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How to Measure AI Adoption in L&D

A practical guide to AI costs, value, and ROI

Introduction

AI no longer feels like an experiment. For many teams, it's already embedded in the routines behind course development, training analysis, and learner support.

At the same time, AI spending is growing and becoming harder to track. Costs are spread across subscriptions, usage-based fees, and AI features built into existing platforms. This raises some practical questions:

- Where is AI actually making a difference to L&D results?
- How much do those improvements really cost?
- Which tools deserve more investment, and which should you drop?

These questions often remain open. Usage is easy enough to see, but the value behind it is much harder to pin down. Until it is, decisions about future investments often rest on assumptions.

In this guide, we'll look at how to measure AI adoption and its impact across L&D. You'll find a six-step process for evaluating outcomes, calculating costs and ROI, and deciding what to do next.

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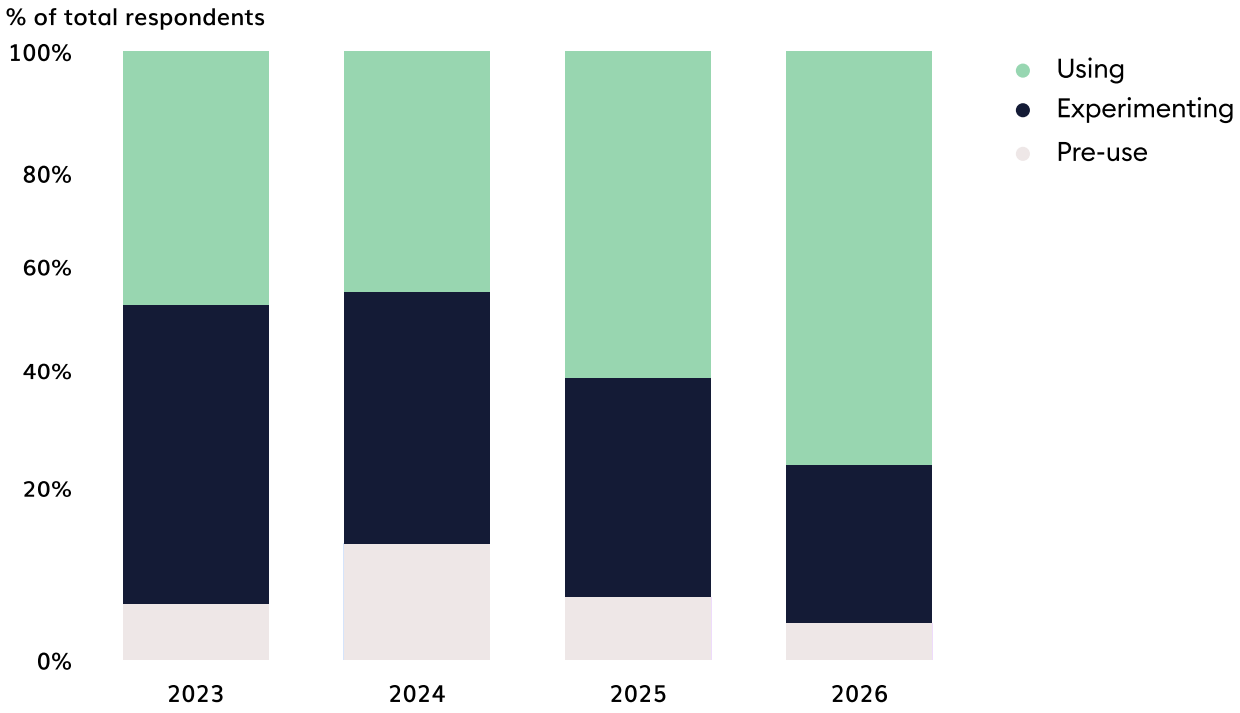
AI in L&D at the turn of 2027: what has changed?

According to Donald H. Taylor and Eglė Vinauskaitė's AI in L&D: Around the Core report, **68% of surveyed L&D professionals said their organizations were using AI in at least some of their work in 2026,** up from 54% in 2025. Another 26% were experimenting or running pilots, leaving just 6% who hadn't started yet.

AI BECOMES BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR L&D



Source: Taylor & Vinauskaitė, AI in L&D: Around the Core, 2026

The more interesting development is what L&D teams now expect AI to help them achieve. Interest in using AI to support better decisions and improve learning design has grown considerably. In 2026, 44.5% of respondents selected data analysis for decision-making among their top three expected benefits, compared with 31.9% in 2024. Improving learning design quality rose from 31% to 37.1%.

These are expectations rather than verified outcomes, but they show how the priorities of L&D practitioners are evolving.

AI use is widespread, but deep integration is still limited

Regular AI use doesn't tell us much about how deeply the technology is integrated into an L&D team's work.

A 2026 study by eLearning Industry, which surveyed 400 L&D buyers and 100 learning technology vendors, offers an interesting perspective:

7.5%

of L&D professionals surveyed say AI is fully integrated into their learning environments

45%

of L&D buyers surveyed are still planning to adopt AI.

Source: eLearning Industry, The AI Expectation Gap in Learning Tech 2026.

These findings might seem surprising given how widely AI is already used in L&D, but in reality, using AI for individual tasks doesn't necessarily mean it's fully integrated into an organization's learning environment.

Consider an L&D department where everyone uses ChatGPT to research topics, prepare course materials, or draft assessments. The team may have no shared guidelines for using AI, no established quality checks, and no way to track the time or money spent on AI-assisted work. Its existing systems and approval processes might also remain unchanged.

Personal productivity gains aren't always reflected in financial results

80%

of respondents say AI improves their productivity, and half say it helps them make better decisions.

Source: McKinsey & Company, The State of AI in 2026: On the Road to ROI, August 2026

Ask people whether AI makes them more productive, and most will say yes.

Yet only 37% could link AI to any impact on their organization's EBIT, about the same share as a year before.

L&D teams face a similar challenge. An instructional designer might now prepare course presentations twice as fast. But has that helped the team launch training sooner, develop more materials with the same resources, or reduce production costs?

The time saved is useful, but its value depends on what the team can achieve with it. Without tracking those results, it's difficult to know how much AI is contributing to L&D's overall performance.

The real cost of AI is getting harder to see

An L&D team might have several standalone subscriptions, usage-based charges, and AI features bundled into platforms it already pays for. And those are only the expenses that show up on invoices.

There's also the time spent reviewing AI-generated content, correcting errors, preparing data, and adjusting existing workflows. Some of this work is easy to overlook because it's absorbed into employees' regular responsibilities.

In Donald H. Taylor and Eglė Vinauskaitė's report, this is described as the **waterbed effect**: reducing work in one area can create more work elsewhere.

The financial pressure is already visible. McKinsey's 2026 research found that 20% of respondents from organizations using AI said **operating costs had constrained its use**. At the same time, 60% expected their organizations to increase their AI investments over the following year.

For L&D leaders, understanding the cost of AI means accounting for the technology and the work required to use it. Otherwise, a tool that appears inexpensive may end up costing more than expected.

Measuring AI adoption and impact in practice

Knowing whether AI creates value in your team requires measurement, and that starts with separating three ideas that are easy to blur together: AI adoption, AI impact, and ROI.

AI adoption tells you how widely and consistently AI is used in your team's workflows. **AI impact** is about what changes as a result, whether that's faster production, better learning experiences, or improved performance. **ROI** looks at the financial side: whether the benefits justify the investment.

The two don't always move in the same direction. Picture a team where every instructional designer generates course drafts with AI. On paper, adoption looks excellent. But if each draft then needs heavy editing and extra rounds of

SME review, the ROI turns negative. **Broad adoption, on its own, proves very little.**

Meanwhile, a single AI-assisted localization workflow could deliver substantial savings without widespread AI adoption across the department.

So, how do you measure all this in practice?

We'll work through six steps using a fictional L&D team that has introduced iSpring Suite AI into its course development process. We'll follow the same example throughout, building up the data needed to assess adoption, costs, results, and ROI.

The method applies to other AI use cases too, including learning analytics, coaching, and L&D operations.

Step 1 Choose the AI use case and define success

If your team uses AI for several different tasks, it's tempting to evaluate everything at once. But how do you compare an AI assistant answering HR questions with a tool that helps instructional designers build courses? They serve different purposes, and their value needs to be measured differently.

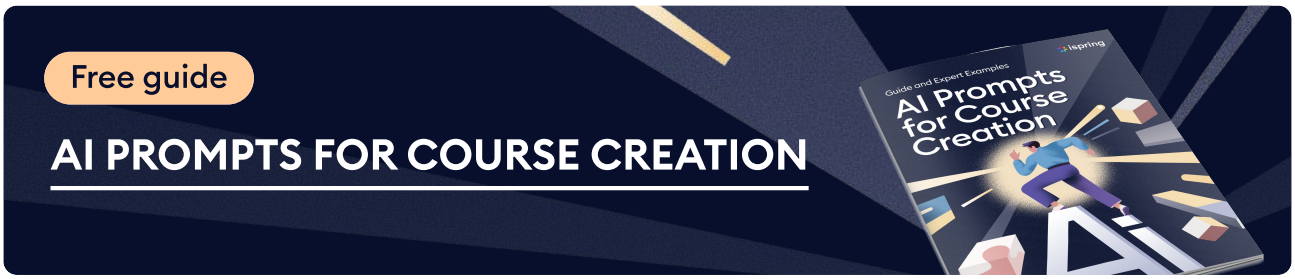
1. **Pick one workflow to start with** – ideally one where AI is already being used regularly, and you can reasonably track the results.the LMS to match your brand book.

2. Next, **spell out why AI was brought into this process** in the first place. "We started using AI" isn't a goal. Neither is "to save time," unless you can specify whose time, on which tasks, and what should happen with the hours saved.

3. Finally, **turn the goal into a success indicator**: a specific measure you can track before and after the deployment of AI. This is what the following steps will build on.

AI USE CASE	CURRENT CHALLENGE	EXPECTED IMPROVEMENT	SUCCESS INDICATOR
Course development	Course production takes weeks, with SMEs waiting for initial drafts	Shorter development time without compromising quality	Development hours per module; number of review rounds; quality checks passed at first review
Localization	Translating mandatory training delays launches in some regions	Faster release of localized versions	Turnaround time per language; cost per approved translation; errors found during review
Training needs analysis	Processing interviews and survey data takes weeks	Faster analysis with reliable, actionable findings	Analysis time; accuracy of findings; usefulness of recommendations
AI assistant for employee support	L&D and HR repeatedly answer routine employee questions	Faster, reliable answers with fewer manual interventions	Number of routine requests to L&D; share of questions resolved without escalation
L&D reporting	Monthly reports require days of manual work	Faster reporting with accurate, useful insights	Hours spent per report; reporting errors; usefulness to stakeholders

Let's say our fictional L&D team chooses course development as its use case and sets a clear goal: reduce development time per module while keeping quality at its current level. Its success indicators are development hours per module and the number of issues found during review. In the next step, the team will measure both indicators under its current process, before introducing AI, and then measure them again after AI is introduced.



Step 2 Establish your baseline

Before you can tell whether AI has improved a workflow, you need to know how that workflow performed without it.

For our L&D team, that means looking at recent course development projects:

- How many hours went into preparing source materials, structuring content, building slides, creating multimedia, and developing assessments?
- How much time did SMEs spend checking drafts?
- And how many rounds of revisions were needed before a module was approved?

The idea is to **capture the entire production process**, including the work that tends to disappear into emails, feedback rounds, and last-minute fixes.

Let's look at our team's baseline.

The team reviews five recently completed training modules of similar length and complexity. Each includes slides, visuals, narration, a short quiz, and one additional language version. For each project, the team counts the working hours of everyone involved, including instructional designers, SMEs, and language reviewers.

DEVELOPMENT STAGE	AVERAGE HOURS
Reviewing and organizing SME materials	4
Planning the course structure and writing content	5
Building slides and multimedia	10
Developing quizzes and assessments	4
Localization	7
SME review and revisions	6
Final checks and publishing	2
Total	**38**

Illustrative working hours per approved training module, including time spent by instructional designers, SMEs, and language reviewers. These figures are estimates, not industry benchmarks.

On average, each approved module takes 38 working hours. Three of the five modules also passed their first SME review, giving the team a 60% first-review approval rate.

We'll use these figures to compare development effort and review outcomes once the team starts using iSpring Suite AI.

Make sure you're comparing like with like

A baseline only works if it describes the same kind of work you'll do with AI. If the team used to build complex compliance courses and now uses AI for short introductory modules, average production time will drop, but the change will have little to do with AI.

Already using AI and have no pre-AI records? Compare similar tasks completed with and without AI, using the same quality requirements. If you're relying on older projects, note any differences that might affect the results.

Step 3 Measure AI adoption

How much of the team's actual work involves AI? Everyone might have access to AI tools, but that doesn't mean they're using them in their day-to-day work.

License counts and prompt volumes won't tell you much about adoption. Instead, focus on two metrics:

METRIC	HOW TO CALCULATE	WHAT IT SHOWS
Active adoption rate	$\frac{\text{People who used AI for relevant tasks during the period}}{\text{people who have such tasks}} \times 100\%$	How widely AI is used across the team
Workflow adoption rate	$\frac{\text{Relevant projects completed with AI}}{\text{all relevant projects}} \times 100\%$	How regularly AI is part of the process

> Don't assume 100% adoption is the goal, because not every task needs AI. Some involve sensitive information that can't be shared with AI tools, while others are simply better handled manually. A lower adoption rate isn't necessarily a problem if employees are making informed decisions about when AI is useful.



Anna Poli
Senior eLearning Developer at iSpring

Let's return to our L&D team. Over the next month, four instructional designers work on five training modules. Three of them use iSpring Suite AI, and the tool is used in four of the five projects.

That gives us a 75% active adoption rate and an 80% workflow adoption rate.

These figures tell us AI is being used regularly, but there's still some context worth checking. Which parts of course development are people using it for? Are they using the course generator, AI writing tools, image generation, or translation? Do they return to these features on subsequent projects?

Ask your team how they're actually using AI

Are employees using AI as part of their regular work, or just experimenting with it occasionally? What's stopping them from using it more often?

Sometimes the problem is a lack of training or confidence with certain features. Other times, employees have good reasons for sticking with their existing methods. Both are useful findings.

How to Create an Online Course with AI: 5 Dos and Don’ts

Step 4 Evaluate efficiency, quality, and outcomes

Now, comes the core question: **what actually changed when your team started using AI?** To find out, look beyond individual tasks and evaluate the results across three dimensions:

DIMENSION	WHAT TO MEASURE	EXAMPLE INDICATORS
Efficiency	Time, effort, and productivity	Working hours per module, turnaround time, and output per employee
Quality	Accuracy, reliability, and the amount of rework required	First-review approval rate, factual errors, and corrections needed
Outcomes	Whether the work achieves its intended purpose	Faster training launches, more useful recommendations, and improved employee performance

Start with the goals you defined in Step 1. For our L&D team, that means comparing development hours and review results before and after introducing iSpring Suite AI.

Let's take a closer look at two parts of the team's workflow.

EXAMPLE 1. PROCESSING EXTENSIVE SME MATERIALS INTO A FIRST COURSE DRAFT

BEFORE IMPLEMENTING iSPRING SUITE AI

The designer reads through every document, decides what matters, puts it in order, and writes the draft from scratch.

Four hours go into the sources and five into structure and writing.

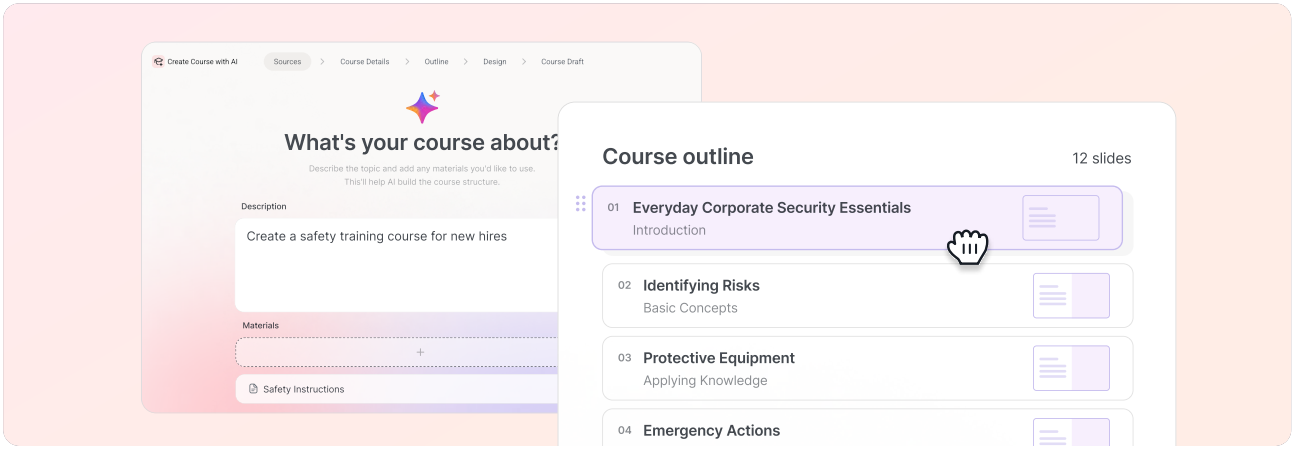
Nine hours in total

WITH iSPRING SUITE AI

The AI turns the source materials into a proposed outline and a first draft.

The designer's job shifts from writing to editing: checking the structure, cutting what's irrelevant, and filling the gaps AI missed.

Four hours in total

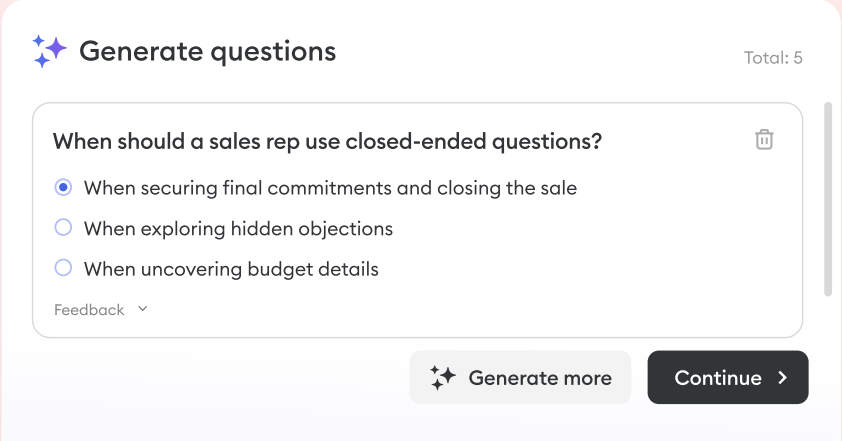


Once the structure is approved, iSpring Suite AI generates an editable, slide-based course draft, complete with headings, explanations, and suggested visuals.

For our example, let's say reviewing the source materials takes two hours, while refining the course structure and editing the AI-generated content takes another two – four hours in total.

EXAMPLE 2. GENERATING KNOWLEDGE CHECKS FROM COURSE CONTENT

BEFORE IMPLEMENTING iSPRING SUITE AI	WITH iSPRING SUITE AI
The designer writes ten questions, comes up with plausible incorrect answers, and prepares feedback, making sure each question reflects the learning objectives and real workplace situations.	The AI drafts questions, answer options, and feedback from the selected section. The designer checks the facts, replaces weak distractors, and rewrites questions that only test recall.
Four hours in total	**Two hours in total**



Next, the team applies the same approach to other stages of course development with iSpring Suite AI, including localization, voiceover production, and the creation of visuals.

Let's say that, after evaluating the entire workflow, our team finds that **development time has dropped from 38 to 25 working hours per module — a reduction of approximately 34%.**

Course development is a convenient example because its gains are easy to count in terms of time. Other use cases function differently.

> Think about an L&D team using AI to analyze a training request. They discover that employees aren't struggling because they lack skills; they simply don't have the right tools to do their jobs.
>
> Now, avoiding an unnecessary course could be far more valuable than cutting its development time in half. Of course, if you're going to claim financial savings, you need evidence that the course would actually have been developed.
>
> Or take AI-powered simulations. Maybe employees can now practice difficult conversations much more often than they could with a live trainer. That's a great opportunity, but I'd still want to know: are those employees actually handling conversations better at work?
>
> It's so important to look at what AI helps us achieve, beyond how much time it saves.
>
> 
>
> **Anna Poli**
> Senior eLearning Developer at iSpring

That’s why there’s no single KPI for every use case. Define the result each one should produce first, then choose the metrics that capture it.

An improvement after AI arrives doesn’t automatically mean AI caused it

Results might also improve because the program was updated or managers started supporting training more actively. Where possible, compare with a period or group without AI, and note anything else that changed at the same time.

By the end of this step, you’ll have measured changes in time, quality, and outcomes – all ready to be translated into financial terms.

Step 5 Calculate the true cost of AI

Saving time is a good start. But to understand whether AI is worth the investment, you also need to know what it costs to use.

The subscription fee is the most obvious expense. To get the full picture, consider three categories:

COST TYPE	WHAT TO INCLUDE
Technology	AI subscriptions, usage-based fees, API charges, and any additional tools or infrastructure
Implementation	Initial training, workflow setup, source material preparation, and development of reusable template
Ongoing operations	Staff time spent producing, reviewing, refining, and approving AI-assisted work, plus any external services

Not all of these are additional expenses. Designers and SMEs reviewed courses before AI, too. What matters is how the **total cost of the workflow changes.**

Calculate the cost per approved deliverable

Let's return to our L&D team. With iSpring Suite AI, developing a module now takes 25 working hours instead of 38. But those hours belong to different specialists, so we can't simply multiply them by a single hourly rate.

Instead, calculate the cost of each person's work separately, then add the relevant technology and implementation expenses.

Cost per approved module = Labor costs + Technology costs + Implementation costs + External production costs

A few details matter here:

Labor

Multiply the hours worked by each specialist's hourly employment cost, including applicable employer expenses.

Technology	Allocate only the relevant share of AI subscriptions and usage charges. If a tool supports several workflows, don't assign its entire cost to course development.
Implementation	Spread one-time setup and training costs across a reasonable number of modules.
External services	Include expenses such as translation, professional narration, or stock visuals, where applicable.

Use the same approach to calculate the cost of the original workflow. This gives you a comparable **cost per approved module before and after AI**, regardless of how many courses the team produces.

Once you have both figures, you're ready to examine the financial value of the changes and calculate ROI.

Step 6 Quantify the value and calculate ROI

By now, the team knows what a deliverable costs with and without AI, and how much it spends on AI itself. The last step is to bring these numbers together over a fixed period – usually a year:

$$\text{Annual value} = A - B \times N$$

A – cost per deliverable before AI
B – cost per deliverable with AI, excluding AI costs
N – number of deliverables produced with AI per year

This gives you an estimate of the value created through lower production costs. But remember that reduced working hours don't always translate directly into budget savings. If employees use the time saved to take on more work, the benefit is increased capacity rather than lower payroll expenses.

For a financial ROI calculation, use the benefits you can substantiate, such as reduced contractor fees, less overtime, or lower spending on external services.

$$\text{AI ROI} = A \div B \times 100\%$$

A – annual value
B – annual AI costs

Keep AI costs out of the first calculation so they aren't counted twice. Include relevant technology, implementation, and ongoing expenses in the second.

Initial setup costs are typically concentrated in the first year, while subscriptions, usage fees, and ongoing support may continue. Calculate ROI separately for each period to see how the economics change over time.

If some benefits can't be reliably valued in monetary terms, report them separately rather than assigning them an arbitrary dollar amount.

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TRAINING ROI PLAYBOOK 2026



ROI isn't the only form of value

McKinsey's 2026 research found that AI high performers were more likely than other organizations to pursue growth and innovation alongside efficiency.

For L&D, this can mean doing things that were previously out of reach: localizing training for ten markets instead of three, or giving employees regular opportunities to practice difficult conversations when live coaching isn't feasible.

Expanded access doesn't automatically mean better learning outcomes, but it represents a meaningful change in what L&D can deliver.

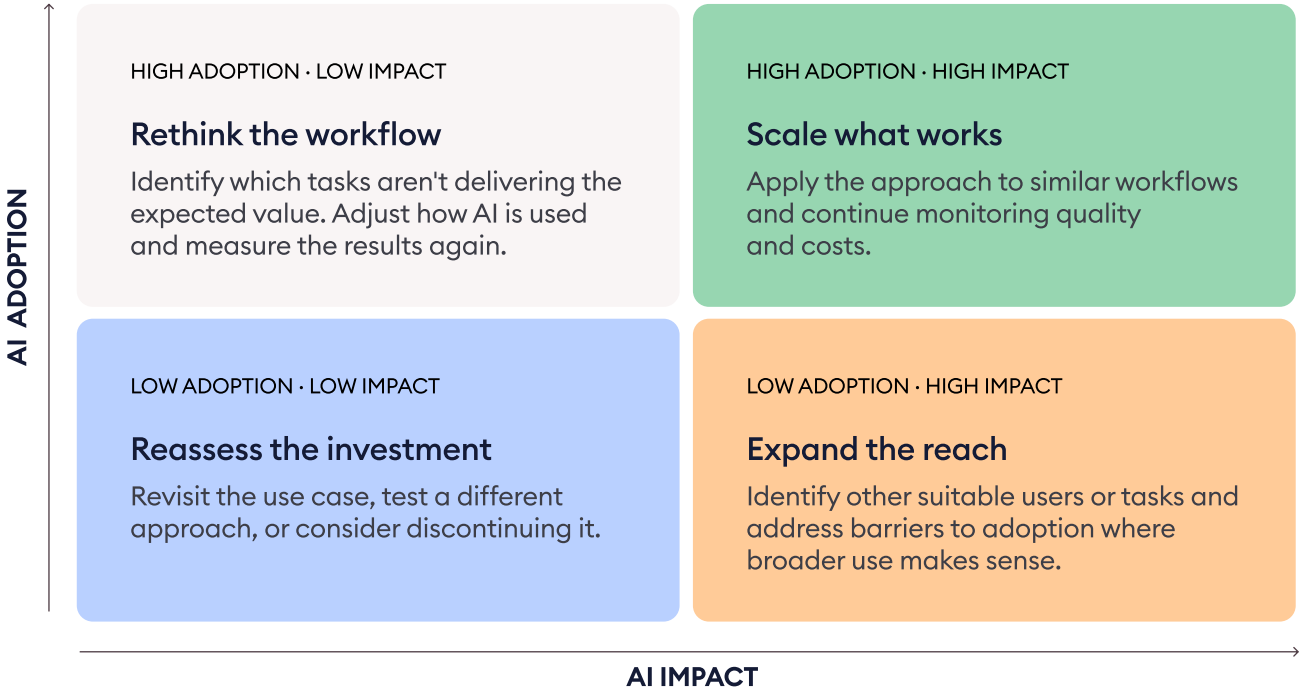
So it's worth looking at the value of AI from three angles:

Efficiency	Do we do the same work faster or at lower cost?
Effectiveness	Have our materials, programs, and decisions become more relevant and more impactful?
Expanded capability	Can we now do something valuable that used to be impossible or too expensive?

What your AI metrics are telling you

By now, you have numbers for adoption, impact, costs, and ROI. Their real use lies in the decisions they support: which AI use cases deserve more investment, which need fixing, and which should be cut.

The most useful insights often come from **looking at several metrics together**.



Read “high” and “low” against the goals of each use case. Some tasks deliver strong results without wide adoption, and broader use isn’t always the right next step.



Treat measurement as a cycle

Tools, prices, and workflows keep changing. A use case that pays off this year may need a fresh look next year, and one that struggled may be worth another try once the tool or process improves.

Looking ahead to 2027: measuring agentic AI

So far, we've focused on AI tools that help L&D professionals complete individual tasks. But what happens when AI starts handling several steps of a workflow on its own?

This is becoming a relevant question as interest in AI agents grows.

In their 2026 AI in L&D report, Donald H. Taylor and Eglė Vinauskaitė note growing interest in AI agents, although many current applications are still closer to customized chatbots. Some L&D teams are already experimenting with agents that coordinate multiple tasks within a workflow.

This raises a new measurement challenge.

Imagine an AI agent that receives a training request, gathers information from internal systems, prepares an initial needs analysis, and sends its recommendations to an L&D specialist for review.

Evaluating such a system would require a broader approach. We would need to look at the entire process: how reliably the agent completes tasks, when human intervention is needed, and what the finished work costs.

The fundamentals of measurement will likely remain the same, but the metrics and methods will need to evolve.

For now, agentic AI is still far from widespread adoption in L&D. How to measure its value is a question we'll likely be exploring in much greater depth over the next few years.

Conclusion

As AI becomes part of everyday L&D work, the question of its value deserves more than an estimate of hours saved or a count of licenses in use.

The metrics we've covered in this guide can help you see which applications are delivering results, where there's room for improvement, and which investments make sense for your team. You don't need to measure everything at once. Start with one use case, establish a baseline, and build on what the evidence tells you.

As you plan for 2027, make AI measurement part of your regular evaluation process. The results will help you allocate resources more confidently, improve workflows, and make a stronger case for future investments.

And if AI-assisted course development is one of the areas you're looking to explore, you can **try iSpring Suite AI for 14 days free** and see how its authoring and assessment tools fit into your team's workflow.

iSpring Suite AI

Keep pace with business needs — iSpring Suite AI

Move course development forward faster while keeping instructional decisions and quality standards in your team's hands.

AI COURSE CREATOR



Turn SME docs into courses

Give AI your source files and a detailed brief to generate the foundation for your learning module.

AI QUIZ GENERATION



Build knowledge checks faster

Select relevant content and generate questions, answer options, and feedback in a few clicks.

AI IMAGE GENERATION



Create targeted visuals

Create custom illustrations that help learners visualize workplace situations and concepts.

AI TRANSLATION



Shorten the path to global rollout

Prepare multilingual course versions without translating content manually.

AI WRITING TOOLS



Make complex topics easier to learn

Adjust the tone and refine wording for different roles, knowledge levels, and learning contexts.

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Generate voiceovers from your scripts and quickly update audio when course content changes.

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