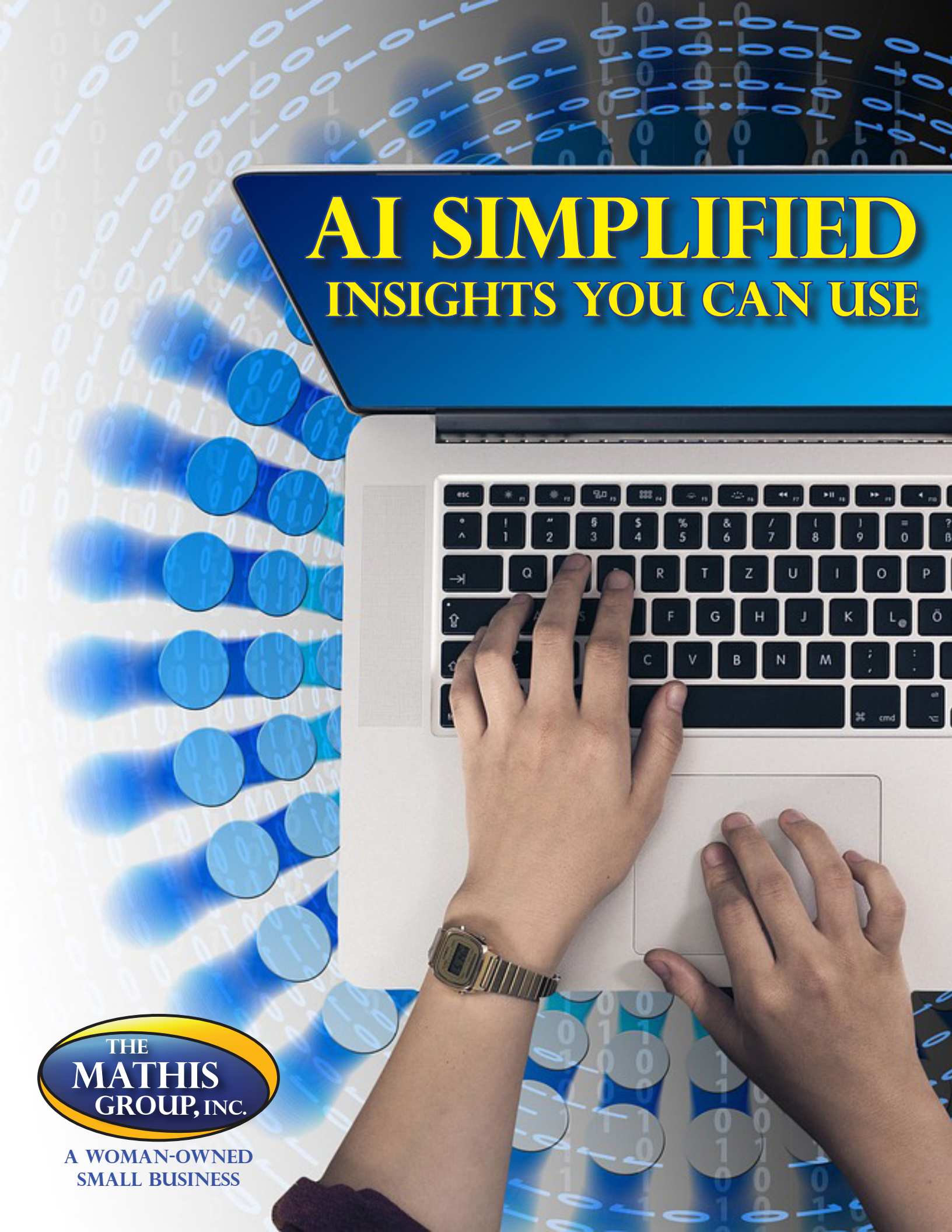
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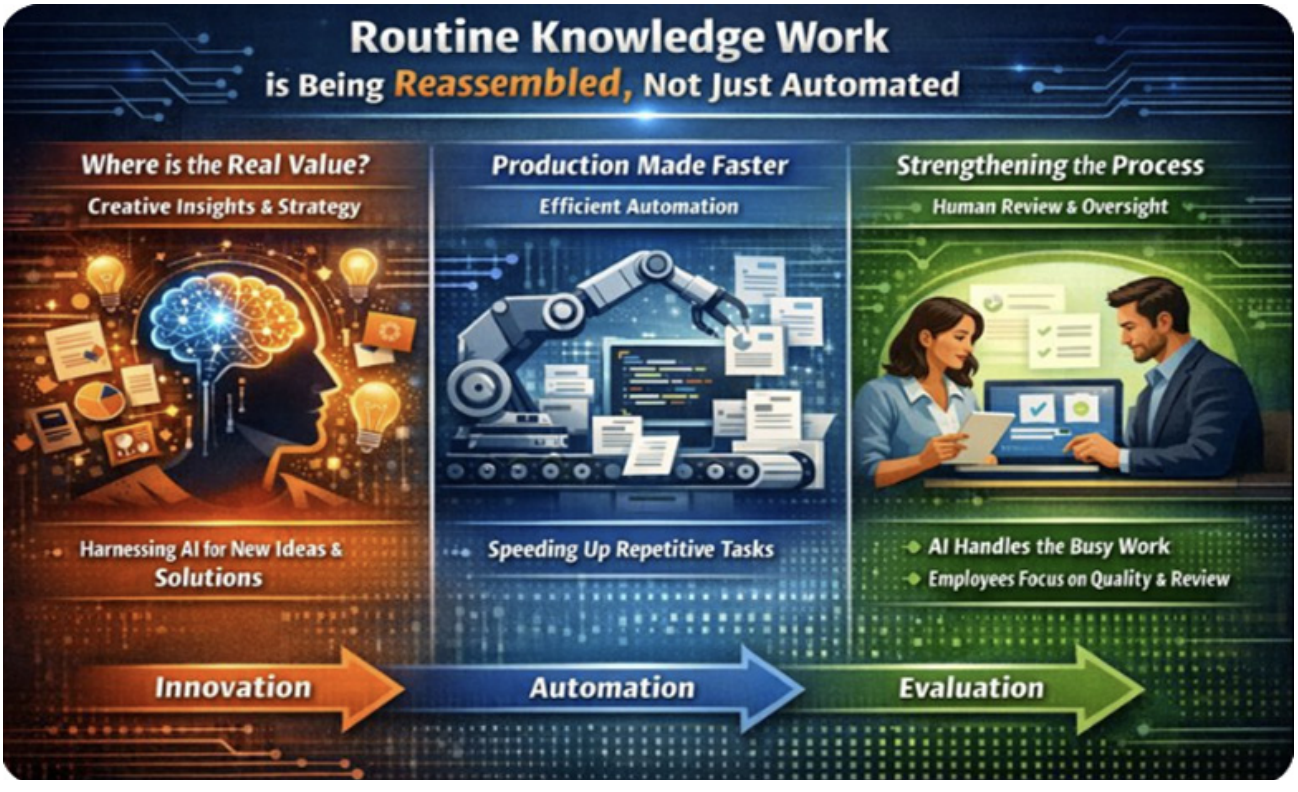
JANUARY 2026 AI NEWSLETTER
DISRUPTION OR TRANSFORMATION? UNDERSTANDING THE NEW WORK LANDSCAPE

Workers are always looking at the current job market and making projections on the future. Some jobs remain the same regardless of which technology becomes part of the new foundation, while others must learn new skills. This is no different with the advancement of artificial intelligence into the current workforce. AI will replace some jobs, while others will use it as a tool to make their jobs easier and faster. Keeping a human in the loop of the AI process appears to be the common direction for most organizations as they begin implementing this new technology. This increases feelings of trust and control, whereas allowing AI to make decisions autonomously reduces them.

This newsletter will explore changes brought about by AI and allow readers to determine whether it is a disruption, a transformation, or a job shift. Introducing new technology can be viewed as a new tool, much as the shift from 1700 to 1800 with the Industrial Revolution. Organizations began using a new tool, the steam engine, which increased production and workers' power. Using steam increased profits and shortened lead times, but it required reskilling to enable the current workforce to learn the best ways to use it.

ROUTINE KNOWLEDGE WORK IS BEING REASSEMBLED, NOT JUST AUTOMATED



Allowing tools such as software to create emails, summarize meetings, and analyze collected data typically does not make employees fearful because they remain in control of the system. They can shut down the system by disconnecting it if or when it begins making catastrophic errors. Over time, AI will bring this same level of comfort and trust.

Real performance gains for AI and organizations come from increasing productivity, not from shallow AI adoption of novelty tools that are fun to use but do not improve speed or output value. Where can AI make the work faster? Where can it allow employees to spend their time reviewing production rather than manually performing the work? All of this requires a newer, stronger process design to perform work with the technology in a different way than before. Allow technology to do what it does well, while keeping employees as a reviewer or quality control for deliverables and outputs.

When technology and workflow redesign go hand in hand, the results are fewer crises and earlier warnings of potential problems. Early adopters report stronger compliance and faster responses or recommendations when issues arise.

Here are some changes one can expect when implementing AI into the daily workplace.

Email and Document Drafting

Because there are so many emails and team messages coming into our inbox, we are inundated with digital communication, which does consume communication but can also suck up an enormous amount of time throughout the day without showing anything productive. By allowing AI to draft many of these emails, reports, and summaries, the human-in-the-loop can review each document and assess whether it meets the required quality and accuracy standards before it is sent. This speeds up interactions and reduces employees' overall workload.

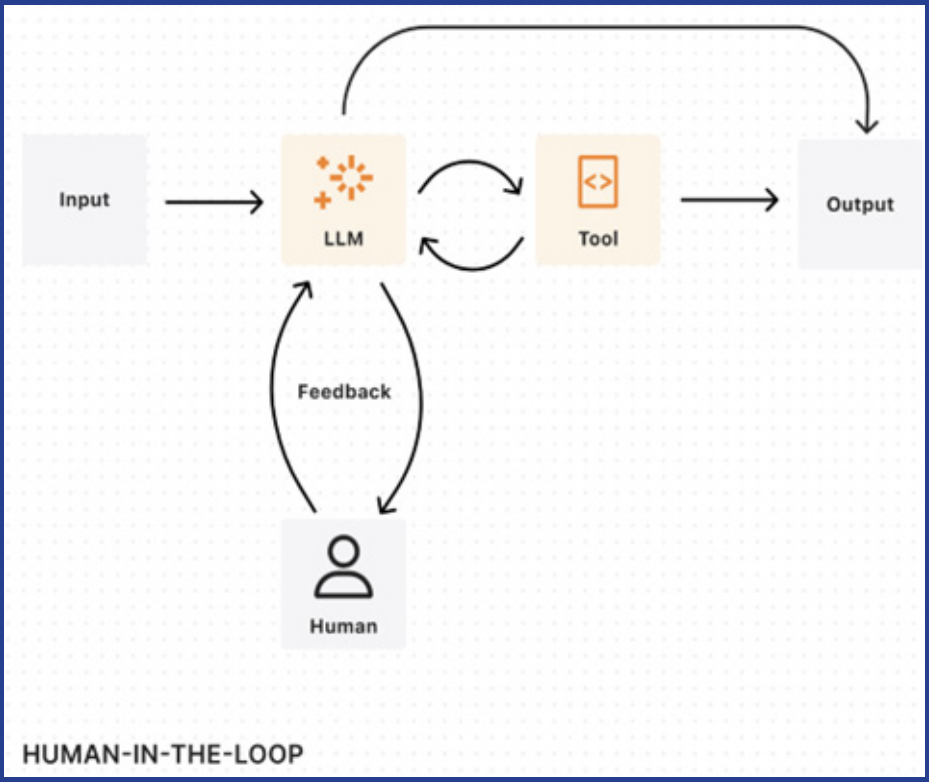
Meeting Capture and Recall

The role of the note taker or scribe in the meeting is often disliked due to the pace and pressure to accurately document every comment while responding to questions and participating in real-time discussions. The adoption of AI for meeting note-taking is achieving significant success, resulting in clear documentation of what was said, who said it, and the actions discussed. Over time, confidence will increase, and more people will use a capture app for this effort, both for ease and correctness. Recently, while listening to a doctoral candidate from another country complete their Ph.D., transcription was enabled in Microsoft Teams. Surprisingly, the transcription accurately captured the terms and addressed the misunderstandings that arose during his speech. The ability of technology to capture the conversation when the team could not is impressive.

First-Pass Data Analysis

Data-driven decision-making should dominate every project management decision. However, many decisions are made based on emotion, with a hint of data to justify the individual's preferred outcome. Allowing AI tools to perform a first pass on data analysis can support current emotional decision-making and challenge those decisions with initial data.

First-pass data analysis does not mean everything is perfect in the research or interpretation of the data; however, it does mean you have a foundational evaluation of the AI's findings. The human-in-the-loop can accept the initial analysis, return it for further review, or reject it as erroneous. Any of these decisions can benefit from reviewing foundational data to justify the current decisions or identify other solutions the team may not have considered.



Allowing AI to conduct a first pass also enables executives on the project or the PMO to gain early insights into the project's status and progress before all final reports are distributed. The PMO director can allow the first passes of the project to be quality-checked or undergo a light-level audit, and begin moving to help those projects that are struggling. This reduces embarrassing mistakes and helps combine speed with skepticism, ultimately enabling strong future decisions.

Content Repurposing Across Channels

Using content in multiple places helps reduce rework and duplication of effort for both the project and team members. Traditional project management often leads to duplication of effort when meeting with various levels within the organization. Management requests milestone charts to show progress; the customer requests delivery dates; and the team discusses task completion. While each of these levels is critical to project progress, they are typically configured differently in the data and require the project manager or team to write, reformat, and edit the material to meet reporting requirements.

One key benefit of using AI is the ability to leverage data across a variety of social settings and slide decks when presenting to different groups. In many cases, team members and project managers know that repackaging data is a "once and done" process because AI can change formats in seconds.

Quality & Compliance Guardrails

Maintaining high quality while delivering faster performance is critical. Faster outputs invite sloppier work unless the team monitors metrics and maintains a consistent approach to creating, reviewing, and providing feedback to management. Hence, they understand what is happening regarding speed.

In addition to collecting and tracking critical metrics, one can audit various areas of the project to verify that all systems function correctly and as intended.

ROLES ARE SUPPORTING "T-SHAPED": ONE DEPTH + BROAD ADJACENT SKILLS

"T-shaped" is a modern term that means broader and deeper. When comparing this phrase to AI projects, one is looking for ways to deepen team roles and broaden content to build new skills. T-shaped workers are expanding and changing not only in their skill sets but also in how they think and evaluate information. Expanding each worker's skill set reduces handoffs across different skills and accelerates work, while supporting the development of new skills.

Marketer

A marketing project uses AI to create two campaigns, each with a different headline, to reach the target customer group. It leverages AI to split a test group into two segments to gather feedback and observe their behavior. With this data, one can determine which headline is more effective for the niche group.

Analyst

Collecting data is essential in any research; however, one must be able to collect, analyze, and use it to present recommendations to the customer. One of the best ways to present recommendations is after the customer understands what the data is telling about their project or organization. One of the best ways to present data is through visual charts, which are straightforward to interpret. The charts are easily created with AI in a few minutes, and if one version is unclear, another can be generated in moments. The goal of making the charts is clarity, not showmanship. Presenting data in charts, labeling the results, and explaining how the data differs from or aligns with prior versions can help everyone understand organizational change.

AI Engineer

As technology evolves, the nature of each person's job changes, and the work environment is shaped by technological factors. Typically, AI engineering focuses on designing and training custom models, which is highly critical to the AI environment.

Traditionally, AI engineering focused heavily on designing and training custom models. Today, much of the work has shifted. Integrating foundational large language models is a new driver that all engineering roles need and use to influence how AI is used. Including large language models requires systems engineering capabilities that enable a person to work across infrastructure and data applications and to influence the user experience.

The foundational skills and work for AI engineers go beyond building and training customer models; they also include deploying models, versioning models with new training data, and rolling them out. Lastly, the AI engineer works closely with Machine Learning Operations (MLOps), which focuses on model lifecycle management. Lifecycle management helps users understand how the model typically operates, improving the evaluation of its output.

Also, the AI engineer is responsible for monitoring and detecting model drift. Drift detection is the systematic process of identifying when an AI model is not performing correctly. Because AI models must be updated periodically with new data, they are constantly working with the latest data, which prevents AI from being installed and then left to run on its own, thinking it will work forever. This technology requires ongoing adjustments and retraining to ensure it works effectively. If the data is not consistently updated, AI will hallucinate and generate responses that sound correct but are not.

Project Manager

As AI becomes more common in project management, PMs and teams will use it to draft business cases, charters, and project plans, enabling AI to demonstrate its strength in resource planning and risk mitigation. Beginning with customized drafts will speed up the planning process. AI's ability to identify gaps, ask questions, or highlight missing areas could help reduce deficiencies in project experience when gathering requirements.

Currently, project managers spend significant time monitoring performance to ensure the project stays on schedule and on budget. However, with AI, project managers and teams will use automated systems that track and provide early warning if something is not performing correctly. Allowing technology to provide this level of monitoring and send automated reports and warnings helps those responsible to begin corrective action quickly.

AI can also assist project managers in aligning with the organization's strategic outcomes and goals. In any project, it is easy to include goals that do not align with the original organizational goals. AI will support oversight of these goals and provide early warnings to ensure that project decisions remain sound.

Data Scientist

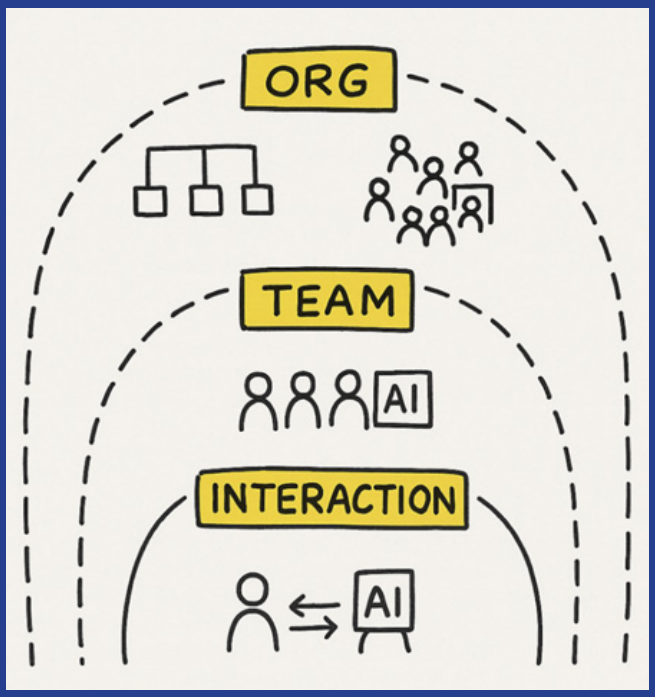
Data scientists may be a relatively new role for many organizations, compared with the typical IT positions. As AI becomes more dominant, organizations are failing to account for the new roles and requirements of working with it.

A data scientist is a professional who collects, prepares, analyzes, and interprets large and complex datasets to generate insights, build predictive models, and support data-driven decision-making. They combine skills in statistics, programming, machine learning, and domain knowledge to turn raw data into actionable insights that help organizations solve problems, improve performance, and anticipate future outcomes.

In today's AI-driven environment, a data scientist also plays a critical role in evaluating, guiding, and governing AI models to ensure they are accurate, responsible, and aligned with organizational goals.

Because this is a new position, it will take time to clarify its roles and responsibilities; however, over time, the trust and roles will become more transparent and precise. As the AI role grows, more of its duties will be automated, freeing time to focus on strategy rather than day-to-day tasks.

CHANGES IN TEAM DYNAMICS WITH AI TOOLS



Due to new roles and responsibilities, organizations will be forced to adopt AI tools in the workplace or risk falling behind competitors. These technologies facilitate real-time data analysis and project management, enabling teams to be more efficient in coordinating with and working with current data and events within the project. Organizations that benefit from AI tools must be proactive in training teams in these technologies, so they have a solid foundation in AI and know when to use the tool and when to defer to human judgment. The stronger the team is at using these tools in project management, the better and faster data-driven decisions can be made, and potential problems can be averted.

Additionally, supporting the employee base in AI adoption is critical to helping them understand how to use artificial intelligence ethically and when and how to make decisions based on its outputs. This understanding shifts the organization's culture and dynamics toward a supportive stance rather than an AI-averse one. Teams must understand the proper use of AI and how to make decisions based on the data and the predictions it provides at any given time.

The transformative role of artificial intelligence in remote work and project management introduces both opportunities and challenges.

Opportunities in AI Interaction

Opportunities continue to focus on its predictive role: making suggestions, offering ideas, and conducting analysis earlier than a human counterpart. Any of these can help notice a problem earlier rather than later and prevent it from escalating and becoming more severe over time. As artificial intelligence continues to mature and organizations develop new skills, it can benefit all parties by establishing stricter rules, guidelines, and best practices for using currently available tools and those developed in the future.

Accelerated Skill Development for Career Growth

A critical area often overlooked is the use of AI to create customized training programs for employees. Each of these programs can emphasize any area where individuals need to expand their skill set, and it strengthens them with practice and competency tests to verify understanding and application of the new material. An example is a junior developer who wants to learn advanced coding. AI can pair programmers and reduce training time from years to months by using a mentorship model. This accelerates the junior programmer's training and enables the mentor to provide valuable guidance and instruction.

Real-Time Learning Through AI Assistance

Real-time learning puts education at everyone's fingertips. Anything one needs or wants to know can be presented in a lesson, slide deck, or study guide to explain the principles and techniques in context. Because real-time learning is so popular, more workers are using AI tools to browse rather than Google or Microsoft Bing. Those seeking information want full details on the subject, not just a brief definition.

Enhanced Creative Collaboration and Innovation

Collaboration and innovation are where AI tools shine. The ability to outline, create a case study, or find research and scholarly material in seconds helps researchers generate more creative ideas. AI helps researchers generate new ideas and test them in new ways.

Rapid Prototyping

Prototyping helps create a visual of the customer's desired product. The prototype allows everyone to see and understand the tool's output. Rapid prototypes can be a drawing or a set of sketches, a 3D model, or drawings to be rendered by a 3D printer to produce the product. Given the speed of AI, a product team might work with stakeholders and review 15 mockups.

Challenges in AI Interaction

There are enormous challenges associated with AI interaction and modern business. Many business professionals continue to view AI through a negative lens, focusing on scams, deepfakes, and everything they see go wrong with this technology. These challenges are not new; they arise from the circumstances surrounding them. However, the modern business world would never consider eliminating the Internet, given its many benefits and favorable conditions. These same ideas will eventually extend to artificial intelligence as workers and companies become more comfortable controlling its components.

There are two primary challenges in AI interaction: how much human interaction is required for this work, and how to shift the culture to be supportive of AI rather than negative toward it.

Human Interaction: How Much?

The amount of human interaction an organization requires when running AI depends on what the AI is attempting to accomplish. If the work could affect an individual's life or death, human interaction must be involved at every stage of the process. However, in some cases, AI works behind the scenes, analyzing data and generating predictions and recommendations for project managers and team members. These individuals are the ones who accept or reject each recommendation. Still, they do not necessarily need to monitor every piece of analysis AI is performing in the background. In some cases, this analysis is part of the black-box theory, which is hidden from the average person and does not add value to knowing how it works, except that it is working and making predictions that align with project goals.

One of the best ideas companies can adopt, especially at the outset, is to ensure that all artificial intelligence systems include a human oversight and interaction component. Allowing humans to be in the loop with AI is one of the safest ways to ensure tools function in ways that support the organization and minimize wrongdoing.

Supportive Culture

The idea that AI will always support the goals of companies and individuals is unrealistic. For example, AI could be asked to review resumes and recommend the top five candidates. In this situation, the AI tool may be biased toward the people it is recommending. Because this could harm potential employees by excluding some from the top five categories, it would require a human-in-the-loop to verify that bias is reduced and that all qualified individuals are evaluated and included in the recommendation pool. The challenges posed by bias in AI decisions, compared to human choices, will likely continue to grow as more complex AI tools are developed and expanded across a broader range of project scenarios.

FOSTERING A CULTURE OF COLLABORATION WITH AI

The evolution of artificial intelligence has just begun, particularly in generative AI and its impact on the typical workplace. As technology continues to evolve, fostering a culture of AI collaboration is essential to the organization's success and to minimizing AI resistance. There are organizations today that promote a culture of resistance to AI, focus on the negatives, and remove any possibility of artificial intelligence from their business. This type of mechanism might be one of the worst decisions an organization can make in the long term and ultimately prove very defeating because it leaves out such powerful technology.

Because AI is projected to make a considerable difference across all types of organizations and in how it works with customers, making better decisions is essential to understanding the evolving landscape and helping organizations navigate these complexities through communication. A culture that emphasizes communication and collaboration among AI systems will be four times more effective than one that rules out AI as unnecessary across the industry. Most people in the organization can identify areas where artificial intelligence can accelerate their work and improve efficiency without compromising ethics or security. Effective leadership will help transform the organization's mindset and culture, enabling the workforce to use AI in certain circumstances but not in others. This type of leadership not only supports innovation but also addresses employee attitudes, helping them embrace technology while upholding

current security standards and ethical guidelines. Building this level of adaptability and resilience within an organization keeps it fresh, current, and ready to move forward, rather than one stuck in the past and eventually no longer competitive.

Fostering a culture of collaboration with AI can begin when executives create teams to explore the various ways artificial intelligence is or can be used within the industry. This enables a proactive approach to assessing whether AI can be beneficial in specific areas of the organization. In most organizations, this team will discover where AI can be helpful without jeopardizing security or ethics. In addition, this team can recommend where to use AI and, in some cases, identify the competitors' use of it that they may want to replicate to gain a competitive advantage. In other situations, this team might notice employees use AI in a way that would create a hostile environment for the company. The team can also reinforce the reasons these areas should be avoided and explain why they recommend avoiding artificial intelligence in those ways.

In closing, addressing the challenges associated with both the perception and the reality of artificial intelligence must be faced in any current or new work landscape. As organizations begin to leverage generative AI technologies, concerns will surface not only in the areas everyone is hearing about but also in new areas as the technology matures. When dealing with these situations, it is essential to determine how much and in which areas a human-in-the-loop approach will reduce security risks and increase comfort for the organization and its employees. Addressing these challenges will require a nuanced approach to policy and practice, as well as a practical way to harness AI to unlock its future potential and opportunities.

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