

Effective AI adoption in London

Key questions for executive teams

About this guide

BusinessLDN, in collaboration with Deloitte, has, over the past year, brought together major employers from financial services, technology, professional services, infrastructure, media and the education sector to build a unique, employer-led view of how AI is reshaping the workforce.

Our goal is to address the question “How can we ensure that AI is a force for good and a win-win for London’s economy and its workforce?”

Approaching this task, we’re mindful that both the technology and use of AI are evolving at pace. Against this backdrop, most firms are grappling with three strategic issues in considering their approach to AI:

1. How will AI affect my workforce now and in the future?
2. What’s the level of trust in the technology, and what does this mean for how I deploy it?
3. How do I scale the opportunity, whilst managing the financial costs of adoption?

Through our work, we’ve gained powerful and practical commercial insights into how AI is affecting jobs and skills in firms across the capital in real time. Much of the focus is on what it means for early careers as well as for existing workers.

AI ownership sits in different places in different organisations. Some are creating Chief AI Officer roles, others are combining responsibilities across Chief Technology Officer, Chief People Officer or Chief Operations Officer functions.

But wherever it sits, it is a whole leadership team issue - affecting workforce, culture, reputation – and so will impact every role in the business. Our findings show that to unlock productivity gains and to ensure that AI is used as a force for good, it is vital that the adoption and use of AI is being driven collectively across the leadership team and embedded throughout the organisation. One of the recurring themes from our discussions has been about doing AI *with* staff rather than *to* staff, so focusing on engagement, trust, training and bringing colleagues on the journey is vital.

To help share some of these insights, we have developed this short, B2B guide on questions that executive leadership teams might wish to consider in rolling out and deepening their AI adoption.

It is not designed to tell you what to do or claim to be the best way to ensure AI adoption. It is also not intended to be a comprehensive list of imaginable scenarios! Every organisation has its own set of circumstances and is best placed to judge. What it does try to do is capture some of the key issues that have emerged in our conversations with senior business leaders and provide a set of prompt questions to help surface these issues – and help you think through how they might apply to your organisation.

We have broken down these questions by functional role, reflecting the shared responsibility across the senior leadership team for ensuring the successful roll-out of AI now and in the future.

Chief Executive Officer

The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is responsible for setting the overall strategy for the adoption and use of AI.

They will likely have the overarching questions about trust in the tech, how to scale the opportunity, and what it means for the size and shape of their workforce at the front of their minds.

Our discussions have highlighted that, as with so many issues, leadership and role-modelling in the use of AI really matter, and the CEO should make sure they don't fall into the trap of "do as I say, not do as I do" on AI.

Key questions for the Chief Executive Officer include:

- What are our biggest AI opportunities and risks?
- Do we have an AI policy that is clear and has buy-in from the Board and staff?
- Where are we positioned relative to our competitors and other sectors; what are the upstart challengers doing?
- Have we got the right governance in place?
- Can I explain what we are using AI for, and why?

"London is at the sharp end of the AI revolution. A common theme throughout our discussions is just how much this is an issue that touches on all roles and functions – from return on investment to risk and reputation – this is a cross-organisation endeavour "
Muniya Barua, Deputy Chief Executive, BusinessLDN

Chief Finance Officer

The Chief Finance Officer (CFO) is responsible for ensuring that the firm is getting good value for money out of its investment in AI, licences and associated training.

Our discussions have revealed that firms are so far finding it hard to calculate and demonstrate a return on investment from AI. Our discussions have shown that productivity savings are often hard to “add up” as the efficiencies are spread across multiple tasks and individuals, so putting the time saved to good use can be challenging.

Alongside the Chief People Officer, the CFO will have a big say in shaping the right incentives across the firm for use of AI, and they will lead on how it might change revenue models in the future.

The CFO will also want to ensure they are comfortable with how AI could potentially change the financial controls that need to be in place, the financial information that AI can gain access to, and how it can help with forecasting, reporting and financial insights.

Key questions for the Chief Finance Officer include:

- What is the total cost of our AI deployment, including licences, implementation, training and use of tokens?
- Can we quantify the productivity gains to calculate the return on investment?
- Are we able to harness the efficiency savings that are spread across individuals and teams, and how are we using the time saved?
- Is our revenue model, for example, the use of billable hours in professional or legal services, sustainable in an era of AI?
- Are the reward and incentive structures that we are putting in place to encourage the use of AI resulting in the right behaviours?
- To what extent do we want AI to be able to generate and approve financial transactions, and do our financial controls put sufficient guardrails around this?
- Do our contracts include all the necessary AI clauses, including around use and ownership of client data?

Chief People Officer

The Chief People Officer (CPO) has a central role to play in the adoption and roll-out of AI across the business. In many organisations, overall executive responsibility is assigned to them.

They will own the question of what AI means for my workforce now, and in the future.

The CPO will be experimenting with the forms of training that ensure the existing workforce can get the best out of AI, recognising the different archetypes that exist in most firms: the enthusiasts who are relentless about leveraging the opportunities; the in-betweeners, who know it's the right thing to do, but are too busy on the treadmill to really figure it out; and the left-behinds, who are either super-busy or have little interest in change.

The CPO will also be working out what it means for their future skill needs, and they will be grappling with what the likely shape of the organisation will look like in the future.

Key questions for the Chief People Officer include:

- How will AI change the work we need people to do: what work is changing, and in what way?
- Do we have the skills and capabilities to use AI well?
- How do we scale the use cases so that we are maximising the benefits across all colleagues?
- Where do the productivity benefits of using AI go?
- What training is working well and delivering results across a workforce with differing levels of capability, comfort and appetite for use of AI?
- How do I build the talent pipeline in the future, including how to ensure future generations have the understanding and critical thinking to run alongside AI?
- How do we need to adapt our reward and performance management systems to reflect an AI-enabled workplace?
- Are all employees aware of their responsibilities and permissions for use of AI?
- Do we have the culture to support our vision for how we'd like to use AI, including the right mix of inquisitiveness to experiment, respect for responsibilities and a focus on human interaction where it matters?

“AI is allowing our graduates to move more quickly into higher-value work by automating much of the routine analysis and administrative tasks that traditionally formed part of early-career roles.

“Rather than reducing our graduate intake, we're continuing to recruit at scale while placing greater emphasis on skills such as critical thinking, problem solving and the ability to work effectively alongside AI.”

Dan Scott, Chief Data Scientist and Head of AI (UK & Ireland), WSP

“Through our research and client work, we see very different levels of AI adoption across the workforce. Broadly, there are three groups: the enthusiasts moving fast and driving change, the experimenters still finding their feet, and those at risk of being left behind – often because they lack the confidence, skills or time to engage.

“This is reflected in Deloitte’s inaugural GenAI Workforce Survey, which found a core of workers are using AI at least daily, a middle group who have used it – but do so less frequently – and a third who haven’t used it at all.

“The challenge for organisations is how they bridge those adoption gaps. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Ultimately, AI is more of a people challenge than it is a technology challenge.”

Alex Kemp, Human Capital AI Leader, Deloitte

Chief Operations Officer

The Chief Operations Officer (COO) will be preoccupied with questions about how AI changes the way the business is run, and they will likely personally own the boardroom question: “How do we scale the opportunity?”

Our discussions have highlighted that bigger prizes can be unlocked by tackling the biggest AI disruptor of all: instead of deploying AI on a task basis, some organisations are starting with the end outcome and re-imagining how to get there. That massively cuts across role types and traditional departmental responsibilities but is something that COOs will be grappling with. COOs will also be concerned with the operational resilience and reliability of AI, and what the failovers are.

Key questions for the Chief Operations Officer include:

- What are the processes where AI can change and enhance our operating model?
- Can successful AI pilots and pockets of good practice be scaled across the business?
- Do we understand how the bite-sized time savings and efficiency gains are being aggregated and deployed across the business?
- Have we reviewed our operational resilience, and could we continue to operate if the AI model becomes unavailable or untrusted?
- Have we stepped back and looked at how AI could improve the end outcome, rather than just deploying it to make existing processes more efficient?

Chief Technology Officer

The Chief Technology Officer (CTO) will often be the person that the Board and Executive turn to for steering the AI strategy, so their first job should be to emphasise it's a collective responsibility.

Their focus is likely to be on the enabling technologies.

They will likely work closely with the Chief Risk Officer to understand any security risks posed by adoption of the technology and with the Chief People Officer to ensure colleagues understand how to benefit from the technology on offer but also the risks associated with using it.

Key questions for the Chief Technology Officer include:

- Have we got the right underlying data, and are we organising it properly to capitalise on the productivity gains that AI has to offer?
- What data and systems can we allow AI to access without creating unacceptable security, privacy or operational risks?
- Are we clear on which AI tools offer the best solutions for different types of tasks?
- Have we worked through the classic 'make or buy' decision to understand what technology we are happy to purchase from third parties, and what do we need to develop or tailor for ourselves?
- Do we genuinely know what tools our employees are using, including those that don't have formal corporate approval?
- How do we guard against increasingly sophisticated AI-enabled attacks, and are our cyber security defences sufficient?
- Is our kill switch effective if AI goes rogue, and what do our failover systems need to look like if AI becomes unavailable?
- Have we got the right engagement between the technology specialists and all employees to move past the answer always being "no"?

63%

Of the entire UK
workforce has used
GenAI

1 in 3

GenAI users do so
without their
employer's
knowledge

35%

GenAI users hear
their leaders speak
about it without a
good understanding

50%

GenAI users have
received no training

Source: **Deloitte GenAI workforce survey**, September 2026
<https://www.deloitte.com/uk/en/issues/generative-ai/genai-workforce-survey.html>

Chief Risk Officer

The Chief Risk Officer (CRO) has a key role to play in the successful adoption of AI, typically taking a lead role in setting the organisation's risk appetite, identifying and assessing the risks posed by AI, monitoring emerging threats and building appropriate controls to mitigate these risks.

For AI adoption, they will likely work closely with the Chief Technology Officer on the security and data risks and with the Corporate Affairs Director on reputational risks.

Given the rapidly evolving nature of AI, a big role for the CRO is to routinely test and challenge whether risks are sufficiently understood and controlled across the business functions.

Key questions for the Chief Risk Officer include:

- Are we clear on our risk appetite for use of AI and is it well communicated?
- Are the risks associated with using AI understood at Board level and at all levels across the organisation?
- Who owns AI risks across the business, and who is accountable if they go wrong?
- Is there a proper process in place for approving use cases?
- Have we got a disaster recovery system in place if AI becomes unavailable, goes wrong or goes rogue?
- Who is responsible for approving new AI tools before employees use them?
- Do we know how AI is being used across our supply chain, and are appropriate controls in place?

Corporate Affairs Director

The Corporate Affairs Director (CAD) will likely have issues around reputation and trust at the front of their minds.

They should be leading on topics such as whether decisions made by AI can be explained if challenged, be across potential political and regulatory risk, and have comms plans in place for scenarios when things don't go to plan.

Their mantra might be "just because we can, doesn't mean we should".

Key questions for the Corporate Affairs Director include:

- Can decisions made by AI be explained if challenged?
- Do we know where we stand on IP ownership and use of copyrighted material?
- Would customers and stakeholders expect us to be using it in this way?
- What are the political and regulatory limitations to be aware of; are all colleagues aware of how these differ across international jurisdictions and market segments?
- Have we got a comms plan in place if something goes wrong, for example around offensive content, misuse of staff or customer data, inaccurate information or something going viral?

“BrainStation partners with large organisations to guide them through the human side of AI and digital transformation. This includes guiding partners through process definition, standardisation and evolution, using AI as a core accelerator. Through this work, we have seen a dramatic decrease in the time required to take an idea to market, run a campaign, or launch a new digital product or feature for their customers. Timelines continue to compress, and what used to take months now takes weeks, if not days. We see both more and better outputs because of this!”

Jason Field, Founder & CEO, Brainstation

“At Sky, we see AI as an opportunity to help our people work smarter, improve experiences and focus our time where human judgement adds most value. But adoption has to be responsible: we keep people involved in important decisions, check AI outputs for accuracy and apply clear safeguards around data, trust and accountability. In areas such as journalism and creativity, that human oversight is particularly important – AI can enhance how we work, but it doesn’t replace the judgement, rigour and editorial standards that underpin our work.”

Abi Goodwin, Group Director - People Experience, Sky

Key lessons learned



Treat AI as an organisational transformation challenge, not a technical or IT-led one. Workforce strategy matters, so focus on working out the future skills you will need to complement an AI-enabled world of work. Reputational challenges should be owned across all functions.



AI adoption is best done with staff, not to staff. Focus on building trust, engagement and bringing people into the process of where and how AI can bring benefits.



AI adoption is uneven. Have a plan to support everyone: enable the enthusiasts to flourish, engage the middle and don't leave people behind.



One-size-fits-all won't work. Top-down programmes and self-serve catalogues quickly become overwhelming or out of date. What does seem to work is peer-led learning, local sharing of good practice, short micro-modules and sustained coaching. Think Duolingo meets AI training.



The biggest gains come from redesigning outcomes, not automating existing tasks. This is hard, but take the time to step back. And with AI productivity wins often scattered across individuals and teams, working out how to harness these efficiency gains that are spread around the organisation is the key to getting a return on investment from AI.

Want to find out more or get involved?

To find out more about BusinessLDN's AI activities, visit the AI section of our website [here](#).

Read our AI blogs:

- From our [first SteerCo](#), focusing on exploring the roles and activities where AI is being deployed today and in the future;
- From our [second SteerCo](#), focusing on re-skilling, re-training and workforce strategy keeping pace; and
- From our [most recent SteerCo](#), focusing on what business leaders are learning about the next phase of AI adoption.

Read our 10-point plan submission to the Mayor's AI taskforce [here](#).

Listen to our podcast on what the rise of AI will mean for London with Martha Lane Fox and WSP [here](#).

If you'd like to get involved:

Please contact Mark Hilton or Matthew Fell for further details on our upcoming AI activity, including our roundtables for functional leads, how we're working with the Mayor's taskforce to help take forward its proposals and our planned work on trust in AI.

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