

**AI PLAYBOOK 25**

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# AI Adoption: Steps To Move Your Team Beyond The Pilot



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Content partially generated by artificial intelligence, refined by human expertise.

This Playbook is part of the CMA's AI Mastery Series, empowering marketers to Implement AI in ways that earn regulatory confidence, maintain strong brand reputation, and foster consumer trust

# Understanding AI adoption roadblocks

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Most organizations face the same frustrating reality: they invest in AI tools, provide some basic training, but struggle to get teams to adopt and integrate AI into their daily workflows. The challenge isn't technical, it's human and organizational.

This playbook provides three practical approaches to diagnose your specific adoption barriers, build genuine user confidence through proven strategies, and create sustainable usage habits that stick beyond initial training. The focus is entirely on the human side of implementation, giving you assessment techniques, onboarding strategies, and momentum-building tactics that will get your organization to adopt AI.

Human factors blocking adoption (people barriers):

- **Knowledge and application gaps:** Teams don't know how to apply AI to their specific workflows or when to use which tools for maximum impact.
- **Fear and resistance:** Job displacement anxiety contributes to active resistance to adoption efforts.
- **Skills and expertise shortage:** Marketing leaders struggle to find talent, while existing team members lack confidence in practical application.
- **Leadership and change management failures:** Insufficient executive sponsorship, inconsistent messaging, and poor change management leave teams without the support needed for successful adoption.

Organizations that systematically address their specific barriers achieve higher adoption rates and better ROI than those using generic implementation approaches.

# Process barriers to AI adoption

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While people barriers focus on individual and team readiness, process barriers stem from organizational systems and structures. These foundational issues often amplify the human challenges, creating a cycle where poor processes increase resistance and resistance prevents process improvements.

## **Organizational systems blocking adoption (process barriers):**

- **Missing strategic vision:** Lack of an AI roadmap leaves employees without clear direction on priorities, use cases, or success measures.
- **Data quality issues:** Poor data quality leads to disappointing AI outputs, eroding trust and enthusiasm for continued use.
- **Integration and workflow friction:** AI tools operate in silos rather than seamlessly integrating into existing workflows, creating extra work instead of efficiency.
- **Measurement and value proof gaps:** Organizations struggle to demonstrate ROI and prove value, making it difficult to secure continued investment and team buy-in.
- **Governance and trust gaps:** Absence of clear rules around compliance, safety, and ethical oversight of AI usage undermines AI trust, creates legal risk exposure, and leads to hesitant adoption as employees fear making mistakes without proper guidelines.

These barriers are predictable, identifiable, and solvable with the right diagnostic approach and targeted solutions.

# Diagnosing your adoption barriers

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Every organization has different adoption barriers. The key to success is accurately diagnosing which barriers are blocking your team, then addressing them.

Use this diagnostic framework for each potential barrier by assessing two key areas:

- What to measure - specific indicators to look for; and
- Red flags - warning signs this barrier is blocking your team.

## Knowledge and applications gap

- **Measure:** Assess practical application confidence, track actual tool usage vs. training completion.
- **Red flags:** Employees can't explain when/how to use AI for their specific tasks, requests for "cookbook" instructions.

## Fear and resistance

- **Measure:** Fear levels (anonymous surveys), change readiness scores, and workflow disruption concerns.
- **Red flags:** Low adoption rates despite training, negative sentiment in team discussions, "we've always done it this way" responses, passive non-compliance with AI initiatives.

# Process barriers: Strategy and integration gaps

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Beyond individual readiness, these organizational process barriers can block even willing, trained teams.

## **Missing strategic vision**

**Measure:** AI roadmap completeness, clarity of use case priorities, alignment between AI goals and business objectives.

**Red flags:** Teams unclear what AI should be used for, scattered pilot projects with no clear progression, difficulty explaining AI ROI to executives, competing AI initiatives with overlapping goals, different departments implementing conflicting AI solutions.

## **Integration and workflow friction**

**Measure:** Time required to access AI tools, steps in AI workflows, user complaints about process complexity, integration points between AI and existing systems.

**Red flags:** AI tools require separate logins/platforms, employees claim that AI takes longer than doing it manually, data export/import required for AI use, AI insights don't flow into existing reporting systems, users creating manual workarounds that bypass AI tools entirely.

# Foundational barriers: Skills, leadership and governance

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## Skills and expertise shortage

**Measure:** Internal AI capability assessment, reliance on external consultants, time to resolve AI issues, talent acquisition success rates.

**Red flags:** Heavy dependence on vendors for basic AI tasks, long delays waiting for external expertise, inability to troubleshoot simple AI problems internally, difficulty hiring qualified AI-marketing hybrid talent, existing team lacks confidence to experiment independently.

## Leadership and change management failures

**Measure:** Executive sponsorship consistency, leadership message alignment, change management resource allocation, management support.

**Red flags:** Inconsistent executive messaging about AI priority, insufficient budget allocation, competing priorities diluting AI focus, middle management resistance to AI initiatives, lack of clear accountability for adoption success.

## Governance and trust gaps

**Measure:** AI policy completeness, compliance framework maturity, ethical oversight processes, safety protocol implementation.

**Red flags:** Employees are uncertain about AI usage boundaries and compliance requirements, inconsistent safety protocols across teams, lack of clear ethical oversight creating legal risk exposure, absence of escalation procedures for AI concerns, teams avoiding AI use due to fear of regulatory violations or ethical missteps.

# Measurement and value proof barriers

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## Data and quality issues



**Measure:** Data completeness percentages, accuracy rates, integration complexity scores, compliance readiness assessments.

**Red flags:** AI producing incorrect results, bias appearing in AI outputs, data silos preventing AI access, compliance concerns blocking implementation, inconsistent data formats across systems.

## Measurement and value proof gaps

**Measure:** ROI calculation capabilities, success metrics definition, pilot evaluation processes, business case development skills.

**Red flags:** Inability to demonstrate AI ROI, pilots running indefinitely without clear success criteria, difficulty justifying continued investment, lack of baseline measurements for comparison, unclear attribution of business results to AI.



Employees will  
determine your  
AI ROI, not  
your  
algorithms.



# From barriers to breakthroughs: People solutions

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Once you've diagnosed your specific barriers, apply these targeted solutions to shift from barrier to breakthrough. Focus on your top 2-3 barriers rather than trying to address everything at once.

Knowledge and application gaps → Practical learning	Create workflow-specific tutorials, establish AI office hours for hands-on guidance, develop role-specific training scenarios, pair experienced users with beginners for practical mentoring, focus on when/how to use AI rather than just what AI is.
Fear and resistance → Transparent engagement	Host monthly AI Q&A sessions addressing job security concerns, share internal success stories showing career advancement through AI skills, communicate 'augmentation not replacement' message consistently, celebrate early adopters publicly, create safe spaces for expressing concerns.
Skills and Expertise Shortage → Internal capability building	Invest in upskilling existing team members, build partnerships with training providers and support employee certifications, develop internal centers of reduce dependence on external consultants.
Leadership and change management → Executive alignment	Secure dedicated executive champion, align leadership messaging about AI priority, integrate AI goals into management performance metrics, provide adequate change management resources.

# From barriers to breakthroughs: Process solutions

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While people solutions address individual and team readiness, process solutions tackle the organizational systems that either enable or block adoption.

Missing Strategic Vision → Clear direction	Create an AI roadmap with clear priorities, establish AI steering committee, align AI goals with business KPIs, communicate strategy regularly across organization, prioritize 3-5 high-impact use cases.
Integration and workflow friction → Seamless systems	Prioritize integrations over standalone tools, create single sign-on access, embed AI capabilities within existing workflows, eliminate manual workarounds, establish API connections between AI and current tools.
Data and quality issues → Foundation first	Start with highest-quality data sources, establish data governance standards, create data integration roadmap, address compliance requirements upfront, implement bias detection and correction processes.
Measurement and value proof → Clear metrics	Establish success metrics before implementation, create ROI measurement framework, implement regular business review processes, develop quantified business cases, set baseline measurements for comparison.
Governance and trust gaps → Compliance framework	Establish clear AI usage policies with compliance guardrails, implement ethical oversight processes and safety protocols, create transparent decision-making guidelines, develop regular audit procedures for bias and risk management, build employee capacity through clear rules and escalation procedures.

# Your first 90 days

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This roadmap specifically targets your diagnosed barriers rather than generic implementation steps, ensuring focused effort on your organization's specific challenges.

## **Days 1-30: Barrier assessment and foundation building**

Complete comprehensive barrier assessment using diagnostic tools from slides 4-6, prioritize your top 3 barriers based on impact and feasibility, secure executive alignment on barrier-specific solutions, establish steering committee with representatives addressing each barrier type, create foundational AI governance framework including ethics guidelines, use policies, and risk management protocols.

## **Days 31-60: Targeted barrier solutions**

Implement targeted solutions for your priority barriers: knowledge gaps get hands-on training, fear/resistance gets transparent communication and success stories, strategic vision gets roadmap development, integration issues get technical solutions, skills shortage gets upskilling programs, leadership gaps get executive engagement, data issues get governance implementation, measurement gaps get metrics frameworks.

## **Days 61-90: Scale and monitor barrier reduction**

Measure barrier reduction progress: Are knowledge gaps closing? Is resistance decreasing? Is strategic clarity improving? Are integration friction points resolved? Scale successful barrier solutions across organization, document what worked for your specific barriers, plan Phase 2 addressing remaining barriers.

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# Recommended reading and references

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## CMA Resources

- [CMA Guide on AI for Marketers](#)
- [Setting the Stage on Artificial Intelligence: A CMA Primer on AI for Marketers](#)
- [CMA Accountability Checklists for AI in Marketing](#)
- [CMA Mastery Series: AI Playbooks](#)

## External References

- Statistics Canada: [Analysis on artificial intelligence use by businesses in Canada, second quarter of 2025](#)
- TD Bank Group: [2025 TD AI Insights Report](#)
- MarketingProfs: [The Biggest Barriers to Adopting AI for Marketing](#)
- Influencer Marketing Hub: [Artificial Intelligence \(AI\) Benchmark Report](#)
- Luckie: [The Three Biggest Obstacles to AI Adoption, According to the 2025 State of Marketing AI Report](#)
- Algomarketing: [Challenges of AI & Automation in marketing: Algomarketing Insights](#)

# The CMA

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This playbook is developed with guidance by the [CMA AI Committee](#) and is part of the CMA's comprehensive AI initiative designed to empower Canadian marketers with the knowledge, skills, and ethical frameworks needed to implement AI responsibly and effectively.

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You can't fix  
what you can't  
see. Start  
diagnosing  
your barriers  
today.

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