

Shadow AI Discovery Survey

Staff Survey · Communication Template · Analysis Guide

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About This Survey

This survey is designed to be distributed to all staff in your organization to identify AI tools currently in use — whether approved or not. It is the first and most critical step in any AI governance program. Without knowing what tools exist, you cannot govern them.

Organizations consistently discover 3 to 5 times more AI tool usage than leadership believes exists. The most dangerous tools are often the ones nobody knew about: AI transcription services recording client calls, AI writing assistants processing confidential documents, and AI research tools with client matter details entered by well-meaning staff who had no guidance.

How to Use This Survey

Step 1 — Communicate Intent: Before distributing, send a message from leadership making clear this survey is NOT punitive. The goal is program development, not discipline. Anonymous responses yield significantly more complete and accurate results.

Step 2 — Distribute: Send via email, Microsoft Forms, Google Forms, or SurveyMonkey. Set a 5-business-day response window. Follow up with non-respondents.

Step 3 — Analyze: Compile responses into your AI tool inventory. Every tool mentioned by any staff member — regardless of whether you knew about it — goes into the inventory for evaluation.

Step 4 — Act: Classify each tool as Approved, Conditional, or Prohibited. Communicate results back to staff within 2 weeks. Silence after a survey destroys trust and compliance.

STAFF COMMUNICATION TEMPLATE

Subject: Brief Survey — AI Tools We're Using at Work (5 minutes, anonymous option)

Team,

We are building a formal AI governance program to ensure we are using AI tools responsibly and in compliance with our professional obligations to clients. As a first step, we need to understand what tools our team is currently using.

Please take 5 minutes to complete the survey at the link below. Your responses [will be / may be] anonymous. There are no wrong answers and no disciplinary implications — we simply need an accurate picture of current usage to build the right program.

[SURVEY LINK]

Please complete by [DATE]. Thank you.

[LEADERSHIP NAME]

SURVEY QUESTIONS

The following questions are designed to be distributed verbatim. Questions marked (Required) should be mandatory. Others may be optional.

SECTION A: GENERAL AI TOOL USAGE

A1 (Required): Do you use any AI tools for work purposes?

- Yes, regularly (at least weekly)
- Yes, occasionally (less than weekly)
- I have tried AI tools for work but do not use them regularly
- No, I do not use AI tools for work

Governance purpose: Establishes baseline usage rates. Frequent users need more targeted follow-up.

A2 (Required if A1 = Yes): Which of the following AI tools have you used for work purposes in the past 3 months? Select all that apply.

- ChatGPT (OpenAI) — free or Plus version
- Microsoft Copilot (built into Word, Excel, Teams, or standalone)
- Google Gemini / Google AI features
- Grammarly or similar writing assistants
- Otter.ai, Fireflies, or other AI meeting transcription tools
- Harvey AI, Clio Duo, or other legal-specific AI tools
- Thomson Reuters CoCounsel, Westlaw AI, or similar research AI
- Intuit AI, H&R; Block AI, or tax/accounting AI tools
- Cursor, GitHub Copilot, or AI coding assistants
- Adobe Firefly, Midjourney, DALL-E, or AI image generation
- Perplexity, Claude, or other AI research/chat tools
- Other — please describe in the next question

Governance purpose: Identifies the specific tools in use. Cover your most likely tools explicitly.

A3 (If applicable): Please list any AI tools you use for work that are not listed above:

- [Open text response]

Governance purpose: Catches tools not covered by the checklist — often the most interesting findings.

A4 (Required if A1 = Yes): How did you start using these AI tools for work?

- I started using them on my own
- A colleague recommended them
- Management or leadership recommended them
- A client or vendor requested we use them
- They are built into software we already use (e.g., Microsoft 365)

Governance purpose: Reveals adoption pathways — helps target where to focus governance interventions.

SECTION B: DATA ENTERED INTO AI TOOLS

B1 (Required if A1 = Yes): What types of information have you entered into AI tools for work? Select all that apply.

- General work tasks (formatting, summarizing, writing — no client information)
- Internal company documents or processes
- Client or patient names
- Client financial information (tax data, account numbers, financial statements)
- Client legal matter details or case information

- Patient health information (PHI) or medical records
- Social Security Numbers or government ID numbers
- Employee personal information
- Confidential business strategy or M&A; information
- I have not entered any sensitive information into AI tools

Governance purpose: This is the most critical question. Identifies actual data exposure risk.

B2: Have you ever uploaded or pasted a client document into an AI tool?

- Yes, frequently
- Yes, occasionally
- Yes, once or twice
- No, never

Governance purpose: Assesses document-level exposure beyond just data fields.

B3: Did you know whether the AI tool you used retained or trained on your inputs?

- Yes, I reviewed the terms and confirmed my data is not used for training
- I assumed my data was not used but did not verify
- I was not sure and did not check
- No, I did not consider this

Governance purpose: Reveals awareness gaps. Most staff have never reviewed vendor data use terms.

SECTION C: GOVERNANCE AND GUIDANCE

C1 (Required): Have you received any guidance from [ORGANIZATION NAME] on how to use AI tools appropriately for work?

- Yes, I received clear written guidance
- Yes, there was some informal guidance but nothing formal
- I have heard general mentions but no specific guidance
- No, I have received no guidance on AI tool use at work

Governance purpose: Establishes baseline of current governance awareness.

C2: If you have concerns about whether an AI tool is appropriate for work use, what would you do?

- Ask my manager
- Ask IT
- Decide for myself based on my judgment
- Not use the tool to be safe

- I am not sure who to ask

Governance purpose: Identifies gaps in escalation pathways — critical for governance program design.

C3: What would help you most in using AI tools appropriately at work? Select all that apply.

- A clear list of approved tools I can use
- Training on what types of information I should not enter into AI tools
- Written policy explaining the rules
- Examples of appropriate vs. inappropriate AI use
- A way to easily get approval for new tools I want to try

Governance purpose: Identifies what staff actually need — use this to design your governance program.

ANALYZING YOUR RESULTS

What You Find	What It Means	Immediate Action
Staff using tools not on any approved list	Shadow AI in active use — unknown regulatory and data protection risk	Add to inventory. Evaluate immediately. Communicate status within 2 weeks.
Client data entered into public AI tools	Potential AICPA ET, ABA Rule 1.6, or HIPAA violation depending on data type and tool	Assess specific tools and data. Legal counsel review if PHI or privilege involved. Policy update required.
Staff unaware of any AI governance policy	Governance gap — policy exists but is not reaching staff	Prioritize policy communication and training before additional policy development.
Staff unsure who to ask about AI tools	Governance structure gap — no clear owner or escalation path	Designate AI governance owner. Communicate name and contact to all staff.
Widespread use of a single unapproved tool	Likely a tool meeting a real business need — governance opportunity, not just a threat	Evaluate tool for approval with appropriate controls rather than simply banning it.

Ready to Get Started?