

B2–C1 Worksheet: When AI Anxiety Pushes Workers to Band Together

Article

In offices and call centres, new AI tools are no longer a distant rumour on the horizon. Managers roll out assistants that draft emails, summarise meetings and score customer chats, while staff quietly keep an eye on what the software is tracking. For some, automation feels like a shortcut to higher productivity; for others, it sounds like a warning bell. If your targets rise but your training stays thin, it is easy to feel you are in the same boat - only the boat is taking on water.

That uncertainty is changing how people respond. Instead of shrugging and hoping to get ahead of the curve, some employees speak up in team meetings and ask for clearer rules. Others push back against constant surveillance, arguing that a dashboard cannot replace judgement. In a few workplaces, colleagues band together to compare notes on workloads, errors and the risk of becoming redundant. It is not always about pay: it can be about transparency, dignity and the right to draw a line around what is monitored.

Employers, meanwhile, worry about backlash if staff think the tech is being used to cut corners. The smartest leaders do not just buy software and move on. They set out what AI will and will not do, offer proper training, and create a simple grievance route when decisions feel unfair. Used well, automation can remove boring admin and free people to do better work. Used badly, it can erode trust fast - and the conversation shifts from tools to power.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The article says AI tools are already being introduced in ordinary workplaces.
2. According to the article, staff are completely unaware of what AI systems track.
3. The writer suggests some employees are asking for clearer rules about new tools.
4. The article claims pushback is mainly about getting higher salaries.
5. The article implies surveillance dashboards may miss important human judgement.
6. The writer says employers can face backlash if people think AI is used to cut corners.
7. The article argues that training is unnecessary because AI is always intuitive.
8. The writer concludes that poor AI rollouts can damage trust quickly.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. on the horizon	A. introduce something new gradually
2. roll out	B. likely to happen soon
3. keep an eye on	C. set a clear limit on what is acceptable
4. in the same boat	D. do something cheaply or quickly by reducing quality or effort
5. get ahead of the curve	E. say something when you might otherwise stay quiet
6. speak up	F. join as a group for a shared purpose
7. push back	G. watch something carefully
8. band together	H. resist or object to something
9. draw a line	I. prepare early so you are in a better position than others
10. cut corners	J. in the same situation as others

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. automation	A. doubt
2. productivity	B. monitoring
3. uncertainty	C. instruction
4. surveillance	D. efficiency
5. redundant	E. strong negative reaction
6. transparency	F. formal complaint
7. dignity	G. use of machines for tasks
8. backlash	H. openness
9. training	I. self-respect
10. grievance	J. no longer needed

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. Have AI tools been rolled out where you work or study? What changed?
2. What do you think employers should keep an eye on: outcomes or process?
3. Have you ever felt you were in the same boat as colleagues under pressure?
4. When do you usually speak up, and when do you stay quiet?
5. Would you push back if software monitored your day-to-day work?
6. Have you ever banded together with others to solve a problem?
7. Where would you draw a line on workplace monitoring?
8. Have you seen people cut corners to hit targets? What happened?

Student B

1. Does automation mainly boost productivity, or does it increase uncertainty? Explain.
2. Is workplace surveillance ever justified, or does it undermine dignity?
3. What kind of transparency should employees expect when AI affects decisions?
4. How should organisations handle backlash when new tools change roles quickly?
5. Should workers need a formal grievance route for algorithmic decisions? Why?
6. How can companies reduce the risk of staff becoming redundant as AI improves?
7. What responsibilities do managers have to get ahead of the curve ethically?
8. In the long run, will AI make people more likely to band together at work?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=T, 2=F, 3=T, 4=F, 5=T, 6=T, 7=F, 8=T

Phrase Match: 1=B, 2=A, 3=G, 4=J, 5=I, 6=E, 7=H, 8=F, 9=C, 10=D

Synonym Match: 1=G, 2=D, 3=A, 4=B, 5=J, 6=H, 7=I, 8=E, 9=C, 10=F