


**AEC Pulse Leadership Webinar Session**

# What Your Workforce Wants: Key AEC Talent Trends from the Future of Work Report

April 23, 2026

Presented by:  
Anthony Fasano, P.E., AEC PM  
Fiona Johann, PMP, AEC PM



1



***“It's not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change”***

**- Charles Darwin**



Engineering Management Institute

2

## Introduction

- B.S. & M.S. in Civil Engineering
- Licensed Professional Engineer
- Found success at a reputable firm at a very young age
- Attended iPEC - the top-ranked executive coaching school in the world
- Wrote the best-selling book ***Engineer Your Own Success*** and started providing career coaching and speaking services to engineers



**Anthony Fasano, PE,  
AEC PM, F ASCE**

Founder, Engineer,  
Lead Trainer and Coach



Engineering Management Institute

3

## Introduction

- PMP-certified Project Manager with a background in higher education leadership
- Partners with AEC professionals to build strong project management and leadership skills
- Experienced in strategic initiatives, program development, and stakeholder engagement
- Focused on helping engineers become confident, effective project leaders



**Fiona Johann, PMP,  
AEC PM**

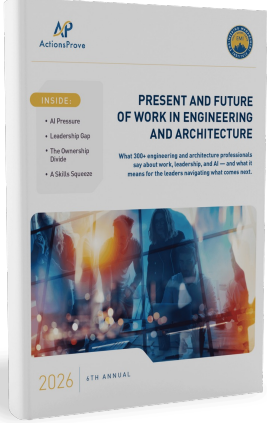
Manager, Strategic  
Marketing & Engagement



Engineering Management Institute

4

## The Problem



The AEC Talent Model Is Being Stress-Tested

- Project complexity is rising
- AI is accelerating change
- Roles are expanding
- Burnout and retention pressure persist

Engineering Management Institute

5

## Why This Matters to HR Leaders

HR and talent leaders are being asked to:

- Develop stronger pipelines
- Support AI and digital adoption
- Improve retention in critical roles
- Do more with limited time and budget

*We wanted to understand what professionals are actually experiencing.*

Engineering Management Institute

6

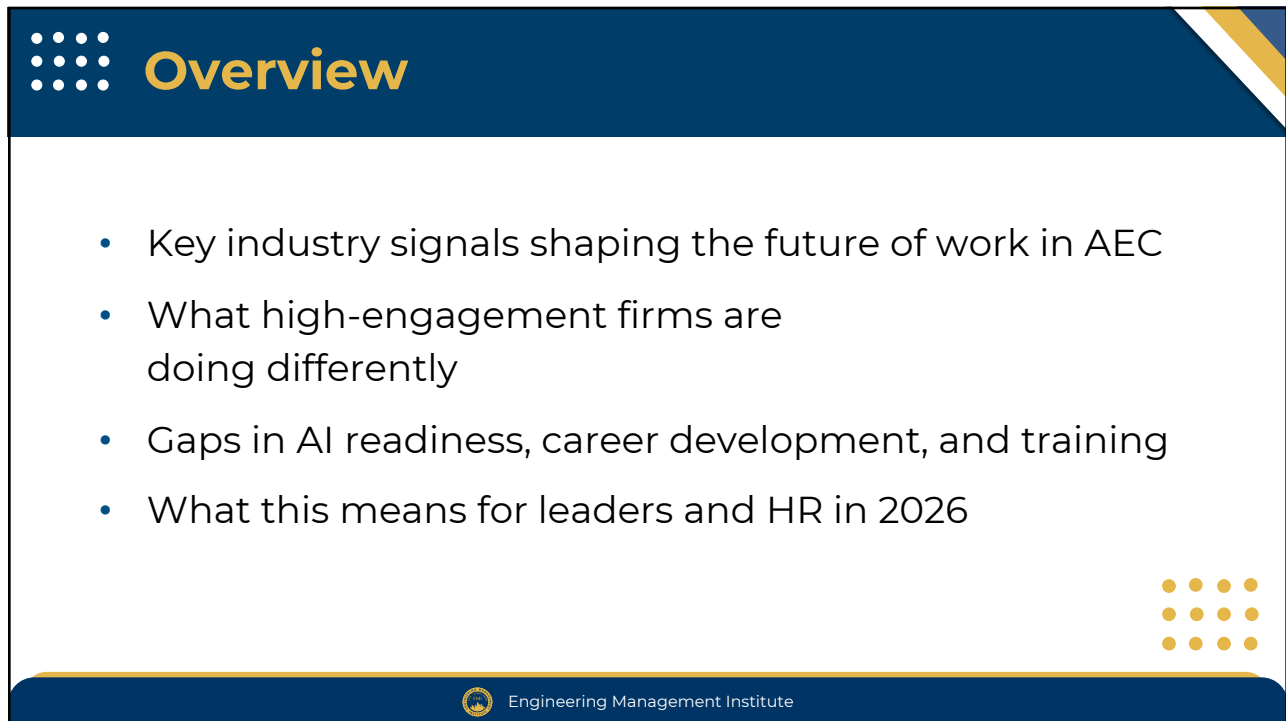


## About The Research

- 6th annual study
- 300+ AEC professionals
- Multiple roles and career stages
- Focus areas: AI, career paths, training, leadership


 Engineering Management Institute

7



## Overview

- Key industry signals shaping the future of work in AEC
- What high-engagement firms are doing differently
- Gaps in AI readiness, career development, and training
- What this means for leaders and HR in 2026

 Engineering Management Institute

8




**Signal #1**

# AI Is Moving Faster Than Workforce Readiness

Engineering Management Institute

9

## AI Is Widespread but Not Yet Embedded



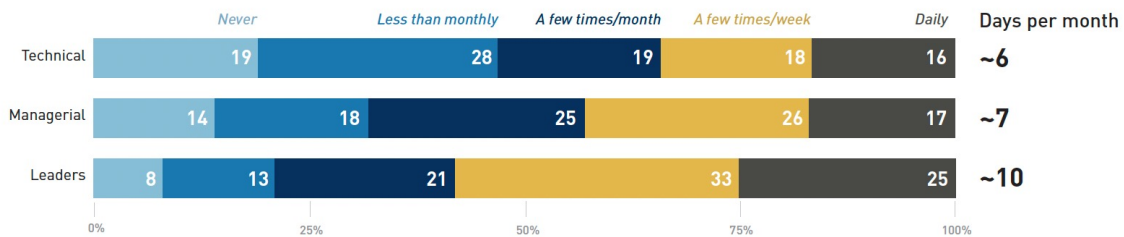
- 88%** 88% say they use AI tools at work
- 21%** Only 21% use AI daily

Engineering Management Institute

10

## Project Managers Are Not Yet Heavy AI Users

Figure 1 AI USE RISES SHARPLY WITH SENIORITY



Q: How often do you use AI tools for your work at your current firm? Notes: Estimated days/month based on frequency band midpoints. [Shown as %.]

ActionsProve & EMI | 2026

- Only 8% of PMs regularly use AI for PM tasks
- Most use cases are administrative (notes, emails)



Engineering Management Institute

11

## Policies and Guardrails Are Still Emerging

- **2 in 3** say their employer offers AI tools
- Only **34%** report clear AI guidelines
- **40%** know colleagues using public AI tools with sensitive info

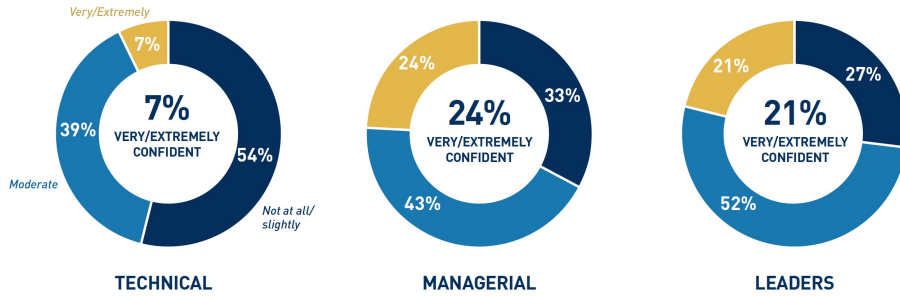


Engineering Management Institute

12

# Confidence in AI Readiness Is Low

Figure 2 CONFIDENCE IN FIRM'S AI READINESS



- Only 7% of technical staff are confident in their firm's AI readiness
- Leaders report higher confidence

*Perception gaps are emerging inside firms.*


# Frequency Matters

Not a single respondent who uses AI less than daily reports transformational productivity gains.

Among daily users:


**53%** report high or transformational impact






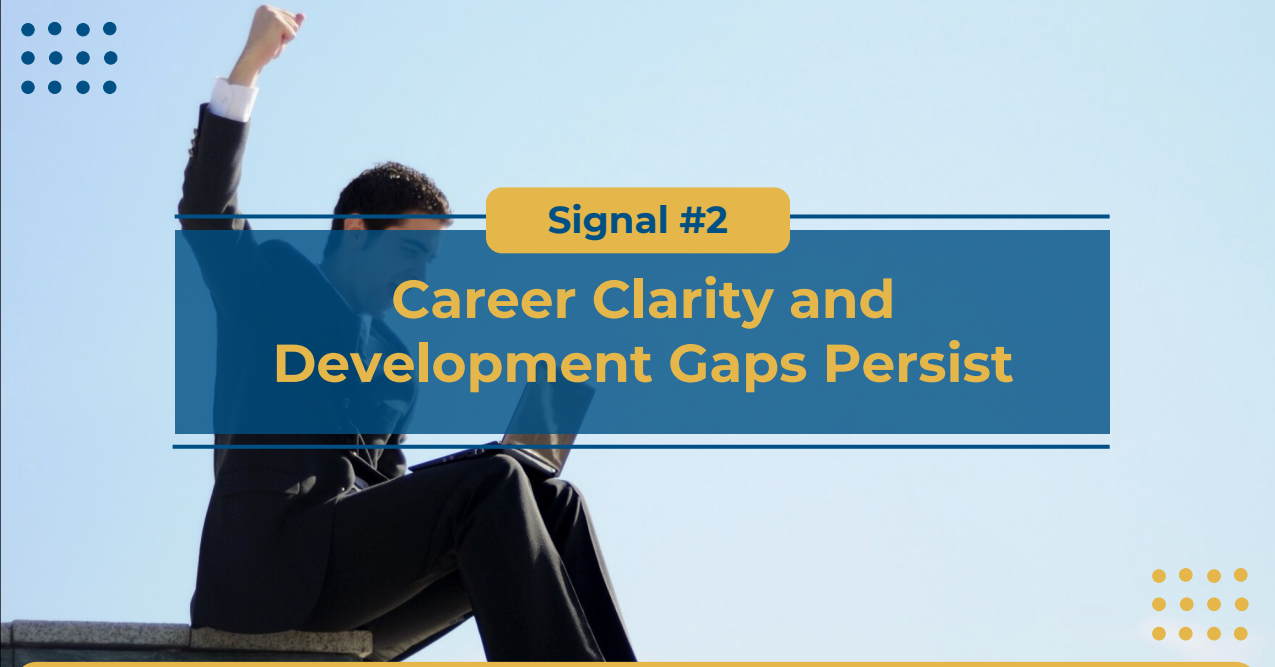

**Signal #1** Summary

- AI Is Widespread but Not Yet Embedded
- Project Managers Are Not Yet Heavy AI Users
- Policies and Guardrails Are Still Emerging
- Confidence in AI Readiness Is Low
- Frequency Matters




 Engineering Management Institute


15



**Signal #2**

**Career Clarity and Development Gaps Persist**



 Engineering Management Institute

16

## Most Professionals Feel Valued

**84% feel valued** ◆

**86% say employers support career development** ◆

◆◆◆◆◆

Engineering Management Institute

17

## Career Path Clarity Is Uneven

39%

- Only 39% of technical professionals say career paths are clear

69%

- 69% of leaders say the same

96%

- 96% want clearer definitions from leadership

◆◆◆◆◆

Engineering Management Institute

18

## Voice of the Profession

*"We need better role definitions at my firm...  
It feels like favoritism has the biggest part to play  
in promotions."*



Engineering Management Institute

19

## Training Effectiveness Is a Concern

**31%**

overall  
workforce

**24%**

technical  
staff

- Only 31% say company training is very effective
- Technical staff: just 24%

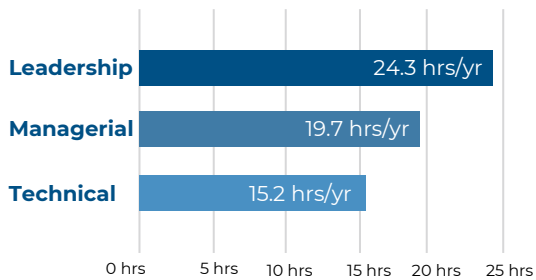


Engineering Management Institute

20

## Training Investment Skews Towards Senior Leaders

*Leaders receive 60% more formal training time than technical staff*



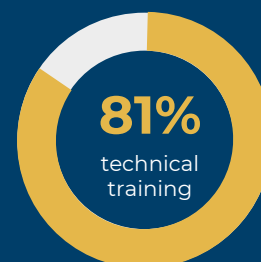
Engineering Management Institute

21

## Professionals Want Continuous Development

- **81%** say technical training should occur at least quarterly
- **73%** say the same for soft skills

*Professionals are not asking for one annual workshop.*



Engineering Management Institute

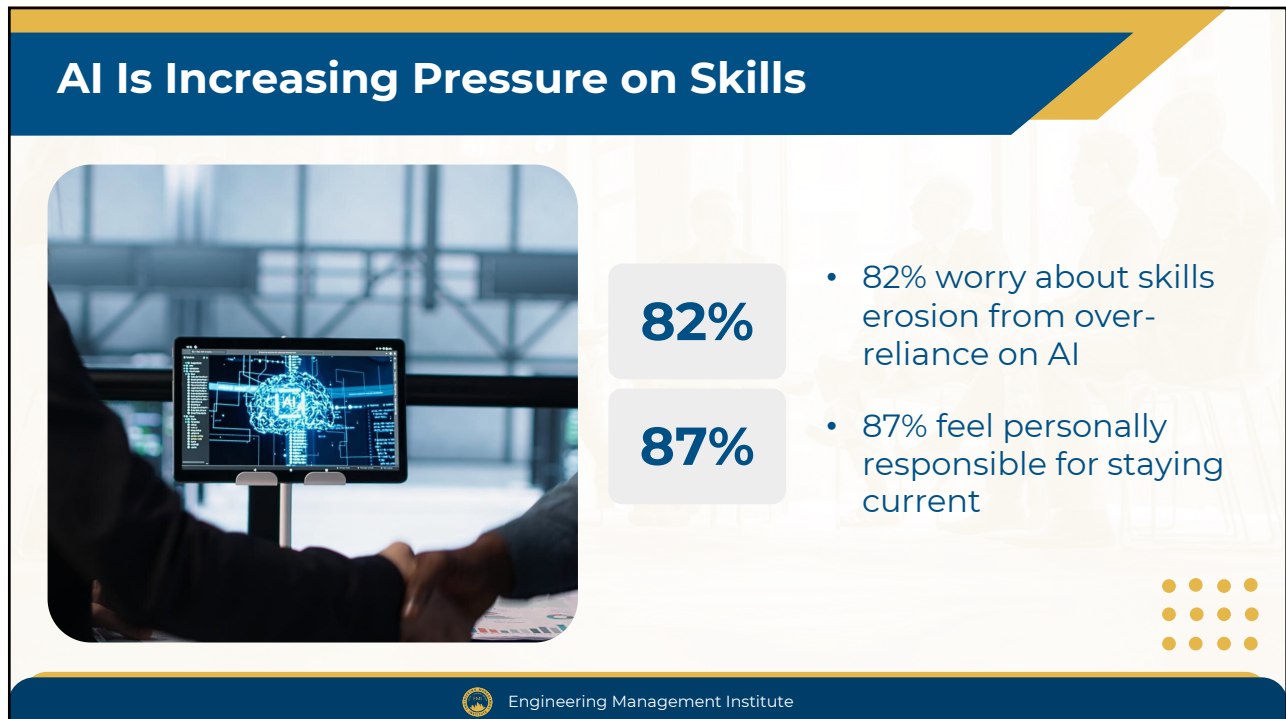
22

## Voice of the Profession



23

## AI Is Increasing Pressure on Skills



24



## Signal #2

## Summary

- Most Professionals Feel Valued
- Career Path Clarity Is Uneven
- Training Effectiveness Is a Concern
- Training Investment Skews Towards Senior Leaders
- Professionals Want Continuous Development
- AI Is Increasing Pressure on Skills



**Signal #3**

**Leaders and Staff Are Having Different Experiences**



## Retention Risk Varies by Role



Would not consider leaving:

**Technical Staff**

**41%**

**Managers**

**50%**

**Leaders**

**77%**



Engineering Management Institute

27

## Leaders Receive More of What Drives Engagement

Leaders report:

More training

Clearer career paths

Greater confidence in AI readiness

Stronger sense of being valued



Engineering Management Institute

28

## What Professionals Say Would Increase Retention

Top drivers:

Better resourcing and staffing

Clearer expectations

Addressing underperformance

Stronger manager effectiveness



Engineering Management Institute

29



**Signal #3**

**Summary**

- Retention Risk Varies by Role
- Leaders Receive More of What Drives Engagement
- What Professionals Say Would Increase Retention



Engineering Management Institute

30



31

## The Hidden Risk for AEC Firms

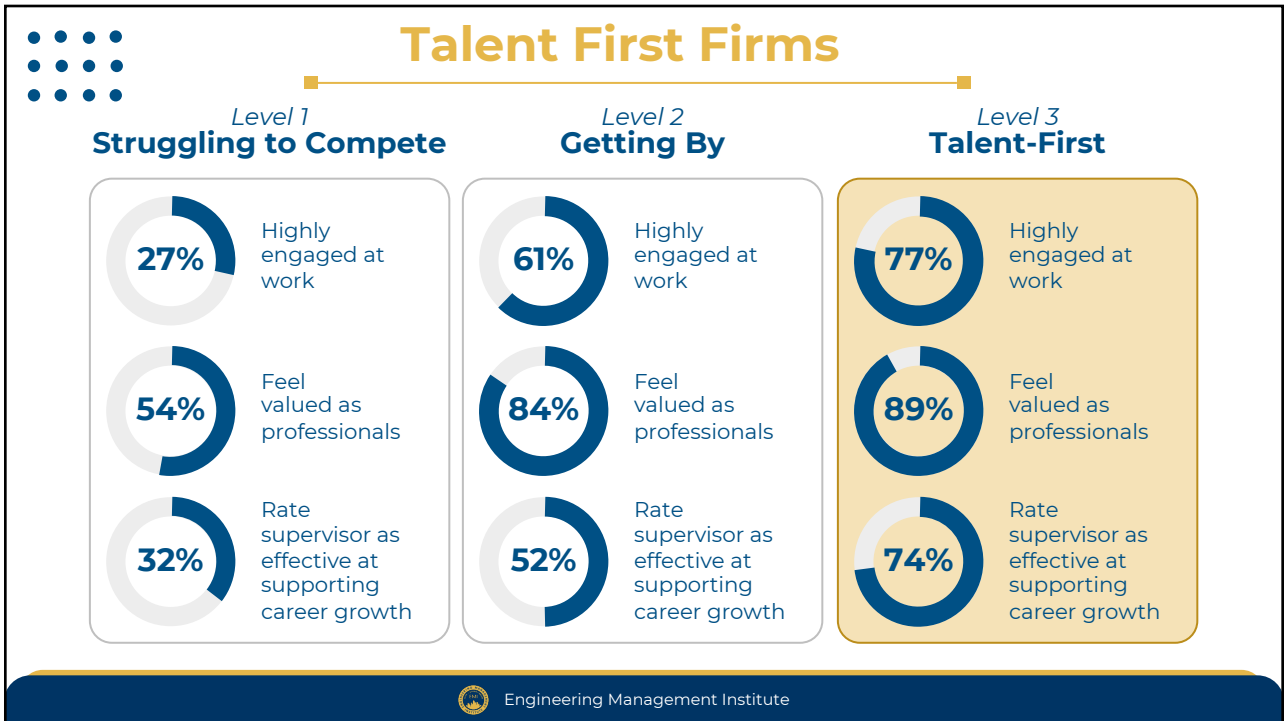
When capability systems lag behind complexity, firms often see:

- Inconsistent project performance
- Rising burnout in middle roles
- Slower adoption of new technology
- Increased retention pressure

32



33



34

## Four Characteristics of High-Engagement Firms

- Clarity
- Confidence
- Connection
- Ownership

Engineering Management Institute

35

## Clarity


Top firms:

- Define competencies clearly
- Communicate career paths consistently
- Tie advancement to measurable performance

***“Where is career clarity breaking down in your pipeline?”***

Engineering Management Institute

36





## Confidence

Top firms:


- Pair technology rollout with structured upskilling
- Provide role-specific guidance
- Build repeatable workflows

Technology investment without capability investment rarely produces expected ROI.



Engineering Management Institute



37



## Connection

Highly engaged professionals:

- Feel valued beyond billable hours
- See purpose in their work
- Experience technology as an enabler, not a burden



Engineering Management Institute

38



## Ownership

Firms that create a stake:

- See higher engagement
- Report stronger retention
- Build deeper organizational commitment



**What This Means for HR  
Leaders in 2026**



## How Leading Firms Are Responding



Across the market, firms are:

- Moving toward role-based development
- Investing in applied leadership training
- Seeking more firm-specific learning experiences
- Looking for measurable outcomes



Engineering Management Institute

41

## Emerging Mandates

- 1 Role complexity is rising faster than development systems
- 2 Episodic training models are losing effectiveness
- 3 Structured, role-specific capability building is becoming critical



Engineering Management Institute

42

## Questions HR Leaders Should Be Asking

- *Where are our capability gaps most visible?*
- *How consistently are we developing future leaders?*
- *Are our current training models keeping pace with role complexity?*
- *Do our managers have the skills today's projects require?*



Engineering Management Institute

43

## Summary

- Key industry signals shaping the future of work in AEC
- What high-engagement firms are doing differently
- Gaps in AI readiness, career development, and training
- What this means for leaders and HR in 2026



Engineering Management Institute

44



# What's Next

Two AEC PM Connect events in 2026



**June 10, 2026 – Monroe Township, New Jersey**




**October 22, 2026 – Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, Kansas**



In project management, the best ideas rarely come from one expert—they emerge through shared experience and dialogue. Let's build PM intelligence in the AEC industry together.




[www.AECPMConnect.com](http://www.AECPMConnect.com)

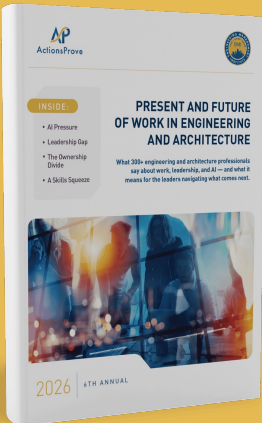


**I'd like to send you a copy of my book.**

Request a complimentary copy of my book here



[www.AECPMbook.com](http://www.AECPMbook.com)



AP ActionsProve


INSIDE

- AI Pressure
- Leadership Gap
- The Qualification Divide
- A Skills Sequence

**PRESENT AND FUTURE OF WORK IN ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURE**

What 300+ engineering and architecture professionals say about work, leadership, and AI — and what it means for the leaders navigating what comes next.

2026 6TH ANNUAL



Engineering Management Institute