

More than half of your employees are quietly worried that AI is going to eliminate their job. They are not telling you. They are showing up, doing their work, and carrying that anxiety in silence while leadership assumes everything is fine. Jax and Sage break down why AI anxiety has become one of the fastest growing chronic stressors in the modern workplace, why the leadership gap is making it worse, and why companies ignoring it are sabotaging their own AI adoption. Use this worksheet to assess your team's AI anxiety level and build a leadership response that works.

50%+

Workers fear AI job loss

2X

Stress vs. acute threat

\$322B

Global burnout cost

3-10%

EAP utilization rate

01 AI ANXIETY — THE SILENT PERFORMANCE KILLER

WHAT THE RESEARCH SHOWS

Sustained uncertainty about job security triggers the same physiological stress response as an acute physical threat. When more than half your workforce carries that uncertainty every day in silence, the cognitive and emotional toll compounds quietly into disengagement, presenteeism, and eventually turnover. Companies that acknowledge AI anxiety openly see stronger AI adoption, not weaker.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE ON YOUR TEAM

Employees anxious about AI are less likely to engage with new tools, more likely to resist change initiatives, and more likely to be scanning job boards for roles at companies that feel more stable. The silence is not acceptance — it is disengagement in progress.

SPOT THE WARNING SIGNS

- Employees are slow to adopt or actively avoiding new AI tools
- Team meetings about AI feel tense or produce more questions than answers
- High performers are quietly interviewing elsewhere
- Managers are either dismissing AI concerns or making promises they cannot keep

When did you last give your team a genuine, honest conversation about what AI will and will not change about their roles — without overpromising or dismissing?

02 THE LEADERSHIP GAP — WHAT MAKES AI ANXIETY WORSE

"Companies ignoring AI anxiety are not just losing sleep — they are actively sabotaging their own AI adoption."

The leadership gap on AI anxiety runs in two directions. Managers who dismiss concerns — telling employees everything will be fine without evidence — destroy trust. Managers who overpromise — guaranteeing no jobs will be lost — create credibility problems when reality differs. The most effective leaders name the uncertainty honestly, explain what is known and what is not, and create space for the conversation to happen. That is not weakness. That is the thing that keeps high performers from quietly leaving.

Employees carrying unaddressed AI anxiety	Estimated hours lost to distraction per week per person	Annual cost at average hourly wage
_____ units	x _____	= \$ _____

03 TWO LEADERSHIP RESPONSES — ONE WORKS, ONE DOES NOT

How a leader responds to AI anxiety determines whether the team adopts new tools or resists them entirely.

WHAT MAKES IT WORSE	WHAT ACTUALLY HELPS
<p>Dismissing concerns as overblown or making promises you cannot keep. Both break trust. Dismissal tells employees their fears are not valid. Overpromising creates a credibility crisis when reality arrives. Either way the anxiety does not disappear — it goes underground and shows up as disengagement and turnover.</p>	<p>Naming uncertainty honestly — acknowledging what is changing, what is not yet known, and what the team can control. Regular transparent communication, role clarity in the context of AI changes, and genuine space for questions are the three highest-impact actions any manager can take right now at zero cost.</p>

04 YOUR 30-DAY TEAM WELLNESS PLAN

WEEK 1	LISTEN	Schedule one genuine check-in per team member. No agenda. Just ask: how are you actually doing?
WEEK 2	LOOK	Review workload distribution and PTO data across your team. Where are the hidden pressure points?
WEEK 3	ACT	Make one structural change — redistribute a task, approve one day off, or remove a recurring meeting.
WEEK 4	MEASURE	Ask your team: what is one thing that would make your work feel more sustainable right now?

AS A MANAGER — DO THESE THIS WEEK

- Schedule a dedicated team conversation about AI this week — not to announce anything, just to listen

- Ask each team member directly what questions they have about AI and their role
- Identify one AI tool your team already has access to and run a low-stakes experiment together
- Audit your own communication — have you been dismissing concerns or overpromising outcomes?
- Share one honest thing you do not yet know about how AI will affect your team — and commit to finding out

YOUR REFLECTION

If your team could tell you one thing about how AI anxiety is affecting their work right now without any career risk — what do you think they would say?

Write your answer here:

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