



Top 2026 investment areas

**Team training
and AI tools**



Businesses' focus area in 2026

**Improved
productivity**



Key area for additional support

Technology

BUSINESSES SET SIGHTS ON GROWTH THROUGH INVESTMENT IN AI AND TEAM TRAINING IN 2026

- A third of UK businesses plan to invest in AI tools (33%), while over a third will be making investments in team training in 2026 (35%)
- Firms' top focus area is improving productivity (42%)
- Over a third of companies also say they'll need extra support in technology (35%) to achieve their 2026 goals

UK businesses are looking to unlock new growth opportunities in 2026 by developing their teams and expanding their use of AI tools, according to Lloyds' Business Barometer.

The survey of 1,200 firms reveals that over a third of UK businesses plan to invest in team training (35%) next year, while a similar proportion will focus on AI tools (33%). These strategic moves aim to position firms to take advantage of emerging growth opportunities in an increasingly fast-paced market.

The survey showed that businesses' top priorities for 2026 will be boosting their productivity (42%), upskilling their teams (39%), and strengthening technological capabilities (37%). When reflecting on operational and investment priorities, most firms identify technology (35%) and productivity (35%) as areas where they will need additional support to achieve their 2026 goals, followed by upskilling (31%) and expanding global reach (25%).

Research from [Lloyds Business Barometer](#) earlier in 2025 found that 82% of UK firms using AI reported increased productivity, underscoring the potential benefits of digital investment.

Lloyds is already investing heavily in AI education, running initiatives such as a six-month 'Leading with AI' programme with Cambridge University and an AI Academy for all staff. In 2025, Lloyds hosted its largest-ever Data & AI Summer School, delivering more than 250 sessions to equip colleagues with cutting-edge data and advanced AI skills.

Paul Kempster, Managing Director for Commercial Banking Coverage, Lloyds Business & Commercial Banking said: "These are investment priorities that will support businesses' long-term growth, helping them capitalise on new opportunities that arise in the year ahead, but also build a firm foundation well beyond 2026.

"Whatever their ambitions for the new year, we'll continue to be with businesses every step of the way, providing our support to help them achieve their objectives and make critical investments for growth."

Lloyds is the UK's largest digital bank with one third of its staff working in technology roles, including software

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engineering, data science and cyber security.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1 Overall business confidence is a measure of responses from surveyed companies, which is calculated as an average based on their views on business prospects and optimism on the UK economy.

2 The long-term average for business confidence is calculated as the average since the survey began in 2002, taking into account the expansion of the survey's sample size at the start of 2018 when firms with turnover below £1m were included for the first time.

- The Business Barometer results provide early signals about UK economic trends. The survey started in January 2002 and research is carried out monthly on behalf of Lloyds Bank by BVA BDRC. This survey was conducted with 1,200 companies between 28th November and 12th December 2025.
- To understand more about how the Business Barometer compares to other confidence surveys, read our report [here](#).
- The results are re-weighted to match proportions by sector, region and size of the total business population, as published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy and the Office for National Statistics. Net balances are calculated by deducting the percentage of negative responses from the percentage of positive responses. Prior to January 2018, the fieldwork was based on telephone responses of 200-300 companies with annual turnover above £1 million.
- The overall 'balance' of business confidence opinion weighs up the percentage of firms that are positive in outlook against those that are negative and gives a net balance on a scale of -100% to 100%, where a score of 0 would mean there was an even balance of positive and negative sentiment.
- Net balances are calculated by deducting the percentage of negative responses from the percentage of positive responses.
- Prior to January 2018, the fieldwork was based on telephone responses of 200-300 companies with annual turnover above £1 million.

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