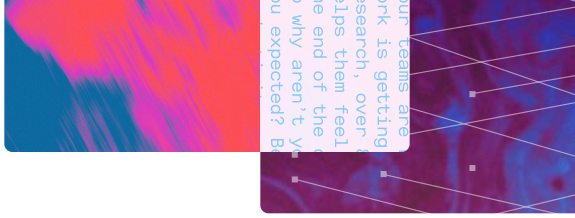
SUPERHUMAN

The Ultimate Guide to Designing for AI ROI



Introduction

AI is supposed to make work easier. And in many ways, it is.

Your teams are producing more, and work is getting done faster. In our research, over 80% of workers say AI helps them feel more accomplished at the end of the day.

So why aren't you seeing the returns you expected? Because isolated productivity gains don't automatically translate into ROI. If your teams are still spending time switching tools, reconstructing context, and coordinating across systems, those gains are quickly offset.

The breakdown isn't in the work itself. It happens in the moments around the work, when cognitive load spikes: switching between tools, tracking down information, coordinating with others, deciding where work should live. Half of workers say it's unclear which tool to use for certain work, and nearly one in four say that uncertainty impacts their productivity.

Individually, those moments feel small. But across your organization, they add up quickly. Even a single hour per day spent searching for information, switching systems, or repeating context adds up to a 12% productivity tax on your workforce.

The problem: App and AI sprawl is costing you a 12% productivity tax

This is where your ROI starts to break down, and what slows the last mile of AI. You're investing in AI to accelerate productivity, but fragmented workflows are quietly limiting the return. There's a persistent gap between your tool capabilities and the value your team actually realizes from them.

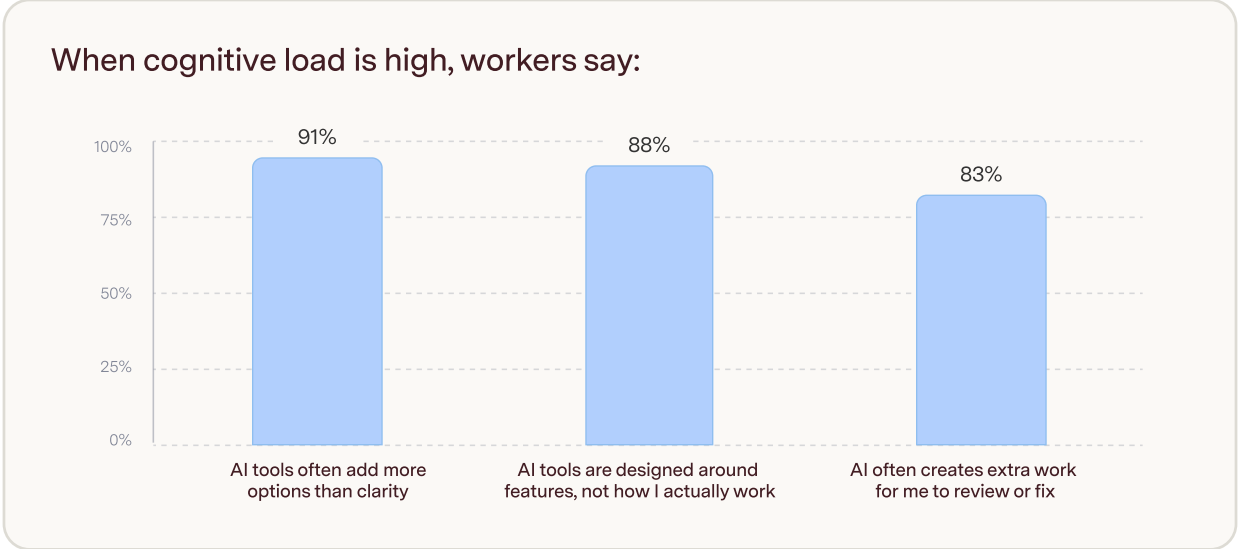
In this guide, you'll learn how to close that gap by reducing the hidden effort slowing your teams down, connecting work across your organization, and designing AI to work the way your people do, so productivity gains turn into real ROI.

Why tools alone don’t deliver ROI

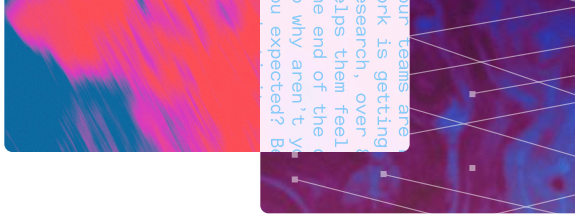
You invest in tools to make work easier. Your teams would agree the tools work. But the issue isn’t capability. It’s that those tools require extra effort when used together.

> The very tools you invested in to make work easier start to make it harder, simply because they don’t work together.

Now AI is being introduced into that same environment. In many cases, it’s added as another point solution, another interface, another place where work happens. And in already fragmented workflows, that doesn’t reduce cognitive load. It increases it.



Instead of simplifying work, AI introduces more decisions, more output, and more coordination across already disconnected systems. This is why AI ROI falls short. Not because the technology isn’t capable, but because it’s being applied within workflows that weren’t designed for it.



Designing for AI ROI

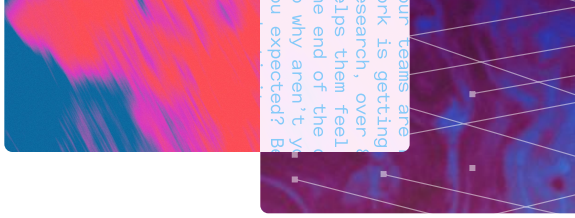
In high-ROI environments, work feels different. Cognitive load is lower, and there are fewer decisions about where work should happen. Context carries across tools, and AI supports how work moves instead of adding effort around it.

This is what a well-designed platform layer makes possible, not by replacing your tools, but by connecting them.

High-ROI environments aren't defined by the tools they use, but by how those tools work together. They tend to share four characteristics.

1. They reduce decision friction

What this enables	Work flows easily, with less effort required to decide where and how it should happen.
What to design for	AI should show up where work already happens. With a platform layer in place, your teams can access AI across the tools they use every day, without switching tabs or changing how they work. That ubiquity matters. When AI is embedded across workflows, people don't have to go looking for it or re-create context each time they use it.
Why it matters for ROI	Choosing where to work is a bigger drain than it seems: Nearly one in four workers say it slows their productivity, and half say it's not always clear which tool to use. Reducing those decisions lowers cognitive load, so more time and energy can go toward moving work forward, not navigating where it should happen.

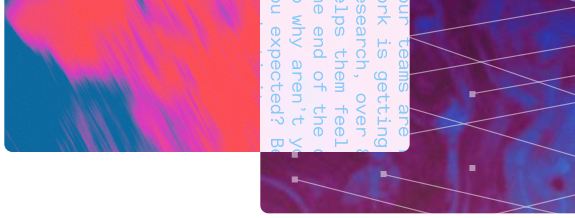


2. They keep context moving

What this enables	Work progresses without losing momentum because context carries forward instead of being rebuilt.
What to design for	Your AI platform should connect the systems where work happens, so context moves with it. With access to relevant, permission-aware organizational context, it can offer help in the flow of work, not in another tab, so your teams don't have to search for information or piece it together themselves.
Why it matters for ROI	In high cognitive load environments, 94% of workers say important information is spread across too many systems. When context is fragmented, your teams spend time searching, piecing together information, and redoing work that should already be connected. Keeping context moving reduces that overhead.

3. They offer proactive support

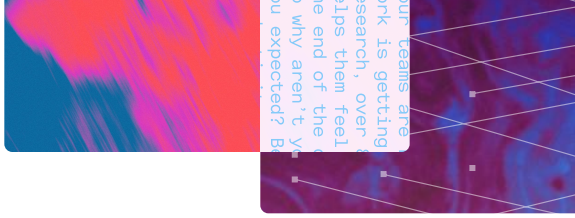
What this enables	Work keeps moving because AI proactively surfaces support at the right moments, without needing to be prompted.
What to design for	Your AI platform should proactively surface suggestions, insights, and next steps as work progresses, without requiring your teams to stop and ask for help. When AI shows up in context, teams don't have to remember to use it or figure out how to prompt it. Support is delivered as part of the workflow.
Why it matters for ROI	In high cognitive load environments, 88% of workers say AI tools aren't designed around how they actually work. When AI doesn't align with real workflows, it creates friction and adoption suffers. Proactive support ensures AI fits into how work already happens, so it's used consistently and actually saves time.



4. They support how work moves between people

What this enables	Work moves smoothly across teams, without getting stuck in handoffs or misalignment.
What to design for	Your AI platform should provide a unified experience where teams can collaborate with AI in one place. Shared context, progress, and decisions should be visible across stakeholders, not spread across tools, so teams can stay aligned without constant check-ins.
Why it matters for ROI	The biggest drops in productivity happen in the seams of work: coordinating with others, switching between tasks, and gathering information. This is where that 12% productivity tax shows up most clearly. When collaboration is unified and context is shared, teams spend less time chasing updates and more time moving work forward.

When tools work together, your teams get more than productivity. They get the time and space to think more deeply, work more creatively, and focus on the parts of their jobs that require human taste and judgment. That's where ROI comes from. Not from adding more tools, but from reducing the effort required to move work forward.



How to evaluate AI platforms through an ROI lens

To evaluate AI platforms effectively, start by evaluating how work actually happens today—and where it breaks down.

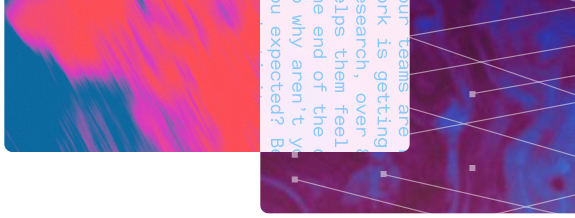
1. Audit your current AI stack

Before evaluating a new platform, take a clear look at what you already have in place. You probably aren't starting from zero. AI is already embedded across the tools your teams use every day—email, messaging, documents, project management, CRM—each with its own assistant or set of features. But when they operate independently, the productivity tax sets in: Work slows down, context is lost, and AI starts to require more effort than it saves.

Use this template to map how AI is actually being used across your organization and where it's helping or hurting the flow of work. This step gives you a baseline for ROI and reframes the goal: Improving AI ROI isn't about replacing your existing tools. It's about making them work better together.

AI Stack Audit Template

Type	Interaction style	Team usage	Adoption	Connectivity	Friction points	Impact on work	Governance
Chatbot	Prompt-based	*e.g., Marketing, Sales, Customer Support*	Low (0–25%)	Low (Stand-alone tool)	*e.g., Copy-paste context; requires significant editing*	Slows	Manual configuration
Assistant	Event-triggered		Medium (26–75%)	Medium (Some tool connectivity)		Neutral	Admin controlled
Agent	Proactive		High (76–100%)	High (Fully integrated)		Helps	Centralized IT oversight
Platform	Mix						



2. Ask the right questions

A platform needs to be evaluated based on how it changes the way work happens, not just what it can do. That means asking different questions than you would for a point solution.

Instead of asking...	Ask this...
What features does this tool have?	**Does the platform reduce the effort required to move work forward?**
How well does it perform on specific tasks?	**Does it fit into how work already happens, or does it require behavior change?**
How advanced is the model?	**Does it eliminate steps or introduce new ones?**
Can it handle this use case?	**Does it connect workflows or create another layer to manage?**

These questions shift the focus from features to outcomes and from isolated performance to real ROI.

Use your audit as a filter. Focus on how a platform addresses the specific issues you identified:

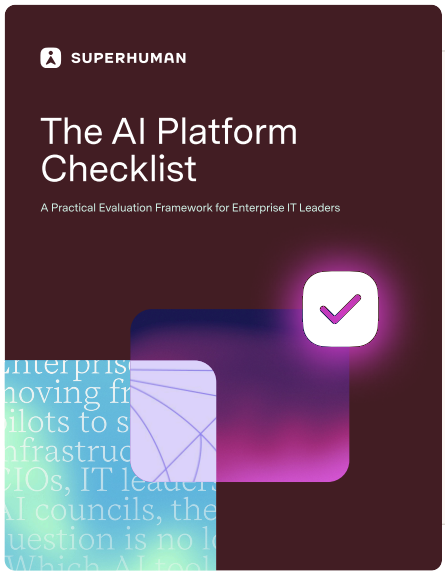
- If adoption is low, look for platforms that embed AI into existing workflows, not separate destinations
- If context is fragmented, look for platforms that carry context across tools and systems
- If AI adds steps, look for platforms that reduce interaction overhead and manual input
- If teams rely on workarounds, look for platforms that eliminate the need for copy-paste and tool-switching

3. Use a structured evaluation checklist

Once you've identified your priorities and reframed how you evaluate, the next step is to assess platforms consistently.

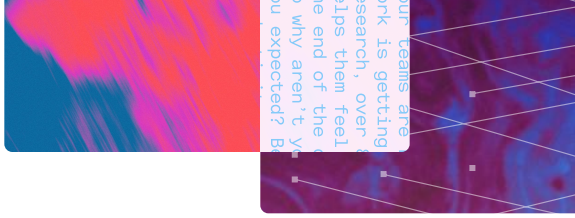
A structured evaluation framework ensures you're measuring what matters: how well a platform reduces effort, connects workflows, and fits into your environment.

Use The AI Platform Checklist to assess vendors across these dimensions and compare them consistently. Inside this practical evaluation template, you'll find:



- ☐ A platform-level framework covering core capabilities, architecture, governance, and security
- ☐ Diagnostic questions to identify risks before enterprise-wide standardization
- ☐ Clear red flags that signal long-term scalability, compliance, and adoption challenges

Get the checklist →



How platforms multiply AI ROI

You've already invested in tools designed to make your teams more productive. You've added AI to accelerate that work. But when those tools operate independently, their value is limited—and your teams carry the burden of making them work together.

That's where ROI gets lost. It's also what slows the last mile of AI, the gap between what your tools are capable of and the value your teams actually realize from them.

A platform like Superhuman closes that gap.

It doesn't replace your existing stack. It makes it work better. By connecting your tools, carrying context across workflows, and embedding AI into how work actually happens, a platform turns isolated capabilities into a coordinated system. And that shift has a multiplier effect.

When AI is accessible across tools, adoption increases because your teams don't have to go out of their way to use it. When context moves with the work, time isn't lost reconstructing information. When workflows are connected, effort isn't spent switching, coordinating, and piecing things together.

The value of each individual tool increases because it no longer operates in isolation.

That's how ROI scales. Not by adding more tools, but by closing the gap between what your tools can do and how easily your teams can use them—so your investments translate into real, measurable value.

SUPERHUMAN

Superhuman (formerly Grammarly) is the AI productivity platform on a mission to unlock the superhuman potential in everyone.

The Superhuman suite of apps and agents brings AI wherever people work, integrating with over 1 million applications and websites. The company's products include Grammarly's writing assistance, Coda's collaborative workspaces, Mail's inbox management, and Go, the proactive AI assistant that understands context and delivers help automatically.

Founded in 2009, Superhuman empowers over 40 million people, 50,000 organizations, and 3,000 educational institutions worldwide to eliminate busywork and focus on what matters.

Learn more at superhuman.com/solutions/enterprise.