



Unlocking New Zealand's Future

From AI Hype to Human Advantage

Why AI adoption is a people problem, not a tech problem — and why that's the best news in the room.

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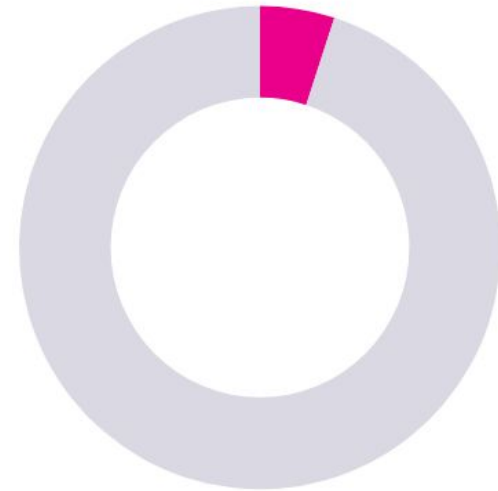


It's not a technology problem.

95%

of enterprise AI pilots delivered no measurable impact on the bottom line.

Only 5% created real value.



■ Created real value ■ No measurable impact

Source: MIT NANDA, *State of AI in Business 2025*. 2026 update: ~88% of organisations now use AI (Stanford HAI) — the value gap holds.

The race sped on. Adoption stalled.

THE INNOVATION RACE

The tools are extraordinary, and getting better every month.

THE ADOPTION REALITY

Licences bought. Pilots run. The transformation hasn't arrived.



Everyone's racing in. Few see the return.

The race to adopt AI has sped on — the measurable return has lagged behind.

88%

of organisations have adopted AI

~60%

of people with access use it daily

5%

capture real, measurable value

Sources: Stanford HAI 2026 (adoption); Deloitte 2026 (daily use); MIT NANDA 2025 (value). Figures drawn from different samples.

The question isn't

“How fast?”

**It's “are we driving it the right
way?”**



**The biggest brake on adoption isn't a missing feature.
It's fear.**

So the leadership job isn't to push the technology harder.

Shift the narrative back to people — and ask how AI can serve our **customers, our team, our community.**



Why adoption really stalls

The bottleneck was never the technology. It's how we work.



Two jobs at once

People keep the lights on and transform, with no time or permission.



Misaligned incentives

We say “experiment” but still measure the old way.



Context in people's heads

The judgement that makes AI useful isn't in the data.



No rituals or feedback

Adoption is treated as a launch, when it's a practice.



What the 5% do differently

Same models as everyone else. Different decisions — and every one is about people.

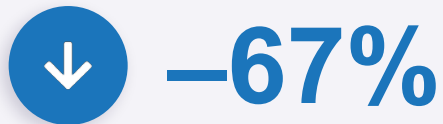
- 1 Start with capability, not licences.
- 2 Give people the time and permission to actually learn.
- 3 Align the incentives with the behaviour they want.
- 4 Get the context out of people's heads and into the work.
- 5 Build the rituals and feedback loops that make it stick.

None of it is a technology decision. **Every one is a people decision.**



The token paradox

The price of intelligence is falling. The bill is rising.



cost per million tokens in a single year —
cheaper almost every month.



of enterprises say their AI bill blew past budget
— spend is going up, not down.

So the runaway cost isn't a tech problem either. It's how we use it — **a people problem, again.**



When the world changes, there are two sorts of people

01

Wait to be told

Sit still. Hope it passes. Let the change happen to them.

02

Take the step

Invest in themselves. Lean in. Shape the change.



We don't just talk about it. We walk the talk.

~50%

of our own team came through our own programmes.

Talent is everywhere — it's opportunity that's unevenly distributed. Your next great AI capability may be the person never given the door.



Profit and purpose aren't a trade-off.

Investing in your people is the highest-ROI move you can make on AI.

2x

more likely to report a strong return when AI tools are paired with real investment in people's capability.

2.3x

faster AI adoption for businesses that genuinely train their people (BCG "AI Leaders").

67%

higher returns on AI for those same organisations versus peers stuck in the talent gap.

Sources: MIT NANDA 2025; workforce-capability research (DataCamp 2026); Boston Consulting Group. Figures via industry reporting.



New Zealand can lead on AI for good

Small enough to move together. Connected enough to matter. But strategy is nothing without execution — business and government walking the talk: equitable models, open entry-level pathways, home-grown talent.

US\$5.5T

the estimated global cost of the skills gap by 2026 if we get this wrong.

Source: IDC.

The antidote to algorithmic bias is

**radical diversity on the
production line.**

If we want AI to serve humanity, then humanity — in all its diverse forms — has to lead the change.



From AI hype to human advantage.

Everyone has the same tools. The advantage is **people** and it's how New Zealand unlocks its future.

Diana Sharma · CEO & Co-Founder, Mission Ready

Thank you.