# Rewiring Work For The AI Age

Empathy, Algorithms and the Employee Experience

United Minds | Part of The Weber Shandwick Collective

# The AI Revolution, and What It Means for the Future of Work

Every organization experiences moments of transformation — mergers, restructures, strategic pivots, digital leaps. These aren't just operational changes; they're emotional events. People respond with hope, hesitation, excitement and resistance.

How leaders navigate these moments can speed or stall the path to impact. Unite teams or fragment them. Build trust or erode it. Drive clarity or deepen confusion.

**Increasingly, AI plays a dual role in these transformations: both as the catalyst for change, and a resource for improving how it is managed.**

On the one hand, AI-based tools are rapidly changing how work gets done, boosting efficiency and enabling new workflows. As a result, many existing jobs are evolving, new roles emerging and entire workforces rewiring.

This profound disruption is creating a lot of opportunity, but even more anxiety. For individuals navigating new operational models. For managers tasked with upskilling teams. For leaders creating a vision for an entirely different future. A future where they must equally consider rapidly deploying technology and managing the human impact.

That's where – when thoughtfully integrated and actively managed – AI becomes a force-multiplier. When people are freed from repetitive tasks, they can focus on what matters most: connecting and contributing in meaningful ways.

Under the right leadership, AI holds the potential to cut through the chaos by enhancing human connection. It can help deliver the right message, to the right person, at the right time. It can tailor learning and development. It can surface signals leaders might otherwise miss.

Let's be clear: if AI is used simply to automate output or reduce costs, it risks compromising vision instead of setting it. Without transparency, it can erode trust. Lacking empathy, it might alienate the very people it's meant to engage.

The real opportunity isn't automation, it's activation. AI, used wisely, becomes a tool to help people feel seen, heard and understood. To do more of what matters, with greater impact and more humanity.

In times of change, business doesn't move unless people do. And people don't move unless they feel connected, informed and inspired. AI, done right, can do just that.

## Table of contents:

# 01

## The Dual Role of AI in the Workplace

## Signals of Change

Across industries, the pressure is mounting. Workforces are more distributed, work and life more integrated and volume of information more overwhelming. What's changing isn't just technology. It's what organizations expect from their employees in its application: to embrace new job responsibilities, adopt new ways of working and shift mindsets. And it's what employees continue to want from their organizations: to be seen, heard and treated like individuals in a time of constant flux.

### AI as workplace disruptor.

**Job responsibilities are evolving.**
In roles most exposed to AI, the skills required for success are changing 66% faster than in roles less exposed, requiring the need to tailor learning and development to different levels of impact.

**Organizations are being remodeled.**
Companies are increasingly using Agentic AI — AI that can plan and act autonomously — to restructure workflows. This is leading to less hierarchical, more agile organizational models where AI agents collaborate with human teams.

**Workplace culture is shifting.**
Around 80% of C-suite executives believe AI will catalyze a cultural transformation, making teams more innovative and adaptive. This is prompting leaders to rethink how work is structured and how teams collaborate.

### AI as workplace connector.

**Personalization pays off.**
Organizations using AI-driven personalization in internal communications have achieved up to 54% open rates, 34% click rates, and 68% employee opt-in for custom content — well above industry averages. These results highlight the power of tailored messaging to drive engagement at scale.

**Disengagement is predictable and preventable.**
AI can forecast employee disengagement, giving teams the opportunity to re-engage, re-align and retain talent.

**Trust depends on transparency.**
While 43% of U.S. employees express concern about personal privacy related to generative AI, 71% trust their employers to deploy AI responsibly — highlighting that clear communication and responsible AI use by organizations can significantly increase employee trust and reduce privacy concerns.

## Why this matters

AI isn't optional. It's already reshaping how employees experience and operate in workplaces. The opportunity now is to use it with intention: to reduce noise, respond with empathy and ensure engagement centers clarity and care when it matters most.

> "
> AI needs to be used in a transformational way: stakeholder intelligence, AI activism. Now is the time to be on the offense with AI.
>
> **CCO, Financial Services Company**
> "

# AI As Disruptor: Reimagining How Work Gets Done

# 02

## From Tool to Transformational Force

AI is rapidly reshaping the workplace — automating tasks, changing job requirements and accelerating the pace of change. For many employees, this brings real anxiety: fears of job displacement, pressure to quickly, learn unfamiliar tools and uncertainty about their future role in an AI-driven organization. These concerns are not just emotional — they're practical, and they're growing.

### Here's how AI will continue to reshape the workplace

**Flatter, faster structures.**
AI enables decentralized decision-making and real-time insights, reducing the need for hierarchical layers.

**New roles, new skills.**
Roles like AI trainers, prompt engineers and algorithm auditors are emerging, while traditional roles are being redefined to include AI fluency.

**Hybrid human-AI teams.**
Managing teams increasingly includes the need to consider AI as a collaborator — requiring new norms for trust, accountability and performance.

**Dynamic talent models.**
Organizations are shifting from fixed roles to fluid, project-based teams that can scale and adapt quickly.

**Cross-functional collaboration.**
AI initiatives frequently require tight integration between communications, data science, IT, legal, HR and business units — and the need to break down traditional silos.

**Embedded ethics and governance.**
New structures are emerging to oversee responsible AI use, including ethics boards, data governance councils and compliance frameworks.

## Why this matters

The future of leadership isn't just about managing people — it's about orchestrating the synergy between people and intelligent systems. To stay ahead, people leaders must become AI-fluent strategists, ethical stewards and change catalysts.

> "
> Very soon it will be the norm to hire people based on their ability to write prompts for AI and to action the insights it generates. AI can and should create raw capacity based on its ability to process information very quickly. Human intelligence is critical for determining how to take advantage of it.
>
> **CCO, Global Manufacturer**
> "

## From Possibility to Practice

AI's promise isn't just about driving efficiency; it's about creating a more responsive, personalized and human employee experience. Used well, AI enables organizations to engage people in ways that are more timely, empathetic and effective at every stage of the employee journey.

### Here's how AI is already helping organizations turn insight into action:

**Accelerating change readiness.**
AI can map how change is experienced across roles, geographies and emotional states, allowing organizations to tailor interventions that address both mindset and behavior. This shortens the time it takes to move from awareness to adoption — and makes change feel more human.

**Improving leadership effectiveness.**
By analyzing when and how employees prefer to engage, AI helps leaders to pinpoint when they are most receptive, using the channels they prefer, with messaging that resonates. That insight turns leadership presence into a strategic engagement tool.

**Building a stronger culture.**
AI can uncover patterns in employee sentiment based on engagement with communications that signal how they are experiencing the workplace. Instead of waiting for annual surveys, organizations can act in real time, reinforcing what's working and addressing pain points before they grow.

**Enhancing the employee experience.**
AI can be used to create content that is relevant and role-based as well as to predict the exact moment it's needed, from onboarding and training to navigating policies and workflows. This kind of precision reduces friction and builds confidence, helping employees focus on their work, not the systems around it.

## Why this matters

The organizations seeing the most value from AI are using data to elevate the employee experience. And they're proving that when you combine smart technology with a human-centered mindset, engagement doesn't just improve. It transforms.

> "
> I think the shift driven by large language models and AI creates an opportunity for the function to define its real value. AI gives me more tools to counsel public facing leaders.
>
> **CCAO, Global Technology Company**
> "

# 04

## Driving the Right Mindset to Encourage AI Adoption and Resilience

Accelerating AI adoption has the potential to be a big part of boosting productivity, regardless of location or industry. AI can also enhance creativity and adaptability — capabilities very much needed to operate successfully in our volatile world. But to truly leverage the power of AI, organizations need to foster the right culture and mindset: a growth mindset.

**What's a growth mindset?**

A growth mindset is the idea that we can all grow and get better through effort, learning and feedback. When it comes to adopting and engaging with AI, a growth mindset means being open to change in everything from job description to team structures to ways of working, experimenting with new tools and seeing mistakes as part of the journey. It's not about knowing everything — it's about being curious, adaptable and ready to learn as we go.

**There are three elements to a growth mindset:**

### 01
**Value Progress**

**Encourage progress and learning over perfection, focusing on improvement rather than fearing mistakes.**

**For example:**
Hold a weekly team "lessons learned" session to talk about any "Gen AI bloopers" and what you learned from them.

### 02
**Experiment**

**Encourage trying new approaches and learning from outcomes, even when the results are uncertain.**

**For example:**
Pick a specific, repetitive task and run a one-week experiment using Gen AI to try and improve speed and/or quality.

### 03
**Learn From Others**

**Learn from the insights and experiences of others to enhance personal growth and gain new perspectives.**

**For example:**
Invite someone from another part of the business into your team meeting to talk about how they have applied Gen AI.

## Why this matters

The potential for AI is enormous. This potential is limited when leaders focus too much on the deployment of the technology and not enough on the people it's affecting, the workflows it's upending and the careers it's evolving.

> "
> I think the challenge of reprogramming people to use AI is going to take much longer than anybody ever anticipated.
>
> **CCO, Global CPG Company**
> "

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# Playbook for Enabling an AI-ready Organization

## 05

As AI becomes increasingly prevalent in organizations, leaders must prepare their teams both operationally and culturally. Here are some practical steps and guiding principles for deploying AI in a way that builds vs. compromises confidence.

### Step 1: Establish norms

**Critical to Success ...** Develop clear ethical, legal and practical boundaries for AI use. Ensure transparency in how data is collected, interpreted and applied. Build policies that balance innovation with privacy and bias mitigation.

**Take it further ...** Don't just say how AI is used, explain why. Share the intent behind each use case, especially when it affects people's roles or data. Transparency builds trust. Clarity builds confidence.

**In practice ...** Colgate-Palmolive developed an internal AI Hub allowing employees to create personalized AI assistants for their tasks without needing technical expertise. This approach fostered transparency and empowered employees to understand and control how AI impacted their roles.

### Step 2: Build skills

**Critical to Success ...** Assess employees' technical and emotional readiness. Provide broad-based AI literacy training and role-specific upskilling. Help people understand what AI is, and what it isn't.

**Take it further ...** Create space for safe, hands-on experimentation. Use pilots and feedback loops to encourage shared learning. Celebrate early wins, address concerns openly and make learning part of the culture, not just the rollout.

**In practice ...** PwC introduced "PowerUp," a gamified AI literacy program engaging employees through quizzes and interactive content, making AI learning accessible and enjoyable.

### Step 3: Shift culture

**Critical to Success ...** Identify behaviors that support responsible AI adoption. Encourage leaders to model these behaviors to reinforce expectations and credibility.

**Take it further ...** Help leaders promote a growth mindset: encouraging experimentation, valuing progress over perfection and normalizing learning as part of the process. This fosters psychological safety and supports long-term cultural adoption.

**In practice ...** Microsoft's internal communications team adopted a growth mindset by integrating AI into daily tasks, encouraging a culture of learning and experimentation to enhance content quality and efficiency.

### Step 4: Design purposefully

**Critical to Success ...** Assess roles and responsibilities to identify where AI tools can augment or automate tasks, e.g., to enhance decision-making, reduce repetitive work or improve service delivery.

**Take it further ...** Redesign team to support on-going collaboration of AI agents and humans. Let AI handle data-heavy or routine tasks, while humans focus on creativity and strategic thinking. This synergy can unlock new levels of productivity and innovation.

**In practice ...** Emirates NBD established hybrid teams within their customer service operations; AI-powered chatbots manage routine inquiries and transactions, providing instant responses, while humans handle complex or sensitive issues.

### Step 5: Lead change

**Critical to Success ...** Establish a structured change management approach to guide teams through AI adoption. Communicate the vision clearly, address resistance empathetically and align AI initiatives with organizational values and goals.

**Take it further ...** Empower change agents across departments to champion AI transformation. Use storytelling and real-world examples – including failures – to further empower experimentation and make the change relatable. Regularly measure sentiment and adapt strategies to maintain momentum.

**In practice ...** Maersk implemented AI-driven predictive maintenance across its maritime fleet, supported by strong change leadership, cross-functional collaboration and clear communications. The program saved over $300M and reduced carbon emissions by 1.5 million tons annually.

## Why this matters

These aren't just operational steps. They're signals of an organization's intent. Proof that technology isn't driving decisions — people are. By defining these practices early, organizations can make AI a tool for enhancing vs. eroding trust.

As part of The Weber Shandwick Collective, United Minds brings unique access to proprietary tools and top thinkers who are leveraging AI to solve both creative and business challenges. Here are a handful of examples of how we are helping clients to use AI to improve employee engagement from across our network.

## Engaging Hard to Reach Audiences at a U.S. Transportation Company

A U.S.-based transportation company was seeking to improve engagement with its frontline workforce, all of whom worked in the field and many of whom were represented by a union. We were engaged to help the company better understand what motivated these employees and design an engagement approach that would better equip them to support the company's new vision.

As a result of our work, communicators within the organization were able to provide frontline managers with toolkits and talking points based on tailored messaging, making it easier to cascade information effectively across the organization.

Our approach included:

**Research and Insights:** Combined digital data-scraping of external social channels and internal platforms with analog insights from existing survey data and focus groups

**Persona Building:** Created custom AI personas leveraging research and insights, segmented by role and location

**Message Testing:** Leveraged AI personas to quickly test and tailor messaging for greater resonance

## Driving Gen AI Adoption at a Top-10 Global Pharma Company

A top-10 global pharmaceutical company was looking to digitize its ways of working in response to growing evidence of doctors' preference for digital interaction and the potential efficiencies offered by Gen AI. We designed a transformation strategy focused on fostering a growth mindset.

The ongoing transformation has shown promising results, with a 26% increase in understanding and belief in the change vision and an 8% rise in participants' confidence to take action. Additionally, 98% of global champions are excited about the transformation journey and 88% feel equipped to contribute to it in a meaningful way.

Our approach included:

**Strategic Design:** Developed a digital and Gen AI strategy, set clear objectives, KPIs and a compelling change narrative

**Customized Change Management:** Mapped stakeholders and created the strategy informed by behavioral psychology principles

**Pilot Program and Engagement:** Launched champion network and Gen AI experimentation experiences in select markets

**Leadership Enablement:** Delivered immersive 'Race Across the World' exercise to bring AI capabilities to life for 30+ leaders

# Encouraging Employees to Embrace AI Via Gamification

Employees at a global pharmaceutical company faced challenges in adopting AI and recognizing the transformative potential it could bring to their work. We designed a gamified learning experience based on "The Amazing Race" to expose participants to a range of Gen AI tools. Employees learned best practices for using Gen AI, including how to use it safely and responsibility.

Participants walked away with practical applications of using Gen AI for tasks like:

- Creating a draft strategic plan with timelines
- Analyzing an Excel file, identify trends
- Creating an image or infographic
- Tailoring a persuasive elevator pitch
- Creating PPT decks

# Empowering Teams Through AI-Driven Knowledge Management

We partnered with a global enterprise to implement an AI-powered knowledge management assistant built on GPT-4. The tool integrated directly with existing platforms including SharePoint, internal newsrooms and shared drives, allowing employees to retrieve institutional knowledge through natural language queries – with no training required.

**Within three months of implementation:**

| Search times for internal documentation decreased by | Employee satisfaction with information access rose by | Onboarding ramp-up time for new hires dropped by |
|---|---|---|
| **60%** | **35%** | **2 weeks** |

Beyond internal use, the organization extended the tool to support external audiences, enabling investors and media to quickly retrieve verified stats and content, reducing ad hoc requests to internal teams. By embedding Gen AI into their communications infrastructure, the company not only streamlined knowledge access but also empowered employees to work more autonomously, improving morale and reducing operational drag.

# Conclusion: Moving People to Move Business

In every moment of transformation — every strategy shift, restructuring, rebrand or reinvention — one thing remains true: business doesn't move unless people do. And people don't move unless they feel connected, informed and inspired.

The real role of employee engagement is to activate and foster commitment to the future vision of the company. And in that work, AI has a growing role to play as both a tool in making that vision a reality and a powerful amplifier of human connection.

Used intentionally, AI can help organizations operate more effectively, not just by increasing efficiency and shifting roles and responsibilities but by enabling leaders to listen more closely, respond more personally and act more meaningfully.

Employed strategically and empathetically, AI can help strengthen culture, build trust and fuel a sense of belonging that keeps people committed to the organization.

But none of this happens by default. It happens by design.

The path forward isn't about chasing the latest AI technologies. It's putting people first by embedding ethics, transparency and empathy into every decision. The organizations that thrive won't be the ones that invest in the most cutting-edge AI tools. They'll be the ones that thoughtfully engage people to use and collaborate with them, empowering shared success.

## So here's the invitation:

Start small. Ask better questions. Involve your people. Pilot with care. Define your boundaries. And never lose sight of what real engagement is ultimately about: helping people feel informed, included and inspired to contribute.

Because when people feel connected, they don't just stay. They move — with purpose, with clarity and with your business.

[1] The Fearless Future; PWC, 2025
[2] Technology, Trust, Ethics; Deloitte, 2024
[3] Understanding IBM's Cutting-Edge HR Strategy; Talent Management Institute, 2025
[4] The Impact of Personalization on Internal Communication Engagement & Effectiveness; Cerkl, 2025
[5] Superagency in the Workplace: Empowering People to Unlock AI's Full Potential; McKinsey, 2025
[6] How to Prevent Employee Skepticism; Shefali Kapadia, 2025
[7] Training the Workforce for AI; Great Places to Work, 2025
[8] Elevating Internal Communications; Jason Kellington 2025

# How Gen AI Supported the Development of this Whitepaper

Generative AI was actively used throughout the development of this whitepaper, providing strategic and creative support at every stage. AI helped accelerate research, structure ideas and sharpen the final product without replacing human insight.

**Specifically, AI contributed by:**

- Researching and summarizing the latest studies on AI in employee engagement to ensure the paper reflected the most current data and trends

- Structuring content by helping to outline the flow and making complex topics easier to navigate

- Drafting and refining language to maintain a professional, approachable tone aligned with the intended audience

- Iterating with the author to continuously sharpen arguments, adjust framing based on feedback and polish the final narrative

# About United Minds

Leading and changing organizations is messy. It brings complex situations mixed with complicated human reactions. We untangle the mess to make swift, straightforward progress, empowering leaders to guide and support their people to shape an organization that delivers more value in service of its mission.

Founded in an innovative, creative communications network and built by management consultants, our team takes a human-centered approach from start to finish. We meet you where you are, keep our minds and ears open and roll up our sleeves with you. We prioritize people and progress over process. And we're with you to the end. United Minds is moving people to move business.

This report was prepared by United Minds, part of The Weber Shandwick Collective, May 2025. For more information, please contact:

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