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| Introduction



Many organizations have spent the past two years putting AI tools in workers' hands—training them, encouraging them to experiment, and launching pilots. The result for most: encouraging productivity boosts in pockets of the organization, but little to show for it at the company level. They're in the messy middle—greater adoption, more use cases, and still no real transformation.

Charter's Leading with AI Summit 2026—held this year in both New York and San Francisco—focused on how to break out of the messy middle and pull ahead. Executives, economists, researchers, and workplace experts came together to share what has and hasn't worked, and to offer practical frameworks for moving organizations from adoption to transformation while preserving the dignity and value of human work.

This playbook distills the most useful takeaways into practical steps and approaches you can implement today. Here's a preview of a few:

- **Stanford economist Nick Bloom** shared new data on AI's current and future impact on work: 59% of US executives predict AI will have a positive impact on productivity over the next three years, with an average estimated impact of 2.25%. "Given baselines of about 1%, that is almost doubling productivity growth," said Bloom. "[There's] nothing we have seen in the last hundred years of technology that would have that effect."
- **IBM CHRO Nickle LaMoreaux** made headlines when she told summit attendees that IBM is tripling its entry-level hiring—including for software developers—even as anxiety over AI's impact on young workers rises. Her logic: "The companies three to five years from now that are going to be the most successful are those companies that doubled down on entry-level hiring in this environment." The catch, she said, is that those jobs have to be fundamentally redesigned.
- **Ronnie Chatterji, OpenAI's chief economist**, said the defining AI story of 2026 is "capability overhang"—the growing gap between what AI models can do and how most employees are actually using them. Among OpenAI's enterprise customers, a small fraction of power users is driving outsized adoption. He said "the biggest story of AI I think in 2026 is closing that gap."

- **Walmart chief people officer Donna Morris** pushed back on the dominant narrative around AI and jobs. “Let’s be a bit more positive,” she said. “There’s also too much rhetoric about everything going away. What’s it going to create? How can it create opportunities?”
- **Klarna CEO Sebastian Siemiatkowski** has been one of the most-watched executives when it comes to AI’s impact on the workforce. “AI will take jobs. I’m not going to pretend anything else,” he told attendees. But he said average compensation per Klarna employee grew roughly 60% between 2022 and 2025 as the company’s AI rollout accelerated.
- **Helen Lee Kupp, founder and CEO of Women Defining AI**, demonstrated to summit attendees how quickly non-technical workers can now build their own tools. “Building as a skill is so much easier now with AI that the distance between ‘I have a problem’ and ‘I can make that happen, fix it, build it, create it, bring it to life’ has collapsed,” she said.
- **Sal Khan, founder and CEO of Khan Academy**, argued that AI is exposing a crisis in education and credentials that long predates the technology—and said companies can’t wait for schools to catch up. “Higher education is broken,” he said, adding that he is working on a new type of credential intended to serve as an alternative to a degree from an elite university.

In the pages that follow, there are many more tactics and approaches designed to help you turn AI from an abstract concept into a tangible advantage. You’ll find additional context and strategic thinking about how AI is reshaping management structures, the new partnerships emerging between CHROs and CIOs, and much more—as well as links to videos from sessions. We hope you find it useful and join us for the next Charter Leading with AI Summit.

How are you applying AI in your organization? We’d love to hear from you at hi@charterworks.com.

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01

Managing the messy middle: From AI pilots to business impact



Companies have spent the past two years putting AI tools in workers' hands—training them, encouraging them to experiment, and launching large-scale AI pilots. Many have seen encouraging productivity boosts in pockets of their organization, but failed to yet see real ROI.

In New York, [Katy George](#), Microsoft's corporate vice president of workforce transformation, and [Iavor Bojinov](#), associate professor at Harvard Business School, discussed how to move from individual-level experimentation to real business impact. In San Francisco, Anthropic chief people officer [Hannah Pritchett](#) and [Brandon Sammut](#), Zapier's chief people and AI transformation officer, discussed the cultural conditions that enable successful change management and how to give workers clarity about the future version of their jobs.

What we've learned so far

- **Focusing narrowly on productivity and cost-cutting can cause companies to miss some of AI's most valuable benefits.** Those benefits include improvements in quality, growth, speed, and the ability to do new things, explained George. She gave the example of Microsoft's audit team, which she said can do audits faster and with fewer people because of AI. "What's far more valuable is that now when we finish an audit, it also comes with proactive risk identification." The value, she explained, comes from AI adding new capabilities.
- **Workers need a clear vision of what their job becomes after AI changes it.** At Zapier, where AI is used "extensively" in customer support, leaders were upfront about what workers in those roles would do with the time they saved with AI, Sammut said. Today, support employees answer customer tickets faster with the help of AI and can focus on complex issues. But they also do work they weren't previously doing, like identifying sales opportunities and using AI coding tools to fix bugs in Zapier's products themselves, rather than passing them to engineering.

- **Intellectual honesty is critical to success for AI.** Sammut talked about how workers know leaders increasingly want them to find value from AI. The problem: that can lead to an environment where people are launching experiments that either don't help the business or don't scale, even if they look promising. It's important for leaders to encourage and demonstrate intellectual honesty, such as by telling workers about a pilot they built that didn't work, said Sammut. Pritchett told the story of a Claude-based tool her team built to collect peer feedback. "This has totally failed within the organization so far," she said. "The tool we built is excellent [but] the social norms in the organization are not in the right place for the adoption of that tool."

Tactics and practices

- **Create space for experimentation and failure.** "If you're forced to do your regular job and at the same time experiment and learn all of these things, you're just not going to have the time," said Bojinov. He added that when new technologies are introduced, there's an initial dip in productivity. "Make that okay."
- **Select the role that's most important for the business outcome you're targeting, build AI solutions tailored to its needs, and scale it to everyone.** George said her team did "ride-alongs" with sales representatives to understand which parts of their jobs would most benefit from AI. Eventually, they developed a customized version of Copilot, Microsoft's AI tool, to help reps with tasks like preparing for sales calls. Now, the sales team is spending significantly less time on administrative work and much more time interacting with customers, said Bojinov, who co-authored a [case study](#) on the topic.
- **Encourage workers to have a broader vision for their job and use AI to help them accomplish it.** Pritchett told the likely apocryphal story of president John F. Kennedy visiting NASA and asking a janitor what they did there. According to legend, the janitor replied that they were helping send a man to the moon. The lesson? Workers should think about their job as what they're trying to accomplish, not the various processes they carry out every day. Pritchett says this framing has been helpful for the people on her team. "Their job is not to execute a process. Their job is to help customers. Their job...in a people organization [is] to help managers find the right people to join the organization."

Choice quote

“

If you want to get an elephant, you get a baby elephant and you let that grow... You don't get a squirrel and then hope you can feed it enough to turn it into an elephant.”



Iavor Bojinov

Associate professor at Harvard Business School
on the importance of selecting AI pilot projects that have the potential to be deployed at scale

Additional reading

- Charter's [story](#) on the AI challenges HR leaders face
- Our [case study](#) on how Colgate-Palmolive is using AI for innovation
- Our [case study](#) on how ServiceNow is reimagining six of its core roles for AI

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02

Leading the AI journey: The transformation view from the top



AI transformation is challenging for companies of any size. But two of our conversations—with senior people leaders whose combined workforces amount to nearly 2.5 million people—helped bring to life what it’s like to lead AI transformation at massive scale.

In New York, [Nickle LaMoreaux](#), chief human resources officer of IBM, shared the hard-won perspective that comes from a nine-year AI journey at one of the world’s largest technology and consulting firms. In San Francisco, [Donna Morris](#), chief people officer of Walmart, spoke about what “people-led, tech-powered” transformation looks like at a company with 2.1 million associates.

What we’ve learned so far

- **Not all companies are eschewing entry-level hiring.** LaMoreaux said IBM is tripling its entry-level hiring—including for software developers. Her statement was notable amid rising anxiety over the state of jobs for young workers and made headlines in [Bloomberg](#), [Fortune](#), and elsewhere. “The companies three to five years from now that are going to be the most successful are those companies that doubled down on entry-level hiring in this environment,” LaMoreaux said.
- **Technology is a fraction of AI transformation work. The rest is human.** After speaking with HR leaders at more than 300 organizations, LaMoreaux said the change management challenge for humans is the single most consistent thing she’s heard. “Technology is five to 10 percent of it, and everybody just needs to acknowledge this,” she said. The value of human skills such as communication and collaboration is rising, both leaders said. On Walmart’s customer team, for instance, agents are taking on higher-level work: “They’re able to actually use their interpersonal skills at a different level than they ever did before,” Morris said.

- **Even as AI reshapes jobs, Walmart plans to stay big.** Retiring Walmart CEO Doug McMillon has said “our goal is to create the opportunity for everybody to make it to the other side,” and Morris confirmed “we’re going to stay a really big employer,” even if jobs will be reshaped. She offered some main-street realism to counter the Silicon Valley-centric rhetoric in the room. “This is a bubble. This is not reflective of what the entire economy is,” she said. Walmart’s consistent message, Morris said, is “we’re going to continue to be people-led, tech-powered.”

Tactics and practices

- **Rewrite every entry-level job—and make the business case now to keep hiring for them.** With AI able to do much routine work, LaMoreaux encouraged HR leaders to redesign roles and demonstrate the value young workers can bring. “It has to be through totally different jobs,” she said. “You have to convince your business leaders that you need to make this investment.”
- **Your red lines on AI may very well move.** LaMoreaux says it’s hard to set “best practices” across companies, because AI “has to fit your business model—how you actually make money. It has to fit your talent model and it has to fit the culture of your company.” The corollary? That means “red lines” may very well get crossed. Three years ago, LaMoreaux told her HR business partners that coaching was “uniquely human” and AI would never do it. She has since reversed that position.
- **Reward skill-building in your performance system, not just results.** Business results are what you did yesterday; skills are what you’ll do in the future. At IBM, year-end performance ratings are structured across three equal dimensions: business results, skills objectives, and behaviors, each of which are rated “met” or “not met.” An employee who exceeds every business result but fails to meet their skills objectives can still be rated a low performer. “So many people tell me, ‘Oh, we’re a learning organization. We believe in continuous learning,’” LaMoreaux said. “Really? Do you reward for it? Do you recognize people for it?”

Choice quote

“

Let's be a bit more positive. There's also too much rhetoric about everything going away. What's it going to create? How can it create opportunities?”



Donna Morris

Walmart chief people officer

on the conversations happening about AI's impact on work and jobs

Additional reading

- “Walmart’s view into how AI will make jobs broader and more generalist,” a conversation with Morris from 2025
- “IBM’s CHRO on how AI is changing her HR function,” a conversation with LaMoreaux about AI’s impact on HR organizations

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03

Learning, development, and skills for a new era of work—and workers



As AI takes over more routine and technical work, many organizations are rethinking the way they approach skilling and development. In New York, [Heather Stefanski](#), chief learning and development officer at McKinsey, and [Melanie Rosenwasser](#), chief people officer at Dropbox, discussed the most important human capabilities driving performance now—and the way recruitment, development, and performance evaluation have changed to prioritize them. In San Francisco, [Barb Cadigan](#), chief people officer at Affirm, and [Matt Beane](#), a professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara and founder of SkillBench, discussed what these changes mean for entry-level workers, and the actions organizations must take to help new hires increase their impact and develop critical skills.

What we've learned so far

- **Human bonds are fundamental for learning.** “For skill development to really take...you need to bond with other human beings,” said Beane, citing his own research on skill development. When novices work closely with experts, they learn more quickly because they feel more motivated to earn their mentor’s respect. “In general, intelligent automation means an expert can do a lot more with a lot less help,” disrupting the novice-expert bond that is so essential to skill development.
- **Young people are “pretty freaked out,”** said Beane. In his work with graduate students at UCSB, he has noticed two common concerns as students prepare to enter the job market: “One is jobs: ‘How do I get one?’ And the other is, ‘Am I dumbing myself down with all this AI stuff?’”

Tactics and practices

- **Use the interview process to evaluate metacognition capabilities in employees.** For companies to see results from AI, workers need to be able to understand and reshape their own thinking and learning, a process known as metacognition. “In classical behavioral interviewing, you’ll say something like, ‘Tell me about a time when you did this,’” said Rosenwasser. But “when you’re testing for metacognition, it’s... ‘Tell me about your assumptions. Tell me about how those assumptions may have changed over time.’” At McKinsey, recruiters use a video game called “Solve,” which tests applicants’ problem-solving skills in real time using a simulated ecosystem, said Stefanski.
- **Pause for experimentation.** Many workers’ biggest barrier to using AI is a lack of time for experimentation. At Affirm, leaders in the engineering function made time to experiment with a “retool week,” said Cadigan. “We’re intentionally pausing because as we’re flying the plane, we need to be figuring out how to build it and rebuild it.” The company’s 950 engineers paused all non-essential meetings and projects during the retool week to participate in demos and experiment with AI agents. At the end of the week, every engineer submitted something they built.
- **Design workflows to build durable skills, such as awareness, judgment,** collaboration, and communication. At Dropbox, that means creating shared expectations about how workers manage projects while working asynchronously, such as publishing postmortems on failed projects everyone can access. “Not only are we communicating what we’re doing, we’re communicating the ‘why’ behind it—the assumptions that we’ve made, the thinking that went behind our proposal,” said Rosenwasser.

Choice quote

“

Knowledge work is actually becoming judgment work.”



Melanie Rosenwasser

Chief people officer at Dropbox

Additional reading

- “Leading Learning in the AI Era,” Charter’s [playbook](#) on how to rethink learning and development for the age of AI
- “Four ways to redesign entry-level jobs in the age of AI,” our [guide](#) to rethinking roles for early-career workers
- “How AI affects junior workers’ skill development,” our [Q&A](#) with Beane

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04

The best ideas for redefining work with AI



As more companies try to maximize the payoff of AI adoption, best practices are emerging to help companies with scaling experiments and expanding impact. In New York, [Rebecca Hinds](#) presented findings from [The AI Transformation 100](#), a research report on organizational practices from Glean's Work AI Institute, which Hinds leads.

What we've learned so far

- **The “toggle tax” takes a toll on workers.** Research shows that workers can switch between apps and tabs up to 1,200 times per day. “If they become distracted as they toggle, it can take them more than 23 minutes to return back to the original task,” Hinds said. “It starts to feel a lot less like work and a lot more like this digital pinball.” To make AI rollouts more effective—and avoid the toggle tax—Hinds recommended building AI directly into the flow of work.
- **Friction can be a good thing.** Hinds said the most “frictionful” parts of work, such as judgment calls, the creative process, and relationship building, are inefficient for a reason. “It’s that friction that often activates what psychologists call the IKEA effect,” said Hinds. “If we build something—whether that’s an IKEA desk or a newly built idea—we’re more likely to value it and we’re more likely to stick to it.”

Tactics and practices

- **Think of AI as a teammate.** Most workers think of AI as a tool—a calculator, a search engine, or a computer. That’s a mistake, warned Hinds. “AI users who report significant productivity with AI are significantly more likely to use this mental model of a teammate,” she said. “They’re recognizing the technology is imperfect, they’re not giving up after the first prompt, they’re often using the same prompt in different technologies, and they’re pushing the technology to think and act deeper.”

- **Identify AI influencers who work across functions.** “Back AI champions who do smart things,” recommended Hinds. She shared data showing that organizations that activate AI influencers to drive adoption are twice as effective compared to those who only use top-down mandates. The most effective influencers, Hinds said, already work across functions. “Cross-functional workers are uniquely aware of the massive coordination tax of work...[and] they’re uniquely suited to carry context from step to step,” she said.

Choice quote

“

“Don’t automate the soul of work.”



Rebecca Hinds

Head of Glean’s Work AI Institute

citing research that 41% of Y Combinator AI startups are building tools that automate tasks workers would rather keep human

Additional reading

- “How AI is making meetings more dysfunctional,” our [interview](#) with Hinds about her recent book, *Your Best Meeting Ever*
- “Where managers excel at using GenAI,” our [2025 interview](#) with Hinds on the factors that drive AI adoption
- “How Zoom leverages AI evangelists,” a Charter [case study](#) on how the video-conferencing company uses influencers to drive adoption
- “The AI Transformation 100,” a research [report](#) from Glean’s Work AI Institute

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05

The converging c-suite: Why AI demands new leadership partnerships



AI is bringing HR and technology leaders closer together—whether they like it or not. As organizations discover that deploying AI is as much about people, culture, and change management as it is about technology, the traditional lines between the CHRO and chief information officer have begun to blur.

In San Francisco, [Rani Johnson](#), the CIO of Workday, and [Jessica Swank](#), the chief people officer of Box, discussed how the two functions must collaborate on AI transformation, the new skills technology leaders need, and how to move beyond fear toward genuine adoption. In New York, [Mary Alice Vuicic](#), the chief people officer of Thomson Reuters, and [Jonathan Marek](#), the chief operations officer of Guild, explored how to make cross-functional AI governance work in practice, how to measure what actually matters, and why the question of who “owns” AI may be less important than how leaders work together to drive it.

What we’ve learned so far

- **The question isn’t who leads AI transformation—it’s whether the right people are actually working together.** The debate over the “chief work officer” title, and whether CHROs might create more hybrid titles reflecting the human and tech parts of their jobs, drew a consistent response: titles matter less than governance. “I think we all need to be chief work officers, honestly,” Swank said. Marek compared the role to an earlier tech disruption: just as there are no chief internet officers today, the need for a dedicated AI overseer is likely temporary. What matters now is sparking use cases—however your organization makes that happen.
- **AI is changing what it means to be a tech leader—and the shift runs deeper than most realize.** Johnson described a pivotal early lesson at Workday, when the company’s first AI agents sat with the infrastructure team and the results were limited because that team didn’t communicate effectively enough with stakeholders. “The technologist who used to be the king or the queen of IT,” she said, “now that role, that function is becoming more of a commodity.”

- **The constraint on AI adoption isn't technology—it's people.** Vuicic shared Thomson Reuters' experience: "The constraint is not going to be tech. It's going to be talent, people, change management, leadership." That insight shaped the company's decision to co-lead its AI transformation through HR and technology together, with senior enterprise leaders owning it rather than relegating it to the sidelines.

Tactics and practices

- **Build a formal cross-functional governance structure, and give it real teeth.** At Workday, Johnson's team created an AI executive advisory with senior representatives from every business function, each paired with a strategy and operations leader responsible for curating and prioritizing use cases. At Box, Swank described a similar AI transformation office that brings together the CIO, the COO, and HR leaders, paired with an AI governance council covering security, compliance, and privacy and a network of AI "champions" within every function. The specifics vary, but the principle is consistent: AI decisions made in silos don't scale.
- **Prioritize use cases by scoring both the potential for return and readiness.** Both Johnson and Vuicic described explicit scoring mechanisms for AI investments. Johnson's team evaluates use cases against impact (whether that's in terms of agility, quantifiable returns, or risk reduction) and feasibility (how fast and easily it can get measurable adoption). They also report quarterly to the advisory team on results, and have begun "decommissioning things that didn't have some of the higher ROI or just didn't hit the outcomes we thought we'd achieve in our hypothesis." In New York, Vuicic added that Thomson Reuters has a similarly rigorous framework of questions: "What's the business benefit? What's the opportunity for scaling? Can this go big? How big? What's the readiness of the team and the technology?"

- **When AI displaces routine work, give employees two paths: Manage AI or go deeper on humanity.** At Guild, when an AI customer support agent quickly began handling roughly 20% of inbound chats, Marek was direct with his team about what was coming. He mapped two concrete paths for the people whose work was shifting. One track moved employees toward managing AI tools' work. A second focused on deepening the human skills—empathy, hospitality, complex problem-solving—the agent can't replicate. “We're being very forthright and honest about that,” he said.

Choice quote

“

I love a new title more than anybody, and I love the idea of a chief work officer, but the reality is it's a collaboration, and no title can make up for defining the right governance structures.”



Rani Johnson
CIO of Workday

Additional reading

- “The case for a chief work officer,” an interview with Workday’s Athena Karp
- “How to make every manager a product manager,” a look at how more companies are treating work like a product

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06

How AI power users are putting new tools to work



Many AI users have settled into using AI for the same handful of tasks: writing, editing, data analysis, and the like. In New York and San Francisco, we asked three AI power users: Every COO [Brandon Gell](#), [Hilary Gridley](#), former head of core product and AI at WHOOP, and [Helen Lee Kupp](#), founder and CEO of Women Defining AI, to present some of the most innovative and practical ways they use AI at work.

Tactics and practices

- **Use AI to codify your judgment and taste as a manager and then share it with your team.** As a manager, Gridley didn't have time to give feedback on everything her direct reports produced, such as on the emails they sent to executives. So she built a custom GPT that grades communications against the criteria she cares about and explains how to improve them. Direct reports, she said, can get feedback that's "probably 80% as good as what I would do, but they can get it over and over and over and they can get it on demand."
- **Ask AI how to use other AI tools.** Gell encouraged non-technical leaders to start building software with Claude Code. Despite not knowing how to code, Gell built a language-learning app for his own personal use and an AI paralegal for Every. Not sure how to set up Claude Code? Ask Claude. "Every single question that you have about how to use this stuff, just ask it," said Gell.
- **Use AI to help you keep track of and prioritize the tasks on your plate.** Kupp built an AI chief of staff as a Claude Project. She gave it access to her Google Drive, Gmail, and Google Calendar, so it had the necessary context and then gave it custom instructions to help it understand her priorities. Eventually, she took it a step further by using [Gumloop](#) to turn it into an agent that she can communicate with in Slack.

- **Pick a task you do on repeat, write down every step involved, and paste the process into a Claude Code, Claude Project, or a GPT to automate it.** Kupp described how she did this to automate an email campaign in Mailchimp for her nonprofit. She described each step of the process to Claude, brainstormed with it, and then had it produce a product requirements document (PRD). She then fed the PRD to Claude Code and worked with it to automate the campaign's preparation.

Choice quote

“

Building as a skill is so much easier now with AI that the distance between ‘I have a problem’ and ‘I can make that happen, fix it, build it, create it, bring it to life’ has collapsed.”



Helen Kupp

Founder and CEO of Women Defining AI

Additional reading

- “Five ‘aha’ ways AI can unlock solutions to our biggest work problems,” a [set of ideas](#) from Kupp
- “Three ways of using genAI you have to try at work tomorrow”—more [practical tactics](#) from Kupp
- Charter regularly shares AI tips of the week—read more [here](#).

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07

Measuring AI's real impact on jobs and the economy

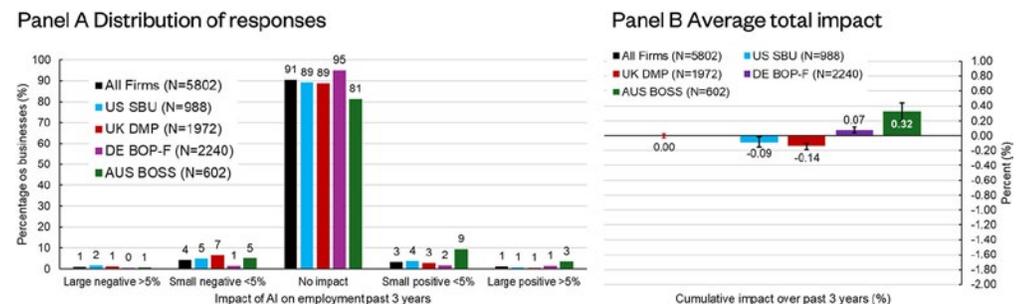


Data about AI adoption and its impact on productivity and employment can be hard to follow. In San Francisco, Stanford University professor [Nick Bloom](#) shared new data on the technology's current and future impact—what Bloom called a “data nerd fest.” Here are our top takeaways from Bloom's presentation:

What we've learned so far

- While AI adoption rates are high, firms have yet to see measurable impacts on productivity or employment. Some 72% of US executives say they personally use AI at work, and 78% say their firms have adopted AI technology. When asked about AI's impact on work over the past three years, however, nine out of 10 US executives said that AI has had no impact on either productivity or employment.

Execs reported no impact of AI on **employment** over past 3 years

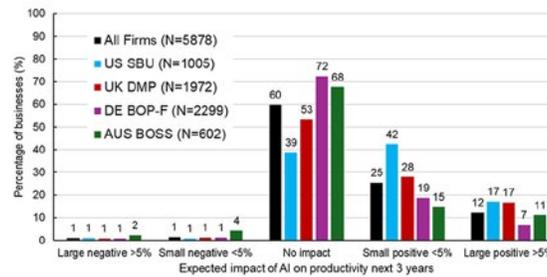


Source: Nick Bloom, Stanford University. For more on the methodology and findings, see [here](#).

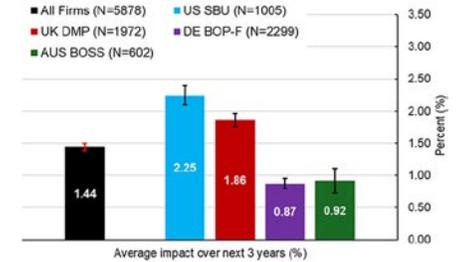
- Leaders predict huge increases in productivity from AI in the next three years.** When researchers prompted leaders to make predictions about the future, their answers changed dramatically. Some 59% of US executives say AI will have a positive impact on productivity, with an average estimated impact of 2.25%. “Given baselines of about 1%, that is almost doubling productivity growth. That is just an enormous impact,” said Bloom. “[There’s] nothing we have seen in the last hundred years of technology that would have that effect.”

Execs forecasted huge impacts on productivity in next 3 years

Panel A Distribution of responses



Panel B Average total impact

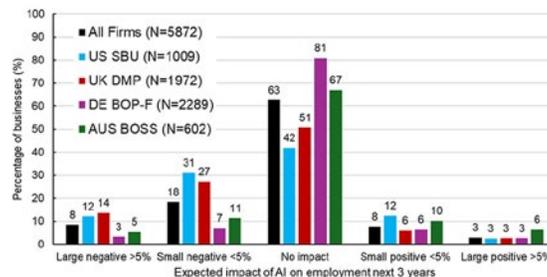


Source: Nick Bloom, Stanford University. For more on the methodology and findings, see [here](#).

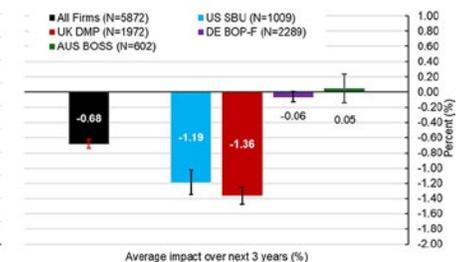
- AI adoption could lead existing firms to cut two million jobs.** When asked about employment at their firms in the next three years, 43% of US executives predicted AI will have a negative impact, with an average total employment decline of 1.2%. With 180 million total working Americans, that could mean two million fewer workers. That doesn’t mean total employment will decline by 2 million jobs, said Bloom. The data only cover existing firms, and AI could spur the creation of new companies and new jobs to blunt the effects of other job losses.

Execs forecast big negatives on employment in their firms in the next 3 years

Panel A Distribution of responses



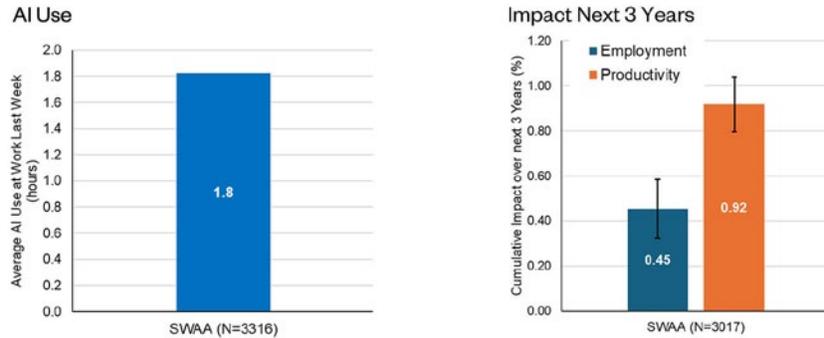
Panel B Average total impact



Source: Nick Bloom, Stanford University. For more on the methodology and findings, see [here](#).

- Compared to executives, employees are less likely to say AI will have a positive impact on productivity but more likely to say AI will have a positive effect on employment. “I suspect execs are probably more correct,” said Bloom. “Execs just see the bigger, longer-run picture.”

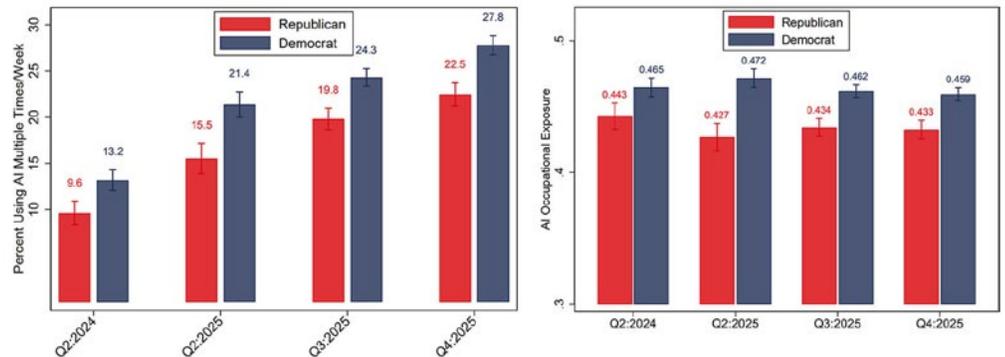
Employees similar usage (1.8 hours a week), but more optimistic on employment (positive impact), much less optimistic on productivity



Source: Nick Bloom, Stanford University. For more on the methodology and findings, see [here](#).

- **AI adoption differs along partisan lines.** On average, AI adoption has been higher among registered Democrats than among registered Republicans, according to an analysis by Bloom and colleagues. In the fourth quarter of 2025, 27.8% of Democrats said they use AI multiple times per week, compared to 22.5% of Republicans. AI occupational exposure is also higher among Democrats than Republicans, at 0.5% and 0.4%, respectively.

This AI use has political differences in adoption and exposure



Source: Nick Bloom, Stanford University. For more on the methodology and findings, see [here](#).

Choice quote

“

[There's] nothing we have seen in the last hundred years of technology that would have that effect.”



Nick Bloom

Professor of economics at Stanford University

Additional reading

- “The Politics of AI,” an NBER [working paper](#) by Bloom and Christos Makridis
- “Firm Data on AI,” an NBER [working paper](#) by Bloom and colleagues

▶ WATCH A RECORDING OF BLOOM IN SAN FRANCISCO.

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08

How org charts and management are changing in the AI age



Most conversations about AI focus on what it means for individual contributors. At both of our summits, we hosted discussions about what's happening one level up, examining how organizations are managed and structured. In New York, Boston Consulting Group expert partner and director [Gabriella Rosen Kellerman](#) and Indeed head of AI innovation [Hannah Calhoon](#) discussed the evolving role of managers, from mitigating the problem of workslop to setting a long-term vision for their team. In San Francisco, Airbnb global head of people and culture [Iain Roberts](#) and LinkedIn chief economic opportunity officer [Aneesh Raman](#) discussed how AI is shifting the structure and shape of organizations and jobs.

What we've learned so far

- **Managers have to help their team understand the difference between good and bad AI-generated work**, said Kellerman, who helped coin the term "[workslop](#)." Over the course of a week, create two folders—one for AI-assisted work that impressed you, and one for AI-assisted work that you didn't like—and share the examples with your team. Some of this will come down to personal preference, she said: "You're their manager and ultimately the work products are for you."
- **Jobs are blurring across traditional boundaries.** Raman talked about how LinkedIn has created a new "full-stack builder" role that blurs the boundaries between a software engineer, a product manager, and a designer to more quickly move from an idea to a working feature. He said HR teams should similarly start merging some of their roles—like learning and development, HR business partner, and talent acquisition—into a job that looks more like a school guidance counselor. "The same person [who] hires you should know about you your whole time at that company and know when you should go to different projects that cross functional lines," he said. "Blur lines—that's the biggest thing I think people can start doing now."

- **The manager’s job should shift to planning and vision-setting.** Individual contributors are increasingly taking on responsibilities that resemble those of managers, like overseeing AI agents that handle more of the work. Kellerman argued managers should spend more time on what she called “prospection,” or imagining and planning for the future. That involves following social, political, and technological trends, and translating them into a clear direction. “The manager has to be ahead of the team in that vision, and that takes a lot of time and planning,” Kellerman said.

Tactics and practices

- **Track a “portfolio of metrics” to prevent workslop.** Indeed tracks how fast their engineers write code, but they also track things like how often people have to go back and revise code, said Calhoon. In marketing, the company looks at the cost and speed of getting a campaign to market, but it also tracks performance metrics, like how many clicks it drove. Both help ensure quality remains high: “If you focus just on that acceleration and productivity win, you create a system that will dump tons and tons and tons of workslop into everybody else’s experience in a way that’s really bad for the business,” said Calhoon.
- **Aim for 10x transformation, not 10% efficiency gains.** Airbnb’s Roberts said the biggest mistake organizations are making is chasing incremental productivity improvements from AI when the real opportunity is reinvention. “Disruption is going to come from those people [who] are actually disrupting our categories.”
- **If you’re earlier in your AI journey, don’t rush to capture productivity gains from your first adopters.** The workers who are seeing the biggest productivity boosts are those “exploring at the edges” and discovering new ways to get their work done, explained Calhoon. She warned that handing them heavier workloads effectively punishes them for innovating, which will lead them to stop. She also said companies shouldn’t raise general productivity expectations on workers until they have given them reliable tools and training and warned about setting expectations too high. “If we move too quickly, what we’re actually going to do is create a lot of frustration and a lot of anxiety in our workforce.”

Choice quote

“

If you turn around and hand [early adopters] 30% more work because they came up with a clever way to save time, it is a punishment and not a reward. They're going to stop and it's going to suck for you.”



Hannah Calhoon
Head of AI innovation at Indeed

Additional reading

- Our [piece](#) about the problem of AI workslop
- Our [interview](#) with Wharton's Ethan Mollick about how AI can make managers and expertise more valuable
- Our [interview](#) with Harvard's Ronald Heifetz about what managers need to do differently because of AI
- Our [interview](#) with Kellerman about how to talk about your organization's AI plans

▶ WATCH OUR CONVERSATION WITH KELLERMAN AND CALHOON IN NEW YORK.

▶ WATCH OUR CONVERSATION WITH ROBERTS AND RAMAN IN SAN FRANCISCO.

09

A conversation with OpenAI's chief economist



Ronnie Chatterji is OpenAI's first chief economist, offering him direct insight into how more than a million businesses are actually using AI. A former professor at Duke University and chief economist of the Commerce Department, Chatterji discussed what his team's research reveals about enterprise and consumer adoption patterns, the critical gap between an organization's most intensive AI users and everyone else, and what leaders can do to close it.

What we've learned so far

- **AI is generating value that doesn't show up in economic statistics.** Chatterji's team found that more than three-quarters of consumer messages to ChatGPT—or prompts—fall into just three categories: seeking information, practical guidance, and writing. That seemed underwhelming to observers expecting GDP-moving breakthroughs, but Chatterji sees it differently. Time saved planning a vacation or helping kids with activities represents real value that never registers in economic data. “That is probably the hidden productivity story of ChatGPT,” he said.
- **The defining AI story of 2026 is “capability overhang”—the gap between what models can do and how most people are actually using them.** Among OpenAI's business customers, average messaging volume with its AI tools grew about 30% last year. But the growth is driven by the 95th percentile worker, who sends far more messages and uses far more compute-intensive features, like data analysis, than the median user. This “capability overhang,” or gap between potential and current use, Chatterji said, means the “biggest story of AI I think in 2026 is closing that gap.”

Tactics and practices

- **Choose AI projects that are neither too small to scale nor too large to succeed.** Chatterji has observed a consistent pattern: small pilots can't scale, while overly ambitious projects rarely show results. The middle ground—significant problems that matter to the business but are appropriately scoped—tends to reap the most rewards. He pointed to John Deere's work on tractor part inventory and supply chains—not glamorous, but a real operational issue AI could genuinely improve.
- **Treat AI as a change management project driven by senior leadership—not a technology deployment handed off to enthusiasts.** When Chatterji joins calls with businesses about OpenAI's tools, he estimates the probability of success by looking at the seniority of who's on the call. Good change management, he said, means what it always has—stating clear objectives, deciding what to measure, bringing people along, tracking milestones, and pivoting when something isn't working.
- **Find the AI workflows your power users have built—and ask which parts of the organization they aren't reaching yet.** Chatterji looks at specific AI-enabled processes that are already working, and maps which functions touch them and which don't. "If someone set up a really good market research workflow or a due diligence workflow, I try to figure out, okay, which other parts of the org is it touching and who should it be touching? How come legal's not in this conversation or the core fin[ancial] team isn't in this conversation?" Successful workflows that stay siloed are a missed opportunity—and often a sign of change management gaps.
- **Stop treating time saved as the end goal.** Many organizations measure hours saved from AI and then find they can't translate that into meaningful business value. "You have to decide what you want to measure," he said. "You should tell us what your business objectives are and how AI can achieve those. If those aren't well articulated, it's going to be really, really hard."

Choice quote

“

Dropping AI in like a SaaS software solution from like five years ago is not going to have that same kind of impact. That’s the biggest mistake organizations make—not bringing the humans along.”



Ronnie Chatterji

Chief economist, OpenAI

on the most common mistake organizations make when deploying AI

Additional reading

- “Ending the capability overhang,” OpenAI’s [report](#) about the gap between how AI is being used and what it’s capable of doing
- A [conversation](#) between Chatterji and MIT Sloan Management Review’s podcast “Me, Myself, and AI”
- “What AI means for productivity and inequality,” Charter’s [conversation](#) with [Erik Brynjolfsson](#) of the Stanford Digital Economy Lab
- “The state of enterprise AI,” OpenAI’s [report](#) on how companies are using AI and turning experimentation into productivity

▶ WATCH OUR CONVERSATION WITH CHATTERJI IN NEW YORK.

10

How AI agents are changing work



In San Francisco, [Amjad Masad](#), CEO of Replit, discussed how advances in AI coding are reshaping domains beyond software engineering and what agents mean for team size, hiring, and the skills that matter most.

What we've learned so far

- **Progress in AI coding has implications for jobs beyond software engineering.** AI agents have gotten particularly good at coding, in part because it's a domain where it's easier to define what the right outcome is. But it turns out that "coding has bearing not just on creating software. It actually can interact with the world in many ways," said Masad, giving the example of an AI model writing Python code to edit an Excel file. He also pointed to a new feature Replit released that allows users to make animated videos. "That's code," he explained. "The utility of code is a lot larger than software, and I think it's going to have a bigger and bigger impact on other jobs."
- **The role of the "software engineer" may eventually go away.** Masad said there are specialists in software engineering who will continue to be valuable for the next few years. "But eventually you could see AI models just getting better at every aspect of engineering," he said. "In the fullness of time, I do think that software engineering as a role sort of disappears and what you have is generalist product people, problem solvers, or systems people."
- **AI tools can significantly increase what one person can do.** Masad told the story of an employee on the company's deal desk, which is part of the sales team, who had never coded before. The employee used Replit to build an application that automates the process of approving deal quotes, allowing sales reps to largely self-serve. Masad said at Replit's scale, they would typically need five people for the deal desk but instead, they have just this one person. "I think we can double our revenue again without hiring any more deal desk people...and the important part [is] she's having a blast and she's enormously more valuable [to] us because she built this."

Tactics and practices

- **Look for employees who can be far more productive with AI tools.** Masad said Replit is “hiring as many people as we can as fast as we can in many areas of the business.” But it's looking for people who “can be 10x more productive” with the latest AI tools. “It becomes more of a skills question and that is the constraint on how many people you want to hire.”

Choice quote

“

When the execution is going to zero—when it's free, when it's as fast as possible—where's the bottleneck? It goes to ideas...so you need to be very generative.”



Amjad Masad
CEO of Replit
on working with AI

Additional reading

- Charter's [interview](#) with Masad about what it's like to have AI coworkers
- Our [take](#) on what a viral essay about AI and jobs got right—and what it missed
- Our [interview](#) with Code.org founder and chairman Hadi Partovi about the future of software engineering
- Our [story](#) on whether AI will make jobs less specialized
- Our [piece](#) about how companies can use AI to break down organizational silos

▶ WATCH OUR CONVERSATION WITH MASAD IN SAN FRANCISCO.

11

What top journalists are hearing about AI's impact



Journalists who cover AI are also grappling with how to use AI tools themselves—and they have a distinctly clear-eyed view of both the hype and the genuine capability. In New York, [Alyson Shontell](#), editor-in-chief and chief content officer of Fortune, and [Gina Chua](#), executive editor-at-large at Semafor and executive director of the Tow-Knight Center for Journalism Futures at CUNY, shared what they're hearing from top executives and how they're thinking about AI's impact on content and work. In San Francisco, [Jessica Lessin](#), founder, editor-in-chief, and CEO of The Information, and [Casey Newton](#), founder and editor of Platformer and co-host of the podcast Hard Fork, discussed the state of AI adoption, what the most successful companies are actually doing, and what their own hands-on experiences with the tools have revealed.

What we've learned so far

- **We are simultaneously overhyping AI and nowhere near understanding what the technology can actually do.** Chua captured the paradox: yes, AI is “not as good as you think in many respects,” but it is also “so much better than you know” in ways most organizations haven't grasped.
- **AI is a language expert, not a fact expert—and using it well requires understanding that distinction.** Chua was blunt: “It's a large language model. It's not a large fact model. It sucks at facts. It's very, very good at language.” Used as an editing companion, a synthesis tool, or a pattern-finder across large bodies of text, she said it is “a better editor than 60%, 70% of the human editors I've worked with.” The key discipline is matching the tool to what it's actually good at.
- **Displacement is real and already visible.** Newton was direct about what he's seen firsthand: “I live with a software engineer. I saw how much code he used to write. I see how much code he writes today. It's zero.” At the same time, Lessin described the current atmosphere among AI company leaders as “paranoid exuberance”—people making the bull case while looking over their shoulders.

- **For many tech founders, shrinking to a smaller team may feel like a gain, not a loss.** Newton observed that “most Silicon Valley entrepreneurs didn’t necessarily ever want to be leading a large team. They all are very nostalgic for the time when it was like eight people who fit in a room” and he believes “spiritually they are always trying to get back to eight people in a room.” As AI makes smaller teams feasible, Newton predicted more tech CEOs might work to move back toward that size—a longing that, as he put it, has “a lot of dire implications” for workers at larger tech companies.

Tactics and practices

- **Put AI tools in the hands of your most experienced people first, not your newest.** At Fortune, Shontell said she is “having really only senior editors experimenting with it” and would not put it in the hands of someone who’s still learning on the job. The reason: experienced people have the domain depth to catch when something “isn’t quite right” or is missing context. Junior workers, still building their own judgment, may not recognize when outputs are subtly wrong.
- **Think in three tiers of AI use—efficiency, scalability, and conceptual work—and invest in all three.** Chua laid out a practical framework: AI for efficiency (doing existing tasks faster and cheaper), AI for scalability (doing more of what you already do), and AI for conceptual work (doing things you could never have resourced before). That third tier—which she described as “what could you do if you had an army of interns”—is where the real untapped value lies. At Semafor, for example, agents read internal news budgets and surface cross-desk connections no one would have caught manually.
- **Be transparent about how you’re using AI, and create a culture where people share what works and doesn’t.** Lessin found that colleagues at The Information would privately share great AI experiences but not post them in Slack, uncertain how it might be perceived. “Being open and clear about how you’re using it—and then sharing what works and doesn’t—is a really good place to be right now,” she said.

- **Favor bottom-up adoption over top-down mandates.** CEOs who assemble everyone and declare that AI must be used for everything tend to get poor results. The better model: empower people to experiment and bring their discoveries into the open. Newton mentioned a non-technical project manager who used Claude Code to build prototypes and started bringing them into meetings, but then got in trouble for spending \$600 on the tool. “I don’t think that’s probably going to work for that company,” Newton observed. The message: empower experimentation, and fund it.

Choice quote

“

The mood to me is this paranoid exuberance. It’s so weird and interesting...you’ll be talking to someone and they’re making the bull case and then they’re looking over their shoulder because they’re one release away from being wiped out of the business.”



Jessica Lessin

Founder, CEO, and editor-in-chief of *The Information about Silicon Valley at the moment*

Additional reading

- A [conversation](#) with Chua about how AI is reshaping the news industry, from NiemanReports
- Listen to Newton's "Hard Fork" [podcast episode](#) with University of Virginia economist Anton Korinek about AI's impact on the labor market

▶ WATCH OUR CONVERSATION WITH CHUA AND SHONTELL IN NEW YORK.

▶ WATCH OUR CONVERSATION WITH LESSIN AND NEWTON IN SAN FRANCISCO.

12

From the frontier: Lessons from Klarna's ambitious AI rollout



Sebastian Siemiatkowski, co-founder and CEO of Klarna, has been one of the most vocal—and most scrutinized—executives on the subject of AI and the workforce. Since 2022, Klarna has been on the bleeding edge of AI adoption, rolling out an AI agent for customer support it says handles the equivalent work of 850 human agents. The company has seen a roughly 50% workforce reduction through attrition since 2022, Siemiatkowski told summit attendees in New York. In his interview, he shared the company's evolving approach to customer service, how he talked with his workforce about AI's impact on jobs, and what he believes every leader needs to understand about AI now.

What we've learned so far

- **Being radically transparent about AI's impact on jobs—and pairing that with honesty about potential financial benefits—can reduce potential resistance.** Siemiatkowski didn't soften the message to his workforce. "AI will take jobs. I'm not going to pretend anything else," he told summit attendees. At the same time, he added, "my employees know that they're driving efficiencies, but they are also participating in getting the benefit of that." Average compensation per employee increased roughly 60% between 2022 and 2025, while Klarna's revenue per employee rose from roughly \$300,000 to more than \$1 million.
- **As AI democratizes coding, the pendulum in hiring may swing back toward business-oriented people.** A majority of Klarna's staff at one point was engineers. But Siemiatkowski described a surprising reversal: because AI makes coding accessible to non-engineers, the constraint is no longer technical skill. It's business judgment and customer understanding. Of most value right now, he says, is the "business person that actually understands the customer, that loves speaking to the customer, that enjoys that conversation and then [can think] about using AI to bring more value to our customers."

- **Human contact may become a premium product—and a competitive differentiator.** Klarna’s AI customer service cut average resolution time from 12 minutes to two minutes. But over time, Siemiatkowski came to see human service as a distinct, higher-value offering. “AI customer support will be the cheap stuff. It will be the one that everyone gets,” he said. “But then there will be the VIP one, which is like, ‘I got to talk to human.’” Today, Klarna is experimenting with having its own most enthusiastic customers work as part-time service agents.

Tactics and practices

- **Lead by example, using AI tools visibly in front of your team to demonstrate what’s possible.** Siemiatkowski described interrupting an internal pricing presentation to build an interactive data dashboard on the spot—taking the team’s Google Sheet, dropping it into the AI coding tool Cursor, and having a working visualization ready while they were still presenting. That both makes the change real and concrete for people while showing that leaders are active participants. “The one thing I would encourage everyone to do is to download Cursor,” Siemiatkowski said. “If you haven’t done that, you will not fully appreciate the change that we’re going to go through.”

Choice quote

“

It’s always been important, but even more important is to lead by example right now...Show people what’s possible. Show them how to use these tools, empower them to use these tools and learn yourself so you truly understand.”



Sebastian Siemiatkowski

Co-founder and CEO of Klarna

on the most important thing leaders can do right now

Additional reading

- “In Davos, CEOs talk of AI—and high job losses,” our [collection](#) of the charts you need to see from the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland
- “How AI is unlocking remote work for blue-collar workers,” a [conversation](#) with Prithwiraj Choudhury about how more non-office workers could work remotely

▶ WATCH OUR CONVERSATION WITH SIEMIATKOWSKI IN NEW YORK.

13

Beyond reskilling: What companies can do about AI displacement



Sal Khan founded Khan Academy in 2008 after tutoring his cousins remotely—and realizing that technology could deliver personalized, one-on-one instruction at scale. Since then, Khan Academy has become one of the world's largest free educational platforms, with lessons in everything from pre-K reading to college-level calculus.

Over the past two years, Khan has become one of the most prominent voices on AI's implications for education and work. Khanmigo, the nonprofit's AI-powered tutor and teaching assistant, is being used this school year by students in classrooms in the US, India, Brazil, and the Philippines. His 2024 book, *Brave New Words*, argued that AI could finally deliver the "two-sigma" benefit of one-on-one tutoring to every student.

Speaking at the New York summit, Khan shared how AI is reshaping education, what that means for the next generation of workers, and his own yet-to-be-unveiled project for creating a new education experience of the same caliber as an elite university college or graduate degree.

What we've learned so far

- **“Higher education is broken,”** said Khan. He argued that economic opportunity is still tied to a small number of elite universities that remain out of reach for most due to selective admissions policies and rising tuition. Making matters worse, many students graduate from these schools saddled with debt and lacking the skills to thrive in the workplace, Khan said. To address the need for accessible, effective skills-based training, Khan said he is working on developing a new type of credential that would effectively serve as an alternative to an undergraduate or graduate degree from a top university.
- **Automation is threatening millions of workers' livelihoods,** warned Khan. He pointed to the example of call center employees and Uber drivers, who are already seeing the impact of automated customer-support agents and driverless car services. Khan predicted that mass automation could happen in call centers within three years, and among drivers within five to 10 years.

- **AI alone isn't as effective at teaching most people without human accompaniment.** “There’s maybe 10% of kids that if you just give them the [AI] tool, they can start running with it,” said Khan. “I would say even for them, they’re learning the material, but even they’re not getting the socialization and the mentorship and all that. But for the other 90% of students, they really do need mentorship. They need adults to hold them accountable to engage with them.”

Tactics and practices

- **Invest in training that will benefit workers even when they leave your company.** Khan argued that organizations benefiting from AI adoption should dedicate 1% of their profits to retrain workers affected by job displacement, an idea he introduced in a [New York Times op-ed](#). The problem with most programs now is that “it’s done in these silos,” he said. “Google might do a bunch of investment and you get a Google certification and then you go to Microsoft and they could care less about that.” Instead, companies should focus on skills and certifications that will be valuable to workers’ future employers, too.
- **Human connection remains at the center of learning.** Even as Khan Academy rolls out new AI-powered learning tools, Khan emphasized there’s no substitute for a great human mentor. “If I had to pick between [an] amazing teacher and amazing technology for my own kids, I’d pick [an] amazing teacher every time,” he said.
- **Focus on human skills.** When asked for his advice about what young people should study to thrive in an AI world, Khan recommended focusing on “the human skills and any other signals that show that you can write well, think well, work hard,” he said. That includes capabilities like analytical thinking, communication, collaboration, and salesmanship.

Choice quote

“

Just imagine something that, as opposed to \$400,000, costs \$5,000, and anyone who can do it gets in.”



Sal Khan

Founder and CEO of Khan Academy
about the new credential he's working on

Additional reading

- “A 1 Percent Solution to the Looming AI Job Apocalypse,” Khan’s December [op-ed](#) in The New York Times
- “The founder of Khan Academy wants to create an alternative to Harvard or Stanford,” Charter and The San Francisco Standard’s [coverage](#) of Khan’s remarks
- “Sal Khan on the critical human skills for an AI age,” Charter’s 2024 [interview](#) with Khan

▶ WATCH OUR CONVERSATION WITH KHAN IN SAN FRANCISCO.

14

About Charter



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

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Reach out to us at hi@charterworks.com