# AI in the workplace: balancing productivity and mental health



The integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into the workplace is reshaping productivity and performance across sectors, yet it also presents significant mental health risks to workers by altering traditional collaboration methods. According to a report by the Financial Times, technologies such as ChatGPT and other generative AI tools have emerged as valuable assets, enabling employees to execute tasks more efficiently and at a higher calibre.

Recent research from McKinsey reveals that over 70 per cent of companies are adopting AI in various functions, particularly in sales roles. Eva McLellan, managing director at Roche Pharmaceuticals, noted, “Tasks like drafting contract templates, managing procurement processes, or analysing complex data — once lengthy and time-consuming — can now be completed in hours instead of days.” This efficiency gain is echoed in a study involving South Korean call centre employees, which demonstrated that AI tools substantially enhance performance and knowledge acquisition.

However, the findings also highlighted a troubling phenomenon: information overload. Such occurrences can blur focus and inundate employees with excessive data, ultimately impeding both performance and recovery. This balance between the cognitive costs of AI usage and its technological advantages is a matter of increasing concern for organisations.

The effects of AI are particularly pronounced in corporate environments that prioritize collaboration and psychological safety. There is a growing apprehension that a shift towards machine-centric interactions might erode human connections, leading to reduced social networks and isolation among employees. A study published in the Journal of Applied Psychology indicates that increased interaction with AI correlates with feelings of loneliness, potentially resulting in insomnia and heightened alcohol consumption.

Despite these negative implications, research suggests a potential coping mechanism: workers often seek to bolster colleague support in response to AI-induced loneliness. This dynamic implies that promoting mutual assistance and knowledge sharing within teams could address the mental health concerns associated with AI integration.

In light of these complexities, many companies are allowing employees to explore generative AI on their own. Such an unstructured approach, however, can exacerbate feelings of isolation and may miss essential opportunities for collaborative knowledge sharing across roles. McLellan has instituted quarterly sessions at Roche for her teams to discuss best practices in AI usage, stating, “By sharing learnings and collaborating on innovative ways to use AI, we can strengthen both our connections and our results.” Her aim is to ensure that technology acts as a connector rather than a divider in workplace interactions.

Adapting job roles is another strategy firms are exploring to preserve human connections while enhancing productivity. Navdeep Arora, a consultant for large insurance companies, highlighted proactive measures taken by businesses to mitigate the impact of AI automation on underwriters. He explained that underwriters have transitioned from individual case management to overseeing the profitability of entire portfolios, fostering closer collaboration with sales teams.

In certain instances, companies are monitoring AI deployment to ensure it alleviates workloads instead of exacerbating existing challenges. Soulaima Gourani, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur, emphasises a balanced approach, advocating for the restriction of generative AI use in tasks requiring creativity or emotional depth. She stated the importance of consciously utilising AI without allowing it to dictate human interaction, underscoring that “humans should stay in the driver’s seat”.

As the adoption of generative AI continues to accelerate, the balance between efficiency gains and employee mental health remains critical. Companies face the imperative of designing robust frameworks to foster social connections and collaboration, all while safeguarding against burnout risks brought on by technological integration. Professor Thomas Roulet from the University of Cambridge notes that these challenges require immediate attention, especially as the lines between human and artificial contributions blur in the evolving landscape of work. His upcoming book, ‘Wellbeing Intelligence: Building Better Mental Health at Work’, set to be published in July, aims to address these contemporary workplace issues.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.stlouisfed.org/on-the-economy/2025/feb/impact-generative-ai-work-productivity> - This article supports the claim that generative AI tools can enhance productivity by saving work hours and improving efficiency. It highlights how workers using generative AI reported significant time savings.
* <https://thebusinessdive.com/ai-productivity-statistics> - This source provides statistics on AI's impact on productivity, including how AI can improve employee productivity by up to 40% and how businesses expect AI to enhance productivity growth.
* <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/how-generative-ai-can-boost-highly-skilled-workers-productivity> - This study shows that generative AI can boost highly skilled workers' performance by nearly 40%, emphasizing the importance of using AI within its capabilities to maximize productivity gains.
* <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10311201/> - Although not directly related to AI in the workplace, this article on digital evidence highlights the increasing reliance on technology in professional settings, which parallels the integration of AI in various sectors.
* <https://www.statista.com/topics/3141/artificial-intelligence/> - Statista provides comprehensive data on AI adoption and its potential impact on labor productivity, supporting the notion that AI can significantly affect workplace efficiency and performance.