Using Communication Forums to Introduce AI to an Organization

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January 2026

When introducing artificial intelligence (AI) to an organization, it is important for leadership to engage in open conversation forums throughout the organization. This will help employees understand what AI adoption is meant to accomplish and how it may impact them. It is highly recommended that email not be used to inform employees about how AI is being adopted in the organization. With headlines in the news about jobs vanishing due to AI adoption, employees may be anxious about their job security when AI is introduced.

These AI Communication forums should be used to openly discuss questions such as:

- Why are we adopting AI?
- Where could AI be introduced?
- How might jobs be impacted?
- What tasks could be impacted?
- When could adoption of AI take place?
- Will there be training?
- What else could be automated and when?
- Will AI support rather than supplant staff roles?

These forums are a way to reduce the rumor mill, breakroom misinformation, and provide clarity for employees. They can be used to successfully introduce AI change management and reduce resistance, while helping leadership get a pulse of the organization and provide employees with an opportunity to articulate their concerns about AI.

These forums need to:

- Be well designed to provide mutual education
- Have experienced facilitators
- Make employees feel they are invited into the conversation

- Be designed to help draw out the silent majority
- Use small groups to help those who are silent or reticent feel comfortable discussing in a smaller group setting
- Not let a few voices dominate
- Have clarity about the specific effect of the AI system on their jobs
- Allow anonymous questions in advance, thus allowing even the most hesitant voices to be heard
- Be substantive, as employees will quickly see through a hollow gesture
- Be well organized so that a meeting summary is sent out that clearly notes any unresolved issues

During these forums:

- Leadership must be willing to actively listen and tell the truth
- Use inclusive language – "We are adopting AI together" vs. "AI is coming and you cannot stop it"
- Focus on how AI can complement rather than replace employees
- Help employees understand the what, why, and how of AI
- Show examples of how AI has streamlined repetitive tasks while freeing up time for strategic decision-making
- Share the results of any pilots that have been done in the organization
- Focus on easing anxieties, building trust, and discussing honestly how AI might be used and not used
- Connect AI adoption to the organization's mission
- Explain what AI can and cannot do – AI may help clean data, but decisions remain human-led. AI could free us to focus on higher-value work
- Discuss compliance, ethical, and privacy protections in place – AI governance policies and guardrails
- If possible, develop a simple flowchart showing "Tasks Today" vs. "Tasks with AI" to help demonstrate benefits of AI and where it will be introduced
- Highlight benefits – emphasize how AI can streamline processes, reduce the burden of mundane tasks, and enhance and expand current jobs
- Discuss how any time saved could be reinvested, rather than focusing on efficiency and job reductions

Summary:

Any AI change can be unsettling, but when employees feel they are part of the process, they can transition from skeptics to stakeholders. Position AI as a partner and not a replacement. Remind employees that AI has limitations and requires human judgment and oversight, especially for sensitive communications or fact-checking. Leadership should prioritize transparent communication and ongoing engagement to help employees feel informed and supported throughout the AI adoption process.