



Workforce Training Thesis

People do not need more demonstrations; they need time, context and support to practice better work.

WORKS WITH THE ASSISTANTS TEAMS ALREADY USE



EDITION 52 / EMBER & VIOLET

EXECUTIVE WORKING EDITION - 08 OCT 2026

52

AT A GLANCE

People do not need more demonstrations; they need time, context and support to practice better work.

Most AI training is a demonstration followed by a hope. People watch what a tool can do, feel briefly impressed, and return to work unchanged. This thesis argues that capability is built through guided practice on real tasks, with habits of checking and care, and with managers who reinforce the change afterward. It sets out four stages (Orient, Practice, Review, Embed), a diagnostic across five dimensions, roles, measures that look beyond attendance, risks, and a first-quarter plan.

WHO IT IS FOR Heads of learning, people and operations, and line managers responsible for helping teams use AI well in the work they already do.

TIME TO USE 50 minutes to read; a pilot cohort to apply

What you will have at the end

- Role-specific learning objectives tied to real workflows
- A practice-and-review format you can repeat with any team
- Habits for checking output and handling information that stick
- A manager guide so adoption continues after the session ends

Contents

01	Capability comes from practice, not exposure	03
02	What most organizations get wrong about AI training	04
03	Four stages: Orient, Practice, Review, Embed	05
04	Orient people to the why, the what and the limits	07
05	Practice on real work, with guidance	08
06	Teach review, information handling and judgment	10
07	Embed through managers, peers and measures	11
08	Diagnostics and ownership	13
09	Measuring learning beyond attendance	14
10	Risks, trade-offs and when not to train yet	15
11	How Halden works with teams	16
12	A first quarter that produces evidence	17
13	Terms used in this publication	18

THE POINT OF VIEW

Capability comes from practice, not exposure

01



Showing people what AI can do is easy. Helping them do their own work better is slower and far more valuable.

We believe the unit of learning is a task, not a tool. A person does not need to know everything an assistant can do. They need to know how to get a useful first draft of the thing they produce every week, how to check it, and when to stop and ask someone. That knowledge is built by doing the task, getting feedback, and doing it again.



Demonstrations still have a place. They create shared vocabulary and reduce fear. But they are the smallest part of a successful program. The larger parts are protected time, role-relevant exercises, a safe way to talk about mistakes, and managers who ask about the work afterward. Without those, knowledge fades within weeks.

There is also a people question that training alone cannot settle. Staff reasonably wonder what AI means for their role. A program that ignores that worry will meet quiet resistance. A program that addresses it honestly, including saying what is not yet known, builds more trust than one that reassures without substance.



- Teach tasks people already do, not abstract tool features
- Treat checking output as a core skill, equal in weight to writing requests
- Protect time, because learning that competes with a full workload loses
- Equip managers, since they decide whether new habits survive
- Be honest about uncertainty regarding roles and change

A USEFUL TEST

Ask someone who attended last quarter to show you one task they now do differently. If they cannot, the program delivered information, not capability.



WORKING QUESTION

What is one task in each major role that you would most like to see done better, and who could show how?

COMMON FAILURES

What most organizations get wrong about AI training

02

The recurring failures are about format, relevance and what happens after the session.

The most common failure is the one-off session. A single talk or webinar for everyone cannot be relevant to a finance analyst, a field technician and a customer service agent at once. It often leaves the keen already ahead and the cautious more uncertain. Attendance is high, satisfaction scores are good, and behavior is unchanged.

The second failure is skill without care. People learn to produce fluent text quickly, but are not taught to check it, to notice when a source is missing or invented, or to judge what may be entered into a tool. Confidence rises faster than judgment. The risk is not that people use AI, but that they use it uncritically.

The third failure is neglecting managers. A manager who has not tried the tools cannot coach, cannot judge whether work is improving, and may unintentionally discourage use or demand too much too soon. Team habits follow the manager more than they follow a course.

FAILURE PATTERN	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	BETTER APPROACH
One-off session	A single talk for all roles	Role-specific, repeated practice
Tool tour	Features shown, tasks ignored	Exercises built on real workflows
Skill without care	Fast output, no checking	Teach review, sources and information handling
Manager gap	Managers untrained or absent	Short manager guidance and coaching prompts

FAILURE PATTERN	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	BETTER APPROACH
Attendance as proof	Completion rates reported as success	Measure behavior and work quality
Silence about roles	Staff worry unanswered	Open, honest conversation about change



ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE

A company (illustrative) trains everyone in a single hour. Two weeks later, a pulse check shows a few enthusiastic users, a large group unsure what is permitted, and managers who cannot answer questions.

WORKING QUESTION

What would your staff say they remember from the last technology training, and what did they change afterward?



THE METHOD

Four stages: Orient, Practice, Review, Embed

03



A complete program does all four. Most programs stop after the first.

Orient builds a shared understanding of what AI is, what appropriate use looks like and the business reason for the change. Practice uses guided, role-relevant exercises on meaningful workflows. Review teaches output evaluation, information handling, escalation and the role of human judgment. Embed supports managers, peer learning and measures that look beyond attendance.



Our free workforce assessment at halden.company/assessments scores five dimensions that map onto these stages: awareness, skill depth, practice, managers and responsible use. They help you decide where the program should put most of its effort for a given group.

STAGE	CORE QUESTION	MAIN OUTPUT
1. Orient	Why are we doing this, and what is appropriate?	Shared understanding and clear expectations
2. Practice	Can people do their own tasks better?	Role-relevant exercises and worked examples
3. Review	Can they judge output and handle information well?	Checking routines and escalation habits
4. Embed	Will it continue after the session?	Manager guidance, peer learning and measures

DIMENSION	QUESTION	IF WEAK
Awareness	Do people know what AI can and cannot do for their role?	Start with Orient and open conversation
Skill depth	Can they request, refine and check?	Increase Practice sessions
Practice	Do they have protected time and coaching?	Fix scheduling and support first
Managers	Do managers coach and reinforce?	Prioritize Embed and manager guidance
Responsible use	Are checking and confidentiality habits routine?	Strengthen Review

WORKING QUESTION

Which of the four stages does your current program barely cover?

STAGE 1: ORIENT

Orient people to the why, the what and the limits

04



Orientation should be short, honest and specific to the organization's reasons for the change.

Orientation does three jobs. It explains in plain terms what AI assistance is and is not, so expectations are realistic. It says why the organization is investing in this and what outcomes it hopes for. And it sets the ground rules: what information may be used, which tools are approved, and who to ask. Keep it under an hour, and give people a chance to ask questions they may be shy to raise.



01 State the business reason

A leader explains what the organization wants to change and what it does not. Specifics build trust better than slogans.

02 Explain the basics

Cover what assistants do well, where they fail and why they sometimes produce confident errors. Use examples from the audience's own work.

03 Set the rules

Walk through the usage note: approved tools, information that must not be entered and the route for questions.



04 Address role questions

Say what is known and not known about how roles may change, and commit to a time when the picture will be updated.

05 Agree the practice plan

Show the schedule, time protected for practice and who will support it.



S.

COMMON MISTAKE

Promising more than you know. If you cannot say whether roles will change, say that, and say when you will tell people more. Reassurance that later proves false damages every later message.

- Use a leader and a practitioner together, so the message is both strategic and credible
- Allow anonymous questions, because many concerns go unspoken
- Provide the written usage note at the session, not afterward
- Record the questions asked and publish short answers
- Keep tool demonstrations short and tied to a real task

S.

WORKING QUESTION

What is the honest answer to the question your staff are most likely to be afraid to ask?

S.

STAGE 2: PRACTICE

Practice on real work, with guidance

05

People improve by doing their own tasks with support, comparing results and trying again.

Practice sessions work best in small groups from the same or adjacent roles, with real material (safe to use under the usage note) and a facilitator who knows the work. The exercise is simple: take a task from the person's normal week, try an approach, compare outputs, discuss what worked and refine. Repeat across several sessions, so people build habits, not just awareness.

II

01 Select the tasks

With managers, choose three to five recurring tasks per role that are frequent, time-consuming and low risk, such as drafting, summarizing, reformatting or research.

02 Prepare safe material

Gather real or realistic inputs that comply with information rules. Remove sensitive details where needed.

03 Run the exercise

Participants attempt the task with and without assistance, then compare time, quality and effort.

04 Debrief

Discuss what instruction produced better results, what needed correcting and what the tool could not do.

05 Capture the pattern

Write the winning approach as a short, shareable example for the role.

ROLE (ILLUSTRATIVE)	CANDIDATE PRACTICE TASK	CHECK TO TEACH
Customer service	Draft a reply to a typical request	Verify policy and tone before sending
Finance	Summarize variance commentary	Reconcile figures to the source
HR	Rewrite a job description	Review for bias and accuracy
Operations	Turn meeting notes into actions	Confirm owners and dates
Sales	Prepare a call briefing	Check facts about the account

Spread practice over weeks, not days. A pattern of one short session a week for four to six weeks, with a task to try in between, tends to produce more durable habits than a full-day workshop. Between sessions, a shared channel where people post examples keeps momentum and lets quieter participants learn from others.

WORKING QUESTION

Which recurring task in your busiest team is both frequent and safe enough to practice on next week?

STAGE 3: REVIEW

Teach review, information handling and judgment

06

The ability to evaluate output is what turns faster work into better work.

Review is the skill most often skipped and most important. People need a routine for evaluating output: does it answer the question, does it match trusted sources, is anything stated that cannot be verified, and does it fit the audience. They also need a clear sense of when a human decision must be made, when to escalate, and what to do with information they should not have entered.

A five-point review routine

- Did the output answer what I actually asked, in the format I need
- Can I verify the factual claims against a source I trust
- Is anything included that I did not provide and cannot confirm
- Is the tone and content suitable for the person who will read it
- Would I be comfortable explaining how this was produced if asked

Information handling

Information rules should be practical. People need to know categories, such as customer personal data, confidential contracts and internal planning, and what is permitted for each approved tool. Walk through three or four realistic cases and discuss them. Say clearly that your own policy and applicable laws and contractual duties govern, and that staff should check current requirements and ask when unsure.

COMMON MISTAKE

Treating mistakes as embarrassing. Create a way to share errors without blame, such as a short note on what went wrong and what check would have caught it. A team that hides errors repeats them.

SITUATION	RIGHT RESPONSE	WHY
Output includes a figure you did not supply	Verify at source or remove	Assistants can state invented details with confidence
Unsure whether data may be entered	Stop and ask the named contact	The cost of asking is low
Output affects a customer or a decision	Review before use, as for any draft	Accountability stays with the person
Output seems biased or inappropriate	Do not use it and report it	Patterns need attention

WORKING QUESTION

If a colleague made a serious error with an AI draft tomorrow, would they tell anyone, and what would happen?

STAGE 4: EMBED

Embed through managers,
peers and measures

07

Learning survives when managers ask about it, peers share it and the organization measures behavior rather than attendance.

Embedding is where programs succeed or fade. Managers need a short guide: what the team has learned, three questions to ask in one-to-ones, how to recognize good use, and what to do when someone is struggling or overusing. Give them a chance to practice the same tasks first, so they speak from experience.

01 Equip managers

Run a shorter manager session, with a one-page guide and sample questions for team meetings.



02 Create peer routines

Set up a regular slot, such as ten minutes in a team meeting, to share one example that worked and one that failed.

03 Name champions

Identify respected practitioners who can answer questions, without turning them into unpaid support desks.

04 Refresh the examples

Update the role examples as tools and tasks change, and retire stale ones.

05 Measure behavior

Check what people do differently, not who attended.

- 
- Ask in one-to-ones: what did you use AI for this week, and what did you change in the output
 - Recognize careful checking as publicly as speed
 - Watch workloads: do not raise output targets by assumed time savings before they are demonstrated
 - Give champions time, recognition and a clear scope
 - Revisit role conversations every quarter, honestly and with updated facts

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE



A team manager (illustrative) adds a standing question to the weekly meeting: where did AI help or hurt this week. Within a month, the team has a shared list of good approaches and three named pitfalls.

WORKING QUESTION

What will your managers do in the first week after training that they did not do before?

DIAGNOSTICS AND ROLES

Diagnostics and ownership

08



A short check shows where the program should concentrate. Named roles prevent training from becoming an events calendar.

Use the checklist for each major group, not for the whole organization, since needs differ. The free workforce assessment at halden.company/assessments scores awareness, skill depth, practice, managers and responsible use, and surfaces patterns such as practice without manager support or confidence outrunning care.



Workforce self-check

- Most people can say what AI might do for their role, in their own words
- People have mixed feelings, but they feel able to talk about them
- People can write a clear request, check output and work with files or sources
- When output is wrong, people investigate rather than abandon the tool
- Teams have protected time and coaching for practice
- Managers ask about AI use in one-to-ones and meetings
- Habits for checking and confidentiality are routine
- People know the route for questions and for reporting problems



ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY	TYPICAL HOLDER
Program owner	Accountable for outcomes, scheduling and measures	Learning, people or operations lead
Executive sponsor	Signals priority and protects time	A member of the leadership team
Facilitators	Run practice sessions with real tasks	Internal experts or external partners
Managers	Reinforce habits and coach	Line managers
Champions	Answer peer questions and share examples	Respected practitioners



ROLE	RESPONSIBILITY	TYPICAL HOLDER
Risk contact	Maintains information rules and handles escalations	Legal, compliance or security lead

WORKING QUESTION

For your most important team, which of the eight self-check lines would the team itself mark as no?

MEASURING PROGRESS

Measuring learning beyond attendance

09

Attendance shows reach. Behavior and work quality show learning.

Choose a small number of measures at three levels. Reaction asks whether people found it relevant and useful. Behavior asks what they do differently: tasks done with assistance, checks performed, questions asked. Results ask whether the work improved: time to complete a task, quality as rated by a reviewer, rework rates. Behavior and results take longer to appear and are more meaningful.

LEVEL	EXAMPLE MEASURE	HOW TO COLLECT
Reaction	Relevance rating by role	Two-question form after each session
Behavior	Share of team using a practiced approach weekly	Short pulse and manager observation
Behavior	Checks performed before sharing output	Sampled review of work
Results	Time to complete a recurring task	Before and after timing on a small sample
Results	Reviewer quality rating	Blind comparison of samples

LEVEL	EXAMPLE MEASURE	HOW TO COLLECT
Risk	Questions and incidents reported	Log kept by the risk contact

Take the baseline before the first practice session, using the same task and the same reviewers. Without it, you will only be able to say people feel better, which is useful but not enough. Keep samples small and honest: ten tasks per team, reviewed carefully, tell you more than a large but shallow survey.

Interpret results with caution. Early time savings often reflect the novelty of the tool or the choice of easy tasks. A rise in reported incidents can mean people are reporting more. Look at trends over a quarter, and talk to participants about what the numbers mean before drawing conclusions.

WORKING QUESTION

Which recurring task could you time and rate before the first session, so you can show a fair comparison later?

RISKS AND TRADE-OFFS

Risks, trade-offs and when not to train yet

10

Training is a means. Sometimes it is the wrong first move.

The main trade-off is time. Practice takes hours away from other work, and protecting those hours has a real cost. The honest argument is that unstructured learning also consumes time, informally and unevenly, and often with greater risk. Starting with one or two teams limits the cost and gives you evidence for the next group.

- Uneven uptake: the confident move ahead and the cautious fall behind, so offer extra support to the second group
- Over-promising productivity gains, which leads to unrealistic targets and distrust
- Training on tools that are not approved or not available, creating frustration
- Material that dates quickly: schedule reviews of the examples

- Legal and regulatory duties around information, employment and sector rules vary by place: check current requirements and take professional advice



WHEN NOT TO TRAIN YET

If there is no approved tool and no usage note, fix that first. If leaders have not decided what the work should change, do strategy first. If a team has no time at all, address workload before offering more learning.

Training can also be misused as a substitute for redesigning a broken process. If the real problem is poor source documents or unclear ownership, teaching people to prompt better will not help. In that case, name the process problem and address it directly.



WORKING QUESTION

What would you have to stop or delay in order to give one team real practice time this quarter?



WORKING WITH HALDEN

How Halden works with teams

11

We design and facilitate practice-based programs, and we aim to leave your managers able to continue without us.

Halden & Company is an AI advisory and implementation partner. For workforce training, we work with you to choose the tasks, build role-specific exercises, facilitate the practice and review sessions, and prepare managers. We use your real workflows, adjusted for information rules, rather than generic examples.



- We begin with a free assessment at halden.company/assessments, which scores five dimensions for workforce capability
- We design exercises with your managers and practitioners, so they reflect your work

- We can facilitate sessions or train your internal facilitators
- We help you set baselines and measures that go beyond attendance
- We tell you honestly if the better step is strategy, readiness or waiting

You can use this document to run a pilot cohort yourself. If you would like help, or a second opinion on a plan, contact us at halden.company/contact. We would rather start small with one team and prove the value than propose a company-wide program on day one.

WORKING QUESTION

Which team would be the best first cohort: motivated, representative and willing to share honestly what happens?

30 / 60 / 90

A first quarter that produces evidence

12

A first quarter that ends with one trained cohort, working manager routines and a fair before-and-after comparison.

First 30 days: ground it

- Choose one pilot team and three to five recurring tasks in each role
- Publish the usage note and approved tools, and run the orientation session
- Take baselines for the chosen tasks and a short confidence pulse
- Run the short manager session and give managers the one-page guide

Days 31 to 60: test it

- Run weekly practice sessions of about an hour with real tasks
- Teach and rehearse the five-point review routine
- Set up a shared channel and a ten-minute team-meeting slot for examples
- Collect reaction and behavior measures after each session

Days 61 to 90: decide

- Repeat task timing and quality ratings and compare with baselines
- Hold a candid review with participants and managers
- Update role examples and the usage note from what was learned
- Decide whether to extend to a second team, change the format or pause

GLOSSARY

Terms used in this publication

13

TERM	MEANING
Orientation	A short session that explains the business reason, the basics of AI and the ground rules.
Practice session	A guided exercise in which people attempt a real task, compare results and refine their approach.
Review routine	A short set of checks applied to AI output before it is used.
Usage note	A one-page statement of approved tools and what information may be entered into them.
Skill depth	The ability to write clear requests, refine results and check output against trusted sources.
Protected time	Working hours formally set aside for learning and practice.
Champion	A respected practitioner who answers peer questions and shares examples.
Manager guide	A short document that tells managers what the team learned and what to ask and look for.
Escalation	Passing a question, concern or problem to a named person for a decision.
Behavior measure	An indicator of what people do differently at work, as opposed to who attended.
Human judgment	The accountable decision a person makes about whether and how to use an output.



A note on use

This publication is a public orientation resource, not legal, technical, financial or professional advice. Adapt it to your people, information, workflows and obligations, and check current tool terms, regulations and risks before acting.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

Take the free Halden assessment at halden.company/assessments, or talk to us at halden.company/contact about turning this into a plan for your organization.

