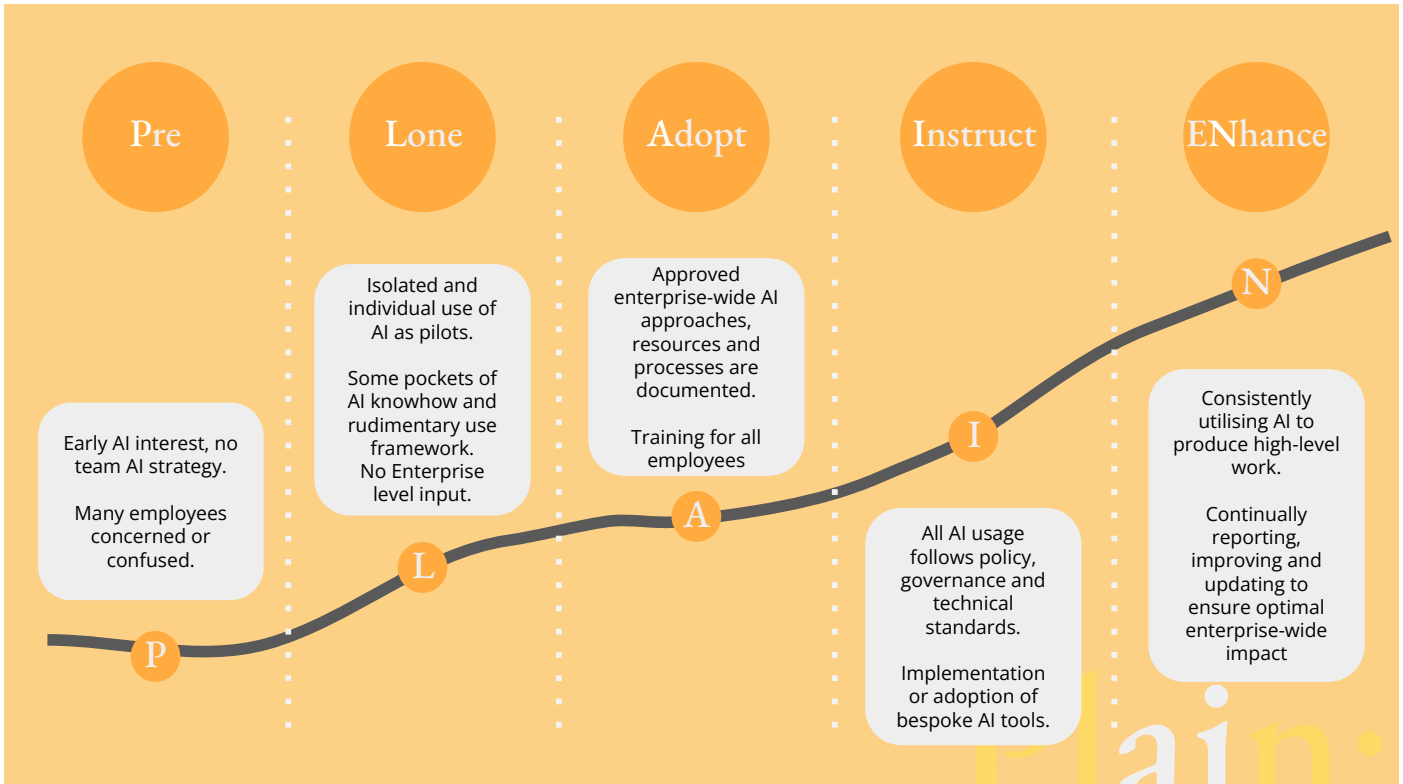
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The Plain: AI maturity model:

This is aimed at helping organisations assess their AI adoption progress. The complete model consists of five stages: Pre, Lone, Adopt, Instruct, and ENhance.

Please contact us if you would like an introduction to the full framework, complete with all dimensions and guidance.

AI Maturity Model Stages:

Pre: Early AI interest, no team strategy, employees concerned or confused.

Lone: Isolated individual use of AI, some pockets of knowledge, no enterprise-level input.

Adopt: Approved enterprise-wide AI approaches, documented resources and processes, training for all employees.

Instruct: AI usage follows policy and standards, implementation of bespoke AI tools

ENhance: Consistent high-level work using AI, continual improvement and optimisation.

Maturity Model Dimensions

The model evaluates three key dimensions:

- a) People: From early awareness to continual learning and training.
- b) Process: From manual processes to continual optimisation
- c) IT & Data: From limited data collection to continuous improvement of bespoke AI solutions.

2. Audit Findings: [Date of Audit: June-July 2024)

Overall audience:

Nearly 50% are in the "Lone" stage.

24% each in "Adopt" and "Pre" stages.

2.1 Distribution of AI Maturity Levels

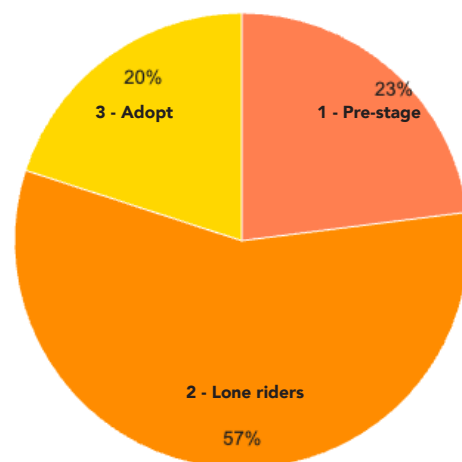
Non MAD//Fest audience:

57% are "Lone Riders"

21% have a few teams implementing AI without coherent reporting

21% have business-wide AI governance and training

- Pre stage: 23%
- Lone Riders: 57%
- Adopt: 20%
- Instruct: 0%
- ENhance: 0%

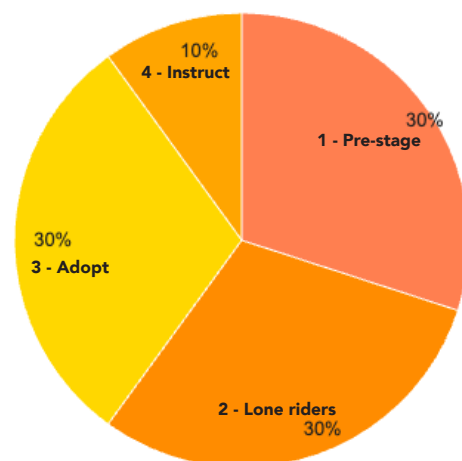


MAD//Fest audience:

10% are at the "Instruct/implement" stage

30% each in "Pre," "Lone," and "Adopt" stages

- Pre stage: 30%
- Lone Riders: 30%
- Adopt: 30%
- Instruct: 10%
- ENhance: 0%



2.2 AI Governance and Documentation

- Only 25% of organisations have business-wide AI Governance and training documents.
- The majority of respondents either don't know about AI governance or have informal, team-specific recommendations.

2.3 AI Champions and Leadership

- There's a mix of approaches, with some organisations having enterprise-wide AI champions and others having no formal guidance.
- Many teams have "AI adventurers" - individuals exploring AI independently.

2.4 Training and Awareness

- Most organisations lack formal, enterprise-wide AI training.
- There's a significant gap in awareness of AI activities across different teams and at leadership levels.

2.5 Process Integration and Impact Analysis

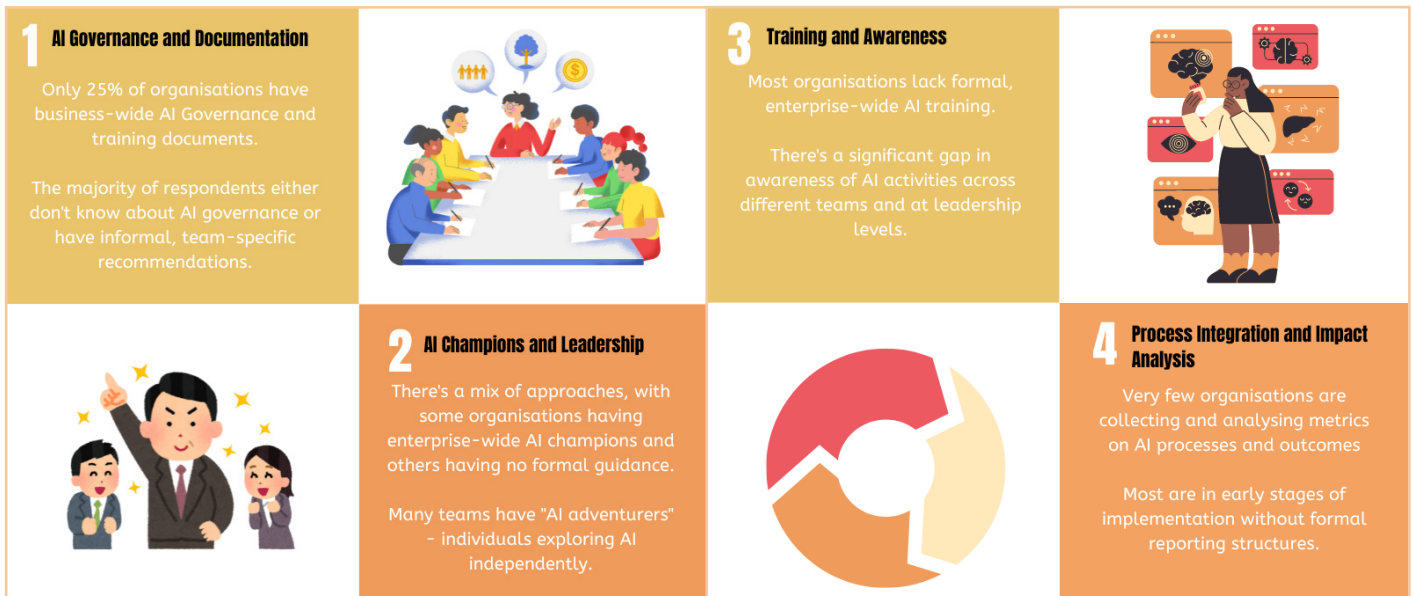
- Very few organisations are collecting and analysing metrics on AI processes and outcomes.
- Most are in early stages of implementation without formal reporting structures

3. Conclusions

Points in summary:

- 3.1 Early Stage of AI Adoption** The majority of organisations are in the early stages of AI adoption, falling into the “Pre” or “Lone Riders” categories of the AI Maturity Model.
- 3.2 Lack of Formal Structures** There’s a notable absence of formal AI governance, training, and impact assessment structures in most organisations.
- 3.3 Isolated Implementation** AI implementation is often happening in silos, with individual teams or “AI adventurers” leading the charge without enterprise-wide coordination.
- 3.4 Awareness Gap** There’s a significant gap in awareness and understanding of AI capabilities and potential applications across different levels of organisations.
- 3.5 Readiness for Growth** Despite being in early stages, there’s evident interest and experimentation with AI, indicating readiness for more structured adoption.

Distribution of AI Maturity levels:



And a bit more detail:

3.1 Early Stage of AI Adoption

The majority of organisations are in the early stages of AI adoption, falling into the “Pre” or “Lone Riders” categories of the AI Maturity Model. This indicates a nascent understanding and implementation of AI technologies across businesses. Many companies are still grappling with the potential of AI, with employees either showing early interest without a cohesive strategy or engaging in isolated, pilot-like usage. This early-stage adoption is characterised by a lack of formal structures, limited enterprise-wide awareness, and often, a degree of confusion or concern among employees about AI’s role in their work. However, this stage also presents a significant opportunity for growth and development. As organisations begin to recognise the transformative potential of AI, they are poised to move towards more structured and strategic approaches to AI adoption, which could lead to substantial competitive advantages in the near future.

3.2 Lack of Formal Structures

There’s a notable absence of formal AI governance, training, and impact assessment structures in most organisations. This absence of formalised frameworks is a critical gap in the AI adoption journey. Without established governance protocols, organisations risk inconsistent application of AI technologies, potential ethical missteps, and missed opportunities for strategic alignment. The lack of standardised training programmes means that AI knowledge and skills are unevenly distributed across teams, potentially leading to inefficiencies and underutilisation of AI capabilities. Furthermore, the absence of robust impact assessment structures makes it challenging for organisations to quantify the benefits of their AI initiatives, justify further investments, or identify areas for improvement. This lack of formal structures not only hampers current AI efforts but also poses significant challenges for scaling AI adoption in the future. Addressing this gap should be a priority for organisations aiming to mature their AI capabilities and fully leverage the potential of these technologies.

3.3 Isolated Implementation

AI implementation is often happening in silos, with individual teams or “AI adventurers” leading the charge without enterprise-wide coordination. This siloed approach to AI adoption, while demonstrating initiative and interest at an individual or team level, presents several challenges for organisations. Firstly, it can lead to duplication of efforts, with different teams potentially working on similar AI projects without knowledge of each other’s progress. Secondly, it limits the potential for cross-functional learning and synergies that could accelerate AI adoption across the organisation. Thirdly, isolated implementation can result in inconsistent practices, varying levels of AI sophistication across departments, and potential conflicts with overall organisational strategies or goals. While these “AI adventurers” play a crucial role in driving initial adoption and experimentation, their efforts need to be harnessed and coordinated at an enterprise level to truly unlock the transformative potential of AI technologies.

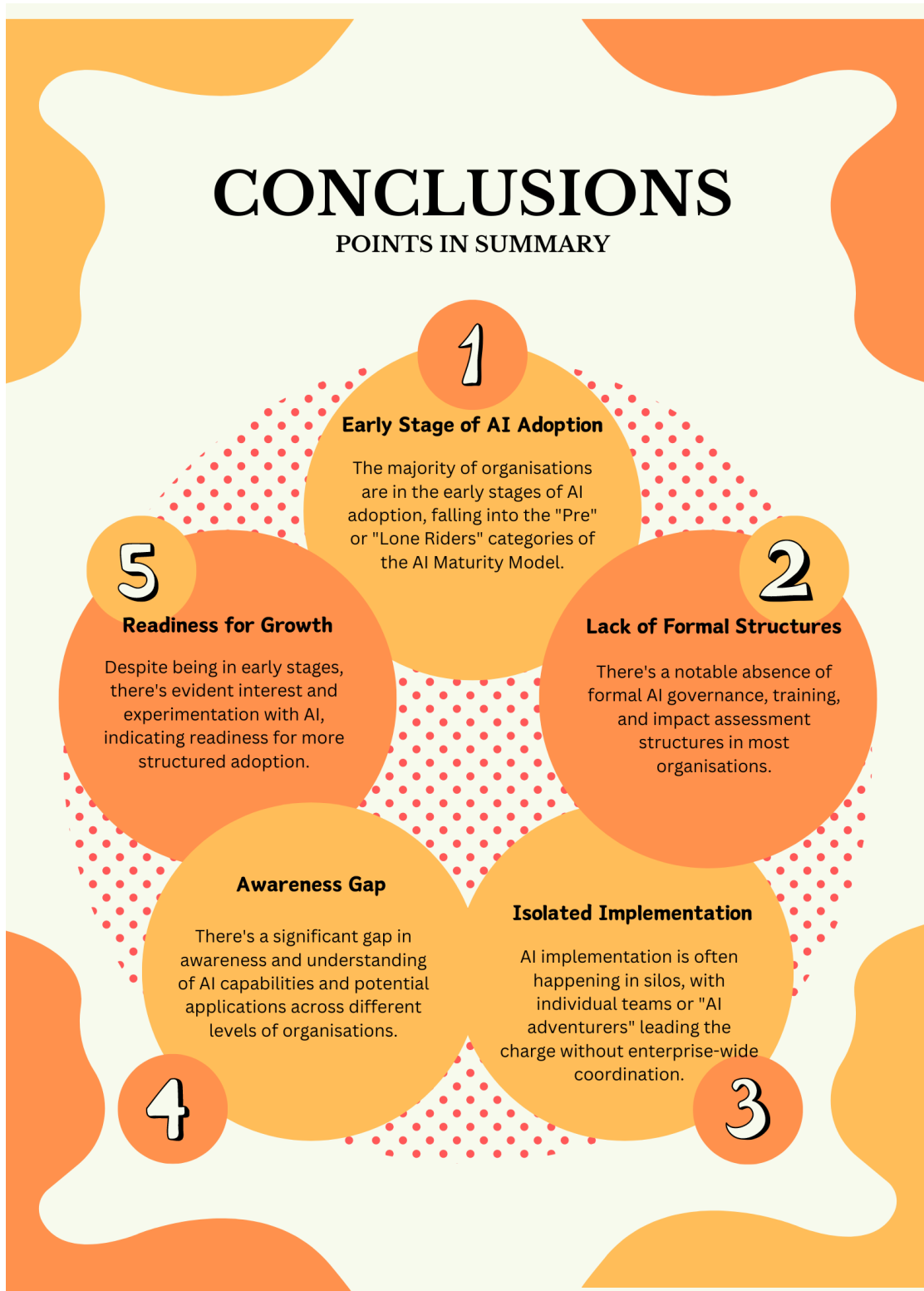
3.4 Awareness Gap

There’s a significant gap in awareness and understanding of AI capabilities and potential applications across different levels of organisations. This awareness gap manifests in various ways, from c-suite executives who may not fully grasp the strategic implications of AI, to frontline employees who might be uncertain about how AI could enhance their day-to-day work. The lack of comprehensive understanding can lead to missed opportunities, underinvestment in AI initiatives, and potential resistance to AI adoption due to misconceptions, fears and inefficiencies. Moreover, this awareness gap can result in a disconnect between those driving AI initiatives and those responsible for implementing them, leading to ineffective or misaligned AI strategies. Bridging this awareness gap is crucial for fostering a culture of AI adoption, ensuring buy-in from all levels of the organisation, and enabling informed decision-making about AI investments and applications. It requires a concerted effort to educate, communicate, and demonstrate the value of AI across all organisational levels.

3.5 Readiness for Growth

Despite being in early stages, there’s evident interest and experimentation with AI, indicating readiness

for more structured adoption. This readiness is a positive sign, suggesting that organisations recognise the potential of AI and are willing to explore its applications. The presence of "AI adventurers" and pockets of AI knowhow, even if isolated, demonstrates a proactive approach to new technologies. This existing interest and experimentation provide a foundation upon which more comprehensive AI strategies can be built. Organisations can leverage this readiness to accelerate their AI adoption journey, moving from ad-hoc experiments to strategic, enterprise-wide implementation. However, to capitalise on this readiness, organisations need to channel the existing enthusiasm into structured programmes, provide necessary resources and support, and create an environment that encourages continued learning and innovation. By doing so, they can transform this readiness into tangible progress, positioning themselves to fully harness the transformative power of AI technologies.



4. Strategic Next Steps for Businesses

Summary of findings:

- 4.1 **Develop Formal AI Strategy** Create a comprehensive, enterprise-wide AI strategy that aligns with overall business objectives.
- 4.2 **Establish Governance Framework** Implement formal AI governance structures, including policies, ethical guidelines, and risk management protocols.
- 4.3 **Invest in Training and Education** Roll out structured AI training programs for all employees to bridge the knowledge gap and foster a culture of AI adoption.
- 4.4 **Appoint AI Champions** Designate AI champions at various levels of the organisation to drive adoption, share best practices, and coordinate efforts.
- 4.5 **Implement Metrics and Reporting** Develop and implement systems to collect, analyse, and report on AI process outcomes and impact.
- 4.6 **Break Down Silos** Encourage cross-functional collaboration and knowledge sharing to maximise the potential of AI across the organisation.
- 4.7 **Start Small, Scale Fast** Begin with pilot projects in high-impact areas, learn from these experiences, and rapidly scale successful implementations.
- 4.8 **Continuous Learning and Adaptation** Stay informed about AI advancements and continuously update strategies and processes to remain competitive.

In a bit more detail:

4.1 Develop Formal AI Strategy

Creating a comprehensive, enterprise-wide AI strategy that aligns with overall business objectives is crucial for successful AI adoption. This strategy should outline the organisation's vision for AI, specific goals, and a roadmap for implementation. It should also address key areas such as data management, talent acquisition and development, and technology infrastructure. For example, Microsoft's AI strategy, as outlined in their "AI Business School," emphasises the importance of a holistic approach that considers business strategy, technology, and ethics (Microsoft, 2021). Similarly, Google's AI principles provide a framework for responsible AI development and use across their organisation (Google, 2018). When developing an AI strategy, businesses should consider conducting an AI readiness assessment, identifying high-impact use cases, and establishing clear metrics for success. The strategy should be flexible enough to adapt to rapidly evolving AI technologies while remaining grounded in the organisation's core values and long-term objectives. Regular review and refinement of the strategy will ensure it remains relevant and effective in guiding the organisation's AI journey.

4.2 Establish Governance Framework

Implementing formal AI governance structures, including policies, ethical guidelines, and risk management protocols, is essential for responsible and effective AI adoption. A robust governance framework helps ensure that AI initiatives align with organisational values, comply with regulations, and mitigate potential risks. The EU's proposed AI Act provides a comprehensive framework for AI governance that businesses can use as a reference (European Commission, 2021). Key components of an AI governance framework should include:

1. Clear roles and responsibilities for AI oversight
2. Ethical guidelines for AI development and use
3. Data governance policies
4. Risk assessment and management procedures
5. Compliance monitoring and reporting mechanisms

For instance, IBM's AI Ethics Board oversees the company's AI efforts to ensure they align with ethical principles and societal values (IBM, 2019). Similarly, Accenture's "AI Governance Framework" emphasises the importance of transparency, accountability, and fairness in AI systems (Accenture, 2018). By establishing a strong governance framework, organisations can build trust in their AI initiatives, both internally and externally, while minimising potential legal and reputational risks associated with AI deployment.

4.3 Invest in Training and Education

Rolling out structured AI training programs for all employees is crucial to bridge the knowledge gap and foster a culture of AI adoption. These programs should cater to different levels of expertise and roles within the organisation, from basic AI literacy for all employees to advanced technical training for specialists. For example, Amazon's "Machine Learning University" offers free online courses to help employees across the company understand and apply machine learning concepts (Amazon, 2019). Similarly, PwC has committed to training all of its 275,000 employees in AI and data analytics through its "Digital Upskilling" initiative (PwC, 2019).

Training programs should cover:

1. Basic AI concepts and terminology
2. Potential applications of AI in specific business functions
3. Ethical considerations in AI use
4. Hands-on experience with AI tools relevant to employees' roles

Organisations can leverage a mix of internal resources and external partnerships with academic institutions or tech companies to deliver comprehensive AI education. For instance, Airbus has partnered with French engineering school ISAE-SUPAERO to offer AI training to its employees (Airbus, 2020). By investing in widespread AI education, organisations can accelerate AI adoption, improve decision-making around AI initiatives, and prepare their workforce for the future of work.

4.4 Appoint AI Champions

Designating AI champions at various levels of the organisation is crucial for driving adoption, sharing best practices, and coordinating efforts. These champions serve as bridge-builders between technical teams and business units, helping to translate AI capabilities into practical applications. For example, Procter & Gamble has established a network of "Citizen Data Scientists" who act as AI champions within their respective business units, promoting AI adoption and sharing knowledge (Procter & Gamble, 2020).

AI champions should:

1. Stay informed about the latest AI developments and their potential business applications
2. Advocate for AI initiatives within their teams and departments
3. Facilitate cross-functional collaboration on AI projects
4. Provide guidance on AI best practices and ethical considerations
5. Help identify and prioritise AI use cases (always explaining the What, why and how with the team)

Companies like Microsoft have implemented "AI Champions" programs to accelerate AI adoption across their organisation (Microsoft, 2020). These programs often include training and certification for champions, regular knowledge-sharing sessions, and opportunities to work on high-impact AI projects. By cultivating a network of AI champions, organisations can create a multiplier effect in their AI adoption efforts, fostering a culture of innovation and continuous learning around AI technologies.

4.5 Implement Metrics and Reporting

Developing and implementing systems to collect, analyse, and report on AI process outcomes and impact is essential for demonstrating the value of AI initiatives and guiding future investments. These metrics should align with overall business objectives and provide actionable insights for decision-making. For example, Google Cloud's AI adoption framework emphasises the importance of defining clear success metrics for AI projects, such as improved efficiency, cost savings, or enhanced customer experience (Google Cloud, 2021).

Key considerations for implementing AI metrics and reporting include:

1. Defining relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each AI initiative
2. Establishing baseline measurements for comparison
3. Implementing tools for data collection and analysis
4. Creating dashboards for real-time monitoring and reporting
5. Regularly reviewing and refining metrics based on learnings

Organisations like Walmart have implemented sophisticated analytics systems to measure the impact of their AI initiatives, including improvements in supply chain efficiency and customer satisfaction (Walmart, 2020). By implementing robust metrics and reporting systems, organisations can better understand the ROI of their AI investments, identify areas for improvement, and make data-driven decisions about future AI initiatives.

4.6 Break Down Silos

Encouraging cross-functional collaboration and knowledge sharing is crucial to maximise the potential of AI across the organisation. Breaking down silos allows for the exchange of ideas, best practices, and resources, leading to more innovative and impactful AI solutions. For instance, JPMorgan Chase has created a central "AI Center of Excellence" that brings together experts from various departments to collaborate on AI projects and share knowledge (JPMorgan Chase, 2019).

Strategies for breaking down silos include:

1. Creating cross-functional AI teams or task forces
2. Implementing collaborative platforms for sharing AI knowledge and resources
3. Organising regular AI showcases or hackathons to promote cross-departmental engagement
4. Aligning incentives to encourage collaboration on AI initiatives
5. Developing a centralised repository of AI use cases and learnings

Companies like Airbus have implemented "digital acceleration centres" that bring together diverse teams to work on AI and other digital projects, fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation (Airbus, 2021). By breaking down silos, organisations can leverage their collective expertise, avoid duplication of efforts, and create more comprehensive and effective AI solutions that address complex business challenges.

4.7 Start Small, Scale Fast

Beginning with pilot projects in high-impact areas, learning from these experiences, and rapidly scaling successful implementations is an effective approach to AI adoption. This strategy allows organisations to gain quick wins, build confidence, and refine their approach before committing to large-scale deployments. For example, Coca-Cola started with a small-scale AI project to optimise vending machine stock levels before expanding to more complex supply chain applications (Coca-Cola, 2019).

Key steps in 'start small, scale fast' approach include:

1. Identifying high-impact, low-risk areas for initial AI pilots
2. Setting clear objectives and success criteria for each pilot
3. Rapidly prototyping and iterating based on feedback
4. Documenting learnings and best practices from each pilot
5. Developing a scalability plan for successful pilots

Companies like Starbucks have successfully used this approach, starting with AI-powered personalised recommendations in their mobile app before expanding to more complex applications like predictive store inventory management (Starbucks, 2020). By starting small and scaling fast, organisations can minimise risks, accelerate learning, and build momentum for broader AI adoption across the enterprise.

4.8 Continuous Learning and Adaptation

Staying informed about AI advancements and continuously updating strategies and processes is crucial to remain competitive in the rapidly evolving AI landscape. This approach requires a commitment to ongoing learning, experimentation, and adaptation at all levels of the organisation. For instance, Netflix's culture of continuous learning and adaptation has been key to its success in leveraging AI for content recommendation and production (Netflix Technology Blog, 2020).

Strategies for fostering continuous learning and adaptation include:

1. Establishing partnerships with academic institutions and AI research organisations
2. Participating in industry consortiums and AI-focused events
3. Implementing regular AI trend analysis and horizon scanning
4. Encouraging employees to pursue ongoing AI education and certifications
5. Creating feedback loops to incorporate learnings from AI projects into future strategies

Companies like IBM have established dedicated AI research labs and collaborate with universities to stay at the forefront of AI innovation (IBM Research, 2021). By prioritising continuous learning and adaptation, organisations can ensure their AI strategies remain relevant and effective, enabling them to capitalise on new opportunities and address emerging challenges in the ever-changing AI landscape.

5. Threat and opportunity

Based on the analysis of our data, we identified the biggest threat and the biggest opportunity for companies adopting AI:

5.1 Biggest Threat: Lack of Formal Structures and Governance

The absence of formal AI governance, training, and impact assessment structures poses the most significant threat to successful AI adoption. It is most pressing at the Lone Rider stage, where businesses are unaware what AI tools are being used, what for and what data is being used. That's why Plain: consults for team-level awareness, understanding and adoption. This threat is multifaceted:

1. **Ethical and Legal Risks:** Without proper governance frameworks, companies risk developing or deploying AI systems that may violate ethical standards or legal regulations. This could lead to reputational damage, legal liabilities, and loss of public trust.
2. **Inefficient Resource Allocation:** The lack of formal structures can result in duplicated efforts, wasted resources, and missed opportunities for synergies across the organisation.
3. **Inconsistent Implementation:** Without standardised processes and guidelines, AI implementation may

vary wildly across different departments, leading to inconsistent results and difficulties in scaling successful initiatives.

4. Inability to Measure Impact: The absence of robust impact assessment structures makes it challenging to quantify the benefits of AI initiatives, justify further investments, or identify areas for improvement.
5. Security and Privacy Concerns: Inadequate governance structures may lead to insufficient safeguards for data privacy and security, potentially resulting in data breaches or misuse of sensitive information.

5.2 Biggest Opportunity: Strategic, Enterprise-wide AI Integration

The greatest opportunity lies in developing a comprehensive, enterprise-wide AI strategy that aligns with your overall business objectives. This means taking a good look at the processes you currently have in place, the tasks within these that are appropriate to introduce AI and training the team why the implementation is happening and the benefits it will bring. As we can see from the AI maturity model, it isn't a single leap to take but many steps. We recommend starting small by identifying a few, easy implementable, low-risk tasks to train the team on and then have a set learning period. Actively close the nervousness gap by upskilling everyone and listening to everyone's comments and experiences, learn from the good and the bad.

This opportunity encompasses:

1. Competitive Advantage: By strategically integrating AI across all business functions, companies can significantly enhance their operational efficiency, decision-making processes, and customer experiences, leading to a substantial competitive edge in their respective markets.
2. Innovation and New Business Models: A well-implemented AI strategy can drive innovation, enabling companies to develop new products, services, and business models that were previously unfeasible.
3. Data-Driven Culture: Enterprise-wide AI integration can foster a data-driven culture, improving decision-making at all levels of the organisation and enabling more agile responses to market changes.
4. Talent Attraction and Retention: Companies with advanced AI capabilities and a clear AI vision are more likely to attract and retain top talent, particularly in technical and leadership roles.
5. Cost Reduction and Efficiency Gains: Strategic AI implementation can lead to significant cost reductions through process automation, predictive maintenance, and optimised resource allocation.
6. Enhanced Customer Experience: AI can enable hyper-personalisation and improved customer service, leading to increased customer satisfaction and loyalty.
7. Scalability and Adaptability: A well-structured AI strategy allows companies to quickly scale successful initiatives and adapt to new technological advancements, ensuring long-term relevance and competitiveness.

By taking steps now you can position yourself and your team at the forefront of the AI revolution, driving sustainable growth and innovation in an increasingly AI-driven business landscape. The AI story is still being written, the sooner you get started, the greater skills you will discover. And if you need a team to help you analyse, implement and encourage then drop Plain a line at hello@makeitplain.uk

Cheers,
Becky & James

So let's make it Plain:

Plain: combines our agency intuition & experience with the speed of artificial intelligence, to provide you bespoke tactics for an enhanced creative process.

Plain: