

Learning & Development as a Change Management Lever for AI Transformations

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Spring 2026 Cornell ILR Independent Study

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Table of Contents

1

Executive Summary

2

Change Lens: Where L&D Fits in Kotter's Model

3

Root-Cause Analysis: Three Human Barriers

4

L&D Intervention Recommendations

5

Impact Measurement: From Readiness to Outcomes

AI transformations are stalling as organizations underinvest in the people side of change

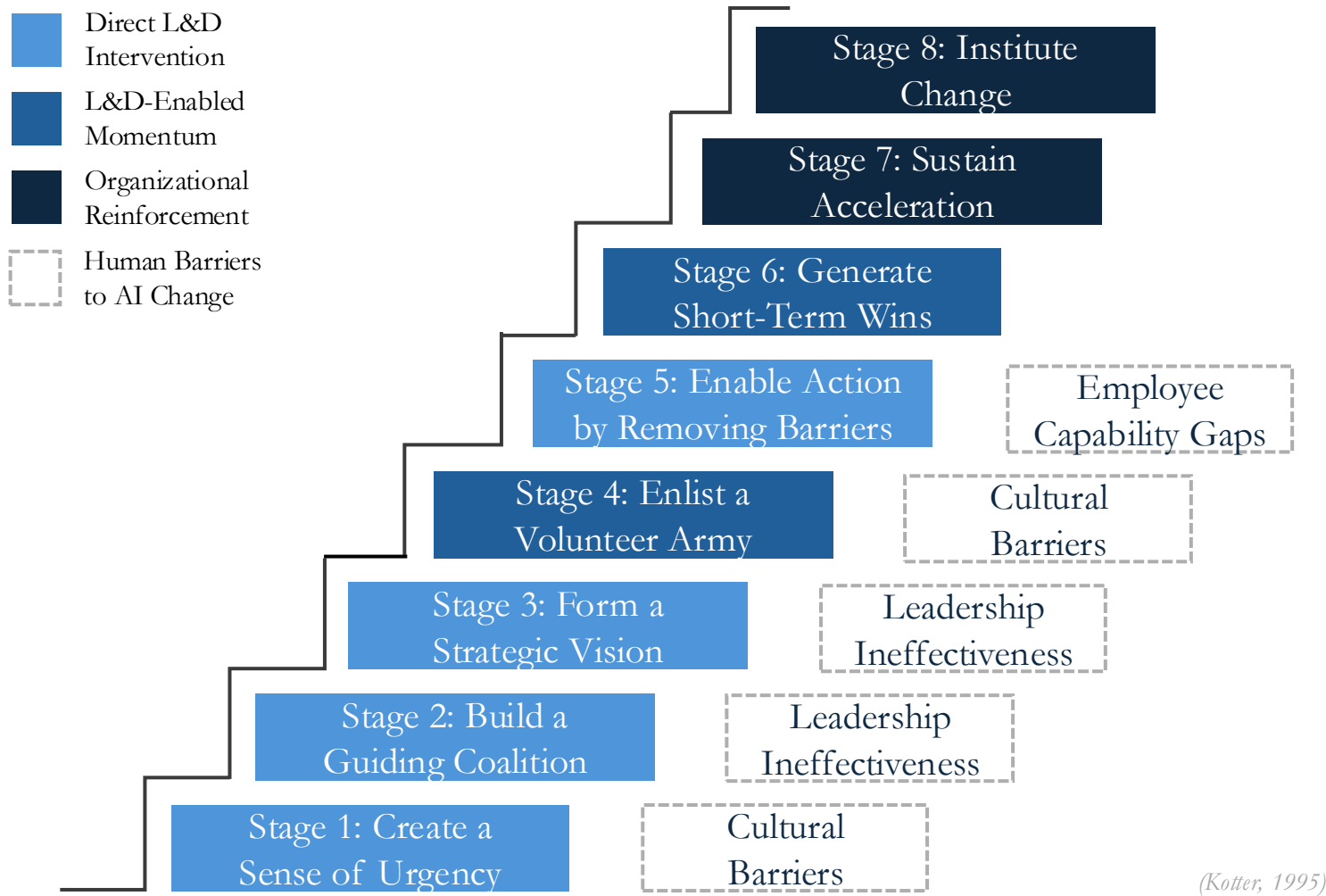
L&D is an underutilized but high-fit change management lever because human barriers reinforce one another during AI adoption

Current State	Human Barriers	L&D's Role	Recommendations	Impacts
95% of organizations report zero ROI from GenAI investments	Cultural misalignment Ambiguity and low psychological safety limit experimentation before AI adoption can scale	Acknowledge AI change by creating cultural norms on openness and trust	Reduce fear through plain-language AI learning, clear data-use norms, and low-pressure exposure	1.6x as likely to exceed AI expectations with change management
93% of executives cite change management issues as primary AI barrier	Employee capability gaps Technology investments are insufficient when employees cannot move beyond task-level usage	Prepare employees to apply AI through role-specific use cases, judgment, and workflow redesign	Build integrated learning paths that combine baseline AI literacy with advanced capability tiers	1.5x as likely to outperform peers after building employee competencies
43% of executives cite lack of leadership vision as top barrier	Leadership ineffectiveness Weak leadership vision struggles to prioritize AI initiatives, align teams, and define success	Enable leaders to champion AI change and develop cross-functional plans	Train leaders across levels to model AI use, define adoption expectations, and guide responsible usage	1.9x as likely to outperform peers via multifaceted leadership vision

(Challapally et al., 2025), (Bean & Davenport, 2026), (Di Battista, 2025)

(Anderson, 2022), (Krishnan et al., 2023)

L&D plays strongest role in early stages of Kotter's Model of Organizational Change



Key Takeaways

- 1** L&D directly addresses the core barriers that emerge before AI adoption can scale
- 2** Leaders are foundational change agents for setting the early direction of AI change
- 3** L&D promotes adoption by removing execution barriers and closing capability gaps

AI adoption stalls when organizations fail to build trust, capabilities, and leadership alignment



Cultural Misalignment

Ambiguity



Reluctance



Resistance

Unclear AI norms and fear of replacement reduce psychological safety, limiting employee experimentation and adoption

L&D's Role

- Improve **employee sentiment** and convey **company AI values**
- Promote **receptiveness to change** and normalize AI experimentation

(Croft et al., 2026), (Gartner, 2026)



Employee Capability Gaps

81% of CIOs report AI skill gaps are impeding progress

AI fluency $\neq$ AI process thinking

Employees struggle to identify role-specific use cases and move beyond task-level AI usage

L&D's Role

- Provide structured training for **AI literacy** and **workflow improvement**
- Close **execution barriers** by enhancing tactical tool usage and output auditing

(McRae & Lowmaster, 2026), (MIT Sloan, 2026)



Leadership Ineffectiveness

25% of companies report change leadership as major strength

AI change leadership must move beyond top-down messaging

Weak leadership direction creates unclear adoption signals, leaving employees unsure whether AI use is encouraged or safe

L&D's Role

- Train leaders in **vision-setting** and **change communication**
- Equip leaders to **model desired AI behaviors** and guide responsible usage

(Di Battista, 2025), (Keller & Viltz-Emerson, 2023)

Organizations should move from generic AI training to barrier-specific L&D interventions



Cultural
Misalignment



Employee
Capability Gaps



Leadership
Ineffectiveness

Demystify AI via Accessible AI Learning

- Use **plain-language** and relevant use cases to reduce employee fear
- Clarify confidentiality and data-use norms to build trust around inputs and **reduce fear of surveillance**



Prudential

AI career coach framed
as development support

Build a Learning-Centric Culture

- Build employee habits of **continuous learning** via **low-risk experimentation** (ex: hackathons, peer forums, and microlearning)



53K-person
lifelong learning model

Build Integrated Learning Programs

- **Sequence** and **diversify** learning types: governance builds foundation, role-based training drives application, advanced pathways sustain growth



5-tier accreditation
model with 17K+
certified employees

Pair Technical with Judgment/Process Skills

Build tiered AI capabilities incrementally

- Level 1: **AI literacy**, governance, and responsible-use principles
- Level 2: output validation, bias detection, and **human judgment**
- Level 3: **workflow redesign** and process expertise

Empower Leaders as AI Change Agents

- Develop **change management toolkit** to normalize imperfections, model AI use, and create psychological safety
- Train leaders to translate AI strategy to **team-level AI practices**, clarifying when and how employees should use AI

Equip Leaders to Guide Ethical AI Use

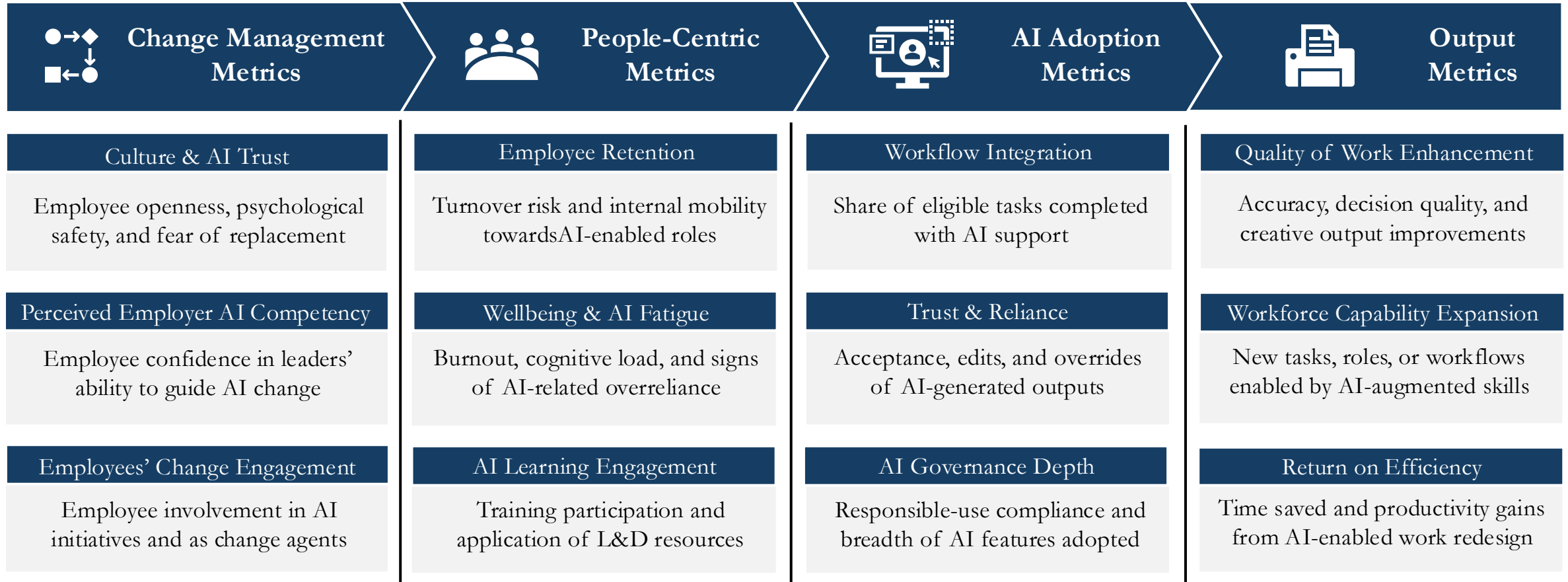
- Train managers to **detect overreliance**, burnout, and governance risks
- Bridge gap between **policy-level AI governance** and **day-to-day practice**



Dedicated AI governance
leadership team

(Valence, 2025), (Accenture, 2021), (Estrada, 2026), (Werbach, 2025)

L&D impact should be measured in a cascade from change readiness to business outcomes



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