

THE ANCHOR

Everyone feels faster. The company still can't find the money.

Eight in ten workers say AI has made them personally more productive this year. Ask their employer to point to a single dollar it added to earnings, and most can't.

By Don Long



Where does the productivity actually go?

According to McKinsey's State of AI in 2026 survey of 1,719 executives across 97 nations, eight in ten workers say artificial intelligence has made them personally more productive this year. ^[1] Ask the companies employing them what that is worth, and the number falls apart. Only 37 percent can attribute any

earnings impact to AI at all, a figure unchanged from the year before. Just 6 percent qualify as what McKinsey calls AI high performers: organizations that can point to at least 5 percent of EBIT coming from AI, with results they call significant. Eight in ten people speeding up. One in six companies actually cashing it in.

The gap is not a technology problem. It is a translation problem. A person gets faster at their own job the moment they find one AI shortcut that actually works, and nobody upstream has to approve that, redesign a process, or update a job description for it to happen. The organization above that person has no comparable move. It cannot deposit "faster at my job" into an earnings report, so unless someone turns individual fluency into a standard practice, a workflow, a real metric, the gain stays exactly where it started: with the one person who found it.

This is the actual case for role-based AI enablement, the practical version, not the abstract one. SummitMark's whole thesis rests on this exact gap: individual AI use and organizational AI capability are two different problems, and right now, most companies are only solving the first one, by accident, one employee at a time.

A USEFUL BREAKDOWN

01

Employee

You closed this gap, and no one told you to. Whatever shortcut got you home on time this week is not written down anywhere. Change teams, and the next person starts from zero.

02

Manager

You are supposed to turn individual speed into team output. If half your people found their own AI shortcut and half did not, your team's numbers look like personality, not process. That is a missing standard, not a coaching problem.

03

Leader

You approved the AI budget. The board wants it on the income statement. Eighty percent of your people feeling faster will not move that number until someone redesigns how the work actually gets done, not just who is allowed to open a chatbot.

“Eight in ten people got faster at their job this year. One in six companies can prove it was worth anything.”

THE FOUR-STEP VERSION

01

Notice

Find one place on your team where someone already has a working AI shortcut nobody assigned them. That is your evidence, not a pilot program.

02

Name

Say the plain version out loud: personal speed is real, but it is not yet organizational capability. Those are two separate projects.

03

Try

Take one shortcut that is clearly working for one person and make it the standard everyone uses, not just something they are quietly allowed to keep doing.

04

Share

Forward this to the person on your team it is already true for, and reply to tell me what they are doing that nobody else is.

**Reply with the task.**

I want the version nobody has written down yet. What is the AI shortcut someone on your team already uses, that has never made it into any process document?

Reply to Mostly Right

Sources & further reading

- 1. **The State of AI in 2026: On the Road to ROI** (McKinsey & Company (QuantumBlack) · August 2026)



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