

How to build your own AI literacy program

Turn your individual wins into
organisation wide capability

HR's Strategic Opportunity

According to our **AI Maturity Assessment**, you're likely either a **Builder** or a **Doer**.



Builders

Your organisation has invested in integrated HR platforms, cleaned your data, put governance in place and secured leadership buy-in. On paper, you're ready. In practice, AI adoption is slow and the value is still emerging. Your challenge is activation across functions.



Doers

You've mastered AI individually. You've found productive use cases, saved hours of manual work and become the person colleagues come to with "How did you do that?" questions. But your wins are mostly personal. You're spending more time explaining AI than using it, and it's not yet a team-wide capability. You're not starting from scratch, you're systemising what's already working, and that makes you the idea person to architect this program.

In both cases, the gap isn't your tools or your talent. It's the **systematic capability-building** that turns potential into performance.

This guide will help you use your AI Maturity Assessment results as a starting point to design an **AI literacy program** that moves you from individual wins to team-wide effectiveness, without burning your champions out or letting your infrastructure sit idle.

What is AI literacy?

AI literacy isn't about turning everyone into a data scientist. It's about knowing when AI can genuinely help with your work, how to guide it effectively, and when human judgement matters more.

An AI-literate employee can:



Engage with AI critically.

They recognise when AI is being used, evaluate whether outputs are accurate and relevant, and know when to trust AI versus when to apply human judgement.



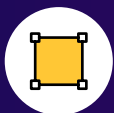
Create with AI effectively.

They guide and refine AI outputs through clear prompts and feedback, ensure content remains fair and appropriate, and use AI ethically while respecting existing materials and intellectual property.



Manage AI strategically.

They understand how AI can support and enhance human work rather than replace it, and assess whether AI involvement aligns with their goals, values, and the organisation's priorities.



Design with AI responsibly.

They consider AI's broader social and ethical impacts, anticipating how AI systems might affect colleagues, customers, and communities.

The capability gap is real

Cultivating an AI-literate workforce is a massive barrier for most organisations, and the data backs that up.

- In our **2026 HR Industry Benchmark Report**, expanding AI use across the organisation is one of the top challenges for ANZ organisations.
- Only **1% of organisations** believe their AI investments have reached maturity.
- The World Economic Forum predicts **78 million new job opportunities** by 2030, but the skills gap remains the biggest barrier to capturing them.
- In 2025, ELMO's **Employee Sentiment Index** showed only 20% of employees felt supported to AI-related training.

None of us know exactly what the future of work looks like. But by giving your people the skills, knowledge and AI literacy competency now, you're preparing them to succeed, whether that's at your organisation or beyond.



The business case: why AI literacy pays for itself

Before you build your program, you'll likely need to make the case for it. Here's what the evidence says.

The return is immediate. Google's AI WORKS 2025 research found that just a few hours of AI training delivers a **10:1 return on investment**. That's not a long-term projection, it's measurable within weeks of a focused program.

Measure impact across three dimensions — not just one. Most organisations default to measuring efficiency (doing work faster), and that's natural. But if efficiency is all you measure, it's a short step to a headcount reduction conversation. Instead, think across three dimensions:



Efficiency

Do work faster.

A report that took 2 hours now takes 30 minutes.



Productivity

Do more work in the same time.

If you could write 1 report a day and now you can produce 2, that's a productivity gain.



Performance

Create more value.

You're improving the quality and strategic impact of outputs, regardless of time.

When you frame AI as creating space for higher-value work, not as a path to fewer people, adoption accelerates. When it's perceived as a cost-cutting exercise, resistance hardens.

Revenue impact is real. Industries most exposed to AI have seen **3x higher growth in revenue per employee**. A conservative efficiency lift of 10–20% is attainable for most organisations with a structured program.

8 steps to build your AI upskilling program

Here's 8 practical steps you can start working on today.

Step 1: Organise an AI team

Your AI literacy program needs owners, and more importantly, it needs HR positioned as the capability architect, not just a training coordinator.

That team might include HR or People & Culture, Learning & Development, IT or data, and an executive sponsor. The key is combining people who understand the workforce context with people who understand the systems and data foundations.



For **Builders**, this is often an extension of existing governance or transformation groups.



For **Doers**, it may start as a smaller working group anchored around the people who've already been experimenting.

For more on how ELMO's own people and culture team partnered with technology leadership to drive adoption, see [The People Power Behind AI Adoption](#).

Step 2: Align with existing education and training

Rather than launching AI training as a standalone initiative, map it to what already exists.

- **Onboarding programs** – foundational AI literacy for all new hires
- **Leadership development** – AI for strategic decision-making
- **Function-specific learning pathways** – Marketing, Finance, Ops, Sales, HR
- **Performance management** – AI effectiveness as a development focus

This creates consistency, leverages existing investment, and embeds AI capability into how your organisation already develops talent.

Step 3: Assess organisational readiness

Use a short survey to understand capability across all functions. Here are some example questions to get you started:

Current capability

- How would you rate your current AI skills? (1-5)
- Which AI tools have you used in the past 30 days?
- How many hours per week do you currently save using AI?

Confidence and attitudes

- What worries you most about using AI in your work?
- What excites you most about AI's potential?

Learning preferences

- How do you prefer to learn new skills? (self-paced, workshops, peer-led, etc.)

Deploy this through your existing survey tool (like ELMO Survey) and analyse by function, level, and tenure. Look for patterns: Are managers lagging behind ICs? Is Finance ahead of Marketing? Where are the biggest capability gaps vs where is adoption naturally happening?

Important: If you're getting a lot of negative or even neutral sentiment around AI, you have communication work to do before you roll out a program. Understanding attitudes first will save you from launching into resistance.

Step 4: Choose two or three clear goals

Your survey results from Step 3 should guide your priorities. You might decide to:

- Reduce **fear and anxiety** and create psychologically safe spaces to learn.
- Build **internal trust and proof points**, showing that AI delivers concrete value.
- Develop **practical skills**, so people use AI weekly for real, recurring tasks.
- Create **competitive advantage**, pushing into data-driven decisions and workforce planning.

Your goals should connect AI capability to business outcomes for example:



Within six months, 60% of managers across all functions will use AI for at least three recurring tasks.



By year-end, aggregate productivity gains equivalent to 1,000 hours per month will be redirected to strategic work.



Builders often set activation goals (getting adoption moving).



Doers set scaling and sustainability goals (systematising what's already working).

Step 5: Design function-specific learning journeys

Think in layers, not one-off courses:

- **Universal foundations:** What every employee needs (AI basics, ethics, prompt techniques, human-in-the-loop practices)
- **Function-specific applications:** Marketing learns AI for content and campaign analysis; Finance learns AI for forecasting and reporting; Operations learns AI for process optimisation
- **Advanced strategic capability:** Leaders and specialists learn workforce modelling, scenario planning and competitive analysis

Use your learning platform (like ELMO Learning) to create modular journeys that combine self-paced modules, live workshops and peer learning. Each module should connect to immediate, practical value, people engage when they can see how it helps with the work on their desk right now.

Step 6:

Create cross-functional experimentation spaces

Don't let HR own all the content. Create spaces where functions share what's working:

- **Organisation-wide AI Days sessions:** Not HR-led workshops, but showcase events where all departments share their wins. See [how to launch your own Educate Day](#) for a step-by-step guide.
- **Cross-functional hackathons:** Teams tackle real business problems with AI
- **AI Champions network:** HR convenes it, but champions come from every function and support their peers
- **Show and tell sessions:** Monthly gatherings where people demonstrate what worked, what failed and what surprised them

At ELMO, internal AI adoption has been supported through:

A dedicated **Educate Day**, where employees step out of their day-to-day roles to explore AI together.

An ongoing **AI training series** with a mix of foundational and advanced sessions.

An **AI Community of Practice** that connects champions across regions and teams.

Step 7:

Embed AI Capability in performance, development and recognition

Make AI effectiveness part of how your organisation already manages and rewards performance:

- Include 'AI-enabled productivity' in development conversations
- Add AI capability to competency frameworks
- Use your performance management platform (like ELMO Performance) to track AI capability development alongside other skills

Then recognise and reward progress – this sustains momentum beyond the initial launch:

Certificates and badges through your R&R platform (like ELMO Rewards & Recognition) when people complete milestones

Public recognition in team meetings and internal comms for teams demonstrating measurable AI effectiveness

Time-based incentives dedicated learning hours or experimentation time as a visible commitment from leadership

Champion recognition formally acknowledging the people who support their peers

This signals that AI literacy isn't optional, it's part of being effective in your role.

Step 8: Measure what matters

Your program should measure success along three dimensions:



Efficiency (time savings)

How much faster can recurring work be done? How many hours have you freed up each month?



Productivity (output and capacity)

What additional work or quality improvements has that freed-up time enabled?



Performance (quality and impact)

How have key outcomes changed? That might include retention, time-to-fill, engagement, or other measures relevant to your context.

A simple framework to identify performance lift opportunities:

Try this exercise with your team to uncover where AI could drive the most meaningful impact:

1 My role / department:

Human Resources

2 A core goal is to:

Improve the quality and long-term success of new hires

3 We measure this with:

First-year employee turnover rate

4 The performance lift question:

How can AI help us reduce our first-year turnover rate by identifying candidates who are a better long-term fit?

Take that question, put it into your preferred AI tool, and it will help you build a plan. You can use this framework across any function and any KPI.

HR should own reporting impact to the C-suite quarterly: *“Here’s our organisation’s AI capability development, here’s the productivity impact, here’s the ROI on our infrastructure investment.”*

Quick wins

If you're a Builder



Your organisation has invested in infrastructure: a connected HR platform, integrated data, leadership support, governance. Your challenge is activation across functions.



90-day activation sprint:

- Partner with 2-3 early-adopter functions (maybe Marketing and Finance) to run focused capability sprints on their highest-value use cases
- Create visible executive sponsorship: ask the C-suite to share how they use AI in their work
- Launch a cross-functional AI Champions network with dedicated time to support peers
- Run an organisation-wide showcase at 90 days, where early wins are shared



What this achieves: Proves the infrastructure investment is paying off, creates internal case studies, builds momentum for broader rollout.

For a deeper look at how ELMO built organisation-wide AI capability from strong foundations, see [When Culture Change Comes First, AI Becomes How You Work](#).

Quick wins

If you're a Doer



Your strength is proof. You've already demonstrated that AI can save time and improve work. Your challenge is sustainability and scale.



Systematisation sprint:

- Document the 10-15 most impactful AI workflows across all functions (not just HR): the task, the approach, the time saved, the output quality
- Work with L&D to turn these into function-specific learning modules
- Run a "show and tell" event where different functions present their wins
- Build an aggregate business case: total hours saved, productivity gains, value unlocked, use this to advocate for better infrastructure or expanded licencing



What this achieves: Scales what's working, creates sustainability, positions HR as the function that can quantify and systematise capability development. Your organisation has the infrastructure or the emerging proof points. Your people have the potential. An intentional, organisation-wide AI literacy program is how HR turns potential into systematic capability and competitive advantage.

The Complete AI⁺ Workforce Platform™

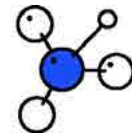
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Management

Founded in 2002, the ELMO Group comprises ELMO Software, Breathe HR and Rotageek. ELMO Group is a multinational provider of people management solutions, trusted by over 18,000 organisations across Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

ELMO is The Complete AI Workforce Platform™. It unifies HR and Payroll on one connected data foundation and layers native AI to turn workforce data into insight and action. ELMO's mission is to get Australia and New Zealand's workforce ready for what's next and supports the full employee lifecycle, from recruitment and onboarding to learning, performance, payroll and more.

Backed by ISO-certified security, Australian-based data hosting and local experts who guide change throughout the journey, ELMO helps mid-sized organisations build the foundation for AI-ready workforces of tomorrow.

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