

The Jonesi Consultancy | Houston, TX

LEADERSHIP FIELD GUIDE · WARNING RESOURCE

10 SIGNS YOUR AI ADOPTION IS STALLING



How to Spot Adoption Friction Before It Becomes an Expensive
Implementation Problem

*Use this guide as a leadership reflection tool, not as a maturity
assessment. The goal is not to count symptoms.*

HOW ADOPTION ACTUALLY FAILS

AI adoption rarely fails all at once. It usually stalls in visible patterns: people use tools quietly, training does not transfer into daily work, leaders measure activity instead of outcomes, and useful practices remain isolated. These signs help leaders identify friction early, before it becomes normalized.

The goal is not to count symptoms. The goal is to identify which conditions are preventing AI from becoming a visible, supported, repeatable organizational capability. Mark the ones you recognize. There is no score at the end, and that is deliberate.

1 The 10 Signs

1. People use AI, but nobody talks about it.

Individuals have quietly worked it into their day. It comes up in passing, never in a meeting, and never in writing.

WHAT THIS USUALLY MEANS: No permission has been given, so use has gone private. Private use cannot be improved, shared, governed, or measured.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: Can employees describe an AI-assisted task openly, including what they verified and what they changed?

2. Everyone received the same training.

One session, one curriculum, delivered to accountants and case workers and schedulers alike.

WHAT THIS USUALLY MEANS: The training was built around the tool rather than around the work. Relevance is what determines whether anything survives the week after.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: What specific work can participants now do differently because of the training?

3. Usage spiked after training, then fell off.

Activity looked excellent for two or three weeks and then returned to roughly where it started.

WHAT THIS USUALLY MEANS: Nothing in the daily job changed to require it. Skill without an application decays, and it decays fast.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: What happens 30, 60, and 90 days after training to reinforce use and remove friction?

WHERE ADOPTION COMMONLY BREAKS DOWN

From Exposure to Durable Behavior

The middle of an AI rollout is where enthusiasm is tested. If training, ownership, reinforcement, and knowledge-sharing are weak, early experimentation never becomes standard practice.

4. Two departments solved the same problem separately.

You discover by accident that two teams independently built a way to handle the same category of work.

WHAT THIS USUALLY MEANS: There is no channel for sharing practice, so you are paying for the same learning more than once and getting inconsistent results from it.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: Where do validated prompts, use cases, lessons learned, and workflow examples live so others can reuse them?

5. Nobody can tell you which tools are approved.

Ask three people and you get three answers, one of which is a shrug.

WHAT THIS USUALLY MEANS: A decision has not been made. Staff read the absence of a decision, correctly, as an absence of support.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: Could two managers independently give an employee the same answer about an ordinary AI use case?

6. Your heaviest users are the people who needed it least.

The enthusiasts are typically your most confident, most technical, or most senior staff.

WHAT THIS USUALLY MEANS: Adoption is following confidence rather than opportunity. The work with the most to gain is usually the work nobody has touched.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: Which roles have the most to gain from AI, and what has been done to reach them?

WHEN ACTIVITY IS MISTAKEN FOR INTEGRATION

The Difference Between Using AI and Changing Work

Organizations can look active while remaining structurally unchanged. The final four signs focus on leadership modeling, measurement, workflow redesign, and the judgment required for responsible use.

7. Managers never raise it in one-to-ones.

It appears in the all-staff message and the strategy deck, and nowhere in the weekly conversation where work actually gets directed.

WHAT THIS USUALLY MEANS: There is no reinforcement. Anything a manager does not ask about is optional in practice, whatever the announcement said.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: Where are leaders making responsible AI use visible enough to normalize it?

8. There is no before.

Somebody is confident the new process is faster, and nobody captured what the old one cost.

WHAT THIS USUALLY MEANS: No baseline was taken, so the improvement cannot be demonstrated to anyone who was not in the room. This is the most common omission and the most expensive one.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: Which operational outcome should be different because AI is being used?

9. AI appears in nobody's objectives.

It is important enough to announce and not important enough to sit in anyone's goals or performance conversation.

WHAT THIS USUALLY MEANS: There is no owner. Initiatives without an owner do not fail. They fade, which is harder to notice and harder to fix.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: Who is responsible for moving AI from experimentation into governed, measurable practice?

10. Leadership talks about AI more outside the organization than inside it.

It features in the conference panel, the funder update, and the LinkedIn post. Internally it has been quiet for a while.

WHAT THIS USUALLY MEANS: Staff hear the external message and draw their own conclusions about the internal one. In our experience they usually conclude headcount.

LEADERSHIP QUESTION: Can employees explain when to use AI, when to verify it, and when to keep the work human-led?

LEADERSHIP REFLECTION

2 What These Signs Are Telling You

Do not total the boxes into a maturity score. This checklist is designed to surface priorities for discussion. The same symptom can have different causes in different organizations, and interpreting those causes requires context.

Mark the statements that are currently true in your organization.

PRESENT?	WARNING SIGN	PRIORITY FOR DISCUSSION		
☐	People use AI, but nobody talks about it.	Now	Soon	Monitor
☐	Everyone received the same training.	Now	Soon	Monitor
☐	Usage spiked after training, then fell off.	Now	Soon	Monitor
☐	Two departments solved the same problem separately.	Now	Soon	Monitor
☐	Nobody can tell you which tools are approved.	Now	Soon	Monitor
☐	Your heaviest users are the people who needed it least.	Now	Soon	Monitor
☐	Managers never raise it in one-to-ones.	Now	Soon	Monitor
☐	There is no before.	Now	Soon	Monitor
☐	AI appears in nobody's objectives.	Now	Soon	Monitor
☐	Leadership talks about AI more outside the organization than inside it.	Now	Soon	Monitor

THE UNCOMFORTABLE PART

Every sign on this list was visible for months before anyone acted on it. None of them required special expertise to notice. They persist because noticing them creates an obligation, and the obligation lands during a quarter that is already full.

3

Reading Your Marks

There is no total here on purpose. Counting the marks would imply a precision this exercise does not have, and a number would tempt you to compare yourself against organizations whose situation you know nothing about.

What matters is not how many you marked. It is where they cluster.

People and Leadership

Signs 1, 6, 7, and 10

The problem is permission, safety, and reinforcement. Your people are waiting to be told this is genuinely allowed and genuinely expected, and the person they are waiting to hear it from is their direct manager rather than the executive who announced it.

WHAT FOLLOWS FROM THIS: More training will not move this. Manager behavior will.

Process and Workflow

Signs 2, 3, and 4

The problem is that the work itself has not changed. People were given a capability and sent back to a job that does not require them to use it, so the capability sat unused until it faded.

WHAT FOLLOWS FROM THIS: Running the training again produces the same curve. Redesigning one process does not.

Governance and Measurement

Signs 5, 8, and 9

The problem is that nobody owns this and nothing was defined in advance. You cannot steer, defend, or expand an effort with no owner, no boundaries, and no baseline.

WHAT FOLLOWS FROM THIS: This is the cluster that quietly makes the other two unfixable, because without ownership and evidence there is no mechanism to notice the drift or fund the correction.

IF YOUR MARKS ARE SPREAD EVENLY ACROSS ALL THREE

That is a common result and a more useful finding than a concentration. It usually means the organization moved on tools before it settled anything else, which is the ordinary sequence and the one that produces the least return. The correction is not more effort. It is deciding what this is for and who owns it, before the next investment.

4 Three Questions to Answer Next

- 1 Which two or three signs are creating the greatest operational friction right now?
- 2 What evidence do we have about the underlying cause, rather than our assumption about the cause?
- 3 Who has the authority and ownership to address the issue across people, process, technology, governance, and measurement?

When a Deeper Readiness or Adoption Assessment Is Appropriate

- Leadership and staff describe the state of AI adoption very differently.
- Governance concerns, shadow AI, or workforce anxiety are limiting otherwise promising adoption efforts.
- The organization is preparing to scale tools, training, or automation but lacks a shared baseline.
- Several warning signs appear across multiple departments rather than in one isolated team.
- AI investment is increasing, but leadership cannot connect it to measurable workflow or business outcomes.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

Is AI becoming easier to use, or is the organization becoming better at using AI? Sustainable adoption requires the second. Our Discovery and Readiness Assessment scores five dimensions over four to six weeks, establishes a workforce sentiment baseline, and settles what will be measured before further money is committed.

© 2026 The Jonesi Consultancy. All rights reserved.

Want to know which stage you are actually in?

A short conversation will tell you whether this needs an assessment or just a decision.

