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Strategic Leadership and the Scaling of Artificial Intelligence within Organisations: From Experimentation to Embedded Practice

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Abstract

The implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) has rapidly increased throughout organisations. Nevertheless, majority of organisations continue to be limited to experimental and preliminary stages and grappling with scaling across the organisation (Haefner, Parida, Gassmann & Wincent, 2023; Mecca, 2025). The significance of leadership in empowering the shift from pilots to expanded deployment continues to be under-investigated in management research. The study investigates the manner in which leadership practices effect the advancement of an organisation from AI piloting to expanded implementation. Qualitative document analysis was employed for the study, utilising data obtained solely from the global State of AI in 2025 report consisting of 1993 respondents throughout organisations in 105 countries. Comparative and textual data which is applicable were extracted systematically and thematically analysed to determine leadership regularities distinguishing entities which have scaled AI effectively among the ones that are in the stages of early adoption. The results of the study indicate four interconnected leadership themes being leadership-driven workflow redesign, leadership role modelling, strategic ambition beyond efficiency gains, and senior leadership accountability. Effectively scaling AI by an organisation is manifested through coordinated organisational change efforts, visible leadership engagement, transformational strategic orientations, and strong executive ownership. The results provide practical insights for leaders in organisations aiming to enhance AI strategies from piloting to long-term organisational outcome. Future studies might extend this study through integrating primary empirical data to investigate in greater depth AI scaling that is leadership-driven throughout national and organisational contexts.

Keywords: leadership; digital transformation; organisational change; AI adoption; AI scaling