

Productivity plateau: What's holding you back?

Intelligent automation is changing the workforce.

How will it affect you?



It's hard to read a news story or analyst report these days that doesn't include a forecast on the emergence of artificial intelligence in the workforce. And while the media often focuses on the potential negative impact on the jobs market, Avanade's research shows that business leaders have moved beyond the "human vs. machines" fear factor and are optimistic about how artificial intelligence technologies will break through the productivity plateau. But some consumers still need convincing.

For **Woodside Energy**, one of the world's largest oil and gas producers, intelligent automation has generated millions of dollars of cost savings, increased the lifespan of critical assets and enhanced productivity by being able to prevent unplanned site shutdowns. Management now has access to data from devices at the plant within minutes, freeing leaders to focus on more complex tasks and innovation. Intelligent automation is also generating hundreds of millions of engineering predictions per day for Woodside – faster than humans could ever achieve.

Woodside isn't alone

A global survey of business and technology executives commissioned by Avanade found that **31% of organizations have already started using intelligent automation** to break through the productivity plateau, with that number set to double by 2020. In fact, **86% of survey respondents believe they must deploy intelligent automation** to be a leader in their field.

Top benefits cited by business leaders globally include increased productivity (50%), faster time-to-market (45%), making more workers available for complex tasks and innovation (43%), and reducing costs (43%).

Overcoming resistance and fear

However, while over half of the global business leaders surveyed expressed optimism about the potential of intelligent automation to augment the workforce rather than replace the jobs of their workers, they still need to convince employees.

An overwhelming **79%** of business leaders believe that **internal resistance** to change is **limiting** implementation of **intelligent automation**.

We also asked consumers about intelligent automation. In some cases, their responses aligned with those of business leaders, but in other instances, their views diverged.

Organizations have reached a productivity plateau

It is simply impossible to get more productivity out of employees using traditional optimization approaches such as industrialization and labor arbitrage. Today, the emergence of artificial intelligence technologies – including intelligent automation, machine learning and robotic process automation – are set to help jump-start productivity again by augmenting the human workforce and freeing employees from mundane, repetitive tasks.

For example, consumers surveyed in the **UK, US** and **Germany** agreed with business leaders that intelligent automation will free employees to spend more time on complex tasks. At the same time, **60%** of consumers believe intelligent automation is more likely to replace jobs than augment the human workforce.

These are indicators that leaders need to help their teams move beyond the human vs. machines fear factor to embrace an **innovation culture powered by intelligent automation**. **Avanade recommends** leaders develop a roadmap to help guide high-level conversations, as well as discussions across the entire workforce about what intelligent automation means for the human workforce.

How can business leaders drive change?

Avanade's research uncovered the need for a significant shift in leadership capabilities for the AI-first world.

According to the research, over half (52%) of global business leaders believe that an understanding of new and emerging technologies, such as AI, will be more important for leadership than traditional specializations like sales and marketing by 2022. The respondents highlighted a capacity to manage the augmented workforce and a thorough understanding of emerging technologies as the top qualities C-suite executives will require within five years.

Want to know more? Go to www.avanade.com/intelligentautomation or follow the conversation on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn at #intelligentautomation.

About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud services, business solutions and design-led experiences delivered through the power of people and the Microsoft ecosystem. Our professionals bring bold, fresh thinking combined with technology, business and industry expertise to help fuel transformation and growth for our clients and their customers. Avanade has 30,000 digitally connected people across 24 countries, bringing clients the best thinking through a collaborative culture that honours diversity and reflects the communities in which we operate. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at <https://www.avanade.com>.

Adopt intelligent automation now or risk irrelevance

Avanade's research shows that an overwhelming majority of business leaders (**85%**) work in organizations that currently **use or intend** to implement **intelligent automation**. The findings validate that embracing intelligent automation will be key to organizations breaking through the productivity plateau and remaining competitive. Now is the time for leaders to establish a clear vision for the AI-first world and start educating teams on the potential of intelligent automation to drive unprecedented personal and professional capabilities.

About the survey methodology

Avanade's online survey was conducted from May 2017 to June 2017 by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com), an independent research firm. It surveyed 400 C-level executives and 400 IT decision makers in Australia, Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK and US. A total of 3,000 consumers (1,000 per market) were also surveyed in Germany, the UK and US.

Intelligent automation & AI: What's the difference?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is an umbrella category for a broad set of technologies and techniques, covering everything from Robotic Process Automation to actual robotics. To augment the capabilities of workers and overcome the prevailing productivity plateau, organizations are primarily embracing two AI technologies:

- *Intelligent automation (IA)*, where machines mimic the learning, decision-making and actions of humans through intelligence enabled by advanced analytics and cognitive services, e.g., chat bots, object/speech recognition, natural-language processing
- *Robotic Process Automation (RPA)*, where machines are used to process repetitive, high-volume manual tasks that use structured data, e.g., insurance claims

To learn more about the emerging AI-first world and get tips on implementing intelligent automation and other AI technologies, read the [2017 Avanade Technology Vision](#).