Hey! What's New? 2024-92

Navigating the Future with a Human Touch, by Gundi Jeffrey

According to an article in *INSEAD Knowledge*, written by Graham Ward, "AI has the potential to unleash creativity, foster human connection, imagine new ways of learning, enable the automation of existing tasks and promote new adaptive tasks that require human ingenuity and empathy. That's quite a list. A list that raises just as many challenges as opportunities. What's clear is that leaders will remain indispensable in helping their teams and firms negotiate this brave new world."

Ward points out that AI does not think, reason or rationalize like a human and cannot be used (at this juncture at least) as a replacement for these activities. "This is precisely where the human factor is indispensable. Leaders must calibrate AI's outputs to minimize disruptions and ensure the least harm. They need to be able to understand and explain when to accept a recommendation by AI and when a human might need to override an AI's decision, thereby improving the algorithms and making it more effective and trustworthy."

Take creative fields like marketing or entertainment, says Ward. "AI might actually serve as a baseline, challenging humans to surpass its suggestions. This dynamic can drive higher standards of creativity and innovation if leaders encourage teams to use AI as a springboard for their own ideas. Leaders must ensure AI complements human intelligence rather than overshadow it, maintaining a balance that fosters meaningful engagement and creativity. By encouraging open dialogue and collaboration, leaders can create a culture where AI is seen as an ally rather than a threat."

Another factor driving employees' increased anxiety is competence. Says Ward, "while AI excels in answering questions and even formulates new ones, it can also aggregate far greater volumes of information to provide instant insight than any human. Identity shifts may therefore be required: Being a subject matter expert may no longer carry weight when a machine has the same level of expertise."

Employees may need to shift their mindset from "I am a person who solves problems" to "I am a person who seeks new frontiers and discovers solutions," Ward advises. "The human element remains crucial in fine-tuning the direction of travel, and ensuring it aligns with the strategic, emotional and contextual nuances of each situation."

Historically, he adds, automation has shifted the economic focus from manual labour to more innovative sectors. "The identity shift from problem-solvers to frontier-seekers will define the future workforce. Leaders must guide this transition, helping employees find new purposes and roles in an AI-driven world."

Leaders must address these issues, Ward Stresses, "fostering an environment where AI enhances rather than diminishes human connections and meaning. Human moments may need to be "manufactured" as remote working persists, and machine learning automates mundane tasks like writing email. In-person strategic meetings, well-facilitated ideation sessions and cross-company collaborative discussions will become ever more vital."

Ward also notes that AI will likely lead to more distributed leadership models, where decision-making is decentralised. "Leaders will need to put aside their egos, at times jettisoning historical ways of doing things in favour of new methods of organizational learning."

AI will increase surveillance in lower-status jobs, while giving higher-status roles more autonomy. He urges leaders to "navigate these dynamics carefully, ensuring fairness and equity across all levels of an organization. Power and influence are likely to become increasingly fluid, making traditional hierarchies obsolete."

Engagement survey data will be a critical lever for leaders to enhance human well-being and productivity, Ward points out. "By understanding and responding to employee sentiments, leaders can create a more supportive and engaging work environment. However, the values we espouse in a post-AI world will matter more than ever, guiding how we use technology to enhance human well-being and organizational success."

Despite the rise of AI, concludes Ward, "leaders remain indispensable in creating moments of profound human engagement, guiding their organizations through the complexities of this technological revolution. Their ability to harness AI's potential while preserving that human touch will be the key to sustained success and meaningful progress."

For much more, see [Navigating the Future With a Human Touch | INSEAD Knowledge](#).

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