



6 Ways to Close the AI Confidence Gap

New insights from Accenture signal a real need to get employees on board with and involved in more AI initiatives and conversations.

The pace of change in business isn't just picking up—it's compounding on itself. What took a year to unfold in 2023 now happens in a quarter, and leaders know they're facing more disruption this year than they saw last year. The question isn't whether things will keep accelerating, but whether organizations can actually handle it.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is driving most of this momentum and has moved well past the pilot program stage and into the daily reality of how companies operate. But while executives bet big on this technology, a disconnect is forming between the C-suite and everyone else, according to new research from Accenture.

In its latest *Pulse of Change* report, the company says that:

- 82% of C-suite leaders expect a higher level of change in 2026 versus one year ago (a 24-percentage-point gap compared to what employees think).

- 55% of C-suite leaders feel prepared for technological disruption in 2026, up from 49% from last year.
- 71% of leaders rank investment in digital tools as their top strategy for managing change, up sharply from 53% in 2025.
- AI remains the centerpiece of 2026 investment strategies, with 86% of C-suite leaders planning to increase AI investment in 2026.
- 78% of them now see AI as more beneficial to revenue growth than cost reduction, up from 65% in 2024.
- 32% of C-suite leaders use AI tools daily in their work, up from 8% in 2024.

But here's the disconnect: Accenture says worker confidence in organizational response remains uneven. "The positivity reverberating across the C-suite does not align with what their

workforce is experiencing, even though talent is the primary accelerator of AI scale," the firm points out, noting that:

- 23% of C-suite leaders say improved access to skilled talent and training would accelerate their ability to implement and scale AI.
- 38% of workers believe their organizations can respond effectively to technological disruption, and just 30% feel confident about how their company will handle talent disruption.
- 48% of workers feel secure in their jobs, down 11 percentage points from 59% compared to last year.
- 59% also believe that young professionals are having a harder time finding jobs due to automation and AI.

6 Ways to Bring People Along on the Journey

Right now, Accenture says AI is widely seen as a driver of revenue growth, even though just 32% of survey participants have achieved "sustained, enterprise-wide AI impact." About one-third of employees say they regularly work with AI agents, and just 27% say they're comfortable delegating tasks to those agents.

Some employees feel left out of the AI conversation and are unsure how the technology will ultimately affect their livelihoods. For example, just 20% feel like active co-creators in how AI changes their work and only 17% enjoy using AI, and seek new ways to apply it (down from 21% last year). Finally, 13% frequently encounter misleading and low-quality outputs when using AI.

Here are six ways companies can bring employees into the AI conversation:

- 1. Communicate early and often.** Don't just introduce tools and hope they're used. Tell employees why they're being implemented and how they'll change their day-to-day work.
- 2. Invest in hands-on training.** Move beyond webinars and give employees structured opportunities (e.g., sandbox pilots and guide use-case workshops) to experiment with AI tools.
- 3. Get input from the frontlines.** They can tell you what slows them down and what would actually make a difference.

4. Make it safe to try things. Give teams room to test AI tools and talk openly about what worked and what didn't.

5. Be honest about what changes and what doesn't. Show employees how AI skills fit into their future roles.

6. Set aside time for testing and feedback. Build short, focused sessions into the workweek where teams can apply AI to real tasks and compare results.