

EMPLOYEES AND RECOVERED CAPACITY

Management needs a real plan for what AI will change, including the consequences for employees.

Client Education Series

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Employees and Recovered Capacity

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Decide what recovered capacity means

Introducing AI requires a management decision about the work and the people who perform it. If a task takes less time, what happens to the time recovered? Will employees clear backlogs, improve service, take on new work, or move into different responsibilities? Is the intention to accommodate growth without additional hiring, reduce overtime, change hours, or reduce staffing? These are materially different strategies. Management must decide which it intends to pursue.

A general statement about productivity is insufficient. Define the intended result, who will be affected, what training or reassignment may be needed, and who is responsible for carrying out the plan. Savings should account for the work that remains, including review and correction. When recovered time is directed to other useful work, we refer to that as capacity reinvestment. Name the work and intended outcome so employees understand what management actually plans to do.

Address what employees are likely to hear

When employees are told that AI will perform their work faster but are not told what will happen next, some may reasonably assume their hours or jobs are at risk. Silence leaves them to fill in the blanks. A request to help automate their own work may then sound like a request to help eliminate their position.

That uncertainty can produce anxiety, resistance, withheld process knowledge, or reluctance to report problems. A technically successful trial can still fail if the people needed to make it work do not trust the purpose. Employee concerns belong in the implementation strategy, not in a reassuring paragraph added after the decisions have been made.

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Communicate decisions that management can stand behind

Explain the actual plan before asking employees to participate. If the intention is to clear a backlog or expand service, identify the work their recovered time will support. If changes to hours, staffing, or responsibilities are under consideration, do not imply that jobs are protected. Distinguish settled decisions from questions that remain open and say when employees can expect an update.

Management does not need to predict every outcome before testing a tool. It does need to define the trial, who will decide what follows, and how affected employees will be informed. Promises made to obtain cooperation must be consistent with the decisions management is prepared to carry out. Where it accurately reflects management's intentions, a concrete explanation could be: "We are testing whether AI can reduce the time spent assembling routine reports. Our first aim is to clear the backlog and give you more time to review exceptions and work with clients. We want your help identifying where it works and where it gets things wrong. We will discuss proposed changes to responsibilities before putting them into practice." Do not use this wording if that is not the actual plan.

Make participation part of the operating plan

Involve employees who know the work in choosing the trial, identifying exceptions, and checking results. Give them time to learn, define their review responsibilities, and provide a way to report mistakes without concealing them. Their knowledge is necessary to determine whether the proposed improvement works in practice.

Review whether recovered time is being used as intended and whether work has simply shifted to someone else. Update assignments, training, and capacity estimates accordingly. An AI adoption plan is incomplete until management has addressed both how the work will change and what those changes will mean for the people doing it.

We're here to help and have structured services to address each of these areas individually or as part of a coordinated plan. To discuss what deserves attention first, contact your Sandbox Technologies Account Manager or Consulting CIO.

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