

Is the boss no longer needed?

**Survey on corporate organizational models:
visions, perceptions and approaches of
italian companies**

Is the boss no longer needed?

Survey on corporate organizational models: visions, perceptions and approaches of italian companies

In recent years, growing competitive pressure, technological evolution, and cultural change have profoundly redefined companies' business models. The emergence of new needs related to flexibility, innovation, sustainability, and well-being has prompted many organizations to rethink internal structures, roles, and processes.

This research was therefore created with the aim of understanding how Italian companies are dealing with change, which models they are adopting today, and above all what vision they have for the future.

The questionnaire explores both the organizational structure currently in use and the willingness to move toward more agile, collaborative, and people-centered models.

With regard to the organizational structure in use, companies showed some difficulty in accurately describing their own model. This probably indicates a lack of habit in exploring and analyzing the topic, which is still rarely addressed within organizations.

Based on the results collected, we can say that Italian companies are in a transition phase: on the one hand, traditional models continue to guarantee stability and control; on the other hand, interest is growing in more fluid forms capable of better enhancing skills, autonomy, and collective intelligence.

Alongside mapping the organizational models adopted by companies, we investigated:

- Perceived effectiveness of the current organizational setup
- Systemic critical issues slowing transformation
- Priority practices requiring revision
- Interest in innovative and human-centered approaches
- Willingness to embrace AI support

The following report is intended to provide useful insights for those leading change within companies today. The voices of businesses offer a picture of where we are and, above all, where we could go.



Key findings

The survey results highlight several themes showing how Italian companies are progressively reconsidering their organizational models and moving toward more participatory and adaptive structures. Change is underway, but it faces cultural, structural, and relational obstacles.

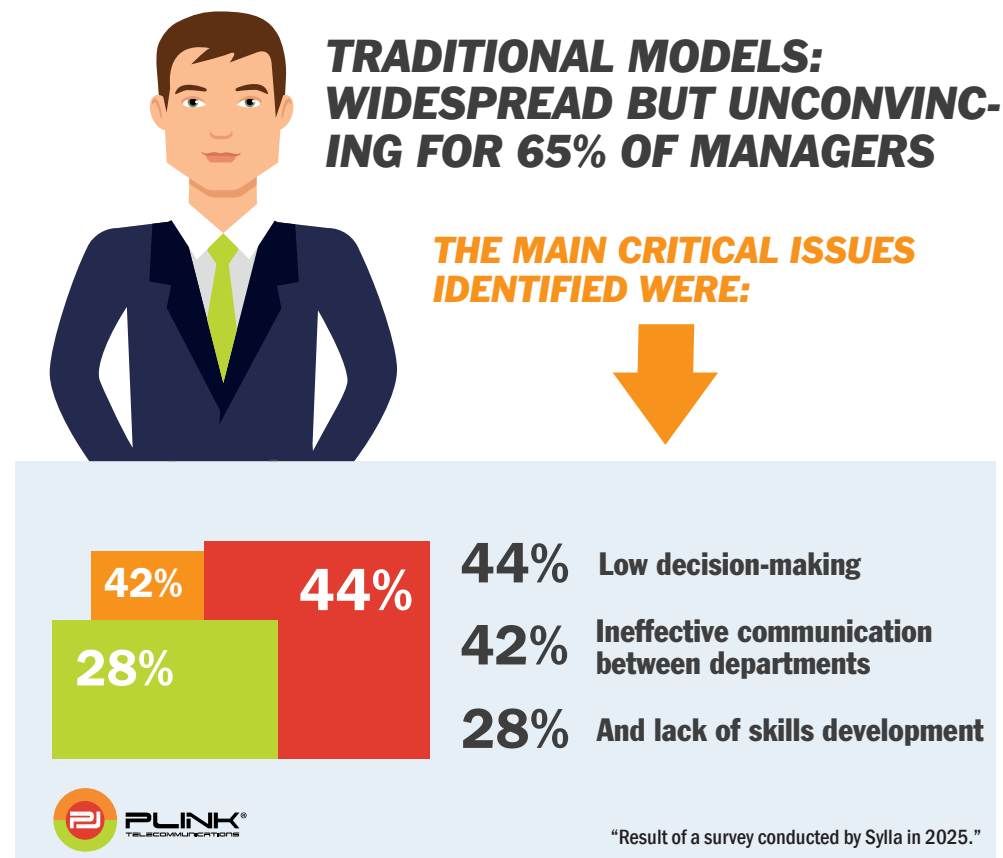
Limitations and critical issues of the current organizational model

In general, companies recognize the partial effectiveness of the model currently in use (average rating 6.78/10) and emphasize its weaknesses:

- Slow decision-making (44%)
- Poor communication (42%)
- Insufficient talent development (28%)

Organizations are often perceived as vertical and bureaucratic, with unclear roles and weak integration among departments. Companies identify the following priority intervention areas:

- Internal communication (28%)
- Greater delegation and autonomy (19%)
- Role clarity (14%)



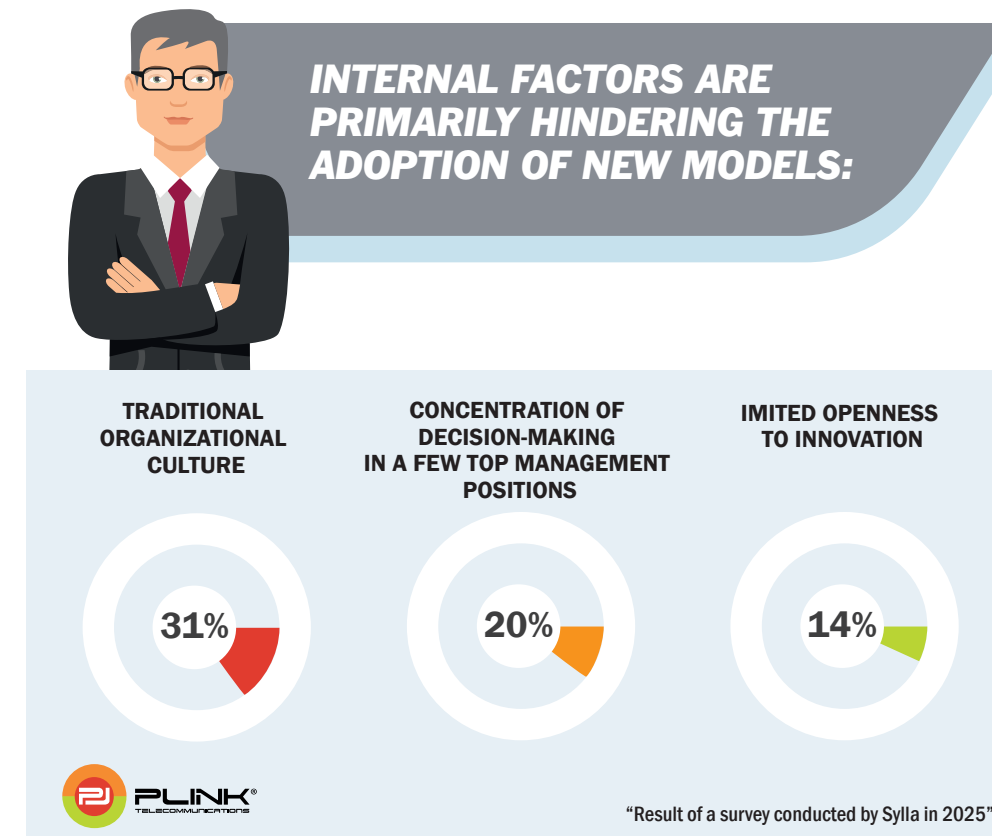
Collaborative and innovation-oriented models

Companies associate innovative models with several advantages:

- Speed and flexibility (62%)
- Greater collaboration (60%)
- Better utilization of skills and competencies (44%)

However, resistance to change remains strong and clearly identified:

- Traditional corporate culture (31%)
- Centralized governance (20%)
- Limited openness to innovation (14%)



Technological innovation and humanity

The role of people and artificial intelligence appears central to the future of organizational models. Humanistic values (collaboration, empathy, well-being) receive exceptionally high average scores (up to 8.87). At the same time, AI is viewed positively: 31% recognize its potential in terms of efficiency and decision support.

Areas where it may have the greatest impact include:

- Knowledge sharing (62%)
- Operational management (52%)
- Strategic support (23%)

However, alternative models are not without challenges: internal resistance from managers and employees, perceived difficulties in scaling, and the risk of role ambiguity are the most frequently reported issues.

Approach to corporate organization: an overall snapshot



Italian business leaders are currently facing complex challenges: increasing competitive pressure, the need for greater adaptability, and the difficulty of maintaining high employee engagement within rigid, vertical structures.

A new context requires new models.

Italian companies are therefore being called upon to rethink their organization. The pressure of innovation, the challenge of attracting talent, and the pursuit of organizational effectiveness are becoming increasingly urgent.

The picture emerging from the survey is clear: companies are in transition. They recognize the need for change in their internal organization, adopt structured models, but seek more agile solutions. Structures remain predominantly hierarchical, but many organizations describe themselves as “evolving.”

78% adopt a traditional hierarchical model

The desired organizational structure is becoming less hierarchical and increasingly fluid.

Organizational structures remain predominantly hierarchical and traditional, although many businesses are highly aware of the limitations of this model and are open to adopting alternative solutions.

6.78 out of 10 is the average rating for current organizational effectiveness

The pyramid model remains very widespread but is perceived as inflexible and unsuitable for change.

The effectiveness of currently adopted organizational models is rated as only “fairly satisfactory,” with no strong conviction or complete satisfaction.

The desire for innovation exists, but the average score is 5.99

Companies dream of change but fear innovation. They are aware of the limitations of traditional models and recognize concrete problems. However, they still show signs of resistance or concern regarding the possibility of innovating and embracing change.

Limitations and critical issues of the current organizational model

Slow decision-making, ineffective communication, and excessive bureaucracy emerge as the most common limitations of the traditional model. More and more companies are therefore evaluating alternative solutions: agile, horizontal, and collaborative models supported by a culture of empowerment and the strategic use of technology.

It is within this context that growing interest has emerged in practices promoting autonomy, self-managed teams, and distributed leadership, often supported by the introduction of Artificial Intelligence into decision-making processes.

Vertical and hierarchical organizational models show significant limitations, including slow decision-making, excessive bureaucracy, unclear roles, and poor internal communication. Yet despite widespread awareness, only 28% of companies state that they intend to take action on internal communication, and only 19% on autonomy and delegation, suggesting that organizational transformation is still insufficiently structured in practice.

Companies, when considering redesigning their organizational model, would focus their efforts primarily on communication and governance. However, cultural resistance and attachment to static models slow evolution. Only 7% cite flexibility as a priority, and only a minimal share identify employee development as a lever worth investing in.

Organizational pressures and declared priorities

- 44% slow decision-making and overly centralized models
- 42% poor communication between departments
- 28% insufficient recognition of cross-functional talent
- 19% demand for greater delegation and autonomy
- 14% poorly defined roles and responsibilities
- 10% no change needed



Overcoming the limitations of traditional models

As we have seen, Italian companies report that the current organizational model struggles to respond to contextual challenges: slow decision-making and poor communication are the most recurring issues and represent the strongest barriers. This hierarchical approach hinders innovation.

But what solutions are being proposed?

Nineteen percent of respondents explicitly suggest action on delegation and autonomy, while 14% highlight the need to clarify roles and responsibilities.

A significant share of companies therefore recognizes the urgency of taking action, but shared operational strategies are still lacking.

Practices adopted to address rigidity

Some companies consider targeted initiatives in the following areas a priority:

- Internal communication (28%)
- Revision of organizational governance (12%)
- More horizontal structures and flexibility practices (5-7%)

These initiatives aim to overcome process verticality, distribute leadership, and reduce the distance between management and operational teams.

Overall, there is a positive inclination toward alternative models, with higher average scores (up to 7.2/10) compared to traditional models.

- 28% greater internal communication
- 19% greater delegation and autonomy
- 14% redefinition of roles and responsibilities
- 12% revision of the organizational structure
- 10% no change needed
- 7% flexibility and adaptation
- 5% employee development

Partnerships aimed at humanizing business, adopting new tools, and revising processes are considered fundamental to ensuring the success of new models.

Promoting agile, collaborative and innovation-oriented models

Business professionals express a strong preference for more participatory, autonomous, and flexible organizational models. According to the data, more than 60% recognize the benefits of closer collaboration between teams and the enhancement of individual skills.

A less vertical model is seen not only as more effective but also as more sustainable. Overall, companies express highly favorable opinions (7.2 out of 10).

The research highlights the need to make organizational models more functional to real working environments. The critical issues are well known, but at the same time respondents identify the levers needed to build a more integrated system: delegation, clear roles, and flexibility. This model overcomes vertical barriers, better distributes competencies, and promotes a more responsive organization.

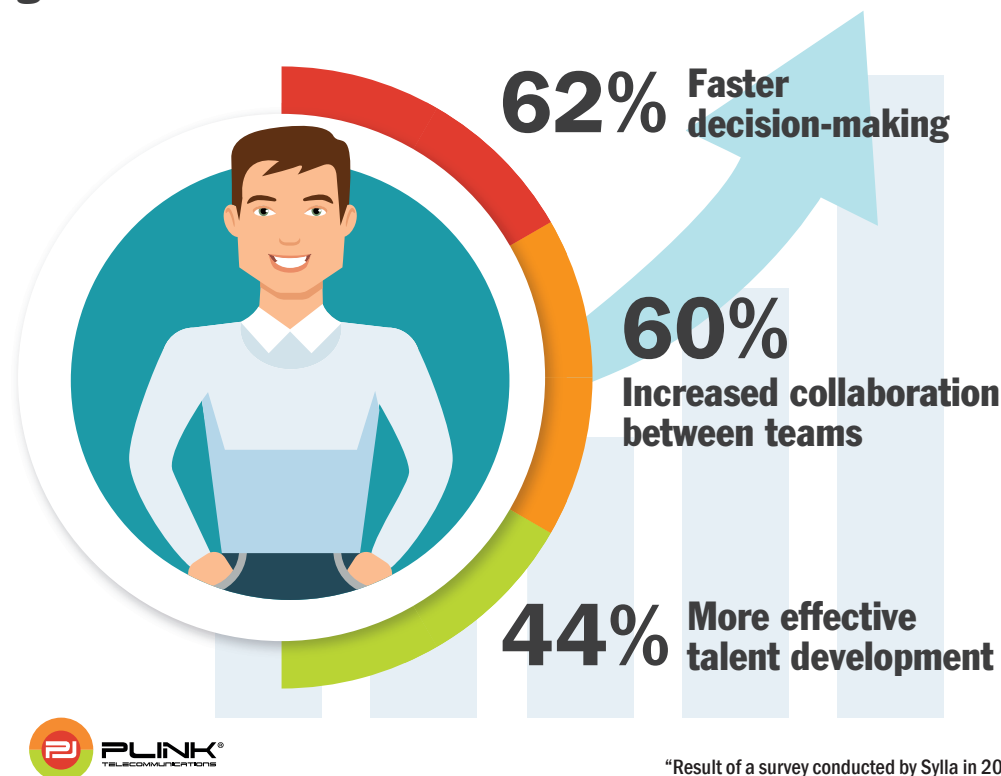
Main perceived advantages of innovative models

- 62% speed and flexibility in decision-making
- 60% greater collaboration among functions
- 38% greater adaptability and innovation

Priority levers for improving the model

- 28% internal communication
- 19% delegation and autonomy
- 14% roles and responsibilities
- 12% governance/organizational structure

Collaborative models based on horizontal governance offer concrete benefits:



Toward agile, collaborative and inclusive models

Approximately 60% of respondents recognize the value of collaboration among teams, while 44% emphasize the importance of recognizing individual competencies.

The perceived benefits of innovative models clearly emerge, above all speed and flexibility in decision-making (62%), but also greater adaptability and innovation (38%).

The strongest result recorded concerns the willingness to adopt fluid and adaptive models: 7.2 out of 10.

But what are the main obstacles to organizational change?

Change is still hindered by cultural barriers: traditional corporate culture (31%), leadership that remains centralized (20%), and limited openness to innovation (14%) are the main factors.

The highest ratings are given to the human dimensions of organizations, such as collaboration among colleagues (8.87/10), passion for work (8.66), and the importance of environments designed for well-being (8.23).

This is a strong signal: the organizations that perform best are those that place greater attention on people, relationships, and quality of life.

Technological innovation and humanity

The research highlights how changes in organizational models cannot be separated from a virtuous alliance between people and technology. The data collected reveal a business perspective still in transition, where cultural resistance coexists with pressure for renewal.

AI is viewed as a tool for improving processes and sharing knowledge, but it also raises concerns about the potential dehumanization of business.

New organizational models focused on innovation and collaboration are gaining support among Italian companies, especially because of their ability to generate positive impacts on both people and the environment. Companies recognize the importance of defining shared standards and setting measurable objectives, while valuing collaboration with external partners and the presence of specialized competencies needed to enable change.

However, this transition is not without obstacles.

Among the main challenges associated with alternative models, as we have seen, are cultural resistance, centralized governance, and difficulties in monitoring performance. Overcoming them requires vision, training, and strong alliances between technology and people.

Digital transformation is profoundly redefining organizational models and the role of people within corporate structures. According to our research, 62% of respondents identify Artificial Intelligence as a valuable tool for coordinating and sharing internal knowledge, while more than half (52%) consider it useful for optimizing workflows.

But it is humanity that represents the strategic driver of change: values such as collaboration among colleagues (8.87/10), personal commitment (8.66/10), empathetic environments and workplace well-being (8.23/10) emerge as key factors for innovation. In this context, creating external partnerships and encouraging inclusive and adaptive leadership models becomes essential.

At the same time, the main challenges associated with alternative models remain cultural resistance, centralized governance, and difficulties in measuring performance. Addressing them requires vision, training, and strong cooperation between technology and people.

- 52% of companies support the use of AI for workload management
- 48% identify challenges in alternative models and resistance from managers
- 10% identify challenges in alternative models related to performance monitoring
- 62% recognize AI as useful for knowledge sharing
- 7,91 recognition of creativity and problem-solving
- 7,2 openness to adopting fluid or adaptive models

Trends and opportunities for the future of business

The highest-performing companies are those with a culture focused on personal well-being, autonomy, and innovation. For them, change is not only technological, but above all human. What is needed is a clear vision, distributed leadership, and inclusive working environments. The priorities companies declare for the coming years are:

- Sustainable growth
- Digitalization
- Attraction of new talent

The actions that make the greatest difference in these areas are investments in training, the revision of internal processes, and the creation of strategic partnerships. Companies must promote an environment in which innovation is encouraged, because the future of business requires an approach that combines technology and humanity.

Artificial intelligence

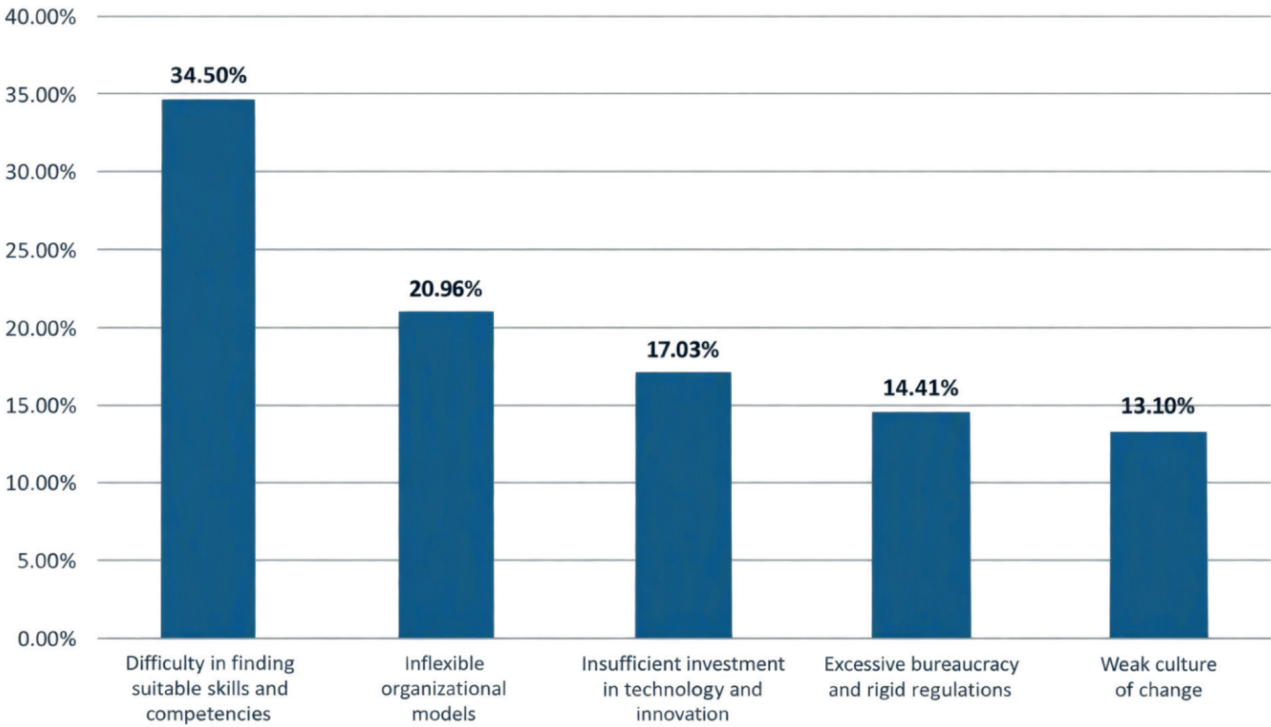
Below are the percentage results for the question:
Which of the following factors currently hinders your company's profitability growth and organizational development the most?

79 respondents selected two options, while 71 selected only one.

	First response	Second response
Difficulty finding suitable skills and competencies	36,70%	16,00%
Organizational models lacking flexibility	18,70%	13,30%
Insufficient investment in technology and innovation	14,00%	12,00%
Excessive bureaucracy and rigid regulations	16,70%	5,30%
Weak culture of change	14,00%	6,00%

The data clearly show that finding the right skills and competencies is the primary challenge, followed by inflexible organizational models. It is also worth noting that excessive bureaucracy and regulatory burden emerge as a significant issue, especially when considering the first response selected by participants.

Let us take a closer look at the overall impact of each factor in the chart. Based on this calculation, the importance of insufficient investment in technology and innovation increases significantly.



The second question was: *Recently, the use of AI seems to be increasing turnover and uncertainty in roles most exposed to automation. Have you observed this phenomenon in your company?*
Respondents indicated that this risk is not yet perceived within their organizations. In fact, 100% selected “No”.

The next question therefore arises naturally:
If the risk is not perceived, what impact has the introduction of AI had on your organization so far?

- The responses can be grouped into clusters.
- **Cluster 0: No measurable impact.** This cluster reflects the early stages of adoption, experiments not yet integrated into business processes, or high expectations that have not yet translated into operational value. Here, AI is perceived as a potential opportunity rather than a completed transformation.
 - **Cluster A: Operational efficiency and process optimization (30%).** Typical responses highlight reduced idle time, fewer operational errors, and smoother internal processes. This is the largest cluster, viewing AI primarily as an efficiency tool rather than a strategic driver.
 - **Cluster B: Decision support and data enhancement (26%).** Typical responses focus on improved decision quality, support for planning, and basic predictive analysis. Here, AI becomes part of the decision-making hub as an advisor.
 - **Cluster C: Performance planning and control (16%).** This cluster highlights the use of AI for goal setting, performance monitoring, and enhanced short-term visibility. AI is viewed as a tool supporting operational planning.
 - **Cluster D: Operational automation and document management (14%).** This cluster emphasizes AI's use in document management, automating repetitive tasks, and reducing low-value activities. AI is essentially described as a “silent colleague.”
 - **Cluster E: Predictive analytics and financial control (8%).** In this cluster, AI is used for cost analysis, trend identification, and management control support. Although more mature than the others, it represents a relatively small share of responses.
 - **Cluster F: Support for commercial activities and customer relationships (6%).** Typical responses involve using AI to support sales, analyze feedback, and improve customer understanding. Surprisingly, this is the smallest cluster, suggesting that AI is currently focused more on internal operations than on market-facing activities.

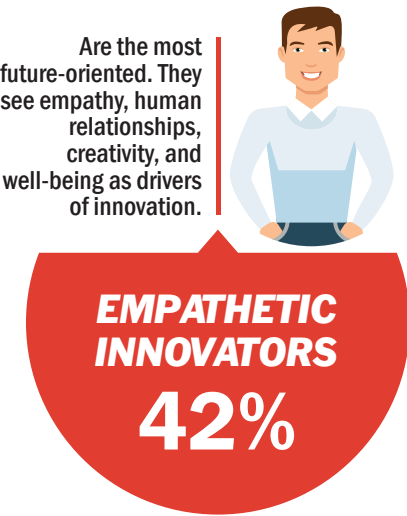
Summary of clusters by weight and keywords

CLUSTER	WEIGHT	KEYWORDS
Cluster A: Operational efficiency and process optimization	30%	reduction, time, errors, processes, management, work
Cluster B: Decision support and data enhancement	26%	data, decisions, support, forecasting, analysis
Cluster C: Performance planning and control	16%	planning, objectives, control, forecasting
Cluster D: Operational automation and document management	14%	automation, processes, errors
Cluster E: Predictive analytics and financial control	8%	analysis, predictive, costs, performance, trends
Cluster F: Support for commercial activities and customer relationships	6%	feedback, engagement, customers

The responses provided by the managers interviewed show that AI is perceived primarily as an operational efficiency lever and a decision-support tool, rather than as a factor of strategic transformation. Its impact is real but partial, often limited to individual processes or functions, with a significant share of organizations reporting no impact or impact that is not yet measurable. Signs of maturity emerge in applications related to planning, predictive analytics, and control, while customer- and market-oriented uses remain marginal.

Cluster analysis

We identified four groups of respondents (entrepreneurs and managers) who share similar attitudes toward the adoption of alternative organizational models.



Innovatori Empatici (42%)

These individuals are strongly oriented toward innovation and organizational well-being. This group records the highest scores across nearly all dimensions of business humanization. Entrepreneurs in this cluster place great importance on creativity, experience, and employees' skills as drivers of innovation. They firmly believe that personal commitment and passion are essential to business success, and they regard the team as a strategic asset. They also recognize the importance of environments designed for well-being, promoting workplaces that encourage efficiency and collaboration. They are often entrepreneurs leading more structured companies and report higher levels of organizational satisfaction than other groups, reflecting a people-centered and innovation-driven corporate culture.

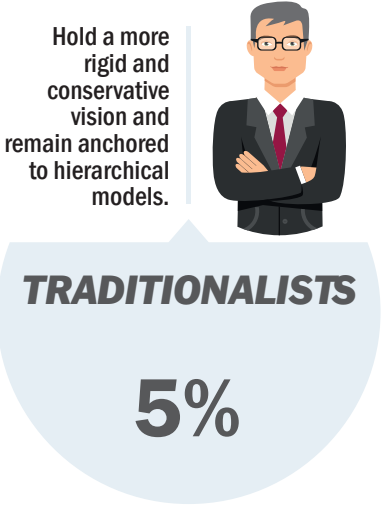
Attitude toward Artificial Intelligence: generally positive about AI adoption, although they tend to prefer more human-centered and creative approaches. They value AI as a strategic support tool but continue to prioritize human capabilities.



Practical collaborators (28%)

Entrepreneurs in this group are more conservative, balancing innovation with pragmatism. While they appreciate the importance of creativity and personal commitment, they tend to be slightly more cautious than the Empathetic Innovators. They focus on structured collaboration among colleagues and place significant value on the quality of internal relationships as a driver of business success. However, they are less inclined toward culturally enriching environments and tend to prefer straightforward and pragmatic human-resource management.

Attitude toward Artificial Intelligence: similar to Empathetic Innovators, but with a slight preference for more structured and less experimental AI adoption approaches.



Traditionalists (5%)

These entrepreneurs remain attached to traditional hierarchical models and score significantly lower across all dimensions of business humanization. They are less inclined to value creativity and internal innovation, preferring more structured and predictable organizational models. They are characterized by greater rigidity in decision-making processes and less openness to working environments designed for employee well-being. This cluster appears to represent companies that are more closely tied to traditional hierarchical models, with less attention given to employee well-being and personal development.

Attitude toward Artificial Intelligence: they show the highest level of skepticism toward AI, with stronger perceptions of risks and difficulties associated with integrating AI into traditional processes.



Collaborative optimists (25%)

Entrepreneurs in this cluster combine a high level of internal collaboration with a strong emphasis on personal commitment. Although they do not reach the innovation levels of the Empathetic Innovators, they place significant value on individual skills and teamwork, viewing collaboration as a key success factor. However, they are less likely than Empathetic Innovators to view cultural experiences as a source of strategic enrichment. They show a slight preference for more flexible and less hierarchical organizational structures than the Traditionalists.

Attitude toward Artificial Intelligence: hey demonstrate a level of openness similar to that of Practical Collaborators, but place greater emphasis on human collaboration rather than dependence on AI.



Connections beyond Connectivity

Professional Link S.r.l.

Via Alcide De Gasperi, 4/A 22072 Cermenate (CO)

Tel. +39 031 778912

comunicazioni@plink.it

www.plink.it

 comunicazioni.plink.it/blog

 PLINK: Professional Link

 Professional Link

 [plink_professional_link](https://www.instagram.com/plink_professional_link)