



Your AI adoption problem may not be resistance.

It may be that learning has nowhere on the calendar to happen.

If your people are willing and your tools are licensed, why has adoption stalled?

The answer in this research is not attitude. It is the absence of a standing routine – time set aside to try AI on real work, review what happened, and change how the work gets done.

Across **601 screened working leaders**, those routines were reported least often of all thirty-six behaviors measured – and they are the ones most closely associated with AI adoption.

Willingness may not be the binding constraint. Routine may be.



Organizations can deploy AI quickly. Redesigning the work around it is harder.

Across industries, leaders are licensing tools, training employees, and tracking use. But activity is not the same as changed workflow – and changed workflow is where value begins.

THE DISCOVERY

Leaders made AI safe before they made it routine.

In the Signalead research, openness-related behaviors were common. The scarce behaviors were the ones that create a standing learning system: structured experimentation, capability review, and follow-through after rollout. The gap is not simply whether people are willing to try AI. It is whether leaders consistently signal that learning from it is part of the work.

THE EVIDENCE

86%

of the variance explained by the principal AI adoption and integration model was unique to **AI-era behaviors** (51-item form, n = 202)

3%

was uniquely attributable to the established leadership measures tested

21 of 21

tested models gained explanatory power when AI-era behaviors were added – 19 statistically significant

86% AI-ERA BEHAVIORS **11% SHARED** **3% ESTABLISHED MEASURES**

In the principal AI Adoption and Integration model, 11% of explained variance was shared between AI-era and established measures. Findings are concurrent associations, not causal or predictive effects.

WHAT CHANGED IS NOT LEADERSHIP'S IMPORTANCE. IT IS WHAT LEADERSHIP MUST MAKE POSSIBLE.

BEFORE AI-ENABLED WORK

Leadership directs, develops, and governs people

Adoption can be tracked through activity

General leadership measures remain necessary

IN AI-ENABLED WORK

Leadership also makes experimentation, learning, and work redesign visible and repeatable

Value depends on whether learning changes the workflow

AI-era behavior reveals the variation those measures were not built to detect

WHAT EVERY CHRO SHOULD REMEMBER

Do not treat AI leadership as a literacy curriculum. Start with the workflow or business outcome that must change. Build the leadership signals that make teams experiment, learn, redesign work, and govern use – until those behaviors become routine. Then re-measure the outcome.

The routine is the signal.

Defined before measured. Nothing revised to fit the data.

Development and validation led by Dr. Mustafa Akben, Elon University. The order below is the point: each stage had to clear before the next one ran, and the instrument was fixed before any outcome was tested.

1,191

working leaders across six independent samples, plus 199 doctoral-level expert judges who rated item content

6

independent samples, no overlap between them

108

items, three per behavior – a single form runs approximately 20 minutes

- 1 **The architecture was defined before a single item was written.** Eleven constructs and thirty-six behaviors were specified first, so candidate items were built to fixed definitions rather than sorted into categories afterward.
- 2 **Independent experts judged the content, not us.** 199 doctoral-level expert judges rated 180 candidate items across twelve definition-matching surveys. **174 of 180 – 97%** – met all three content criteria, and every one of the thirty-six behaviors retained at least three strongly supported items.
- 3 **Structure was settled on one set of leaders, then confirmed on different ones.** Item selection ran on 590 screened working leaders. The fixed 108-item battery was then tested on **601 newly recruited leaders**, with each model specified in advance and not revised to fit the data.
- 4 **It was tested against the measures it might duplicate.** All **142** tested comparisons against eleven established leadership and organizational measures met the prespecified discriminant-validity criteria – the behaviors were empirically distinguishable from the measures tested.
- 5 **Outcomes were tested with established measures as the baseline, not as the comparison.** Across **21 models** covering seven multi-item organizational outcomes, the AI-era behaviors added explanatory power in all 21 – 19 of them statistically significant.

17 of 730

Of 730 leadership-and-AI studies reviewed in 2025, seventeen included defined, evaluable competencies for leading in the AI era. The field has named this problem repeatedly and rarely made it measurable. Conceptual frameworks are abundant; instruments built on business leaders, specified at the level of observable behavior and published with psychometric evidence, are not.

How leadership becomes business value

	Occasional signal	Consistent signal
SIGNAL SENT	Encourages AI experimentation.	Builds recurring learning routines, reviews experiments, and updates workflows.
TEAM INTERPRETATION	“AI is optional.”	“Learning from AI is expected here.”
WORK CHANGES	Experiments stay isolated.	Learning becomes embedded in everyday work.
BUSINESS IMPACT	Adoption stalls.	Adoption compounds into measurable value.

When expectations are uncertain, people infer what matters by watching what leaders consistently do – not simply what they say. Those signals shape how teams learn, how work changes, and whether AI creates business value.

The routine is the signal.

INNER	ADAPT	OUTWARD	ADOPT	GROUNDED	SCALE
Mindset & Adaptability		People Practices		Judgment & Governance	
Shapes the leader.		Shapes the team.		Shapes the organization.	
Developmental Stretch		Proactive Transparency		Contextual Calibration	
Adaptive Leadership		Role & Skill Evolution		Ethical Guardrails & Accountability	
Outside-In Learning		Team Learning Experiences		Change Discipline	
		Psychologically Safe Climate			
		Purposeful Communication			

Every exhibit that follows is labeled in this vocabulary. There is **no overall score**, by design: a single index would invite exactly the ranking use the evidence does not support.

What each dimension measures, in the leader's own behavior

Three signals organize eleven dimensions and thirty-six sub-dimensional behaviors. The dimension is the development agenda; the behavior is the level at which a leader can act.

INNER

ADAPT

Mindset & Adaptability

Shapes the leader.

Developmental Stretch

Uses AI in leadership work to stretch current capability, stays open when AI challenges expertise or prior judgment, and improves practice through feedback and evidence.

3 BEHAVIORS

Adaptive Leadership

Takes timely action on AI use under incomplete information, then revises decisions, leadership behavior, and AI tactics when evidence indicates a better path.

3 BEHAVIORS

Outside-In Learning

Looks beyond the team's usual domain for AI signals, perspectives, and practices, then translates those external inputs into team-relevant learning.

3 BEHAVIORS

OUTWARD

ADOPT

People Practices

Shapes the team.

Proactive Transparency

Openly explains why AI is used, how it works, how it informs decisions, and what it implies for the people affected.

3 BEHAVIORS

Role & Skill Evolution

Develops team capabilities, redesigns roles, and coaches critical AI discernment as AI changes the work.

3 BEHAVIORS

Team Learning Experiences

Helps the team systematically turn AI-use experience into shared learning, improved work practices, and applied capability.

5 BEHAVIORS

Psychologically Safe Climate

Creates a climate where members can speak up, experiment, seek help, and raise AI-related concerns without fear.

4 BEHAVIORS

Purposeful Communication

Makes AI transformation intelligible and meaningful while preserving human purpose, role meaning, and continuity as work changes.

2 BEHAVIORS

GROUNDED

SCALE

Judgment & Governance

Shapes the organization.

Contextual Calibration

Interprets, questions, and calibrates AI output against organizational context, situational realities, and future implications before relying on it.

4 BEHAVIORS

Ethical Guardrails & Accountability

Sets clear ethical boundaries for AI use, enforces them under pressure, and accepts personal accountability for AI outcomes.

3 BEHAVIORS

Change Discipline

Structures AI implementation so change is paced to team capacity, coordinated across stakeholders, governed by clear criteria, and sustained through setbacks.

3 BEHAVIORS

Read the profile, not the total. Every leader scores on all thirty-six behaviors. There is no overall index, by design: a single number would invite exactly the ranking use the evidence does not support.

Dimensions are not ranked. Which ones matter most depends on the outcome you are trying to move — adoption, workforce transformation, or responsible use. Page 11 maps each to its behaviors.

Definitions. Abbreviated working definitions of the eleven constructs; the full construct specifications sit in the technical report. **Instrument.** 36 behaviors, three items each, 108 items total.

WHAT IS MISSING

The scarce behaviors all need a calendar. The common ones all fit inside conversations that already exist

Average frequency on a 7-point scale; the bar spans the middle half of leaders (25th to 75th percentile).

REPORTED LEAST OFTEN

All five are standing routines, or decisions made before the evidence is complete

Runs recurring AI experiments on real work

Team Learning Experiences · **Outward**

4.20

Decides before the evidence is complete

Adaptive Leadership · **Inner**

4.47

Reviews whether new AI capability got used

Team Learning Experiences · **Outward**

4.67

Sustains the change after the rollout ends

Change Discipline · **Grounded**

4.82

Sets the checkpoints that govern rollout

Change Discipline · **Grounded**

4.96

REPORTED MOST OFTEN

All five happen inside a conversation or review that already exists

Makes it safe to ask for help with AI

Psychologically Safe Climate · **Outward**

6.04

Shows their own vulnerability first

Psychologically Safe Climate · **Outward**

6.01

Checks whether AI output fits the situation

Contextual Calibration · **Grounded**

5.87

Coaches the team to question AI output

Role & Skill Evolution · **Outward**

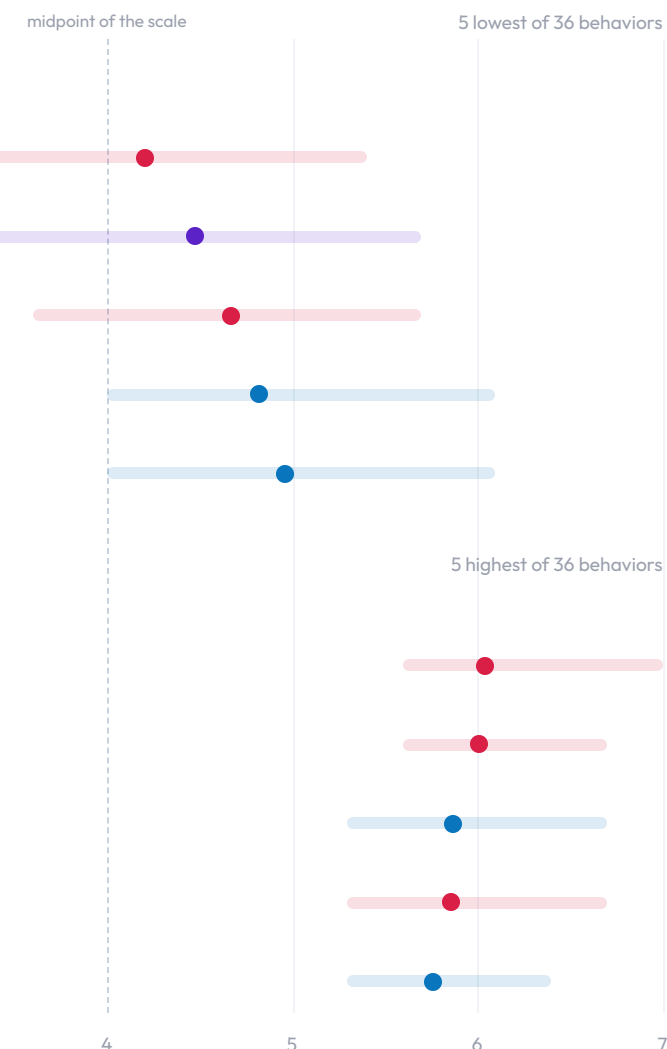
5.86

Judges how far to trust AI, case by case

Contextual Calibration · **Grounded**

5.76

This is not a weak-tail problem. For the least-reported routines, even the 75th-percentile leader barely clears 5, and the bottom quartile falls below the scale midpoint. The routines are missing across the whole distribution of leaders measured. The gap is not attitude or awareness. It is an operating rhythm that few leaders have built yet.



Several of the scarcest behaviors sit in or near the strongest outcome-linkage zone. The five most-reported behaviors cluster near the bottom of that ranking. Development effort aimed at climate and openness largely reinforces what is already in place.

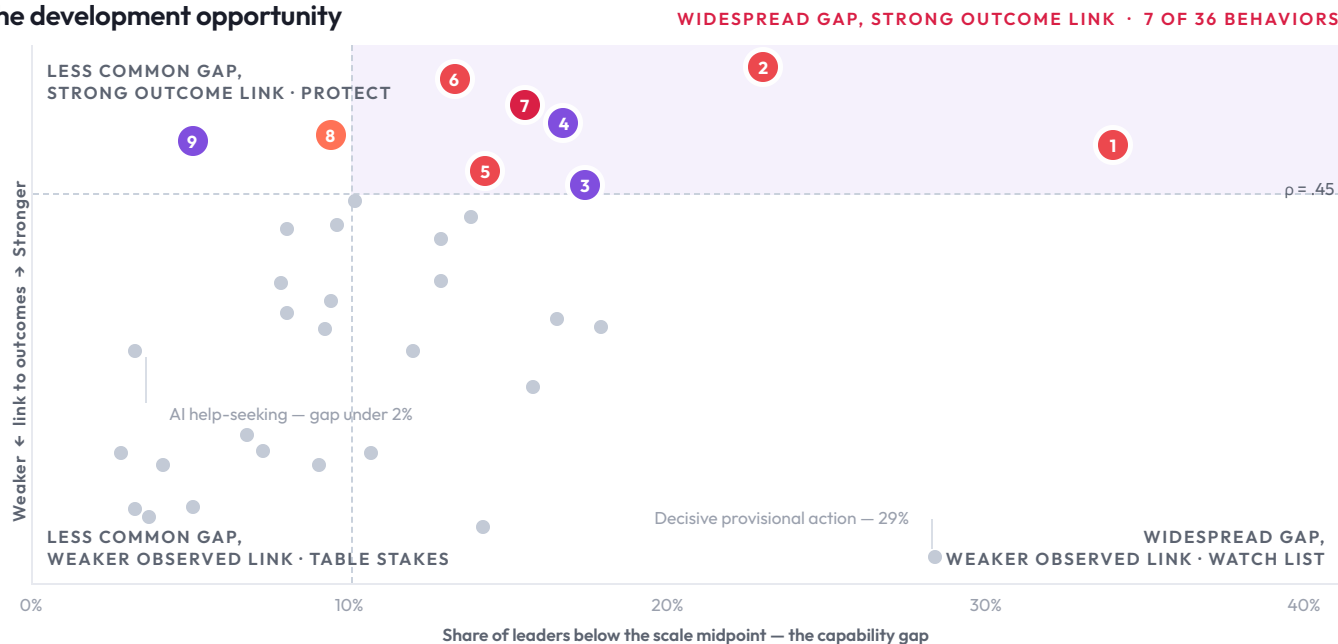
“We’re an AI-first team.” The mandate is announced, the tools are licensed, the training is booked. The leader has not touched the tools. The team reads the working signal – this is not for real work – and adoption quietly dies.

Sample. 601 screened working leaders; n = 198–202 per research form; self-reported. **Note.** Deciding before the evidence is complete is equally scarce but shows no strong outcome link yet, so no claim rests on it. Measure detail on page 14.

Two dimensions hold the behaviors that matter most and show up least

The AI Leadership Priority Matrix · 36 sub-dimension behaviors · n = 601 screened working leaders

The development opportunity



1 Structured AI experimentation — 34%

Team Learning Experiences

2 Capability review — 23%

Team Learning Experiences

3 Developmental stretch orientation

Developmental Stretch

4 Feedback-driven updating

Developmental Stretch

5 Developmental handling of mistakes

Team Learning Experiences

6 Translating learning into practice

Team Learning Experiences

7 Continuous capability development

Role & Skill Evolution

8 Human meaning preservation

Purposeful Communication

9 Expert identity flexibility

Developmental Stretch

Below $p = .45$

No Grounded sub-dimension reached $p = .45$ on this mean-across-criteria measure; Grounded behaviors carry their clearest associations elsewhere — see page 12.

What your leaders already do well is not what tracks AI results.

Openness, help-seeking and careful judgment about when to trust AI are nearly universal — gaps under 2% — and they sit at the bottom of the outcome-linkage ranking. Table stakes.

The gap is two dimensions wide, and both are buildable. The high-priority development zone sits in Team Learning Experiences and Developmental Stretch — routines, not fixed traits. One in three leaders lacks a structured experimentation routine; one in four lacks a capability review practice.

What this matrix does and does not say. This matrix shows where a common gap and an observed outcome association coincide. It prioritizes where to investigate and develop; it does not prove that closing the gap will move the outcome. That is the next study in the field.

Sample. n = 198–202 per research form. **Measure.** Gap = % of leaders scoring below 4 on the 1–7 scale. **Status.** Exploratory Signalead analysis of the validation samples; not part of the published preprint. Measure detail on page 14.

The behavior that tracks AI adoption most closely is the one leaders practice least

Team Learning Experiences carries the strongest observed associations in the battery. It led five of the eight criteria examined in the technical report (see page 14). Its association with AI Adoption and Integration — $r = .66$ — is the highest single association observed in the study. It is also where leaders are weakest: two of the lowest-scoring structural learning behaviors sit inside this dimension, structured AI experimentation at **4.20** and systematic capability review at **4.67** on a seven-point scale.

The pattern is specific rather than general. Leaders who score high do three things. They **structure the experiment**, running trials systematically and reviewing how teams apply AI. They **close the loop**, translating discoveries into standing work practice. And they **make it visible**, modeling learning publicly rather than privately. The emerging role is not “I understand AI and can tell the organization what to do.” It is “I create the routines through which the organization learns what to do.”

TEAM LEARNING EXPERIENCES — ACROSS THREE BEHAVIORAL LEVELS

	Ad hoc	Informal	Embedded
WHAT THE LEADER DOES	AI learning is left to individuals. Experimenting happens when someone finds spare time.	Sharing is encouraged when time permits. The review is occasional and nothing is written down.	A standing time to try things, review what happened, and decide what stays.
WHAT THE TEAM EXPERIENCES	“We are figuring it out alone.” The same problem gets solved three times by three people.	“We sometimes exchange useful tips.” Adoption is strongest around whoever is most enthusiastic.	“We test, learn and adapt together.” New joiners inherit a practice instead of rediscovering it.
WHAT HAPPENS TO THE WORK	Isolated experiments. Nothing reaches the workflow.	Some practices spread informally; others stop where they stop.	Learning changes workflows and becomes standard practice.
WHAT THE EVIDENCE ASSOCIATES	Where pilots stall after the pilot.	Adoption registers but does not compound.	The strongest observed association with AI adoption, team performance and the quality of AI-enabled work.
THE DEVELOPMENT RESPONSE	Install a structured learning loop.	Add ownership, evidence and cadence.	Build cross-team learning and enterprise transfer.

Measure. Levels are illustrative descriptions of the measured behavior — not bands, not cut-scores, and not the empirical tiers on page 9. **Status.** Associations are concurrent: association, not causation.

What most separates higher- from lower-signal leaders is not a trait. It is a team routine

Each bar spans the three most common leader profiles, from low-signal to high-signal tier (Δ = the gap between them) · mean signal, 1–7 scale



The largest separation appears in Team Learning Experiences ($\Delta 2.7$). What most distinguishes the higher-signal tier from the lower-signal tier is whether structured learning runs with the team. By contrast, judgment, ethics and safe climate sit high with short bars – the lower-signal tier holds its own there. Those are the baseline nearly everyone shares, not what separates the tiers.

Higher-signal profiles are relatively consistent across dimensions; lower-signal profiles are more uneven. At the top, scores sit at a similar level across all eleven dimensions. Lower down the picture varies – the same profile that carries a warm, open climate can be missing the learning routines entirely. A lower-signal profile is not low everywhere. It is usually missing one specific, learnable practice.

$p = +.05$

leadership experience vs.
behavior composite – not
significant

Years in leadership were essentially unrelated to the measured behavior profile. A leader of twenty years scores no higher than a leader of three, and the same holds for total work experience, organizational level and age. Whatever builds this capability, tenure is not it – which removes waiting, and promoting differently, from the list of available responses.

Sample. $n = 198\text{--}202$ per research form. **Measure.** Tiers are slices of one continuum, not distinct types. **Status.** Same-source self-report; exploratory Signalead analysis, not part of the published preprint. Method detail on page 14.

WHAT CHANGED, AND WHAT DID NOT

Leadership capability endures. AI-enabled work changes how it must be expressed

For decades, leadership science converged on a stable view of effective leadership, and those capabilities remain essential. Established measures remain valuable. Signalead extends them into the AI-specific behavioral variation they were not designed to assess.

ENDURING CAPABILITY	BEFORE AI-ENABLED WORK	IN AI-ENABLED WORK	WHERE THIS IS MEASURED
Sets direction	Sets a clear destination and the path to reach it.	Defines where judgment stays human and where systems may decide.	● Contextual Calibration
Develops people	Builds capability against a defined role and career path.	Redesigns roles as capability shifts, and builds fluency alongside AI.	● Role & Skill Evolution
Builds trust	Keeps commitments and reasons consistently and openly.	Makes reasoning visible – human and machine – so people can question it.	● Proactive Transparency ● Psychologically Safe Climate
Communicates clearly	Translates strategy into what it means for each team.	Explains what changed, why, and what it means for each person's work.	● Purposeful Communication
Adapts to change	Leads change through defined initiatives and transition plans.	Treats re-learning as continuous, and models it out loud.	● Adaptive Leadership ● Developmental Stretch
Executes with discipline	Sets standards, tracks progress, and delivers to commitment.	Runs disciplined trials, keeps what works, retires what doesn't.	● Change Discipline
Collaborates across boundaries	Bridges functions, geographies and agendas.	Bridges people, data and systems that don't yet share a language.	● Outside-In Learning ● Team Learning Experiences
Acts with integrity	Does the right thing under pressure.	Sets guardrails and owns outcomes no system can be accountable for.	● Ethical Guardrails & Accountability

● Inner Mindset

● Outward Practices

● Grounded Governance

7% → 50%+

For AI adoption and integration, five established leadership measures explained about 7% of the variance between leaders ($R^2 = .071$). Adding the eleven AI-era construct composites took it past 50% ($\Delta R^2 = .436$; total .507).

This is the empirical form of the argument above. Because both sets of measures were collected the same way, shared method does not favor one over the other, and a marker-variable check changed none of the 142 discriminant classifications; the evidence remains same-source and concurrent. Tested head to head, the AI-era behaviors added explanatory power in **21 of 21 models**, 19 of them statistically significant.



This is not a criticism of established instruments. They do what they were built to do and should stay in your stack for selection and succession. It is an argument that they were never built for this question.

Sample. 51-item research form, n = 202. Status. Same-source self-report, concurrent design – association, not treatment effect. Model detail on page 14.

Read a profile, not a score — then match the behavior to the outcome you are already funding

STEP 1

Choose the outcome

Adoption, workforce transformation, or responsible use.

STEP 2

Diagnose the behavior

Identify the leadership routine most relevant to that outcome.

STEP 3

Install and re-measure

Develop one observable practice in live work and test movement over time.

There is no overall number, by design

The useful question is not how high a leader scores but **which behavior to develop next**. Then: is the gap a personal habit or a missing organizational routine? Naming which of those two you are looking at is the most useful thing a profile does. Completing a Signal Profile™ takes approximately 20 minutes.

Different priorities call for different behaviors

There is no single best AI leader. What to develop depends on what you are trying to move.

	Adoption and team performance	Team Learning Experiences · Adaptive Leadership
	Workforce transformation	Role & Skill Evolution · Change Discipline
	Responsible and defensible use	Ethical Guardrails & Accountability · Contextual Calibration

WHAT IT IS FOR — AND WHAT IT IS NOT

The Signal Profile™ reads at two levels. For the individual leader it is a development tool: a behavioral profile and a clear first move. For the organization, aggregated results become a diagnostic. A Team & Organization Signal Report shows how many leaders report each behavior, where the scarce routines are missing, and which gaps stand between your AI investment and scaled value. **The organization gets a decision; the leader gets a development path.**

What it is not is a selection instrument. Individual results are not for hiring, promotion or pay decisions, and the evidence does not support that use. We would rather say so here than be asked.

Diagnose the system. Develop the leader. Never grade the person.

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR NEXT AI REVIEW

Ask these of your own leadership population before anyone shows you an instrument.

1 Can our leaders convert experimentation into changed work?

Not “are teams trying AI” or “are licenses being used” — but are lessons reviewed, workflows changed, successful practices codified, weak uses stopped?

2 Are we deliberately building AI capability—or hoping it spreads?

AI capability rarely spreads by itself. Do leaders actively redesign roles, build new skills, and prepare people for work that is changing?

3 Can our leaders redesign work—and human capability—as AI changes both?

Not whether employees receive AI training, but whether leaders can judge which expertise gains value, which tasks shift, and where human judgment stays essential.

4 Can our leaders make confident decisions without becoming overconfident in AI?

Know when to rely on AI, when to question it, and when human judgment should make the final call.

5 Are our leadership systems measuring what AI-enabled work now requires?

Assessments designed around general leadership may not reveal AI-specific transparency, collective AI learning, capability redesign, or absorptive pacing.

Sample. Behaviors and dimensions as measured in the Signalead validation program. **Status.** Signal Profile™ is built on the validated framework and is a development and diagnostic instrument; the evidence does not support use in selection, promotion or pay decisions.

What is established — and what the evidence does not support

1,191

working leaders across six independent samples, plus 199 doctoral-level expert judges — not an additional leader sample

6

independent samples, no overlap

174 of 180

candidate items drew strong expert support

Established

All 36 behaviors cleared conventional reliability standards. All 142 tested comparisons met the prespecified discriminant-validity criteria on independent confirmation samples — the behaviors were empirically distinguishable from the established comparison measures tested. Under a statistical marker for common-method bias, none of the 142 classifications changed. Against established leadership measures the AI-era behaviors added explanatory power in 21 of 21 models, 19 significantly.

The six samples above cover content validity, dimensionality and reliability, convergent and discriminant validity, and concurrent criterion validity. The research is published as a preprint (arXiv:2609.17965); the full documentation stands behind every figure in this briefing.

What is not established

Causal and predictive claims stay off the table until the sequence is observed. The evidence is self-report, not multi-source, and the instrument has not yet been tested for measurement equivalence across groups.

WHAT THE EVIDENCE DOES — AND DOES NOT — SUPPORT

Three findings need reading more carefully than a headline allows, and we publish them anyway. **Contextual Calibration** led its form for customer and stakeholder response capability ($r = .43$); its four behaviors relate to criteria in differing directions, so we read them separately rather than as one score. **Ethical Guardrails & Accountability** led its form for AI security and risk management ($r = .51$), and ethical AI boundary setting was the strongest single contributor to formal AI policies. **Decision speed** was the criterion no measure explained well.

Psychometric caveats, stated separately. These are properties of the instrument, not outcome findings: one of the three research forms fit less cleanly, six of 180 candidate items drew only partial expert support, and one retained scale is the weakest of the set.

WHAT WAS TESTED, IN THE ORDER IT WAS TESTED



Content validity

199 doctoral-level expert judges.
174 of 180 candidate items drew strong support.



Structure and reliability

All 36 behaviors cleared conventional reliability standards across three research forms.



Convergent and discriminant validity

Convergent relationships held against eleven established measures; all 142 discriminant comparisons passed on independent confirmation samples, and none changed under a common-method marker.



Concurrent criterion validity

Explanatory power added in 21 of 21 models against established leadership measures, 19 significantly.

Sample. Per-exhibit n values are subsets of the 601-leader reference sample — never separate studies, never pooled across forms. Full sample notes on page 14.

Your leaders are not missing a quality. They are missing an occasion

Nothing on the calendar asks for the scarce behaviors, and everything on the calendar accommodates the common ones. That is why leaders differ most on exactly the behaviors fewest of them perform.

Those behaviors are developable: they are habits waiting for a trigger, not traits waiting for a personality change. Signalead™ measures the behaviors that tell you which change to make first. Then it builds the occasion into the calendar and re-measures to show whether it moved.

Request a 30-minute Executive Research Briefing

Bring one leadership population and one outcome you are already funding. In thirty minutes we walk through the findings, explore where they may apply to you, and outline how that population could be assessed – and, if it is useful, leave you a short written summary you can put in front of whoever owns the AI transformation budget. No procurement process required to find out whether this is relevant to you.

info@signalead.ai | calendly.com/signalead/30min



Leslie Coyne, Founder, Signalead™

Who built this, and what the briefing is drawn from



Leslie Coyne

Founder & Principal Advisor, Signalead™

Leslie has spent more than two decades helping organizations identify, assess, and develop leadership capability across manufacturing, healthcare, and technology organizations. Through executive assessment, leadership development, and talent strategy, one question became increasingly difficult to answer: which leadership behaviors actually help organizations turn AI investment into measurable business value? Signalead was created to answer that question through measurement, evidence, and development.



Dr. Mustafa Akben

Assistant Professor of Management and Director of Artificial Intelligence Integration at Elon University

Dr. Akben's research focuses on leadership, organizational behavior, and psychometric measurement. He led the research design, validation strategy, and psychometric analyses reported in this briefing. His work centers on developing scientifically rigorous approaches to measuring complex leadership constructs.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This briefing summarizes the initial validation of the AI Leadership Battery on which the Signalead™ Signal Profile™ is built: 199 doctoral-level expert judges and 1,191 working leaders across six independent samples. It examined concurrent relationships between AI-era leadership behaviors, established measures, and organizational outcomes. Published as a research preprint: Akben & Coyne (2026), arXiv:2609.17965 · doi.org/10.48550/arXiv.2609.17965.

METHODS AND SAMPLES

Samples. The program total of 1,191 working leaders spans six independent samples, recruited through an online research panel. Behavioral distributions and associations come from the 601-leader screened reference sample, which splits across three research forms of roughly two hundred leaders each ($n = 198 / 202 / 201$). Per-exhibit n values are subsets of that 601 — never separate studies, never pooled across forms.

Who answered. Working leaders with at least one direct report: median 6–9 years in a leadership role, median 5–7 direct reports, 68–80% at manager level or above, 36–48% in organizations of 1,000 employees or more.

Outcomes. Seven multi-item scales, used in the 21 regression models: AI adoption and integration · AI-enabled team performance · AI-enabled work experience · AI security and risk management · organizational growth · decision speed · customer and stakeholder responsiveness. An eighth indicator, team AI-use frequency, is a single item used in correlations only. Three organizational AI-readiness criteria — AI maturity, formal AI policies, formal AI training — are reported separately.

Instrument. Canonical item bank of 108 items, three per sub-dimension; a single research form runs approximately 20 minutes.

MEASURES AND SOURCES

Page 4. Dot = average; bar = the middle half of leaders (25th to 75th percentile) on a 7-point frequency scale, axis truncated at 3.0. **Page 5.** Numbered markers are the nine sub-dimensions with mean $\rho > .45$, colored by dimension; plotted values are mean associations across criteria; quadrant cuts are presentational and markers are nudged to avoid overplot. Within-form Spearman correlations. **Page 7.** k-means ($k = 3$) tiers computed within research form (tier shares 22–44 / 43–57 / 12–21%); experience comparison on the pooled screened sample.

Page 8. Hierarchical OLS with F-change tests over a baseline of five established leadership, team and motivational measures. Baseline $R^2 = .071$; construct-composite $\Delta R^2 = .436$; sub-dimension-block $\Delta R^2 = .522$. The decomposition covers AI adoption and integration; unique shares for other criteria run lower. Across the 21 continuous models the two exceptions to significance were both on decision speed.

Sources. Signaling: Spence, M. (1973). Job Market Signaling. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87(3), 355–374. Stanford AI Index, 2026. MIT Project NANDA, *State of AI in Business*, 2025. IBM Institute for Business Value, *2026 CEO Study: 5 plays for AI-first transformation* ($N = 2,000$ CEOs, 33 geographies, 21 industries, fielded February–April 2026 with Oxford Economics). Bock & von der Oelsnitz (2025), *Strategy & Leadership* 53(3), structured review.

Attribution. Individual attribution only. Dr. Akben's university affiliation identifies him, and does not denote institutional sponsorship, endorsement, or partnership by Elon University. **Status.** Concurrent, same-source self-report; longitudinal and observer studies pending.

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What is not in this document

The behavior descriptions in this briefing characterize what is measured. They are not the survey items. The item bank, scoring procedures, and reference distributions are confidential, are not licensed by this document, and may not be administered or adapted without written permission from Signalead LLC.

LIMITS OF THE FINDINGS

Findings describe concurrent associations in the samples noted on each page. Nothing here is a causal or predictive claim, and nothing here supports use in hiring, promotion, or pay decisions.

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Instrument. Signal Profile™ is built on the validated framework; validation led by Dr. Mustafa Akben, Elon University. **Status.** Concurrent, same-source self-report; longitudinal and observer studies pending.