



Entrant company name: **Financial Times**

Entry title: **Building AI confidence and engagement at the FT**

Category: **Internal Communications or Employee Engagement Campaign**

BRIEF, OBJECTIVES AND BUDGET

The Financial Times is a global news organisation known for its authoritative journalism and commitment to innovation. With over 3,000 employees worldwide, the FT has a long-standing reputation for embracing digital transformation as it comes - including generative AI.

In January 2024, our leadership set a company-wide goal to enable employees to confidently and responsibly use AI to enhance productivity, futureproof their careers, and uphold the integrity of FT journalism. The AI Transformation Programme was launched to embed AI fluency across the organisation. Its core objectives were:

- Increase adoption of AI tools like ChatGPT to at least 1,000 weekly active users.
- Establish a measurable AI fluency framework to track confidence and skills.
- Provide accessible training, workshops, and resources for employees at all levels.
- Remove barriers to AI experimentation and foster a culture of responsible AI use.

By leveraging existing suppliers, resources and internal expertise, costs to deliver AI transformation were kept to a minimum. We recruited an AI Fluency Lead with experience in digital transformation and adoption of new technologies who was onboarded at the end of Q2.

RESEARCH AND PLANNING

To establish a baseline of AI perceptions and skills, we conducted a staff survey that gathered 725 responses. The results showed that while many employees were optimistic about AI, over half had little to no experience using it in the workplace. The most significant barrier to adoption was a lack of time.

To address this, we developed a structured framework to define AI competency levels and assessment benchmarks, providing a more precise measure of AI fluency across the organisation. This framework served as the foundation for an AI quiz that allowed

employees to assess their proficiency and access tailored resources to advance their skills.

To support hybrid working across multiple time zones, we offered live activities scheduled at optimal times, complemented by recordings and resources that could be accessed on-demand. A steady flow of communications throughout the year ensured sustained engagement without overwhelming employees.

STRATEGY, CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Our strategy focused on making AI fluency accessible, engaging, and practical. In addition to providing enterprise access to leading AI tools, the programme produced training, workshops and peer support networks to ensure employees felt confident and empowered to use AI. Key campaign elements included:

- **Leadership advocacy:** We equipped the senior management team with talking points to position AI fluency as a strategic priority in their departmental communications, and identified early adopters who could champion AI further in their teams.
- **Visual identity:** Our in-house creative team designed a collection of visual resources, avoiding clichés like robots and code. Instead, the visuals emphasised the creative potential of AI with an abstract palette of swirling colours.
- **Interactive social learning:** We engaged employees through Slack tips and tricks channels, inspirational peer demos and case studies.
- **Gamification:** A staff competition encouraged employees to experiment with AI in a fun, low-pressure way.
- **Events:** We brought AI learning to life with tailored workshops, practical demos, and peer-led case studies, helping employees apply AI to their specific roles.
- **Bespoke trainings:** In response to employee feedback, we worked with AI suppliers and team leaders to deliver a series of focused AI workshops tailored to the needs of specific business functions.

DELIVERY AND IMPLEMENTATION

The AI transformation programme was executed through a combination of training, events, communications, and engagement initiatives to meet our objectives.

Universal access to AI tools: In early 2024, the FT provided all employees with enterprise access to ChatGPT and Gemini, alongside targeted onboarding support, workshops and dedicated 'tips and tricks' channels on Slack. Emails from the CTO to

staff announced access to these tools, driving initial adoption; the FT had the third-highest weekly active users of Gemini in the world in the first few weeks post launch. We also took a data-driven approach to evaluating AI tool effectiveness. When we made decisions not to continue with AI tools, we published case studies to share what was learned so lessons could be applied to future AI experiments.

FT Global AI Immersion Week: In June 2024, we worked with our professional events team to hold a week-long internal event series called FT Global AI Immersion Week. We provided comms templates for department leaders to explicitly encourage teams to take time out to attend and thereby overcome the biggest adoption barrier we identified in our survey. The event opened with a welcome message from the CEO and featured a senior leadership panel, hands-on workshops, and peer-led showcase demos.

AI mascot competition: We held a staff competition on our intranet to design a theoretical FT mascot using AI to foster creative engagement. 84 employees submitted designs, and nearly 1,300 votes were cast for the staff favourite. This competition was particularly effective at engaging employees in Asia, who had previously been slower to adopt AI tools.

Learning and knowledge sharing: We published and promoted internal case studies covering personal productivity hacks, product developments and new tools. We included case studies in the monthly CEO business update to all staff, which has an average 84% open rate. We added an "AI Tip of the Week" to our weekly staff newsletter, sharing short, easy to apply ideas and new features in AI tools. We also provided e-learning and best practice guides on our learning portal and created lively Slack communities for support and sharing resources on developing AI technology and regulation.

MEASUREMENT, EVALUATION AND IMPACT

The AI Transformation Programme exceeded its key targets and drove measurable improvements in AI adoption, confidence, and engagement across the FT:

- 1,400+ weekly active ChatGPT users by year end, surpassing our target of 1,000 users.
- 1,214 employees attended or watched recordings of FT Global AI Immersion Week. 80% of attendees rated the event with 9 or 10 stars, and 94% said they planned to use AI learnings in their role.
- 569 employees completed the AI fluency quiz in November (up from 388 in June), with 98% achieving "AI Literate" status or higher.
- AI sentiment in our employee engagement survey increased from 6.4 in Q2 to 7.1 in Q4, reflecting greater confidence in AI tools and training provided by the FT.

- AI peer-learning Slack communities reached 1,568 employees and became a key engagement forum.
- AI has been increasingly embedded into business workflows, with employees proactively integrating AI into their daily tasks.

By implementing a structured, engaging, and practical approach to AI fluency, the FT successfully drove meaningful transformation in how employees engage with, and feel about, AI. The programme has laid a strong foundation for continued AI adoption and innovation across the organisation.

The text in this case study is presented as submitted in the original award entry. Where necessary, entrants have removed or redacted information considered sensitive or confidential.