

Tips for Managers

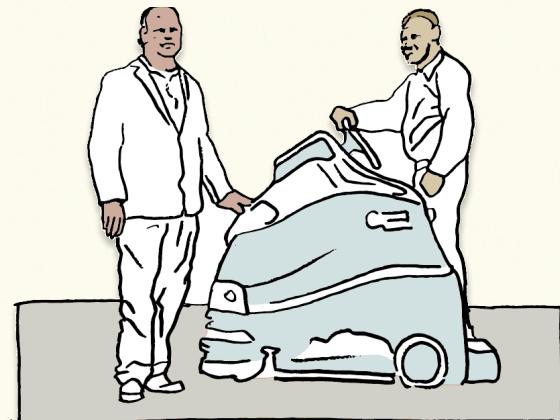
Below are a set of worker-centered tools for managers to develop best practices for the implementation and maintenance of AI-powered technologies. Each activity is meant to build toward an actionable foundation that an organization can adopt and adapt to their own needs.

- In order for these activities to be successful, organizations should orient themselves to be: worker-centered, transparent, collaborative, responsive and responsible.

Activity #1: Approach to Training

Background / Research Insight:

Across essential industries—service, hospitality, retail—we found that training was a largely overlooked area in the implementation and maintenance of AI-powered technologies. If training did happen, it was largely the tech manufacturers who delivered it at the time of deployment. However, issues often appeared over time as the technology was incorporated into day-to-day operations (rather than when it was initially introduced). Additionally, training often omitted instructions on how to address the types of malfunctions that frontline staff would likely experience within the specific material or social context of their work environments (e.g., unpredictable performance in high traffic zones). The effort staff made to diagnose and resolve malfunctions was often viewed as “extra work” that they felt interfered with their day-to-day demands.



Scaffolding / Concept:

We recommend both managerial staff at the organization and field engineers with the technology company have a holistic approach to training that takes into account three key aspects that shape the implementation and maintenance of AI-powered technologies:

- 1) organizational management
- 2) day-to-day operations
- 3) on-the-ground action

Each of these points of interaction address different aspects of technologies' performance, and the distinct set of responsibilities needed for a successful roll-out process.

Primary Objectives:

Develop a training strategy that embeds understanding of interconnectedness and collaboration, taking into account different types of potential interaction with the technology and existing human relationships that make up an organization.

Key Takeaways:

A well-established training program that equips staff members according to their engagement with the technology and existing day-to-day routines.

Activity #2: Coordinating Logistics for Training

Background / Research Insight:

When training was conducted, we found that essential workers were expected to stay after-hours as it was typically scheduled at the convenience of the field engineer or managerial staff. Additionally, training was often delivered in the style of a tech demonstration, rather than a step-by-step walkthrough of how to use and maintain the devices. Frontline workers reported that the training did not equip them to adequately manage the robots or, troubleshooting when unanticipated errors occurred.

Scaffolding / Concept:

We recommend centering three priorities when determining the logistics for training sessions, each meant to foreground the importance of collaboration to successfully implement and maintaining technologies into the workplace:

- 1) gauge frontline staff's level of expertise in technological devices to identify the point of departure for the training;
- 2) center the learning styles of frontline staff when designing the training;
- 3) work with the trainer to customize the training and topics;
- 4) schedule within working hours, prioritizing the schedules of staff who work directly with the technology on a day-to-day basis. .



Primary Objectives:

Properly train staff who work directly with the technology by prioritizing their schedules, learning styles, and understanding of technology. Decrease unnecessary burdens of additional work or after-hours activities.

Key Takeaways:

An operations strategy that prepares staff for unexpected malfunctions and events will strengthen morale through a practice that aims to preserve the dignity and wellbeing of workers.

Activity #3: Track Progress

Background / Research Insight:

Our qualitative interviews and observations revealed a disconnect between management's understanding of engaging with the new technologies and the day-to-day realities of this interaction for frontline staff. Essential workers reported experiencing an accumulation of work due to the need to deviate from their routine to remedy or fix regular malfunctions. As a result, workers noted increased stress as they struggled to fit the additional task of overseeing the new technology into their daily routines.

Scaffolding / Concept:

We recommend formalizing check-ins and accountability measures between managerial staff and essential workers to identify areas where directives, work allocation, and scope of work are not aligned. This includes an active feedback loop that allows workers to voice their concerns and demands of the workplace, in addition to a partnership with workers' advocacy groups at the local, regional, and national levels.

Primary Objectives:

An accountability strategy that addresses managerial oversight to balance asymmetrical power relations and allows workers to voice concerns and recommendations for improved procedures without fear of retribution.

Key Takeaways:

Identify technology malfunctions that are creating additional work for the essential workers, and balance daily or weekly assignments so that essential workers' initial scope of work remains the same.

Activity #4: Feedback

Background / Research Insight:

From our participatory design workshops, essential workers expressed a sense of relief as they voiced their concerns and identified inconsistencies between administrative directives and their day-to-day realities, in addition to ways to potentially address these widening gaps.

Scaffolding / Concept:

We recommend creating formalized feedback and listening sessions that incorporate the principles of:

- 1) non-hierarchical collaboration,
- 2) active participation,
- 3) institutional transparency, and
- 4) anonymity of the worker.

We recommend having a third party to facilitate this process. Meetings may take place in a room separate from common areas in a location and at a time convenient for all parties during working hours. A third party will facilitate the intake of anonymized feedback and share essential workers' insights on a regular basis without indication of the workers' identity.

We recommend having these meetings once every quarter, as well as at the request of frontline workers.



Primary Objectives:

Develop a co-design strategy and set of accountability measures that heighten efficiency and morale by creating a space for workers to receive updates and give feedback continuously.

Key Takeaways:

Keeping organizational administrators and managerial staff accountable. Frontline workers have the opportunity to voice their concerns via a process that actively seeks to translate their feedback into actionable steps for the institution.

Activity #5: Communication Across All Parties

Background / Research Insight:

From our observations, we found that the roll-out and maintenance process involved multiple actors who didn't have formalized strategies for communicating with one another. Essential workers, especially, reported finding themselves continually guessing next steps as they managed the daily care and periodic repair of the devices. This resulted in workers associating the new technology with negative feelings and a sense of dismissal.

Scaffolding / Concept:

We recommend formalizing a communication schedule across all actors, with particular focus on the relationship between essential workers and field engineers. This would involve reserving specific days and times to have regular check-ins and/or a formalized channel to communicate the need for repairs. In addition, we also recommend coordinating with the tech vendor to work with a reliable, locally owned maintenance company for smaller scale repairs and daily maintenance, as such firms are more likely to have existing rapport with staff and address issues in a timely manner.

Primary Objectives:

A communication and operations strategy that formalizes ways to spotlight issues across rank and third-party local maintenance and repair companies.

Key Takeaways:

Establish regular lines of communication around repair and maintenance across the organization, as well as with the tech vendor and local third party repair company

