



SHIFT HAPPENS:

Get Ahead of HR's
AI Reckoning

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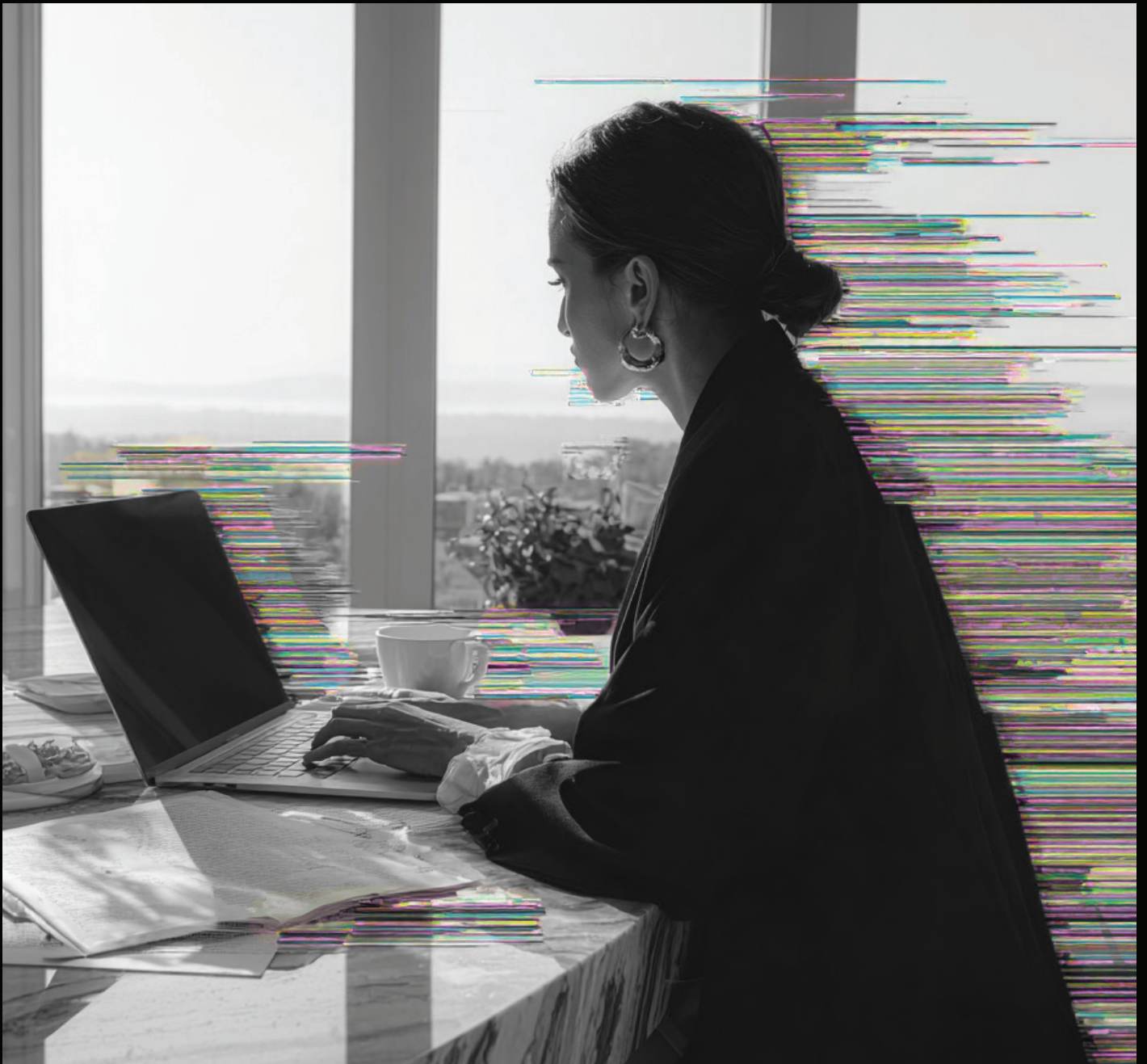
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SECTION 1

HR's AI Readiness Check-In



INTRODUCTION

The Day HR's Job Changed

As AI rapidly disrupts virtually every aspect of life, the challenges for HR may seem new, but the underlying problems have been around for years.

You've seen it yourself: HR professionals in a leadership meeting, expected to answer questions on turnover risk, succession plans, or skills gaps, while pulling together reports from multiple systems that don't tell the whole story. HRIS data was in one place, ATS data in another, engagement scores somewhere else. Each system provided value in some ways, but none provided the complete picture needed. Now, that kind of fragmentation is more than frustrating. It's a risk.

AI is quickly reshaping the way people and companies operate. In boardrooms across the globe, executives aren't asking if AI will change the way we work. They're asking how quickly the transition can be made.

Shopify CEO Tobi Lütke told his teams that before asking for more headcount, they must prove AI can't do the job. Fiverr's Micha Kaufman was even more blunt in a company-wide note: "AI is coming for your jobs. Heck, it's coming for my job too." Ford's Jim Farley has predicted that AI could replace "literally half of all white-collar workers." These aren't throwaway lines. They're signals from the top about where the game is heading.

When CEOs are this direct, the clock starts ticking for HR.

THE GREAT AI MISDIRECT

Many organizations will approach AI as a tech rollout. They'll buy the tools, train the IT team, and assume the benefits will follow. That's a mistake. A successful AI strategy is a talent and data strategy more than a technology one. Without the right skills and mindsets in your workforce, and without the right data foundation to steer decisions, expensive new software is guaranteed to underdeliver.

A shift around talent and data makes this HR's time to shine. No other function has the visibility, the influence, and the expertise to lead a transformation this consequential to people.

WHY YOU'RE THE RIGHT LEADER

You may be thinking, "Seriously? HR leading the AI transition across a whole org? We can barely get a seat at the table, sometimes."

Hear this: your experience isn't a disadvantage. It's your greatest strength. The message is urgent, and the responsibility is immense, but we've seen firsthand that this is a role you're perfectly built for.

This seismic shift is a strategic challenge, not just a technical one. For HR leaders, it isn't a spectator sport; you will be managing change.

THE NEW WORKFORCE AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR CULTURE

The systems and frameworks that guided HR's work for decades were built for a workforce made entirely of people. That's already outdated. The future of workforce planning is about people harnessing the power of agents and AI to deliver higher levels of productivity and value together.

This means asking different questions. Which roles are best suited for automation? Where do human creativity, empathy, and judgment remain irreplaceable? How do you redeploy talent when automation shifts the work? What new issues might emerge? These answers won't be static. They'll evolve as technology does.

The work will change, and the culture will change with it. We'll need new definitions of collaboration that account for this new class of powerful tools. Your new definition of "culture fit" will be adaptability and AI fluency.

LEADING WITH BUSINESS IMPACT

The need to manage through workforce changes makes sense to HR. But to truly lead this transition, you'll also need to speak the language of the business: protecting the bottom line and driving strategic goals. That means showing the C-Suite how a talent strategy is a direct investment in what they care about most. For example, linking your L&D programs to measurable gains in operational efficiency through the adoption of AI.

OWNING YOUR STRATEGIC VALUE

There's no doubt that leading in this moment will take conviction. You may have to tell a business unit that its headcount plan is obsolete in an AI-enabled world, which can get uncomfortable fast. And you'll need to push back when there's pressure to deploy AI without proper safeguards.

These aren't easy conversations, but they're where HR proves it's a strategic driver.

The rest of this playbook will give you the frameworks to assess your current state, build the skills you will need, and re-engineer your data foundation for an AI future. But none of that matters if you wait.

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HR, THIS IS YOUR
MOMENT. TAKE IT.
WE'RE HERE
TO HELP.

CHAPTER

1

Your Readiness Check

The AI reckoning is here, but the mandate for HR to lead it may not be. If you're facing resistance or simply not being invited to the conversation, your first step isn't to push harder. It's to build a case for your leadership.

Begin with a clear-eyed understanding of your starting point. Before you can lead well, you need a picture of where your organization stands. We've provided an easy assessment on the next page to help give you that.



TAKE THE QUIZ: WHERE DO YOU STAND?



[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to take our short, diagnostic quiz to quickly spot strengths and gaps, and guide your next moves. The goal isn't to get a perfect score. Instead, aim to find your true starting point so you can move forward with confidence.

Or you can read through the questions here and use them as a guide for reflection.

Role Awareness & Planning

- Do you know which roles in your organization are most likely to be impacted by AI in the next 12–18 months?
- Have you engaged business leaders in identifying where AI is already being explored or used in their teams?
- Have you begun to update job architectures, success profiles, or org design based on anticipated AI-related changes?

Responsible Use & Guardrails

- Has your organization established any principles or guardrails for ethical AI use in people decisions?
- Do employees understand how AI is (or will be) used in tools that affect their work, evaluation, or growth?
- Do you have a cross-functional team (e.g., HR, Legal, IT) that regularly discusses responsible AI governance?

Learning & Leadership Readiness

- Is there a plan to build AI literacy across the organization beyond just technical roles?
- Are managers being prepared to lead teams through AI-related change?
- Does your L&D strategy reflect the skills and mindsets needed to collaborate with AI tools?

Strategy & Direction

- Has your HR team articulated a clear talent strategy to support responsible AI adoption, or are you still reacting to tools being brought in by others?
- Has your organization assessed whether your people data is clean, integrated, and reliable enough to support AI-driven decisions?



WHY AI READINESS MATTERS: THE 4 PILLARS OF YOUR STRATEGY

AI readiness and strategic focus will come down to these four critical areas:

Employee Anxiety: Your people are feeling uncertain. You probably are, too.

80%. That's how many people aren't sure how their jobs will change or what they're supposed to do about it. Yes, 80%. That's not a readiness gap; that's a readiness canyon. You can't solve this by looking the other way. You solve it by providing clear direction and giving employees a future they can actually see themselves in.

Data Quality: 'Garbage in, garbage out' is still true.

Ever heard the term 'AI slop'? It's the digital equivalent of what happens when you feed AI a bad diet of data — the output is just as messy. Using AI without quality controls or context is a fast track to undermining trust in the entire process. HR must be part of shaping this from the start because data isn't just data. It represents real people and has real consequences if not up to par. Key context gets lost if you're left out of these decisions.

Ethics and Safety: In the end, HR owns the risk.

Many of the big AI decisions are happening in IT or product teams, but the consequences often land squarely on HR's desk.

Algorithmic bias, opaque decision-making, and privacy concerns are already here. HR's role is to ensure AI scales with the right boundaries and with human values intact.

Business Alignment: Cool tools don't pay the bills.

Shiny new toys are fun, but without a clear connection to business goals, AI initiatives can lose steam faster than a New Year's resolution. AI readiness means starting with the why: What business outcomes do you want to enable? Is it solving a \$10 problem or a \$10M one?

JUST GETTING STARTED?

3 FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS FOR CHROS

If you're new to the game, don't worry. No one has all the answers yet. The quiz was a warm-up. Now, use these starter questions to begin your strategic journey. Commit to revisiting them as your company — and the tech itself — evolves.

1. How are roles changing, and how will people keep up?

You can't predict the future, but you can scan for early signs of change. Ask team leaders directly: What's already shifting? What parts of your team's work feel ripe for AI augmentation or what's getting weirdly complex because of it?

Quick start: Build a simple table with these columns: Role / What's Changing / How We'll Respond. You'll be surprised how much clarity it creates, even with rough ideas.

2. What does “responsible AI use” mean for our people?

Your employees need to know where AI will be used, how decisions will be made, and what principles will guide those choices. Ask your leadership team: What boundaries are non-negotiable for fairness, privacy, or transparency?

Quick start: Host a 45-minute discussion with key leaders. The agenda: “Where are we using AI today? Where might we soon? What do we need to protect?” Then work with legal and ops partners to shape a first draft of your principles.

3. How will our people learn to work with AI?

Your people need to feel empowered, not endangered. This goes way beyond technical training. They need to learn how to think with AI: when to trust it, when to question it, and how to use it responsibly.

Quick start: Survey your workforce. Ask: Have you used AI tools at work or at home? What do you want to learn? What are you unsure about? Use their answers to prioritize what kind of support and education to roll out first.

ALREADY IN MOTION?

If you've already mapped roles or started AI pilots, don't slow down. **Chapter 5** offers a next-stage 90-day sample plan to help you scale responsibly and lead long-term momentum.

READINESS IS A PRACTICE

You're not going to solve everything at once, and that's okay. Expect this journey to take a while. Readiness is about building the confidence to start and the clarity to keep going. Now it's time to help you turn your reflections into action.

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SECTION 2

Leading at Every Level



CHAPTER

2

Your Executive Compass

You've laid the groundwork for AI readiness. Now the real fun begins. This section is your compass for critical upstream conversations and work: building the plans, cases, and capabilities before anything gets deployed. Then we'll cover cross-functional alignment in Chapter 3 and follow up with downstream adoption in Chapter 4.

HR LEADS WHERE TECH CAN'T

Most organizations are treating AI like a race. They're buying software, hiring data scientists, and jumping headfirst on the hype train. Few are asking if their people, processes, or structures are ready for the ride. A recent McKinsey Superagency report revealed that only 1% of companies consider themselves "AI-mature." That's a staggeringly low number, especially when 92% are planning to increase their AI investment. What they lack is the workforce readiness piece.

And that's where you come in.

We're calling on you to lead one of the biggest shifts in modern business — with no precedent and a thousand opinions. The CEO wants to move faster. The board wants to understand the



risks to people, culture, and reputation. Your CTO is already neck-deep into vendor demos. And it's on HR to figure out where the workforce fits in.

As we said earlier: AI readiness doesn't begin with your tech stack. It begins with your people. You need to sell your CEO and board on the planning phase where HR helps the business slow down, ask smarter questions, and build the right foundations before change accelerates.

And this is the appeal you must make

upstream: A structured audit of how work is *actually* getting done — by whom, with what skills, and where the pressure points are — is foundational to the organization's AI success. If workflows are a mess or roles are unclear, AI won't fix the problem. It'll just scale the confusion faster.

Who else but HR has the lens or credibility to do this work well? Without you, AI deployment is just an expensive guessing game.

CAPABILITY IS THE NEW CAPACITY

When your leaders start thinking about AI, their first question will likely be, "How many roles will we lose or gain?" It's the wrong first question, but you can reframe it.

Instead of focusing on headcount, you can help them see that giving their people the skills, agility, and development pathways to succeed in a changing environment will equip the business to move forward with confidence and succeed at scale.

As you map out your current state — as outlined in the previous chapter — your job is to ask the

more strategic questions: How can we make our workforce more competitive? Who can we retool and reskill, not replace?

Employees are already telling us what they need to succeed. A SHRM report found that 74% of employees believe AI should support human talent, not replace it. More than half say they need better training to keep up, but Deloitte reports that only 37% of companies are making meaningful investments in workforce training to support AI adoption. Among Gen Z and millennial professionals already using AI at work, fewer than 20% have received any formal instruction.

We can't ignore these signals. Without capability planning now, you risk rolling out AI into a workforce that isn't ready to use it — and either won't trust it or will trust it too much.

Your leadership needs to understand that strategy only works if your people are equipped to execute it. AI readiness is more than one-time skill building. It's a process that requires repetition, reinforcement, and the space to practice. At Thomson Reuters, employees who trained in sandbox environments were nearly twice as likely to report measurable business value from AI. Their success came from repeated use, experimentation, and confidence-building inside a safe environment.

Role-based learning, internal mobility programs, and skills-focused tools create the flexibility organizations need to adapt as work evolves.

Every headcount discussion is now a capability conversation. And every learning investment is a bet on how fast your people can close the gap between potential and performance.



NO RESULTS? NO BUY-IN

This is where the rubber meets the road, as the saying goes.

Abstract plans and one-off pilot programs won't cut it. AI is forcing every function to prove its value. HR is no exception. Executives want proof that talent investments will deliver higher productivity and better business outcomes.

And the data backs them up. *Deloitte's 2024 Global Human Capital Trends Report* found that organizations aligning workforce planning with business strategy are 2.6 times more likely to exceed their financial goals. LinkedIn research shows that companies using skills-based talent models are 107% more likely to place employees in roles that directly support business needs.

This is the new standard. HR earns its seat at the table by tying talent strategy to business results through skills mapping, org design, internal mobility, and targeted learning. Headcount alone doesn't show whether your workforce is ready. Outcomes do.

WHAT THE BOARD WILL ASK . . . AND WHY

Remember, each question is an opportunity to reframe the conversation and lead it in more useful and strategic directions.

Most questions about workforce readiness for AI fall into three core themes:

- **AI as an enhancer:** Can it supplement current capabilities to give us a strategic advantage?
- **AI as a force multiplier:** Can it help us scale more efficiently and do more with the same resources?
- **AI as a replacement:** Can it automate low-value work to reduce cost and headcount?

Understanding the “why” beneath their questions lets you offer sharper, more credible answers and steer the discussion toward what really matters.

Board Question	Strategic Response	Why They're Asking / Why This Is Your Response
How will AI impact our workforce size and structure?	Start with how work is changing. Capability comes first.	They're focused on headcount and cost. You're reframing the dialogue to evolving roles and workforce agility.
What roles are at risk of disruption?	We're mapping those roles to skills and internal career paths.	They're anticipating redundancy. You're offering a proactive strategy for retention, redeployment, and role evolution.
Are managers ready to lead AI-enabled teams?	They're training through real-world scenarios, not just theory.	They know managers will make or break AI adoption. If they resist or misunderstand the shift, the organization stalls. You're showing HR is enabling leadership – not just employees – for what's next.
Can our org structure absorb this level of change?	We're testing workflows and spans of control to prevent bottlenecks.	They're worried about structural drag. You're showing a plan to build flexibility and resilience into the organization.
Where are we seeing traction in AI upskilling?	We're tracking adoption and skill growth by function and role.	They need evidence of progress. You're providing concrete signals of enablement and where to reinforce.
Do we have an internal pipeline of AI-capable talent?	Yes. We're building it through mobility, reskilling, and smart role-matching.	They want to know if you're building or buying. You're demonstrating momentum with the talent you already have.
What risks are we reducing by investing in talent now?	We're preventing churn, accelerating adoption, and reducing bad-fit decisions.	They're justifying investment. You're offering a risk mitigation narrative that supports long-term ROI.
How are we managing the ethical risks of AI at work?	We're working with legal and compliance to build guardrails around data use, decision-making, and transparency.	They're concerned about liability, trust, and regulation. You're positioning HR as a co-leader in setting ethical standards.

MEASURE WHAT MATTERS TO YOUR LEADERS

Metrics track more than progress. They give you a direct line back to the boardroom and provide concrete answers to the questions they're asking HR leaders.

Each of these measurement areas ties to a core executive concern: workforce readiness, internal capability, leadership alignment, and the ability to manage risk at scale. Together, they prove that your talent strategy is actionable, visible, and drives the business forward.



EVERY HEADCOUNT
CONVERSATION IS
NOW A CAPABILITY
CONVERSATION.

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Current Headcount

14,013

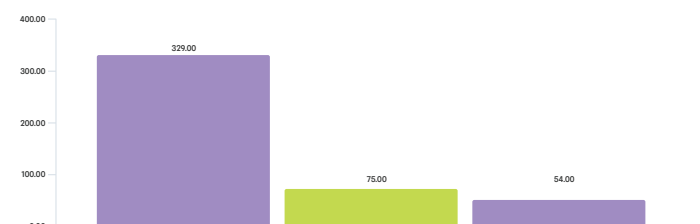
AI Skilled Workers

4,472

Percent of AI Ready Workforce

31.9%

Role Breakdown



% of Critical Roles Needing AI Ready Skills

15.0%

Metric Area	Boardroom Question(s)	What It Measures	Why It Matters
Skills Coverage	What roles are at risk? Do we know what's changing?	% of critical roles with AI-relevant skills defined % of workforce assessed against those skills	Reveals gaps between current state and future needs.
AI Adoption	Where is upskilling working? What are employees actually using?	% of employees trained by function or role Tool usage and opt-in rates across teams	Tracks enablement and shows which areas are adapting and which need support.
Internal Mobility	Do we have an internal pipeline of AI-ready talent?	% of AI-impacted roles filled internally Average time to fill reskilled or adjacent-skill roles	Demonstrates how well you're building versus buying.
Leadership Engagement	Are our managers ready to lead through this shift?	% of people leaders trained on AI topics Usage of leadership-specific AI playbooks or frameworks	Middle managers are critical to scaling change effectively.
Organizational Resilience	What risks are we reducing? Can we absorb AI-driven disruption?	Time-to-productivity in AI-adjusted roles % of functions with a succession-ready bench	Shows how ready the organization is to adapt to continuous change.

AI readiness starts with visibility, clarity, and action. When HR leaders like you take the lead in mapping roles, building capability, tying strategy to outcomes, and answering leadership's

questions with data, AI becomes a business advantage instead of a business risk. The message to the C-Suite is simple: HR is not just ready to support the shift. We're ready to lead it.

CHAPTER

3

Your C-Suite Alliance

Leading the charge through the AI reckoning doesn't stop with your upstream partners. To drive this transformation, you also need to manage horizontally, influencing functional leaders in the C-Suite and aligning every function to this new reality. This is about more than just doing your part. It's getting the entire organization to do theirs.

The truth is, AI is everyone's job, but it's rarely a shared one. A CFO may see AI as a quick path to cost savings, while a CIO may push for new tools without considering the human impact. Without a unifying voice, these siloed priorities can lead to fragmented, expensive, and ultimately, ineffective strategies.

This is where you step in.

The Cross-Functional Advantage

A single, governed people data foundation is the missing link in many organizations' total AI strategy. Every department has a "people" dimension, and a unified platform connects those insights to show a bigger picture.

- **Finance:** People data on turnover, compensation, and skill gaps directly impacts financial forecasts and the bottom line.
- **Operations/Product:** Data on who has what skills and capabilities determines which projects get staffed and how quickly new products can be launched.
- **Sales:** People data on sales team productivity, output metrics, and forecasting revenue.

Armed with this understanding, your next step is to turn this advantage into a case the C-Suite will understand.

BUILDING A CASE FOR A STRONG DATA FOUNDATION: YOUR CONVERSATION WITH THE C-SUITE

It can't be overstated that every C-Suite peer's AI efforts — from predictive modeling to operational efficiencies — requires a strong data foundation. If this is news to you, [click here](#) or use the QR code above to dive deeper into this critical topic.

This is the core of your case, but you'll need to speak their language so everyone gets what they want.

Your Conversations with the CFO

Don't talk about data; talk about risk and ROI. The CFO wants to know that new AI investments will deliver value without creating new risks. So flip the script from "data" to "dollars and sense."

Deloitte's research found that today's C-Suite leaders are increasingly focused on quantitative skills and navigating risk and regulatory environments. This aligns perfectly with your pitch: a poor data foundation is a massive liability because it leads to bad decisions, inaccurate forecasts, and regulatory risk.

By investing in a single source of truth for people data, you're not just buying a tool; you're buying an insurance policy against poor decisions.

The Pitch: "We can bring in the flashiest AI tools, but they'll underdeliver and create new risks if our data foundation is fragmented. With a single, transparent data model, we're protecting our investment and reducing our exposure to regulatory risk."

Your Conversations with the CIO

The CIO is focused on infrastructure. According to PwC's 2025 CIO priorities report, their entire world is built on three things: cloud, security, and data. Your job is to make the case that people data is a foundational asset to the future of the business. The CIO will want a single, secure, and governed data platform that all AI tools can plug into. You can show them that a fragmented ecosystem is a security risk.

The Pitch: "Our teams are already experimenting with AI, creating data silos and security risks. A single, governed people data platform will not only support our HR needs, but will also serve as a secure and consistent foundation for every AI tool across the enterprise."



[Click here](#) or scan to explore the importance of a strong data foundation in our guide: **Achieve People Analytics Maturity with a People Data Platform.**

How BlackRock's CHRO/CTO Partnership Drove AI Success

One Model client BlackRock, one of the world's largest investment managers, was ready to embrace AI as a real operational force without losing its workforce.

Instead of siloing AI as a "tech problem," they did something smarter. They paired their Chief Technology Officer with their Chief Human Resources Officer who, together, designed an **AI Dream Team strategy**.

They aligned on a shared vision, co-created implementation plans, and prioritized culture — embedding transparency, trust, and psychological safety into every AI initiative.

This approach activated the organization. Innovation happened faster and became a sustainable shift in how work gets done.

BlackRock's AI transformation didn't replace humans. With a CHRO-CTO alliance steering the way, it amplified them.

(SHRM, 2025)

EQUIPPING EVERY FUNCTION TO LEAD

C-Suite alignment doesn't move the needle on its own. Your next challenge will be to work with function leaders to guide their employees through the change, one team at a time. At a high level, that includes:

Creating a Shared AI Playbook

Partner with IT, Legal, and department heads to create simple guidelines for responsible AI use. This is much more than a generic policy. It's a tool to build psychological safety, encouraging employees to experiment within clear, non-negotiable guardrails. You can even use AI to build your first draft.

According to a Wharton report, companies that invest in change management see a 70% increase in AI adoption rates. So make sure employees know how to use AI, when to question it, and when to escalate concerns.

Reimagining the Org Chart

AI will go far beyond simply automating tasks; it will reorganize how work gets done. You must work closely with function leaders to anticipate where these shifts will occur and start planning now. The jobs of today are not the jobs of tomorrow, and you must help leaders and employees see that.

Building the Path Forward

Your role is to turn workforce transformation into career opportunities. This is where HR shines. The focus shifts from managing pipelines to managing the future. Internal mobility becomes a survival strategy, allowing companies to quickly redeploy talent from sunset roles into growth areas, gaining speed, resilience, and cultural cohesion.

Can you see how, as a strategic partner, HR has the potential and positioning to help align every leader to the demands of this transformation?

You can do this.

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CHAPTER

4

Your Downstream Challenge

Your AI readiness strategy gets real when people understand what it means for their day to day. How will their work shift? What parts of their job stay human? How do decisions get made now? This is personal, emotional, and deeply human work. As a leader, you're not just rolling out tech. You're protecting dignity, sharpening purpose, and connecting daily work to key outcomes.

In any kind of change management, communication is key. For change this big, it's the drumbeat that keeps everyone moving through these nine critical areas:

1. REMEMBERING YOUR ROLE IN ORCHESTRATING CHANGE

AI adoption doesn't happen in a straight line. If HR isn't setting the pace and guardrails, every business unit will interpret "AI readiness" differently and act on it differently. That chaos slows adoption, drives inconsistent policies, and risks cultural fractures.

HR leaders must own the definition of the organization's AI principles *before* the first department pilots a tool. This means leading a cross-functional AI readiness council represented by HR, Finance, Legal, IT, Operations, and at least two business unit leaders. Their job is to agree on the organization's guiding principles for AI, identify areas where AI will be tested, and define who is accountable for outcomes.

Example: A One Model customer in logistics used this approach to align Warehouse Operations, Customer Service, and Finance on a unified AI playbook. The council agreed on baseline principles like transparency, security, and augmentation over replacement. They rolled them out in a two-page document every employee could read in under five minutes. That alignment made later policy decisions easier because the “why” was already settled.

2. ADDRESSING JOB SECURITY AND CAREER PATH CONCERNS

The issue: The question on everyone’s mind is “Will AI replace me?” Employees are wondering if their skills will still matter and if promotions will require mastering tools they’ve never touched. If all they’re hearing is crickets about AI within the org, you’re likely to see disengagement, resistance, and attrition.

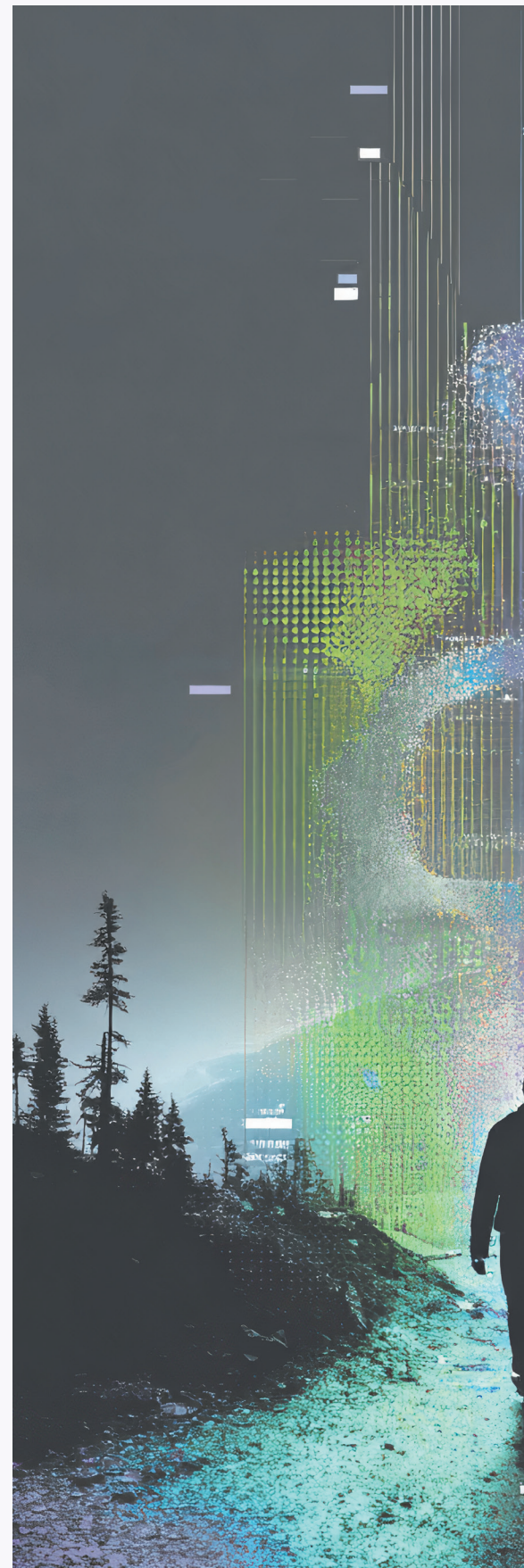
What leaders must do: Lead with empathy. Be transparent about what you know and don’t know. You can’t predict exactly which jobs will change fastest, but you can state your organization’s AI usage philosophy in plain language. Publish it and refer to it. This is your workforce’s north star when anxiety spikes.

Philosophy and Transparency

- **Why we’re using AI:** To reduce low-value work, speed decisions, and open space for higher-value human judgment.
- **How we’re using AI:** Supplementally first (co-pilot), with fallback procedures when outputs are uncertain or humans are unavailable, and human review for consequential decisions.
- **Where we will not use AI:** Sensitive decisions that affect pay, promotion, and termination; areas with weak or biased data; anything that touches safety or legal exposure without a human in the loop.

Map out future career pathways showing how AI literacy fits into advancement. Make examples tangible: show how a claims processor who once managed 50 cases a week now supervises AI to process 200, with their role elevated to quality oversight and client escalation.

Example: A One Model customer in fashion retail ran an internal AI upskilling program where merchandisers learned to use AI to predict demand shifts. Within six months, participants were shortlisted for new roles in planning and forecasting — roles that previously required five more years of experience.





3. REWORKING THE WORK & REDEFINING PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

The issue: If performance metrics still reward manual execution, you'll overlook the employees who add the most AI-era value. AI changes the definition of contribution. Without adapting measurement, you risk promoting the wrong people and losing your future leaders.

What leaders must do: Partner with business unit heads to rebuild performance frameworks. Don't start with job titles; start with tasks. Give managers a simple worksheet and have teams mark up a week of work; then pilot changes with tight feedback loops using the four-part framework:

- **Automate** repetitive, rules-based tasks: meeting notes, initial job-description drafts, first-pass QA.
- **Augment** expert tasks: analysts exploring scenarios, recruiters writing outreach, HRBPs prepping board summaries.
- **Accelerate** throughput: code reviews, policy comparisons, data prep for dashboards.
- **Avoid** where stakes are high and data is thin: performance ratings, disciplinary actions, medical accommodations.

Add AI-related competencies (prompt design, error detection, ethical judgment) and weight metrics for quality assurance and decision-making alongside output.

Example: Siemens updated its engineering team KPIs to include "AI-assisted design validation," making it a formal promotion criterion.

4. BALANCING SPEED AND PRECISION

The issue: AI can supercharge speed, but unchecked velocity risks mistakes, compliance breaches, or reputational harm. The temptation to chase faster output is huge, but if you don't define where speed stops and accuracy takes over, teams will decide that for themselves.

What leaders must do: Work with each department to classify workflows as “precision-critical” (where every detail matters) or “speed-first” (where rapid output is the goal). Embed those classifications in playbooks and onboarding materials so that employees know which mindset to adopt for each task.

Example: A One Model customer in financial services created an AI review checklist for all customer-facing communications, slowing down only the steps that directly touched sensitive compliance information.

5. TRAINING LEADERS TO MANAGE HYBRID WORKSTREAMS

The issue: Managers will need to oversee both human-created and AI-generated work. Coaching humans is one skill. Validating machine output — and coaching humans to do it — is another entirely. Leaders must be comfortable managing outcomes where they didn't personally create the underlying work.

What leaders must do: Implement manager training on reviewing AI outputs, detecting bias, and integrating AI metrics into performance reviews. Include role-playing exercises where managers must assess AI work, challenge its accuracy, and give constructive feedback.

Example: A One Model customer in the healthcare sector ran mock review sessions where managers assessed AI-generated patient outreach scripts. They found 15% contained subtle undertones that could alienate patients, reinforcing why human oversight matters.

6. SETTING BOUNDARIES FOR AI USE & GUARDRAILS THAT ENABLE

The issue: Without clear limits, AI use will drift into risky territory, creating compliance, IP, and brand risks that are hard to undo. You want to build a fence, not a wall. Keep guardrails practical so adoption grows inside the lines — not in shadow tools.

What leaders must do: Create three short, accessible guides.

- **Principles:** The organization's non-negotiables for AI use (e.g., transparency, data security, augmentation over replacement).
- **Acceptable Use:** Specific guidelines for data handling, approved tools, and scenarios.
- **Red Lines:** Concrete examples of prohibited uses, with rationale. For example: "No AI in legal contract drafting without legal review" or "No AI in handling customer complaints involving potential legal liability."

Example: IBM's AI Ethics Board publishes clear internal "red lines" that forbid certain AI applications outright, based on compliance and brand risk considerations.

7. BUILDING A CULTURE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE

The issue: Most employees have never been trained to review AI output objectively. A single high-profile AI error can destroy trust inside and outside the company. Remember, a machine can't build trust; only a human can. "Human in the loop" only works if the human has authority, time, and context.

What leaders must do:

- Publish simple review checklists for creators working with AI. This ensures clear ownership, audit/compliance, and traceability.
- Run internal "QA sprints" where employees practice catching and correcting AI mistakes in realistic scenarios.
- Make QA results visible and celebrate high performers in this skill area.

Example: A One Model customer in insurance used monthly QA challenges to upskill claims processors. Within three months, accuracy rates on AI-assisted claims jumped 23%.

8. EVOLVING HIRING AND TALENT STRATEGY

The issue: Today's hires will operate in tomorrow's AI-saturated environment, so stop hiring for yesterday's jobs. Skills pipelines need to adapt now to avoid capability gaps later.

What leaders must do:

- Update job descriptions to reflect AI-era competencies.
- Adjust interview questions to assess AI comfort, ethical judgment, and adaptability.
- Work with talent acquisition to find the people who are already curious and experimenting with AI in safe, thoughtful ways.

Example: A One Model customer in media now tests final-round candidates on their ability to brief an AI tool and critique its output as part of the hiring process.

9. YOUR GUIDING MINDSETS

In a major cultural reset like this one, your ability to navigate these changes depends on three guiding mindsets that cut across every action and decision you make:

1. **Cultivate Capability:** Focus on building confidence, not just competence, with a layered learning approach.
2. **Champion Communication:** Communicate like change leaders. Set a steady drumbeat of transparency and shared learning.
3. **Prove the Value:** Skip vanity metrics and prove value with actionable insights. Pair metrics with short stories that demonstrate impacts.

Without clear data, though, this guidance risks being based on guesswork. Transparent, connected, and customizable workforce analytics give HR leaders the evidence they need to make the right calls. And One Model provides exactly that foundation.

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SECTION 3

Turning Strategy into Momentum



Quick Wins vs. Long-Term Transformation

Are we moving fast in a way that builds toward sustainable, long-term transformation? Or are we chasing moves that feel right in the moment but could lead to costly backtracking later?

That's the question every HR leader should be asking right now. Because while everyone loves a quick win, not all of them are created equal.

HOW TO KNOW IF YOU'RE ON THE RIGHT TRACK

The journey to AI readiness is filled with uncharted twists and turns. Some moves create clarity, trust, and lasting momentum. Others skip essential conversations and end up compromising alignment, ethics, or employee engagement. They aren't wrong-headed or reckless. In fact, most of them look like good progress. But without the right foundation, they rarely go far.

Considering the magnitude of what's coming, this truth will be even more consequential.

Here's how to tell the difference and shift your team's energy toward efforts that build real readiness.

NOT ALL QUICK WINS ARE CREATED EQUAL

Looks Like a Win	Builds Long-Term Readiness
Launch an AI pilot without cross-functional input	Survey employees on their hopes, fears, and ideas about AI
Map roles against tech potential based on job titles	Flag roles most likely to shift using a red-yellow-green framework — and start conversations
Implement AI tools and monitor adoption metrics	Identify one area to apply AI with employees , not <i>to</i> them — and invite feedback along the way
Adopt vendor guardrails as-is	Draft a set of AI guardrails or values with DEI, IT, and Legal partners
Build a data warehouse	Start by clarifying the talent and business questions , then build the infrastructure to support them
Aggregate data fast to “feed the model”	Prepare your data for decision-making: integrated, contextual, governed, and people-aware
Use historical reports to inform AI models	Pair historical data with real-time context from your teams to surface bias, gaps, and relevance

See the Difference?

At every stage from readiness to launch you’ll be making choices that shape the next ones. The steps on the left may feel like progress, but they can take you nowhere fast — or worse, force you into decisions you’ll have to unwind later.

The moves on the right do more: They build momentum. They signal leadership.

And they buy you the space to plan for what really matters: sustainable transformation.

FROM READINESS TO RESULTS: A SAMPLE 90-DAY TRANSFORMATION SPRINT

Turn early wins into a repeatable model for organizational transformation in 90 days.

Move 1: 30-Day “AI Heat-Map” Census

Inventory tasks, not titles. When companies shift to a skills-based talent model, they can place employees in roles that directly support business needs. That focus on skills and tasks — not just job titles — reveals where talent truly resides and how it can be redeployed to support AI-driven priorities.

In the first two weeks, ask every function to tag the top 20 recurring tasks in their workflows. Then cross-reference them with Gen AI capability lists to flag activities that could be quickly automated.

1. **Quantify exposure.** Use a simple 1–3 risk/impact scale to rank tasks; highlight roles where $\geq 40\%$ of work is highly automatable, mirroring the World Economic Forum’s finding that 39% of core skills will churn by 2030.
2. **Publish the heat-map.** Share a one-page dashboard with execs and people leaders by day 30. KPIs: 100% functions submitted, tasks mapped covering $\geq 75\%$ of payroll, and top-10 high-impact automations identified.

Move 2: 60-Day AI Literacy Blitz

1. **Launch a micro-learning series.** Curate four 30-minute modules (AI basics, prompt engineering, data ethics, and use-case spotting) delivered weekly via your LMS or town-hall “watch parties.”

This investment in fundamental knowledge is crucial. According to a PwC report, employees who are skilled in AI are 27% more productive than their peers, highlighting the measurable business value of a company-wide AI literacy blitz.

2. **Pair learning with labs.** Form peer squads of 5–7 employees each to practice real prompts on internal documents. They can demo results at the next all-hands.
3. **Track lift, not attendance.** Target 85% completion and run a five-question pre/post quiz, aiming for a 25% knowledge gain. Flag functions scoring $< 70\%$ for follow-up coaching. By day 60, you’ll have built a common vocabulary and surfaced champions for deeper reskilling.

Move 3: 90-Day Guardrails and Pilot Push

1. **Seat an “AI First-Aid” council.**
Convene HR, Legal, Security, and two BU leaders; meet bi-weekly to vet use cases and issue interim guidelines. Cite the Gartner survey showing 77% of CFOs boosting tech spend in 2025 to secure a modest compliance budget early.
2. **Draft a one-page acceptable-use policy.**
Cover data sensitivity tiers, employee disclosure rules, and approval workflow for third-party tools — keep it provisional but enforceable.
3. **Green-light one quick-win pilot with lightweight AI assist.**
Use tools you may already have to test how well your data and processes actually support AI adoption, plus where to invest next. Choose a real process with repetition and friction (e.g., offer letter generation).

Define success metrics (e.g., cycle time cut $\geq 30\%$, zero policy breaches, etc.), then test the results. If the data fails the trust test, that’s your signal: focus on fixing the foundation before scaling automation.

These sprints deliver concrete insights specific to your organization:

- How AI is currently being used
- What tasks lend themselves to automation
- Which roles are most affected
- Where the opportunities or risks are

They also position HR as the trusted navigator of AI change while showing tangible wins inside one quarter. But even the best pilots, programs, and policies can stall if your data isn’t ready.

That’s where many organizations fall short. And why we circle back to the second most critical AI transformation step after people: **your data.**

[Click here](#) or scan to download our technical guide **Before the Warehouse: The Case of an HR Data Platform-First Strategy**



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DATA READINESS IS AI TECH READINESS

Too often, AI conversations rush straight to tooling, skipping the foundation that makes any of it work: data that's fit for human decisions.

If your systems are fragmented, your context is missing, or no one trusts what they're seeing, AI won't solve that, it will scale it.

From a tech perspective, true preparedness is about:

- Data Clarity: What decisions does this data need to support?
- Data Context: Does it reflect how work actually happens?
- Data Confidence: Will people believe in it enough to act?

Contrary to popular opinion, standing up a warehouse first isn't the answer. Messy unconnected HR data centralized in a general-purpose data warehouse like Snowflake is still messy, unconnected HR data.

HR and people data come with unique complexities (effective-dated records, organizational hierarchies, strict privacy needs) that generic data platforms aren't equipped to handle.

An HR data platform-first strategy is what turns AI from an experiment into a long-term advantage.

WHERE ONE MODEL FITS IN

You don't need another AI vendor.

You need a partner who understands people, data, and the decisions in between.

We've helped CHROs and People Analytics leaders move beyond dashboards — analyzing and visualizing their data with AI and agents after building the infrastructure for AI readiness through adaptable architecture, integrated data, people-first governance, and a foundation of trust.

And we're here to help you get ready for the biggest business shift of your lifetime.

WE'VE GOT YOU.

CHAPTER

6

Lead Calmly, Execute Clearly

Whew! After all that, if you're feeling the weight of AI decisions, you're not imagining it. You've invested significant time and mental energy into following this playbook, and now you're at a critical juncture. There's no downplaying it: decisions ahead are far-reaching and they will shape your organization's future, its culture, and the careers of the people you lead. It's a lot of responsibility, to say the least. But to be clear, the stress you're experiencing is not a sign of weakness; it's a rational response to a massive change.

Now, the most important work isn't about more research or another stakeholder meeting. It's about clarity and composure to execute what you've already planned.

Before you take any action, you must move to a state of calm or else your anxiety will bleed over to everyone. A centered mind is your most valuable asset, enabling you to prioritize with precision, make sound judgments, and lead with confident authority.

WHY THE ANXIETY IS RATIONAL, BUT ALSO MANAGEABLE

Anxiety or stress in this context is a byproduct of three core dynamics of professional leadership. To start, there's the inherent uncertainty of this transformation. You're navigating a landscape where the rules are still being written; your uncertainty can feel like a threat to the stability you're responsible for maintaining.

Second, you may be experiencing an identity shift. The very nature of your role is morphing as AI redefines talent management, skill development, and organizational design.

Third, the accountability is enormous. Leaders in high-stakes roles often experience a 30% spike in the stress hormone cortisol during periods of intense change. Your brain is built to spot threats fast: most of us feel potential losses about twice as



strongly as potential gains. That can make every choice feel riskier than it is. The key isn't to eliminate this stress but to manage it. Anxiety is a signal to slow down, get clear, and act with intention.

CENTERING PROTOCOL

- **60–90 seconds: paced breathing.** Close your eyes and take three slow, deep breaths. Inhale for a count of four, hold for two, and exhale for six. This simple act resets your nervous system and grounds you in the present.
- **Name the decision & horizon.** “What am I deciding, for what timeframe, at what consequence?”
- **Reframe the task.** Acknowledge the weight of the decision, then consciously reframe it as an opportunity to reinforce a core company value like innovation, ethical responsibility, or employee development.
- **Decision Intent.** State your intention for the decision. “My purpose is to choose the path that best protects our people while enabling progress.” This aligns your actions with your values.

DECISION FILTER (ASK BEFORE YOU GREEN-LIGHT)

Use these questions to quickly evaluate a proposed action or strategy and ensure it aligns with your company's steady, risk-aware posture.

1. **Does this action introduce unnecessary risk?** Is this a bold but measured step, or is it a rushed, reactive move?
2. **Is this a “nice-to-have” or a “must-have”?** Does this decision directly support our core business objectives, or is it driven by FOMO (fear of missing out)?
3. **Do we have the governance in place?** Before we act, are the necessary guardrails around ethics, data privacy, and security firmly established?

ANTICIPATED FEARS & COUNTERPOINTS

Common AI Strategy Fear (HR Leader)	Key Counterpoint
We will choose the wrong technology.	Right partners, right governance, steady.
I'll lose credibility if this fails.	Clear process leads to sound judgment.
We'll fall behind our competitors.	Steady progress beats rushed, flawed moves.
Employees will resist the new tools.	Trust, communication, and training are key.
Our data security will be compromised.	Governance and policy are your defense.
The cost will be a huge budget drain.	Incremental investment, measured ROI proof.
I won't have the technical expertise.	You lead; your team provides expertise.
We'll make an ethical misstep.	Clear guardrails and human oversight.



CENTER FIRST, THEN ACT

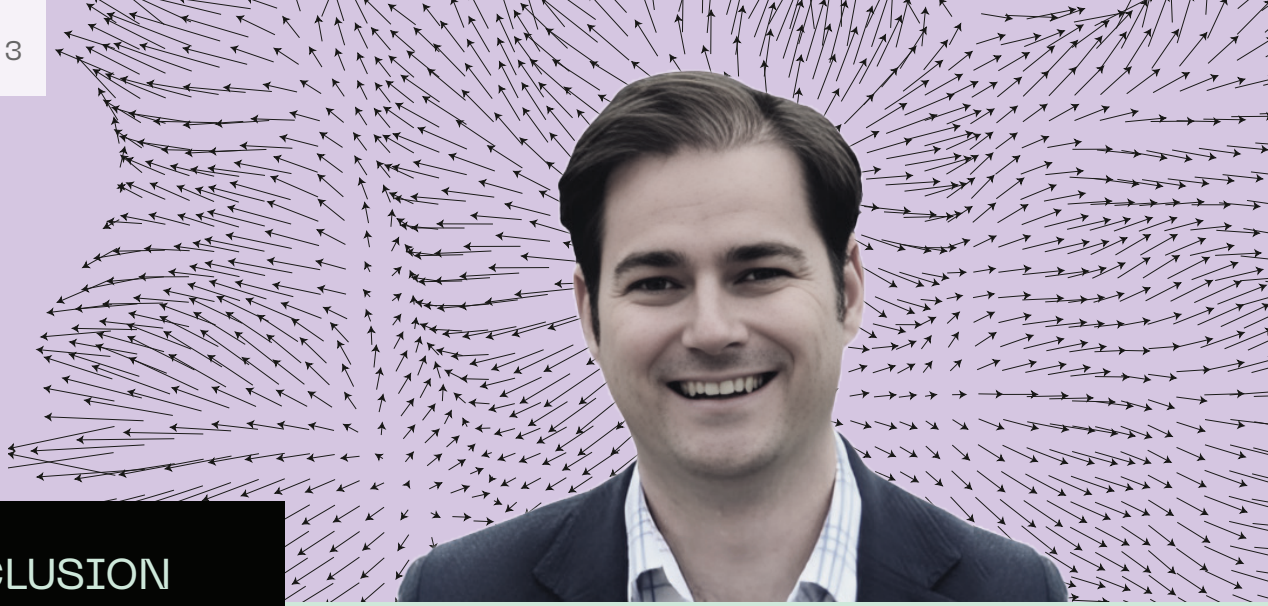
You have a path, governance, and a clear sequence. Use them. Favor steady progress. Make small, reversible moves that teach you something important, keep stakeholders close, and protect the enterprise.

When you lead calmly, your teams mirror that steadiness. When you execute clearly, the organization learns where value is — and isn't. You do not need to rush or prove everything at once. You need to keep the boat stable, continue to compound learning, and maintain trust.

You're prepared. Now breathe, align, and take the next right step.



YOU'RE
PREPARED.
NOW BREATHE,
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RIGHT STEP.



CONCLUSION

An invitation from Chris

We didn't start One Model because the world needed another HR system.

We started it because HR needs answers that can't be found when data is scattered across half a dozen systems, each one telling part of the story, but never the whole thing.

In an AI-driven world, part of the story isn't enough.

We built One Model to fix that problem. To bring every piece of workforce data into one place, in a way you can actually trust and tailor to your business. When the system flags a department as high risk, you can see exactly why and decide what to do about it.

No black boxes. No guessing. Just clarity.

I believe HR should be leading this moment in history, not playing catch-up. One Model makes that possible.

I'd love to hear what challenges you're facing. If you're ready to talk about what AI readiness really looks like for your organization and how your data can help you lead, get in touch. Let's have that conversation.

—Chris Butler

CEO, One Model

Let's connect!



REQUEST YOUR AI READINESS
DATA CONSULTATION

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to talk to us
about your current data state, gaps, and
priorities and we'll help you map out a smarter,
people-first path forward.

