

Closing the AI confidence gap.

Your checklist for making AI adoption a long-term success.



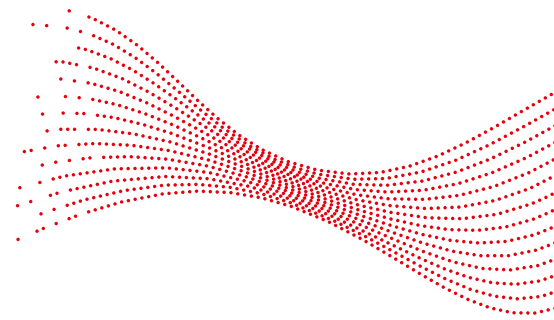
Within organisations across Europe, there's a growing AI confidence gap between leaders and employees. Adoption is rising, but 35% of EU leaders have reported missing skills, with teams feeling unsure or reluctant about using AI tools.¹

Sharp Europe research has identified some of the key reasons behind this gap. Read on to discover five ways to better support teams, increase confidence, and ensure your business is AI-ready.

Five ways to build AI confidence

1 Get a clear picture of AI usage

Shadow AI – where employees use AI without disclosing it – is a growing issue across Europe, meaning leaders should implement tools and techniques to regulate usage.



✓ Deploy an anonymous internal survey to understand which public AI tools your teams are already using to complete daily tasks.

✓ Run an IT discovery network audit to identify unauthorised software seats, unapproved browser extensions, or API calls communicating with external AI models.

✓ Document all active use cases across marketing, sales, customer support, and operations to map where automated tools are currently driving the most value.



45%

of leaders believe employees use AI without disclosing it¹

A close-up photo of a woman with blonde hair, smiling and looking towards the camera.

44%
of leaders think employees are signing up to tools without their knowledge¹

2 Map your AI supply chain

If your organisation is using third-party software that recently integrated AI, it's important to review their privacy policies to check for any updates that could affect security and data sharing.

✓ Check if your CRM or accounting software recently auto enabled an AI feature that summarises client emails or financial records using a public model.

✓ Review whether your customer support or helpdesk platform has introduced AI-powered chat summarisation, ticket classification, or response suggestions.

✓ Audit collaboration and productivity tools to see if newly added AI assistants are analysing internal documents, meeting transcripts, or emails.

3 Set strict security and privacy rules

Fear of reputational damage may trigger employees to hide data breaches. Make sure to protect your business from GDPR fines, client trust issues, and non-compliance with NIS2 and the UK CSR Bill.



Create an internal 'IT panic button' email address where accidental breaches can be reported within minutes, allowing IT to begin damage control as soon as possible.



Add a clause to your client contracts along the lines of: 'We utilise closed-loop, enterprise-grade AI tools to assist in data processing; however, your proprietary data is never used to train public AI models'.



Establish a data classification system, providing clear rules on what data is strictly banned from public AI prompts.



Over 1/3

of leaders worry about handing data to big tech¹



4

Align your existing frameworks

AI shouldn't be exempt from existing security frameworks. Unregulated AI use could cost you lucrative enterprise contracts or invalidate your current security certifications, so make sure to take corrective action to avoid this.



Deploy a licensed, vetted tool like Microsoft Copilot across all company devices, maintaining strict access controls.



If an AI tool causes a data leak, establish who on your team is responsible for drafting the 24-hour early warning report required by the regulators.



Prepare for the possibility of a regulated client asking you to sign a vendor agreement proving your staff isn't feeding their sensitive operational data into ungoverned models.

5

Give employees the support they need

Provide hands-on training to close the gap between leadership expectations and employee capabilities.



Consider hosting AI workshops with a focus on specific roles, such as a 'How to safely summarise CVs in Copilot' for the HR team.



Ensure leadership actively communicate that using AI efficiently is a skill, not a shortcut.



Establish an internal AI champion to support hesitant colleagues.



35%

of employees cite a lack of tech skills as a concern about AI¹

Prepare for your AI transformation

Sharp DX can help you close the AI confidence gap through our AI readiness assessment. Taking only 20 minutes of your time, our expert team will ask you a series of questions to help understand your current maturity level, before making tailored recommendations for the next steps in your AI transformation journey.

Learn more about Sharp's AI services on our AI hub

GET IN TOUCH

¹ Sharp research conducted by Censuswide from 17 June 2025 – 25 June 2025 and responded to by 2,500 business owners in companies with 50-250 employees across Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. The sample size for each of these markets, including the UK, was 250.

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