ANALYSIS · FRANÇOIS TESSIER · SEPTEMBER 2026

AI Adoption in Public Service Media

The Speakeasy and the Front Page: ban it, let it run, or enable it



François Tessier
AI Strategy & Deployment · Digital Transformation · Digital Media Production

realisationtessier.ca · francois@realisationtessier.ca · LinkedIn

The Speakeasy and the Front Page

Ban AI and it goes underground. Let it run and it ends up in the headlines. Public media need a third door.

Twelve months of public evidence, from Sydney to Mainz to London, point the same way: AI is already inside every public broadcaster. The open question is no longer whether staff use it. It is whether leadership can see it, steer it, and prove what it is worth.

AI DISCLOSURE: HOW THIS BRIEF WAS PRODUCED WITH CLAUDE

1. **Editorial positioning** — the author, François Tessier, sets the questions, the tone, the editorial point of view, the thesis and the limits of the brief.
2. **AI-assisted research** — the literature review and the gathering of public sources were carried out with Claude.
3. **Verification and judgment** — every source was opened and validated by the author, over successive iterations.
4. **Writing and production** — structure, argument, figures and layout settled by the author.

François Tessier · September 2026 · public sources published between September 23, 2025 and September 23, 2026

AI is already inside the building

Staff adopted it before their employers did. Everywhere we looked, the policy is chasing the curve.

68%

of Canadian employees use AI at work

Léger AI Index 2026

46%

use AI tools their employer has not approved

Léger AI Index 2026

61%

have received no AI training on the job

Léger AI Index 2026

56%

of UK journalists use AI every week; only 32% say their newsroom trains them

Reuters Institute, Nov. 2025

The leaders have noticed. 64% of 280 news executives in 51 countries rate back-office automation as “very important” this year, and 67% have not cut a single job because of AI.

Adoption is no longer the goal. It is the starting condition.

SOURCE: Léger, AI Index 2026 (online survey, May 22 – June 21, 2026; 3,031 workers, 1,050 decision-makers, Canada) · Reuters Institute, AI adoption by UK journalists (Nov. 27, 2025; 1,004 journalists; fieldwork Aug.–Nov. 2024) · Reuters Institute, Trends and Predictions 2026 (Jan. 2026; 280 leaders, 51 countries).

Public broadcasters publish principles, not machinery

What the public record shows of their internal AI apparatus, September 2025 – September 2026

● documented ◐ partial ○ not found in public sources

	RULES OR PRINCIPLES	ENTERPRISE AI TOOL	CHAMPIONS NETWORK	DEDICATED AI ROLES	ADOPTION RESULTS
ABC (Australia)	● Updated guidelines	● Claude, Microsoft tools, in-house ABC Assist	● 100-champion pilot	● Adoption specialist, assurance lead	○ Not yet
BBC (United Kingdom)	● Generative AI guidelines (2024–25)	◐ Pilots (My Club Daily)	○ —	● GenAI programme director	○ —
ZDF (Germany)	● Internal rules on AI material	○ —	○ —	○ —	○ —
Sveriges Radio (Sweden)	○ —	○ —	○ —	● Head of AI	○ —

Principles: everywhere. Machinery: rare. Results: nowhere. The record shows what broadcasters believe, almost never what they measure.

SOURCE: Deutsche Welle (four-pillar strategy) and France Télévisions (medIAenrich, opened to EBU members) show the same pattern. · ABC News, July 6, 2026 · Deadline, Apr. 2026 · EBU, Oct. 2025 and Feb.–Mar. 2026 · AFP, Feb. 2026.

Fear has an address

Resistance is measurable, and it does not live in the same place for everyone.

THE NEWSROOM FEARS FOR TRUST

60%

are extremely concerned about AI's effect on public trust

57%

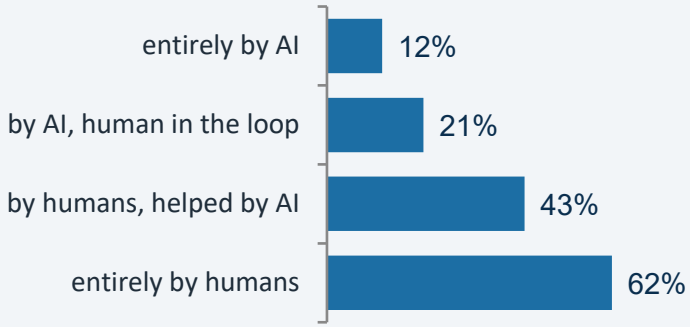
about accuracy

62% vs 15%

see AI as a threat rather than an opportunity

THE AUDIENCE WANTS A HUMAN

Share comfortable with news made…



AI backstage is welcome (55% accept it for grammar correction). AI on stage is not. Trust in news: 37% across 48 markets, the lowest since 2015.

THE EMPLOYEE FEARS FOR THE JOB

44%

of AI-using employees fear their tasks will be reduced or replaced

43%

say they feel overwhelmed

25%

of non-users simply prefer to work without it, up from 17% a year earlier

In newsrooms, fear falls with daily use and rises with knowledge. A policy memo will not reassure a newsroom. Supervised practice will.

SOURCE: Reuters Institute: UK journalists (Nov. 27, 2025; 1,004 respondents); Generative AI and News Report 2025 (Oct. 7, 2025; six countries); Digital News Report 2026 (June 16, 2026; 48 markets) · KPMG Canada, Generative AI Adoption Index (Nov. 2025; consulting firm).

Ban it, and AI moves to the speakeasy

Prohibition does not stop the drinking. It stops you from seeing it.

46%

of Canadian employees use AI tools their employer has not approved: shadow AI

Léger AI Index 2026

72%

say the official tools are hard to access

Léger AI Index 2026

65% vs 31%

executives vs staff using unapproved AI tools in the UK and US: the example comes from the top

TrustedTech / Censuswide, Mar. 2026 (vendor-commissioned)

Most shadow-AI figures come from security vendors with an interest in the problem; Léger's index is the exception.

WHAT THE RECORD SHOWS

1. **Bans get reversed.** Samsung banned external generative AI in 2023 after a source-code leak. In 2026 it opened ChatGPT, Gemini and Claude to its DX division.
2. **Blocked tools come back.** Employees reinstall AI tools after IT revokes them.
3. **The tool is already in the browser.** Most search engines now summarize results with AI by default.
4. **Broadcasters restrict content, not tools.** No public broadcaster announced a blanket ban in the period. DR and NRK temporarily pulled a documentary (Skyggekrigen, The Shadow War) on Sept. 21, 2026, fearing AI could unmask anonymous sources.

The strongest case against a ban is not that it backfires. It is that it fails: use continues, visibility disappears.

SOURCE: CIO.com, 2026 · Vanta via Wikipedia, 2026 · NETendances 2025, Université Laval, Mar. 2026 · The Local Denmark, Sept. 21, 2026.

Let it run, and AI lands on the front page

Every one of these organizations had rules. The rules did not do the checking.

OCT. 2025

EBU / BBC

22 public broadcasters test AI assistants: 45% of answers about the news carry at least one significant issue.

Errors attributed to the broadcasters themselves

NOV. 2025

Politico

An arbitrator rules two AI tools were deployed in breach of the collective agreement.

Both tools shut down, May 2026

FEB. 2026

ZDF

A Sora-generated video airs on the flagship newscast as footage of real immigration raids.

On-air apology, correspondent recalled

MAR. 2026

ABC

Fabricated quotes drawn from an AI-altered video are published.

Correction, breach found by the ombudsman

APR. 2026

New York Times

An AI-generated quote is attributed to a Canadian political leader.

Correction on May 1

4 in 10 Canadian employees have regretted trusting a wrong AI answer. **3 in 10** sometimes use AI output without checking it.

"At its core, this is about the credibility of our reporting." — ZDF editor-in-chief, after the incident. For a public broadcaster, one fabricated quote is paid for in trust, then in the debate over public funding.

SOURCE: EBU, Oct. 22, 2025 · NewsGuild, Dec. 2025 and May 2026 · AFP via Delta News, Feb. 2026 · Mediaweek, 2026; vibegraveyard.ai (secondary) · The Walrus, May 2026 · Léger AI Index 2026.

Everyone is using it. Almost no one can prove it.

The real gap is neither access nor ethics. It is evidence.

93%

of Canadian organizations use generative AI

KPMG Canada, Nov. 2025

79%

of employees say it makes them more productive

KPMG Canada, Nov. 2025

2%

of organizations measure a return

KPMG Canada, Nov. 2025

46%

of AI-using organizations see no measurable gain yet; 3% report significant business impact

Léger AI Index 2026

21%

track how AI tools are used

Léger AI Index 2026

THE WHITE SPACE ON THE MAP

In twelve months of public sources, we found no public broadcaster that has published a measure of its shadow AI, or the results of its enablement program.

Whoever publishes first will set the benchmark the others are measured against.

SOURCE: KPMG Canada, Generative AI Adoption Index (Nov. 2025; consulting firm) · Léger, AI Index 2026 (May–June 2026) · Search window: Sept. 23, 2025 – Sept. 23, 2026, French and English public sources.

Three doors. Only one opens onto value.

What each option unlocks, what it costs, where it has been tried, and how the third one works

A Lock it down

Unlocks — Visible control of data and sources; a clear answer to unions and regulators.

Costs — Little money, a lot of blindness: use carries on off the books.

Where — Samsung, 2023, reversed in 2026.

B Let it run

Unlocks — Speed of experimentation.

Costs — Reputational and legal exposure: ZDF, ABC, Politico.

Where — No one claims it. It exists wherever rules go unenforced.

C Enable

Unlocks — A legitimate channel for the use that already exists, and the data to steer it.

Costs — Licences, dedicated roles, champions' time, months of negotiation.

Where — ABC since June 2026; Samsung 2026; BBC pilots.

I CHOOSE C: GOVERN TO ENABLE

Guardrails are not brakes. They are what lets you take the curve at speed.

1 Clear guardrails

Simple, role-specific rules; graduated disclosure.

2 A legitimate tool

An approved option that beats the personal account.

3 People who carry it

Champions, office hours, adoption and assurance roles.

4 A pipeline, not a pile of pilots

Sandbox, pilot with a metric, then scale or stop (author's model).

5 A licence to operate

Notice and consultation built into the rollout.

SOURCE: CIO.com, 2026 · ABC News, July 6, 2026 · Deadline, Apr. 2026 · NewsGuild, Dec. 2025 and May 2026 · AFP, Feb. 2026 · KPMG Canada, Nov. 2025.

Measure the value, then move: the first 90 days

A credible AI scorecard has four families of indicators. Most organizations track one.

USAGE

Active users, frequency, approved vs unapproved

73%

of Canadian AI users use it weekly

VALUE

Use cases in production, time reinvested, costs avoided

2%

of organizations measure a return

RISK

Incidents, corrections, sensitive data in prompts

14%

have entered private financial data

CLIMATE

Staff sentiment, training coverage, negotiated clauses

83% vs 48%

want training vs find it sufficient

FOUR MOVES IN 90 DAYS

1. **Take the baseline.** An anonymous survey of AI use, approved and unapproved, and of skills. Co-designed with staff representatives, aligned on a national index so results compare from day one.
2. **Build one registry.** Every AI asset, tool and initiative in one place, each with an owner, a risk level and a stage.
3. **Open the legitimate channel.** An approved tool, a first cohort of champions, weekly office hours. Make the right way the easy way.
4. **Run three cases through the pipeline.** Chosen with business leaders, a success metric set before launch, reported at day 90 on the four-family scorecard.

At day 90, leadership holds a map of real use, a first registry, a trained cohort and three measured cases: numbers no public broadcaster has published yet.

SOURCE: KPMG Canada, Generative AI Adoption Index (Nov. 2025; self-reported; consulting firm).

What will separate the leaders from the rest

A stated conviction, and what would prove it wrong

The public broadcaster that leads the AI decade will not be the one with the most tools. It will be the one that can show, in public, what its AI is worth and what it is not allowed to do.

Trust is the product. Evidence is how you keep it.

WHAT WOULD INVALIDATE THIS THESIS

- A controlled study showing unapproved use is the same under a ban and under enablement.
- A champions pilot followed by no rise in approved use.
- Incidents as frequent in “enabling” organizations as anywhere else.
- Limits: no study measures shadow AI inside a public broadcaster; most shadow-AI figures come from vendors; ABC’s pilot is too recent to show results.

SOURCES · SEPT. 2025 – SEPT. 2026

ABC News, July 6, 2026
AFP via Delta News, Feb. 2026
CIO.com, Samsung, 2026
Deadline, BBC, Apr. 2026
EBU, Oct. 22, 2025; Feb. 2026
KPMG Canada, Nov. 2025 (consulting firm)
Léger, AI Index 2026, Sept. 2026
Mediaweek, ABC, 2026
NETendances 2025, Université Laval, Mar. 2026
NewsGuild, Dec. 2025; May 2026
Reuters Institute, Generative AI and News, Oct. 2025
Reuters Institute, UK journalists, Nov. 2025
Reuters Institute, Trends and Predictions, Jan. 2026
Reuters Institute, Digital News Report, June 2026
Statistics Canada, June 17, 2026
The Local Denmark, Sept. 21, 2026
The Walrus, May 2026
TrustedTech / Censuswide, Mar. 2026 (vendor)
Vanta via Wikipedia, 2026 (vendor, secondary)
vibegraveyard.ai, 2026 (secondary)

FRANÇOIS TESSIER

Is your organization facing this challenge?

Let’s talk. A first conversation is often enough to frame the question, name what is blocking it and see where to start.

francois@realisationtessier.ca

realisationtessier.ca

LinkedIn · François Tessier

Montréal · Services in English and French

Seeing what’s possible. Making it real.