

The Five Shifts

Moving from AI Adoption
to AI Fluency

A leadership guide for managers working across cultures and languages. Five frameworks that separate the 88% who have adopted AI from the 5% capturing real value.

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How to use this guide: Read it in 15 minutes, then do the Personal AI Audit at the end. It takes 3 minutes and will show you exactly where you sit on the adoption-to-fluency spectrum. Share your results with your team — the conversation that follows is where the real value starts.

The Gap

88% Adoption. 5% Value. 83 Points of Wasted Potential.

88%

of managers have adopted AI

5%

capture meaningful value

83pt

the adoption-to-value gap

Here is the uncomfortable truth about AI in business: almost everyone has adopted it, and almost no one has figured out how to use it properly.

McKinsey's latest data tells the story in two numbers. 88% of managers across Asia-Pacific report having adopted AI tools. Only 5% report capturing meaningful business value from them. That is a 83-percentage-point gap between motion and progress — between logging into a tool and changing how work actually gets done.

Most organisations respond to this gap by investing in more training. The APAC average is now 5.2% of L&D budgets allocated to AI capability development, and the figure is climbing. But the training itself tends to follow the same pattern that created the gap: it starts with the technology and hopes participants will figure out the application.

This guide takes the opposite approach. It starts with you — with how you actually use AI today, and with the five specific shifts that separate adoption from fluency. These are not abstract principles. They are observable behaviour changes that you can measure in yourself and in your team.

Why “fluency” and not “literacy”? AI literacy means understanding what AI can do. AI fluency means thinking in AI — integrating it into your leadership practice so naturally that it is inseparable from how you work. The difference is like knowing French vocabulary versus thinking in French. This guide is about fluency.

1

SHIFT 1

From Search to Integration

Open your AI tool and scroll through your last 50 interactions. Categorise each one:

Category	Description	Typical %
Search	You asked AI something you could have Googled. Facts, definitions, quick answers.	70%
Draft	You asked AI to write something you would substantially edit or rewrite.	20%
Integration	You used AI as a genuine thinking partner within a structured workflow.	10%

When we run this exercise with senior leaders across Asia, the typical result is 70/20/10. Seventy per cent search, twenty per cent drafting, ten per cent genuine integration. These are experienced, capable leaders. They are not failing at AI. They just have not been shown how to move beyond the first two categories.

The shift from Search to Integration is not about using AI more. It is about using it differently. An integrated interaction looks like this: you have a recurring weekly process (say, preparing a team status update). Instead of asking AI to “write a status update,” you build a structured prompt that takes your raw inputs (meeting notes, metrics, action items) and produces a formatted output in your team’s standard template. The AI is not doing your job — it is removing the friction between your thinking and your team’s information needs.

The diagnostic question: If someone removed AI from your workflow tomorrow, would you need to redesign any process or would you just open a search engine?

2

SHIFT 2

From Output to Workflow

2.8x

workflow redesign multiplier

1.15x

bolt-on AI improvement

Most people apply AI backwards. They take their existing process, bolt AI onto it, and wonder why the improvement is marginal. It is like putting a jet engine on a horse cart, impressive thrust, wrong vehicle.

The 2.8x productivity multiplier comes from teams that started by mapping their workflow, identifying the information-processing bottlenecks, and then redesigning the entire flow with AI as a structural element, not an add-on. The bolt-on approach delivers roughly 15% improvement. The redesign approach delivers nearly three times the output from the same inputs.

The Grab case study: A product manager in Jakarta redesigned her sprint workflow around AI in eleven days after completing the Sigma programme. Not eleven days of training — eleven days of applying a framework she had spent four hours learning. She identified three handoff points where she was personally reviewing, summarising, and redistributing information that an LLM could handle in seconds. She redesigned around those points. Her team's cycle time dropped by a third.

The shift is methodological, not technological. It starts with a question most leaders have never been given the space to ask: *"If I were designing this process today, knowing what AI can do, would I design it the same way?"*

The three-step redesign process:

1. Map	List every step in one recurring weekly workflow. Estimate hours for each.
2. Identify	Mark each step as High (automate), Medium (assist), or Low (human only) AI potential.
3. Redesign	Restructure the process with AI as infrastructure. Some steps are eliminated, others compressed, handoff points removed.

3

SHIFT 3

From Monolingual to Multilingual

72%

prompt in a second language

85%

in Asia-Pacific specifically

Here is something nobody in Silicon Valley talks about: the majority of global AI users are prompting in their second language. In Asia-Pacific, that figure is closer to 85%.

Think about what that means. You are already navigating the uncertainty of a new technology. Now add the cognitive overhead of doing it in a language that is not your mother tongue. The result is not a skills gap. It is a **Confidence Gap** — senior leaders who hesitate to use AI in meetings because they are not confident their English prompts will produce credible results in front of native-speaking colleagues.

No amount of “prompting best practices” webinars will fix this, because those webinars assume everyone starts from the same linguistic baseline. They do not.

Two tracks, one programme:

Track A (native English speakers): Focus on structuring AI interactions that bridge linguistic and cultural gaps in your multilingual team. How to design prompts that produce output accessible to non-native speakers. How to run AI-augmented meetings inclusively.

Track B (English as second language): Specific prompting architectures that ensure language proficiency does not determine output quality. Structured frameworks. Graduated confidence progressions. Real exercises in your actual work context.

Three prompting architectures for second-language users:

- 1. The Scaffold Prompt:** State your intent in your native language first, then translate only the structured instruction. The AI fills the gap.
- 2. The Output Template:** Specify the exact format, headings, and tone you need. Reduces dependence on phrasing quality because the structure does the work.
- 3. The Iterative Refinement:** Start with a rough prompt, then use follow-up prompts to correct, expand, and refine. Three rounds of simple English outperform one attempt at complex English.

4

SHIFT 4

From Individual to Systemic

Personal AI fluency is necessary but insufficient. The value materialises when it becomes a team capability — when your entire unit operates differently, not just you.

The challenge is that teams do not adopt AI the way individuals do. An individual can experiment privately, fail without consequence, and build confidence at their own pace. A team has social dynamics, hierarchies, and cultural norms that shape adoption behaviour.

The TSMC case: When TSMC rolled out AI-augmented decision-making in their supply chain, they discovered that technical accuracy was the easy part. The hard part was cultural adoption — getting engineers who had spent decades building intuitive expertise to trust a system that sometimes contradicted their experience. Their solution was not more training. It was a structured confidence-building programme where managers first used AI on low-stakes decisions, built evidence of reliability through repeated exposure, and gradually extended to higher-stakes contexts.

The trust curve:

Phase	AI role	Stakes
Observation	AI produces output; human reviews but does not act on it	None
Collaboration	AI produces options; human evaluates and selects	Low
Delegation	AI handles defined tasks; human monitors exceptions	Medium
Integration	AI is structural infrastructure; human sets parameters and strategy	High

In consensus-driven cultures (Japan, Korea), AI adoption spreads through social proof, not mandates. In hierarchical cultures (traditional Chinese, Southeast Asian), junior members will not adopt until senior leaders model it openly. In individual-accountability cultures (Western), adoption follows personal ROI. Your team's decision-making culture determines which trust curve they follow — and conventional AI training ignores this entirely.

The manager's role: Create psychological safety for AI experimentation. Make it normal to try, fail, and share what you learned. The leader who uses AI openly in meetings — including showing when the output is wrong — gives permission for the entire team to do the same.

5

SHIFT 5

From Adoption Metrics to Value Metrics

If your organisation is measuring AI success by adoption rate, you are measuring the wrong thing. An 88% adoption rate sounds impressive. It tells you nothing about whether anyone's work has actually changed.

Three metrics that actually matter:

Metric	What it measures	How to track it
Workflow change rate	% of managers who have redesigned at least one process around AI	30-day post-training survey with specific behavioural examples
Integration ratio	Shift in the 70/20/10 breakdown toward integration usage	Self-report audit (Search/Draft/Integration) at baseline and 90 days
Confidence score	Manager's self-rated confidence using AI in high-stakes settings	Pre/post assessment on a calibrated scale

The ANA case: ANA's hospitality division tested both approaches in a controlled pilot. The tool-first group showed 60% completion and minimal workflow change. The leader-first group showed 94% completion and measurable efficiency gains within three weeks. Same tools. Same timeframe. The difference was starting point: the leader-first group started with the person's workflow and worked backwards to the technology.

If you are an L&D director about to sign off on another tool-centric AI workshop, ask: "What percentage of participants report measurable workflow change 30 days after completion?" Not satisfaction scores. Not completion rates. Measurable workflow change. If the provider cannot answer with data, that tells you everything.

The ROI framework: For every dollar invested in leader-first AI training, organisations recover approximately \$3–4 in Year 1 productivity gains (based on the 2.8x workflow multiplier applied to participating managers' information-processing hours). Tool-first programmes return \$0.80–\$1.20 per dollar. The methodology is the multiplier, not the budget.

Your Personal AI Audit

Three minutes. Complete honesty. No judgement.

This is the exercise from Module 1 of the Sigma AI Fluency programme. It takes about three minutes and gives you a clear picture of where you currently sit on the adoption-to-fluency spectrum.

Step 1: The 50-Interaction Audit

Open your AI tool. Scroll through your last 50 interactions. Categorise each one as Search, Draft, or Integration using the definitions from Shift 1. Write down the count.

Category	Your count (out of 50)	Your %
Search	_____	_____
Draft	_____	_____
Integration	_____	_____

Step 2: The Workflow Question

List three recurring weekly processes in your role. For each one, answer honestly: “Have I redesigned this process because of AI, or am I using AI within the original process?”

Weekly process	Redesigned? (Y/N)
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____

Step 3: The Confidence Check

On a scale of 1–10, how confident would you be using AI-generated content in a board presentation or client meeting without heavy editing? If you prompt in a second language, how much does that affect your answer?

Reading your results: If your Search percentage is above 50%, you are in the majority — and your biggest opportunity is Shift 1. If none of your three workflows have been redesigned, Shift 2 is your lever. If your confidence score is below 6, Shifts 3 and 4 are where the value is. Share these results with your team and ask them to do the same exercise. The team-wide pattern is more important than any individual score.

What Comes Next

These five shifts are the foundation of the Sigma AI Fluency for Leaders programme (SM-AFL-01). If you want the structured twelve-week version — with case studies, exercises, two language tracks, and a personal AI integration strategy — here is what the full programme delivers.

Module	Focus	Case study
1. Personal AI Audit	The 70/20/10 framework applied to your real usage	—
2. AI as Thinking Partner	From search-and-draft to cognitive collaboration	Grab
3. Cross-Cultural AI Lens	How culture shapes AI interaction patterns	Samsung
4. The Confidence Gap	Track A/B divergence; language-specific strategies	—
5. Workflow Architecture	Map, identify bottlenecks, redesign around AI	Grab + ANA
6. Ethical AI Leadership	When to accept, question, or override AI output	Hiring Bias
7. The Trust Curve	Graduated adoption from low-stakes to high-stakes	TSMC
8. Integration Strategy	Personal plan with 30/60/90-day milestones	—

Eight modules. Twelve weeks. Fifteen places per cohort. Two language tracks. Every exercise uses your real work context, not hypotheticals.

Explore the full programme

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The Sigma AI Fluency programme integrates with the broader Sigma curriculum: SM-LAC-01 (Leading Across Cultures), SM-NEG-01 (Negotiation), SM-GT-CS-02 (Game Theory), and SM-LMS-02 (Learning Management System). Corporate clients using multiple programmes receive compound value and unified reporting.