

WSR

Workforce Solutions Review

2nd Quarter 2024

The Official Journal of the International Association for Human Resource Information Management

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Workforce Solutions Review is a peer-reviewed journal of the International Association for Human Resource Information Management (IHRIM) whose mission is to prepare the next generation of HR technology leaders.

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Published quarterly by IHRIM, a nonprofit association, IRS 501(c)6. Publication of ads, articles, or letters of opinion do not constitute nor imply endorsement by the Publisher.

Direct Circulation: 14,000 /issue
Passive Distribution: 39,000 /month
Rates are available upon request.
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ISSN 2154-6975

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from the managing editor

Dan Vander Hey, HRIP



Dear Fellow HR Technology Practitioners,

Like you, my passion for people and technology is nurtured actively by my work and hobbies. Through my volunteer role as an IHRIM board member and managing editor of our flagship publication, I'm inspired by our people and the horizons of HR and related technology they present daily. Despite being an “old dog,” I firmly believe in my ability to learn new tricks! This year, I decided to challenge the HRIP exam, a significant step in my professional journey, to validate my knowledge and experience. This singular certification, recognized worldwide, now adorns my name, confirming my knowledge and expertise and brightening my professional prospects.

I want to share my gratitude for this recognition with those who gave me the experience and enthusiasm – even the love – for HRIT! This issue is a labor of that love, as seen in the following pages.

Prepare for a scorching cover topic in our Q2 2024 issue—Artificial Intelligence (AI) is taking center stage! While we won't dedicate a whole issue to AI, expect this disruptive tech to be a recurring theme throughout the coming months and years. A day doesn't pass when AI isn't mentioned in some conversation on the future of HR technology, so let's embrace ongoing learning in that area.

Roy Altman starts this issue by redefining human experience, focusing on tech that seamlessly blends into our lives. Bharath Kumar Mittapally's piece on AI and predictive analytics ignites optimism for the future of work. Pan Singh Dhoni explores the transformative power of Generative AI in business applications. Frank Ginac's piece sheds light on AI limitations, grounding its application in reality for HR professionals. Krishnakumar Sivagnanam lays out strategies for upgrading HR enterprise applications with ERP and GRC integration. That's just a sampling of what you'll find in this issue.

As we wrap up Q2, we're excited about the fresh ideas and innovations in our Q3 and Q4 issues. If you have content or ideas to share, consider WSR your platform. It's been an incredible year, and we're eager to see what the second half holds!

Yours truly,
IHRIM
Dan Vander Hey, HRIP
WSR Managing Editor



from the IHRIM Chair

*Dennis Hill, Ph.D., SHRM-SCP, SPHR, HRIP
IHRIM Chairperson & CEO*



Dear Workforce Solutions Review Readers,

Thank you for being a part of our vibrant community, where HR professionals like you come together to support each other in our daily struggles and on our pathway to success. Through IHRIM membership, you stay ahead in the ever-evolving world of HR technology with exclusive access to a wealth of resources, including this respected peer-reviewed journal, timely and topical webinars, courses, and industry conferences, born from forty years of expertise, leadership, and strategic partnerships at the intersection of human resources and technology. Where else can you intimately access the resources and wisdom of thousands who have and continue to walk in your shoes?

We understand the importance of networking with proven practitioners, innovative developers, applied researchers, and hands-on leaders to drive personal and professional growth. That's why IHRIM draws unique and rare professionals like yourself to a culture of self-education, empowering you to navigate new challenges, seize emerging opportunities, and excel in your role up and down the org chart—from the newest analyst to the most seasoned C-suite executive.

As an IHRIM member, you join a caring community of colleagues who support and champion your success. As HR tech professionals, we love our work with people and with tech, so IHRIM's mission centers on supportive programs, engaging conversations, and a state-of-the-market certification with an eye on transformative trends. That's why IHRIM's HRIP certification stands as the only testament to your expertise in HR technology and related best practices recognized around the world. By investing in your professional development through IHRIM membership and HRIP certification, you not only enhance your skills but also open doors to new career opportunities and bolster your credibility.

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Let's neighbor online soon and in-person this September in Vegas!

Warm Regards,
IHRIM
Dennis Hill, Ph.D., MSL, HRIP, SHRM-SCP, SPHR
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Redefining the Worker Experience: How Technology Can Make Work More Human

By Roy Altman, HRIP

Since the dawn of the computer age, industry pioneers knew that our new digital tools were only as good as they were usable. As technology became more sophisticated (and complicated), ease of use has become more elusive. Our software is meant to make one “more productive.”¹ However, “knowledge worker productivity is inherently enigmatic and almost impossible to quantify.” At least we should strive to make work easier as we navigate an increasingly complex world.

In the consumer world, ease of use is a must. Our smartphones can be operated with minimal instruction, and soon, their functions feel natural. We understand that business software is inherently more complicated, and there will be a more substantial learning curve to start firing on all cylinders. Yet, even consumer technology usability can be less than first-rate.

I want to start with an analogy in the consumer world relating to home entertainment. In the beginning,

we had 13 channels of TV and UH, then cable took hold, and we had hundreds of channels and nothing to watch. People were unhappy paying for bundles of channels, the vast majority of which you will never tune into. Then, the market got fragmented: Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, Apple, and others with “smart” TVs offered enhancements or even cable replacements. Navigating these options made it painful to search for a program in any way other than speech recognition.

The fragmentation is bordering on chaos:

- You have to authenticate with each provider. Sometimes, it forgets your credentials, and you have to reset them.
- You are offered several platforms to get the desired program. They are listed along with prices. Some are marked “free to me” because they are included in one of your subscriptions.

- Remotes – separate remotes are needed for the TV, cable box, and audio system.

If you have experienced this, you know it is a horrible user experience. Now, there’s a pushback toward the bundled model, with some market consolidation.

The Vision

The best software fades into the background, and you don’t even know it’s there. This is the mantra we must live by when designing a user experience. However, the user experience of your entertainment system, described above, is far from fading into the background.

We want a user experience where every aid and convenience is available to any worker anytime without impeding their focus on their task. Let’s see what this entails:

- **Information is readily available** – your question gets answered promptly, correctly, and with limited ambiguity.

- **The user is unaware of what system is delivering information**—the user doesn't know (and shouldn't care) what back-end system is performing the task.
- **The system knows** who you are and what you will likely want to do: interoperability between systems and access to historical transactions for a seamless experience.
- **Humans should be reserved for the most complex tasks; everything else should be automated. Automated apps should handle simple tasks or questions**, with human experts reserved for complex issues.
- **The system should proactively recognize and resolve** issues or impediments to accomplishing the task: built-in workflows with robust exception processing.
- **Systems interactions should be intuitive** – users shouldn't require training to accomplish their goals.

Surveys

The most direct way to get feedback from workers is to ask them. Surveys are considered an *active* method of gaining information because you are actively eliciting information from the workers, as opposed to a passive approach whereby you use technology to record metrics generated by the worker.

Surveys besiege us in our daily lives. You can hardly use any service without being asked to complete a survey. For the worker focused on their job, you're asking them to pause working and complete the survey (so much for the software fading into the background).

Surveys can be helpful because they get right to the information you want to collect, but they depend

on how the questions are worded and who you're asking. Surveys can be valuable because they are leading indicators. However, if the information gathered by the study is not actioned immediately, the worker will lose confidence in the survey, affecting future participation.

Survey vendors assure the employees' anonymity and only allow the export of aggregated data. That means you must consider the dimensions you want to report on before exporting the information.

The passive approach involves using technology to capture helpful information without the worker interrupting their work to complete a survey. Organizational Network Analysis (ONA) does just that—it looks at data in the enterprise (e.g., calls, texts, emails, etc.) to establish who is interacting in the workplace. Sentiment analysis uses statistical techniques to determine workers' feelings based on the language in their texts and emails.

The Role of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

AI and worker experience were made for each other. Conventional technology can effectively provide one with information or take them through a transaction, but AI can provide much more. Imagine being accompanied by a digital coach who provides you with answers, information, or advice at the moment it's needed.

A common use case for AI is Chatbots. Simple, commonplace chatbots will narrow down the reason for the inquiry and point you to an applicable link or a human expert if the query cannot be resolved. As the technology evolves, chatbots can potentially replace human help agents as they can deal with more nuanced understanding and, therefore, save significant money.

The net result is the enhanced or augmented worker.

Industry analyst Josh Bersin has said, "... the high-performing companies of today are *not* functional hierarchies; they are networks of teams..."²

Agile Organizations

Industry analyst Josh Bersin has said, "... the high-performing companies of today are *not* functional hierarchies; they are networks of teams..."² The agile methods require team leads to have a way to quickly create, disband, and modify teams that reflect the way work gets done. I call this *Distributed Ownership*.

Yet HR software still represents the organizational structure as hierarchies. This limits transactional workflow approvals, reporting/ analytics, and access security. Sure, you can designate a matrix relationship, but this is maintained centrally by a system administrator (rather than distributed ownership), quickly becoming unmanageable in an ecosystem of teams and relationships in the organization.

What's Behind the Curtain?

Making work simple for workers is a complicated task. Behind the scenes, a great deal of technology enables a positive user experience.

The Data/Integration Platform

Data is at the root of it – all applications need to “know” about the user we’re interacting with. Integrations need to make a seamless transition between functions. Think of integrations as “connective tissue” between the person’s organs. You cannot live without it. Most integrations are point-to-point, for instance, between your HRIS and Applicant Tracking System. Suppose your system architecture is based on a platform containing all your people data. In that case, it makes more sense for the integrations to be between each application and the data platform, which would ensure that you’re sharing between applications the latest and most correct version of your data and that it’s being kept up to date with the other systems.

- Once your data is imported into the platform, it must be cleaned up. Our systems often contain a lot of incomplete or incorrect data. The Human Resource Business Partners can help reach out to the workers and correct or complete missing or suspected data.
- Often, a person’s unique identifier is not consistent among systems. For example, your payroll system, HRIS, finance system, etc., may have different identifying primary keys. Data harmonization is getting all the systems to talk to each other.

- Once the data is complete, corrected, and harmonized, it can be normalized, kept in the optimal format for maintaining changes, and de-normalized: put in a format easily accessible for analytics or integrations (called a Star Schema).
- Finally, we need to agree on what the data means. For instance, a request for a listing of all employees can mean different things to different people. Depending on who’s asking, it can mean FTEs, positions (filled or empty), or workers, including consultants (or not). Data taxonomy stores commonly agreed descriptions of metrics.
- The data platform is an excellent place to put that app or data that doesn’t fit anywhere else. For instance, all those customizations of your pre-cloud on-premise system that you couldn’t replicate when you implemented your cloud HRIS. Or the data structure to maintain the agile organizational relationships discussed earlier.

The platform is the best way to use analytics to get a holistic view of the workforce, and analytics should be central to your worker management strategy and workforce planning.

As AI is embedded in almost all of your applications, start by leveraging that capability where it aligns with your strategy. Once you gain a level of maturity, you can use the unstructured data stored in your

data platform, e.g., texts, phone calls, images, etc., as the training dataset for machine learning and the basis of your foray into AI.

Where to Get Started

The approach laid out here can be accomplished by creating a center of excellence around integrations, data management, AI, and usability. Consulting firms or other vendors dedicated to each of these disciplines can fill the gaps if needed.

Begin by compiling an inventory of applications and current integrations. Start cleaning up missing or incorrect data. Think about your pain points, what you want to get out of analytics and AI, and what processes you’d like to improve.

Conclusion

The Worker Experience Platform gives companies optimized flexibility in their technology stack. Not only does it support the best possible worker experience, but it goes beyond the worker experience as it optimizes future HR technology initiatives by assembling your data in the ideal format, allows you to take control over your integrations, and gives you a platform that acts as means to fill the gaps between your HR modules. But it all comes down to trust – will your workforce trust the software that supports them? That trust is earned by being sensitive to workers’ needs and having a working toolset to act upon them.

Endnotes

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/marksettle/2022/04/12/the-myths-of-knowledge-worker-productivity/?sh=22f3aaaf102f>

² <https://www.fastcompany.com/3068492/the-future-of-work/how-ai-is-changing-the-way-companies-are-organized>

About the Author



Roy Altman, HRIP, is the founder/CEO of Peopleserv, a software/services company whose clientele includes well-known Fortune 1000 companies in several industry sectors. Previously, he was the HRIS Analytics and Architecture Manager at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Altman has published extensively: he has co-authored five books on Business Process Management (BPM) and has published many articles in HR, business, and technology publications. He frequently presents at industry and academic conferences relating to HR and BPM. He is on the faculty of NYU’s new MS in Human Capital Analytics and Technology program and has also taught at Columbia University and Baruch College. He is an Associate Editor of *Workforce Solutions Review*. He can be reached at roy@peopleserv.com.

2024 Wellbeing and Voluntary Benefits Survey

5th Edition — February 2024



A WSR Interview with Tom Kelly and Ruth Hunt

Interviewed by Dan Vander Hey, HRIP

This is an excerpt from an interview conducted on March 22, 2024, with Tom Kelly (Principal, Health and Benefits Practice, Gallagher) and Ruth Hunt (Principal, Engagement and Communications Practice, Gallagher), the lead authors of Buck, a Gallagher company's biennial *2024 Wellbeing and Voluntary Benefits Survey*. WSR Managing Editor Dan Vander Hey conducted the interview.

Dan: Let's get started by giving our readers a better perspective on Buck's biennial 2024 Wellbeing and Voluntary Benefits Survey. This comprehensive exploration of employee wellbeing provides a crucial snapshot of how U.S. employers rate their workforce's

mental, emotional, financial, social, and physical health. Its findings are informative and highly relevant for HR leaders and professionals interested in employee well-being and benefits. I love the lead you took with this survey, which said that things are better but is not a rebound. I had a similar reaction, as I initially thought, "Wow, better?" I know we've been struggling with COVID and all sorts of concerns about health and health care. I still sense this feeling amongst employees that they are apprehensive about "What's next? What is the next thing we're going to have to deal with?"

Ruth: We said, "Better, but not a rebound," because our last survey in 2022, our fourth survey, showed

clearly that perceptions and wellbeing were still in trouble. We were not "out of the pandemic." The scores on the critical measures of well-being were more negative in 2022 than they are overall right now. You can tell we've emerged to a new reality, a different "normal". However, the challenge is still huge as you look at the data. One in five 1 employees report worsening mental, physical, and financial health. If you look at the aggregate score, we have seen some improvements; but we have a sizable group that's getting worse. We have a large segment of 92% (Figure 1) that wants more financial support. For the employers who wish to declare any victory on wellbeing, which is very few, they want to say that wellbeing is



Figure 1.

improving from their vantage point. But employees say, “Not so fast.”

Tom: One of the values of this survey is the ability to compare the viewpoints of employees and employers. We continue to see that employers need to be aware of gaps when building a benefits strategy. For example, one of our major insights from this research is the belief that improving employees’ financial wellbeing should be the employer’s top priority as it relates to wellbeing initiatives and saving money. Saving money was listed at the top among employee priorities. In contrast, employers rank that lower, tending to prioritize things like attraction, retention, productivity, absenteeism, etc.

The message when we talk to organizations is that there were many years when financial wellbeing was defined purely as retirement readiness. Fast forward to today, we see that 58% of employees say they live paycheck to paycheck. About 55% say they’re doing the same or worse financially since a year ago, and only one in three employees can afford a \$500 unexpected expense. So, these data points show that employees are under financial stress. Inflation only makes things more difficult.

Employers are stepping in, saying we need to provide more resources. Employees want real money-saving solutions.

Ruth: It’s intriguing to see that over the time we’ve conducted the survey, employee demand and expectations of their employer and the employer/employee relationship have only risen. We did the correlative analysis to look at data on top retention drivers aside from pay. The first three were about job satisfaction and trust in management. Drivers four and five were, “Prove you care about my wellbeing” and “Deliver a good benefits package.” If I want to trust my management and have a comfortable view of my job, my employer needs to prove that they care about me besides issuing my paycheck and providing benefits.

Dan: I want to discuss a couple of significant variances with you. One that jumped out was that 75% of employers said they increased their commitment to promoting well-being. And yet, only 50% of employees say they have seen an increase in support. That nearly 25% variance is like a huge opportunity. Employers say, “We’re doing things to improve wellbeing,” yet a quarter of the population says, “Oh, no, you aren’t.” Tell me more about the disconnect between employers thinking they’ve got it and doing something good versus employees failing to realize it.

Tom: Employers need to ensure they’re offering the right programs. Now more than ever, it’s key for organizations to be more targeted, selective, and focused on what they’re offering. The other priority is communication and engagement. 55% of employees say they don’t understand their benefits, and ratings worsen the younger they go. Younger employees were also less likely to stay with the organization.

And younger employees want more resources, overall.

As we looked at data around the types of programs, it’s clear younger employees want more flexibility and choice. Among employers, it’s why 67% of organizations want to infuse more personalization into their benefits package, and 77% of employees say voluntary benefits are essential to a benefits strategy. It’s all about offering flexible choices and aligning those programs with the right workforce segments based on specific needs in voluntary benefits. (Figure 2)

Dan: I was fascinated by your wellbeing quadrant, which was differentiated by Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers. How do employers deal with the variance in these groups?

Ruth: Ask people! Do an assessment. Where is your workforce? For instance, parents need help with childcare and education, and they’re worried about their child’s future. And they probably know, to your point on retirement, that they should be maximizing their 401(k) plan. Ask people where they’re at, and then you can look at an inventory of your current offerings, identify which ones are underutilized, and make enhancements that will have the most significant ROI.

Tom: Millennials generally represent the largest segment of the US workforce today, and our survey showed that within that segment, there’s greater interest in topics like child education, caregiving, pregnancy, fertility, and new baby support. Understanding your population and the makeup of the other data points from the survey provides additional insights. We can craft a more targeted benefit strategy based on your workforce. That’s key for HR leaders.

Wellbeing – Better, but not a rebound

With the heightened awareness of employees' struggles with physical, mental, social and financial health during and after the pandemic, and socio-political and economic events, organizations have increased their focus on wellbeing. However, they remain challenged regarding how to meet employee needs, recognizing that many of the adverse factors impacting wellbeing still persist.

To compete for and retain talent, organizations know it's imperative to care about and actively support employees' wellbeing journeys. The data shows that the top reasons employers cite for increasing wellbeing investment is to attract/retain top talent (66%), followed by increased job satisfaction (65%), and then support for mental health (59%).

The good news is that our survey shows employees feel better across all dimensions of wellbeing, compared to our 2022 survey, but they also expect more support from their employer. This underscores the continued importance of a robust wellbeing program that meets the needs of today's workforce.

Key survey findings

- Employer awareness of the importance of wellbeing has increased
- Employees are feeling better but also expect more wellbeing support
- Commitment to employee wellbeing strengthens engagement and retention



Figure 2.

Dan: One area was at least potentially contentious. This was the question where you assessed whether employees are better off this year than in the past, including whether employees feel better off financially this year. So what's your assessment: are people better off, or are they worse off? Please help me understand your assessment and why you believe there's empirical data to say one way or another.

Ruth: That's the difference between this assessment's aggregate data and a closer look at subgroups. If you look at the aggregate, the intense pain that we were feeling during the pandemic timeframe included a lot of socio-political division and the isolation that happened with the quarantine and people struggling. The challenge now depends on your vantage point. Some subgroups we've been discussing, like younger employees, have poorer self-ratings that make perfect sense. They're

coming out of school at low pay levels, and some of them feel underemployed. When it comes to their physical and financial wellbeing, they might have been on their parents' benefits until they were 26, so they didn't fully understand what employer benefits are like. They're still learning how to address some basics, like making it on a budget and stretching their paycheck. Boomers have different types of struggles, such as "How will I be able to afford retiree medical care?" That's why the "Better, but no rebound," assessment. Overall, you've got to look at the macro, not just the micro.

Tom: I agree with Ruth that you must dig into the segments to see if there are notable differences. We see that 58% of employees live paycheck to paycheck. That's up from 54% the last time we did the survey. One in three employees wants additional support for unexpected medical

expenses, up from 23% in 2020. 56% of employees say inflation or rising costs will impact their ability to obtain health care in the coming years. So, it's clear there is significant financial stress, which is why it's no surprise that employees want more resources. I think if there's an area for employers to focus on, that's undoubtedly an excellent place to start.

Ruth: And to be fair, there are interdependencies here. The challenge is that the minute you're hurting financially, you're also hurting emotionally. It's incredibly distracting to productivity and your commitment to your job. The feeling that "This is an excellent place to work" ends up being so intertwined with other factors that it's hard even to pull some of those pieces apart relative to how we support holistic wellbeing. But you have to start somewhere and return to that prioritization, asking, "What can we do that will make a difference?" And that's things like

“Help me with my credit score, help me know what to do about emergency savings, help me figure out how to afford childcare, those kinds of real-world tactical things you can do to help my life better be better day to day”

Dan: So, tell me, with rising medical costs and the impact on an employee’s financial wellbeing, how are people dealing with that? How do you think employees and employers should deal with that issue? The inevitable is that it just keeps getting worse.

Tom: We've discussed creativity. Employers must look beyond traditional health and benefit plans. Traditional retirement plans and health care may not be enough. We also discussed infusing greater personalization, choice, and flexibility. I think employers know it's a challenge for HR leaders because of the pressures and the headwinds with respect to budgets, dollars, and investment of time. That's why we see the tie between voluntary benefits and our survey. 86% of employers said voluntary benefits

are an essential part of a well-being strategy, while 77% of employees believe voluntary benefits are an integral part of a well-being strategy. Going back to the description of voluntary, it's a way for organizations to strategically round out their benefits package and fill gaps in their benefits package. This involves helping them be better prepared when they face unexpected medical expenses or the 56% that say they will forgo medical costs because of the influence of inflation risk. So putting in supplemental medical options for employees to help them de-risk unexpected expenses is one strategy an organization can use. (Figure 3)

Ruth: By way of illustration, supplemental medical is a perfect example. If I know I'm going to have a baby or major surgery and I'm going to be hospitalized, I should be signing up for hospital indemnity insurance on top of my medical. It's going to help me with cash. There are many other medical payments and financing programs resources where you can

help people with their great fears of medical debt and how they will deal with that cost.

Tom: Another good example is student loan debt. The federal pause on student loans expired last year, and many people need to start making those student loan payments again. This is an example of how employer organizations can step in, and it doesn't necessarily have to cost them a lot of money. This can help employees access programs that may even be federal programs that will help them save money on their student debt, cap their monthly payments, or offer loan forgiveness over time based on their income level. So organizations can act strategically to broaden the resources available to help put real money back into their employees’ paychecks.

Dan: I understand that voluntary benefits are the way of the world today and the direction everyone should be going. Out of curiosity, please tell me what voluntary innovations and variances you see in that area.

Voluntary benefits play a key role in supporting employee wellbeing

Using voluntary benefits to attract and retain key employees continues to be a strong wellbeing strategy for employers. On average, employers offer 13 voluntary benefits (up from 11 in 2022), and plan to introduce four more.

Many voluntary benefit options are available so the challenge for employers is to identify the top needs and priorities given the profile of their workforce and then prioritize offerings to deliver the greatest impact.

9

Top voluntary benefits offered by employers

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Supplemental life/AD&D | 6. Identity theft protection |
| 2. Critical illness | 7. Pet insurance/pet discounts |
| 3. Legal services | 8. Mental/emotional health |
| 4. Discount marketplace | 9. Hospital indemnity |
| 5. Health accident | 10. Vision |

Fastest growing voluntary benefits

- | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Long-term care | 6. Cancer support and savings |
| 2. Emergency savings | 7. Identity theft protection |
| 3. Caregiving | 8. Pet insurance |
| 4. Financial coaching | 9. Hospital indemnity |
| 5. Critical illness | 10. Student loan support |

* Based on the change in employers offering between 2020 and 2024



Figure 3.

Tom: There was a time when voluntary benefits included maybe five or ten kinds of unique offerings. The menu we support today has at least 75 to 100 unique benefit options. In many ways, when we look across all dimensions of wellbeing, it may be defined by our voluntary benefits product list, which includes medical financing programs, loan programs, emergency savings, banking products, or mortgage and refinance programs. Long-term care has made a huge resurgence in terms of supporting employees. I'd say for employers, when we define voluntary, it could either be offering a subsidized benefit or looking at the marketplace for competitive options. You also look at emerging needs within the population, such as mental health or caregiving resources for your employee population. So, the voluntary menu has evolved based on the workforce's needs. And that's what we're always trying to stay in front of here, even working on product innovation and proactively bringing products to our clients based on employee needs.

Employees want more flexibility, more choices, and more options. Again, there's a balancing act there, though, since you don't necessarily want to offer everything under the

sun. You have to be very strategic when introducing new programs. I would say that the communication strategy is even more important than the products themselves, ensuring you're packaging it correctly.

Ruth: Let's also talk about the communication gap and how we get employees to use their benefits. Part of our research asked about preferred communication channels, and not surprisingly, email tops the list. It always does based on usage and is the most popular with employers because it's free, right? I can blast out many emails and hope that people read them. But it could be less preferred by employees because they're getting overloaded. One of the interesting disconnects is web platforms, internet, intranets, etc. Use does keep rising on those, but they're also disconnected when employees say how effective they are.

Employees want more personalization and relevance, but technology should be able to make things more relevant. The challenge often is that we did one-size-fits-all benefits packages in the past, and we're still sometimes using one-size-fits-all technology. And users must be able to more easily search and find trusted, easy-to-understand information.

When I conduct employee focus groups, I see people who say I can't find anything. And that's part of the challenge. Employers love technology because the information can be all there (or maybe in multiple locations). But too often, we hear employees say they can't navigate and find what is needed, relevant information. So we can do better with better technology tools.

The other employee request is for more decision support. So on an annual basis, can you help me choose my medical plan or decide whether to contribute to a flexible spending or Health Savings Account? Should I select long-term care, insurance, or whatever those decisions may be? Decision support tools can help employees figure out what to do with their limited resources and how to prioritize.

We see some big gaps that employers can fill. Regarding people, processes, and technology, we can improve processes and programs, and continue enhancing our technology, support, and navigation for an improved employee experience that meets employee goals for improved wellbeing while meeting employer goals for attraction, retention and productivity.

Dan: Tom and Ruth, you both have been eloquent in your answers.



Ruth Hunt, Principal, Communications Practice, Gallagher

Ruth Hunt is a principal in Gallagher's communications practice. She frequently speaks on total rewards and the employee experience and specializes in helping companies enhance employee wellbeing to support their business vision and workforce goals.



Tom Kelly, Principle, Health & Benefits Practice, Gallagher

Tom is a Principal in Gallagher's health practice and a member of the voluntary benefits team. For more than twenty years, he has helped some of the country's largest and most respected employers design voluntary benefit programs that deliver on business objectives and drive greater employee engagement.



Artificial Intelligence and Predictive Analytics for Business Growth

By Bharath Kumar Mittapally

Introduction

The journey from raw events to strategic decision-making encapsulates a transformative process in business. It begins with events – discrete occurrences in the business environment. These events generate data, the raw, unprocessed facts that are the lifeblood of any modern enterprise. As we collate and analyze this data, it transforms into information, providing insights into past business activities.

The journey continues. From information, we distill knowledge – and understand patterns and relationships within the data. These patterns are the precursors to predictive analytics, a sophisticated process that looks beyond current knowledge to forecast future trends and outcomes. Predictive analytics represents a critical leap from understanding what has happened to anticipating what could happen.

This anticipation is where human and artificial intelligence comes into play. Intelligence involves applying knowledge to make informed decisions. Artificial Intelligence (AI) takes this a step further in business

growth. AI leverages predictive analytics, transforming deep insights into actionable strategies. It represents the pinnacle of this journey – from simple events to complex, data-driven decision-making systems.

This article explores the coexistent relationship between AI and predictive analytics, real-world applications across industries, and ethical implications. Insights are offered to help businesses capitalize on AI and analytics to succeed.

The Power of AI and Predictive Analytics

Predictive analytics applies statistical modeling and machine learning techniques to historical and current data to uncover patterns and forecast future trends and events. Models can identify relationships and make probabilistic predictions about customer behaviors, sales, operational risks, etc.

AI enhances these capabilities and allows organizations to operationalize predictive intelligence at scale through:

Advanced-Data Processing:

- AI can process exponentially more significant volumes of structured, unstructured, and streaming data from disparate sources, orders of magnitude faster than human analysts.
- Image Recognition, Natural language processing (NLP), and other techniques draw insights from complex unstructured data.
- Neural networks identify complex nonlinear relationships and hidden correlations that evade traditional modeling.

Continuous Learning and Adaptation:

- Machine learning algorithms continuously train on new data, test predictions, and update models to improve accuracy over time.
- Deep learning techniques enable models to learn complex data representations and scenarios with little explicit programming.
- Reinforcement learning optimizes decision-making and outcomes through trial-and-error interactions with data environments.

Automated Workflows and Recommendations:

- Once predictive models are validated, AI allows their operationalization through automated workflows.
- Businesses can embed predictive analytics into their applications via APIs to trigger actions.
- Natural language generation transforms model outputs into human-readable narratives and prescriptive recommendations.

AI amplifies predictive capabilities to new levels of sophistication and integration. While traditional analytics provide rear-view business insights, AI-driven predictive analytics generate an intelligent roadmap for the future. It moves organizations from hindsight to foresight.

Business Applications Across Industries

In the dynamic landscape of modern business, applying Artificial Intelligence (AI) and predictive analytics is not confined to a single industry or niche. Instead, its influence spans diverse sectors, each harnessing these technologies to address unique challenges and capitalize on new opportunities. From revolutionizing customer experiences in retail to optimizing processes in manufacturing, AI and predictive analytics are reshaping the fabric of how industries operate. This section delves into various sectors, illustrating these technologies' versatile and transformative role in practical, real-world applications.

Retail: In the competitive world of retail, AI and predictive analytics are essential in comprehending consumer behavior and preferences. By analyzing purchasing patterns and market trends, retailers can forecast demand, manage inventory more efficiently, and personalize marketing strategies to enhance

customer engagement and loyalty (Chandaramana, 2023).¹

Healthcare Sector: The transformative impact of AI-driven machine learning solutions in sustainable healthcare development is profound. This sector leverages AI and machine learning for predictive diagnostics and personalized treatment plans. By analyzing patient data and medical histories, AI not only aids in early disease detection but also recommends tailored treatment protocols.

A recent study highlights the significant improvements in patient outcomes because of AI integration in healthcare. AI-enabled diagnostic algorithms have shown an average accuracy of 92%, surpassing traditional diagnostic methods. This advancement paves the way for more precise and timely disease identification.

Additionally, treatment plans optimized through AI led to a 20% increase in positive patient outcomes and a 25% reduction in hospital readmission rates. These findings underscore the efficacy of AI in treatment planning. Furthermore, AI-driven resource allocation strategies have resulted in a 30% decrease in unnecessary tests and a 15% reduction in hospital resource utilization, emphasizing enhanced efficiency and cost-effectiveness. Adopting AI-powered telehealth platforms has also contributed to a 40% increase in remote consultations, significantly improving the accessibility of healthcare services, especially for marginalized communities (Kusula & Whig, 2023).²

Finance and Banking: In finance, AI's predictive capabilities are invaluable for risk assessment and fraud detection. Academic research highlights how advanced analytics like AI and machine learning can help identify risks and fraudulent activities by analyzing

volumes of financial transactions in real-time. These models can detect anomalies, patterns, and deviations from expected behavior, enabling early detection and prevention of fraud. For example, AI algorithms can analyze financial transactions and patterns to detect potentially fraudulent activities, helping to prevent economic losses (Adrain, 2015).³

In the dynamic landscape of modern business, applying Artificial Intelligence (AI) and predictive analytics is not confined to a single industry or niche.

Additionally, AI models can assess financial risks by analyzing historical market data, economic indicators, and other relevant factors to provide insights for risk management and mitigation strategies. AI enables more proactive and data-driven approaches to managing financial risk. AI statistical learning methods applied to market data can uncover correlations and risk factors that are difficult for humans to identify (Bennett & Hugen, 2016).⁴ AI's pattern recognition capabilities allow for more secure and efficient financial operations by quickly identifying emerging risks and

fraudulent activities compared to traditional methods.

Manufacturing: The manufacturing industry employs AI and predictive analytics for maintenance and supply chain optimization. Manufacturers can minimize operational disruptions, boost efficiency, and optimize supply chain processes by predicting equipment failures before they occur and optimizing production schedules. A study of over 30,000 manufacturing firms found that average productivity was \$918,000 higher for those utilizing predictive analytics, IT capital, educated workers, and efficiency-focused workplace designs (Brynjolfsson, Jin, & McElheran, 2021).⁵

Transportation and Logistics: In transportation and logistics, AI and predictive analytics help optimize route planning and fleet management (Tsolaki, Vafeiadis, Nizamis, Ioannidis, & Tzovaras, 2023).⁶ These innovative approaches significantly enhance the efficiency of logistics operations. For instance, machine learning algorithms are adept at analyzing complex transportation data, leading to more accurate predictions and better management of logistics challenges. This results in more efficient route planning, timely deliveries, and improved operational performance in logistics.

Agriculture: AI has become a game-changer in crop management and yield prediction in the agricultural sector. Beyond analyzing weather patterns and soil conditions, AI assists farmers in selecting the optimal seeds for specific weather scenarios and advises on the best planting times. AI-powered solutions offer insights into soil quality and necessary nutrients, promoting healthier crop growth and efficient farming practices. (Javaid, Haleem, Khan, & Suman, 2023).⁷ These

advancements enable farmers to increase yields, improve crop quality, and expedite time-to-market, leading to more sustainable and productive farming practices.

In summary, the real-world uses of AI and predictive analytics differ widely across various industries. By harnessing the power of these technologies, businesses across sectors are unlocking new potentials, driving innovation, and reshaping their operational landscapes for enhanced efficiency and growth.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations play a crucial role in using AI and predictive analytics. As AI and predictive analytics continue proliferating across industries, businesses must prioritize responsible and ethical practices.

Several key ethical risks demand proactive mitigation.

1. Bias and Fairness: AI and ML systems can inadvertently perpetuate and amplify biases in their training data. This could lead to unfair outcomes, particularly in sensitive areas like hiring, criminal justice, and loan approvals. Ensuring fairness involves actively identifying and mitigating biases in datasets and algorithms.

2. Transparency and Explainability: Many AI systems, particularly deep learning models, operate as inscrutable “black boxes,” offering limited visibility into their decision-making processes. This need for explainability concerns high-stakes sectors like healthcare and law that depend on transparency and accountability. To build trust, developers must prioritize more interpretable AI that elucidates the reasoning behind outcomes. Explainable and transparent AI is critical for establishing confidence

in these technologies for sensitive applications.

3. Privacy: AI and ML often require humongous amounts of data, which may include sensitive personal information. Protecting this data and using it ethically is paramount. It involves adhering to data protection regulations (like GDPR), implementing robust security measures, and considering the implications of data collection and usage.

4. Accountability: Mistakes made by AI systems often lack defined accountability. Responsibility attribution remains vague - do developers, users, or AI bear responsibility? To address this, transparent frameworks and guidelines must delineate accountability.

5. Safety and Security: As AI systems become more powerful, ensuring their safety and preventing malicious use becomes more critical. This includes preventing unintended consequences of AI actions and protecting systems from being manipulated or hacked.

6. Social Impact and Job Displacement: AI can automate tasks, leading to job displacement in specific sectors. It is essential to consider the broader social impact of AI, including retraining programs for those whose jobs are affected, and consider the implications of AI on economic inequality.

7. Environmental Impact: Training large AI models requires significant computational resources, which can have a substantial environmental footprint. Optimizing algorithms for energy efficiency and considering the environmental impact of data centers are essential steps.

8. Global Cooperation: AI

development is a global phenomenon, and its impacts cross national borders. International cooperation on standards, regulations, and ethical guidelines is crucial to ensure that AI benefits everyone equitably.

In summary, creating ethical AI and ML solutions is not just about technical excellence but also about considering the broader impacts on society and the environment. This requires a combined effort from technology experts, ethicists, policymakers, and other stakeholders to establish guidelines and frameworks that prioritize transparency, accountability, privacy protection, and societal benefits (Luccioni & Bengio, 2020).⁸

Conclusion

In conclusion, AI and predictive analytics are pivotal in driving business growth and success. These technologies provide valuable insights and enable businesses to make data-driven decisions, optimize operations, enhance customer experiences, and identify new growth opportunities. By leveraging the power of AI and predictive analytics, businesses can stay ahead of the competition, adapt to changing market dynamics, and achieve sustainable growth.

Endnotes

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About the Author



Data Science Consultant Bharath Kumar Mittapally has an impressive track record spanning over half a decade. Bharath has established himself as a seasoned data science consultant, positioning

him at the forefront of the field. As a trusted data science consultant, he has worked with Fortune 500 companies such as Verizon and AT&T. Leveraging their vast datasets, he has adeptly employed cutting-edge data science and advanced machine learning techniques to combat fraudulent activities. Beyond fraud prevention, Bharath also worked with prominent companies like Xandr and Microsoft as a Data Scientist, working with their advertisement research department. Driven by his passion for continuous learning, he loves to engage with white papers, reviews, and research to remain abreast of the latest advancements and emerging trends in the field. His industry prowess led to his appointment as an IT Industry Expert and Judge for the Globee International Awards. He can be reached at bharathkumarmittapally@gmail.com.



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Strategies for Upgrading HR Enterprise Applications with ERP and GRC

By Krishnakumar Sivagnanam

Introduction: The Dynamic HR Evolution

The role of HR in organizations has evolved significantly over the years, transitioning from a purely administrative function to a strategic partner in driving business success. As technology advances, the need for HR systems to keep pace and align with organizational goals becomes pivotal. Integrating ERP systems, designed to streamline and unify business processes, and GRC frameworks, essential for managing risks and ensuring compliance, represents a strategic move toward enhancing HR enterprise applications. The seamless integration of these systems promises increased efficiency, improved data accuracy, better risk management, and optimal data-driven decision-making. However, the journey is challenging, and successful navigation requires a strategic approach.

The Current Landscape of HR Enterprise Applications

Before embarking on the upgrade journey, assessing the existing HR landscape is crucial. Many organizations still operate on legacy systems that often result in fragmented processes, data silos, and compliance challenges. Real-time scenarios showcase instances where outdated

HR applications hinder operational efficiency, leading to increased manual workload and higher risks of errors. To understand the urgency of upgrading HR enterprise applications, we delve into real-world scenarios where archaic HR systems hinder organizational growth and efficiency.

The Evolving Role of HR

The conventional role of HR, primarily centered around managing employee records and payroll, has undergone a significant transformation. HR has evolved from a purely administrative function to a strategic partner driving business success. In today's dynamic business environment, HR functions as a multifaceted entity, contributing significantly to talent management, workforce planning, and strategic decision-making. To meet these expanded responsibilities, HR systems must outgrow rudimentary functionalities and metamorphose into strategic tools that empower organizations with real-time data for informed decision-making.

The Impact of Technological Advancements

As technological innovations continue to reshape the business landscape, organizations must adapt to stay competitive. Outdated HR systems

hinder agility and pose a barrier to achieving operational excellence. Integrating ERP systems, designed to streamline and unify business processes and GRC frameworks, offers a solution to this challenge by providing a comprehensive platform that aligns HR processes with broader organizational objectives. This integration is crucial for managing risks and ensuring compliance and represents a strategic move toward enhancing HR enterprise applications.

Manual Processes and Inefficiency

Within most large multinational corporations, HR professionals are grappling with manual processes for performance appraisals and employee feedback. This manual approach not only consumes significant time and resources but also introduces the risk of errors and inconsistencies in the evaluation process.

Data Entry Woes

The HR team in these multinational corporations often needs help managing employee data across various regional offices. With a centralized system, HR professionals can avoid manual data entry, which results in inconsistencies, delays, and compliance risks.

Compliance Risks in a Regulated Environment

In a highly regulated industry, companies often face challenges keeping up with the evolving landscape of compliance requirements. A unified system is needed to ensure that HR practices align seamlessly with the latest regulations, which can expose the organization to compliance risks and potential legal consequences.

Unlocking the Integration Advantage

Integrating ERP with HR systems transforms HR operations, creating a seamless data flow across various functions. This integration enhances operational efficiency and reduces dependence on manual recruitment and payroll processes. Real-world scenarios illustrate the transformative impact, such as automating the onboarding process, which results in accelerated workflows and minimized errors.

GRC integration fortifies compliance management, providing a unified approach to navigating regulatory landscapes. In highly regulated industries, real-time compliance monitoring becomes achievable, ensuring automatic updates to HR policies in response to regulatory changes. This proactive approach mitigates compliance risks and enhances the organization's reputation.

Streamlining HR Operations with ERP

Integrating ERP with HR applications represents a paradigm shift in managing HR processes. This seamless integration enhances operational efficiency by automating and streamlining HR processes from hire to retire, reducing reliance on manual processes and minimizing the risk of errors.

Harmonizing the Onboarding Process through Automation

Consider a scenario where an

organization integrates its ERP system with the HR onboarding process. New employees traverse effortlessly from the recruitment phase to onboarding, with their details automatically flowing through the various HR functions. This automation expedites the onboarding process and significantly reduces the likelihood of errors associated with manual data entry. The HR team experiences a significant reduction in manual workload, enabling them to focus on strategic initiatives rather than repetitive administrative tasks.

Synchronized Employee Data

In an integrated environment, changes made in one system automatically reflect across all connected systems. When an employee updates personal information, it seamlessly synchronizes across the HR, ERP, and other systems. This approach reduces the risk of data inconsistencies and ensures a single source of truth for employee information.

Strengthening Compliance with GRC Integration

Integrating GRC frameworks with HR applications ensures organizations operate within regulatory guidelines and effectively manage risks. When integrated with HR systems, GRC provides a unified approach to compliance management, reducing the risk of non-compliance and enhancing the organization's overall risk posture.

Real-time Compliance Monitoring

Integrating GRC with HR systems enables organizations to monitor compliance in highly regulated industries in real-time. The system automatically updates HR policies in response to regulation changes, ensuring that the organization remains compliant without manual intervention. This proactive approach mitigates compliance risks, enhances the organization's reputation, and keeps ahead of regulatory changes.

Navigating Challenges in the Upgrade Process

Despite the promises of enhanced efficiency and compliance, upgrading HR enterprise applications with ERP and GRC integration poses significant challenges. Successful navigation through this integration demands a strategic and proactive approach to address potential roadblocks.

In global enterprises, a phased integration approach mitigates complexity, starting with essential functionalities and gradually expanding. Efficient data migration from disparate systems to a unified platform is crucial for success. Real-world scenarios showcase seamless data migration in significant system upgrades involving comprehensive mapping, efficient transformation, and rigorous validation processes. Change management and user adoption strategies are pivotal for successful HR system upgrades. Proactive measures are essential to address concerns, ensure a smooth transition, and maximize user adoption.

Ensuring data security and privacy is non-negotiable, especially considering the sensitivity of HR data. Real-world scenarios highlight the criticality of implementing robust security measures during ERP and GRC integration, encompassing encryption, access controls, regular security audits, and collaboration with cybersecurity experts.

Overcoming System Integration Complexity

Integrating ERP and GRC with HR systems involves connecting diverse technologies, databases, and processes. The complexity inherent in this process can be a significant hurdle if not addressed strategically. Organizations must develop a well-defined strategy to address this complexity.

Strategic Integration Planning

Integrating ERP, GRC, and HR systems poses a complex

challenge in a global enterprise. Successful organizations address this by developing a comprehensive integration strategy, defining clear goals, engaging IT and HR teams collaboratively, and prioritizing critical functionalities. Adopting a phased approach, starting with essential functions and gradually expanding to reduce the complexity of the integration process, is fundamental.

Data Migration and Consolidation Strategies

Efficient data migration is a critical aspect of the successful integration process. Migrating data from disparate systems to a unified platform requires meticulous planning and execution.

Seamless Data Migration

In a significant system upgrade, a company undertaking a major upgrade decides to migrate from its legacy HR system to a modern, integrated solution. The organization ensures a seamless data migration process through meticulous planning by including comprehensive mapping data, transforming it efficiently, and validating it rigorously. Extensive testing involving end-users helps identify and rectify any data-related issues, resulting in minimal disruptions during the migration process.

Steering Change Management and Ensuring User Adoption

The success of any integration initiative depends on effective change management and how well employees embrace the change. Upgrading HR systems demands a proactive change management strategy to ensure a smooth transition.

Proactive Change Management

Change management takes center stage in an organization undergoing a significant HR system upgrade. Clear communication about the purpose and benefits of the upgrade, coupled with comprehensive training

programs, ensures a smoother transition and fosters a positive attitude toward change. Engaging key stakeholders and end-users from the early stages provides a smoother transition and maximizes user adoption. The organization establishes an ongoing feedback mechanism to address concerns and continuously improve the user experience.

Robust Security Measures

As HR systems deal with sensitive employee information, robust measures must be in place to ensure data security and privacy. As a part of the ERP and GRC integration process with the HR system, a company implements robust security measures, including encryption, access controls, and regular security audits to safeguard HR data. Data governance policies are established to maintain data privacy and integrity throughout the integration process. The organization engages with cybersecurity experts to stay abreast of evolving threats and implement proactive measures.

Paving the Path Forward

The journey of upgrading HR enterprise applications with ERP and GRC integration is both transformative and challenging. Real-time scenarios illustrate the tangible impact of this integration on operational efficiency, compliance management, and decision-making capabilities. The complexities of system integration, challenges in data migration, intricacies of change management, and the critical concern of data security all become integral aspects of the journey. However, by addressing these challenges proactively and leveraging the advantages of ERP and GRC integration, organizations can position themselves for sustained success in the evolving landscape of HR operations. The path forward involves not merely adopting new technologies but embracing a mindset of continuous improvement and strategic evolution.

In conclusion, success in upgrading HR enterprise applications with the integration of ERP and GRC demands a strategic mindset, meticulous planning, and a proactive approach to addressing challenges to achieving organizational excellence in the evolving landscape of HR operations.

About the Author



Krishnakumar Sivagnanam is a seasoned Information Technology professional with over 20 years of experience. Currently, he holds the position of Solutions

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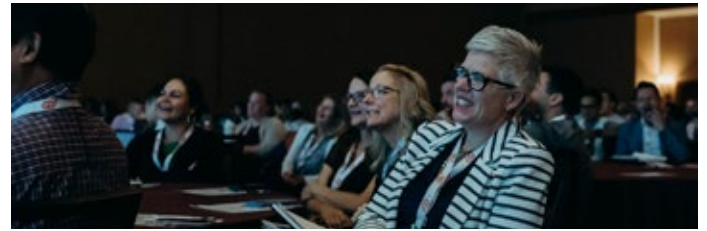


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Schedule At-A-Glance

Monday, September 23, 2024

HRIP Certification Exam Prep Course	9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
IHRIM Annual Meeting	5 - 6 p.m.

Tuesday, September 24, 2024

Women in HR Technology Summit	8:30 a.m. - 12:15 p.m.
Breakout Sessions	12:45 - 3:30 p.m.
Opening Keynote	3:45 - 4:45 p.m.
Expo Activities	5 - 7 p.m.

Wednesday September 25, 2024

Breakfast	7:30 - 8 a.m.
Josh Bersin Keynote	8 - 9:15 a.m.
Expo Activities	9:15 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Breakout Sessions	10:45 - 11:30 a.m.
Mega Sessions	1 - 1:45 p.m.
Breakout Sessions	2 - 2:30 p.m.
Breakout Sessions	3:30 - 4:15 p.m.
Industry Insider Sessions	4:30 - 5 p.m.

Thursday, September 26, 2024

Breakfast	7:45 - 8:30 a.m.
Ravin Jesuthasan Keynote	8 - 9:15 a.m.
Expo Activities	9:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Breakout Sessions	11 - 11:45 a.m.
Lunch	12 - 1:30 p.m.
Breakout Sessions	1:30 - 2:15 p.m.
Breakout Sessions	2:30 - 3 p.m.
Mega Sessions	4 - 4:45 p.m.

Friday, September 27, 2024

HRIP Certification Exam	9:30 - 11:30 a.m.
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The Hybrid-Work Challenge: Balancing Productivity and Privacy

By Sneha Mandala

In the ever-evolving work landscape, especially in the wake of the global shift to remote and hybrid models, the quest for optimal employee performance has become a central concern for leaders. As a champion of sustainable peak performance and a certified professional executive coach, I frequently encounter leaders grappling with the complexities of remote work productivity. It is high time we shift our focus from mere outcomes to optimizing the inputs for the best results.

The common knee-jerk reaction to a remote employee's poor performance is often the assumption of slacking because of a lack of micro-supervision. However, the reality is far more nuanced. Many issues could be at play—mismatched job responsibilities, a lack of autonomy, the need for support, or the struggle to stay authentic within job constraints. This realization brings us to a crucial point—evaluating productivity should go beyond surface-level assessments and consider the deeper factors influencing an employee's engagement and well-being.

Integrating remote and in-office dynamics, the hybrid work model brings an additional layer of intricacy. By adopting “return-to-hybrid” policies, leaders seek software to monitor employee presence—whether in the office or remotely. Some of these tools use Artificial Intelligence (AI) as well. However, employees resist the widespread use of such productivity-tracking tools. Many employees commonly express discomfort, feeling like they are under the watchful eye of

“Big Brother.” This raises a significant challenge: How can leaders effectively measure employee engagement without using tools that trigger a sense of being surveilled?

To address this challenge, leaders must recognize the importance of balancing the need for tracking employees' concerns about privacy and their autonomy. Leaders need to foster an environment of trust where results are emphasized over constant monitoring. Open communication channels can play a pivotal role in understanding what methods work best for leaders and employees, ensuring that the quest for engagement does not compromise the sense of autonomy and comfort among the workforce.

We do not have to reject technology entirely. For example, AI's capabilities extend far beyond mere efficiency monitoring. It is a strategic ally, introducing objectivity and scalability to core HR functions. Leaders, leveraging AI insights, gain a nuanced understanding of employee needs, allowing them to cultivate a positive work culture that fosters engagement and satisfaction. Moreover, AI proves instrumental in addressing intricate challenges such as turnover and burnout and optimizing overall performance management.

Within the broader context of reshaping work environments, AI technologies like [Flow-Pilot](#)¹, powered by Dataken's OLI, assume a pivotal role. These tools enable data-driven decision-making, streamline processes,

and enhance organizational agility. Integrating AI is not just about efficiency; it catalyzes innovation and adaptation in constant workplace evolution.

Before delving into the specifics of AI tools, let us lay a comprehensive foundation with practical strategies.

Navigating the Hybrid Work Landscape: Six Tips for Employees and Leaders

1. Fostering Proactive and Transparent Communication: In navigating the hybrid work landscape, fostering proactive communication emerges as a cornerstone for employees and leaders. Regular check-ins facilitate discussions on work progress and play a pivotal role in building a sense of unity among team members. Inspired by the effective practices of remote team members after COVID-19, the adoption of a weekly email update system has become a valuable tool, actively encouraging open communication channels.

Employees should actively engage in these practices, recognizing their contribution to cultivating a communicative environment essential for effectively navigating the nuances of the hybrid workspace. For leaders, championing transparent communication practices is not just about keeping the team informed; it is a strategic approach that nurtures a keen sense of connection. Virtual town halls serve as dynamic platforms to convey company updates,

ensuring every team member feels a part of the organizational narrative. Encouraging an open-door policy further fortifies a culture where employees freely share concerns and suggestions.

This commitment to transparent communication is foundational, creating an inclusive atmosphere that fosters trust and collaboration, proving instrumental in overcoming the unique challenges a hybrid work setting presents. Also, empathy is crucial in bridging the gap for remote and hybrid team members.

Actively involve:

- Remote employees in team-building activities.
- Leveraging video calls.
- Instant messaging.
- Emails for regular communication.

Leaders can set the tone by participating in informal virtual gatherings and acknowledging individual contributions. Implement an open-door policy, encouraging employees to share their thoughts and concerns. Practical tips for employees include initiating virtual coffee breaks and sharing personal updates to foster a sense of connection. Leaders should prioritize regular virtual check-ins focused on work progress and understanding the unique challenges remote team members face.

2. Championing Continuous Learning

Learning: Proactively seek diverse skill development opportunities and remain attuned to industry trends to maintain an agile and adaptive approach. Attend virtual workshops, especially those centered on project management, and actively apply the newly acquired skills to elevate the efficiency of team workflows. Additionally, set personalized learning goals and actively track progress through shared platforms, fostering a dynamic culture of growth and development within the team.

This initiative-taking commitment to continuous learning becomes a personal initiative and a strategic imperative for employees. It ensures individual adaptability and sustained personal development within the ever-evolving work environment. Actively engaging in skill enhancement contributes to personal effectiveness in the hybrid workspace and catalyzes the entire team's collective growth. As critical influencers,

leaders play a decisive role in actively championing a culture of continuous learning, empowering their teams to proactively evolve and thrive amidst the fluid dynamics of the contemporary work landscape.

3. Dedication to Career Growth

Growth: Employees should prioritize a clear commitment to career growth in remote and hybrid work scenarios. Take ownership of your career path by proactively planning and pursuing your goals, even in a distance-based setting. Initiate discussions with your manager to collaboratively craft a career progression plan aligned with company objectives. Collaborate with mentors to formulate a personalized career development plan, leveraging their insights for strategic growth. Actively steering your career journey ensures alignment with personal aspirations and meaningful contributions to the company's objectives within the hybrid work landscape.

For leaders, providing employees with transparent career progression frameworks fosters motivation and clarity in remote or hybrid settings. Consider implementing visual roadmaps for career progression, ensuring transparency and motivation among team members. Conduct regular career development check-ins with team members to facilitate ongoing growth discussions and align individual aspirations with organizational objectives. Flexible goal setting is vital to unlocking individual potential. Understand employees' strengths and aspirations, aligning tasks to enhance motivation. Leaders should facilitate collaborative goal-setting discussions, ensuring alignment with individual and team objectives. Regularly revisit goals to accommodate changing priorities and encourage employees to lead in shaping their professional development. This positive commitment to career growth not only enhances individual professional journeys but also contributes to the overall success and resilience of the team in the dynamic landscape of hybrid work.

4. Prioritizing Well-Being: A focus on well-being is a foundational pillar for individual resilience and collective success within the hybrid work paradigm. By proactively setting clear boundaries to maintain a healthy work-life balance,

employees create a framework that not only safeguards their mental and physical health but also fosters sustained energy levels and heightened adaptability in the face of the unique challenges inherent to the hybrid work setup.

Moreover, active engagement in activities that promote overall well-being becomes a strategic choice, acknowledging the symbiotic relationship between individual vitality and professional effectiveness. For instance, scheduling short breaks for mindfulness is not merely a routine but a deliberate investment in mental well-being, contributing to increased focus and productivity. Furthermore, sharing well-being practices with the team goes beyond individual benefits; it fosters a collaborative and supportive culture where every team member is empowered to thrive. In essence, the rationale behind prioritizing well-being is rooted in its transformative impact on individual and collective resilience, fortifying employees to navigate the complexities of the hybrid work landscape with vigor and sustained effectiveness.

5. Cultivating Autonomy, Trust, and Ownership

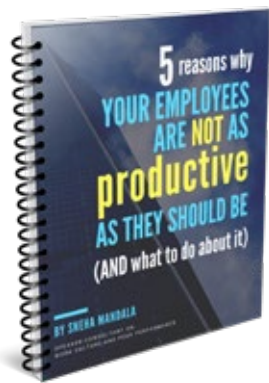
Ownership: In navigating the complexities of a hybrid work environment, fostering autonomy, trust, and ownership is pivotal for sustained success. Employees can cultivate autonomy by proactively managing their time and tasks. Establish clear goals, create a structured daily plan, and communicate transparently about progress. For leaders, instilling trust involves guiding while allowing room for individual decision-making. Regular check-ins should focus on support rather than micromanagement.

Ownership is nurtured through a shared understanding of the organization's mission. Leaders should articulate the company's vision, emphasizing each team member's role in achieving it. Encourage open dialogue and feedback, making it clear that contributions are valued. Employees, in turn, can take ownership by aligning their work with broader objectives, showcasing initiative, and learning from challenges. Striking this balance fosters a culture of autonomy, trust, and ownership, fortifying teams in the dynamic landscape of hybrid work.

6. Leveraging Technology for

Enhanced Flexibility: Employees benefit from embracing a mindset that prioritizes adaptability, allowing them to navigate evolving tasks and responsibilities seamlessly. Leveraging technology, employees can use project management tools, collaborative platforms, and automation solutions to enhance their agility. For instance, adopting cloud-based collaboration tools facilitates real-time communication and efficient project execution, enabling employees to respond swiftly to changing work dynamics.

Leaders, on the other hand, play a crucial role in fostering organizational agility. They can implement agile methodologies and utilize advanced analytics to expect trends, enabling active decision-making. Technology tools like data analytics platforms and project management systems empower leaders to streamline workflows, allocate resources efficiently, and respond swiftly to market shifts. For employees and leaders, embracing agility and leveraging technology go together, ensuring a responsive and dynamic approach to the challenges of the modern hybrid work environment.



The Role of 'Flow-Pilot' in Enhancing Productivity

Now, let us turn our attention back to the role of AI, specifically **Flow-Pilot**,¹ in enhancing productivity and fostering a state of flow for employees. Flow-Pilot is a technological marvel, leveraging advanced machine learning algorithms like Decision Tree and K-nearest neighbors. These algorithms, backed by extensive data analysis, ensure precise and personalized insights into employee preferences and work patterns.

Integrating large language models in the backend allows Flow-Pilot to understand and interpret complex language nuances. This linguistic proficiency contributes to more accurate and context-aware suggestions, making the tool highly effective in real-world work scenarios.

While the back end operates with innovative technology, the front end of Flow-Pilot boasts a user-friendly interface. This ensures employees can easily navigate and derive value from the tool regardless of their technical proficiency. Seamless integration into everyday work processes is crucial, enhancing existing workflows rather than disrupting them.

One of the standout features of Flow-Pilot is its ability to provide personalized suggestions for task optimization. These suggestions go beyond generic insights, offering actionable recommendations that align tasks with individual strengths. The result is a workplace where employees feel more connected to their roles, making work less routine and a source of fulfillment.

The success story of Flow-Pilot becomes clear when we examine its real-world impact. In one such case for the customer service division of a Fortune 50 company, the six-month implementation of Flow-Pilot resulted in a remarkable 31% spike in employee engagement. The Net Promoter Score, a measure of how highly customers are likely to recommend the company, saw an impressive 40-point surge during this period. Customers noticed the change, attributing it to the exceptional quality of service they received.

Flow-Pilot redefines tools for a hybrid work environment —crafted for employee well-being, not surveillance. In contrast, the typical «big brother» tool monitors but misses the user-centric finesse. Opt for functionality that enriches, not just oversees. Choose tools that empower, not just scrutinize.

Conclusion

As we navigate the dynamic terrain of remote and hybrid work, the pursuit of optimal employee performance takes center stage. Our focus has shifted from outcome-centric approaches to the intricate factors shaping engagement and well-being. In the face of hybrid

work complexities, balancing the need for tracking with privacy and autonomy is paramount, underlining the significance of open communication.

Artificial Intelligence, exemplified by tools like Flow-Pilot, emerges not as a disruptor but as a transformative force. Its integration, combined with foundational strategies like transparent communication, continuous learning, career growth dedication, well-being prioritization, and technology leverage, reshapes the modern workplace. With its advanced algorithms, Flow-Pilot offers personalized insights, enhancing productivity and work satisfaction.

In practical situations, the success of initiatives driven by AI emphasizes the tangible impact of embracing strategies that combine both human and AI elements, unlocking the authentic potential of employees. As organizations champion this integrated paradigm, they not only adapt to the challenges posed by the hybrid work era but also pave the way for sustained success in the continually evolving work landscape.

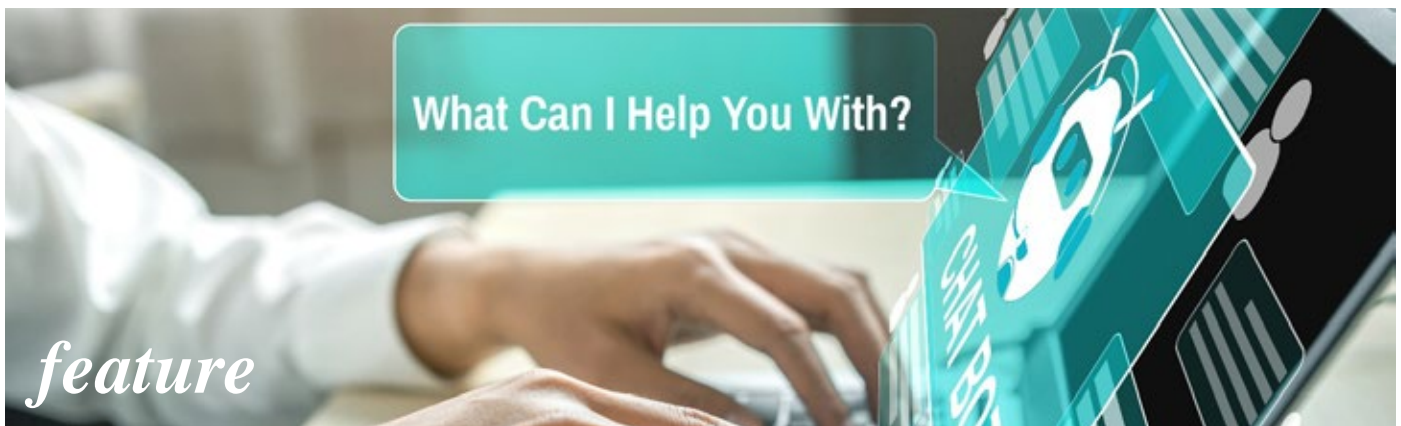
Endnotes

- ¹ The Flow-Pilot – Your Friendly AI Co-Pilot (2023, December 20). <https://snehamandala.com/introducing-flow-pilot/>
- ² Sneha Mandala - Speaker on Work Culture & Peak Performance. (2022, December 4) | Join the «Effortless Work» Revolution! <https://snehamandala.com/>

About the Author



Sneha Mandala is a seasoned speaker and advisor on sustainable peak performance, specializing in enhancing engagement while reducing stress and burnout in the workplace. With a passion for unlocking human potential, Sneha combines neuroscience insights with practical strategies to create environments where individuals thrive. Sneha's expertise drives peak performance by integrating drive and authenticity at work, fostering flow states for increased productivity, creativity, and learning. Her impact is evident in her work with leaders across various industries, where she champions integrating AI tools like Flow-Pilot to revolutionize the modern workplace. To reach her, visit <https://snehamandala.com/>.



feature

AI and Generative AI: Transforming the Businesses, Employees, and How We Work

By Pan Singh Dhoni

Over the past three decades, from 1990 to the present, we have witnessed substantial advancements in Information Technology. The mid-1990s and early 2000s were pivotal in web development, fundamentally connecting countries on a unified platform. The early 2000s saw the emergence and growth of various social media platforms, which have profoundly influenced our society and culture. By the mid-2010s, numerous companies began incorporating [Artificial Intelligence](#)¹ (AI) in different sectors, including

developing autonomous vehicles, enhancing online e-commerce platforms to boost sales, and improving medical imaging techniques. Over the same duration, we have observed improvements in machines, including enhancements in memory and CPU capabilities. We now have more powerful processors (GPUs) supporting various data types. A common thread among these innovations has been the pivotal role of data and powerful machines, which are leading the way for AI-driven automation (see Figure 1).

December 2022 marked a significant milestone in this trajectory, highlighted by the emergence of [ChatGPT](#),² which accelerated the race in generative AI and related technologies. This period has seen the introduction of innovative tools such as [Google Bard](#),³ Gemini, AWS Bedrock, [MidJourney](#),⁴ and DALL.E.

This article explores how Artificial Intelligence is revolutionizing business operations, employee roles, and our overall approach to work.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the ability of machines to process, interpret, and apply information in a manner akin to human cognitive functions, distinguishing it from natural intelligence exhibited by humans and other animals.

Machine learning is a subset of AI, and deep learning (Natural Language Processing (NLP), Convolutional Neural Network (CNN), and Recurrent Neural Network (RNN)) is a subset of machine learning (see Figure 2). Deep and machine learning have two essential types: supervised learning (labeled data) and unsupervised learning.



Figure 1. Representation of Transformation to Businesses and Employee

Artificial Intelligence

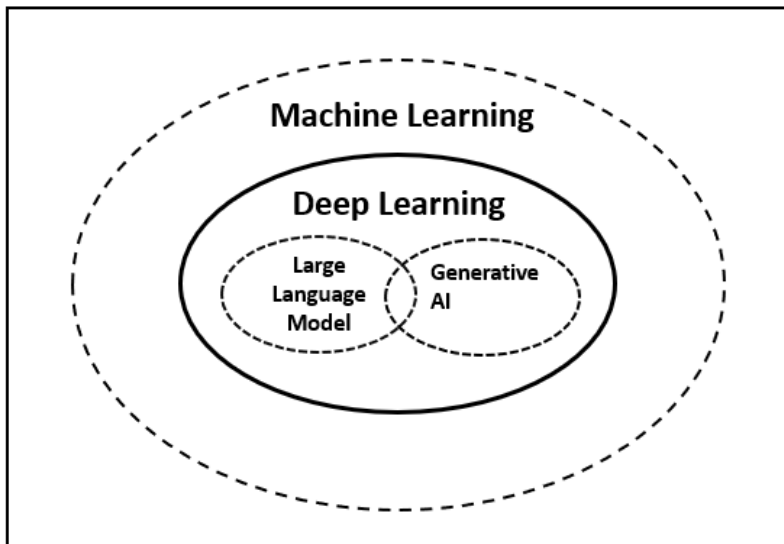


Figure 2. The relationship between AI, Machine Learning, and deep learning

Business Transformation

1. Revolutionizing Industries: The Impact of AI Across Various Business Sectors

Businesses span diverse sectors in national and international arenas, including healthcare, retail, financial services, manufacturing, media, arts, and education. Each of these industries has its unique requirements for sustaining growth and competitiveness. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) continues to evolve, each sector is keen to harness its potential. For instance, healthcare organizations are utilizing AI to enhance patient care and improve diagnostics, such as obtaining more precise imaging of the lungs. By analyzing patient histories, imaging, and lab results, AI enables doctors to make more informed treatment decisions. In retail, companies leverage AI to derive deeper insights from consumer data, aiding in targeted marketing strategies and revenue growth. The media industry is adopting AI for enriched communication experiences, while the automotive sector is exploring AI for advanced automation.

Generative AI,⁵ in particular, is set to transform the data and analytics landscape, boosting productivity and expediting delivery processes.

Organizations can capitalize on these AI capabilities to improve end-user experiences with data, enabling faster and more informed decision-making. Rather than replacing data and analytics professionals, generative AI will augment their efforts, allowing more organizations to benefit from data-driven insights.

A common trend across these sectors is the increasing adoption of advanced AI-enabled chatbots, enhancing customer interaction and service. Similarly, virtual stores and business entities are being reimagined with AI integration, paving the way for innovative and efficient business models.

2. Revolutionizing the Digital Landscape: How IT-Enabled Products and Companies are Shaping for the Future

The recent advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) have opened new avenues and provided a strategic direction for software companies. Recognizing the immense potential of AI, these companies are significantly increasing their investments in artificial intelligence technologies. The main aim of this surge in investment is to enhance their products and remain competitive in the rapidly evolving

market. We are witnessing a trend where many companies integrate AI capabilities into their offerings. This integration is a response to market demand and a strategic move to stay ahead in the technology race.

Including AI in products and services is leading to unprecedented levels of automation. This automation goes beyond mere efficiency; it's about creating more intelligent, intuitive systems to learn, adapt, and make decisions, potentially revolutionizing how businesses operate and interact with their customers. The AI-driven transformation is not limited to large corporations; even startups and mid-sized companies rapidly adopt AI to innovate and enhance their service offerings.

Furthermore, this shift towards AI-focused strategies is reshaping the IT landscape, leading to the emergence of new business models and redefining customer expectations. Companies that effectively harness the power of AI are poised to offer more personalized, efficient, and impactful solutions, setting new standards in the technology sector. As AI continues to evolve, it promises to unlock even more possibilities, driving the future of IT-enabled products and companies toward an increasingly automated and intelligent horizon.

3. Transformation Information Technology (IT) Service Industry: Bridging the AI Skill Shortage

IT-enabled service providers have been dynamically transforming their offerings to meet the evolving needs of their customers. Embracing a multi-stream approach, these providers are focusing on several key areas. Firstly, they are investing in the training of consultants on AI-related topics, ensuring their teams are well-versed in the latest technological advancements. This knowledge equips them to understand better and meet the

complex demands of clients in an AI-driven business environment.

Secondly, these providers are dedicated to developing AI-driven tools tailored for their clients. These tools are designed to assist businesses in daily operations, offering innovative solutions that streamline processes, enhance decision-making, and improve overall efficiency.

Overall, the drive towards AI integration and enhanced IT security is a testament to IT-enabled service providers' proactive and forward-thinking stance. By continuously evolving and adapting their services, they stay relevant in a competitive market and pave the way for future innovations in IT services.

Transforming Employee

1. Employees are Eager to Acquire New AI Skills.

Many employees are consistently eager to learn new skills and technologies, and AI is a significant source of this motivation. We have observed many individuals engaging in blogging and writing about their respective domains, actively seeking to integrate and relate their expertise with AI concepts. This trend reflects a keen interest in understanding and utilizing AI, demonstrating a proactive approach towards staying relevant and innovative in their fields. Employees are learning about AI and exploring ways to apply it practically, enhancing their professional capabilities and contributing to the broader discussion in their areas of expertise. This enthusiasm for AI is a positive indicator of a workforce that is adaptable, forward-thinking, and ready to embrace the challenges and opportunities presented by emerging technologies.

2. Organizations Anticipate Increased Self-Training Among Employees Through AI Tools.

There is often a lengthy learning

curve, particularly with new hires, and employers invest significantly in their training and development. However, with AI, there is an expectation that employees will increasingly take the initiative in their skill development. Utilizing AI tools, they can gain essential skills and become productive more quickly than before. This shift towards self-directed learning, facilitated by AI, will likely streamline the training process, making it more efficient and cost-effective for organizations. Employees are expected to leverage these AI resources to enhance their capabilities, reducing the time and resources traditionally required for employer-led training. This trend represents a shift towards a more agile and adaptive workforce, where individuals proactively engage with emerging technologies to accelerate their professional growth and contribute more effectively to their organizations from the outset.

3. New Cycle of Employment in the Era of Automation

Every business is unique, and AI will impact them all. While we may see some jobs become irrelevant, new jobs will emerge because of automation. Consider the example of the self-driving car: it doesn't mean that all drivers' jobs will be wiped out; instead, it will create new avenues and opportunities. A similar transformation is expected to occur in other areas as well.

Transforming How We Work

1. AI Tools for Workplaces

In today's workplaces, we can access many AI tools that enhance various aspects of business operations. This article will focus on some of the most recent and impactful tools. Tools like ChatGPT and Google Bard are at the forefront of content creation, data analysis, troubleshooting, and providing suggestions. Similarly, DALL-E and Midjourney offer innovative artistic

and image-creation capabilities. Tools like Gemini and AWS Bedrock⁶ streamline the process of application development. Microsoft's [GitHub Copilot](#)⁷ revolutionizes code generation and offers real-time coding assistance. Beyond these, numerous products are dedicated to data security, ensuring businesses can safeguard their digital assets effectively. This list is just the tip of the iceberg in the rapidly expanding universe of AI tools.

2. Overcoming the Blank Page Dilemma with AI Assistance: Boosting Productivity Across Various Tasks

AI technology is revolutionizing how we approach initial document creation, offering solutions to the often-daunting 'blank page' problem. By utilizing generative AI, individuals and organizations can efficiently generate first drafts of various documents, including emails and reports. This capability significantly streamlines the writing process, enabling users to kickstart their tasks with a solid foundation, which they can refine and customize.

The impact of generative AI extends far beyond just drafting documents; it plays a pivotal role in enhancing overall productivity at multiple levels. From improving communication to augmenting work processes, AI's contributions are multifaceted. It empowers users to focus on higher-level creative and analytical tasks by handling the initial, time-consuming stages of document creation. This advancement in AI technology is not just a tool for efficiency; it's a catalyst for innovation and productivity in the modern workplace.

3. Problem-Solving Across Industries

Depending on your industry, you can tackle specific challenges effectively. For instance, in the software industry, you can troubleshoot code and review logs

to identify and resolve issues. This skill is crucial for maintaining the functionality and efficiency of software applications. The ability to problem-solve in this context is not just about fixing immediate issues; it also involves a proactive approach to anticipating potential problems and implementing preventive measures. This kind of targeted problem-solving is essential in various industries, as it ensures that operations run smoothly and efficiently, contributing to overall business success.

Ethical Considerations for Workplaces

The list of ethical considerations

is extensive. Here are a few points derived from my research on [workplace guidelines](#):⁸

- Work closely with AI vendors for data security and privacy
- Don't share PII and PCI data with AI tools
- Educate Employees on the pros and cons of AI tools
- Don't put company intellectual property at AI Tools

Conclusion

The advent of Artificial Intelligence, including specialized fields such as Generative AI, is set to impact the business landscape profoundly. This technology will drive the evolution of businesses,

leading to enhanced experiences and benefits for end-users and customers. Companies are expected to accelerate the trend towards automation, ushering in a new era of efficiency and innovation.

At the same time, this technological shift will positively influence the workforce. Employees will find their roles and methods of working transformed by AI, improving productivity and job satisfaction. Although there are ethical considerations to be addressed, the overarching effect of AI and automation on society promises to be beneficial, heralding advancements in various sectors and contributing to overall societal progress.

Endnotes

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³ Sundar Pichai, An important next step on our AI journey, Google Blog, February 06, 2023, <https://bit.ly/30yg003>.

⁴ Enterprise DNA Experts, What is Midjourney and How to Use It - Blog, October 17, 2023, <https://bit.ly/3UuzGAV>.

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⁶ What is Amazon Bedrock? <https://bit.ly/3SNaV1N>.

⁷ The AI coding assistant elevating developer workflows, <https://github.com/features/copilot>

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Video Link: <https://youtu.be/XNs7t9IDvSE>.

While the journey of generative AI might seem daunting now, it mirrors the trajectory of many transformative technologies of the past. Like any pioneering technology, subsequent advancements and refinements often overshadow the early hurdles. Collaborative efforts between researchers, developers, and industry experts will be instrumental in navigating these challenges. Over time, as the technology becomes more integrated into various sectors, its true potential will unfold. The future promises improved efficiency and innovative applications we have yet to envision.

About the Author



Pan Singh Dhoni, a seasoned professional with close to two decades of experience in Information Technology, currently holds the position of Engineering Technical Manager at Five Below, Inc. His passion lies in leveraging disruptive technologies such as cloud computing, big data, and AI, utilizing multi-cloud and hybrid ecosystems in Data, Analytics, and AI. Dhoni has established himself as a thought leader in the Data and AI domain, contributing prolifically to various social media platforms, including YouTube, LinkedIn, Facebook, DZone, Quora, and Medium. He regularly publishes insightful articles on AI and data analytics. His extensive collection of research papers, which explore the complexities of AI and big data, is available on Google Scholar. Dhoni also contributes to the academic community by providing technical reviews for scholarly articles and books. An esteemed IEEE Senior Member, he holds dual master's degrees in mathematics and computer Science from Kumaun University and NIELIT, India. Dhoni can be reached at ps.dhoni@gmail.com.



feature

Unmasking the Limits of ChatGPT and the Misconceptions of AI in the Business World

By Frank P. Ginac

Welcome to the second installment of my series, *AI Buyers Guide for Human Resources (HR) Professionals*. This series is designed to equip HR professionals, who are crucial in selecting, deploying, and managing AI-based HR Tech solutions in the enterprise, with the necessary knowledge to carry out these tasks confidently. The insights shared here are not only beneficial to HR professionals but also to any buyer of AI-based software. I trust you will find this information valuable, and I look forward to your feedback and comments.

ChatGPT continues to dominate AI news. With hundreds of millions of users by the last count, it seems that everyone has jumped on the LLM bandwagon. The media is painting it as a universal AI that can be applied to solve just about any problem it's tasked with. While it is impressive, and I expect it will continue to improve with users finding more and more creative ways to apply it, it can't solve (and never will) every kind of task that the vast array of AI/ML approaches and algorithms can solve today.

Of deep concern to practitioners and researchers is the misconception of its capabilities and its use as a "source of truth." Consider the lawyers using ChatGPT to write a legal brief with

six fabricated citations. After being sanctioned by the court, the law firm issued the statement, "We made a good faith mistake in failing to believe that a piece of technology could be making up cases out of whole cloth."¹

More alarming are concerns about the use of LLMs in medical diagnoses, the creation of treatment plans, and the like. Consider a recent research paper published by the Journal of Medical Internet Research that evaluated the accuracy of ChatGPT's diagnoses and found that "ChatGPT achieved an overall accuracy of 71.7 percent across 36 clinical vignettes."²

Deep Learning Neural Networks and LLMs perform very well at specific tasks and, in some cases, much better than other AI approaches. However, they have their limits, as seen in the cases above. Why are they good at some tasks and not so good at others, and why are they not a universal AI solution? Let's start with a definition: LLM stands for "Large Language Model," which is a machine learning model trained with data designed to complete a sequence in AI parlance. Tasked with finishing the sequence, "Jack and Jill went..." a well-trained LLM will respond with "...up the hill to fetch a pail of water." They can be trained to complete any sequence from the domains of natural languages to

programming languages to symbolic languages and more. In the broadest sense, a language is any system of symbols, letters, numerals, and rules that transmit information. Think about the above examples of applications of LLMs gone wrong. Does it now make sense why LLMs are unsuitable for all tasks? ChatGPT is much more than an LLM. It is an LLM that has undergone further fine-tuning to learn how to follow instructions. However, at its core, it is still an LLM with all the limitations of LLMs.

In my world, HR Tech, I spoke to an analyst recently (a very senior analyst who covers the HR Tech industry) who posited that the only AI of value is "big data" AI, that is, Deep Learning Neural Networks and LLMs that require vast amounts of data to train, data that is only readily available to a small handful of huge companies, with access to enormous computing resources. I hear more and more VCs, analysts, CEOs, and other business decision-makers making the same ill-informed claim. When it comes to deciding which approach or algorithm to use to solve a particular problem or even whether AI should be applied at all, I turn to the following advice from experts in the field:

"Any problem that your in-house expert can solve in a 10-30-minute

telephone call can be developed as an expert system [classic AI approaches/algorithms].”³

“If a typical person can do a mental task with less than one second of thought, we can probably automate it using AI [supervised machine learning, specifically, function approximation] either now or soon... [Such] tasks are ripe for automation. However, they often fit into a larger context or business process; figuring out these linkages to the rest of your business is also important.”⁴

Ginac’s corollary to Andrew Ng’s “one second of thought” proposition is that anything that takes longer than a few seconds of thought is unlikely to be automated with supervised machine learning approaches, including Neural Networks/Deep Learning approaches, at least not today’s approaches.

When thinking about ways to apply AI/ML, these two rules weigh heavily on what we choose to automate and how we automate it. Recently, we embarked on a project to automate updating thousands of out-of-date learning references in one of our data sets. For example, given a learning reference in the form of a book with an author, description, publisher, date of publication, and ISBN that was published more than five years ago, is there a recently published book that covers the same material?

As one of my former AI professors at Georgia Tech is fond of saying,

“Do the easy thing first!” The easy thing to do, at least to try, was to see how OpenAI’s gpt-4 model would do given the task of “generating” a bit over 3,000 book references. Iterating over the dataset with a carefully crafted prompt, the model faithfully generated a book title, a description, a publisher, a publication date within the past five years, and even an ISBN for each one! Given our understanding of LLMs, we did not unquestioningly trust the results and proceeded to verify each reference generated by the model. It turns out that only 10% of the books it generated were real books.

This phenomenon is known as model “hallucination,” and it is precisely why LLMs should not be used as a source of truth even for tasks they perform quite well. Does that mean that LLMs are utterly useless for this particular task? Not entirely, it turns out. The gpt-4 model does a reasonably good job of inference. For example, given the summary of a book, it can infer subjects that the book is likely to cover. Now, with a title, description, and a list of subjects, we can “ground” the model with data from source-of-truth databases, e.g., the Library of Congress catalog or Google Books, and apply other non-LLM AI techniques to confirm the similarity of the original to the updated reference.

The journey of applying AI and

LLMs like ChatGPT in the HR Tech landscape underscores a critical lesson: the effective use of AI requires a blend of technological understanding and practical wisdom. LLMs are not infallible or universally applicable tools despite their advanced capabilities and versatility. They excel in generating and inferring information within their trained domain but fall short when discerning fact from fiction or tasks requiring deep, contextual understanding or ethical judgment. This limitation, often manifested as model hallucination, necessitates a cautious and informed approach in their application.

The key lies in leveraging AI as a tool to augment human intelligence and expertise rather than as a standalone solution. By combining the inference abilities of LLMs with data verification from reliable sources and complementary AI technologies, we can harness the power of these models more effectively and responsibly. It’s about finding the right balance: utilizing the strengths of AI to enhance our capabilities while being acutely aware of its limitations and ensuring that its application is grounded in reality. As we continue to explore the frontiers of AI in various fields, this mindful approach will be crucial in unlocking the true potential of these technologies in an innovative and ethically sound way.

Endnotes

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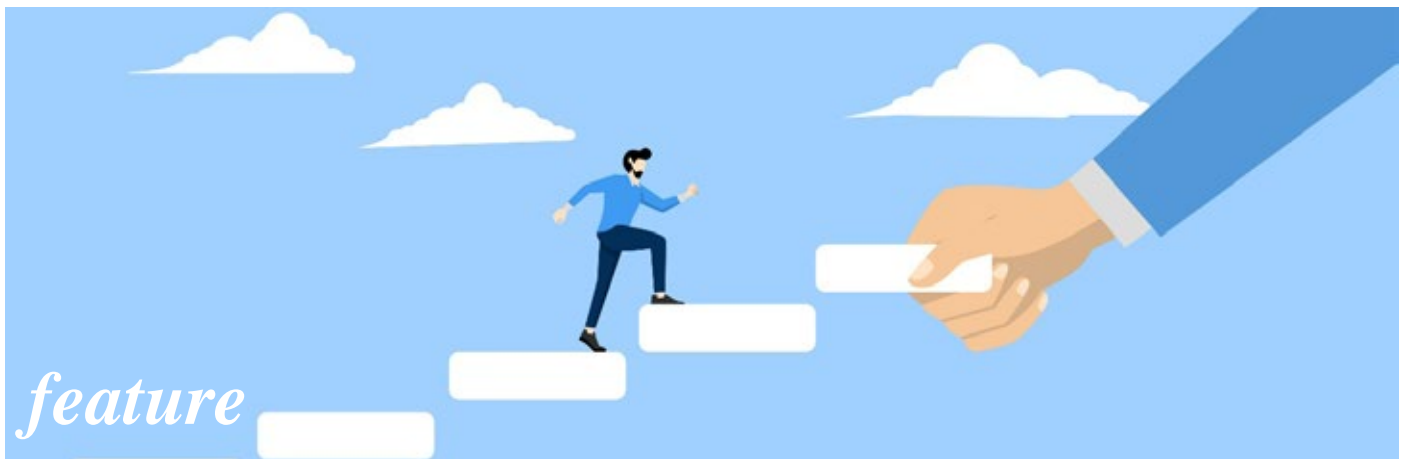
⁴ NG, A. (2017, September 21). Andrew Ng: What AI Can and Can’t Do. *Harvard Business Review*, <https://bit.ly/3KaGxJi>

About the Author



Frank Ginac is a leading figure in the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) with talent management. As the Co-Founder and Chief Technology Officer of TalentGuard, he has been pivotal in advancing AI applications to address complex challenges within large enterprises. Frank also serves as the head of TalentGuard Labs, where he drives innovation in AI to enhance employee growth, organizational growth, and operational efficiency. Frank has also made significant contributions to the academic field by providing instructional support for graduate-level courses in

AI and related subjects at the Georgia Institute of Technology. His work in education reflects his dedication to nurturing the next generation of tech innovators, ensuring ongoing engagement with the forefront of technological research and development. He holds a Master of Science in Computer Science from the Georgia Institute of Technology and a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science with Honors from Fitchburg State University. His academic and professional achievements underline his role as a visionary in applying AI technologies to enhance talent management systems and his commitment to educating future leaders in technology. A published author, he has contributed to AI, software development, and quality assurance through his books and numerous articles. He can be reached at frank.ginac@talentguard.com.



Unleashing The Power of Assessments for Leaders and their Organizations

By Allan H. Church, Ph.D., James A. Scrivani, Ph.D., and Markus Graf

The accurate assessment and development of organizational leadership potential and capability is a critical factor in any effective talent strategy. While designing, implementing, and maintaining assessment processes have been a mainstay of organizations with robust talent systems for decades, the increasing emphasis on identifying high-potential individuals in corporations has resulted in the exponential growth of using assessments for development and decision-making. Consider industry estimates from Forbes and others that global organizations spend upwards of \$360 billion on leadership development programs annually (see the Forbes link under suggested readings). Unsurprisingly, organizations are increasingly jumping on the assessment bandwagon to enhance the rigor of their talent discussions.

Moreover, independent benchmark studies conducted by Church and colleagues with top development

organizations over the past ten years have reported that 85 percent or more use assessment methods for identifying and informing their internal movement and succession planning efforts, and that percentage has been increasing year over year even through COVID-19 (see “How are Top Companies Assessing their high-potentials and senior executives” and “How are Top Companies Designing and Managing Their High-Potential Programs” under suggested readings). As c-suite leaders and chief human resource officers focus on building their leadership pipelines both for near-term succession and with an emphasis on finding the “diamonds on the rough” high-potentials deeper in their organizations, the role of assessments has become increasingly more strategic than in the past.

Why Assessments Are Often Lacking

Despite the increasingly widespread use of these tools, we continue to hear

senior leaders and HR practitioners in other organizations question the value and impact of their assessment efforts. Why is this the case? Isn't it enough to hire a consulting firm, have them assess a group of executives or middle managers, deliver feedback on their strengths and development areas, and let them back out into the world to become better leaders?

The answer is no; it's not that simple. Many factors play into the success of a leadership assessment and development program beyond just collecting and delivering feedback to participants. Aside from broader organizational system aspects, such as ensuring you have senior leadership sponsorship and deliver true differentiated development support after results are received, the assessments' content is one of the most surprising areas where companies miss the mark from our perspective. In our experience working with these tools internally in companies like PepsiCo and Novartis and our external consulting efforts,

standard “out of the box” approaches to leadership assessment are limited in application. If we step back and apply a culture change lens to the implementation of an assessment process, using generic models of leadership typically falls short for three key reasons:

1. Lack of Future Focus and Cultural Relevance
2. Over-reliance on Specific Methods or Tools
3. Under Leveraging the Insights from the Data

The answer is simple. To build an effective, impactful, and meaningful assessment system, you need to customize the leadership framework for your organization, leverage a blend of tools that align with this framework, and design the process to yield data-based insights for multiple stakeholders, from individuals to the C-suite. Next, we’ll discuss how a customized approach can address each challenge we’ve raised.

1. Focus Assessments on Future Capabilities Needed for Your Organization

The best leadership assessment and development programs focus on the capabilities (i.e., experiences, knowledge, skills, and abilities) that will be required for the future success of a given organization. This focus makes an assessment strategic and, therefore, more valuable and engaging for the organization and the senior leadership team’s talent agenda. Generical leadership models are great for developing generic leaders but less so for building the critical capabilities you need in your company. While using a standard “out-of-the-box” set of assessment tools might be faster to implement and possibly more cost-effective (depending on the consulting firm

To build an effective, impactful, and meaningful assessment system, you need to customize the leadership framework for your organization . . .

and if the target population is relatively small), it will inevitably fail to deliver beyond helping a group of feedback recipients improve their effectiveness. It’s simply not that relevant beyond the basics. Just as organizations don’t all have the same cultures, face the same business challenges, or have the same drivers for sustained growth, it makes sense that the most impactful leadership capability and assessment frameworks will be those embedded in your organization’s unique context. They should be relevant and meaningful and reflect the organization’s culture, language, and priorities to maximize their value (see the article by Church & Ezama under suggested readings that describe the PepsiCo GREAT5 leadership framework for an example).

2. Take a Multi-Trait, Multi-Method Approach to Assessment, aka Use Multiple Lenses

Along with taking a more customized and company-specific approach to assessments, another critical step to ensuring more significant impact and value is to build an “assessment suite” that leverages multiple tools. By taking a more holistic and customized approach to building our fully integrated assessment suite, you have a real opportunity to:

1. Drive a culture of the desired behaviors for the organization deemed strategically crucial for the future by the C-suite.
2. Provide insights using different but complementary data-based lenses into the talent strengths and gaps relevant for leadership

development planning and succession.

3. Create significant pull and ownership from your C-suite sponsors.

And, of course, the participants will also receive better, more meaningful, and impactful feedback on leadership dimensions that matter to the business.

While it is critical to use empirically validated assessments to evaluate your leaders’ strengths and opportunity areas, more than using a set of generic tools alone is needed to gain a competitive advantage in the market. Though it may seem straightforward to take this approach, the watch out is that your competitors might be doing the same thing with the same tools. This approach might be helpful if benchmarking your leaders against others outside your organization is essential. So, instead of solely using an “off-the-shelf” suite, we suggest implementing a blend of third-party tools configured in a way that provides feedback against an internally relevant leadership framework.

Crucial to success, however, is ensuring that your behavioral tools (e.g., 360 feedback, which benchmarks show is the most used by top development companies) are direct measures of your future-focused leadership model. There is tremendous value in creating a custom 360 that links to your internal model, which allows for creating nuanced, measurable, and actionable behaviors that can inform individual development planning (for more on designing 360 systems, see the Handbook of Strategic 360 Feedback under suggested

readings). After collecting enough data, it is also possible to empirically determine which items are the most predictive of future success internally, which truly brings your future-focused framework to life for the C-suite.

Since no one tool is the perfect solution, and senior leaders often have differing preferences based on personal experience, using multiple assessment measures and methods will drive maximum insights and predictive power for your organization. Equally important, using a blend of custom and standard tools will also help mitigate legal risk from the process because the tools measure different facets differently. Some examples here include coupling a custom 360 (i.e., behavioral feedback from others) with personality assessments (i.e., self-reports), cognitive tests (i.e., problem-solving and pattern recognition), structured interviews, and group exercises (i.e., third party observation), and digital simulations or situational judgment tests (i.e., testing for decision-making in novel situations). For examples of how these tools can be used in practice, see the SHRM report “Selecting Leadership Talent for the 21st-Century Workplace” under suggested readings).

Another argument for using a suite of tools customized against the internal model concerns the user experience for participants. Stated differently, you might have the most valid assessments the market offers. However, if participants have a negative experience or find some of the data confusing because they present results using different concepts, data quality can become irrelevant because they may reject the results outright. Leveraging the language of an internal model for presenting results from all the tools used will keep the terminology simple to follow and positioned as developable in nature (since

the framing is in the language of leadership, not the underlying psychology of the tools themselves).

For example, a popular and valid personality assessment, the Hogan Assessment Suite, has detailed reports against multiple dimensions and subdimensions (additional details on the Hogan are under suggested readings). While results can be presented stand-alone to a leader using their 20+ proprietary dimensions, the same data can also be mapped and presented using the language of an organization’s custom approach. Similarly, for cognitive ability tests, instead of assigning a single number representing someone in the X percentile, you could map that percentile as one component within a “Strategic Thinking” or “Decision Making” capability. In our experience, participants almost always receive this better. It helps remove some stigma around testing in general and avoids the temptation to rank people using their cognitive scores.

3. Unlock the Value of Assessment Insights for Leaders, Teams, and the Organization

The third method for ensuring your assessment data will provide maximum value sounds simple but is often overlooked for various reasons. Despite the best intentions of many senior executives who

commission assessment work, there is frequently a lack of knowledge (i.e., the “knowing-doing gap” and/or capability regarding how best to maximize the value of the data-based insights beyond the immediate individual(s) being assessed (see the recent Workforce Solutions Review article by Ulrich, Church, Eichinger, and Pearman under suggested readings). In short, aside from the clear focus on helping develop individual leaders, assessment data can also be used highly effectively at the team (e.g., for team composition and staffing) and organizational levels as well (e.g., for talent planning and succession, building targeted development interventions and programs based on patterns of outages/needs, and for driving culture change and organizational capability regarding the language of leadership and embracing what top development companies call a “talent development mindset”). Each of these applications is described briefly below.

a. For Leadership Development

Focusing on the development of individual leaders is often the number one reason organizations embark on assessments per the benchmark data (e.g., 72 percent use data for development per the top development company benchmarks noted earlier) and the reason many of these tools were initially

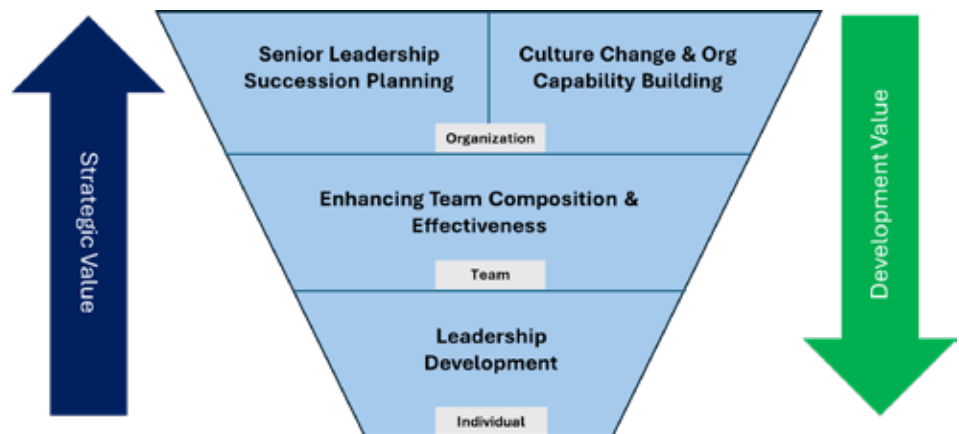


Figure 1. The Three Levels of Assessment Insights

created. Whether for individual coaching or as part of a leadership development program, using assessment data as a baseline can be very effective as the starting point for individuals as they craft their development journeys. Assessment insights help raise the recipient's level of self-awareness (which research has shown predicts future success) and allow them to target their strengths for reinforcement and development opportunities to work against (for more on the role feedback can play, see The Feedback Reality under suggested readings). Data at this level is also useful for identifying future leadership potential, but this purpose is less for the individual than the organization.

b. For Enhancing Team Composition and Effectiveness

At the group or team level, assessment data summarized across a set of individual leaders can also be used to drive composition (i.e., through the staffing of complementary skills when looking at the team holistically) and team effectiveness (e.g., by focusing on group strengths and potential opportunities for working together more effectively). This typically involves enrolling intact teams and/or talent cohorts in the assessment process with two goals in mind. The first is to create bespoke interventions for the entire cohort (e.g., a networked team with shared purpose and goals or raise the level of collaboration for a specific leadership level). The second is to analyze the data to help support team dynamics and interventions in improving working methods, setting team charters and norms, enhancing communications, understanding formal and informal roles, and optimizing performance (see Executive Team Dysfunction,

Defeated and Team Effectiveness 101: A Primer on What works for examples of this type of work done at PepsiCo over the years).

c. For Senior Leadership Succession Planning

Arguably, the most strategic and impactful use of assessment data for organizations and their C-suite leaders is when they are integrated into the broader talent management and HR agendas. This integrated assessment includes using insights to identify high-potentials based on the future success profile, and inform talent discussions, planning, and targeted development during formal review processes with senior leaders. In addition, these insights can be invaluable in slating key individuals for succession roles and summarizing capabilities of top successors to c-suite positions for the Board of Directors (in publicly traded companies). For example, assessment data can help pinpoint the development needs of a senior successor to enhance their readiness for the C-suite role using the 70/20/10 model of critical experiences, coaching and mentoring, and formal learning. Executives can utilize this data to decide who has the more robust profile to lead a significant SVP operating role with 50,000 front-line employees, for example, vs. who might be better suited for an SVP insights or strategy position. While this application of assessment data, mainly when it is based on the unique capabilities needed to drive sustained growth for the future, top development benchmark data indicates that less than half of top development companies use their data for talent decision-making or succession (44%) and even less for identification of potential (36%). Perhaps it's an issue of accountability rather than capability, as only 13% of companies formally

measure the outcomes of their talent management processes (per benchmark studies under suggested readings).

d. For Driving Culture Change and Organizational Capability Building

The other areas in which assessment data in the aggregate can be leveraged strategically for the organization are for use in large-scale capability or development interventions to close enterprise gaps in core areas (e.g., inspirational leadership, effective collaboration) as well as culture change initiatives (e.g., core values and leadership expectations). In essence, if leadership frameworks and the tools that measure them have been tailored for the future, by assessing significant numbers of leaders, an organization communicates and reinforces the "how" results should be achieved along with the "what." This should not be surprising given that customized 360 feedback and other tools have been used for decades to drive culture change (see Church and Burke's chapter on Strategic 360 for Organization Development in the Handbook). Yet, in our experience, many organizations are underleveraging this opportunity. Having a CEO and C-suite team endorse a custom set of leadership capabilities. However, it sends a powerful message about what is critical for the desired end-state's success.

The Small Print

With all our focus on developing custom-integrated suites of solutions for enhancing the impact of assessments, it is remiss not also to stress the importance of ensuring the responsible use of data and the role that governance plays in global and ever-changing legal environments. Whenever an organization is designing and utilizing these types

of tools and processes, special care must be given to the following:

- Protecting their integrity regarding what has been communicated to participants regarding the transparency and use of the assessment data itself,
- Understanding the role of languages and cultural differences when conducting and using assessments, particularly in global contexts,
- Building capability of those delivering the feedback if done so internally (e.g., HR professionals) as well as managers and even c-suite leaders in how to make the most effective and informed use of insights from the tools and

- Conducting a formal validation study using internal leaders to ensure there are no biases inherent in the tools being used in your company (see the SHRM resource under Suggested readings for more detail).

Where Does AI Play a Role in Talent Assessment?

As technology and its application to the world of work continues to advance at a breakneck pace, digital platforms and processes, along with the role of AI and Generative AI, have become one of the hottest topics of discussion. While there are many big ideas around the use of AI for talent tools and processes

(see, for example, *Where Does Artificial Intelligence Play in the HR Game* and *How to Tame the Talent Marketplace* under suggested readings), in our experience, the current state of AI and Generative AI are not quite ready to replace talent professionals entirely. However, this is an area that anyone who works with talent needs to watch carefully as it continues to evolve.

In closing, assessments are critical for talent management and leadership development. If your organization struggles to justify the resources and spend thought or is simply interested in maximizing the value from these tools, the opportunities and actions are clear!

Suggested Readings

Leadership Development Is A \$366 Billion Industry: Here's Why Most Programs Don't Work (forbes.com)

How are top companies assessing their high-potentials and senior executives? A talent management benchmark study. (apa.org)

How are top companies designing and managing their high-potential programs? A follow-up talent management benchmark study. (apa.org)

The handbook of strategic 360 feedback. (apa.org)

Hogan Assessments | Personality Tests That Predict Performance

Selecting-Leadership-Talent.pdf (shrm.org)

Why Talent Management and Succession Bench Building Aren't Working Today: At Least Not as Well as They Could! – International Association for Human Resources Information Management (ihrim.org)

The Feedback Reality - TalentQ (talent-quarterly.com)

Executive Team Dysfunction, Defeated - TalentQ (talent-quarterly.com)

Team Effectiveness 101: A Primer on What Works

<https://trainingindustry.com>

Where Does Artificial Intelligence Play in the HR Game? - TalentQ (talent-quarterly.com)

How to Tame the Talent Marketplace - TalentQ (talent-quarterly.com)

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the backstory

On The Road Again: The Cost of the Employee Commute Part 2 of a Series

By Katherine Jones, Ph.D.

What does it cost for your employees to come to work? Previously, in *The Back Story*, we looked at the cost of childcare—knocking about \$18,000-20,000 annually out of a parent’s paycheck for each baby’s or toddler’s daycare. Today, we look at the cost of commuting, a topic of interest to me after meeting two people: one, a man working at a Bay Area tech company who had a four-hour each-way commute daily. He said he found his dream job, but his children were in school and daycare in the town he lived in—so he spent eight hours a day on the road—when the weather was good and there were no traffic issues. The second was a young Guatemalan woman who lived in rural California and commuted two hours for a position as a waitress with a new baby at home.

That is approximately 2,000 hours driving to and from work, 1000 hours for the waitress.

Most commuters do not face a four-hour commute to the office, yet

the distance and the toll of coping with traffic add up to a significant cost to the employee. While the work-from-home model avoided these costs during the Pandemic, about half of employers currently require their workers to return to the office full-time.¹

Of course, commuting costs vary depending on where the employer is located, fuel cost, the method of getting to work (driving, carpooling, public transportation), tolls, parking, and variation in car costs, maintenance, etc. Whether driving, ride-sharing, or relying on buses, commuter rail, or subways, the costs have risen. A recent study has revealed that the average American spends \$8,466 and 239 hours each year commuting.² That’s nearly 19% of the average commuter’s income and roughly ten days a year spent on the road or in transit.

According to CharterUp.com, which conducted this research, this includes gas expenses that, on

average, amount to \$867 annually, plus additional costs for car maintenance that can add up to \$410 per year. (Note: I do not know what this research used for the average cost of a gallon of gas). Inflation, global events, and fluctuation in oil production all lead to rising fuel prices, affecting both car owners and public transport users. And, of course, the cost of cars themselves has increased. In addition, one must consider the addition of registration costs, tires, taxes, depreciation, and insurance to the original sticker price.

According to an analysis of Census data by Eno Transportation, the distribution of people using different modes of transportation (e.g., driving alone, carpooling, or walking) to work has remained steady since 2010. Nearly 80% of Americans commute by driving to work each year alone.³ Another study determined that driving was the most stressful of all commuting options, with the direst potential effects.⁴

The average of 239 hours spent commuting yearly is equivalent to a 10-day vacation.

Commuting is Not Fun.

No one likes commuting. Commuting to work and back, especially daily, takes a toll on the employee. Sitting in traffic, especially in congested urban areas, wastes time and increases stress. An interesting study by Dr. Francesca Ortegren concluded:

- People with long commutes are more stressed, more **depressed**, and less **productive** than those who don't commute as long.
- The cost of commuting disproportionately affects low-income workers. Lower-income people drive farther to work and spend more out of pocket.
- Longer and farther commutes were linked to worse health outcomes.
- Unscheduled absences from work can be related to the effects of commuting and cost employers nearly \$2,700 per worker each year.⁵

Fighting traffic and crowded parking lots is not just stressful; it is irritating. Employees arrive on the job already cranky and cross—hardly how one wants them to start their work day.

The Ortegren study reported that

Americans spend an average of 46 minutes commuting to and from work each day, and nearly a third spend over an hour; if that employee spends 200 hours commuting annually (lower than the 239 national average), the opportunity cost lost by an hourly wage earner, for example, could be an additional \$5,200 a year.⁶

...It's also Unhealthy.

People who have longer commutes⁷ are 33% more likely to be depressed, 46% more likely to get less than 7 hours of sleep per night, and 21% more likely to be obese than people who commute less than 30 minutes to work (one-way), all of which can contribute to poor health. Those health costs might play a role in why commuters also tend to **miss** more⁸ than those who live closer, adding to the potential for unforeseen consequences of commuting.

Job satisfaction is also negatively impacted by long commutes. *Researchers in England found that adding 20 minutes of commuting per day has the same negative effect on job satisfaction as receiving a 19% pay cut.*⁹

Can HR Play a Role?

Increasingly, employees are looking to their employers for more work-from-home flexibility or monetary assistance to counter growing commuting costs, whether in terms of a cash benefit or travel and parking vouchers. Some companies provide buses to employees when a sizable number reside in one place away from the office. Because of Wi-Fi capabilities, the rationale includes

adding hours of productive work to the employee's day. Some provide shuttles from mass transport stops to the place of employment, encouraging employees to use public transit options.

Awareness is also critical. Likely, HR and managers are unaware of the time employees may have to commute or the difficulty of juggling the means to get to work. For example,

- How many of your employees have commutes that might be considered unreasonable?
- Do parents face conflicts when transporting children to daycare or school before getting themselves to work?
- Are managers aware of the toll commuting can take on the wellness and productivity of their teams?
- How do local travel patterns affect employee lateness on the job?
- Is the daily commute the measure by which employees manage their schedules?
- What would be the impact of flexible scheduling of the work day to better address traffic congestion in your location?

Conclusion

This series examines the cost of work to the employee. When we add commuting to childcare, we see a rationale for employees leaving the workforce. Employees' salaries clearly must be commensurate with the actual cost of working. We will look at further costs to work in the final article in this series, which will appear here in the future.



What is your commuting cost?

There are various commuting cost calculators online: here is a **link** to one from Commute Solutions to try yourself (car years only go up to 2018, however).¹⁰ You may be surprised..

ENDNOTES

- ¹ 1 50% of companies want workers back in the office five days a week—why experts say this strategy could fail. [Morgan Smith](#). Mar 18, 2022. [50% of companies want workers back in office five days a week \(cnbc.com\)](#)
- ² [The Rising Cost of Commuting: A \\$8,466 Yearly Expense \(charterup.com\)](#)
- ³ [2018 ACS Survey: While Most Americans' Commuting Trends are Unchanged, Teleworking Continues to Grow, and Driving Alone Dips in Some Major Cities - The Eno Center for Transportation \(enotrans.org\)](#)
- ⁴ [Am stressed, must travel The relationship between mode choice and commuting stress. Alexander Legrain, Naveen Eluru, Ahmed M. El-Geneidy. Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour Volume 34, October 2015, Pages 141-151. Am stressed, must travel: The relationship between mode choice and commuting stress - ScienceDirect](#)
- ⁵ [The True Cost of Commuting By Dr. Francesca Ortegren The True Cost of Commuting | Clever Real Estate \(listwithclever.com\) Updated April 10, 2023.](#)
- ⁶ [Ibid.](#)
- ⁷ [Long Commutes Costing Firms A Week's Worth Of Staff Productivity. Mercer. May 17, 2017 London, UK. Mercer | Long commutes costing firms staff productivity \(archive.org\)](#)
- ⁸ [Walking and cycling to work makes commuters happier and more productive. July 4,](#)

2019. [Walking and cycling to work makes commuters happier and more productive \(theconversation.com\)](#)

⁹ [Study: Adding 20 Minutes to Your Commute Makes You as Miserable as Getting a 19 Percent Pay Cut | Inc.com](#) Tanza Loudenback, Business Insider, Oct. 23, 2017.

¹⁰ [Commute Cost Calculator < Commute Solutions](#)

About the Author



Unique as a thought leader for her ability to make theory actionable and technology comprehensible to non-technologists, Dr. Jones is a sought-after writer and speaker in the U.S. and internationally. Moving easily from the academic world to the worldwide technology stage, she has repeatedly created value propositions bridging technology and theory with the practical world of today's business. Whether working with systems integrators in the Federal arena, consultants in oil and gas, or small business owners, her clarity and wisdom – as well as her wit—has been appreciated and commended. Now an independent high-tech marketing analyst, she was previously responsible for the creation and provision of thought leadership content for a web-based membership program as a partner at Mercer and spent several years at Bersin & Associates both before and after its acquisition by Deloitte, where she was the VP heading the HCM technology research

practice in Bersin by Deloitte. She became an industry analyst at Aberdeen Group in Boston, covering the ERP space, then human capital management in Palo Alto. Later, as marketing director for NetSuite, her efforts coincided with one of the more successful IPOs of that year. Before becoming an analyst, Katherine was in the Boston-area high-tech companies' product marketing and strategic alliance management, specializing in data communications and network management. She spent several years in marketing education at a minicomputer company. She created new programs in high-tech sales and system engineer training and sold them to the Federal Government, leading a DDN certification project in the company's Federal System Division. She had left a career in higher education administration and teaching, which included the assistant deanship in the School of Education at the University of Connecticut and responsibility for the Master of Arts in Teaching program in the English Department at Cornell University, where she was instrumental in the Improvement of Undergraduate Education project in the Provost's office. An industry veteran and independent high-tech analyst, she is widely published on talent management and personnel-related technologies, cybersecurity, ERP and HCM systems implementations, change management, and the mid-market, totaling over 500 works in print. Her master's and doctorate degrees are from Cornell University. She can be reached at katherine_ics@msn.com or [@katherine_jones](https://twitter.com/katherine_jones).

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