

PRODUCTIVE CONFIDENCE

THE MISSING LINK IN AI ROI.

Every company is buying AI tools. Few are seeing returns. The real multiplier isn't adoption figures or usage rates, it's people with **the confidence to apply AI productively**, turning hype into measurable business outcomes.



1. INTRODUCTION - STOP COUNTING SEATS

**‘X% of employees
have access.’**

**‘Y hours saved
per week.’**

**‘Z billion pounds of
value unlocked.’**

AI adoption numbers are everywhere. But let's be honest: most of it is smoke.

Procurement numbers don't equal value. Hours saved on paper don't mean hours invested in real business outcomes. And adoption statistics, while comforting in a board pack, don't move the bottom line.

At Makers, we see the pattern every day. The difference between companies that dabble in AI and those that profit from it comes down to one factor: **productive confidence**.

Not "I tried Copilot once."

Not "I asked ChatGPT to summarise a doc."

But **"I trust myself to use AI to deliver real work, faster, smarter, and better."**

This white paper is a call to cut through the noise. We'll show how UK organisations can turn AI confidence into productive confidence, the only measure that matters for ROI.

The message is simple: Stop counting licenses. Start measuring outcomes. Because the future won't be led by the companies with the most AI users, it will be led by the companies with the most productive learners.



2. THE UK ROI PROMISE, AND WHY IT'S MISUNDERSTOOD

AI is sold as a numbers game. Hours saved. Costs cut. Productivity doubled. And the UK headlines are enticing:

122 hours per year: Google's research found UK workers could save the equivalent of three weeks annually by automating admin tasks with generative AI (Reuters, 2025).

26 minutes per day: In Microsoft's trial with 20,000 UK public sector workers, staff reported saving nearly two work weeks a year using Copilot (Gov.uk, 2025).

30.6 million hours freed: TechMonitor estimates that automating repetitive processes across the public sector could unlock over thirty million hours weekly in the UK (TechMonitor, 2025).

On paper, AI looks like a revolution. In practice, most of those hours never get saved, most of those tools never get used. They assume that every software seat is actively used, every workflow changes, every employee adapts.

The reality in the UK tells a different story:

1/10	According to the CIPD, fewer than 1 in 10 UK employers feel confident their teams can adapt to fast-moving AI tools (Makers, AI Transition Playbook, 2025).
35%	35% of firms cite lack of expertise , and nearly a third point to cultural resistance as the biggest barriers to adoption (TechUK, 2025).

Even where AI is used, early productivity gains often mask “**workslop**” - poorly produced or redundant output that creates rework and slows teams down (Harvard Business Review, 2025).

This is why the ROI story gets distorted. We measure deployments, not learning. We track exposure, not outcomes. We celebrate pilots, but ignore the friction that stops them scaling.

At Makers, we argue the real multiplier isn't access to AI. It's productive confidence: teams that trust themselves to use AI in meaningful ways, changing not just how they work, but how much value they create.

“Nearly half of business leaders indicated concern about data accuracy or bias when adopting AI. The challenge isn't technical - it's about building governance, transparency and trust.”

IBM AI Adoption Survey, 2025



3. WHY ROI STALLS WITHOUT PRODUCTIVE CONFIDENCE

If the UK numbers look so promising, why aren't more organisations seeing the payback? Because adoption is often treated as a software rollout, not a people transformation. Download new skills. Install best practices. Reboot productivity.

Humans don't work that way.

According to TechUK (2025), 35% of UK firms cite lack of expertise as the main barrier to adoption, while nearly a third point to cultural resistance and cost concerns. These aren't technology problems. They're people problems.

“Around 70% of AI implementation challenges stem from people- and process-related issues, with only 20% attributed to technology problems.”

BCG Global AI Survey, 2024

The Behavioural Barriers

Routine disruption: AI doesn't just change tasks; it disrupts habits built over years. Staff often feel their hard-won expertise is being replaced. Without psychological safety, resistance sets in fast.	Confidence gap: The CIPD found only 1 in 10 UK employers believe their teams can adapt to AI. Tools are rolled out, but people hesitate — unsure if they're “allowed” to rely on AI for core work.
Equity gap: Women and mid-career professionals hold a higher share of AI-exposed jobs, yet adoption rates lag. This creates a new kind of digital divide, where the very groups most at risk of disruption benefit the least.	Leadership unpreparedness: According to PwC UK (2024), just 21% of UK leaders feel “very prepared” to manage AI's workforce impact. Without confident leadership, momentum evaporates before ROI can be realised.

Leadership as the Confidence Multiplier

Confidence starts at the top. Leaders set the tone for experimentation, legitimacy, and safe adoption. If managers don't model AI use, their teams won't follow. And in a UK context, many “accidental managers” already feel under-prepared. AI raises the bar: leaders must now be both people-literate and AI-literate.

When leaders demonstrate productive confidence, showing where AI adds value, acknowledging risks, and celebrating early wins, adoption accelerates. When they don't, even the most promising pilots stall.

Makers' own leadership programmes, from Transformative Digital Leader (Level 5) to Senior Tech Leader (Level 7), are built to develop exactly this confidence, helping leaders model confidence and guide their teams through disruption.



**TURNING AI ADOPTION
INTO MEASURABLE ROI**

THE PRODUCTIVE CONFIDENCE INDEX™

WHAT IS IT?

Productive confidence is the degree to which employees not only use AI tools, but trust themselves to apply them effectively to create measurable business outcomes.

It's not "have you tried AI?"

It's: "Do you know how to use AI in your core work, and can you prove it makes you more productive?"



THE FORMULA

Let's walk through a real-world scenario:

Company profile:

UK PROFESSIONAL SERVICES FIRM

250 employees

Deployed Microsoft Copilot and ChatGPT Enterprise **six months ago.**

 Copilot  ChatGPT

STEP 1: CALCULATE APPLICATION SCORE

They measure three things:

1. Weekly Active Use Rate	2. Workflow Integration Depth	3. Cross-Function Adoption
48% of employees use AI weekly for core tasks	35% of key workflows incorporate AI augmentation	7 out of 9 departments actively using AI
= 48 points	= 35 points	= 78 points

Application score (0-100):

$(48 + 35 + 78) \div 3 =$	54
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STEP 2:

CALCULATE CONFIDENCE SCORE

They run a quarterly pulse survey (1-10 scale) with four questions:

1. "I feel confident using AI to do my core job better"

Average: 6.5

2. "I trust AI-generated work to be accurate and useful"

Average: 6.1

3. "I feel supported by leadership to use AI in my work"

Average: 7.2

4. "I know how to troubleshoot when AI doesn't work as expected"

Average: 5.8

Confidence score (0-100)

6.4 (average) x 10

64

STEP 3:

CALCULATE OUTCOME SCORE

They measure three business impacts:

1. Productivity Conversion Rate

52% of employees report time saved was reinvested in strategic work

= 52 points

2. Quality Improvement Index

22% reduction in proposal rework

15% faster turnaround

= 37 points

3. Business Metric Movement

8% increase in revenue per employee

12% improvement in client satisfaction

= 50 points

Outcome score (0-100):

$(52 + 37 + 50) \div 3 =$

46



STEP 4:

CALCULATE FINAL PCI

Final PCI (0-100):

Application score	$0.3 \times 54 =$	16.2
Confidence score	$0.4 \times 64 =$	25.6
Outcome score	$0.3 \times 46 =$	13.8
Final PCI	$16.2 + 25.6 + 13.8 =$	55.6

With a PCI of 55.6, this firm sits in the “ROI Realised” band (51-70). AI is delivering measurable returns, but there’s room to grow—particularly in outcome conversion and workflow integration depth.

The diagnostic is clear:

Confidence is relatively strong (64)—leadership has done well in creating psychological safety

Application is moderate (54)—adoption is good but not yet organisation-wide

Outcome is the weakest link (46)—people are using AI, but business impact is still emerging

Action priorities based on PCI:



Double down on workflow integration (push Application Score to 65+)



Run “quick wins” showcases to boost outcome visibility (target Outcome Score of 55+)



Maintain confidence through continued leadership modelling and celebration

This is the power of PCI: it doesn’t just tell you “are we getting ROI?” It tells you where to focus next.



HOW TO MEASURE

The Productive Confidence Index isn't just a number—it's a management tool that connects AI adoption to business outcomes in ways traditional metrics can't.

PCI as a Leading Indicator of Financial ROI

Traditional ROI calculations are lagging indicators. By the time you measure “£X saved” or “Y% productivity gain,” months have passed. PCI gives you a leading indicator of whether those gains will materialize:

			PCI 71+
	PCI 31-50	PCI 51-70	Competitive advantage:
PCI 0-30	Emerging Value:	ROI Realised:	AI deeply embedded, continuous improvement culture established. ROI compounds quarter over quarter.
Phantom ROI: Tools deployed, licenses paid for, but minimal value realised. Expect traditional ROI calculations to disappoint.	Pockets of success, but organisation-wide impact is limited. ROI is starting to appear but isn't scaling.	Solid foundation across the business. Traditional ROI metrics now start showing meaningful returns.	

WHY IT MATTERS

Board-ready metric: goes beyond vanity adoption stats to track real ROI.

Diagnostic tool: reveals where confidence gaps (by function, gender, seniority) are blocking ROI.

Action lever: gives leaders a score they can improve by training, modelling, and celebrating AI use.

At Makers, we use the **Productive Confidence Index™** alongside our **SHIFT Framework™** to help organisations see the ROI multiplier in action. **It's how we move from licences bought to value realised.**

4. THE MAKERS SHIFT FRAMEWORK™ AS THE ROI MULTIPLIER

“Government trial participants saved an average of 26 minutes a day with Copilot.”

UK Cabinet Office, 2025

But those minutes only materialise when people feel confident enough to change how they work. That’s why Makers built the **SHIFT Framework™** - a practical path for converting AI confidence into productive confidence. Each stage tackles the people-side of adoption, and each one links directly to business returns.

The SHIFT Framework reframes adoption as a leadership task as much as a technical one. Leaders who model confidence and track real impact amplify ROI across the organisation.

SET THE FOUNDATIONS S	HARNESS AI SAFELY H	INTEGRATE LEARNING IN THE FLOW I	FUEL EVOLUTION F	TRACK MOMENTUM T
<p>Clear vision, named champions, and psychological safety.</p> <hr/> <p>ROI impact: Faster adoption curve. Instead of software gathering dust, employees know why AI matters, where to start, and how their work connects to business outcomes.</p>	<p>Guardrails, practical training, and safe sandboxes for experimentation.</p> <hr/> <p>ROI impact: Lower compliance risks, fewer “shadow IT” workarounds, and greater trust in legitimate AI use.</p>	<p>Role-specific application (reports, research, code, content).</p> <hr/> <p>ROI impact: Productivity gains where the work actually happens. In UK pilots, workers saved 122 hours a year when AI was embedded into their day-to-day routines.</p>	<p>Celebrate quick wins, showcase internal stories, and reimagine processes “AI-first.”</p> <hr/> <p>ROI impact: Compounding momentum, stronger engagement, and higher retention.</p>	<p>Measure confidence, capability, and business outcomes - not just activity logs.</p> <hr/> <p>ROI impact: Proof to the board in the metrics that matter: time saved, tasks automated, retention, promotions.</p>

5. CONFIDENCE IN ACTION

The companies winning with AI aren't the ones with the biggest budgets. They're the ones building productive confidence systematically.

LinkedIn Revenue Multiplier

The LinkedIn AI Adoption Survey, 2025 notes that 51% of SMBs using generative AI saw revenue increases of 10% or more, but only after systematic workforce preparation. They didn't just roll out tools. They built confidence first, starting with clear use cases and celebrating early wins before scaling.



The Growing Skills Premium

PwC's UK AI Jobs Barometer 2025 shows AI-skilled workers now earn 56% more than their peers, up from 25% the previous year. But here's what matters: this premium isn't just about knowing AI exists. It's about confidently applying AI in ways that deliver measurable value.



Microsoft's Public Sector Breakthrough

The 25 minutes per day saved by UK public sector workers using Copilot didn't happen by accident. It required structured confidence-building programs, clear guardrails, and permission to experiment. The time savings only materialised after people trusted the technology enough to integrate it into their actual work.



The pattern is clear:

Tools plus training = disappointment.
Tools plus confidence = transformation.



6. THE COST OF NOT UPSKILLING

Every unused seat, every stalled pilot, every disengaged employee adds up. Ignoring productive confidence is already costing UK businesses.

Wasted investment: TechUK (2025) shows lack of expertise is the top adoption barrier, leading to shelfware.

Stalled pilots: MIT Sloan (2025) found 95% of early AI projects failed to deliver measurable ROI. Microsoft UK confirms many firms remain “stuck in experimentation.”

Attrition risk: Replacing a mid-level engineer costs £30k+. Without upskilling, attrition drains productivity and culture.

Recruitment premiums: With UK competition for AI talent among the highest in Europe, over-reliance on external hires inflates costs.

This is the hidden tax of failing to upskill. Leadership inaction compounds the problem: when managers don't invest in their people, costs rise everywhere else.

7. ACTION PLAN FOR UK LEADERS

Turning AI confidence into productive confidence requires deliberate action.

1. Audit confidence gaps

Ask employees: “Does AI help you do your job better?” not just “Have you used it?”

2. Build Learning Quotient (LQ)

Embed adaptability into leadership and team training. LQ equips staff to learn, unlearn, and relearn - the foundation of AI fluency.

3. Make training role-specific

Tailor programmes to functions. A finance analyst's confidence looks different from a marketer's or an engineer's.

4. Integrate into daily work

Create micro-challenges (“optimise one workflow this week”) and celebrate quick wins.

5. Track outcomes, not activity

Measure productivity, retention, promotions, and confidence levels. Report these to the board as proof of ROI.

Leadership as driver: Leaders are the multipliers of confidence. They need to go first - modelling AI use, legitimising experimentation, and tracking outcomes.



AI will not transform your business because you bought the right tools. **It will transform your business when your people feel confident enough to use those tools productively.**

That's the real ROI multiplier: **productive confidence.**

The UK organisations leading the AI transition aren't counting usage stats. They're building learners who adapt, experiment, and apply AI in ways that deliver measurable outcomes - higher productivity, stronger retention, faster innovation.

“At Makers, we don't just train people in new technologies. We build the confidence that turns AI into ROI. Start with a PCI baseline, and see how fast productive confidence can multiply value in your business.”

Because the future won't be led by organisations with the most AI users.

It will be led by those with the most confident learners.

We build the learners. They build your business.

DISCOVER MAKERS AI PROGRAMMES

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