Pearson

Building a Technology-Ready Learning Ecosystem

Turning AI Investment into Workforce Capability

Learn more →

Welcome from Vishaal

AI is advancing at an extraordinary pace. Across industries, organizations are investing heavily in new technologies with the expectation that they will transform how work gets done. But technology itself is not the differentiator. What matters is people's ability to learn, adapt and build new skills as quickly as the world around them changes.

That is why the conversation about technology, especially AI, can no longer be separated from the conversation about workforce transformation.

The question for leaders is how quickly they can equip their people with the skills and confidence to work alongside AI and use it effectively. The answer will determine not only the return on their technology investments, but also their ability to innovate and grow in the years ahead.

At Pearson, we work with organizations around the world as they navigate this challenge. They recognize the opportunity AI presents, but they are also asking important questions: Which skills matter most? How do we build those skills at scale? How do we make learning relevant to real work? And how do we ensure that learning translates into measurable business impact?

What is becoming increasingly clear is that the organizations making the greatest progress are those that put learning at the forefront. They embed skills development into the flow of work, align learning to business outcomes, and build cultures where continuous development is part of how people succeed.

The reason is simple: AI transformation is workforce transformation.

The greatest returns will not come from technology alone. They will come from helping people work confidently alongside it, apply new capabilities in ways that create real value and continue building skills as technology evolves. When workforce capability keeps pace with technological change, organizations can unlock productivity, performance and growth. When it does not, the gap between ambition and impact widens.

This report explores what it takes to close that gap. Drawing on insights from leaders at organizations including Deloitte, Salesforce, KPMG and HCLTech, it highlights how leading enterprises are building technology-ready learning ecosystems that connect skills development to business priorities and workforce outcomes.

Above all, this is a report about people. It is about creating opportunities for individuals to learn continuously, adapt with confidence and develop the skills needed for the future of work.

The opportunity ahead is significant. By putting skills at the center of their transformation strategies, leaders can move beyond experimentation and begin realizing sustainable value from their AI investments. I hope the insights in this report help organizations take that next step with confidence.

Vishaal Gupta
President, Enterprise Learning & Skills at Pearson

Inside this report you'll find

- Why traditional learning models are struggling to keep pace with AI and other fast-moving enterprise technologies
- The four pillars of a technology-ready learning ecosystem: trusted content, verified skills, adoption enablement, and measurement at scale
- How leaders can move from technology strategy to workforce capability
- Examples of how Pearson and other leading enterprises are building learning ecosystems that help people adopt, apply, and sustain new skills at scale

Why skills – not technology alone – are holding your organization back from realizing AI value

Many large enterprises have invested heavily in AI, cloud, data analytics, and cybersecurity technology. The platforms are live; the pilots have launched — and in some cases concluded. But for many organizations, the returns are yet to catch up with the promise.

It's tempting to assume the gap is technical — more data, better models, more time. However, for most organizations the answer isn't technology alone, but whether people have the skills, confidence, and support to use technology differently in the flow of their everyday work. Ambition for AI moves as fast as the board and C-suite can invest. Capability moves at human speed.

Deloitte's 2026 Human Capital Trends report found that 59% of organizations take a technology-first approach to AI — and they're 1.6 times more likely to miss their expected returns than organizations that lead with people. Meanwhile, 71% of CEOs now call AI a top investment priority, and two-thirds expect a return within one to three years. Expectations are accelerating. Technology is advancing. But workforce capability is not always keeping pace.

The stakes are significant. Pearson research shows that AI-powered worker augmentation could add $4.8 to $6.6 trillion to the U.S. economy by 2034 — but only if organizations invest in human capability alongside technology.

The result is a widening gap between technology investment and workforce readiness. The spend is committed and the window to show value is short, but the real bottleneck is not the technology. It's whether people can apply new tools, build new skills, and work differently because of them. The skills gap is dragging down ROI, with companies that are working to close it pulling ahead. That makes technology readiness no longer just L&D's problem, but a leadership issue that needs priority commitment from the CEO down.

> "I think the more enlightened C-suite leaders recognize that tech, HR, customer facing business leaders need to be in the room together. At Deloitte, we have been talking for many years now about how each member of the C-suite has their own role to play here, but they need to work as an orchestrated team."
>
> Josh Haims, Principal, Human Capital at Deloitte

Your workforce needs more than extra courses or one-off training. It needs a **technology-ready learning ecosystem**: one that builds skills continuously, embeds learning into work, validates capability, and connects learning investment to measurable business impact.

Why traditional learning models no longer work

Legacy models — formal education, traditional corporate training, and one-off upskilling programs — were not designed for technology cycles that move this quickly. They often separate learning from work, deliver generic content to diverse audiences, and measure completion rather than capability. In an AI-enabled enterprise, that creates four problems:

1 One size fits no one

A program built for 'everyone' reaches almost no one. Today's workforce includes people from various generations with different roles, skills, learning preferences, and levels of confidence with technology. AI fluency varies just as widely, even within the same team. A scalable learning ecosystem needs to meet people where they are — and help them build the specific capabilities they need for the work they actually do.

> "People learn differently. Every human being — their learning agility varies. All of us have different ways we learn. So, we've really tried to create a more dynamic learning ecosystem."

Pallavi Sebastian, Senior Vice President, Talent & Learning at Salesforce

2 Programs that don't scale

Instructor-led and bespoke courses have their place, especially for complex or high-stakes skills. But leaning on them to transform a whole workforce is a trap: expensive, slow, hard to scale. For fast-moving technologies such as AI, the bigger opportunity is to combine expert-led learning with modular content, simulations, guided practice, and role-specific learning paths that can reach more people faster — without losing relevance with learners.

> "Our clients are not asking us to develop e-learning courses for them at the pace of years past. They are asking for experiential learning in the form of deep simulations and practical exercises that are linked to real business use cases. They say, 'given the pace of change, and the agility needed of our teams to adapt, these are more effective for immediate application back on the job, we need to learn in the flow of work'."

Josh Haims, Principal, Human Capital at Deloitte

3 Learning is disconnected from daily work

When learning feels disconnected from daily work, people disengage. When it is connected to the tasks, tools, and decisions they already own, they are more likely to apply it. With AI this distinction matters, as companies are asking employees to not just learn new tools, but to rethink workflows, improve processes, and identify where AI can enhance the work they are responsible for. Learning must happen close enough to the work to change behavior.

4 Measuring the wrong things

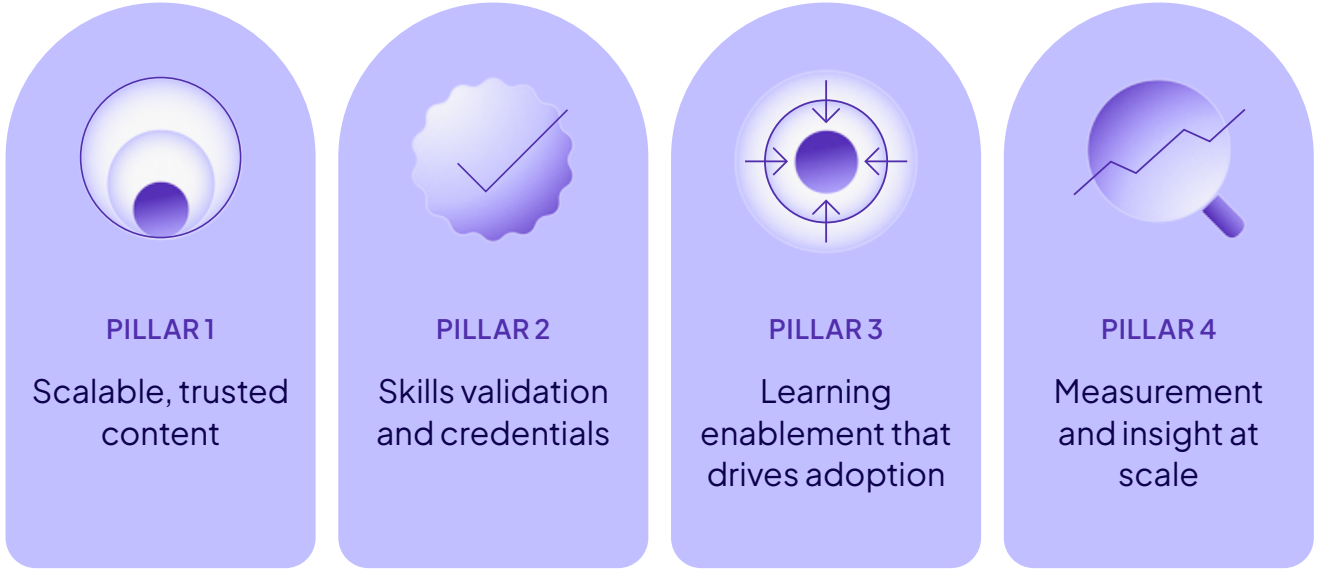
As learning becomes a strategic investment, it must prove its worth against business outcomes — yet most measurement stops at the easiest number to collect. A technology-ready learning ecosystem needs measurement that connects skills to behavior change and business impact.

> **“Completion data is easy to collect. It’s almost completely uninformative. The meaningful indicators that you really want to get are behavioral, or people using the learning, or they’re using the technology, or they’re doing their job better.”**

Louise Scott-Worrall, Partner, Head of KPMG Learning Services at KPMG in the UK

From isolated experiences to learning ecosystems

The answer is a robust learning ecosystem: one that helps people learn in the flow of work, build skills continuously, and apply those skills to measurable business outcomes. A meaningful learning ecosystem does more than deliver content. It helps people adopt new technologies, use them responsibly, redesign work where needed, and sustain capability as tools continue to evolve. And it measures and delivers real impact.



PILLAR 1

Scalable, trusted content

PILLAR 2

Skills validation and credentials

PILLAR 3

Learning enablement that drives adoption

PILLAR 4

Measurement and insight at scale

For many enterprises, that ecosystem may also extend beyond employees to partners and customers, creating a shared foundation for technology readiness at scale.

"Training and certifications are important milestones, but they are only the starting point. Real transformation happens when people can translate those skills into measurable business outcomes. The organizations that will lead in the AI era are those that treat learning as a continuous capability-building engine, one that empowers people to apply AI in meaningful and enterprise-relevant ways."

Vijay Guntur, Chief Technology Officer and Head of Ecosystems, HCLTech

PILLAR 1

Scalable, trusted content

Scalable, trusted content is the foundation of any learning ecosystem designed to drive technology adoption. In the context of AI, content is no longer just about knowledge transfer — it is about enabling people to apply new capabilities in their day-to-day work in ways that deliver measurable business outcomes.

At scale, this requires a fundamentally different approach. Content must be structured, modular, and continuously evolving — not as isolated courses, but as part of an integrated system that supports learning in the flow of work and adapts to learners' needs. Content experiences should be designed to meet individuals where they are, adjusting to their existing skill sets, roles, and proficiency levels so that learning is relevant and efficient.

Leading organizations prioritize content that is:

- **Grounded in real enterprise use cases**, showing how AI applies to specific roles, industries, and workflows
- **Aligned to role-based capability models**, so employees see immediate relevance to their work
- **Personalized and adaptive**, evolving based on learners' skill levels, behaviors, and progress to deliver the right content at the right time
- **Backed by recognized experts and validated sources**, ensuring credibility in a rapidly evolving field
- **Connected to tools and environments employees actually use**, allowing learning and application to happen together

This shift reflects what enterprises are demanding.

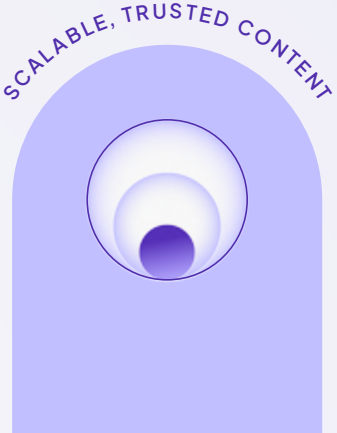
Leaders should take a **skills-led approach** to building this learning ecosystem. As AI reshapes roles and tasks, organizations need to start with a clear view of how skills are evolving — using skills ontology and AI-driven insights to identify where work is changing and which capabilities are becoming critical. These inputs provide a more precise understanding of capability gaps, enabling organizations to prioritize learning that aligns to emerging skill needs and delivers the greatest business impact.

Equally important is **ensuring that content is designed for application, not consumption**. Different functions — whether sales, IT, finance, or operations — use AI in distinct ways. Scalable content systems must reflect these differences through targeted scenarios, workflows, and case-based learning that mirrors real business challenges, while dynamically adjusting depth and complexity based on the learner.

Finally, **scalable content must be paired with opportunities to practice**. The most effective learning experiences now combine content with simulation, experimentation, and real task execution, enabling employees to build confidence and capability in context.

In this model, content is not a static asset — it is a dynamic, trusted layer within the learning ecosystem that drives adoption, accelerates skill development, and connects learning directly to business value.

> "Enterprises are prioritizing content that is relevant, credible, and grounded in real skills and tasks. The focus is shifting from volume to impact, helping employees use technology effectively. We've moved beyond traditional delivery, bringing expert-led and applied learning directly into the business. People engage most when they can clearly see how it helps them in their work and put it into practice straight away."
>
> Julie Phifer, Head of Content and Training, Enterprise Learning and Skills at Pearson



PILLAR 2

Skills validation and credentials

Digital badges and credentials motivate learners and show leaders trusted proof of credibility. Done well, a credential shows that someone has demonstrated a skill they can apply. That distinction matters — 93% of certified professionals report increased work quality — highlighting how validated skills translate into real performance. The proof the credential provides is becoming more valuable.

Employers agree. The Lumina Foundation's Micro-Credentials Impact Report 2025, found that 96% of employers said micro-credentials strengthen a candidate's application and 94% said they help reduce training time and costs for new employees.

As learning shifts toward the experiential, simulations become a natural place to certify skills — you watch someone apply a capability and verify it, rather than trust a completion rate.

As the pace of technology change accelerates, learning investments must become continuous, rather than a one-time or periodic investment. That means, for example, that some credentials might expire after a set time, perhaps after a few months, spurring employees on to formally update their skills with additional learning.

> "The biggest problem that we hear from enterprises is the lack of deep insights about skills at the individual level. Credential data, especially the scale at which Credly by Pearson helps manage it, helps enterprises get down to the individual level with skills that have been verified by the premier learning and training organizations."

Billy Grieco, Lead, Product Management, Enterprise Learning and Skills at Pearson

> "Building AI capability is not a destination. It is a continuous journey. What is cutting-edge today may be obsolete tomorrow. The real investment is not just in technology; it is in creating a culture of learning and adaptability that is needed to evolve at the pace of change."

Vijay Guntur, Chief Technology Officer and Head of Ecosystems, HCLTech

PILLAR 3

Learning enablement that drives adoption

For enterprises that have invested heavily in AI and other fast-moving technologies, adoption is the first step toward return — but adoption does not happen by default. People need permission, practice, guidance, and reinforcement. A strong learning ecosystem supports adoption in three ways.

1 **First, it embeds learning in daily workflows**, so people learn as they go. In learning and development, there are frameworks that suggest about 70% of workplace learning takes place through challenging experiences and real assignments — yet historically, that kind of learning has been difficult to measure.

But the embedding of AI capabilities into workforce productivity software is enabling employers to provide real-time feedback on skills and suggest ways to improve them. For AI and other applied technologies, this matters because capability develops through use: trying new workflows, receiving feedback, adjusting behavior, and applying skills in context.

As AI capabilities become embedded into productivity tools, organizations now have new opportunities to provide real-time feedback, surface skill gaps, and reinforce learning as work happens.

2 **Second, it equips managers and leaders to reinforce those skills and behaviors**. At Salesforce, employees whose managers role-model AI use are 25% more likely to use it themselves.

> "The number one thing we can do is give people permission to use AI. Usage and adoption ultimately drive the outcomes."
>
> Pallavi Sebastian, Senior Vice President, Talent & Learning at Salesforce

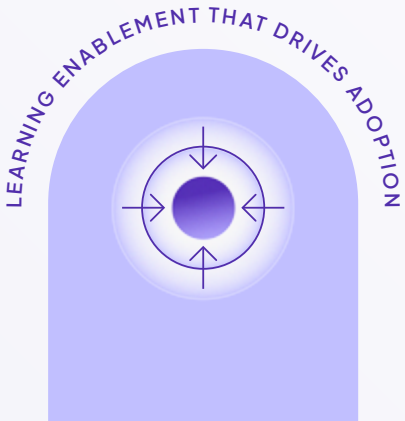
Salesforce makes that concrete: around 500 senior leaders are being prepared to lead an AI-driven enterprise through coaching in the flow of work, not through a one-time leadership offsite.

At HCLTech, this clarity of expectation when it comes to embedding AI into daily work is demonstrated through job role categorization. Employees are split into three broad groups, regardless of function: AI builders, who are expected to use AI to create or enhance products and services; AI superusers, who will use AI tools to reshape and improve workflows; and AI users, who will use AI tools as part of their day-to-day work. With these expectations defined, leaders and employees alike are clear on how they are expected to engage with AI, and what skills they need to develop to effectively engage at their level.

3 **Third, a unified environment creates common ground** — shared standards, personalized paths, and peer-to-peer community hubs.

Underneath all three sits culture. Technology readiness depends not only on tools and training, but on the norms that tell people what is expected, what is safe to try, and how new technologies should be used.

KPMG's Scott-Worrall says readiness is like a three-legged stool: technology, people, and the cultural norms that tell everyone 'how we use AI around here'. Leaders and managers play a critical role here: they give people permission to experiment, model responsible use, and make learning part of how work gets done.



PILLAR 4

Measurement and insight at scale

Measurement should be built in from the start and tied to business outcomes. Start with a baseline; what the workforce can do today, where the capability gaps sit, and what business outcomes learning is expected to influence. That means agreeing up front with business, finance, and risk leaders what success should look like, and capturing the 'before' so you can prove the 'after'.

Then measure what matters, such as post-learning behaviors instead of completion rates. Salesforce uses before-and-after comparisons across learner cohorts, tied to hard metrics like sales pipeline generated or developer productivity. In creating learning metrics, organizations should consider:

- What are the business activities that connect skills and business outputs?
- Are employees behaving or working differently?
- Are upskilled people being selected for new roles, promotions, or other indications of advancement at work?
- Are employees who engage with learning content staying with the organization longer?

Employers should also consider identifying and measuring 'capability decay', where unused skills aren't retained. It also happens when skills change as technology advances.

> "You can look at capability decay. We measure at the point of training; we rarely go back to assess whether capability has been maintained. AI capabilities are evolving faster than traditional training models, which means decay is not just a risk, it's almost guaranteed without continuous reinforcement."

Louise Scott-Worrall, Partner, Head of KPMG Learning Services at KPMG in the UK

Measure the risk you avoid, too. More than half of workers admit to AI-driven mistakes — a quantifiable risk finance and risk leaders grasp at once. And watch for decay: AI evolves faster than training can refresh, so an ecosystem that tracks capability over time catches erosion early.

PEARSON CASE STUDY

Connecting learning, AI usage and business impact

The Challenge

Enable Pearson's workforce to make better use of Copilot AI capabilities within Microsoft 365.

The Goal

Build a shared baseline of confidence and fundamental skills for new users, while enabling more advanced users to practically apply Copilot in their day-to-day work.

The Solution

Live sessions delivered across time zones over 10 weeks. 20 introductory sessions established a shared baseline of skill, while 30 application tracks with 4 sessions each, focused on practical workflows.

The Results

More than a third of all employees with Copilot licenses registered, and the vast majority of those who registered attended at least one session.

2 weeks after training, Copilot workflows across apps increased by 16–46%:

- **32%** Copilot chat
- **46%** Outlook
- **16%** Teams
- **20%** Meeting summaries

30-day follow-up reports:

61% said their job performance improved

71% said their productivity increased

61% said the quality of their work improved

By implementing a structured learning ecosystem, Pearson was able to accelerate adoption, drive behavior change, and translate results directly into measurable productivity gains.

See the full case study for more detail

Getting started: Implementing a scalable learning ecosystem

The four pillars provide the foundation for a technology-ready learning ecosystem. The next challenge is implementation: understanding where the organization is today, where technology is changing fastest, where learning can create the greatest business impact, and how to build a practical roadmap that can scale.

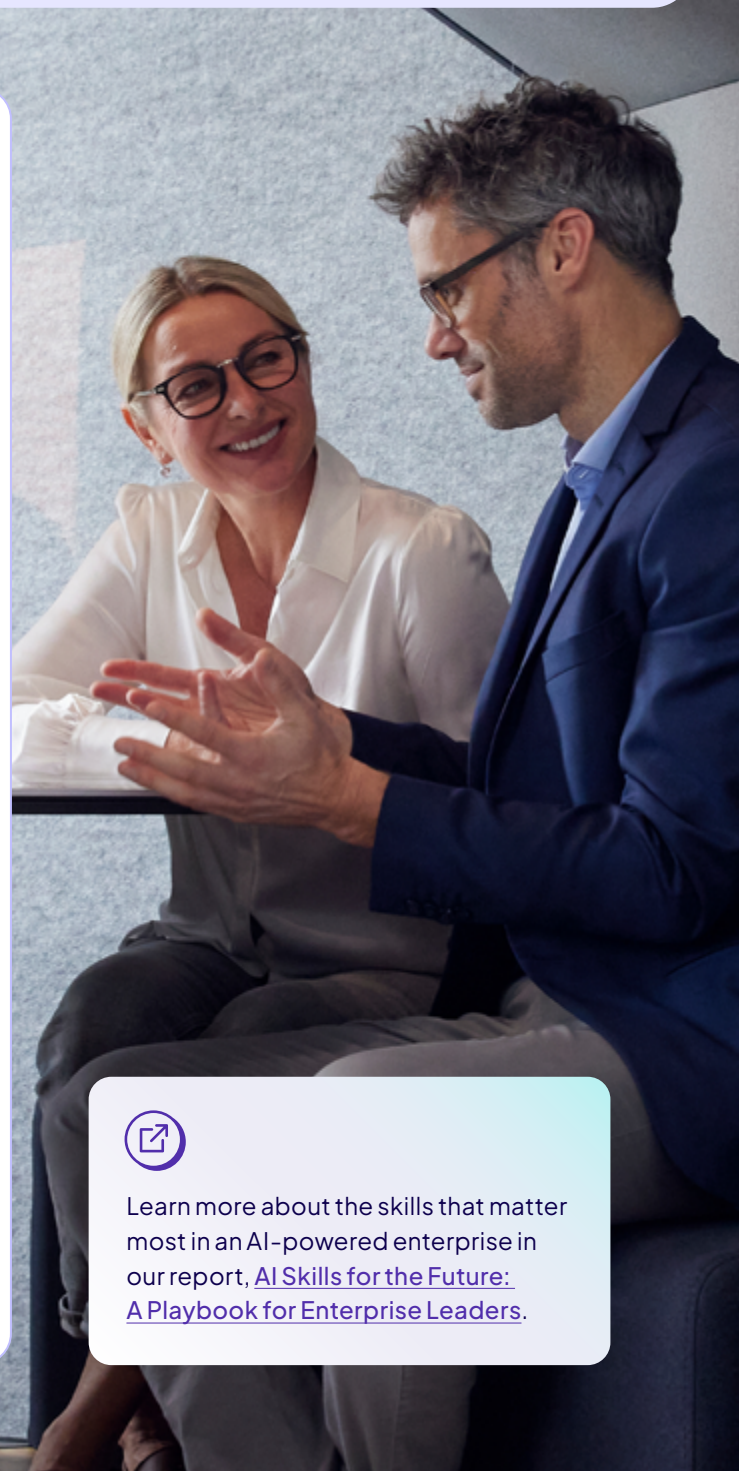
Leaders can start by identifying the technologies and use cases that matter most, assessing current skills and readiness gaps, defining what 'ready' looks like across roles and functions, choosing scalable learning approaches, and building measurement into the process from the start.

- **Identify priority technologies and related skills**
- **Assess current skills and readiness gaps**
- **Define what 'ready' looks like for your organization**
- **Choose scalable, evidence-based learning approaches**
- **Build in measurement from the start**

Identify priority technologies and related skills

Start with what matters most to your business. Review your strategy, gather input from business and technology leaders, and identify where AI and other fast-moving technologies are already changing work. Then translate those priorities into the skills people need to use those technologies effectively. For example, Faethm by Pearson analyzed more than 9,000 skills and has identified four distinct categories of AI skills:

AI Skill Type	Definition	Examples
Foundational AI	Knowledge and competencies required to understand and use AI.	Decision making, Prompt engineering, Critical thinking, Creative thinking, Logical reasoning, Generative AI, Data Literacy etc.
Specialized AI	Knowledge and competencies required to design, build, and evaluate AI systems and applications.	LLaMa, Prolog, Large Language Models Fine-Tuning, Deep Learning, Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK), FastText etc.
AI Governance	Knowledge and competencies required to govern and manage the development, use, and impact of AI.	Data Governance, Data Security, Risk Governance, Policy Monitoring, AI Ethics etc.
AI Tool	Platforms or applications that are fundamentally driven by AI as their core operating principle (excludes products where AI is a feature).	DALL-E, ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, Midjourney, IBM PowerAI, Amazon Lex, AlchemyAPI, TIBCO Spotfire, Synthesia, etc.



Learn more about the skills that matter most in an AI-powered enterprise in our report, AI Skills for the Future: A Playbook for Enterprise Leaders.

Assess current skills and readiness gaps

Use data, leader input, workforce insights, and role analysis to understand where capability is strongest and where the biggest gaps sit. Pearson's DEEP framework can support this step by helping organizations identify the gap between the skills their workforce has today and the skills they need in the future to realize the value of AI and other technology investments.

This is also where the learning ecosystem becomes practical: leaders can connect priority use cases to role-specific skill needs, identify which gaps create the greatest business risk, and decide where learning will have the most immediate impact.

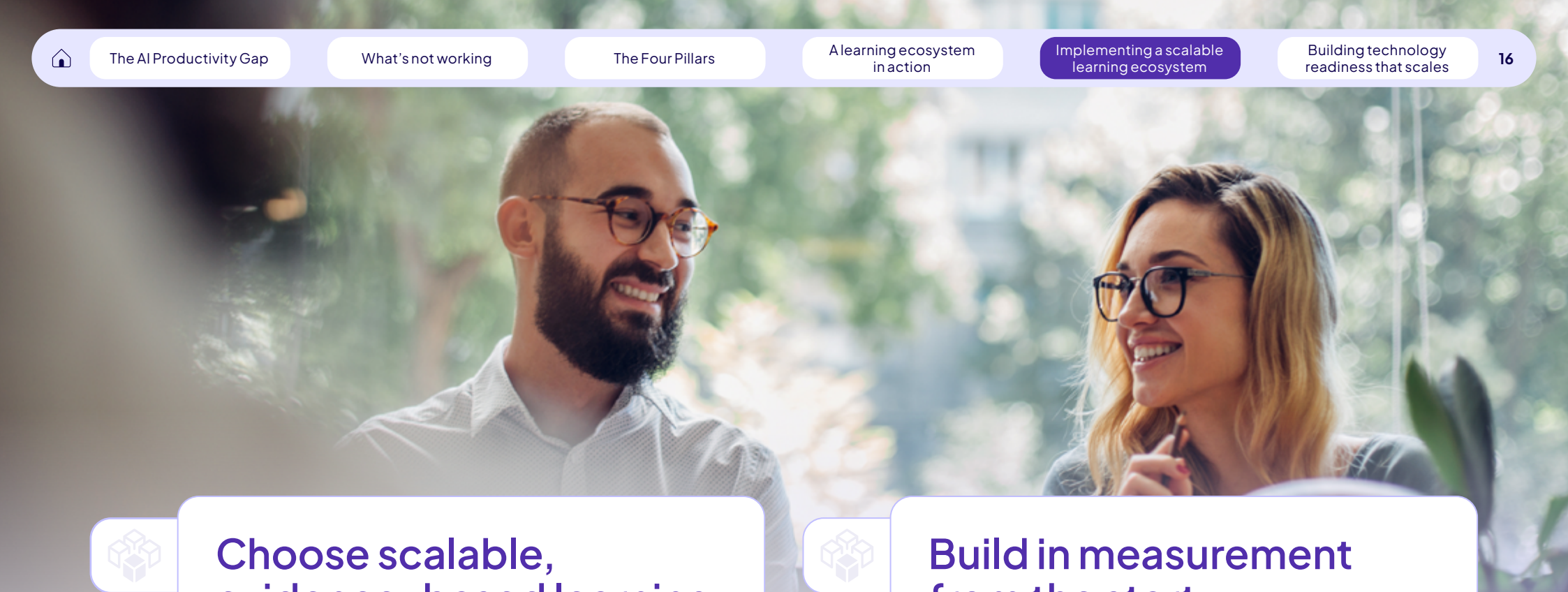
You can learn more about how organizations can operationalize that insight — building scalable learning ecosystems that close the gap between technology investment and workforce capability — in our Mind the Learning Gap whitepaper.

Define what 'ready' looks like for your organization

You can't hit a target you haven't identified. Set expectations for the whole workforce, for each function, and for priority roles. That might include defining a set of foundational AI skills that broad groups of employees will be expected to learn and use, as well as specialized pathways for teams such as sales, IT, finance, product, operations, and customer support. Readiness should also not be defined only as knowledge of a tool. It should include confidence, responsible use, practical application, and the ability to apply technology to real business problems.

Leaders should be involved in shaping this definition, too — sharing how they are using AI, what they are learning from experiments and failures, and where they see technology taking the organization.

> **"Organizations that steal a march on their competitors will reframe up front. That's why it can't just be a technology deployment. It's got to be, 'We've got a vision to improve our business performance, and this is how it'll do it.' And then the human element, 'And actually, it can also help you with your personal productivity.'"**
>
> Louise Scott-Worrall, Partner, Head of KPMG Learning Services at KPMG in the UK



Choose scalable, evidence-based learning approaches

Once priorities and readiness gaps are clear, choose the approaches that will help people build and apply skills at scale.

That may include trusted content, role-based learning pathways, simulations, live expert sessions, credentials, manager enablement, peer learning, and learning in the flow of work.

The goal is not just to deliver training. It is to create the conditions for adoption: giving people relevant learning, opportunities to practice, proof of progress, manager reinforcement, and the confidence to apply new skills in real business contexts.

Build in measurement from the start

Build measurement into the ecosystem from the start. Set a clear baseline, agree the outcomes up front with business, finance and risk leaders, and track whether learning is changing behavior and business results — not just course completions.

For fast-moving technologies like AI, leaders should also monitor risk reduction and capability decay over time. Skills that are not used can fade. Skills that are newly built can become outdated as tools evolve. A scalable learning ecosystem should help leaders see where capability is growing, where it is eroding, and where intervention is needed.

Building readiness that scales with your business

Skills — not technology alone — are the real constraint on growth. What turns investment into return is a workforce that can apply new tools, keep pace as they evolve, and use them to improve the work that matters most.

The right ecosystem turns that challenge into an advantage. It builds skills at scale, helps learning keep pace with the technology, and proves its impact in terms the whole C-suite understands. Most importantly, it keeps people at the center. The organizations pulling ahead are designing an enterprise enabled by AI, but led by humans.

And you don't have to build all this alone. The right partner can help large organizations connect trusted content, assessments, credentials, and enablement that work as one ecosystem — built to scale and deliver measurable impact.

> "The human is the most important thing in all of this. If we can unlock that human potential with the technology, we can be wildly successful — and help people do the best work of their careers."

Pallavi Sebastian, Senior Vice President, Talent & Learning at Salesforce

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Pearson helps enterprises build future-ready workforces through integrated talent planning, talent sourcing, and talent development solutions. With global reach and expertise in AI and learning sciences, Pearson enables organizations to identify strengths today and develop the talent they need for what's next.

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