



## AI reality check: What executives actually see

AI is progressing steadily, not explosively. Executives are broadly optimistic, pragmatic, and focused on value creation. The organizations that benefit most are those that adopt AI deliberately, align it with real business needs, and keep humans firmly in the loop.

### **87% see AI as an opportunity**

Despite alarming headlines, executives are overwhelmingly positive. Only 2% view AI as purely a threat. Leaders see AI as a way to move faster, improve productivity, enhance customer service, and unlock value from underused data. The risk lies less in AI itself than in poor governance, misuse, or blind trust in outputs.

### **Most companies are still early**

Sixty percent report that AI supports 20% or less of their organization's work. There is no overnight transformation. Adoption levels remain modest and broadly consistent across regions and industries, with manufacturing slightly ahead and healthcare lagging.

### **Returns are real, but uneven**

Fifteen percent report no value yet from AI investments, rising to 30% in healthcare. This highlights the importance of prioritizing focused, high-impact use cases rather than broad, unfocused deployments.

### **AI creates value across many functions**

Executives see the greatest value in data analysis, marketing, software development, and customer support, with notable regional differences. AI is not a single-function tool; it scales best where data, repetition, and speed matter.

### **Employees are more open than expected**

Only 11% of executives report resistance to AI upskilling. Teams, especially in APAC, are generally open and transparent about AI usage, reducing concerns around shadow AI.

### **AI skills are not yet a hiring filter**

More than 60% say AI knowledge has little impact on general hiring today. While AI literacy matters for some roles, critical thinking and decision-making remain the most valued skills.

### **Executives are not being replaced**

Over 70% still spend most of their time leading human teams. AI supports decisions and execution; it does not replace leadership.

*This synthesis is based on research by [Boris Groysberg](#), and Sarah Abbott, at Harvard Business School, drawing on a global executive survey conducted in partnership with The Official Board.*

*The complete original article is available in [Newsweek](#).*