

AI Is No Longer Optional: Why CEOs Must Lead the Transformation Now

Ray Zaso, Strategic AI Advisor June 16, 2025

While 70% of chief executives now use generative AI daily, the remaining leaders risk falling behind as artificial intelligence reshapes entire business models and workforce strategies.



Image: Gettyimages

While global headlines focus on trade disputes and economic volatility, generative AI is quietly transforming workplaces. Since ChatGPT's 2022 debut, 70% of CEOs now use AI daily, and companies are rapidly adopting it to reshape business models and boost productivity.

[Vistage's Q1 2025 CEO Confidence Index](#), surveying 1,796 U.S. business leaders, reveals that 70% of CEOs use generative AI daily, and over 40% of companies have invested in AI licensing or subscriptions.

While generative AI primarily serves as a productivity enhancement tool for individuals, it's evolving into a broader organizational asset. Consequently, executives need to prioritize workforce education on appropriate and ethical AI use. By March 2025, nearly half of surveyed CEOs indicated they were providing AI training to their employees. A significant jump from the 32% who reported such initiatives in the second quarter of 2024.

Why CEOs Must Be Intentional About AI

AI is no longer a future consideration. It is the foundation of how work is being done today. CEOs can no longer afford to take a passive approach. To lead in this era, they must not only adopt AI but **reimagine their organizations through it.**

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AI Is Reshaping the Workplace

Generative AI is moving beyond hype and becoming embedded in daily workflows. It’s driving a shift from task-based labor to **AI-enhanced productivity** and **cost efficiency**. Here’s how with real-world use cases:

Function	Company / Context	AI-Driven Transformation
Customer Service	American Express	Automated 75% of inquiries, freeing agents for complex cases.
Recruiting	Unilever	Uses AI video and game-based assessments to reduce hiring time by 75%, improving candidate experience.
Legal & Audit	PwC, Deloitte	Automated document review for contracts, compliance, and M&A due diligence.
Sales & Marketing	Salesforce	Einstein GPT auto-generates call summaries and tailored sales emails enabling reps to spend more time selling.
Marketing	Coca-Cola	Leverages GenAI to produce customized ad content at scale for different markets.
Healthcare Administration	Mayo Clinic & NYU Langone	AI scribes transcribe and summarize patient visits, slashing paperwork time by 30–40%.
Manufacturing	Siemens	Uses AI for predictive maintenance, preventing costly machinery breakdowns.

Key Takeaways:

- AI automates routine tasks, reshaping entry-level roles.
- New roles like AI content editors and prompt engineers are emerging.
- CEOs must redesign workforce structures to leverage AI effectively..

AI Requires a Visionary Approach

Rather than treating AI as a tool, forward-thinking CEOs are treating it as a **catalyst for organizational reinvention**. Developing a Strategic AI Roadmap is essential to achieve success. The winners won’t just adopt AI, they’ll **rebuild their workflows, workforce models, and leadership mindsets around it**. Below are examples of companies applying visionary reimagination:

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Company	How They Reimagined Work With AI
Airbnb	Embedded AI into the customer journey from planning trips to guest-host messaging using custom LLMs to deliver tailored experiences.
Morgan Stanley	Built an internal GPT-powered assistant to give 16,000 financial advisors instant access to proprietary research and insights.
IKEA	Deployed AI-powered design tools for customers and shifted staff roles to focus on design consultation and customer experience.
Pfizer	Uses AI to optimize clinical trial protocols and support research teams in real time with predictive insights.
KPMG	Created AI centers of excellence and redesigned entire audit workflows with AI-powered platforms.

Leadership Mindset Shifts Required:

- View AI as a **strategic partner**, not just a tech solution.
- **Lead AI** strategy personally, rather than delegating it to IT.
- Invest in **AI fluency across all levels** of the organization.
- Shift workforce strategy to emphasize **human skills** such as creativity, judgment, and collaboration that complement AI.

Bottom Line for CEOs

Do Now	Why It Matters
Build a Strategic AI Roadmap	Identifies high-impact use cases ensuring focused investment, scalable adoption, and alignment with business priorities.
Train the workforce in AI fluency	Only 47% of CEOs are doing this and those who don't will face widening productivity gaps.
Redesign jobs, don't just automate	AI is eliminating repetitive tasks. Now's the time to elevate human-centered roles.
Lead with intention	The 53% of CEOs not yet acting on AI risk losing on cost, agility, and innovation.
Adopt a Bold Vision	AI isn't just a tool, it's the infrastructure for the next era of business.

AI is not just a tool, it's **the new infrastructure of work**. CEOs who fail to invest in workforce training, redefine their operational models, and align AI with strategy will fall behind. Those who lead with clarity and intent will gain a lasting advantage.

Adapted from the June 15, 2025 Inc. article **AI-Powered Workplaces Are the Future: Leaders Must Adapt** by Joe Galvin Chief Research Officer for Vistage Worldwide.

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About the Author



Ray Zaso is the Founder and Principal of The Zaso Group, where he helps small and mid-sized businesses harness innovative technology solutions. He specializes in implementing practical AI applications that deliver measurable returns in months, not years. With deep experience across multiple waves of technological change, Ray believes AI's disruptive power rivals and may ultimately surpass that of the Internet itself, positioning early adopters for significant competitive advantage. Connect on [LinkedIn](#) or visit <https://thezasogroup.com/>

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