



Enterprises Lose 51 Workdays Per Employee to Technology Friction Annually Despite Record AI Investment, WalkMe Global Study of 3,750 Finds

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The State of Digital Adoption 2026 reveals a widening trust gap between executives and workers

SAN FRANCISCO, April 09, 2026 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) — Enterprise AI investment is at record levels, but employees are walking away from the tools. WalkMe's fifth annual State of Digital Adoption report reveals that over half (54%) of workers bypassed AI tools and completed tasks manually at least once in the past 30 days. A further 33% haven't used AI at all. Rather than friction, the research describes outright rejection.

The global survey of 3,750 executives and employees across 14 countries at enterprises with 1,000 or more employees found a systemic disconnect: executives and their employees are describing fundamentally different companies.

- **Only 9% of workers trust AI for complex, business-critical decisions, compared to 61% of executives** – a 52-point trust chasm.
- **88% of executives are confident employees have adequate tools; only 21% of workers agree** – a 67-point gap on tool adequacy.
- **81% of executives believe they have significantly improved productivity through AI, while workers waste 7.9 hours per week** dealing with digital frustrations – the equivalent of losing one full working day, every week.

The problem is accelerating. Workers now lose the equivalent of 51 working days a year to technology friction, up 42% from 2025. The trend had been improving, falling from 43 days in 2024 to 36 in 2025. Now, the rapid deployment of AI tools has driven wasted time to a three-year high. Despite a 38% increase in digital investment from last year, 40% of that spend underperforms.

"The problem is not AI's capability," said **Dan Adika, CEO & Co-Founder, WalkMe**. "The technology will keep improving. What won't improve on its own is the human side: the trust gap, the governance gap, the question of who acts, when, and with what guardrails. That's what this data is really showing. And that problem doesn't go away as AI gets smarter. It gets harder."

The trust gap is also fueling a shadow AI problem. At least 45% of workers used unsanctioned AI tools in the past 30 days, and 36% did so with confidential data. Yet, 78% of executives say they want to discipline shadow AI use, despite only 21% of workers ever being warned about AI policies. Another 34% of workers say they don't even know which AI tools their employer approves. The contradiction runs deeper: 62% of executives agree that the risk of unsanctioned shadow AI is overstated compared to not taking enough advantage of AI in the first place.

"The use of shadow AI isn't a behavior to penalize; rather, it's an opportunity to address a systemic gap," said **Keith Kirkpatrick, Vice President and Research Director of Enterprise Software & Digital Workflows, The Futurum Group**. "When employees use unapproved AI tools, they're compensating for performance or efficiency gaps left by sanctioned tools and unclear governance. Organizations that close this gap by equipping AI with real-time context, cross-application reach, and robust guardrails will ultimately realize the strongest return on their AI investments."

[Access the full State of Digital Adoption 2026 report here.](#)

Methodology:

The State of Digital Adoption 2026 is based on a global survey of 3,750 respondents, including 1,700 senior leaders and 2,050 office and hybrid workers at enterprises with 1,000 or more employees across 14 countries. Surveys were conducted online through an independent research agency. In parallel, WalkMe analyzed millions of real-world workflows across thousands of enterprise applications.

About WalkMe:

WalkMe, an SAP company, is the critical layer that makes enterprise AI work. Copilots and AI agents are powerful, but incomplete. They can't see what's on an employee's screen, move across applications, or act where work actually happens. WalkMe can. Built on over a decade of experience in enterprise deployments, WalkMe gives AI the real-time context, cross-application reach, and workflow execution it needs to deliver results. WalkMe helps organizations adapt faster, make better decisions, and build a workforce that learns continuously. Trusted by global leaders including IBM, Nestlé, ThermoFisher Scientific, and the U.S. federal government, WalkMe turns AI investments into business outcomes. Visit www.walkme.com.

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