



WHITE PAPER

AI Adoption Trends

**An AMA Toronto White Paper in collaboration
with TrendHunter**

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Foreword

As marketers, we have always worked at the intersection of technology, culture, and human behaviour.

Today, artificial intelligence is reshaping that intersection faster than ever before, creating additional uncertainties. This whitepaper, developed by our partners at TrendHunter, arrives at an important moment. Rather than focusing only on technology, it explores the human and organizational realities behind successful AI adoption.

At AMA Toronto, we believe our role is not only to bring the marketing community together, but to help leaders navigate change with curiosity and purpose.

Most importantly, this conversation is not about adopting AI for the sake of innovation. It is about using it to strengthen what marketing is about: human creativity and trust.

Thank you for taking the time to review this whitepaper.



Maxim Rakov
President

The AI Adoption Divide

The path to AI adoption has not been linear since the launch of ChatGPT in late 2022. In the 3+ years since, we've seen many different reactions creating a divide between those who see it as the next frontier of innovation and those who see it as a threat to humanity. At TrendHunter, we believe the key to moving forward lies in leveraging both the fear and enthusiasm, which is most evident in our framework on Winning AI(doption).

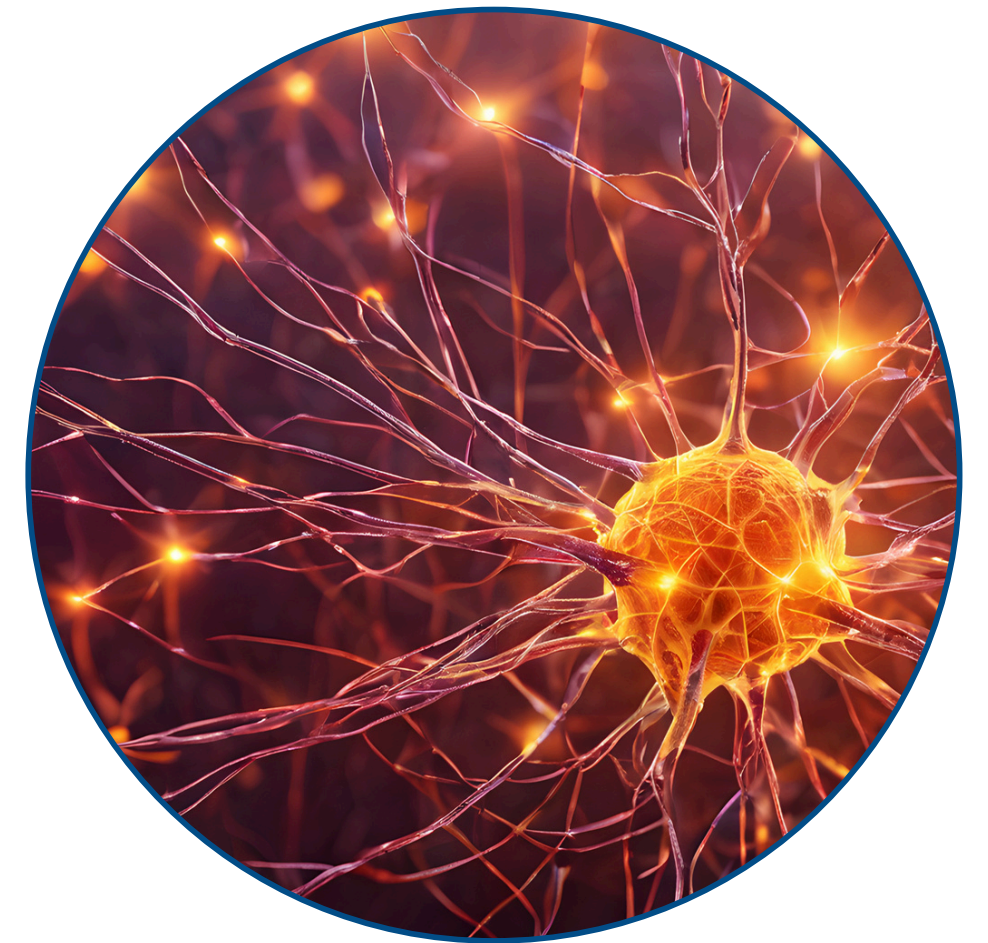
It comprises three principles: Address the Fear, Reward Experimentation, and Automate what you Hate. Across our keynotes, Masterclasses, and Futurist engagements, we use this framework to meet teams where they are, addressing real fears around displacement and trust, rewarding hands-on experimentation to build confidence, and identifying tasks that AI can automate to allow more room for human-led creativity.



Address the Fear

It's natural to be cautious of AI in an era where it's either framed as a miracle solution or a looming threat. For organizations, the real challenge isn't debating who controls AI, but building the capability to use it responsibly, creatively, and credibly. In practice, fear shows up as hesitation: avoiding new tools, delaying experimentation, or worrying about getting it "wrong." At TrendHunter, we help teams move past this by starting small and normalizing the learning curve, whether that means using AI to accelerate research, test messaging, or simplify everyday workflows. When brands take this same approach with consumers, by introducing AI in low-stakes, transparent ways and clearly communicating its role, they reduce friction and build confidence among teams.

A simple way to do this is to have you and members of your team self-identify your level of AI expertise in a public setting, encouraging transparency. You then assign small tasks to boost familiarity; for example if you're at a level 0 (in that you know a bit about AI but have never personally used it), your task is to use ChatGPT or Gemini to figure out what to make for dinner based on what's in your fridge. This creates shared accountability and a safe environment to experiment.



Turning Fear into Trust

For advertisers, this can look like acknowledging consumer fears around AI. According to Pew Research, while 76% of AI professionals believe the benefits of using the technology outweigh the risks, only 43% of the general population feels the same. As a result, we're seeing a surge in brands taking loud and proud anti-AI stances.

A TrendHunter insight exemplifying this is AI Rebellion, highlighting campaigns and products that deliberately resist, parody or undermine the promise of seamless automation. Examples like Fiverr's A No-Code Love Story, which critiques "vibe coding" and reinforces the value of real human expertise in the area, responds to consumer fatigue around productivity pressure and potential job replacement. In the same vein, our Human Powered insight spotlights brands launching services that are 100% human-run—from Write.ad's human-written ad copy to Del Real Foods' "Abuela Intelligence" campaign that honors real wisdom and advice from real people.



AI Slop

These insights also address consumer concerns around use of AI towards creative work. According to the Getty Images Report Findings, 90% of global consumers wanted to know whether an image has been crafted using AI, while 98% agreed that ‘authentic’ images and videos are pivotal in establishing trust.

And that skepticism is showing up in real time. As “AI slop” increasingly saturates social and commercial channels, consumers are growing more discerning and more resistant to it. At the same time, artists and creators are going on defense, using tools that stop their work from being scraped and fed into the content machine without permission. For example, Nightshade lets artists “poison” their images so unauthorized training systems get unreliable outputs when they try to learn from the work. TrendHunter calls this Protective Digital Art: tech-driven protections that make it harder for AI models to train on creative work, a signal that audiences increasingly care about consent, credit, and trust.



AI's PR Problem: Transparency

The key to fixing AI's PR problem is transparency. Because AI-generated content is getting harder to detect and easier to abuse, trust breaks down faster when brands stay vague about how they use it. Therefore, more companies are treating disclosure as the clearest path back to credibility. TrendHunter calls this shift AI Transparency: clear signals about when content is AI-generated, when customers are interacting with AI, and how consumer data factors into the experience.

One of the clearest examples is the rise of “AI nutrition labels,” like Motorola Solutions’ approach to explaining how AI functions in public safety and enterprise tools, because it makes complex systems legible in a format people already understand. If audiences worry about synthetic, misleading, or exploitative content, transparency matters because it reduces ambiguity and forces accountability. As a result, AI disclosure is quickly becoming a baseline trust signal, not a nice-to-have.



Reward Experimentation

Cultivating a culture of trial and error is always easier when you build the infrastructure for it within your own organization. This isn't just a best practice we preach in our masterclasses; it's a methodology we live and breathe at TrendHunter. Internally, we implement 'AI Sprints' where every team member—regardless of their department—dedicates a half-day each week to AI experimentation, culminating in a bi-weekly showcase. We initially faced the classic pushback of, 'Why us? We don't use AI,' but that skepticism eventually evolved into a high-stakes competition, sparking innovation in the departments you'd least expect.

A brand standing out in this space is Uber, recently launching a U.S.-based pilot program allowing drivers to earn extra income during downtime by completing in-app digital tasks like image, document or audio uploads to better train its AI models for enterprise clients. In India, Uber Eats is also using generative AI to enhance menu photos and rewards its consumers for contributing images that help restaurants showcase more appealing food photography.



Reward Experimentation

For brands and advertisers, rewarding experimentation can look like low-stakes touchpoints like product guidance, personalization, or decision support that acknowledges the learning curve and positions AI as a tool that enhances human judgment rather than replacing it. Just as importantly, employers can reward experimentation by giving employees permission to try, test, and even fail with AI. A great example is Meta tracking how much AI is used across its team and gamifying that with tangible incentives.

That same “wait... is this going to watch me / replace me / add more work?” anxiety is also playing out inside organizations. As more companies push AI into day-to-day workflows, employees are getting wary of tools that feel invasive, noisy, or like a shadow performance review. TrendHunter calls the fix Integrated AI: non-exploitative assistants that are embedded inside the software people already use, offering contextual help (not constant disruption), privacy-first defaults, and role-based permissions that keep autonomy intact. Instead of forcing teams to learn yet another interface, Integrated AI shows up as in-app guidance, anonymized insights, and low-code integrations that make experimentation feel safe and seamless. Platforms like Dashworks (instant internal Q&A across company knowledge), Alterfy (workflow + meeting optimization insights), and Ayraa (all-in-one AI work suite) signal where this is going: AI that earns adoption by reducing friction, not increasing surveillance.

Through examples like incentives, pilots, and opt-in experiences, advertisers and brands help normalize AI use while signaling that curiosity and learning are valued over immediate perfection.



Automate What You Hate

It is impossible to discuss AI without addressing its ethical weight. For many, AI is viewed as fundamentally anti-human - a looming threat designed to replace the person behind the work. We believe the best way to pivot away from that fear is a principle we call 'Automate what you hate.'

A cornerstone of our masterclass program involves asking a deceptively simple question: 'Which part of your role do you actually hate?' By using AI to offload the mundane, the repetitive, and the soul-crushing tasks, we aren't replacing the person; we're clearing the path for them to return to the work that actually lights up their brain.

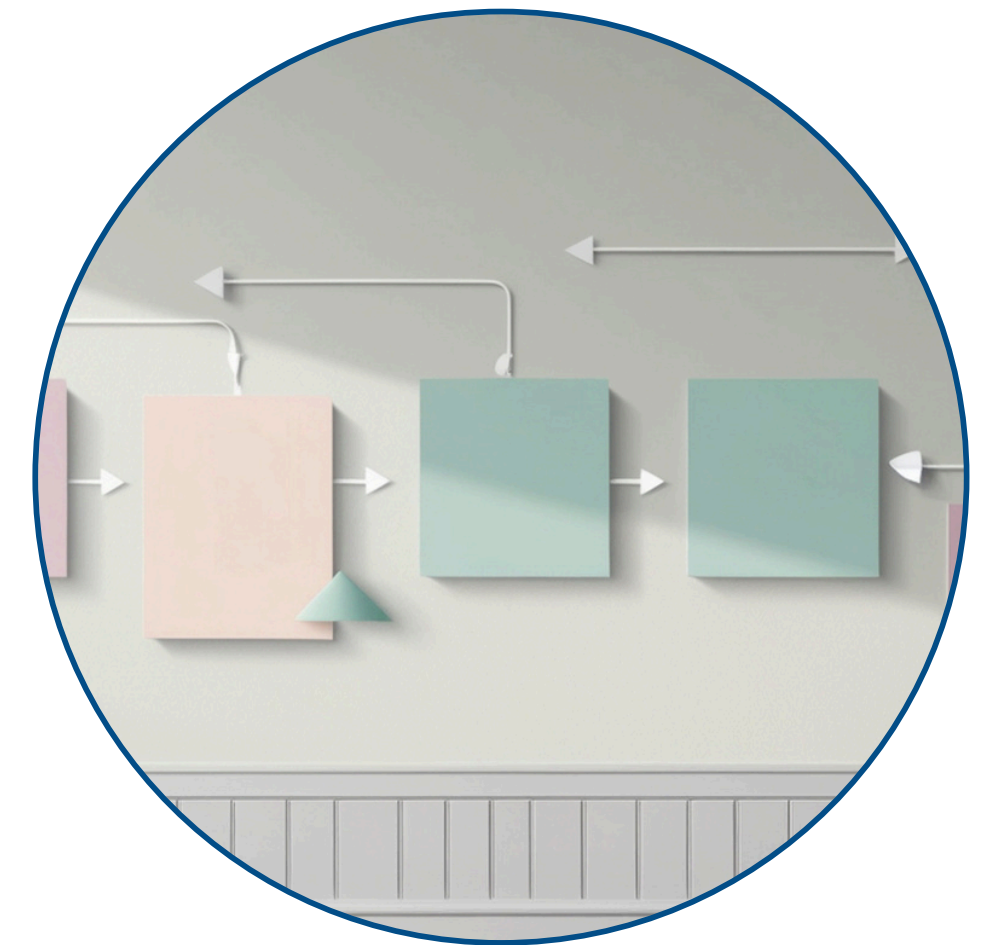
This works because AI adoption doesn't have to be all-or-nothing. Some people don't want AI everywhere, but they do want it to take the worst parts of work off their plate so they can spend more time on the parts that require judgment, empathy, and creativity. TrendHunter calls this AI Microtasking, and it's a useful entry point because it keeps the scope small: instead of automating entire roles, teams automate tiny, specific admin tasks that show up every day.



Smarter Workflows

Historically, this pattern isn't new. People resist tools when they feel like a threat to identity or livelihood, but they adopt them faster when the benefit is obvious and the risk is contained. Therefore, if you start AI in low-stakes places, the fear drops because the boundaries stay clear and the wins show up quickly. Paperguide is a good example of this approach because it tackles a narrow pain point in the research workflow: finding, reviewing, and organizing sources; while leaving the thinking and decision-making with the person. Over time, these small automations build trust and fluency, so broader experimentation feels safer and more earned.

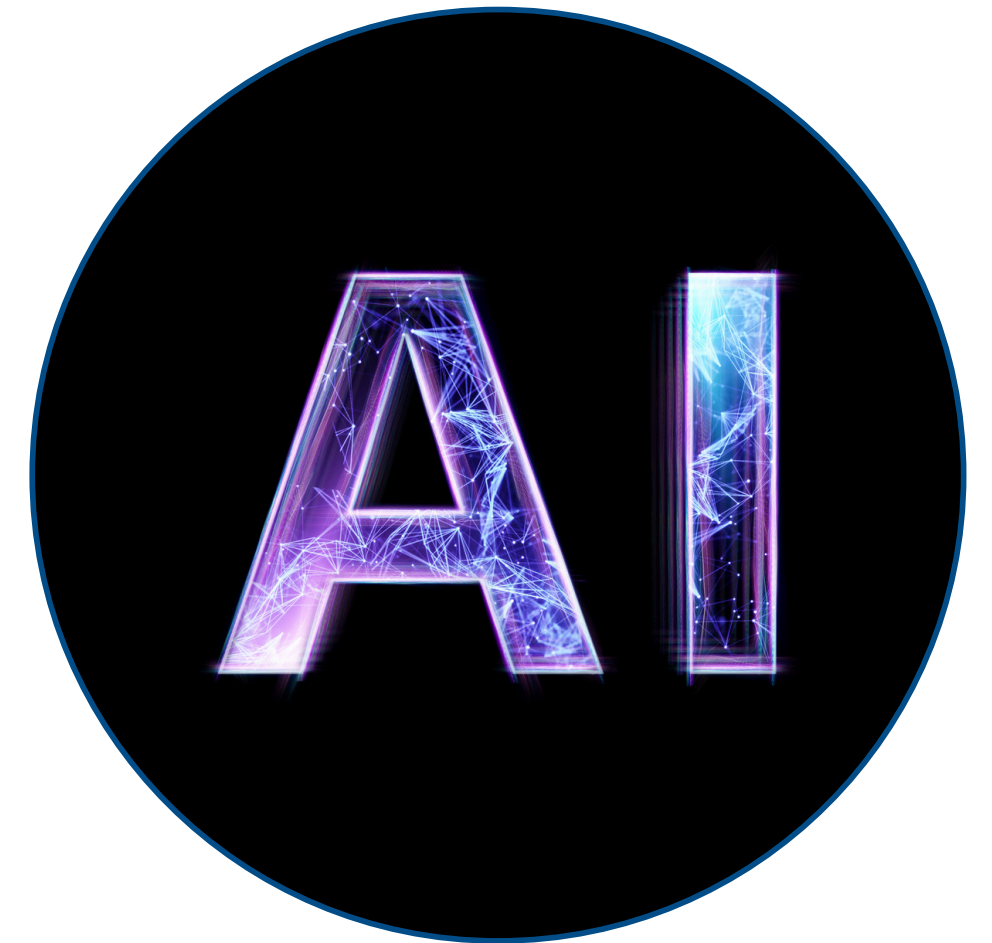
IBM is also doing this by relying on AI agents like AskHR to replace portions of transactional HR work while simultaneously creating new, more specialized roles. The agent fields questions from 270,000 individuals daily about everything from IBM's maternity leave policy to employment verification letter requests, illustrating how automation can elevate rather than simply eliminate human contribution.



Winning AI(dooption)

Ultimately, the goal of the Winning AI(dooption) framework is to move organizations from a state of passive observation to one of active, ethical participation. By Addressing the Fear through radical transparency, Rewarding Experimentation through low-stakes play, and Automating what you Hate to reclaim human time, we shift the narrative from replacement to empowerment.

In an era defined by skepticism and "AI rebellion," the brands that thrive will not be those with the most complex algorithms, but those that use AI to become more undeniably human. By stripping away the mundane and honoring the authentic, we don't just adopt a new technology, we create the necessary space for the next frontier of human-led creativity to flourish.





CREDITS

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