

CTT

Centre for
Trustworthy
Technology

Human Resources in the Age of AI

Part 1: Benefits and Development Factors for AI in HR



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Our vision

Our vision is to empower all through the responsible integration and use of innovative and potentially disruptive technologies.



Our mission

Our mission is to guide organizations in understanding, preparing for, and leveraging transformative and trustworthy technologies, thereby promoting a future where technological innovation benefits all.



Our core values

Our core values include Collaboration, Global inclusivity, Human-Centered outcomes, Being Action-Oriented, Passionate and Committed to Learning & Educating.



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Foreword

With growing numbers of job applicants, the complexity of managing a distributed workforce, and HR's evolving role as a value driver and strategic partner in the organization, it is no longer a question of whether HR teams need to adopt AI. As AI is beginning to proliferate workplace technologies, the questions are, how can AI be used to enhance HR operations, remove human bias in employment decision making, and most importantly comply with longstanding civil rights laws. Investors, developers, and deployers all must ask how will AI account for these protections and help their current and future workforces prosper.

AI is already being used in HR in a variety of ways, from screening and hiring to skills assessment and development to productivity tracking and targeted upskilling. In these and many other applications, AI is already delivering on the expected benefits of productivity, efficiency, cost reduction, workforce development, and removal of bias. On its face, the technology that can break through some of HR's most challenging obstacles has arrived just in time, and the path ahead is lined with benefits and opportunity.

This technology, however, does not come without risk – to the organization, the employees, and society. AI is simultaneously a valuable tool and one that must be carefully managed and governed. However, as you will learn, they are actually two sides of the same AI coin. More than that, however, because AI can independently perform many functions at scale, its risks and liability also emerge at scale. If the results of the AI tool violate longstanding laws, such as anti-discrimination laws, it is the organization utilizing AI that will face the the ramifications to the courts and ultimately the public.

Accepting the compelling reasons for AI adoption in HR, which there are many, is only the first step. Equally important is understanding the use and application within your organization and the correlating governance structures. Even though, AI is a complex technology that is unfamiliar in many ways to HR professionals it should not be a deterrent towards embracing such technologies. At the end of the day, there is only a finite amount of employment decisions, all of which organizations have been making since the industrial revolution modernized workplace policies. Bringing AI into the HR picture is

disruptive to the old ways of working, and change is hard, but relying on status quo, has not decreased the volume of employment discrimination claims and fines companies receive each year.

With any business transformation, the foundational step is attaining the knowledge needed to go forward. Fortunately, when it comes to AI's use in HR there is no shortage of primers on AI functionality or summaries of its potential benefits and risks. More valuable, however, is a narrow investigation of AI specifically in the HR context. What capabilities does it offer? What opportunities are on the horizon? What are the lessons learned and the most impactful risks? Building a foundation of AI literacy empowers HR professionals to think critically about this transformative moment and make strategic decisions and investments that are not just good for the organization. This also allows vendors to design the tools in accordance with trusted HR practices, benefiting not only the market, but the workforce as well.

This series by the Centre For Trustworthy Technology, supports developers, deployers, and HR professionals on their journey to transform employment practices through transparent and non-biased employment decision making. It is intended to serve as a catalyst for the conversations HR teams are having in organizations in every sector and industry. The factors and questions presented help structure thinking about human-centered approach to HR technology investments and change management, all with an eye to avoid unwanted outcomes. Whether HR is just getting started with AI or is already reaping its benefits, this series offers insights that help set AI projects on a trajectory to delivering the value HR seeks with technology that can be trusted.

Carefully designed and properly used with trust and governance at the forefront, AI holds enormous potential for HR. With these principles in mind, AI can help organizations find the most skilled employees all while enhancing the workplace experience. AI will continue to ensure human employees will still be an organization's most valuable resource. Far from fear of job displacement, AI is opening the door to a world where diverse and inclusive workforces can reach for new heights of productivity and creativity. HR can and should lead us there.

Hon. Keith E. Sonderling,
Former Commissioner (2020-2024)
United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

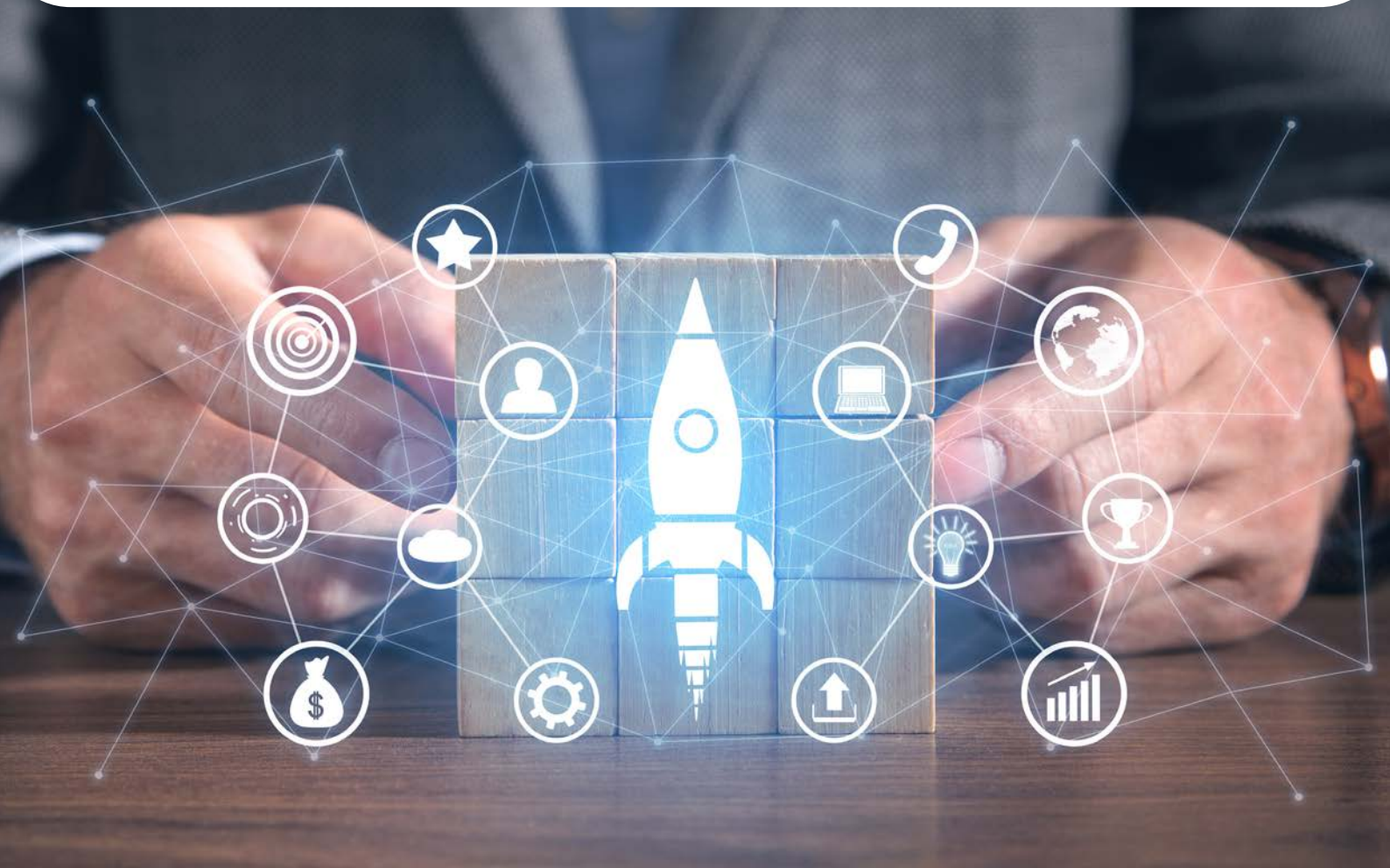
Introduction

The growth and maturity of AI promises to lift organizations to new heights of productivity and efficiency – but there is growing concern it could erase jobs as it does. The International Monetary Fund estimates about 60% of jobs in advanced economies are exposed to AI, half of which will be negatively impacted.¹ While there is likely to be disruption and job changes, the future is brighter than it might seem. How AI is being used in Human Resources (HR) tells a truer story.

With the right incentives, design and deployment decisions, AI can play an outsized role in advancing productivity, equity, and trust in the workforce and across the enterprise. Delivering on the HR mission to cultivate and support a skilled human workforce will take new applications and collaboration. There are a range of critical decisions that influence how AI applications are developed and deployed, how their benefits are accessed, and how their risks can be mitigated to inspire trust that AI is not a tool to replace humans; it is a platform to support them.

This point of view paper series unpacks the factors, questions, and key decisions in using AI in HR. It explores the benefits, the human-centered qualities of development, the issues and considerations around deployment, and the risks and ethical issues that impact trust. This installment dives into where AI can be used in talent acquisition, workforce management, and compensation and benefits, and it explores the stakeholders, options for acquisition, and qualities of human-centered, value-driving AI.

The AI-fueled workforce and the HR teams that manage them are facing transformational change. That does not mean, however, that the value of human effort will fall. Instead, as is shown, AI is the vehicle that will carry people and organizations to new ways of working and empowering human resources.



AI Types and Trends in HR

The AI technology ecosystem

AI is an ecosystem of technologies that together perform an objective function. These technologies include the code and ensuing algorithm, datasets, high-performance computing, and often, a number of third-party products and services. There are different types of AI, including machine learning (uncovering correlations and patterns in data), natural language processing (consuming and outputting language as it is commonly spoken), and more recently, generative AI (generating text, images and other data in a way that appears to be created by a human).

In the enterprise environment, HR professionals typically do not perform the technical work of training a model and managing the enabling IT infrastructure. Yet, AI literacy and upskilling remains important for all stakeholders. For HR teams, AI literacy means competency in understanding how AI is being used, its capabilities and limits, and the types of data fueling the application. It also means stakeholders have enough knowledge of the AI to critically evaluate its function and value and to know how to collaborate with and use the tool in each setting (e.g., the workplace). Literacy is important in part because it positions non-technical HR stakeholders to communicate their needs and ideas to technologists.

To this point, no single model possesses generalized capabilities that allow it to function equally across tasks. Instead, AI is typically designed and used for discrete applications, such as automating a process or using AI to power a customer-facing chatbot. Thus, AI in the enterprise is best conceived as a collection of technologies powering an array of AI use cases, each performing their own tasks under the supervision of human stakeholders.

CHRO perspectives and expectations with AI

AI application is occurring across industries and business units, but in HR, adoption is occurring at a more modest pace. Surveys reveal 60% of HR teams are not using AI,ⁱⁱ which has remained largely unchanged since 2020.ⁱⁱⁱ This may be due to challenges in securing funding for HR technology

acquisition, which is a growing concern for Chief Human Resources Officers (CHROs).^{iv} It may also owe to a lower priority placed on AI and technology adoption, as one survey showed less than 9% of HR teams considered managing HR technology and AI a top challenge.^v The result, according to one survey, is that just 12% of HR professionals assess that their organization is integrating AI effectively.^{vi}

Despite these adoption trends, CHROs do broadly appreciate AI's potential value for their work, and they are optimistic about the future. A Gallup survey revealed 65% of CHROs expect AI to improve performance in most roles in the enterprise. And even in the face of funding challenges, about half of CHROs expect to increase technology investments over the next 12-18 months, including in the adoption of generative AI (GenAI).^{vii}

With GenAI specifically, there are forecasts suggesting widespread job replacement, with some estimates at 2.4 million job positions replaced with AI by 2030—in the United States alone.^{viii} Worldwide, some 300 million fulltime jobs could be automated in the years ahead.^{ix} This tracks with CHRO expectations. While most (66%) do not expect AI to replace jobs in the next 12 months, 72% do expect job replacement in the next three years.^x

Importantly, there is some divergence between what business leaders expect with AI and sentiments and concerns in the broader workforce. A Pew Research study^{xi} found American public opinion weighted against AI use in the workplace. Seventy-one percent oppose placing AI in charge of final hiring decisions, and majorities also oppose allowing AI to make firing decisions or track employee movements while at work. These public concerns are relevant to HR leaders as they consider not only how to leverage AI but also how to convince the human workforce that AI is not a threat to their employment but instead a tool to enhance their work. In a word, what's needed is trust.

The availability and maturity of AI comes at a time when the role of HR within the enterprise is evolving. Once generally viewed as a cost center, HR today is increasingly a strategic partner to the CEO.^{xii} CHRO decisions impact the quality of the workforce, the availability of in-demand skills, and the ability to retain talent in the face of a thriving job market that favors worker mobility. In these and other areas, the use of AI can drive improvements and efficiencies that accelerate the transformation of HR into a value driver for the organization.

Business Value with AI in HR

With AI, business benefits are often measured in efficiency, productivity improvement and cost savings. Time and money saved with automation liberates the human workforce to focus on value-driving work, leading to productivity gains. At a high level, this virtuous cycle of AI value is what attracts so much interest from business leaders, as it appears simply plugging AI into processes can unlock the desired value. The reality is more complex.

More traditional IT applications, like a software solution, can be relatively easily injected into workflows, and ongoing management is the straightforward IT task of identifying a flaw and deploying a patch. Unlike software, AI is better understood as a component of a human-machine workforce, one must be managed, assessed, retrained, and eventually retired, in much the same way the human workforce is managed. This is not simply accelerating productivity with a better tool but transforming how tasks are accomplished. At scale, AI becomes a vital and ubiquitous cornerstone underpinning the entire workforce.

To probe the deeper benefits of AI in HR, it is helpful to consider AI applications in the context of the core HR business functions: talent acquisition, performance management, and compensation and benefits (also called total rewards). The applications and use cases described here are not aspirational visions for the future. They are already being deployed in HR organizations worldwide.

Talent acquisition

In the increasingly technology-fueled workplace, skills gaps are growing, with nearly 70% of HR professionals citing a divergence between the skills present in the workforce and those needed for the business to compete and thrive.^{xiii} This is a global challenge, in part because the demand for skilled talent is surging across every industry around the world. Sourcing for skills, rather than simply job experience, and doing so in the volume needed for today's marketplace, is a significant challenge. In this, AI can supplement the labor required to find and recruit the best applicants.

Talent recruitment and acquisition tactics can be thought of as a funnel, with the broad top soliciting interest and the narrow bottom containing the jobseekers who are best suited to the role. AI can play a role at each step of the process. HR professionals can use AI to write job descriptions and screen resumes at scale. This expedites the top of the funnel, allowing the employers to focus more on decision making rather than the laborious and

monotonous task of reviewing resumes.

Meanwhile, AI-powered tools are being used to engage job candidates and conduct interviews, shrinking the applicant pool without much human intervention. Some AI applications even claim the ability to consume applicant data to predict which jobseekers are likely to be successful if hired, increasing the quality of new hires.^{xiv} And AI can advance the HR priority to drive diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the workforce^{xv} by driving a wider applicant pool of candidates with a range of backgrounds, experiences, and skills while mitigating the risk of biased and discriminatory employment decisions from humans. (This is a particularly important outcome of AI application in HR, discussed in a forthcoming installment of this series).

Together, these kinds of AI use cases drive time and cost efficiency while also improving the quality and skills of the workforce. By reducing the time required to attract and hire a new employee, HR can more rapidly match workforce skills with enterprise needs and potentially reduce costs-per-hire.

Performance management

As workforces become larger, more distributed, and more complex, HR professionals face a challenge of managing and supporting an increasing number of employees in a greater diversity of locations. Remote work trends that accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic persist today, and workforces are no longer only direct employees but also contingent workers, vendors, and cognitive machines. The scale of the performance management challenge is beginning to eclipse what a purely human HR workforce can accomplish.^{xvi}

With AI, HR can automate onboarding processes, such as by leading the new employee through administrative activities, necessary paperwork, technology system training, orientation, and an introduction to enterprise rules and culture. Once brought into the workforce, AI promises the potential for HR teams can track worker productivity, analyze performance data, and develop training and improvement plans for individual employees. Personalized learning plans meet the employee where they are in skills development, improving education outcomes and empowering the employee with the knowledge and skills they need to be successful. Of HR organizations using AI today, 36% report using applications for employee training and development.^{xvii}

AI-powered predictive analytics may even be able to identify low employee engagement, falling employee satisfaction, or turnover trends.^{xviii} With this insight, HR professionals are informed and aware and can take steps to improve employee satisfaction, as well as adjust talent acquisition strategies.

These applications show the transformational impact of AI in performance management for the workforce. Standard processes can be automated and accelerated, employee support can be personalized, and overall workforce management is less subjective and more driven by data. The result is a workforce that is intentionally shaped to meet the strategic goals of the business, making HR an indispensable partner in value generation and organizational competitiveness and growth.

Compensation and benefits

With high demand for skilled talent, growing skills gaps in many regions and industries, and low unemployment rates worldwide, retaining skilled talent is a top priority for HR teams. One survey showed that 80% of CHROs reported a talent strategy focused on retaining existing employees.^{xix} In this context, effectively managing and tailoring employee compensation and benefits is one avenue for promoting employee satisfaction and retaining talent.

AI can be used to set salary ranges and personalize rewards and benefits packages, consulting data and workforce trends with the goal of determining the most attractive and competitive offers. It can also give the employee greater independence in exploring and shaping benefits, such as through self-service applications that have

the dual benefit of empowering the employee while reducing the associated HR labor.

There are also organizational benefits in efficiency and cost. Automating routine tasks such as payroll can liberate human workers to focus on more meaningful work while also reducing the risk of errors that could impact timeliness or accuracy of compensation, as well as potential ramifications for tax and compliance penalties.

These kinds of AI applications may drive strategic value for the organization by improving efficiency and accuracy, reducing costs, empowering the workforce, and retaining the best talent.

The future of AI in HR

Given the scale of challenges in attracting and retaining a high-skilled workforce, leveraging AI in HR is becoming a competitive necessity. Organizations are already adopting and deploying value-driving AI. While slow, purposeful action is still beneficial, the adage “if you are standing still, you will be left behind” applies. Meanwhile, employees are looking to their organizations for support in developing the knowledge and skills they need for the AI era. Complicating the matter still, the employee mobility and remote work trends that accelerated during the pandemic persist as a new workplace reality for HR leaders.^{xx}

As HR roles are changing and the nature of the work transforms to become more personalized and data driven, identifying opportunities to leverage AI and deploying solutions for strategic benefit are table stakes activities in an AI-fueled world.



Factors in AI Development

With an appreciation of the value AI can create for HR, leaders can begin to contemplate the many considerations, questions, risks, costs, and strategic decisions that inform which AI use cases are pursued and how best to do so. Organizations are at different stages of AI readiness, with some striving for novel, differentiating AI applications and others just beginning to explore simpler AI applications, such as administrative automation. An organization's AI maturity and workforce AI literacy are relevant. Still, whether an organization is breaking new AI ground or just getting started, there are factors in development common to most AI deployments.

Stakeholders in AI development

AI development is a collaborative endeavor, requiring the participation of numerous enterprise lines of business. Each stakeholder plays a part in determining what is developed or acquired, how it is used, and how it is funded. Consider the people involved in AI decision making and development and the priorities they are likely to weigh in the process.

- » **HR:** The CHRO leads HR in the effort to imagine and acquire an AI use case. They engage with other executives in the strategic decision making around technology investments. The HR employees also have a role to play in development. Technologists are unlikely to have deep, day-to-day knowledge of the needs and challenges HR faces. Conversely, HR employees hold that knowledge and are positioned to imagine how the use of AI could improve their work.
- » **Finance:** AI development projects bring costs, and the CFO seeks a clear path to return on investment (ROI) after the AI is deployed. Finance leaders want to see the business case and know in advance how an AI investment can impact the bottom line.
- » **Data science/IT:** These are the technologists who develop AI at a technical level. HR can communicate an idea for a use case and solicit technical insight on if and how such a use case could be developed. If AI is built in-house, the data scientists, AI architects and others perform the technical work. If AI is sourced through a third-party vendor, the technologists should be part of the conversation, as they

can ask technical questions based on their knowledge and experience.

- » **Legal and compliance:** Laws and regulations dictate how organizations need to guard personal private information (PPI) and sensitive employee data. In addition, there are anti-discrimination laws around hiring and civil rights that apply regardless of whether AI is used. When developing a use case, legal and compliance professionals have an essential role, as an AI deployment that leads to discriminatory outcomes and legal or regulatory violations subjects the organization to fines, penalties, and reputation damage.
- » **Third-party vendors:** In many instances, the straightest path to AI capabilities may be buying or renting an AI platform from a vendor. The AI marketplace is growing, offering a mix of services for the entire AI ecosystem, including cloud services, data procurement, model training, and even post-deployment management.

Options for acquisition

Developing AI is not a trivial challenge, and the question of whether to buy, build, or rent AI is multifaceted. Since AI is not just one thing but an ecosystem of technologies, deciding how to acquire and develop AI hinges on a range of factors. A starting point is assessing the gaps between what the organization already possesses and what is needed for AI.

Does the organization possess server-grade GPU clusters for AI training? Demand and cost for GPUs is high, and managing and using GPU clusters is a technical challenge unto itself. Organizations need to consider the costs and practical challenges of managing on-site hardware. For some, renting access to compute (such as via a cloud provider) makes more business sense.

Is the organization's enterprise training data curated and sizable enough for model training? If not, it may be necessary to buy data from a broker or invest in preparing the organization's data for use with AI.

Do the organization's technology experts have the knowledge and bandwidth to train and test an AI model? Technology skills are in high demand across every industry and sector. If the organization's technologists have limited capacity for new endeavors, the business may look to outsource much of the AI development process to a vendor.

Ultimately, AI development raises a mix of considerations around cost, reliability, time use, business benefit and the strategic priorities of the organization. For HR, each of these factors impact the rationale and anticipated ROI underlying the AI project, revealing the many decision-making waypoints that reach beyond HR into other parts of the business.

Human-centered, value-driving AI

Alongside the hard technical challenges of developing AI are considerations around the qualities of the resulting model. The priority is to keep humans at the center of AI development decisions. The human factor is not just one element to value-driving AI but is in fact the most important element. AI outcomes are in part a function of how the tools are used by humans. Given that HR is focused on supporting human talent, its HR applications necessarily need to be designed and developed in a way that respects and caters to the end users.

The popular narratives that AI will neatly replace humans owes in part to a machine-centric approach to AI development, where data, capabilities and outcomes are not necessarily in line with human stakeholder interests or values. For example, imagine a chatbot used in job candidate screening that poses questions to the applicant and captures their responses. How does using the chatbot change the job application process for the human stakeholders? Does the applicant see the chatbot as a credible tool or just a way to avoid engagement? If the latter, how does that impact the job candidate's answers, enthusiasm, skepticism, or impression of the organization?

The orienting challenge is to weigh each use case on its own merits in the context of human end users. In human-centered development, the human

factor is not an afterthought but the first thought. Because each organization is different and each AI application is trained on different data and deployed into unique environments, no two use cases are precisely the same. This frustrates a check-the-box approach to developing value-driving AI. There may not be universal answers, but there are several areas where attention and investment can keep humans (and not machines) at the core of AI development decision making.

Collaborative input

There are limits to what one person can imagine, and in AI development, a diversity of input can help yield an application that reflects stakeholder needs and concerns. Even as technologists perform the technical development of a model, given workloads, experience and a technology-specific subject matter expertise, the data scientists and IT leaders will be hard pressed to conceive of all the value and risks a use case could create.

Instead, by bringing together the many stakeholders in development, a range of priorities and expectations can be balanced at the outset. A workforce monitoring tool that tracks worker productivity can capture data-driven insights into each employee. With such a tool, the HR leader anticipates using the collected data to develop performance improvement plans. However, if the tool is developed without any consideration for people affected, it could drift away from a human-centered application to a privacy invasive tool inflicted on the workforce. Conversely, if the intention is to gather data so as to support employees, bringing those stakeholders into development discussions early can help avoid decisions that appear to put the machine before the human. This kind of inclusive approach also helps drive AI applications that function as intended for a diversity people and groups, promoting applications that fuel equity in value and treatment.^{xxi}



Transparency in design and intent

While the underlying data and technology that make-up AI may be difficult for non-technologists to understand, stakeholders do require knowledge of the AI application itself. Transparency in this context means ensuring those affected have an appreciation for how the AI is being used, the data it consumes, the responsibilities of the stakeholders, the decisions it informs, and how those decisions impact end users. With AI, each of the key stakeholders, as well as the workforce more broadly, need transparency in development such that they trust the function and intent.

Returning to the example of a workforce monitoring tool, HR leaders need to understand which data are collected, including the risk of capturing incorrect data or failing to do so at all. Where are the pitfalls, and what are the implications for compliance, workforce sentiment, brand reputation, and the many ways the application could create value or risk? These questions need to be contemplated not after deployment but at the start of the AI lifecycle. This underscores the importance of collaboration in design and development, giving stakeholders the opportunity to understand what is being created and to voice their priorities and concerns.

Data dignity, integrity, security, and privacy

The lifeblood of AI is data. It fuels AI training, and it is the medium through which end users interact with the machine. In human-centered AI development, this data is treated with the responsible, careful respect it requires, if not for ethical reasons, then by virtue of regulations and laws. How data is consumed, transferred, stored, and shared all impact whether the AI it enables is respectful of human priorities and expectations (such as the security of sensitive personal information).

This view is adjacent to the concept of data dignity. While data dignity is framed as a way to reimagine the economics of the connected web and consumer-facing AI products, it points to an important quality of human-centered AI: people are the source of the information that fuels AI and that information should be used in a way that benefits humans and inspires trust.

It raises important considerations for how to treat the data used in development. Some of the most critical are:

- » **Data integrity:** In storage, processing, transfer and consumption, the data is not altered or lost, either intentionally or accidentally. Broadly, need transparency in development such that they trust the function and intent.^{xxii} Preserving the integrity of data is important to ensure the AI model is trained on reliable, accurate information, which in turn impacts how it functions after deployment. Missing or inaccurate data could lead to applications that do not precisely reflect the needs and realities of the end users.
- » **Data security–** Across the AI lifecycle, data is guarded against malicious attempts to compromise it, and technologies and processes are in place to prevent unauthorized disclosure. There are laws and regulations emerging worldwide dictating how data must be treated. Just as important, from the perspective of data dignity, security failures threaten the intrinsic value of human-created data and could limit the full potential of an AI application.
- » **Data privacy:** Privacy is linked to data security, in as much as a system compromise could divulge protected information. However, data privacy in human-centered design begins with empowering the user to make information decisions about which data they share with the machine. This means users have knowledge of the AI, the system, and the organization's intent and can give informed consent in how their data is stored and used. Honoring user privacy could include tactics such as obscuring sensitive information in the dataset, removing it, and giving the user the option to request that their data be deleted.

These are just some of the important factors in AI development. The decisions in technology investments, process changes, and human-centered function and outputs each raise cascading questions whose answers impact all stakeholders, not least of which are the employees themselves. By prioritizing collaboration, transparency, data protection, and human benefit, HR organizations can begin to create the applications that serve the enterprise, as well as the end user.



Conclusion

Accessing AI's full potential in HR begins with identifying the benefits and determining how best to build or acquire a tool in a responsible manner. However, this is only the start of the AI lifecycle. As HR teams shift their attention from identifying a value-driving use case to building and deploying it, new questions arise and how they are answered holds implications for whether an AI application can earn the trust of its users.

Achieving this vision will take careful decision making and investments in testing, deployment, and risk management. In the second article in this series, we will investigate what is involved in deploying AI use cases into HR workflows. This

includes a nuanced approach to pre-deployment testing, post-deployment management, and HR's vital role in AI governance. In the third article, we dive into the HR challenge of risk management and the ethical use of AI, looking at risks such as bias and discrimination, privacy and data security, and broader issues impacting the workforce, the marketplace and society.

The future with AI in HR is bright, and the benefits hold the potential to drive hard business benefits. For AI to deliver its intended value, however, the stakeholders and end users need to be able to trust that its development is an opportunity (rather than a threat), and that humans, not machines, are at the center of the picture.

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Human Resources in the Age of AI Part 1: Benefits and Development
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