

Internal AI Champions Playbook

How to choose, resource and measure the people who drive AI adoption.

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Six moves, in order

- 1 Pick the right champions
- 2 Write the remit
- 3 Ring-fence the time
- 4 First 30 days
- 5 Manufacture wins worth copying
- 6 Measure the gap, then close it

What is this?

AI initiatives stall because they lack a dedicated human support system. This playbook provides the structured framework you need to identify and empower the right people to drive lasting measurable adoption within your organisation (or team).

This playbook covers six moves, in order, each with a template you can fill in.

It comes out of running AI rollouts at global companies like CHAI and Novo Nordisk. Across 30+ countries, the pattern held everywhere. Teams get the tools. Usage stays flat until someone builds the human system around them. That system is the 90% of any rollout, and it is the part nobody hands you.

This is that part, written down.

How to use it

Work the six moves in order. Copy each template. Done properly, you can stand a champion up inside a month. If a line here can't be acted on next Monday, ignore it.

MOVE 1

Pick the right champions

Default is a volunteer sign-up sheet. It is the wrong tool, because it selects for the wrong trait.

Enthusiasm is a weak signal. The keen early adopter often helps no one but themselves. They love the tool, they go deep alone, and their work doesn't travel to anyone else.

Pick the person whose work other people already copy. When that person changes how they work, the change spreads on its own, because copying them is already a habit on the team.

GREEN FLAGS

- ✓ People who get asked "how did you do that"
- ✓ People who share their own shortcuts without being told to
- ✓ People senior enough that copying them feels safe, but not so senior that juniors won't admit they're lost

RED FLAGS

- ✗ People with the most spare time (usually spare for a reason)
- ✗ Loud advocates with no followers
- ✗ Executives whose teams will nod and change nothing

Champion selection filter

Score each candidate 0 to 2 on four lines. Pick the top one or two per team.

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| ☐ Others already copy their work | 0 / 1 / 2 |
| ☐ They share how they work without being asked | 0 / 1 / 2 |
| ☐ Their standing makes copying them safe | 0 / 1 / 2 |
| ☐ They have, or can get, protected time | 0 / 1 / 2 |

A 6 or above is a real champion. A 3 or 4 is a volunteer, and a volunteer without pull won't move the team.

MOVE 2

Write the remit

A title with no written remit is a wish. Put three things on one page: what the champion owns, what a good month looks like, and what they are not on the hook for. Without it they either drown or get blamed for the whole rollout.

Champion remit

Champion

Name, team, manager

What you own

Help this team get a real result from [tool] on the work they already do.

What good looks like in 90 days

Two or three concrete signals. Not "drive adoption." Something like "the weekly [X] report is written with AI by at least three people, without me in the room."

What you don't own

You are not IT support, you are not the policy owner, and you are not responsible for people who refuse to engage.

Protected time

See move 3.

When you're blocked, you go to

[name]

MOVE 3

Ring-fence the time

You can't have a champion with zero hours. They get told to spread AI use on top of the day job, so it never happens. Protect half a day a week, on the calendar, for the first quarter.

Any less and the day job eats it. Any vaguer than a calendar block and it evaporates.

The hard part is the manager. The champion's own manager has to agree to lose that half day of normal output. So hand the champion a line they can send, and make the trade obvious: their team is first to get a real result, and they get to claim the win.

Protected-time agreement

Champion

[name]

Time protected

Half a day a week, blocked on the calendar.

For

One quarter, reviewed at the end.

What the manager gets

Their team is first in line for a working result, and a named win they can point to.

SIGN-OFF LINE THE CHAMPION MAY SEND THEIR MANAGER

Hi [manager], I've been asked to be our team's AI champion for the next quarter. To make it worth anything I need half a day a week protected for it, blocked on my calendar. The trade is that our team gets a usable result first, and it's a win we can put our name on. Can I book it in?

MOVE 4

First 30 days

Give them a plan for month one, so there is always a next action.

30-day champion plan

- Week 1** Pick one task the team does often and finds slow or dull. Get one person a real result on it. Don't broadcast anything yet.
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- Week 2** Run the same win with two or three more people on the same task. Watch where they get stuck. Fix the instructions, not the people.
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- Week 3** Package the win so it travels (move 5). Show it where the team already shares work, a standup or the team channel, not a special "AI session" nobody remembers.
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- Week 4** Hand the task off. The test is whether someone does it without the champion in the room. Log what worked and what didn't, ready for the monthly read in move 6.

MOVE 5

Manufacture wins worth copying

The flashy demo, write a poem, summarise a PDF, gets applause and changes nothing, because it is no one's real work. A win that spreads is tied to a task lots of people share, small enough to repeat, and packaged so the next person can do it alone.

Pick the first win against four tests. If it fails two of them, pick a different task.

"Worth copying" filter

- ☐ Many people on the team do this task, not just one
- ☐ It is boring and repeated (the weekly report, the first-draft email, cleaning a list), because that is where time leaks
- ☐ It removes an obvious annoyance or saves obvious time
- ☐ Someone else can repeat it in one sitting, from the packaged version

Then package it so it travels:

- Exact prompt or steps, saved where the team already looks (can be packaged as a project or skill too)
- Before and after: the old way took [X], the new way took [Y]
- Whose win it was, by name

EXAMPLE

Say the weekly sales summary takes someone an hour of copy-paste every Friday. The champion gets it down to ten minutes with a skill, writes the steps in the team channel, and by the next Friday two other people are using it. Small, shared, repeatable, named. That is the kind of win to chase.

MOVE 6

Measure the gap, then close it

Measure the signals that mean the work itself changed. Once a month, read four signals.

The monthly read

Repeat use

Is at least one real task now done with AI by default, by more than one person? Name the task.

Spread

How many people used the champion's packaged win this month?

Pull, not push

Is anyone asking the champion for help unprompted, or is it all still the champion pushing?

Manager's read

Does the team's manager say the work is faster or better, not just that "people are trying it"?

Then act on whichever signal is weak.

If this is weak, do this

No repeat use → back to move 5. The win wasn't copyable. Pick a more shared task.

No spread → move 4 or 5. You packaged it wrong or showed it in the wrong place.

All push, no pull → move 1 or move 3. You may have the wrong champion, or the right one with no time to be present enough to create pull.

Manager unconvinced → move 2. "What good looks like" wasn't concrete, so no one agrees what success even is.

WHEN THIS ISN'T ENOUGH

What next?

Run a full cycle of this and, most of the time, use starts to move. If it still won't, the block usually sits above the champion layer. Leadership isn't showing its own work. Governance is scaring people quiet. Incentives punish the people who try. That is a different diagnosis, and it is not one a champion can fix from below.

That is the part I read in an adoption teardown: where a stalled rollout is actually stuck, and the two or three moves that unstick it. If you've run this playbook and usage still won't shift, that's the next conversation: cal.com/akshatkharbanda/30min