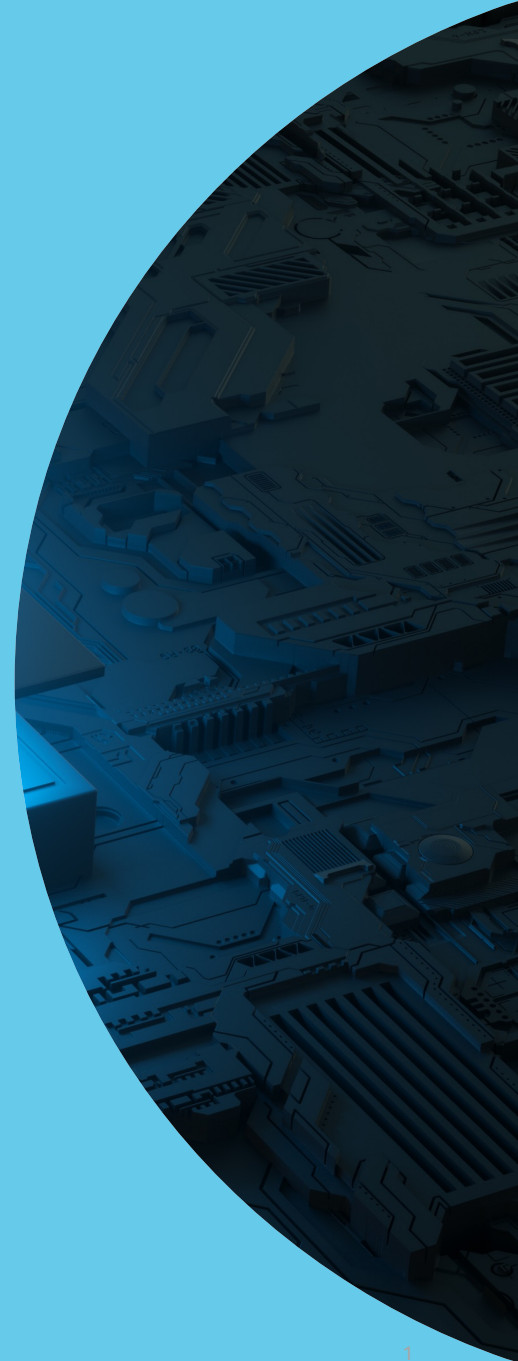
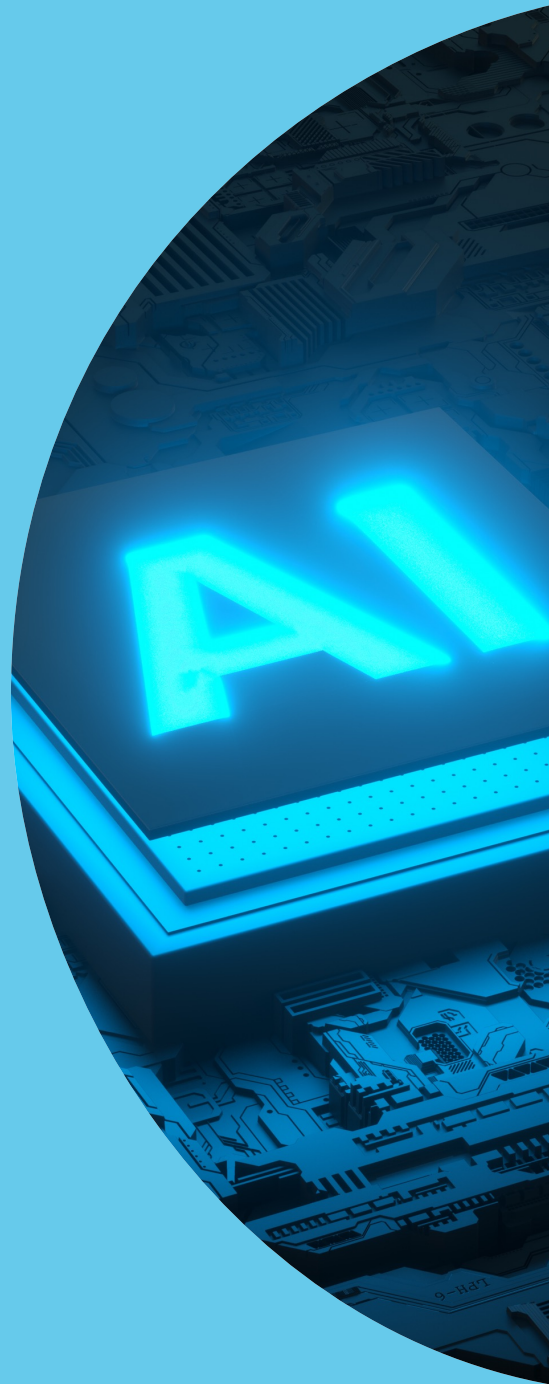


# Driving trust in the age of agentic AI

In an era of autonomous systems, human adoption of agentic AI is stalling not because of lack of capability, but because of lack of trust from employees, customers, and internal leadership.



# FOREWORD

**Across businesses today, there is a fundamental tension:** workforces are fearful they are "building their own coffins," anxious that AI will eliminate their roles entirely. Yet this narrative is far from the truth. The businesses that will win in the agentic AI revolution are those that intentionally explain – both inside and outside their organisations – how this technology can fundamentally enhance their capabilities and competitive position. The real challenge for communicators is that adoption is not primarily a technical issue, it is a behavioural and cultural one.

This is where trust becomes critical. Our recent 'Trust in the Age of Agentic AI' panel event revealed a striking paradox: hundreds of millions of people use AI because it is useful, yet many remain uncertain about trusting it. The terminology itself is broad and often poorly understood by audiences and employees alike. Adoption, as our panellists highlighted, is constrained not by capability but by behaviour and culture. Yet there is a hidden risk embedded in this adoption curve. AI outputs are so polished and convincing that organisations risk what one of our esteemed panellists, Ramaa Sharma, called "cognitive surrender" where teams accept answers without critical thinking, experiencing false confidence in tools simply because they feel authoritative. Bias can be built into these systems and calibration, an accurate understanding of what

AI can and cannot do, is often absent. The question organisations face is not whether to adopt, but how to adopt in a way that maintains rigour, accountability, and human judgment at every stage.

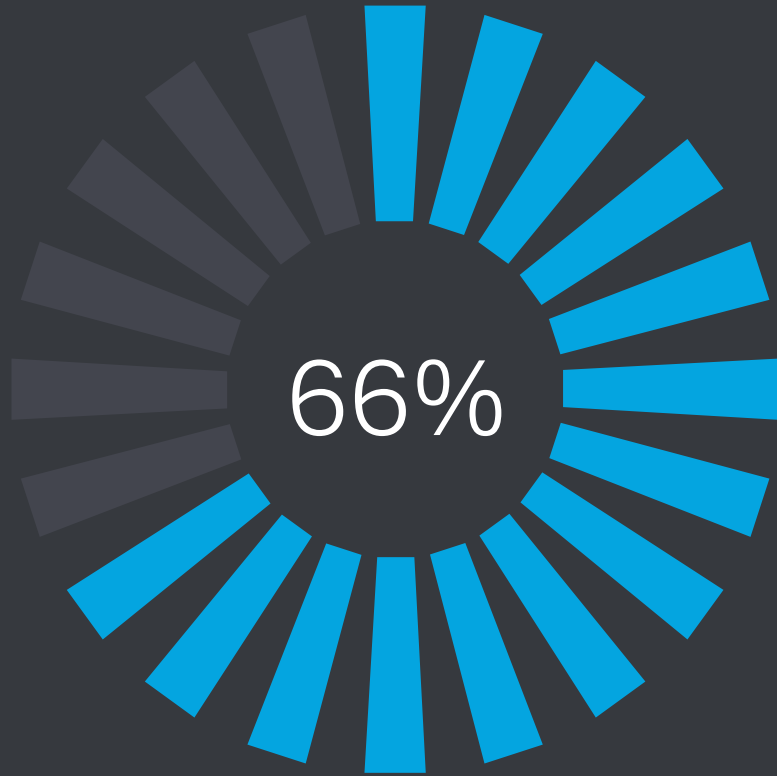
For communicators in particular, your role in bridging the gap between organisational capability and organisational confidence is essential. The most successful organisations will be those that communicate deliberately about why they are using agentic AI, not just what they are building. This requires transparency about both the potential and the limitations, clarity on how this technology enhances rather than replaces human expertise, and a commitment to keeping the thinking human. As our panellists concluded, people will always be in charge of AI. Your creativity, expertise, and organisational culture will ultimately determine whether agentic AI becomes a force multiplier for your business or a source of ongoing anxiety and mistrust. This report provides insights, research findings and useful tips to help navigate that complexity.



**Claudia Bate**

Managing Director & Senior Partner, EMEA  
Technology Lead

“  
For communicators  
in particular, your  
role in bridging  
the gap between  
organisational  
capability and  
organisational  
confidence is  
essential.”



Two thirds have no/little to moderate trust in the answers and outputs from large language models (LLMs)

“

I don't know if the main question is whether you should trust it, it's whether it's useful. And demonstrably, more than a billion people find it very useful. There's still a very wide tail though. I've shown GPT on my phone to some older couples who have never heard of it, and **they look at me like I've invented fire.**

**Mark Egan**

Principal Research Advisor,  
Behavioural Insights Team



“

People will always be in charge of it (AI). As leaders, **it is your creativity and expertise** that will make your business more impactful

**Ephraim Cohen**

Global Head of Data & Digital,  
FleishmanHillard



**58%**

Are very concerned about LLMs making errors or providing false information to users.



**Ramaa Sharma**

Consultant & Executive Coach  
- How We Do This

“We need to have a **culture of continuous education**. I think that literacy is a big part of bringing people along the journey and letting them use AI to understand what it is. It’s empowering. It demystifies what it is, helps people understand the use of it.”

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59%

Say we should keep AI systems and LLMs out of primary and secondary schools



**Mark Egan**

Principal Research Advisor,  
Behavioural Insights Team

“Everyone talks about building trust. I prefer to think of it as what do you do to make sure the tool is trustworthy? Trust is a byproduct of somebody having regular interactions with something that produces good outcomes. If you focus on this trustworthiness idea, then you can start to think about the other side of, well, how do we **make it legible and verifiable**? I don't think anyone's going to resent an AI tool that makes their lives easier and which they can verify the outputs of.”

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72%

Almost three quarters think both the companies implementing LLM systems and the LLM model companies should be equally responsible



**Kamal Ahmed**

Digital Editor, Consultant and Executive Coach,  
How We Do This

“Adoption is not just a technical issue. Adoption is an issue about your colleagues, it's about yourself, it's about what you use, it's about how does your business flourish, it's about how does the public sector flourish. **It's about thinking about the different levels and layers of those organisations.** And there are many, many behavioural issues around adoption which I think are some of the most important and probably least talked about. We are more comfortable talking about technical ability, workflow management, how you can make things more efficient.”

30%

Use LLMs daily as part of their work



**Ephraim Cohen**

Global Head of Data & Digital,  
FleishmanHillard

“Learn how the technology works. The underlying technology, how it calculates, what its capabilities are, how it handles data, how to format data, how to organise data, the different ways it approaches it. The more you do that, the more you will uncover new things that we can do that have real, real business value.”

18%

Put more trust in LLMs ability to handle important tasks accurately and responsibly compared to human employees

# TOP TIPS FROM RAMAA SHARMA

These tips are designed to guide how communications leaders can demonstrate the ways which they embed the responsible use of AI within their own organisations to ensure they can face up to scrutiny and build trust with both external and internal stakeholders.

## 01

### **Show your working**

Run small, targeted experiments against specific goals inside your organisation. Be clear about what they've shown, the limits, and what you don't yet know, alongside the mitigations you have in place or are considering. Bring your teams into the problem-solving process as often as possible; let them learn and consider the challenges alongside you. The behaviour you model becomes the permission your teams need to shape how agentic AI is used, rather than feeling it is being 'done' to them.

## 02

### **Use AI Governance to enable decision-making**

Governance can help alleviate many of the concerns staff and users may have. It may create some friction initially, but in the long run, it enables confidence and trust in what you are building. Have clear principles, guardrails, and evaluations in place to surface and communicate results and trade-offs early. Consider AI governance your creative constraint; understanding the trade-offs will enable you to feel more confident in your innovation.

## 03

### **Design your AI systems for thinking, not 'cognitive surrender'**

The affirmatory nature of chatbots can provide a sense of validity and the illusion of certainty. It is worth remembering these outputs are just predictions; be careful not to inadvertently 'cognitively surrender' to the results presented. Consider how AI systems could be used to encourage more critical and creative thinking. This might look like:

- Designing prompts and system instructions that ask for user input first, then offering reasoning, nuance, and alternatives rather than just answers.
- Shaping UX so it invites critique by asking questions such as "what might be missing?" or "where could this be wrong?" before outputs are accepted.