

ILX GROUP UNVEILS NEW RESEARCH REPORT FOR 2026

Realising the value of AI in IT and project delivery: The skills, governance and human judgement defining sustainable business transformation in 2026

Four priorities sit at the heart of business development this year: increasing efficiency (50%), maintaining quality (40%), accelerating digital transformation (40%), and improving data management and security (37%).

In its latest research report, training provider ILX Group surveyed 600 IT and project leaders in UK organisations with 500+ employees to understand their top priorities for the year, the skills most in-demand, and how they are addressing challenges in areas including cyber security, data management and artificial intelligence.

Business transformation challenges

Leaders are facing pressures from economic uncertainty (64%), talent shortages in specialist roles (57%), and the need to manage costs while continuing to innovate (56%).

As the number one issue this year, economic uncertainty is weighing heavily on business performance and business growth. For business transformation, the impact is significant. When conditions are uncertain, organisations often become more cautious.

The research also highlights a clear tension: the need to stay efficient in the short term while continuing to invest in long-term performance (50%). Transformation is no longer a one-off initiative for most companies; it is now an ongoing requirement. This makes that balance harder to maintain.

High priority technical, digital and soft skills

Cyber security (80%), quality assurance (80%), data analysis (80%), artificial intelligence (77%), and project, programme and portfolio management (75%) are the five technical skills prioritised by businesses this year.

These areas reflect the wider pressures shaping business transformation in 2026, with organisations focusing on the technical capabilities most closely linked to resilience, quality, better decision-making, faster change and long-term competitiveness.

Organisations also recognise that soft skills cannot be separated from technical capability, as they are vital for ensuring technology is used ethically and efficiently. As a result, the priority human skills this year are closely aligned with this need. Analytical thinking tops the list (39%), followed by problem solving (37%), critical thinking (36%) and creative thinking (33%).

The impact of AI... on everything

AI is now influencing every part of business transformation. It is raising expectations around efficiency, decision-making and productivity, while also increasing the pressure on organisations to adapt operating models faster.

As such, 79% of businesses are giving teams access to more generative AI tools, and employees are using GenAI freely within 42% of teams. However, governance is lagging, with 65% citing a lack of regulation as a concern and 74% needing more guidance on legislation and compliance.

In addition to governance concerns, a clear link is emerging between AI, cyber security and technical debt. Businesses may move faster with AI, but without modern, maintainable systems underneath, every update or control change becomes harder to deliver safely.

The question is no longer whether AI matters. It is whether your organisation has the data, systems, controls and capability to use it with confidence.

Delivering value through learning and development

Russell Kenrick, Managing Director of ILX Group, comments: “As the report demonstrates, businesses need more than technology investment alone to deliver on strategic priorities. Capability gaps remain a key constraint, underscoring the value L&D can add.

“By partnering with ILX, senior leaders can equip their teams to adapt faster, work more efficiently with new technology, and apply the judgement that sustainable business transformation relies on.”

The full research report is available to download [here](#). To learn more about ILX Group and its selection of available training courses, visit www.ilxgroup.com.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

For more information about ILX Group or the ‘Realising the value of AI in IT and project delivery’ report, please contact Ettie Long at ettie.long@ilxgroup.com.

About ILX Group

ILX has been a trusted learning and development partner for over 35 years, supporting more than 500,000 people across 5,000 organisations in over 120 countries. We specialise in delivering development programmes and consulting solutions across project, programme and portfolio management, agile, change management, service management, cyber security, and a wider portfolio of technical and soft skills.

As part of a group of specialist learning businesses, ILX also provides access to expert-led software testing, business analysis, AI, coding, programming, operating systems, databases

and web development courses through our sister companies TSG Training and StayAhead Training.

Together, we help individuals and organisations build capability, improve performance and adapt to today's fast paced business environment.