Employees Left Behind in Workplace AI Boom, New WalkMe Survey Finds

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Nearly 80% of employees admit to using unapproved AI tools, exposing businesses to risk and wasted ROI

SAN FRANCISCO, Aug. 27, 2025 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — The AI revolution is well underway in the workplace, but a new survey from WalkMe, an SAP company and pioneer of the Digital Adoption Platform (DAP) category, reveals that employees are being left to navigate it on their own. The company's second annual "AI in the Workplace Survey" finds that while workers are eager, most lack the support needed to use AI responsibly and effectively, fueling risk, wasted productivity, and lost ROI.

Shadow AI is everywhere
AI tools are flooding the workplace — but often without IT's approval. 78% of employees say they use AI tools not provided by their employer, while more than half (51%) report conflicting guidance on when and how to use AI. This unmanaged use may create significant security and compliance risks.

The productivity paradox
Employees overwhelmingly believe in AI's potential, with 80% saying it improves productivity. Yet nearly 60% admit it often takes longer to figure out how to use AI than to complete the task manually. Without proper guidance, AI's promise is stalling, which at scale may mean thousands of lost hours and millions in wasted investment.

"Beyond the productivity paradox, we're facing a full-blown governance crisis," **said Dan Adika, CEO and Co-founder, WalkMe.** "When nearly 80% of employees are using shadow AI tools, organizations are not just losing money – they're losing control. Businesses are missing a massive opportunity to strategically empower their people and realize the full potential of AI."

AI stigma at work
Cultural confusion is compounding the problem. Nearly half (45%) of workers admit they have pretended to know how to use it in a meeting or presentation to avoid scrutiny. And yet 49% admit they have claimed not to use AI to avoid judgment. This trend is even more pronounced among Gen Z: 55.5% of Gen Z employees say they've pretended to understand AI tools, and 62% have hidden their use altogether.

Training gap blocks ROI
The enablement gap is stark. The number of daily AI users increased by 16 points since last year's survey, but only 7.5% of employees have received extensive AI training. An additional 23% report receiving no training at all. This is a costly problem: WalkMe's own 2025 State of Digital Adoption Report found that companies lost an average of $104 million in 2024 due to underused tools and poor rollout.

"AI has become an essential enterprise skill. But without training and guardrails, shadow AI creates risk and undermines ROI," **said Gina Smith, PhD, Research Director, IT Skills for Digital Business, IDC.** "The companies that build AI-ready skills and digital adoption strategies now can avoid such loss. They are the organizations who will lead the next era of work."

Methodology
This report is based on a survey conducted by Propeller Insights on behalf of WalkMe between July 16 and 23, 2025. The survey polled 1,000 working U.S. adults who use AI in their jobs in some capacity. The sample was balanced to be nationally representative across age, gender, industry, company size, and seniority. The margin of error for the total sample is ±3 percentage points. The survey was designed to screen for employees who use AI at work, so the 100% adoption rate is by design and not a representation of the broader U.S. workforce.

About WalkMe:
WalkMe, an SAP company, pioneered the world's leading Digital Adoption Platform, enabling organizations to navigate the change brought on by technology. Leveraging over a decade of experience, WalkMe's platform integrates generative AI to deliver proactive, accessible, and actionable insights. Our context-aware solutions guide users through any workflow, identifying and resolving digital friction to ensure seamless execution of critical processes across all departments. Trusted by global leaders like IBM, Nestlé, ThermoFisher Scientific, and the U.S. Department of Defense, WalkMe empowers organizations to maximize software ROI and drive people-centric digital transformation. Visit www.walkme.com.

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