Pearl Meyer

RESEARCH REPORT | AUG 2026 | PEARL MEYER MARKET INTELLIGENCE

AI Execution Puts Executive Confidence to the Test: ?Q2 2026 Market Intelligence Survey?

Brad Jayne, PhD

PRINCIPAL

Peter Thies

MANAGING DIRECTOR

Organizations are accelerating their AI ambitions faster than they are improving the leadership systems needed to support them, according to Pearl Meyer's Q2 Market Intelligence Survey, AI Execution Puts Executive Confidence to the Test.

Building on our Q1 2026 Leadership Quick Poll, While AI Is Advancing, Leadership Systems Are Not, this survey examines leadership effectiveness, talent and succession, transformation readiness, and AI to assess where confidence may be outrunning capability. ?

A consistent pattern emerges: Boards and CEOs often see greater alignment and readiness than the executives responsible for carrying out the work. That divide is especially visible within the senior team. ?

- 80% of CEOs believe their executives can make trade-offs for the good of the enterprise, but only 30% of other C-suite leaders agree. ?
- At the same time, although 80% of respondents believe their organization has the leadership capability to manage transformation, only 41% believe employees can absorb additional change without becoming overstretched.?

AI expectations for near-term gains are high across every stage of maturity, yet clear executive ownership is often absent, and data and talent remain the most common barriers. AI-driven change is concentrated in infrastructure and investment rather than in leadership systems, accountability, or ways of working, suggesting a focus on outcomes over areas that improve decision-making long-term.?

As in our Q1 findings, AI is amplifying these leadership and execution challenges. Resolving them will depend more on alignment than technology: clearer ownership, more disciplined talent decisions, and a realistic view of how much change the organization can absorb.?

Read the Executive Summary.

About the Authors

Brad brings a decade of experience in executive assessment, leadership development, coaching, and team effectiveness, partnering with senior leaders to build high-impact teams and talent strategies.

Peter brings 30+ years supporting CEOs and leadership teams through organizational change, including CEO succession, executive development, and integration challenges.

About Pearl Meyer

Pearl Meyer is the leading advisor to boards and senior management helping organizations build, develop, and reward great leadership teams that drive long-term success. Our strategy-driven compensation and leadership consulting services act as powerful catalysts for value creation and competitive advantage by addressing the critical links between people and outcomes. Our clients stand at the forefront of their industries and range from emerging high-growth, not-for-profit, and private organizations to the Fortune 500.