# HR champions generative AI

*Embrace experimentation, empower people*

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# Experts
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### David Bowin

Senior Director of HCM Cloud Strategy,
HCM Global Partner Development,
Oracle Cloud Applications Development
linkedin.com/in/david-bowin-b23a6/
david.bowin@oracle.com

David's career in enterprise business solutions started with Accenture, where as senior manager he focused on developing and implementing a full spectrum of solutions for high tech and consumer packaged goods customers. David then joined PeopleSoft as they transitioned from an HCM-only solution provider to the delivery of a full ERP suite. In his current role with the Oracle Cloud Applications Development team, David is focused on enabling customers and partners as they innovate and realize value in their adoption of Oracle Cloud Applications and technology.

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### Andi Britt

Senior Partner,
Talent Transformation Leader,
IBM Consulting
linkedin.com/in/andi-britt-1718b62/
andi.britt@uk.ibm.com

Andi leads IBM's United Kingdom and Ireland (UKI) Talent Transformation Service Line, providing talent management, digital HR, generative AI, and organizational change management advisory services for clients. Andi specializes in HR transformation and business change and has worked with IBM's largest global clients in public and private sectors on HR outsourcing, Cloud SaaS, ERP, and enterprise-wide change management engagements. He is a thought leader on generative AI, automation, and skills transformation.

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### Robert Enright

Associate Partner,
AI-Powered HR Transformation,
IBM Consulting
linkedin.com/in/robertenright/
roberten@uk.ibm.com

Robert is a visionary HR strategist with two decades in HR and technology consulting, pioneering transformative HR practices for large-scale enterprises. With an unwavering commitment to innovation, he enhances technology's role in empowering individuals, shaping a future of work beneficial to both employees and employers, achieving genuine competitive advantage through technology.

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### Dr. Surlina Yin

AI Technologist, HCM Domain
Oracle
linkedin.com/in/surlinayin/
surlina.s.yin@oracle.com

Dr. Surlina Yin, a Senior Solution Architect in the Cloud Development HCM Center of Excellence, started her Oracle career in 2000. She holds two US patents, with two pending applications. Surlina specializes in helping customers harness the full potential of their data for strategic transformations. With a doctorate in business administration, she has extensive global experience, particularly in human resources.

# Key takeaways

*Three-quarters of CEOs (75%) say competitive advantage depends on generative AI.[1]*

■ **Generative AI presents an opportunity for HR to be the trailblazer for change.**

In recent IBM IBV research, a staggering 95% of respondents believe generative AI will be a game-changer for their business.[2] Three-quarters of CEOs (75%) expect that the enterprise with the most advanced generative AI will win, and they say competitive advantage depends upon it.[3]

■ **The lack of a cross-enterprise generative AI strategy can hurt enterprises financially.**

Organizations that manage how employees use generative AI more formally say their employee experience investments yield returns that are 46% higher than their peers.[4] Yet 60% of organizations do not have a framework for assessing the impact of generative AI on their current workforce.[5]

■ **To drive a seamless "people" experience, HR needs to be more tech savvy.**

HR needs to drive functional requirements for tech with an entrepreneurial lens, all while following through on driving adoption. It should strive to influence tech investments and broader data strategies in ways that maximize effectiveness and unite teams across functions and the partner ecosystem.

Generative AI is already radically impacting the HR function, enabling automated data processing, freeing up employees for higher-value endeavors, and more.

Advantages are proliferating—along with disruption. But one significant opportunity has too often gone untapped: *how HR can serve as the primary champion and driver of generative AI across the enterprise.*

While many departments huddle in silos, HR's influence touches every part of an organization and every person on the team. HR can reshape the performance culture of the organization, encouraging today's workforce to embrace tomorrow's skills. HR must play its part in creating the innovative, inquisitive, rapid experimentation culture in which generative AI can thrive—as well as the employees who embrace it.

AI-fueled change is occurring at an exponential rate. OpenAI's ChatGPT has been the fastest-growing consumer application in history, with 100 million monthly active users just two months after it launched. (Instagram took two and a half years to reach this milestone.)[6] Enterprise obsession with generative AI has been similarly intense, and how people work is undergoing a dramatic transformation.

Research conducted by the IBM Institute for Business Value (IBM IBV) indicates that 40% of the global workforce will need to reskill due to implementing AI and automation over the next three years.[7] This translates to 1.4 billion of the planet's 3.4 billion working population, according to World Bank statistics.[8] The tidal wave of reskilling, while challenging, can unleash enormous changes in how work gets done: 87% of global executives surveyed by the IBM IBV expect job roles to be augmented by generative AI.[9]

More than 60% of executives say generative AI will disrupt how their organization designs experiences—and personalization is at the core of this evolution.[10] In this report, we address the top 10 "calls to action" for how HR can help organizations reinvent the employee experience to keep up with a shifting environment. Part one explores how HR can facilitate a generative AI-empowered culture—influencing the multitude of disparate systems and business processes that support organizational culture. In part two, we'll demonstrate how HR can serve as strategic advisor in developing a people-centric operating model that best positions the enterprise for the future.

*In this report, we address the top 10 "calls to action" for how HR can help organizations reinvent the employee experience to keep up with a shifting environment.*

# How HR can create a generative AI culture

Generative AI presents a huge opportunity on multiple fronts across organizations. In recent IBM IBV research, a staggering 95% of respondents believe generative AI will be a game-changer for their business.[11]

Three-quarters of CEOs (75%) expect that the enterprise with the most advanced generative AI will win, and they say competitive advantage depends upon it.[12] But it's not only an opportunity for the enterprise. *It's an opportunity for HR as a corporate function to lead.*

Consider this sobering fact: 60% of executives view HR as a purely administrative function.[13] At the same time, 60% of organizations do *not* have a framework for assessing the impact of generative AI on their current workforce.[14] This strategy vacuum can disadvantage enterprises financially: organizations that manage how employees use generative AI more formally say their employee experience investments yield returns that are 46% higher than their peers.[15]

So how can HR transcend its administrative reputation and fill the strategic gap? Here are 10 key elements—and supporting high-level technical tips—to help create a generative-AI-empowered culture spanning communication, recruiting, ecosystems, and management practices. Ultimately, these activities are all important; they are not listed in sequential order for action.
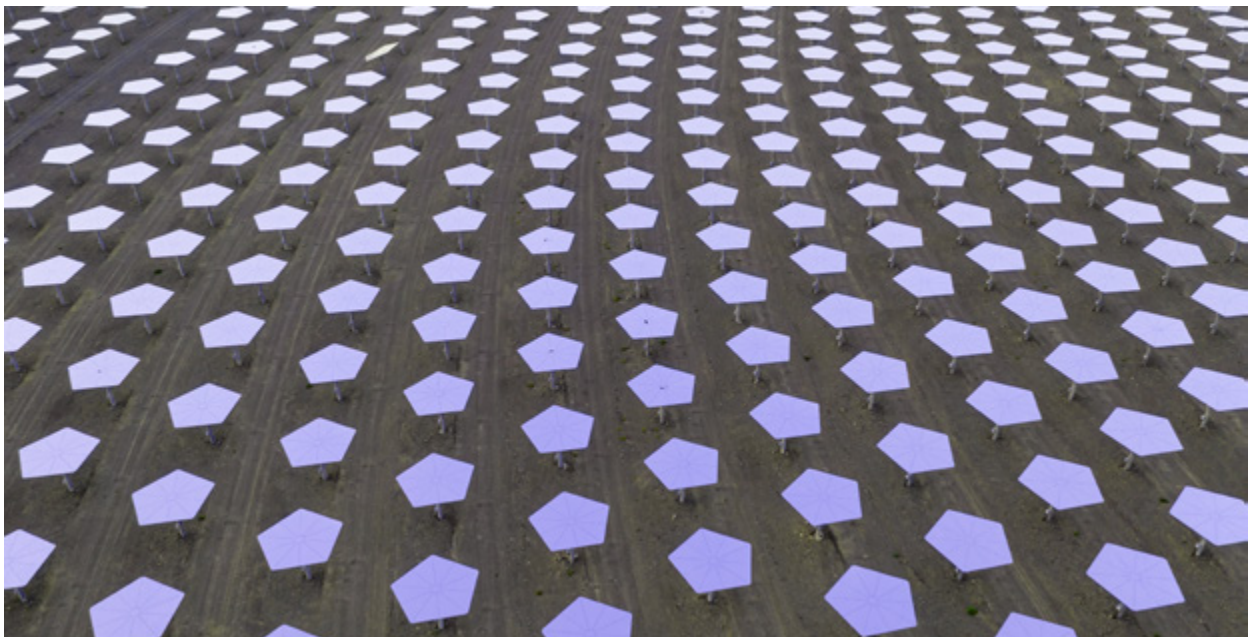
## 1   Set the organizational tone for AI.

Employees are already reading about generative AI—the good, the bad, and the hallucinations. Many are already experimenting with the technology on their personal time. HR's first step is to openly communicate the promise of generative AI across the enterprise. Apprehension and enthusiasm are often two sides of the same coin. Share the company's AI strategies—including necessary guardrails—even as they're developing.

And be sure it's a two-way conversation. Engage employees with transparency—unhandled and mishandled questions can run rampant and wreak havoc on morale. How will this impact my job? Will I still *have* a job? The stress can't be underestimated. In fact, IBM IBV research shows more than half (54%) of employees are concerned new technology will make their jobs obsolete.[16]

HR can facilitate programs that probe deeper for details and support redesigning work and job roles. What are specific employee concerns about generative AI? What is stoking skepticism? Inclusive dialogue is imperative—via online chats, focus groups, in-person town halls, research surveys, and more—so the enterprise understands employee concerns and can address them. Additionally, open up development opportunities and fire up your organization's feedback loops to get the conversations started and out in the open.

**Tech tip:** Prompt conversations and interactions via ongoing digital check-ins with support from AI-generated discussion topics. Give employees an active role in getting the support they need by providing them with one place to share feedback, take suggested actions, and schedule manager check-ins.

## 2   Collaborate on AI strategies and foster a culture of responsible AI.

Trust is paramount. Align with frontline employees to explore and co-create guiding principles around ethics, trust, and transparency. Model the use of generative AI, keeping "humans in the loop." Leverage generative AI for insights and recommendations, with ultimate decision-making resting in the hands of people. Make sure the large language models (LLMs) are continuously tested and re-evaluated. Communicate guidelines, with built-in guardrails, to steer employees in the right direction. Critically, this includes partnering with departments across the organization to heighten awareness of cybersecurity measures.

**Tech tip:** Mitigate risks and strengthen compliance by easily detecting security access anomalies, using comprehensive controls leveraging AI and machine learning.

## 3   Welcome the Augmented Workforce, where human workers are supported by digital assistants—increasingly powered by generative AI.

As employees grow more comfortable with generative AI, they may well evolve toward accepting AI-fueled digital assistants. As well, it is critical for employees to have a purposeful connection to how their work directly aligns with the organizational vision. In recent IBM IBV research, almost half (45%) of employees said that the impact of their work was the attribute most important to them.[17]

With a clearer view of generative AI's potential, employees could embrace it as their ticket to higher-value work and more meaningful careers. To that end, HR should promote use cases in which generative AI adoption leads to more satisfying, effective outcomes for employees. As HR redesigns work with human and AI augmentation in mind, it needs to create human-centric work-life experiences with interactions that are natural and intuitive to organizational work style and processes.

**Tech tip:** Help employees quickly find and connect with experiences, use cases, and best practices for AI and digital assistants.

## 4 — Facilitate the co-creation of new jobs and new ways of working.

HR needs to take the lead role in redesigning the future of jobs—what that future will look like, and what levers will make those new moves a reality. This begins with a review of work breakdown structures, both now and within the augmented-worker future. Process and task lists, value stream mapping, and job architectures and skills taxonomies are methods and tools HR can use to support management in this organizational design journey.

Employees need to visualize how their career paths can evolve in this new reality. This exercise can empower them in their career choices. And, equally, the organization can help them move through those journeys in a seamless manner.

Managers are the "make-or-break" change agents for increasing engagement and boosting productivity when it comes to job redesign. Managers need to create a safe space for employees, allowing the freedom to experiment and co-create rewarding career pathways personalized by generative AI. They also need to work with employees to determine where generative AI can help, hinder, or make no difference at all.

But such discussions may become too sweeping to be actionable. HR can facilitate ideation sessions, provide managers with training and guidance, and help ensure that job roles are regularly updated—or changed altogether.

Management can engage in creative dialogue around the potential of augmenting tasks, including questions such as, "What part of your job fails to inspire you?" and "What would you do with five extra hours a week?" In short, it's how generative AI and digital assistants can assist in jobs, not replace them.

**Tech tip:** Use AI tools to inform and create a dynamic job architecture that evolves with a changing organization and external market conditions. Help managers confidently take the right steps to build trust with their team.

## 5 — Upskill and reskill across the skills spectrum—not just the technology realm.

Encourage all employees to regularly update their digital skills and knowledge to stay relevant. At the same time, it is essential to provide ongoing training in non-STEM capabilities. In the evolving human-tech partnership, qualities such as people skills, adaptability, and collaboration become increasingly important (see Perspective, "Fluid work roles, fluid job requirements"). When it comes to investments in upskilling and reskilling, organizations should reward employees who are fully prepared to refresh their skillsets and embrace new ways of working. Reskilling should be positioned as a tailored growth opportunity for individuals with the capability and interest to tackle emerging tasks in unknown territory.

**Tech tip:** Use generative AI to create and personalize learning content to close skill gaps and support career progression goals. Enable blended learning and promote knowledge sharing while creating learning communities to keep skills current. Let the technology help employees visualize career growth possibilities by discovering how skills align with different career options and roles.
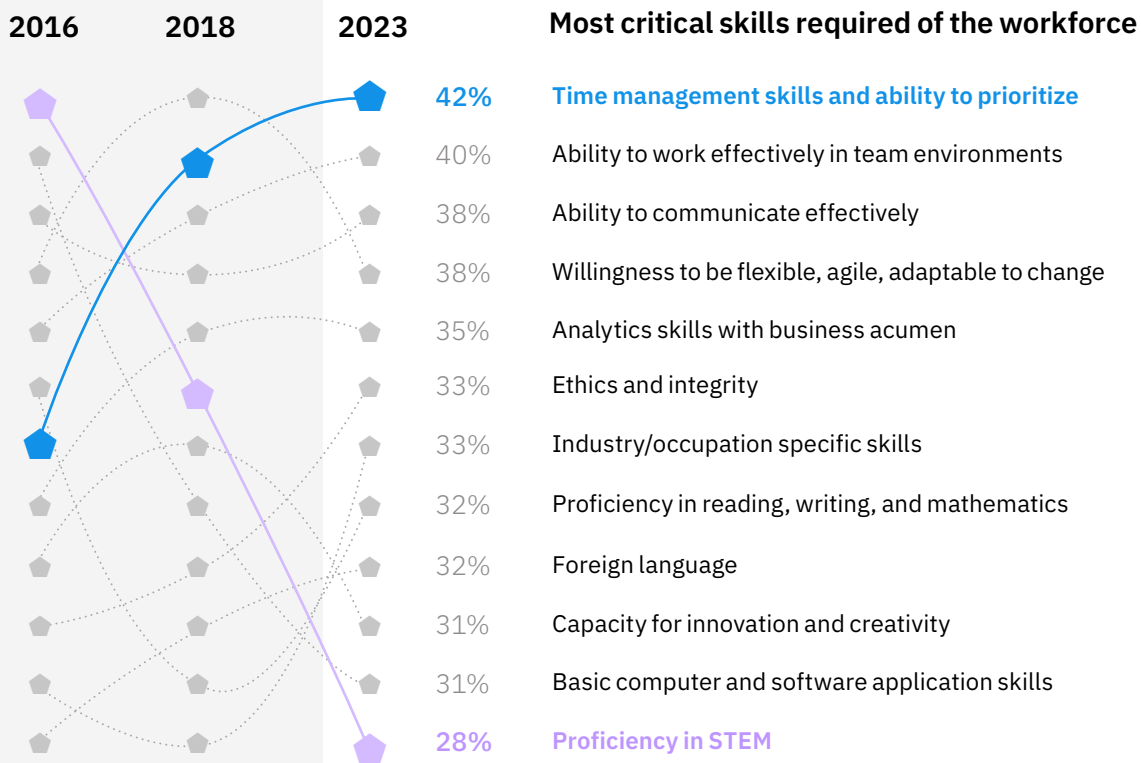
# Fluid work roles, fluid job requirements[18]

At first glance, recent research from the IBM IBV is surprising: STEM skills have plummeted in importance, dropping from the top spot in 2016 to 12th place in 2023.[19] But a certain amount of baseline technical acuity may now be seen as a given. And when exploring new terrain such as generative AI, capabilities including people skills, time management and prioritization, collaboration, and communications are critical. As job responsibilities shift, and shift again, organizations are looking beyond concrete skills and more to flexibility, adaptability, and strong collaborative skills. Clearly, the lens through which candidates are assessed is growing more nuanced. HR must be front and center of this trend.

## A new skills paradigm

STEM skills drop in importance as people skills rise to the top

| 2016 | 2018 | 2023 | Most critical skills required of the workforce |
|------|------|------|-----------------------------------------------|
| | | 42% | **Time management skills and ability to prioritize** |
| | | 40% | Ability to work effectively in team environments |
| | | 38% | Ability to communicate effectively |
| | | 38% | Willingness to be flexible, agile, adaptable to change |
| | | 35% | Analytics skills with business acumen |
| | | 33% | Ethics and integrity |
| | | 33% | Industry/occupation specific skills |
| | | 32% | Proficiency in reading, writing, and mathematics |
| | | 32% | Foreign language |
| | | 31% | Capacity for innovation and creativity |
| | | 31% | Basic computer and software application skills |
| | | 28% | **Proficiency in STEM** |

*Q. What do you believe are the most critical skills required of the workforce today? Sources: 2016 IBM Institute for Business Value Global Skills Survey; 2018 IBM Institute for Business Value Global Country Survey; 2023 IBM Institute for Business Value Talent and Skills Global Survey*

## 6 Reward experimentation and innovation.

Implementing generative AI technology can be challenging. With the right guardrails in place, HR can encourage experimentation through motivational "competitions," contests, certification programs, and other recognition. Importantly, reinforce psychological safety by making it clear that there are no penalties for failed experiments. IBM IBV research shows organizations that don't penalize AI failure achieve a 22% higher rate of revenue growth compared to peers, and that enterprises with an environment of open, fearless innovation show 10% higher revenue growth.[20] Make rapid experimentation and agile discovery the default way of working.

**Tech tip:** Personalize recognition programs to different segments of the organization, such as country or department. Tie recognition efforts to business impact using real-time, connected insights.

## 7 Recruit digitally minded talent—some with untraditional backgrounds.

HR must do more than identify generative AI geniuses. By focusing on skills versus degrees for both internal and external candidates, HR can bring in creative, inquisitive, teachable employees from wide-ranging backgrounds.

Exercising a holistic talent management approach to hiring and employee mobility is not always straightforward. With in-demand skills outpacing the market, organizations need to be creative about defining skill requirements and job roles, fostering a dynamic way of working and promoting growth opportunities.

**Tech tip:** Use AI-driven tools to surface candidate skills and employee profiles for adopting a skills-based hiring strategy. Establish an opportunity marketplace to support internal career mobility opportunities.

## 8 Become a uniter across workforce ecosystems.

Make HR the primary skills curator to help business leaders access in-demand skills rapidly as needs evolve. HR's influence can extend to the entire organization, which naturally positions HR as a conduit to trusted, safe, effective use of generative AI.

**Tech tip:** Unite workforce platforms, bringing together talent-related applications to inform and execute an integrated talent acquisition strategy. Improve skills gap closure by defining critical skill requirements to be filled by ecosystem partners.

**9** Train management on how to conduct
the New Performance Review.

As the generative AI journey progresses, HR should coach managers on how
to assess generative AI skills in their employees. But it's not a simple
"yes-or-no" checkbox. Are employees using AI responsibly—and creatively?
What are examples of experimenting with new applications? How are they
evangelizing and providing support to colleagues less advanced on the
adoption scale? Can they provide examples of collaborative scenarios—even if
they "fail forward?" Another challenge: how do you evaluate performance in
jobs that are constantly changing—due to generative AI? HR can work with
managers to be more flexible, responsive, and sensitive to learning curves as
they evaluate performance.

**Tech tip:** Capture formal
and informal feedback
from multiple sources to
create rich, well-rounded,
evolving portraits of
employees. Provide
specific feedback for
growth, and enable
ongoing conversations
between employees,
managers, and coworkers
to drive performance and
talent development.

**10** Encourage managers to serve as ambassadors
for change.

Managers have particular leverage in shaping an evolving enterprise
(see Perspective, "The new middle manager," on page 9).[21] But to be
effective change agents, leadership must navigate and overcome
challenges and willingly step outside comfort zones, all while encouraging
their teams to do the same. HR can reward and encourage managers to
share their personal stories—and be transparent about their own vision
around AI. When management shares stumbles as well as successes with
their teams, employees understand they are permitted to make mistakes.
Employees at all levels can mutually learn and contribute to fostering an
inquisitive, adventurous culture.

**Tech tip:** Empower
employees and managers
alike to access and share
important highlights,
such as contributions or
milestones, to strengthen
relationships and boost
positive behavior change.

# The new middle manager

In 2023, IBM IBV research found that 65% of organizations are investing to improve people manager skills and 72% plan to increase their investment by 2025.[22] Yet only 41% of organizations have defined new roles for middle managers to serve as coaches for cross-functional teams.[23] More than ever, managers are required to coach their teams and help them make sense of the rapidly evolving technology landscape. They must also be transparent about what is known and what remains unclear.

In light of generative AI's profound impact on the workforce, HR would do well to increase focus, education, and resources on management coaching and collaboration. Tactically, HR will need to create new or repurpose existing investments to fund these initiatives.



*More than ever, managers now need to coach their teams and help them make sense of the rapidly evolving technology landscape.*

Generative AI can fuel the evolution of both careers and HR itself, as noted by one Oracle client. "Using generative AI in HCM applications will be a game-changer for organizations," said Gareth Abreu, domain principal—HCM Business Platforms, Co-op. "We're excited about what's becoming possible in this space. Streamlining and making actions more efficient, intelligently guiding individuals to better outcomes, and elevating worker experiences are just a few of the benefits we expect to gain from the use of generative AI within Oracle Cloud HCM. This technology has the power to completely reinvent how we're thinking about work and the work of HR specifically."[24]

# How HR can influence the development and application of generative AI

Executing on the recommendations above involves HR playing a leadership role in selecting and implementing both human capital management (HCM) solutions and broader ecosystem technology. HR is ideally positioned to inform the enterprise on the role of generative AI to support the workforce; it has clear insight into how to optimize opportunities and mitigate disappointments.

To drive a seamless experience, HR needs to be more tech savvy, driving functional requirements for HR tech with an entrepreneurial lens, all while following through on driving adoption. It should strive to influence tech investments and broader data strategies in ways that maximize effectiveness and unite teams across functions and the partner ecosystem. The array of technologies integrated across the enterprise can be intimidating, particularly for those who are not well-versed in technology. In the HR area alone, they span:

– An HCM platform

– Collaboration and productivity tools

– Workflow and ticketing solutions

– Learning platforms

– Recruiting solutions

– Talent marketplace systems

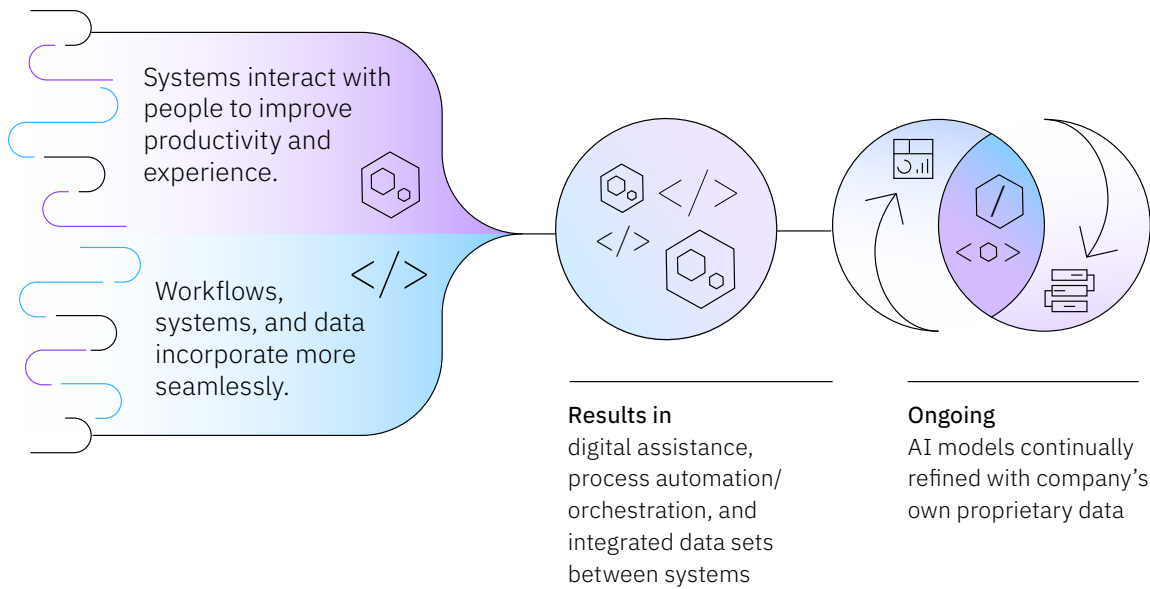– Business intelligence tools, and more.

It's complicated. But HR's input can be critical in helping organizations pursue generative AI within enterprise applications in a more cohesive way. This requires openness and true partnership across groups. Often, enterprise technology and HCM may fall short of expectations, while HR departments often cling to a "Frankenstein" model of favorite legacy systems.

Generative AI itself can help span the disconnects between such siloed processes. For starters, generative AI can help interpret and synthesize data and operations of various systems. The technology can contribute to code that helps disparate systems communicate with each other, helping to create integrated processes across multiple applications. And each organization's adoption of generative AI models can be refined with the company's own proprietary data (see figure).

Generative AI-based digital assistants can help employees navigate unfamiliar processes, providing prompt support and closing knowledge gaps within organizations. These assistants also have the potential to proactively anticipate and personally respond to employee needs throughout the employment lifecycle. For example, chat solutions have progressed beyond single-turn interactions and are now adept at providing clarification, summarization, and suggesting next-best actions in an exponentially personalized manner. And generative AI can even identify requirements for how legacy systems are evaluated. After all, as generative AI becomes increasingly prevalent, legacy systems that fail to interact with it risk becoming obsolete.

**Generative AI**

A powerful intersection between people, technology and data.



Systems interact with people to improve productivity and experience.

Workflows, systems, and data incorporate more seamlessly.

**Results in**
digital assistance, process automation/ orchestration, and integrated data sets between systems

**Ongoing**
AI models continually refined with company's own proprietary data

*Generative AI itself can help span the disconnects between siloed processes.*

HR can create a generative AI-friendly culture, empowering managers to motivate their employees to embrace this new technology and use generative AI itself to power the very tools that promote it. In the process, HR leaders can instill confidence by also emphasizing the value of human traits—in effect, those ineffable qualities not at risk of succumbing to AI. Organizations need to remain authentic and transparent, and spread hope—not fear.

As Rachana Shanbhogue, business affairs editor at *The Economist,* wrote about the adoption of generative AI: "Most important of all, your workers need to be on board. So, pay attention to their fears—and convince them of the joys of experimentation."[25] It's an exhortation both simple and daunting—and HR must rise to the challenge.

*HR can create a generative AI-friendly culture, empowering managers to motivate their employees to embrace this new technology and use generative AI itself to power the very tools that promote it.*

# Unifying HR data across disparate systems

The first hurdle to implementing AI in HR is the fragmentation of data across various systems and platforms. It's essential that an organization's data strategy and technology help to unify talent data sources and make them accessible and usable for AI applications.

A key part of enabling the effort is a hybrid cloud-based infrastructure that can support AI deployment across multiple systems. This can support an integrated AI approach that enhances HR processes, providing personalized experiences and digital assistants. These assets can support employees in finding talent, building new connections, gaining new skills, and sharing their expertise.

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## Related reports

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**The CEO's Guide to Generative AI**

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