

THE HUMAN SIDE OF AI · FREE GUIDE

Adopt AI **without losing** your people

The human reasons AI rollouts stall, and a five-minute readiness check to see whether yours is set up to succeed.

Your AI rollout will be decided by *people*, not technology.

Leaders are investing in AI tools, licences and training. Yet most rollouts underdeliver for a reason that has nothing to do with the technology: the people being asked to change were never really brought along.

The evidence is consistent. AI adoption is a behavioural and organisational change, and it quietly drives stress, resistance and disengagement when it's handled as an engineering exercise. The good news is that the opposite is also true: when people feel confident, safe and involved, adoption sticks and morale holds. Confidence is a protective factor you can build on purpose.

This short guide gives you two things:

- **The 7 human reasons AI rollouts stall:** the patterns that derail adoption, and what helps in each case.
- **A 5-minute Human-Side Readiness Check:** ten quick questions to show you where your rollout is strong and where it's exposed.

It's written for SME leaders, owners and the people teams who carry the change. Read it in ten minutes; act on it for years.

The 7 human reasons AI rollouts *stall*

1 It's run as a technology project, not a human change

Attention goes to tools, features and licences. The people actually doing the work, and how they feel about it, become an afterthought.

What helps: treat adoption as a change programme with people at the centre, not an IT deployment.

2 People feel their competence, and identity, is under threat

AI can feel like a verdict on someone's value or expertise. That quiet fear turns into quiet resistance long before anyone says it out loud.

What helps: name the fear openly and reframe AI as amplifying people's expertise, not replacing it.

3 Nobody answers "what does this mean for me?"

Uncertainty breeds anxiety and avoidance. Vague, upbeat reassurance often makes it worse, because it doesn't address the real question.

What helps: be specific, role by role, about what changes, what doesn't, and what's expected.

4 It's done to people, not with them

Change imposed from the top meets resistance, because people defend their autonomy. Mandating usage rarely creates genuine buy-in.

What helps: involve people in how AI is introduced. Participation lowers resistance dramatically.

5 Too much, too fast: technostress sets in

Overload, complexity and constant change overwhelm people. Stress and fatigue follow, and adoption stalls under the weight of it.

What helps: pace the rollout, give right-sized training, and protect people's workload.

6

Confidence is missing, so the tools go unused

Without safe ways to practise, people avoid AI even when it's right there. Capability and confidence have to be built, not assumed.

What helps: create low-stakes experimentation and relevant, practical use cases people can try today.

7

Trust hasn't been earned: fairness and ethics go unaddressed

Worries about monitoring, fairness and "where are the limits?" quietly erode willingness before adoption even begins.

What helps: be transparent, set clear boundaries, and keep human judgement in the loop.

The Human-Side *Readiness Check*

How it works: rate how true each statement is for your organisation today, from **1 (strongly disagree)** to **5 (strongly agree)**. Add up your ten answers for a score out of 50, then read what it means below.

1 = strongly disagree → 5 = strongly agree

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. We treat AI adoption as a people change, not just a technology rollout. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. Our people understand what AI means for their specific role. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. People have had a genuine say in how AI is being introduced. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Our team has safe, low-stakes ways to practise with AI. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. We've paced the rollout so people aren't overwhelmed. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Leaders here visibly use and support AI themselves. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. People feel safe admitting they're struggling or sceptical. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. We've been clear and fair about how AI use is monitored. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. We have clear boundaries on what AI should and shouldn't be used for. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. We track confidence and wellbeing, not just how much AI gets used. | <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> |

WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS

40-50

Strong human-side readiness. You're protecting morale and trust as you adopt. Keep reinforcing what's working, and watch your lowest-scoring statements so they don't slip.

25-39

Mixed: real gaps to close. Adoption will work in places and stall in others. Target your two or three lowest scores first; that's where the friction and risk are concentrated.

Below 25

At risk. Your rollout is likely to stall on the human side, whatever the tools can do. It's worth acting before momentum and morale erode. Small, deliberate moves make a fast difference.

Wherever you scored, the gaps are *fixable*.

The Human Side of AI helps SME leaders and their teams adopt AI in a way that builds confidence, lowers anxiety and protects engagement, through training, workshops and advisory grounded in psychology, not hype. Courses are launching soon.

Join the waitlist or book a 30-minute conversation →

About

The Human Side of AI is led by Michael Wakeham, who brings over twenty years as a director and operational leader inside SMEs, an MSc in Psychology, and a particular interest in how people really respond to digital systems. The premise is simple: most AI problems are people problems wearing a technical disguise, and they're solvable when you treat them that way.