charter

A 2023 CHARTER WORKPLACE SUMMIT PLAYBOOK

The New People-First Paradigm

Presented by:

Microsoft

How can leaders continue to advance a people-first approach in a new economic and social zeitgeist? The 2023 Charter Workplace Summit addressed the urgent need to confront this question—and explored frameworks and practices to navigate the challenge.

Throughout the day, virtual and in-person audience members added their own experiences and insights to the conversations unfolding onstage. This playbook captures their contributions as well as those of our speakers. We look forward to hearing how you build on the ideas in these pages as you craft your talent strategy over the coming year—let us know at hi@charterworks.com.

Table of contents

01

How AI will change work and management

Management is at an inflection point. With generative artificial intelligence reshaping what it means to be productive, creative, and strategic, the tools and tactics managers have used to help their teams thrive are no longer the same ones that will carry them into the future. Jared Spataro, Microsoft's corporate vice president for modern work and business applications, discussed with Charter editor-in-chief Kevin Delaney how AI is giving leaders new tools and frameworks for what it means to work, manage, and lead effectively.

- <u>Jared Spataro</u>, corporate vice president, modern work and business applications, Microsoft
- Moderator: <u>Kevin Delaney</u>, editor-in-chief, Charter

What we've learned so far:

- **Somewhat counterintuitively, older workers are often better prepared to work with AI than their younger colleagues.** One of the key skills in an AI-powered workplace is the ability to delegate well—not only to assign the technology a task, but to do so with clear guidance. "'Here's the situation I find myself in. Here's what I'm trying to accomplish. Please don't go down this route because it's a blind alley. I want you to perform it or give it to me in this format,'" Spataro explained. "And then you have to exercise judgment" over the output and understand how to diagnose any problems that led the tool astray. While more seasoned workers have often honed those abilities through years of people management, "what we're finding is that people who are earlier in their career, they just don't have that experience."

- **AI is most effective when used in conjunction with expertise.** "If you know a domain and can ask very intelligent questions about that domain, you'll get much more substance out of the tool than if you're asking superficial questions," Spataro noted. "That thing becomes an incredible partner in working on problems or tasks."

Tactics and practices:

- **Double down on soft-skills training for managers.** In the past, "We often paid middle managers to be technically proficient," Spataro said. But as AI adoption spreads, "some of this technical proficiency is going to be absorbed by the machine," weighting the role of managers more heavily toward coaching and interpersonal care and support. "There is now a higher bar and need to invest in strengthening the foundational human skills of care, coaching, collaboration, relationship-building, and trust," wrote attendee Michele Choi, head of business development at the group coaching platform Medley.

- **Treat AI as an active meeting participant.** Beyond passively transcribing the discussion for meeting minutes, an AI assistant can help move things forward by, for example, capturing where each participant stands on a contentious issue and summarizing their arguments for the path forward. "Taking that information and

sharing it with the people in the meeting changes the dynamic," Spataro argued. "Sometimes people say things like, 'Wait a second, you know what? Maybe it sounded like I actually am for this measure, but I'm a little bit more balanced. Can I explain my perspective?'" Another use case he cited: As the meeting is drawing to a close, ask the tool to identify the decisions that have been made, open questions, and next steps.

Key considerations:

- **Make sure your inputs include a diversity of voices.** While AI tools can give workers time back by summarizing meeting notes, "If everyone stops going to the meetings, what is AI learning from other than recycling its own ideas?" asked virtual attendee Bill Kellner, president of Optimized Talent Strategies. A less extreme version: If only the same small group of people continues to attend meetings synchronously, the AI's outputs will begin to reflect an increasingly homogenous point of view. Take care to ensure that fewer attendees doesn't automatically mean the same attendees at every gathering.

Choice quote:

> **"**
>
> **We pay you to exercise good judgment. We pay you to learn what good judgment looks like. We pay you to be practicing judgment in low-stakes scenarios, so that in high-stakes scenarios you can exercise it well. And what you get back from this machine, we will tell you, is not always right... Just like people provide that type of input to you, you have to be able to exercise good judgment and pull it all together."**
>
> **JARED SPATARO**
> Corporate vice president, modern work and business applications, Microsoft

Further reading:

- Charter's previous interviews with Spataro, "The skills managers need to succeed with AI" and "How AI requires a new approach to work and management."
- "AI: Lessons From the Frontier," our strategy briefing for Charter Pro members, for case studies and recommendations, as well as a checklist, readiness assessment, and multi-phase work plan.
- A roundup from our Charter Work Tech newsletter on AI tools to improve your meetings.

Watch a recording of the full session here.

02

Best practices for culture-building, career development, and innovation with hybrid and remote work

Several years into the rise of hybrid and remote work, organizations continue to grapple with the same question: how to make the most of in-person time. This panel provided updated frameworks for structuring that time, strategies for communicating its purpose, and tactics for creating an in-person environment that workers are excited to experience.

- Kausik Rajgopal, EVP, people and sourcing, PayPal
- Tia Silas, chief human resources officer, Shopify
- Moderator: Cari Nazeer, managing editor, Charter
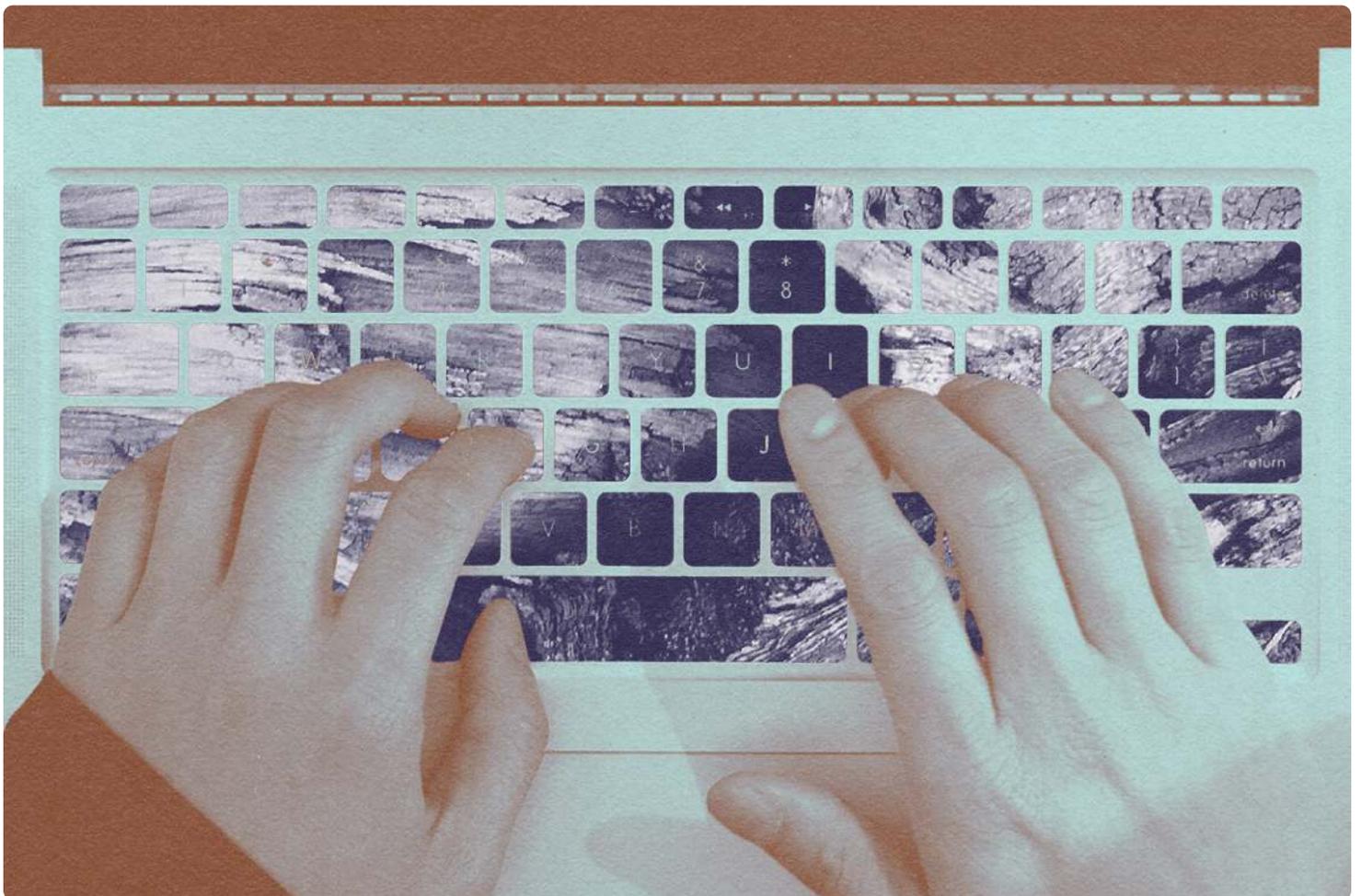
What we've learned so far:

- **"Maker's time" should be protected.** Silas cited a distinction developed by computer scientist Paul Graham between "maker's time" and "management time," noting that while managers can plan and work in shorter increments, the focus and flow inherent to maker's time means it ideally exists in longer uninterrupted stretches. "Now if you think about the power dynamics of an organization, all the people who have the power are managers," she noted. "So what we do is take our one-hour increment and we put it all over the calendar, and we completely disrupt any ability to have this kind of crafter's paradise building time." Any new meeting, she said, should invite reflection: "Is that really how we want to spend our time versus building?"

- **Build working arrangements with the (internal or external) customer in mind.** "We have followed the principle of, let's use the workplace model that actually helps us serve our customer the best," Rajgopal said. "For finance and HR, that may be an internal customer. For our sales and product teams, it may be an external customer. We have a lot of colleagues that are engaged in customer service, taking calls from customers, and for that population flexibility and being able to work from home is highly valued."

Tactics and practices:

- **Find ways to create friction for scheduling meetings.** Silas pointed to Shopify's meeting calculator, which displays the cost of gathering based on attendees' compensation and the scheduled duration. In a similar vein, when workers try to schedule meetings on Wednesdays, designated a "no meeting" day, an automated Slack reminder pops up asking them to reconsider.

- **"Don't run a focus group in your head."** One key learning of the past few years is that "we know that it's important to challenge our assumptions," Rajgopal said, warning against the common pitfall of leaders and managers assuming they know what their workers want and need. Most organizations that have reached a successful equilibrium around working arrangements have done the same few

things, he argued: "Listen to the voice of the employee, figure out what's important, and evolve."

- **Empower workers to plan their own social gatherings.** Rather than mandating that workers come together at any regular cadence for forced bonding, Shopify—which identifies as a "digital first" company—sponsors meetups for workers who live near one another, while giving them the autonomy and resources to "organize things that might be more community-building and social."

Key considerations:

- **In hybrid and remote settings, highlight the behaviors you want to see emulated.** In part because of less in-person interaction. "the opportunity to model or to witness modeled behavior has become less common in many (not all) workplaces," argued virtual attendee Jeanine Stewart, owner of the coaching firm Maven McLeod. Leaders can address this gap by calling out or publicly praising when someone does something that aligns with organizational values or supports the desired culture.

Choice quote:

> **"**
>
> I define culture as the implicit software that we carry around in our heads when we show up to work."
>
> KAUSIK RAJGOPAL
> EVP, people and sourcing, PayPal

Further reading:

- Graham's <u>essay</u>, "Maker's Schedule, Manager's Schedule."
- Charter's <u>research</u> on the effectiveness of remote and hybrid mentorship, with advice for organizations to set those relationships up for success.
- Our <u>interview</u> with <u>Franz Paasche</u>, PayPal's SVP and chief corporate affairs officer, on how the company's volunteer program increased connection among remote workers.
- Our <u>interview</u> with Allstate CEO Tom Wilson, "A surprising case study in remote work at scale," on what the company has learned from its remote-work experiment.

<u>Watch a recording of the full session here.</u>

There are no shortcuts to high performance

In business, there are no shortcuts to high performance. And new research shows that performance is all about putting in the hard work where it matters most.

In our latest report, "Redefining High Performance in the New Era of Work", Viva People Science asked 1,100 global business leaders what factors leaders considered most important to high performance. Topping the list are human ones: effective managers who empower teams, along with good communication across those teams, inspiring leaders, and an inclusive culture that supports wellbeing.
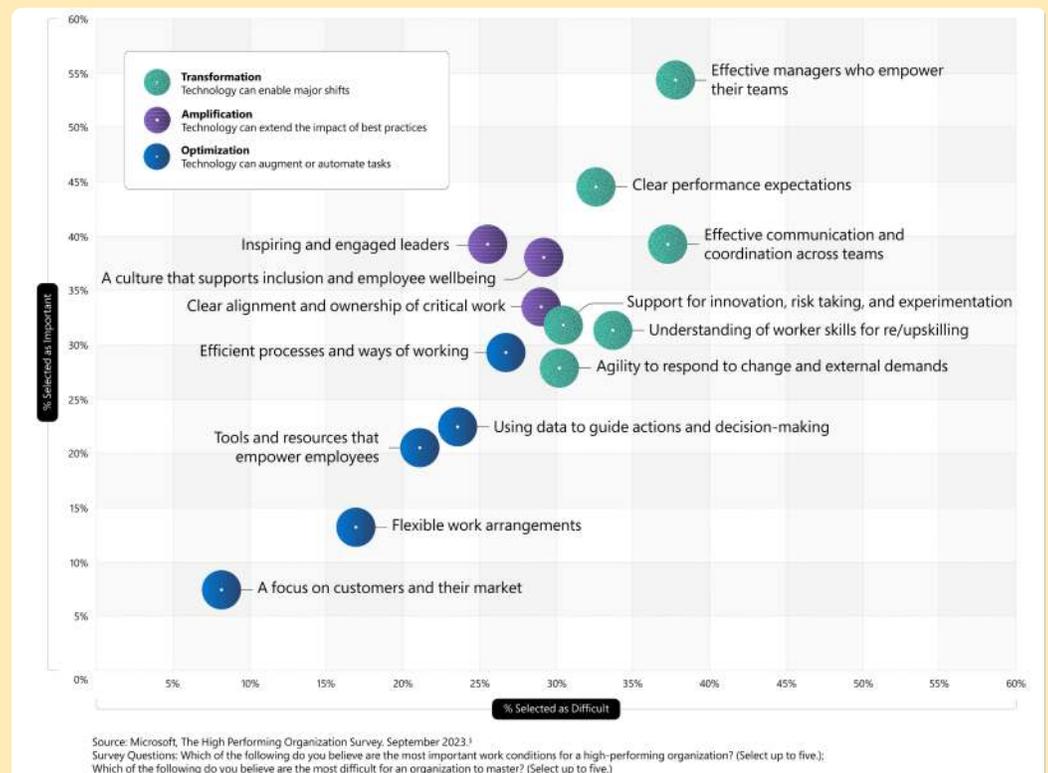
Here's the rub: leaders said that these human factors are the hardest things to get right.

But getting them right really pays off. Our survey found that these challenging yet important capabilities are where organizations should focus time and energy to take performance to the next level—and where investments in technology can have the biggest impact.

Work smarter, not harder

Use technology to simplify easier tasks so you can focus on the performance drivers that are important but difficult to achieve.

Source: Microsoft, The High Performing Organization Survey. September 2023.[1]
Survey Questions: Which of the following do you believe are the most important work conditions for a high-performing organization? (Select up to five.);
Which of the following do you believe are the most difficult for an organization to master? (Select up to five.)

Managers *really* matter

Leaders said that having effective managers who empower others was the single most important factor associated with high performance.

It's not hard to see why: managers are the gateway to your workforce, and effective managers are key to harnessing the value of your people.

But the leaders we surveyed said that developing effective managers is the most difficult thing for organizations to do. Likewise, effective communication across teams and clarity around performance expectations - which are crucial to getting the best out of teams—are seen as both key to performance and especially challenging.

"

"Effective managers who empower teams" was the most important factor leading to high performance, but also the most difficult to get right in the study."

Download the full report.

This is where organizations should focus, and they should lean on technology to help. AI can reduce the burden on managers, allowing them to focus on empowering teams, improving communication, and ensuring alignment on goals and expectations.

Facilitate tough but meaningful collaboration

The survey results showed that when leaders collaborate with other leaders they're most often engaging in positive, low-conflict connections, like building strong relationships and celebrating each other's wins.

The types of collaboration that leaders tend to engage in less often are the more difficult ones, like constructively debating disagreements, co-deciding on investments, and sponsoring one another's initiatives.

That's particularly concerning when it comes to HR and IT— departments that need to work together to adopt technologies that address the human factors that matter most.

But when it comes to making decisions on technology investments, most IT leaders said they most frequently collaborated with their own teams (88%), and just 29 percent said they work closely with HR to make investment decisions.

Similarly, HR leaders said their own teams were their most frequent collaborators (78%), and just 47 percent said they work with IT to make decisions about technology investments.
IT and HR need each other, but they don't always speak the same language. That means IT teams may work hard to deliver a product that doesn't account for human factors, which could affect its success.

To solve this problem, many organizations have created roles for Digital Experience or Digital Transformation leaders who focus on aligning technologies with human-centered needs and values. As such, they act as the glue between IT and HR, serving as both mediator and translator.

78%

The percentage of HR leaders who said their own teams were their most frequent collaborators, and just 47 percent said they work with IT to make decisions about technology investments.

AI is essential to overcoming performance hurdles

A critical priority for these digital transformation leaders is empowering people with AI tools. Take the following all-too-familiar challenges that leaders cited as barriers to high performance:

- Burned-out and disengaged employees
- Inefficient work culture, which included endless meetings and excessive working hours
- Overburdened managers
- Accumulation of tedious tasks

When asked which barriers AI had the best potential to address, leaders cited the same issues, showing that AI capabilities are uniquely well suited to helping organizations overcome the barriers to high performance. Leveraging AI to reduce the burden of rote work, create efficiencies, and give employees time to focus on the work that's meaningful to them is essential for organizations looking to surmount the barriers to high performance.

In fact, leaders who reported consistently strong performance across a range of indicators said that their organizations were further along in AI adoption than their peers, and they were more likely to have invested in AI for specific employee experience use cases.

When it comes to performance, the easy path may not be the best route, and AI is particularly good at helping organizations tackle the challenges that matter most. Facing the hard stuff head-on—and using technology to make challenges less formidable—is what makes the difference between a high-performing organization and one that is simply doing fine.

**To read the full report from Microsoft, download the PDF at https://aka.ms/ HPOGuide.**

And to learn how Microsoft Viva can help your organization address top barriers to engagement and performance, visit https://aka.ms/Viva.

03

Worker-friendly approaches to AI

Many workers are legitimately concerned that the introduction of artificial intelligence will make their jobs worse rather than better (or eliminate them entirely), decrease their employability, and disproportionately undermine underrepresented groups. Building on Charter research, this session covered best practices for using AI fairly and ethically.

- Bryan Hancock, partner, McKinsey & Company
- Alex Buder Shapiro, chief people officer, Jasper
- Julia Stoyanovich, director, NYU Center for Responsible AI
- Moderator: Emily Goligoski, head of research, Charter
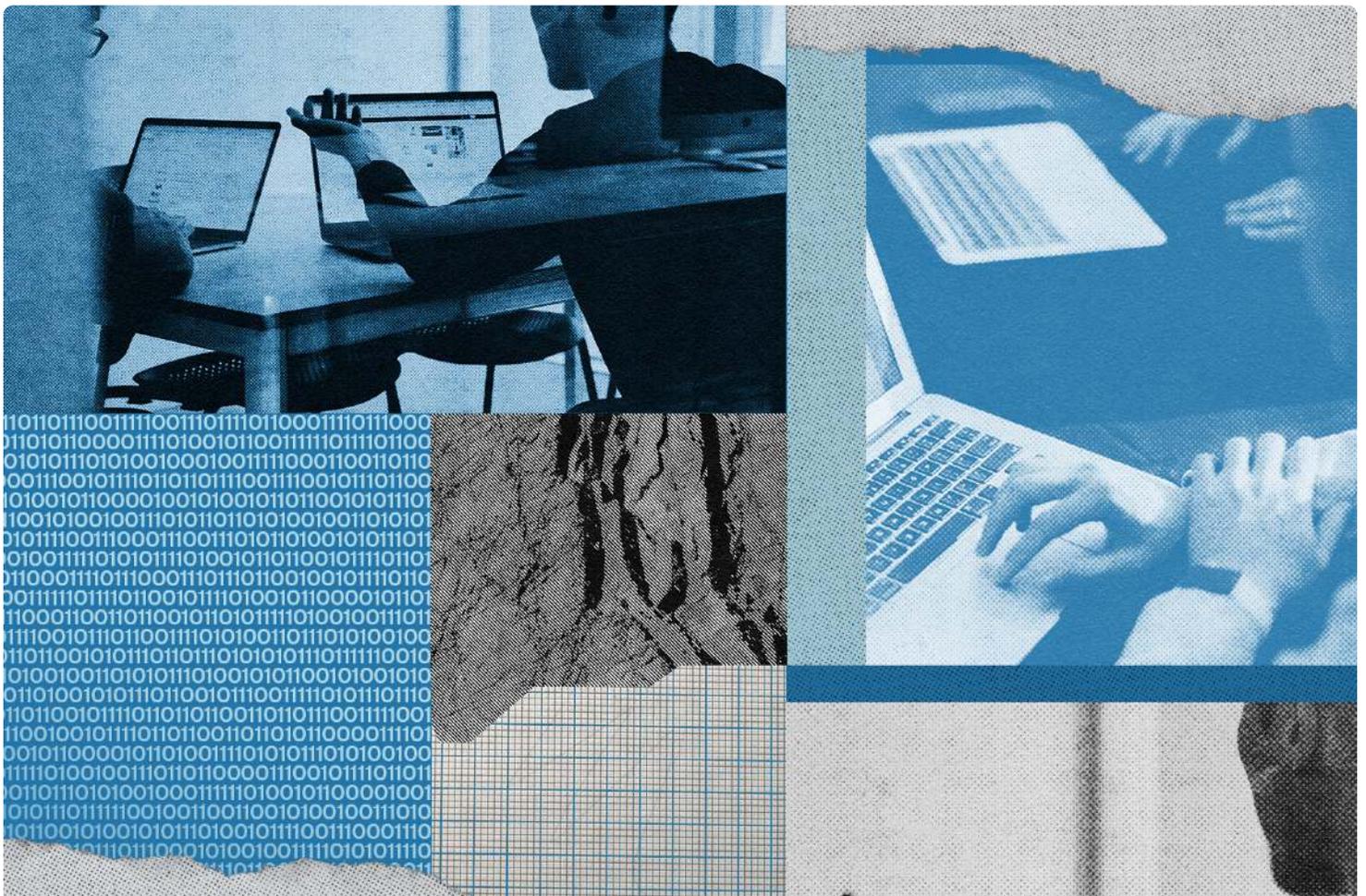
What we've learned so far:

- **People need to be at the center of AI adoption.** Stoyanovich said it's important to give people agency and control in whether and how AI is used for any problem. "Responsible AI is about people having the responsibility and being able to carry that responsibility for the way in which AI is designed, developed, and used," she said. Buder Shapiro added that people are overestimating the role of technology and underestimating their own agency around deciding what business problems to work on and how to delegate that work.

- **AI doesn't change the type of questions we should ask about technologies.** Stoyanovich explained that we need to have a clear goal for any technology we're using, and a way to determine if it's helping us achieve that goal. She gave the example of AI used to find suitable job candidates. "How can we quantify that?" she asked. "How can we then check down the road or even before we deploy these tools that in fact these goals for the technology are met?"

- **It's not predetermined that AI will have a negative impact on any particular population.** "If we put diversity at the forefront...then we can actually have solutions that solve for diversity," said Hancock. He cited findings that show that AI tools tend to help less experienced workers the most. "If we've got a technology that could help access more jobs to more people, let's deliberately then say, 'Hey, if that's possible, let's figure out what the hiring needs to be. Let's figure out what the training needs to be to connect those folks to opportunity.'"

Tactics and practices:

- **Give employees a safe space to ask questions.** Stoyanovich said employees should not only be trained, but allowed to ask questions about the technology. "Why are we using this tool? How will we know whether it works? How will we measure success? Are we prepared to not use it if we can't find a successful use case?"

- **Start by piloting specific use cases.** And then let "people become evangelists to their team members about what opportunities they see," said Buder Shapiro. That ripple effect "helps break down a lot of the barriers."

Key considerations:

- **Make sure you can articulate the "why" of an AI use case.** Stoyanovich suggested a litmus test to help ensure that the benefits outweigh the costs: "Is there a real social or business problem we think AI will help us solve?" If not, "we shouldn't just be using something because it's here, because there is no free lunch," she argued, giving the example of the <u>negative impact of AI tools</u> on the environment.
- **AI can act as a career coach.** "Generative AI can help translate other jobs into a language somebody might understand," said Hancock. The AI can help anyone "understand what they can do to leverage their skills to get the next set of opportunities so they're not reliant on one career coach or one manager who may or may not know."

Choice quote:

> **"**
>
> If somebody hands you a car and says, 'Please drive it. Believe me, it runs fine, but I can't really tell you how I tested it,' would you be comfortable getting behind the wheel of that car? No."
>
> **JULIA STOYANOVICH**
> Director, NYU Center for Responsible AI

Further reading:

- Charter's <u>playbook</u>, "Using AI in ways that enhance worker dignity and inclusion."
- Our <u>interview</u> with economist Joshua Gans about how AI can decrease income inequality.
- Our <u>AI strategy briefing</u>, "The Urgent AI Tasks for HR," for a sample AI philosophy for your organization, as well as communication plans and guidelines.

<u>Watch a recording of the full session here.</u>

04

The DEI Agenda for 2024

Amid an ongoing cultural backlash, a difficult political and legal landscape, and shrinking budgets, leaders face no shortage of challenges to making their organizations more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. At the same time, businesses are being tasked with the imperative to fix society's inequities where other institutions currently fall short. In this panel, a researcher and a practitioner shared their insights for what to prioritize in the coming year to push through these challenges and continue to create more equitable outcomes.

- <u>Stephanie Creary</u>, assistant professor of management, Wharton
- <u>Mita Mallick</u>, head of inclusion, equity, and impact, Carta
- Moderator: <u>S. Mitra Kalita</u>, Charter columnist and chief executive officer, URL Media
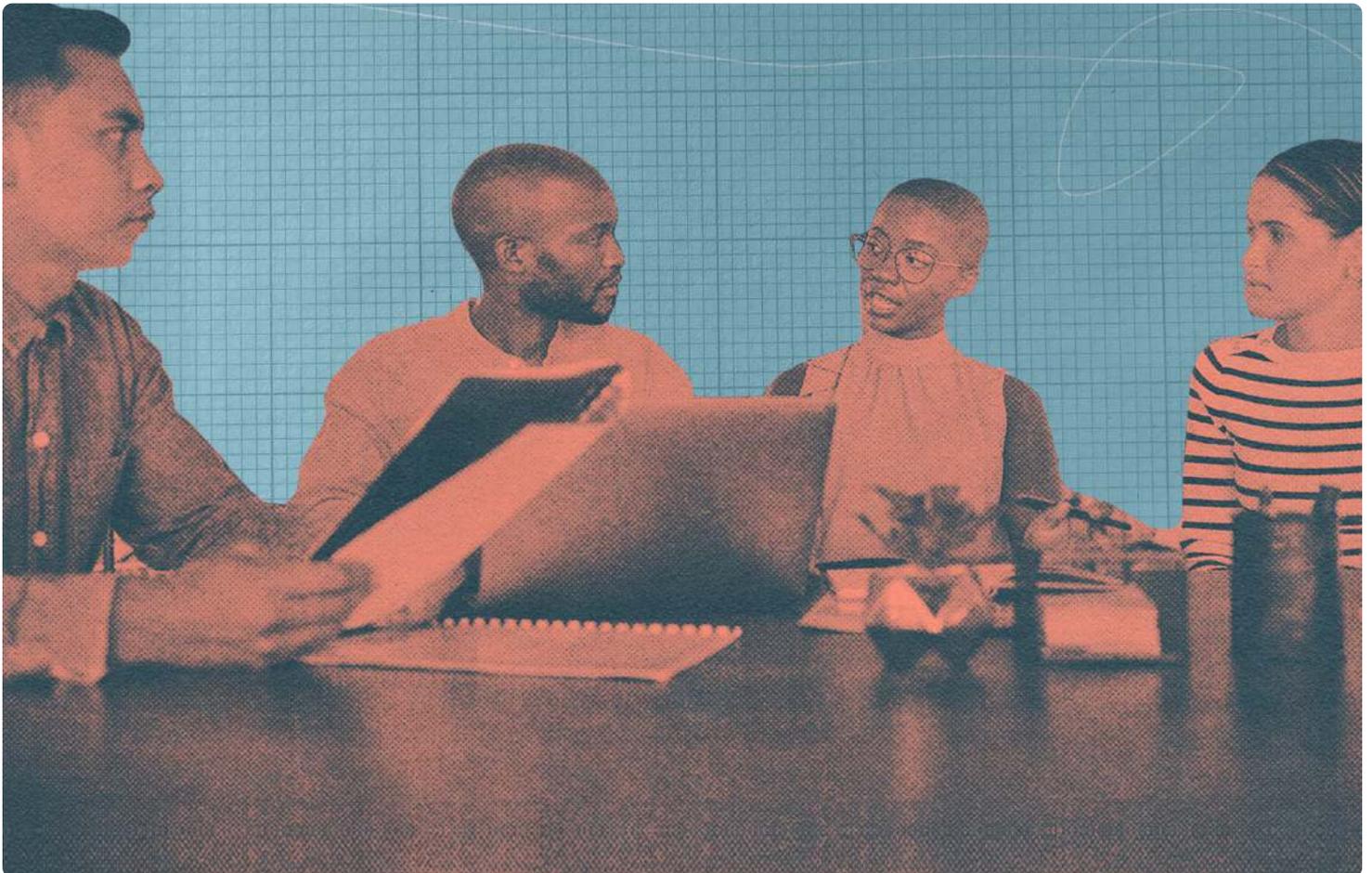
What we've learned so far:

- **The legal landscape has created new challenges to DEI work, but hurdles have always existed.** Mallick pointed to the Supreme Court's recent rulings overturning the right to abortion care and the constitutionality of race-based affirmative action as two cases that energized backlash against diversity, equity, and inclusion in corporate workplaces. But "this is certainly not our first rodeo," Creary told attendees. She observed that many corporate leaders stand ready to make the business case for diversity, even amid new challenges to the legal case for DEI work.

Tactics and practices:

- **Train workers to productively disagree with one another.** "A lot of us are feeling lonely and isolated, and we come to work and look to our leaders for community and conversation," said Mallik, noting that the Edelman Trust Barometer Survey has found higher levels of trust in individual employers compared to institutions like government, media, or business as a whole. Especially in the lead-up to the 2024 election, though, workplace discourse unrelated to work runs the risk of becoming fraught. Disagreeing with kindness and respect "requires skill," she argued, and "we need to help people be skilled to have these conversations."
- **Audit your review and promotion practices through an equity lens, recommended Mallick.** "It starts with, 'How are you attracting talent?' But also I would challenge people to think about, 'How do you retain and develop talent? Who's deemed a low performer? Who's deemed a high performer? How do you evaluate talent? Are you paying them fairly and equitably?'"
- **Challenge-proof your DEI initiatives.** Amid increasing legal challenges to corporate DEI programs, Creary encouraged organizations to evaluate existing programs on whether they are "targeting any one particular group while excluding another group of people." If that's the case, "maybe we need to rethink the language and the strategy behind these programs" to open access to all workers, even if the focus may be to uplift a specific group. Then, collect the necessary data "to identify that there was a problem that necessitated the program in the first place and...to see what the program is actually doing."

Key considerations:

- **General counsels are crucial partners in defending DEI work.** "We are seeing now the necessity of there being a collaborative and collegial partnership between corporate diversity leaders…and a general counsel," Creary said. Moving forward, the key questions for that partnership are, "How do we work together?" "How do we get past the no?" and "How do we do [DEI work] in a way that helps to mitigate harm and risk, knowing that we can't get rid of these diversity, equity, and inclusion practices?"
- **Voting remains essential.** At the end of the session, Creary reminded attendees that DEI work in the workplace must be paired with action outside of work: "No matter what your political persuasion is, you actually do need to vote, and businesses need to give people the time off to go and vote."

Choice quote:

> **"**
>
> Inclusion is a competitive advantage, and it's a driver of the business. So you will see some companies embrace that and as a result, leap ahead, and other companies who I believe will be left behind as the market continues to shift."
>
> MITA MALLICK
> Head of inclusion, equity, and impact, Carta

Further reading:

- Charter's <u>interview</u> with Creary, "What we know about how board diversity affects companies."
- *Reimagine Inclusion:* Debunking 13 Myths to Transform Your Workplace, Mita Mallick's 2023 book. Order the book <u>here</u>, or read a <u>preview</u> of the book in Charter Pro.
- "The chief diversity officer was never enough," Kalita's <u>column</u> for Charter.
- "How to shore up diversity efforts against attacks," Charter's <u>interview</u> with NYU's David Glasgow, for more on how to audit DEI programs amid legal challenges.

<u>Watch a recording of the full session here.</u>

05

Research insights: Using AI to enhance worker dignity

Highlights from Charter research on approaches to artificial intelligence that will benefit workers, including frameworks to help leaders prioritize job quality and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- <u>Kevin Delaney</u>, editor-in-chief, Charter
- <u>Emily Goligoski</u>, head of research, Charter
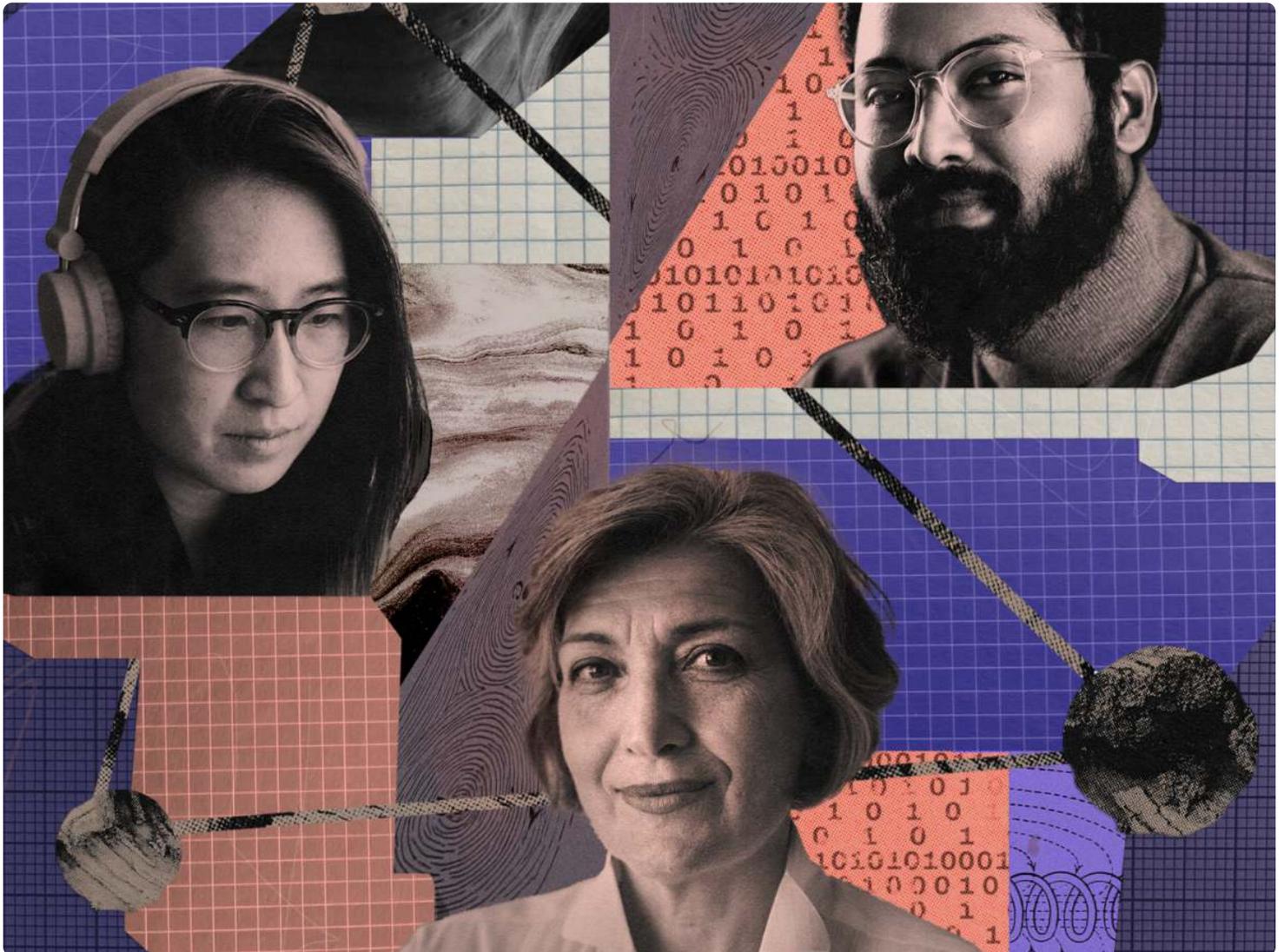
What we've learned so far:

- **The AI gender gap is significant.** According to original research from Charter, 35% of women are using generative AI tools in their jobs currently, 13 percentage points less than men. "Why we think this is important is we know that experience gaps within organizations could lead to increased capability gaps over time, and result in greater labor market inequality," said Goligoski.
- **Workers want more communication around AI.** The number-one form of support employees say they value from their employer when it comes to AI is clear communication about AI plans relative to their role, according to data from Charter. As one survey respondent said, "Our company could clearly state how AI will be used and for what purposes. They can also indicate how our team can utilize AI to make their roles more productive for the future."
- **Companies get more out of workplace technology when they involve their employees.** There are three main reasons for this. One, workers can help identify promising use cases. Two, workers can identify how a new technology will impact workflow for themselves and their colleagues. And three, workers can help identify ways that technology will impact service.

Tactics and practices:

- **Involve workers early in planning for AI implementation.** It's not only what employees want—some 36% of managers and individual contributors told us they want the ability to help shape their organization's approach to AI adoption—but it also helps the business. You can source that input through focus groups, employee surveys, and so on.
- **Move beyond the productivity benefits of AI.** As we wrote in our AI and worker inclusion playbook, emphasizing the productivity benefits of AI alone "reinforces the commoditization of labor and short-term financial logic that fewer workers could be necessary." Instead, focus on improvements in work quality and worker autonomy, both benefits that empower employees.

- **Validate your employees' concerns—and err on the side of over-communicating.** Employees want more communication around AI. "We are on a mutual learning journey," said Goligoski. "Over and over again, whether it's fears of data, privacy, bias and discrimination, and more, we hear employees say they want more communication, more dialogue, and more training from their employer, not less, in this moment."

Key considerations:

- **Worker control is key.** A given technology is more likely to be embraced by workers when they have the ability to control it and when they have discretion in overriding it when necessary. "This is such an important part of this work to me, the idea that workers are assessing the technology—not the other way around—and that AI is a subservient enabler to them," says Goligoski.

Choice quote:

> "
>
> Now is the time to act, even as employers are starting to learn about these tools and experiment with them themselves...it actually really is the right moment to reach out to individuals in historically marginalized groups around the AI support that they tell us they are seeking."
>
> **EMILY GOLIGOSKI**
> Head of research, Charter

Further reading:

- Charter's <u>playbook</u>, "Using AI in ways that enhance worker dignity and inclusion."
- Our Charter Pro <u>interview</u> with Julia Dhar, managing director and partner at BCG, about addressing employee concerns about AI.
- Our Charter Pro <u>interview</u> with Apratim Purakayasth, chief product and technology officer at Skillsoft, about how his company balances bottom-up and top-down AI adoption.

<u>Watch a recording of the full session here.</u>

06

Discussion: What Gen Z needs from workplaces now

A conversation on research takeaways and actionable priorities for recruiting, developing, and retaining younger workers.

- <u>Julia Christenson</u>, general manager, US employee experience chair, Edelman
- <u>Monne Williams</u>, chief impact officer, Handshake

What we've learned so far:

- **Younger workers are entering the workforce already burned out.** Some 80% of college seniors in a recent Handshake <u>survey</u> said they've experienced burnout symptoms "sometimes" or "often" as undergraduates, and a quarter are highly worried about work-induced burnout post-graduation. As a result, Williams noted, many place a high value on an employer's mental-health benefits when considering jobs.
- **Gen Z's views on work are rubbing off on older generations.** Christenson pointed to two key Edelman data points: Some 93% of workers say they've been influenced by their younger colleagues' attitudes toward work-life balance and compensation. As a result, 61% are more willing to pressure their employer on issues like salary transparency.

Tactics and practices:

- **Try speed mentoring.** Around half of undergraduates say they're more willing to apply to a job if they know that the employer has programs in place to support their learning and development, according to Handshake data shared by Williams. Virtual attendee <u>Audrey Marcum</u>, process manager at the biotechnology company Seagen, shared such a program from her own organization: mentor "coffee talks," where younger workers can sign up for 30-minute sessions with a senior leader to seek guidance and advice. While the format is inherently low-commitment, those conversations also have the potential to evolve into longer-term relationships.
- **Give employees an ongoing place to proactively share feedback.** In response to the question posed by Christenson, "How is it exactly that Gen Z wants us to redefine work?" Williams highlighted expectations around transparency and worker voice: "It's the fact that you're asking me and it's the fact that you're going to potentially listen to what I might have to say." In addition to tools like surveys and town halls, leave the door open for workers to tell leadership about their needs, wants, and ideas with the timing that works for them. Marcum also shared that her organization implemented a dedicated "send us feedback" inbox, and set up a team to funnel messages to the correct recipients. Critically, the system also carried the expectation that each piece of feedback was responded to.

Key considerations:

- **Both younger and more experienced workers should assume positive intent.** When younger workers disagree with the decisions of older leaders, resentment can build between the two parties, as one in-person attendee pointed out. "When the early career folks feel like, 'Oh, you haven't walked a mile in my shoes,' how do they suppose we got to where we are?" she asked. Christenson noted that she often fields a similar question from clients: "We've had a lot of clients come to us and say, 'We've put in this work… we're doing things based on knowledge and expertise.'" The key to respectful dialogue, she says, is for each side to assume the other is coming from a genuine desire to improve their organization, and seize on that shared interest.

Choice quote:

> **"**
>
> People felt the intensity of being remote for much of their college careers, and they're also anticipating some of those feelings coming into these jobs. That's why they're demanding more from employers around mental health benefits, flexibility, student loan repayment—really thinking about all those things that will support them as a full human being, not just as an employee."
>
> **MONNE WILLIAMS**
> Chief impact officer, Handshake

Further reading:

- Charter and Medley's <u>playbook</u> on managing multigenerational workforces, "Intergenerational Fluency 101: A toolkit for leading across generations."
- "The most important factor for predicting cohesion and conflict at work, our <u>interview</u> with NYU professor Michael North, who studies multigenerational workforces, on what workplaces misunderstand about generational dynamics.
- Handshake's recent <u>report</u> on the workplace expectations of college seniors, "The class of 2024 sets their sights on the future."
- "How Gen Z is changing the workplace," our <u>interview</u> with Maia Ervin, chief people officer at JUV Consulting, a Gen Z digital marketing agency.

<u>Watch a recording of the full session here.</u>

Re-imagine the workforce ecosystem to be age-inclusive

By 2040, the population of Americans aged 65 or older <u>will rise</u> to 80 million from 54 million today.

As people live longer, healthier lives, they're working longer—because they want to or need to. **Over the next decade, those 65 and older will make up the fastest-growing segment of the US workforce.**

With five generations working side-by-side now "the new normal," AARP sees opportunities in a **reimagined workforce ecosystem**, one that we can create and invest in.

As highlighted in <u>an AARP report</u>, "the growing diversity of age, experience, ability, and needs of the workforce call businesses to **think and act differently to unlock human, financial, emotional, and social capital:** creating productive, meaningful, and dynamic work and careers, made accessible for all who want or need to work."

The business benefits are clear. Among the most successful businesses are those with expressed commitments to building multi-generational, inclusive workforce practices—such as members of <u>AARP's Living Learning and Earning Longer Collaborative</u> and <u>Employer Pledge Programs</u>.

To build a thriving, age-inclusive workforce, leaders must **understand the major trends shaping the future of work** and **redesign practices, policies, and programs** accordingly.

Learn more today by reading:
- <u>Five Megatrends Shaping the Future of Work</u>
- <u>Report: Building a Competitive Future for All: The Business Case for Healthy Longevity</u>

07

The reskilling roadmap

Research has found a significant gap between the training workers are receiving and the training they say they need to do their jobs well—a gap that, as more new technologies take hold, will only get bigger without deliberate intervention. This online-only session addressed the most urgent priorities for worker upskilling and reskilling, as well as strategies for how employers can best identify skilling needs within their own workforces.

- <u>Brandon Clark</u>, global head of talent development, Adobe
- <u>Sarah Tilley</u>, senior vice president of talent acquisition and development, ServiceNow
- Moderator: <u>Jacob Clemente</u>, reporter, Charter

What we've learned so far:

- **"Learning agility" is a critical skill.** There aren't always handbooks or learning courses geared toward the new complex challenges businesses face. "So in my view, the future of work is a lot less about what you know today and a lot more about something that I'll call learnability or learning agility," said Clark, who defined this as the ability to quickly adapt one's skills. Clark mentioned learning agility as one of the key skills for employees in the next five to 10 years.
- **A skills-based talent strategy is a win for employees, managers, and companies.** Tilley explained how ServiceNow is using its own AI-powered skills intelligence system—which it also offers to customers—to understand its employees' skills and match skills to roles, training programs, and internal opportunities. This system enables employees to better visualize career paths and build personalized learning plans, she explained, and helps managers optimize team performance and identify hiring and development needs. For companies, it provides a data-driven approach to talent management.

Tactics and practices:

- **Encourage leaders to share personal stories during workplace training.** Clark emphasized the role of storytelling in connecting with employees: "When you have a leader that is telling you...how they were supposed to be giving someone feedback and they chickened out of it and then that problem only festered, it really helps you remember" the lesson.
- **Find areas of overlap between the training employees want and the skills your organization needs.** "I may want to learn how to surf, but if I'm not working for a company that makes surfboards, it's not really that relevant," says Tilley. "However, if I want to learn how to better present to senior executives and we sell a product to senior executives, that's valuable all around."
- **Start learning programs with a problem statement.** Clark emphasized the importance of defining a specific, measurable behavior change you want to see when designing a learning program. For example, when Adobe wanted to improve manager feedback, it took a representative sample of the feedback and tracked it over several quarters to see whether it improved from training.

Key considerations:

- **Workforce training programs should make you feel something.** "We all have smartphones in our pockets, and we're all surrounded by beautiful experiences all the time," says Clark. "So when you come to work and the content that you come in contact with doesn't make you feel anything...it sticks out like a sore thumb."

- **Create learning programs that are "just in time."** Rather than teaching employees skills and "pray[ing] that [they] remember and use some of these skills when the situations arise," as Clark puts it, serve up learning experiences when employees are able to actually apply what they've learned. Tilley gives the example of providing a manager with training on inclusive hiring practices when that manager opens a job requisition. "Finding ways to have it be in the flow of work, that's what comes to mind when I think about continuous learning."

Choice quote:

> **"**
>
> The modern learning professional has to be thoughtful about creating experiences that are in fact experiences and not just training."
>
> **BRANDON CLARK**
> Global head of talent development, Adobe

Further reading:

- "A new approach to supporting people leaders," our Charter Pro interview with Clark about Adobe's launch of its Leader Experience program.
- Kalita's column for Charter and TIME on building a skills-based hiring strategy amid rapid change.
- Our guide for Charter Pro members on transitioning to skills-based hiring.
- Our third AI briefing for Charter Pro members with a guide to building a skills-based organization.

Watch a recording of the full session here.

08

Creating a gathering blueprint with Priya Parker

After nearly three years of hybrid gatherings, return-to-office battles, and meeting resets and reckonings, there's a lot organizations have learned about how to bring people together effectively—and plenty they're still struggling to get right. Priya Parker, author of *The Art of Gathering* and a digital course with the same name, discussed what we've learned in this new era of work about how to gather well.

- Priya Parker, facilitator, strategic advisor, author
- Moderator: Massella Dukuly, head of workplace strategy and innovation, Charter

What we've learned so far:

- **Meeting culture is not a given—it can and should be shaped by individuals.** For Parker, one of the crucial lessons of the pandemic was that people outside of sociologists and gathering experts began "to see the infrastructure of how we meet" and the fact that "we actually make it up. We invent it. We inherit it." As individuals figured out Zoom and slowly returned to offices, "we began to actually go back in our workplaces...to ask first order questions: When, where, how, and for what reason should we meet, and who decides?"

- **Gathering is a skill to be cultivated.** "This is a learnable skill, and it happens to be the most important 21st century leadership skill because, for better or worse, this is now how we shape culture," Parker noted, explaining that she defines a gathering as any occasion—in person, remote, or hybrid—in which three or more people meet for a shared purpose. "This is now how we decide what our priorities are, and this is how we interact and make decisions."

Tactics and practices:

- **Create a norm of questioning a meeting's purpose.** "The single best way to shift the culture of your organization overnight is to make the question, 'What's the purpose of this meeting?' not taboo," Parker argued. Virtual attendee Alex Dunne, principal consultant at Locomotive Partners, commented, "Preferably answer the question, 'What's the purpose of this meeting?' when initially scheduling it, not when finally attending it."

- **Balance inclusion and exclusion in creating invite lists.** Base meeting attendees on the gathering's purpose, which means keeping the invite list tight. "When we're not sure what the purpose is, we get inclusion and exclusion really confused," Parker observed. "We should absolutely be systemically increasing inclusion, but for most meetings, the more is not the merrier. The more is the hairier. The more is the scarier." Instead, increase inclusion by circulating agenda and meeting notes after the gathering, or by meaningfully involving a diverse group of voices on each project.

- **Set a "silent but unmuted" norm for meetings.** A meeting facilitator's task of building an environment of trust is more easily accomplished when they can hear participants' in-the-moment reactions such as sighs or gasps, argued Parker. As virtual attendee Marcum noted, the practice also cuts down on the likelihood that meeting participants will be multitasking by removing their ability to mask telltale keyboard clacking.

Key considerations:

- **Upskilling your workforce on gathering requires conscious investment.** "An opportunity for companies to create better outcomes around gatherings is to teach, and reward the skill of gathering, and facilitating others," pointed out attendee <u>Al Dea</u>, founder of The Edge of Work. That means creating trainings and resources around facilitation, building gathering skills into employee evaluations, and loudly recognizing and rewarding excellent facilitation.
- **Trust is essential to gathering well.** Dukuly pointed out that the secret ingredient to aligning on a shared purpose and gathering well is often trust. "Part of what I know as a facilitator is that trust is often built in the informal, in the moments that are not the stump speech. It's in the sprout speech," replied Parker. She encouraged leaders to use the informal time before and after official meeting times to build relationships, whether by joking about the snacks on the table before a meeting or catching up with an attendee afterwards who chose to sit at the back of the room.

Choice quote:

> **"**
>
> **It's a really helpful question to say, what is the highest use of this time? What is our deepest need as a team? What are the different needs of the people who don't know anybody or are remote versus the people who see each other every day in the office? Where and how do we actually focus connection, and where do we have really complicated conversations where—while post-its are helpful and Miro boards are nice—we can actually get in the room together?"**
>
> **PRIYA PARKER**
> Facilitator, strategic advisor, author

Further reading:

- "What we've learned about gathering well," Charter's September 2023 interview with Priya Parker.
- *The Art of Gathering* by Priya Parker. Order your copy here.
- Parker's "Getting to Purpose Workbook," a resource from her digital course on gathering well.
- "Meeting facilitation toolkit," a resource from Charter Pro.

Watch a recording of the full session here.

09

Navigating a rapidly changing business environment

Leaders are currently being tasked with steering their organizations through multiple large-scale shifts at once, including—but far from limited to—fluctuating economic conditions, the explosion of AI, evolving attitudes toward and expectations of work and working arrangements. This panel highlighted proven strategies for leading effectively while keeping business needs and the talent agenda tightly aligned.

- <u>Cara Allamano</u>, chief people officer, Lattice
- <u>Edith Cooper</u>, co-founder of Medley, board director at PepsiCo and Amazon
- <u>Jelena Djordjevic</u>, vice president of people, Thumbtack
- Moderator: <u>Kevin Delaney</u>, editor-in-chief, Charter
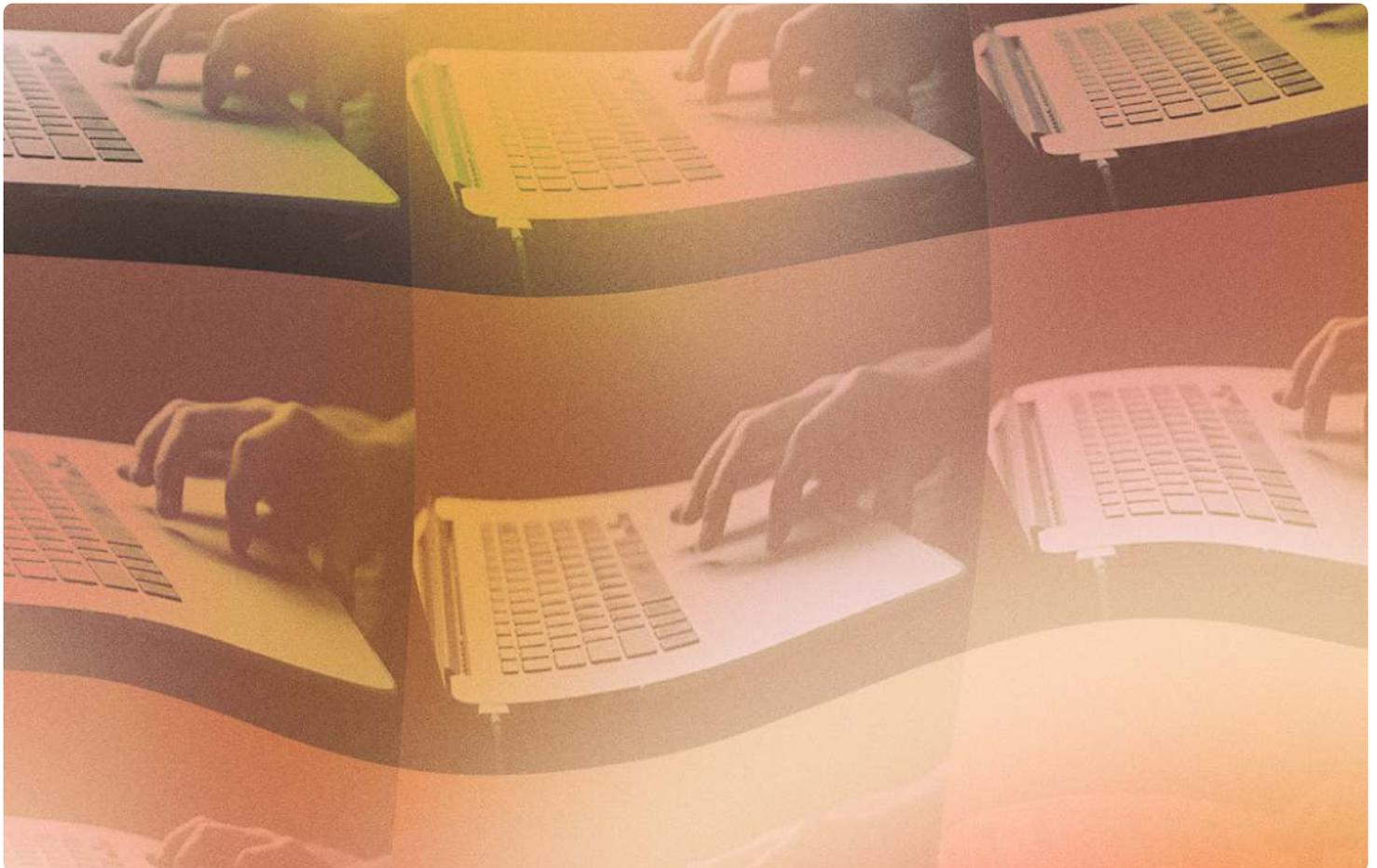
What we've learned so far:

- **The pace and magnitude of change have both increased.** Djordjevic observed that the economic uncertainty of the past few years has been markedly different from previous cycles. "Whereas previously you might've expected a recession every 10 to 12 years, here it's just these unpredictable swings," she said. And as a result of these economic changes, "the power dynamics have fundamentally changed...between an employee and an employer."
- **People leaders have a whole new set of issues in their wheelhouse.** "You have to care about so many things that you might have historically been able to say, 'Not our issue,'" said Cooper. Allamano pointed to the war in Ukraine, the pandemic, and social justice issues. "As a people leader, I was the first person with a potential answer," she said. "When I started in HR, I didn't expect that the core of my being would be someone who's dealing with these existential social threats as well as trying to build an internal community and get to outcomes from a business standpoint."

Tactics and practices:

- **Build flexible decision-making frameworks rooted in first principles.** With a steady barrage of new challenges confronting people leaders, Cooper encouraged organizations to "have a framework that you can apply to different circumstances that allow you to flex," rather than creating rigid and static procedures for each issue. Djordjevic gave the example of the return to office. Two years ago, "companies were very reactive and not reasoning from first principles, but from the labor market," she observed. Then, as the labor market cooled, many organizations reversed their flexibility policies because they were based on recruiting goals rather than company values.
- **Introduce people scorecards to hold people leaders accountable to retention and engagement goals.** Djordjevic challenged attendees to bring the same level of rigor to the management of people outcomes as they do to business results. At Thumbtack, each people leader will soon be evaluated on a people scorecard, which will measure key engagement metrics against the organization's overall goals.

Key considerations:

- **Organizations can't always avoid getting "whipsawed" by the economy, argued Allamano.** That means leaders must be honest and transparent about "accepting risk and also accepting the fallibility of humans and the decisions we're going to make," she said. She encouraged leaders to focus on making decisions based on data, people, and business outcomes, while being transparent to workers about the health of the business and the rationale behind big decisions.

Choice quote:

> **"**
>
> As we think about the people team and the role of the people leader, we say that our purpose is to enable the success of the business through the success of our people. Full stop."
>
> JELENA DJORDJEVIC
> Vice president of people, Thumbtack

Further reading:

- Keeping Culture at the Center, Charter's <u>playbook</u> for preserving culture investments amid economic uncertainty and change.
- HR is the New PR, our <u>mini-guide</u> for Charter Pro members on how people leaders can navigate new issue amid heightened scrutiny on HR decisions like benefits planning, DEI policies, and statements on societal issues.
- "Why A Strong CEO And CPO Partnership Is Critical For A Strategic People Function," Allamo's September 2023 <u>column</u> for Forbes.
- "'How to lead through crisis," Charter's <u>book briefing</u> on *The Prepared Leader* by Erika H. James and Lynn Perry Wooten.

## <u>Watch a recording of the full session here.</u>

10

The workplace AI agenda: Separating hype from reality

With the rapid rise of AI has come an equally rapid rise in uncertainty about the technology's possibilities and pitfalls. As leaders experiment with, and search for answers on, the ways in which AI will shape the talent agenda, a crucial skill will be the ability to differentiate the signal from the noise. Accenture's Chief AI Officer, Lan Guan, discussed how leaders can equip themselves to lead their organizations with clear eyes into an AI future.

- <u>Lan Guan</u>, chief AI officer, Accenture
- Moderator: <u>Edward Felsenthal</u>, executive chairman and former editor-in-chief, TIME
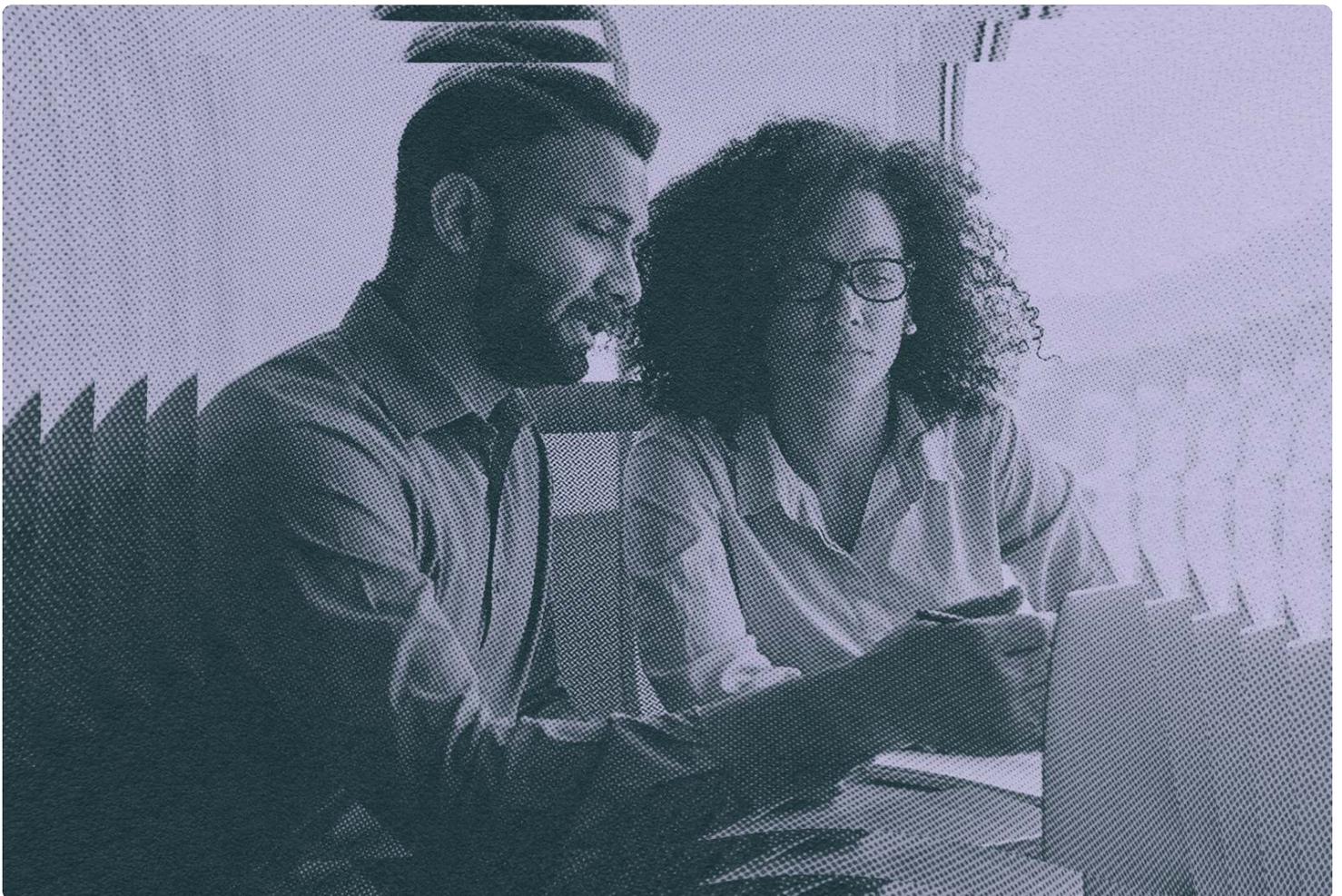
What we've learned so far:

- **Knowledge management is a powerful AI use case.** "The modern enterprise workplace has lots of knowledge"—in the form of documents, images, recordings—"but a lot of this knowledge is actually underutilized," Guan said. She pointed to the work of insurance claim agents as one example of how generative AI is bringing more institutional knowledge to the fore more quickly: "When they're processing a customer claim, now they can use this knowledge-management application to look up regulatory policy" without having to manually wade through the many documents that contain the relevant information.

Tactics and practices:

- **Include your executive team in AI upskilling.** Most CEOs are still in the early stage of understanding how generative AI works, said Guan, who observed that many have uncertainty and fear. "Education, education, education is so important," she said, including at the leadership level.
- **Create clear lanes of responsibility for AI-related decision-making.** Guan enthusiastically endorsed the idea of every company ultimately creating a chief AI officer role. While that may not be feasible for all organizations, especially smaller ones, they can nevertheless appoint one person to drive AI strategy, including "pull[ing] together a lot of the existing capabilities in the technology arena, in the data arena" to ensure that all departments and functions are benefiting from one another's knowledge, she said.

Key considerations:

- **Making AI education widespread should be a high priority.** "The immense power of AI needs to come from democratization, meaning more people, more communities, more business organizations can use AI," Lan said, but many people—including leaders making decisions about AI on behalf of their teams or organizations—continue to see the knowledge barrier to entry as prohibitively high. "We have a lot of work to do to educate the business community and tech community, so that this isn't knowledge that's only limited to a small group of people."

Choice quote:

> "
>
> Machine learning, deep learning, natural-language-processing technology existed before. But the challenge was before generative AI, this kind of technology was not easily accessible by people in the workplace... For the first time, AI is actually making sense to the general public."
>
> LAN GUAN
> Chief AI officer, Accenture

Further reading:

- Accenture's report from March 2023, "A new era of generative AI for everyone."
- Charter's resource library of studies, articles, and tools to increase your AI literacy.
- "How to make AI upskilling fun," our Charter Pro interview with PwC chief learning officer Leah Houde on the company's AI education strategy.

Watch a recording of the full session here.

About Charter

Our mission is to transform every workplace and catalyze a new era of dynamic organizations where all workers thrive. Charter does this by bridging research to practice—giving people the tactical playbook for what work can and should be.

Charter is a next-generation media and insights company. We publish a free email newsletter, original research, and articles about work on TIME.com. Charter Pro is a premium membership that supports owners of the people agenda in executing their highest-value initiatives, quickly. We also host events for workplace decision-makers and work with organizations directly.

charter