Uncovering the AI fault line: New study exposes deep disparities and contradictions in workplace AI adoption

The Adaptavist Group study reveals 42% of AI leaders think their company's AI claims are over-inflated, with AI adoption fuelling fear, risk, and redundancies

LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM, September 24, 2025 / EINPresswire.com/ -- As businesses around the world grapple with AI adoption, value, and ethics, new research from The Adaptavist Group has unearthed deep-rooted contradictions in how companies are approaching and implementing the technology, making it a dream for some and a dystopia for others.

Conducted as part of the company's latest Digital Etiquette: Unlocking the AI gates report, the survey of 900 professionals responsible for introducing and onboarding AI across the UK, US, Canada, and Germany uncovered a major fault line between the 42% who believe their company's AI claims are over-inflated - the AI 'sceptics' - and the 36% - the AI 'realists' - who do not.

% of AI leaders who report time savings

% of AI leaders who report the AI adoption is tied to performance KPIs

For the AI 'sceptics' - leaders who think their company's claims are overhyped - the technology brings perceived threats and fear: a huge 65% believe their company's stance on AI puts customers at risk of financial, psychological, or physical harm, vs. just 9% of those who believe their organisation makes realistic claims about AI's promise.

Despite this bleak outlook, the organisations overhyping AI are ploughing millions into the technology: 34% of 'sceptic' leaders had spent between £1m and £10m on implementing the technology in the last 12 months, and 8% had invested over £10m. Whilst this is more than their 'realist' peers, 31% of whom spent between £1m and £10m, and 6% over £10m, the slightness of the gap highlights that the difference in attitudes is not likely to be linked to investment levels.

% of AI leaders who report no formal AI training

In companies with 'sceptic'-led adoption, pressure, not results, is the driver behind AI implementation: 84% said they encourage their team to use the technology because they feel they should, rather than because it delivers specific value, compared to 58% of 'realists'. This gulf between respondents - the very people integrating AI into organisations - indicates that the technology is being foisted upon teams from the top down, perhaps without the requisite support or training.

% of AI leaders who believe their organisation's stance on AI puts customers at risk

Underneath the differences in attitudes lie disparities in value extracted from AI. AI leaders in companies that take a more measured approach to AI adoption report better tangible gains. They are more confident in the technology, more willing to experiment, and more likely to see improvements in work quality, time efficiency, and output.

The findings arrive at a critical time, as companies grapple with widespread AI rollouts amid employee anxiety. Hype remains strong, yet more professionals are drifting into disillusionment, and highly-publicised studies from organisations such as MIT claim that 95% of generative AI pilots are failing. In the wake of the MIT report, The Adaptavist Group's research highlights how company culture, perception, and implementation can wield enormous influence over AI outcomes.

The carrot vs. the stick

AI-'sceptic' leaders, who feel compelled to deliver results quickly or meet lofty expectations,

report a culture of fear, blame, and stringent restrictions. In these organisations, 67% of respondents worry that AI adoption puts jobs at risk, compared with just 10% of less jaded leaders. Similarly, 80% of leaders who believed their company was over-inflating AI claims said that their organisation leverages AI innovation to reduce headcount, compared to 39% of those companies with realistic expectations.

42% of AI 'sceptic' leaders say they hide their AI usage at work for fear of repercussions, versus only 6% of 'realists', likely stemming from poor workplace culture. Nearly half (48%) of those in over-inflating organisations worry about being incorrectly accused of using AI, while 45% feel that colleagues perceive AI users as less competent. This is a stark contrast from the 15% and 5% of 'realists' who believe the same.

Differences in organisational attitudes towards measurement may also offer some insight into the polarised experiences reported by the two groups, with 'sceptic' leaders under more pressure to deliver measurable outcomes. Respondents from 'sceptic' leaders say their company is also more likely to tie AI usage to performance KPIs (50% vs. 28%) and discourage experimentation (66% vs. 16%), indicating that where companies perceive AI as a high-stakes obligation, the culture becomes restrictive, stifling curiosity and experimentation.

Gaps in training may compound these pressures, setting AI 'sceptic' leaders up to fail: 59% of leaders in companies where AI is overinflated report no formal AI training, compared to 16% of realists. The Adaptavist Group's previous report uncovered the importance of training and widespread disparity in terms of access to it.

Unlocking the value of new technology

By contrast, AI leaders in companies who felt that AI's value had been communicated honestly reported far greater benefits. 58% say AI has improved work quality (vs. 43% of leaders who felt their companies overinflated AI claims), 61% report time savings (vs. 36%), and 48% note increased output (vs. 35%).

These organisations also report fewer ethical and operational challenges. Concerns over plagiarism, hallucinations, inaccuracies, and bias are dramatically lower among leaders in 'realist' organisations where more training had been delivered:

- Only 37% of 'realists' are concerned with ethics and plagiarism issues, compared with 74% of 'sceptic' leaders.
- 21% of 'realists' worry about hallucinations, versus 72% of 'sceptic' leaders.
- 22% flag bias concerns, compared to 70% in reportedly overhyped environments.

The better-trained 'realists' also spend less time correcting AI outputs, reflecting the stronger guidance they have received: 25% regularly edit or regenerate responses versus 74% of sceptic leaders. Leaders in 'realist' organisations foster experimentation, build trust in AI-generated

work, and create environments where both people and technology can thrive.

AI disparity set to widen despite mass investment

Rapid tool proliferation also contributes to the divide and hints that 'sceptic' leaders might have fallen victim to "too much, too soon". 74% of AI 'sceptic' leaders feel that too many AI tools are being introduced too quickly, compared to 24% of 'realists', and 67% of 'sceptic' leaders expect their AI usage to decrease over the next 12 months, compared to just 9% of realists.

This highlights that even with significant investment, perception, and approach, whether AI is seen as a high-pressure obligation or a manageable, beneficial tool determines whether organisations experience a 'dream' or 'dystopia.' CEOs and CTOs must ask if they have provided their AI leaders with the correct training and mindset to allow growth.

Jon Mort, CTO at The Adaptavist Group, commented: "The contrast between leaders who are confident in their organisation's AI journey and those grappling with poor outcomes, rushed implementations, and a reluctant workforce is stark.

"Which side of the coin your company lands on appears to depend on perception, but there are factors beneath which create those perceptions. Organisations who treat AI tools simply as replacements for existing jobs or tasks, without considering their system of work as a whole, are set up to fail. Pushed to 'just adopt' without considering training and time to test, refine, and build the right support structures, leaders are far more likely to find themselves in a culture of fear around AI and diminished confidence in the value of human input.

"To unlock AI's true value, organisations must be quick to experiment, but take time to thoughtfully roll out fully, by investing in training, and creating an environment where both people and technology can thrive."

-ENDS-

Methodology:

A survey of 900 respondents evenly split across the UK, US, Canada and Germany.

Respondents were identified as 'business leaders' who are responsible for implementing AI into the organisation. 'Business leaders' were defined as those in the following positions:
- C-Level (e.g. CEO, CFO), Owner, Partner, President
- Vice President (EVP, SVP, AVP, VP)
- Director (Group Director, Sr. Director, Director)
- Manager

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We are experts at delivering innovative software, tailored solutions, and quality services across some of the world's most trusted technology ecosystems, including Atlassian, AWS, monday.com, GitLab, and many more.

The Adaptavist Group exists to support clients' day-to-day workflows, business transformation, and high-growth strategies. We offer a comprehensive but always evolving range of services across key practices: DevOps, work management, ITSM, AI, agile, and cloud. Our depth of knowledge across these practices unites us in our mission to help businesses embrace continuous transformation and make it their competitive advantage.

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