Why AI doesn't guarantee better performance

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Artificial intelligence is changing how organizations work. It can predict customer churn, surface revenue opportunities, improve forecasting, automate routine tasks, and recommend what someone should do next.

And employees are using it more often. The New Rules of Engagement® research for 2026 found that daily use of AI at work increased from 19% in 2024 to 33% in 2026. More than half of employees say they use AI more now than they did a year ago.[1]

Organizations are already seeing business benefits. NVIDIA's 2026 State of AI research found companies across industries reporting productivity gains, increased revenue, and lower costs from AI investments.[2] But access to increasingly powerful technology still leaves organizations with a familiar challenge: turning what AI knows into what people do.

The technology is moving fast. The harder question is whether performance is keeping up. In many organizations, it isn't.

AI can point to an opportunity. It can flag a risk. It can tell leaders where performance is breaking down. Then someone has to do something about it.

The execution gap

Most organizations already have plenty of information. Sales leaders can see pipeline health. Operations leaders track productivity. Customer service leaders monitor satisfaction and retention. AI adds another layer by finding patterns faster and surfacing signals that may otherwise be missed.

Say AI identifies a group of customers at risk of leaving. That insight is useful. But the business result depends on what happens next.

- Does someone contact those customers?
- Do managers coach the right response?
- Do employees know which behaviors are most likely to make a difference?

That's where the gap often appears.

Deloitte's 2026 State of AI in the Enterprise research found that organizations are expanding AI access and moving toward broader deployment, yet only 34% say they are using AI to deeply transform the business.[3]

The technology may be advancing faster than the organization's ability to put its insights to work.

Start with the behaviors that drive the outcome

Organizations spend a lot of time measuring results:

- Revenue
- Productivity
- Retention
- Customer satisfaction
- Profitability

Those numbers tell leaders whether the strategy worked. They don't always tell employees what they should do differently today.

To influence performance, organizations have to get closer to the behaviors that create those outcomes.

- Revenue can improve because a salesperson asks better discovery questions.
- Retention can improve because an employee reaches out before a customer becomes disengaged.
- Customer satisfaction can improve because a service team follows a specific response practice more consistently.

AI can help identify those relationships. The opportunity is to turn that information into something employees can actually use. A 2026 review of enterprise AI research from Capital Numbers points to the same shift: organizations create more value when they redesign workflows around AI rather than simply adding new tools.[4] What matters is whether AI is changing how work gets done in the moments that influence performance.

That may mean narrowing a broad business objective into a specific goal. It may mean identifying which customers deserve attention first. It may mean giving an employee a clear action to take based on where performance stands right now. That is where data starts becoming useful at the individual level.

Clarity matters more than another dashboard

Employees rarely need more things competing for their attention. Someone can have access to an impressive AI platform and still start the day wondering which of 15 priorities matters most. The employee experience is much simpler:

- What should I focus on?
- What do I need to do?
- How will I know if I'm making progress?

BI WORLDWIDE research suggests many organizations haven't fully answered those questions when it comes to AI. Only 44% of employees say their organization has prepared them to use AI and new technologies in their jobs. Just 45% say their organization has a clear, actionable AI strategy.[1]

Those findings have an important connection to engagement. Employees who believe their organization has prepared them to use AI and new technologies are 4.4 times more likely to be highly engaged. Employees who say their organization has a clear, actionable AI strategy are 4.2 times more likely to be highly engaged.[1]

Preparation gives employees more than technical knowledge. It helps them understand where AI fits into their work and what the organization expects them to do with it. That clarity becomes especially important when AI is being used to influence day-to-day performance.

Personalized goals create focus

One of AI's most useful roles in performance strategy may be helping employees answer a very practical question: **What should I focus on right now?**

That's where **personalized goals** can make a difference. Instead of asking every employee to work toward the same broad objective, organizations can use data and AI to translate business priorities into goals that reflect an individual's role, current performance, and greatest opportunity for improvement.

For one employee, that might mean following up with three customers whose behavior suggests they are at risk. For another, it could mean increasing discovery conversations, completing a coaching activity, or improving a specific performance behavior. The goal is still connected to the larger business outcome, but the path to that outcome becomes much more relevant to the individual.

And personalization doesn't have to stop when the goal is set. As performance changes, goals can change with it. AI can help organizations continually recalibrate targets based on progress and performance trends, keeping goals challenging enough to drive improvement without becoming irrelevant or unrealistic.

Personalized goals help employees understand where they stand, what action matters next, and whether they are making progress. They also reduce the burden of asking employees to interpret a wall of data and determine on their own which metric deserves attention.

AI can help identify the opportunity. A **personalized goal** turns that insight **into something an employee can act on**.

Reinforcement keeps the behavior going

Even a clear goal does not guarantee that a new behavior will stick. People need feedback and a clear view of their progress. Coaching can help them adjust when performance starts to drift, while recognition and rewards reinforce the behaviors worth repeating.

Recognition can play an important role here. When recognition is connected to the behaviors that influence business results, it helps employees see which actions matter. Progress tracking, incentives, communications, and coaching can strengthen that connection over time.

The result is a performance system that responds while work is happening rather than waiting until the quarter closes to explain what went wrong. That human element matters because employees are still deciding what AI means for them.

In **BI WORLDWIDE**'s research, efficiency and time savings emerged as the most common benefit employees see AI bringing to the workplace. Their concerns include job loss, privacy and data security, accuracy, and the risk of becoming too dependent on technology.[1]

Organizations should pay attention to both sides of that equation. Employees are more likely to embrace AI when they can see how it helps them work more effectively and when they understand the role they still play in creating the result.

Intelligence is only valuable when it changes what happens next

AI will continue to get better at identifying opportunities, predicting outcomes, and recommending actions. That raises the bar for execution. A company can have excellent analytics and still lose a customer because nobody followed up. It can identify the exact behavior associated with higher performance and still see no improvement if employees never adopt it.

The advantage comes from connecting insight to action. That means understanding which behaviors matter, translating them into clear goals, helping employees act on them, and reinforcing progress as it happens. It's also where solutions such as PerformIQ can help, turning performance data into personalized goals, timely coaching, and reinforcement that keeps employees focused on the actions most likely to improve results.

AI gives organizations more intelligence
than they have ever had before.
What people do with it is what determines the result.

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Sources

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