

The AI Execution Gap: From Ambition to Impact



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Imprint Participants

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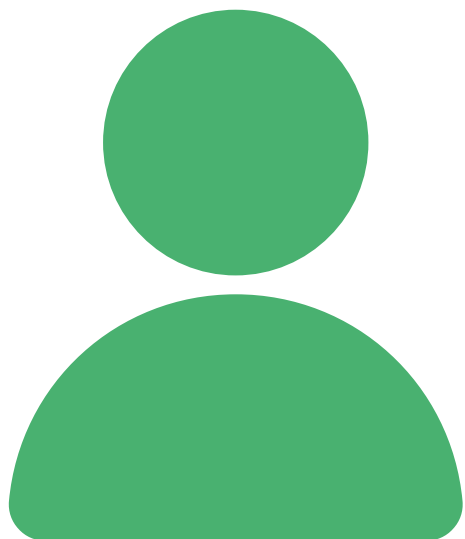
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Section 1

Executive Summary



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Why AI Matters Now

AI ambition is no longer the problem. Execution is.

Investment in artificial intelligence is accelerating at unprecedented levels. This investment, however, is not consistently translating into sustained business value. In several instances, these initiatives are failing to scale beyond isolated use cases, resulting in an ever-widening gap between AI ambition and AI impact.

Our point of view is clear: The next phase of AI advantage will come from organisational maturity, not from tool access.

The Transformation Alliance's (TTA) research across seventy-five organisations spread over several industries shows that a clear execution gap currently exists. Many businesses continue to approach AI as a series of disconnected initiatives, rather than as embedded enterprise activities. These organisations are often trapped in an experimentation cycle, where their AI initiatives are launched before clear ownership or governance has been established.

In the rush to not be left behind by competitors, several businesses have not put in place the necessary frameworks to ensure efficient scaling of the technology. Though there is a clear drive to embed AI into organisational strategy, the execution of this strategy is currently falling short. The strongest organisations are not those with the most pilots. They are the ones who ensure their AI activities are supported by the appropriate operating models, workforce enablement activities, and measurable value tracking frameworks.

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What This Report Provides

Whilst new tools, platforms, and use cases are emerging at pace, senior leaders are increasingly facing a more fundamental set of questions which this report is designed to answer:

How mature is our organisation's approach to AI? (See Sections 3 & 6)

- How can organisations assess and benchmark their AI maturity?
- Which organisational capabilities matter most for long-term success?

Why are some organisations scaling AI successfully while others remain stuck in pilot mode? (See Section 4)

- What are the most common barriers preventing AI initiatives from scaling?
- Why are operating models, workforce adoption, and governance becoming more important than technology alone?

How are the most mature organisations creating value from AI, and what can we learn from them? (See Sections 4 & 5)

- What common characteristics exist across higher-maturity organisations?
- How are leading organisations embedding AI into day-to-day operations?
- How do approaches vary across industries and regions?

What capabilities do organisations need to build now? (See Sections 4 & 6)

- What skills, governance structures, and delivery models are becoming critical?
- How should organisations approach workforce adoption and change management?

How can organisations remain adaptable in a rapidly evolving AI landscape? (See Sections 6 & 7)

- How can leaders respond to the pace of technological change?
- What does successful long-term AI scaling look like?

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Drawing on our assessments across multiple sectors and regions, including organisations headquartered across the United Kingdom, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, and several additional international markets, this report examines how organisations are embedding AI in practice and how levels of AI maturity vary across industries and geographies. While most participating organisations were European, the study also incorporates broader international perspectives through selected interviews and cross industry case study analysis.

The findings presented in this report are intended to help leaders identify where their primary capability gaps exist, understand how they interact, and prioritise the actions most likely to unlock sustained value.



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Where AI Execution Breaks Down

Our research sample indicates that the barriers to AI adoption are rarely simply due to the technology itself. Instead, these barriers are often a set of systemic organisational challenges. Across the organisations studied, three constraints emerged consistently as the primary barriers to scale:

- **Disconnected Operating Models:** Successful AI pilots are often not designed with scale in mind. AI capability frequently remains concentrated within isolated teams, creating dependency bottlenecks and limiting broader adoption. Without clear ownership and integration into core business processes, use cases remain fragmented and fail to translate into enterprise-wide capability.
- **Limited Workforce Adoption:** Employees are not sufficiently equipped, incentivised, or supported to integrate AI into their day-to-day work. Long standing ways of working often produce a culture which is resistant to change. The potential benefits of AI solutions are not clearly communicated by leadership teams and as a result, tools remain underutilised and potential productivity gains are left on the table.
- **Absence of Value Tracking:** Organisations frequently lack the required mechanisms to reliably measure the impact of the initiatives they introduce. There is often misalignment between whether personal or organisational productivity is being prioritised. Without clearly pre-defined success metrics, it becomes difficult to prioritise investment and consistently demonstrate ROI.

These narratives are emphasised clearly by the scores shown in Figure 1. These constraints reinforce a broader notion that successful AI adoption is less dependent on access to technology, and more dependent on the organisational readiness to operationalise it effectively.

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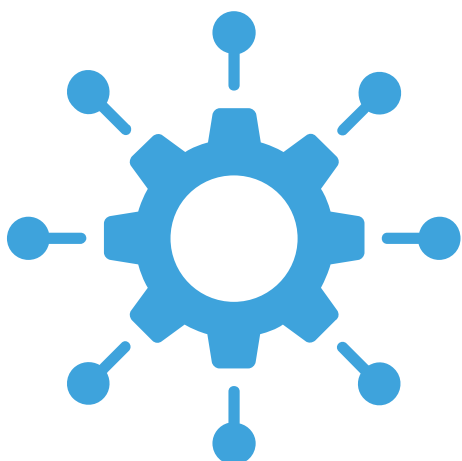
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From Fragmentation to Maturity

To examine this execution gap more systemically, the report introduces an **AI Maturity Framework** built around **eight capabilities** identified as critical to scaling AI effectively. Together, these pillars span the enterprise landscape, including strategy, operating model, workforce capability, governance, technology, and value realisation.

Our findings reveal a clear adoption deficit currently exists. Organisations are investing heavily in AI strategy, but comparatively less in the capabilities required to scale delivery. As seen in Figure 1, strategic direction and workforce capability are the areas in which organisations are prioritising at present, however operating model maturity and workforce adoption activities emerge as the most consistent barriers to scale. This is a theme which is echoed across industries, with Figure 2 highlighting that regardless of relative sector strengths, these are the categories which are providing the most persistent challenges. Section 5 of this research explores these industrial trends in more detail.



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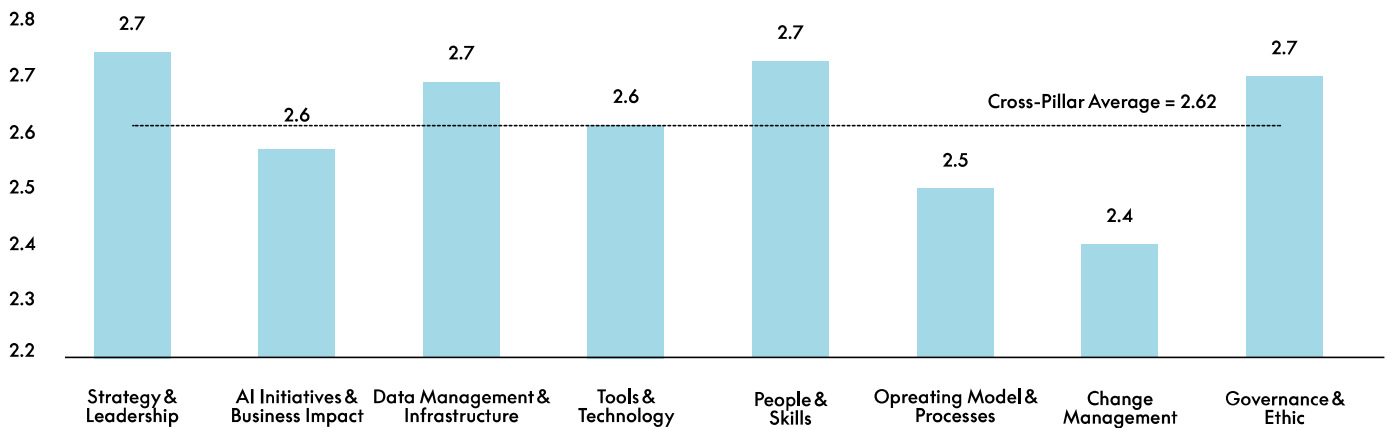


Figure 1: Average Maturity Scores Per Pillar Across All Interviews Conducted



Figure 2: Average AI Maturity Scores per Pillar Across Industries (Green = Higher Maturity, Red = Lower Maturity)

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Turning Insight into Action

Alongside our framework, this report introduces an **AI Maturity Toolkit** designed to translate this insight into action. The toolkit enables organisations to assess their current maturity across each pillar, benchmark their position against their peers, and identify the most critical capability gaps limiting progress.

It then provides targeted, practical recommendations aligned to the organisation's existing maturity level, supporting leaders in prioritising and sequencing transformation efforts. This toolkit is designed to be iterative. As the AI landscape continues to rapidly evolve, the toolkit can be consistently revisited over time, enabling organisations to track progress and continuously adapt their approach to ensure that their own maturity grows in tandem with the wider market.

