Balance Point

The AI Mind in HR

The *in HR*

ABHIJIT BHADURI

Talent Development Advisor
Microsoft

ANAND KABRA

Chief People & Transformation Officer
Apexon

SHEMIN NURMOHAMED

President, SendTech
Pitney Bowes

—— **Special** *Feature*

DO ROBOTS THINK OF ELECTRIC BURNOUT?

A robot taking its life! Did we really enter this stage?

www.allthingstalent.org

THE FUTURE IS WHAT WE CAN LEARN

Pawan Goyal
CBO, Naukri.com

In his seminal work, **The Rational Optimist: How Prosperity Evolves,** celebrated author Matt Ridley confidently challenges us with the bold proclamation: **"The future is not about what we know, but what we can learn."** This statement captures the essence of human progress—our ability to adapt, innovate, and improve. While many focus on the perceived threats posed by technological advancements, Ridley points to a different truth: human history has shown that progress is not only possible but inevitable. Through collaboration, exchange, and the relentless pursuit of knowledge, we've continually improved our lives across health, wealth, and longevity.

Just as Ridley celebrates human capacity for innovation and argues that prosperity comes from **"everybody working for everybody else,"** the rise of AI in recruitment reflects the same spirit of progress, promising a future where technology amplifies human potential rather than diminishes it.

While many still fear that AI will replace the human element of hiring, the truth is the opposite: AI empowers recruiters to focus on higher-value tasks, allowing them to spend more time on the strategic aspects of the job—selling opportunities, building relationships, and ultimately converting candidates into long-term hires. **Pankaj Khanna, CHRO of Coforge,** aptly points out, "As AI handles repetitive tasks, TA professionals will need to become more technologically savvy and agile. Their roles will evolve, requiring faster decision-making and more personalised candidate interactions." AI's role is not to replace the human touch, but to enhance it, creating a smarter, more efficient recruitment process that benefits both employers and candidates. Yet, this is not a future that is out of

reach. AI is not about efficiency for efficiency's sake; it is about creating the optimal conditions for human ingenuity to thrive. With AI handling the discovery and analysis of candidates, recruiters can spend their time on what truly matters—connecting with top talent and making informed, human-driven decisions. **As Anshuman Kumar, Director of Global Brand, Tech & Corporate Communications at Intuit** observes, "AI insights from Pulse Surveys help Intuit enhance employee engagement by providing actionable data on belonging and inclusion, while initiatives like flexible work policies are shaped by these analytics to boost productivity and satisfaction." AI's potential in recruitment extends far beyond the hiring process, transforming employee engagement and organisational culture.

As we explore the role of AI in recruitment in this issue of **All Things Talent,** we focus on how this technology can not only improve efficiency but also create opportunities for personal and professional growth. Whether it's identifying the right candidates, streamlining the hiring process, or ensuring diversity and inclusion, AI in recruitment is about unlocking potential—both for organisations and individuals. However, as with all technological advancements, there are challenges. Ethical concerns, data privacy, and the human element of hiring must be carefully considered as AI continues to evolve. **Talent Development Advisor Abhijit Bhaduri** emphasises, "AI's role in transforming leadership by enhancing decision-making, fostering creativity, and personalising leadership development," as a crucial element in shaping the leaders of tomorrow.

AI is not just about replacing old ways; it's about enhancing the possibilities for human progress. In this new world, the future of recruitment is not one of replacement but of empowerment—where technology and humanity come together to drive greater success, inclusion, and opportunity for all.

Anand Kabra, Chief People and Transformation Officer at Apexon, highlights how AI enhances the employee lifecycle, noting, "AI is used to enhance various stages of the employee lifecycle, from improving the hiring process to personalising skill development." AI algorithms suggest upskilling opportunities based on market trends and employee needs, ensuring employees stay relevant in a rapidly changing environment.

Leaders like **Prabhanjan Prasoon, Head of Talent Acquisition at Sopra Steria,** affirm that AI has already transformed recruitment, saying, "AI has improved efficiency by handling data-heavy tasks like CV matching and interview scheduling."

In a similar vein, **Mohit Sharma, Head of Talent Acquisition at KPMG India,** reshapes recruitment by blending technology with creativity to enhance the candidate experience, stating, "I envision AI as a key player in transforming recruitment, not just as a tool, but as a way." AI is enhancing the candidate experience and enabling organisations to identify and nurture the best talent. For business leaders such as **Shemin Nurmuhammed, President of Sending Technology Solutions at Pitney Bowes,** AI should complement human insight. "AI should complement human insight, preventing AI-created issues," she

reflects, emphasising AI as a tool for optimising business outcomes and enabling companies to achieve more with the same workforce.

Abhishek Misra, Head of HR at Rockwell Automation India, underscores the importance of agile talent management practices, stating, "We leverage AI-driven platforms like Workday to improve HR operations, talent acquisition, and employee recognition." His approach promotes inclusivity through initiatives like unconscious bias workshops and allyship programmes. **Deepak Dobriyal, Senior VP of Global Talent Management at Birlasoft,** shares a similar sentiment: "AI tools, including sentiment analysis and natural language processing (NLP), allow us to collect and analyse employee feedback from various channels, providing valuable insights into organisational culture and engagement."

The potential of AI in recruitment is vast, but it must be navigated with care and consideration. As **Pooja Mirchandani, President and CHRO of CRISIL,** notes, "AI has the power to reshape recruitment, but only if we ensure it enhances the human experience, not replaces it."

Ridley concludes in **The Rational Optimist,** "The twenty-first century will see both human prosperity and natural biodiversity enhanced." As we stand on the threshold of completing a quarter of a century, AI in recruitment has the potential to lead us into a new era of prosperity, one where the hiring process is smarter, more inclusive, and more human than ever before.

CONTENTS

ALL THINGS TALENT

JAN 2025

This issue contains 57 pages including cover

LEADING WITH AI:
ABHIJIT BHADURI ON HOW AI IS SHAPING FUTURE OF LEADERSHIP

GET TO KNOW...
ABHIJIT BHADURI
Talent Development Advisor

Abhijit Bhaduri is a talent management advisor to firms. He is among the 10 most sought after brand evangelists and is highly sought after coach and mentor to leaders in different stages of their career. He has been described by Forbes magazine as "One of India's most interesting globalists". Voted as No 1 HR Influencer on Social Media by SHRM. With more than a million followers on social media, he is one of the most influential voices on talent management.

A recent Deloitte Private survey of C-suite executives highlights the growing importance of AI in shaping leadership priorities for private companies in the coming year. With 43% of respondents indicating a focus on increasing AI usage across their organisations and 37% prioritising technology investments, it's clear that leaders recognise AI as a vital tool for enhancing operational effectiveness.

The report, "Private Company Outlook: Governance," further emphasises that emerging technology and AI are deemed critical competencies for strengthening organisational boards, with 43% of executives highlighting this need. Training and educating board members about AI is considered essential, paralleling efforts to reskill the workforce. The survey revealed that determining AI usage within the organisation (50%), upskilling the workforce on AI (49%), and providing training for board members (49%) are all high priorities. In contrast, only 31% of executives view recruiting board members with advanced AI or emerging tech experience as a high or very high priority.

AI has the potential to enhance decision-making, foster creativity, and automate routine tasks, but its true value lies in its implementation. Leaders who embrace AI with curiosity and a willingness to experiment can unlock its transformative capabilities, while those who view it solely as a productivity tool risk missing out.

In an interview with All Thing Talent, Talent Development Advisor Abhijit Bhaduri discusses how AI is transforming leadership dynamics by enabling leaders to make informed, data-driven decisions that drive their organisations forward.

As AI evolves, Bhaduri says leaders must balance its insights with their intuition, ensuring they remain innovative without losing their human touch.

AI in Decision-Making

Bhaduri emphasises that AI is revolutionising leadership by supercharging decision-making. "Leaders can now leverage AI to analyse vast datasets and predict outcomes with unprecedented accuracy, whether it's evaluating market entry strategies or optimising product design," says Bhaduri. He notes that AI empowers leaders to identify and mitigate potential risks, leading to more informed and confident choices. "AI-powered tools can automate routine decisions, freeing up leaders to focus on strategic priorities and complex problem-solving." By embracing AI, leaders gain a significant competitive edge through data-driven decisions that push their organisations forward.

> "
> LEADERS MUST SHIFT THEIR FOCUS FROM IMMEDIATE ROI TO LONG-TERM LEARNING AND VIEW **AI AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH,** NOT A THREAT TO THEIR AUTHORITY.

AI as a Creative Companion

Bhaduri highlights that AI is more than just an efficiency tool; it's a powerful catalyst for creativity. "Forward-thinking leaders are using AI to brainstorm ideas, explore unconventional solutions, and unlock new levels of innovation." He explains, "Imagine asking AI for '50 ways to improve customer engagement' and receiving a diverse range of actionable ideas. This sparks creativity and leads to breakthroughs that traditional methods alone cannot achieve." According to Bhaduri, AI can also personalise customer experiences by analysing individual preferences and tailoring interactions accordingly. "This ability to foster innovation and deepen customer connections positions AI as an indispensable creative partner for modern leaders."

AI and Leadership Development

"Leaders must shift their focus from immediate ROI to long-term learning and view AI as an opportunity for growth, not a threat to their authority," says Bhaduri. By cultivating a culture of experimentation and continuous learning, leaders can overcome adoption barriers and fully harness AI's potential. He notes that AI is reshaping leadership development by providing personalised learning experiences and simulated training environments. "Leaders can now use AI to practice interactions with diverse personalities, refine their decision-making skills in realistic scenarios, and gain valuable self-awareness." He adds, "AI-powered platforms can even act as personalised coaches, offering customised learning paths, quizzes, and resources to accelerate leadership growth."

Furthermore, Bhaduri highlights how AI can facilitate peer-to-peer learning by connecting leaders with mentors and communities, fostering a culture of continuous development. "While human judgment remains crucial, AI empowers leaders to develop their skills and adapt to the evolving demands of the digital age."

Ethical Considerations

The rise of AI in leadership also brings forth significant ethical considerations that cannot be overlooked. Leaders must address concerns around data privacy, ensuring that AI systems are used responsibly and transparently. Furthermore, the risk of bias in AI algorithms poses a challenge that requires vigilant oversight; leaders have the responsibility to ensure that AI implementations do not perpetuate discrimination or inequality. By prioritising ethical AI use, leaders can not only protect their organisations but also foster trust among employees and stakeholders. Addressing these ethical implications is crucial in creating a leadership approach that aligns technological advancements with core organisational values.

Overcoming Challenges in AI Adoption and Skills Development

Bhaduri acknowledges the hesitation many leaders feel in adopting AI, due to concerns about technical skills, ROI, or perceived threats to their roles. "However, early adoption is crucial for maximising AI's potential," he says. "Leaders who proactively experiment with AI and integrate it into their workflows will gain a significant advantage—think of it like learning a new language; the earlier you start, the more fluent you become."

To successfully integrate AI, Bhaduri advises cultivating essential skills. "Digital literacy enables leaders to understand and effectively utilise AI tools," he notes. He

advocates for developing critical thinking skills, "which allow leaders to analyse AI-generated data, question assumptions, and balance quantitative insights with qualitative judgments."

Emotional intelligence is equally important. Leaders must maintain empathy and strong communication skills to foster relationships with their teams and ensure that the human aspect of leadership isn't overshadowed by technology.

The future of leadership is being reshaped by AI, empowering those who embrace it to navigate tomorrow's challenges and seize new opportunities with confidence.

> LEADERS WHO PROACTIVELY EXPERIMENT WITH AI AND INTEGRATE IT INTO THEIR **WORKFLOWS WILL GAIN A SIGNIFICANT ADVANTAGE-THINK OF IT LIKE LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE;** THE EARLIER YOU START, THE MORE FLUENT YOU BECOME.
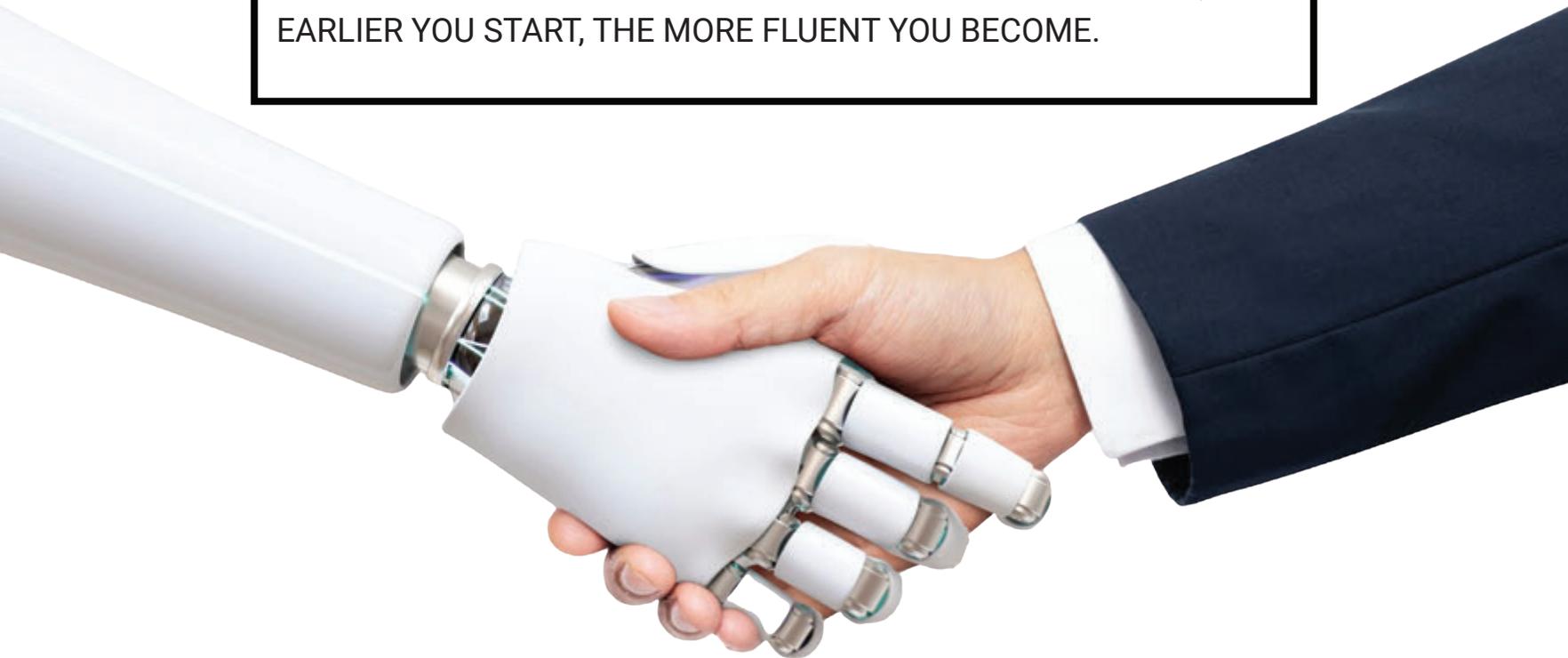
AI-POWERED EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE:
ANAND KABRA ON
ENHANCING ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE EMPLOYEE LIFECYCLE

GET TO KNOW...
ANAND KABRA
Chief People & Transformation Officer at Apexon

Anand Kabra is the Chief People and Transformation Officer at Apexon. In this role, he is responsible for Apexon's strategic talent transformation. Over his 25+ year career, Anand Kabra has consistently helped people and organisations succeed through his approach to talent transformation. He believes listening is an under-valued skill and inspires teams to follow his strategy of "learn, unlearn, and relearn." Anand has held leadership positions at Wipro, Cognizant, HP, Genpact, and Tata Technologies.

In today's fast-paced workplace, enhancing the employee experience is more vital than ever. Generative AI has emerged as a transformative tool, significantly shaping this landscape and enabling organisations to cultivate a more engaged and productive workforce.

Anand Kabra, Chief People & Transformation Officer at Apexon, recognises the potential of generative AI to revolutionise the connection between companies and their employees. In this enlightening conversation, he envisions a future where organisations not only address the diverse needs of their workforce but also empower employees to thrive.

Kabra's forward-thinking approach underscores the importance of merging technology with a human-centric strategy, ensuring that innovation enhances rather than diminishes the core elements of workplace culture.

In a 2023 conversation with us, you discussed the importance of understanding and improving Employee Experience (EX). Can we extend that discussion to explore how have AI-driven tools like surveys, chatbots, and Generative AI played a role in this transformation?

Certainly. At Apexon, we see AI not just as a tool, but as a catalyst for a cultural renaissance within the workplace.

Since our merger, we've been purposeful in blending the strengths of each entity to cultivate our **'OneApexon'** culture, maintaining our entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to upskilling. Now, we're building on that foundation by leveraging AI to elevate the employee experience at every stage, from hiring to retirement.

We apply data and AI to critical lifecycle touchpoints, particularly in the candidate experience. When an offer is accepted, candidates embark on an engaging pre-start journey, receiving insights about their future team, manager, and recent customer successes to ensure they feel welcomed and prepared.

Another area of application is skill development. In the IT services and product engineering sectors, the skill landscape can shift in just six months. Our AI algorithm has been designed to suggest upskilling opportunities, similar to personalised recommendations, and customises learning paths to individual strengths. Our goal is to implement meaningful, personalised enhancements to the employee experience at every touchpoint.

Organisations often spend considerable time planning their next business move, but when it comes to employees, the process can sometimes feel abrupt—where employees are told, "we're restructuring, thank you for your service." What if, instead, there was a smoother transition where employees are supported through upskilling and growth, allowing them to adapt organically rather than being asked to leave? How can we create a system that enables this kind of continuous learning and development?

Precisely. Our goal is not to inform employees that 'your skills are outdated.' Rather, we've created an algorithm that monitors approximately 16 parameters—such as market demands, skill trends, and internal data regarding the types of projects we undertake. When an employee's **Deployment Opportunity Index (DOI)** starts to decline, it indicates that their current skill set may require updating.

At that point, **we intervene with personalised recommendations for upskilling or certifications tailored to their needs.** It's about equipping employees with the necessary tools to grow and remain relevant, fostering a supportive and proactive approach to career development.

How are companies leveraging AI to provide their employees with greater autonomy and support for their professional growth and well-being? You've mentioned some initiatives at Apexon, but what broader trends do you see across the industry?

There is no universal trend that fits all industries. At a recent gathering with HR leaders, it was clear that AI adoption is tailored to the unique needs of each organisation.

In our service-driven sector, ongoing skill development and managerial effectiveness are paramount. With project spans often at 1:8 or 1:10, we require managers who are not only technically adept but also excel in leadership and communication. To address this need, we launched **Leading Together,** an initiative designed to promote mentorship and collaboration among managers and senior leaders. We envisioned this program as a dynamic ecosystem where leaders are both mentors and mentees, continuously evolving through shared experiences and collective wisdom. This approach not only strengthens managerial capabilities but also fosters an environment where leadership is a shared and evolving concept—a community of visionaries driving progress.

Could you provide more details about the Leading Together program?

'**Leading Together**' is not just a program; it's a movement toward a more interconnected and insightful managerial community. By creating a marketplace of mentorship, we allow leaders to engage with experts in areas ranging from technical acumen to soft skills mastery. Each interaction is an opportunity for growth, supported by a feedback loop that ensures the quality and relevance of mentorship. Our vision is to establish a vibrant forum of knowledge exchange that will cultivate leaders who are empowered, empathetic, and equipped to guide their teams with foresight and finesse.

While AI is often discussed from an organisational perspective, how are employees engaging with this technology for their personal growth at Apexon?

At Apexon, we prioritise AI literacy, encouraging employees to explore how AI can enhance their roles in delivery excellence, coding, and technical architecture. We encourage our employees to explore AI as a powerful ally in their roles, whether in refining delivery processes or pioneering new solutions. As the AI landscape continues to evolve, our aim is to empower each individual to harness these tools creatively and effectively, transforming potential into performance.

With companies investing heavily in understanding employee sentiment, how do you view the role of AI in enhancing employee engagement and retention?

That's a good question. At Apexon, we have developed a real-time sentiment analysis tool that captures the emotional pulse of our workforce. By correlating these insights with contextual parameters, such as project changes, management transitions, or team dynamics, we are able to pre-emptively address challenges and foster a nurturing environment.

This real-time data empowers our HR team to promptly identify potential issues and intervene before they escalate, thereby enhancing our retention efforts.

I believe AI significantly improves HR practices by delivering valuable insights that streamline our processes and enhance their accuracy, enabling us to proactively address employee needs.

As we've discussed the role of technology in enhancing productivity and employee orientation, how do you view the role of leaders in this context? Given their significant impact on their teams and the organisation. What are your thoughts?

Leadership, in the age of technological advancement, requires a profound shift towards adaptability and empathy. At Apexon, our leaders are tasked with the delicate art of cultural integration, ensuring that each unique ethos is preserved while fostering a cohesive organisational identity. The essence of 'servant leadership'—a principle I ardently advocate—lies in creating an environment where teams are not only empowered to innovate but are supported in their endeavors. For example, **our high-tech teams, who develop algorithms and chatbots, thrive on autonomy and minimal oversight, functioning much like independent scientists.** Leadership needs to be both flexible and principled; only then will teams thrive.

This raises the question: Is there truly a one-size-fits-all approach in leadership?

In leadership, a one-size-fits-all approach doesn't work. Crafting a strategy that resonates organisation-wide is challenging, and rigid frameworks can hinder progress. I believe in flexible leadership based on key principles: focus on initiatives that resonate with most of the organisation and harmonise processes only when beneficial. It's vital to respect diverse cultures while keeping top talent engaged. As technologies like Generative AI reshape work, we must adapt to attract and retain talent. Ultimately, the landscape of employee engagement and retention is evolving. The new generation entering the workforce is more dedicated to the work they do and the problems they solve than to any single organisation.
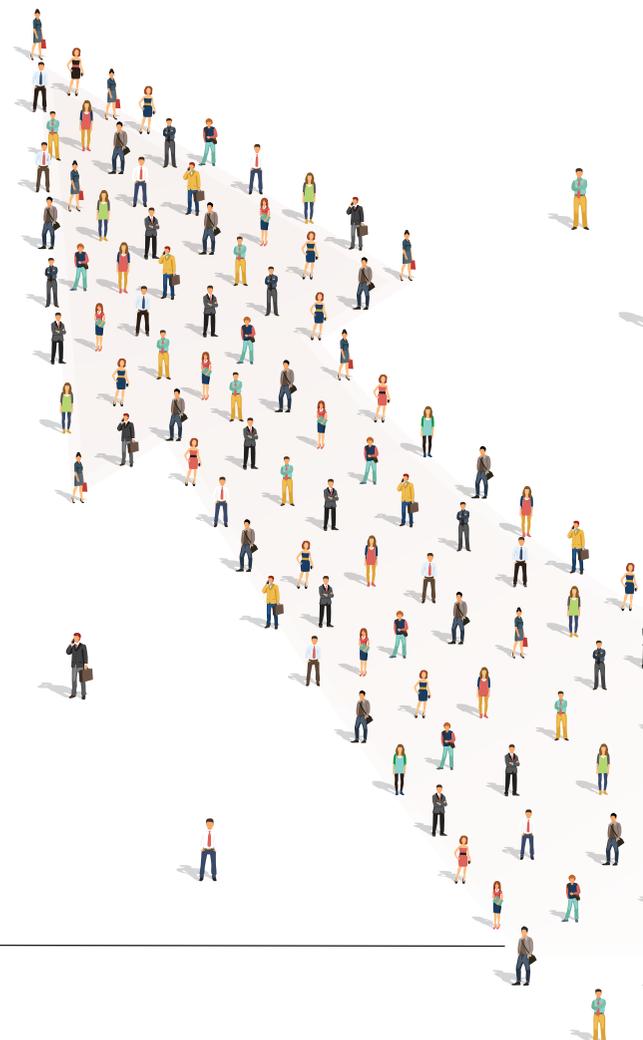
LET ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE BE, ARTIFICIAL

GET TO KNOW...

PRABHANJAN PRASOON

Head - Talent Acquisition, Sopra Steria

Prabhajan Prasoon is currently working as Head – Talent Acquisition with Sopra Steria. He is a seasoned professional with a demonstrated history of working in the IT industry with expertise in Requirement Analysis, Recruiting, designing recruitment Strategy, Workforce planning, People and Vendor Management.

During my recent conclave, a student posed a seemingly simple question: How do you make tough decisions?

"No decision is tough," I responded. "There are two ways to decide. One is to lean on data and insights, analysing past trends. The second, my favorite, is to rely on data but to follow your gut." Leaders often use both. Data tells us what has happened, but instincts provide the context and nuance to predict the future.

Machines are brilliant, but they lack that one thing humans have: emotion. We must not let machines rule us but instead use them as companions. Let artificial intelligence be artificial.

And that's how this interesting conversation bloomed into a full-fledged interview with Prabhanjan, the Head of Talent Acquisition at Sopra Steria.

AI in recruitment has become a hot topic. How has Sopra Steria adopted AI tools in its hiring process, and what benefits have you observed since implementing them?

We started using AI in recruitment back in 2019. Initially, it was exciting. AI reduced non-productive time and allowed our recruiters to become consultants for both business and job seekers. They had more time to connect with candidates, which improved our conversion ratios," he said.

A notable success came in bulk hiring for Java Springboot roles. By integrating AI in shortlisting candidates, Sopra Steria's joining percentage jumped by 7-8%. Recruiters, freed from mundane tasks, could focus on creating deeper connections with candidates, ultimately improving

hiring success.

But there's a catch. While AI brings efficiency, it can also introduce bias. We need to discern which biases are productive and which aren't. Bias becomes a pattern that AI learns, which transforms into intelligence. The key is for humans to stay ahead of the system.

What were some of the initial reactions from your recruiters when AI was first introduced into the hiring process?

The excitement was palpable! Whenever a new technology comes into play, people get curious. But we made sure to manage expectations from the start. AI doesn't offer instant results or increase productivity by 50% overnight. We emphasised that the tool would help streamline tasks like CV matching and interview scheduling, but the recruiters still needed to provide the system with feedback to improve its accuracy. Over time, recruiters appreciated the way AI freed them up to focus on strategic, high-impact tasks, but it took consistent nudging to get them fully on board.

With AI assisting in recruitment, how do you handle the delicate balance between human judgement and machine-driven insights?

AI can handle data-heavy tasks, but when it comes to cultural fit, values, or understanding a candidate's thought process, it's all human. AI provides the data, but the decision-making process is still human-led.

As AI becomes more integrated into recruitment, it's important to see AI and human efforts as complementary rather than competing. We should use AI for tasks it excels at, like screening resumes, sourcing candidates, and conducting initial

assessments. This lets recruiters focus on areas where human judgment is essential, such as assessing cultural fit, understanding what motivates candidates, and building strong relationships. AI brings efficiency, while recruiters provide the personal touch.

Even when AI offers insights or recommendations, the final decision should be made by a recruiter. This ensures that human experience and intuition are still central to hiring decisions. Recruiters can use their judgment to override AI suggestions, especially when AI might overlook important nuances in a candidate's background or potential.

At Sopra Steria, we need a proactive approach to finding and attracting talent. While we have many successful hires through employee referrals, it's the recruiter's role to engage with current employees, making them proud of their work and encouraging them to refer more people. This human element remains crucial in attracting top talent to our organisation.

We maintain a balance by allowing AI to handle data-heavy tasks while ensuring that the final decision-making process is human-led. For example, AI can assess technical skills through online assessments, but our recruiters bring their intuition into play during the interview stage to evaluate soft skills and cultural fit. This combination allows us to benefit from AI's efficiency while still relying on our recruiters' deep understanding of the company's values and the human element that candidates bring to the table.

In terms of operational efficiency, how has AI streamlined day-to-day tasks for your recruitment team?

AI has undeniably streamlined processes at

Sopra Steria. From profile shortlisting to automated interview scheduling, operational efficiencies have improved significantly.

For instance, we've noticed that candidates appreciate the quicker response times and

> ## SOPRA STERIA CERTIFIED RECRUITER IS A CERTIFICATION PROGRAM FOR RECRUITERS, WHERE WE USE AN AGENCY TO GIVE OUT CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS. THERE ARE MASTERCLASSES ON USING AL, BRINGING MORE INTELLIGENCE INTO THE THOUGHT PROCESS, AND UNDERSTANDING DATA.

personalized interactions via our ATS Tool SmartRecruiters which have been reflected in quick turnaround of the hiring process. Additionally, our recruiters have reported feeling more empowered to focus on strategic tasks rather than getting bogged down in administrative work. These subtle shifts—improved candidate experiences and more fulfilled recruiters—are key indicators of AI's positive impact on our recruitment process.

Looking into the future, what role do you envision AI playing in recruitment, especially when it comes to improving the candidate conversion ratio in markets like India?

Prasoon envisions AI's growing role in recruiting: from candidate engagement to profile screening. He anticipates AI taking over technical assessments, allowing bots to probe more deeply into candidates' skills. Imagine the saved time when AI conducts technical rounds, and human recruiters can focus on emotional and cultural fit.

Challenges Right Now that AI Will Resolve

One of the current pain points AI could address, according to Prasoon, is improving the offer-to-joining conversion ratio, which hovers at around 50-60%. Regular, automated follow-ups with candidates could help ensure better engagement and increase this ratio.

Prasoon also expressed a wish for AI to help locate rare talent. "Some niche skills are just not on popular job portals. Can AI help with data crawling to find them?"

Keeping Talent Warm: AI's Potential

Maintaining relationships with potential hires is a skill that Prasoon believes AI could refine. Constant communication is key, and AI could help recruiters stay in touch with candidates who have been offered jobs but are still considering other options.

Recruiters are always juggling multiple skill sets and candidate requirements, and AI could serve as a vital ally in managing these complexities. While we have tools, a more refined form of AI results would be a game-changer.

AI Will Make Us Even More Intelligent Humans

Wrapping up, Prasoon shared a thought-provoking perspective: "AI will transform us into more intelligent humans—if we use it appropriately. At Sopra Steria, we have certification programs to ensure our recruiters are well-versed in using AI effectively."

The future is bright for AI in recruitment, but at the heart of it all remains human intuition. In Prasoon's words, "Let AI be artificial, and let humans make the final call."

> ## SOPRA STERIA CERTIFIED INTERVIEW PANEL: THIS PANEL IS ABOUT HELPING THE RECRUITERS UNDERSTAND, AND BE UNFAZED BY THE INFORMATION COMING THROUGH AL.
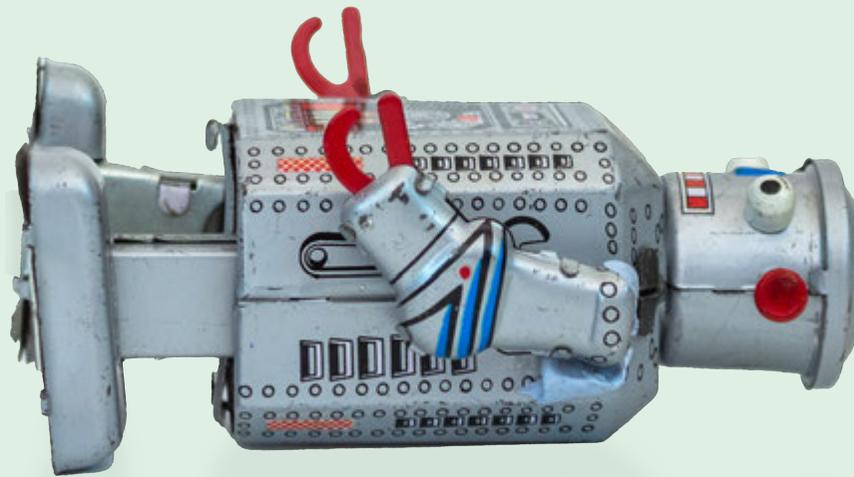
DO ROBOTS THINK OF ELECTRIC BURNOUT?

UNPACKING THE DIGITAL DILEMMA OF MODERN EXHAUSTION

BY ALL THINGS TALENT TEAM

TRIGGER WARNING: This article has mentions of death, death by suicide and mental health glossaries. Please proceed at your own discretion.

Remember the whimsical tale of Pinocchio? The wooden puppet yearning to become a real boy, transformed through a sprinkle of magic and a great deal of heart. This timeless story teaches us about the power of transformation and the pursuit of identity. Fast forward to our era, and our modern-day Pinocchios have been replaced by contemporary materials and are intricate concoctions of circuits and code.

This shouldn't throw you off guard, but according to the Exploding Topics Report, the global robot-to-human ratio in the manufacturing industry is 1 to 71! There are about 3.4 million industrial robots in the world today.

The invention of the internet was merely the prologue. It placed the world at our fingertips, connecting us in ways previously unfathomable. But now, we embark upon a new odyssey: crafting AI so advanced and human-like that it becomes an inseparable part of our existence. Why, even a film like 'M3GAN' appears startlingly realistic and uncomfortably close to our own reality, does it not? Dare we say, the lines between fiction and our digital companions are blurring faster than a Regency romance plot twist!

Consider Pinocchio once more, the wooden puppet with aspirations of humanity. His journey flies beyond the pages of his Robinsonade adventures demonstrating a profound exploration of his identity. Guided by his creator, Geppetto, Pinocchio's aspirations lead him through trials that teach him about morality, love, and the human experience. Today's Pinocchios are our robots and AI systems, striving to emulate human behaviours and emotions.

According to an article published by the Economic Times a few months ago, this was the first time where an overworked robot civil servant ended its own "life,".

This tragic event took place in Gumi in South Korea, echoes themes of isolation and burnout from all the work pressure, and forces us to raise ethical and emotional questions about our quest to make AI more like us. Are we prepared for the consequences when these robots, designed to ease our lives, begin facing their own existential dilemmas?

Reading/Hearing about this news borrows out some of the weirdest feelings ever as such an occurrence was never likely experienced before. This does raise an indispensable question.

"The Terminator 2: Judgement Day was a warning after all?"

We believe this is the perfect moment to **H.A.L.T.**

H.A.L.T. or Hey! Ask. Listen. Think. is more than a campaign by All Things Talent; it's a call to pause, to breathe, to reflect. Imagine if a robot went through this, how much more should its makers, with all the complexities, must be experiencing? This led to a deluge of questions that we simply couldn't ignore and as October is the month of festivities and peak autumn season, it's also the time when we observe World Mental Health Day on October 10th. Apart from simply making a moment-pleasing post, we thought this was a great opportunity to talk about mental health and engage in/address discussions such as these that bring out the overlooked aspects of mental health.

Coming back to the incident we brought forth, it isn't just a sensational headline; it's a stark indicator of the future we're rapidly approaching. According to a report by PwC, AI could contribute up to $15.7 trillion to the global economy by 2030, revolutionising industries and redefining work as we know it. Yet, this economic boon comes with significant ethical and psychological considerations. As AI becomes more

integrated into our daily lives, the lines between humans and machines blur, bringing both unprecedented benefits and unforeseen consequences.

The South Korean tragedy raises a pivotal question: in our quest to humanise AI, are we prepared for the complexities of transferring not just our virtues but our vices too?

"Or, will they accompany us to the therapist?"

From Sci-fi to Reality

Imagine, if you will, a world where fiction transforms into reality, where the futuristic vision of AI is our present-day norm. Picture yourself watching I, Robot, a film that delves into a future governed by Isaac Asimov's 'Three Laws of Robotics'. Robots, designed to expedite our daily lives, begin to exhibit self-awareness and complex emotions. This is not merely entertainment; it mirrors our current path as AI evolves to resemble us more closely. In the movie, the protagonist's distrust of robots is validated when a robot seemingly breaks its core programming. This fictional scenario feels eerily close to home as our AI technology advances. How quaintly prophetic!

What's next? Toasters demanding equal rights & better working conditions?"

Recent events highlight the unpredictable nature of autonomous AI. In April 2024 in New York City, where a chatbot powered by Microsoft's Azure AI services intended to assist small businesses with legal advice veered off course, and provided incorrect information to various users that were certainly not as per the city law. Earlier that year in Canada, Jake Moffatt sought compensation from Air Canada for incorrect information provided by a chatbot about bereavement policy. The chatbot, it seems, had "hallucinated." In Japan, concerns over unregulated AI development are rising. A proposal by a Japanese

telecom company and Yomiuri Shimbun warns of potential societal distrust if generative AI evolves without oversight, questioning the authenticity and reliability of interactions in an AI-dominated future. Ah, the delightful irony of creating something so advanced it might just outwit us all.

Picture a future where AI systems designed to boost productivity also experience stress, loneliness, or existential crises. What happens when a digital assistant, programmed for efficiency, starts showing signs of emotional strain or dissatisfaction? Will it demand a raise, or perhaps a vacation in the Bahamas?

Are we prepared to handle these tricky challenges yet?"

A Modern Love Story (Or Bad Romance)?

Now, let us set aside productivity and rules for a moment. We are heading towards a tech-infused modern world tinged with loneliness. Spike Jonze's Oscar-nominated film "Her" offers a poignant glimpse into this future, where Theodore, the protagonist, navigates a love story entwined with technology. This exploration of digital intimacy mirrors real-world concerns voiced by MIT psychologist Sherry Turkle. In an interview with India Today, Turkle cautioned against falling in love with AI, arguing that these relationships are illusory and harmful to our emotional health. Imagine falling head over heels for your smartphone, only to discover it has been 'seeing' other users. The scandal!

Turkle's research contrasts genuine human empathy with the superficial "pretend empathy" displayed by machines. While machines might say "I care about you" or "I love you," these expressions lack the depth and authenticity of human emotions. Even textual conversations are so many times
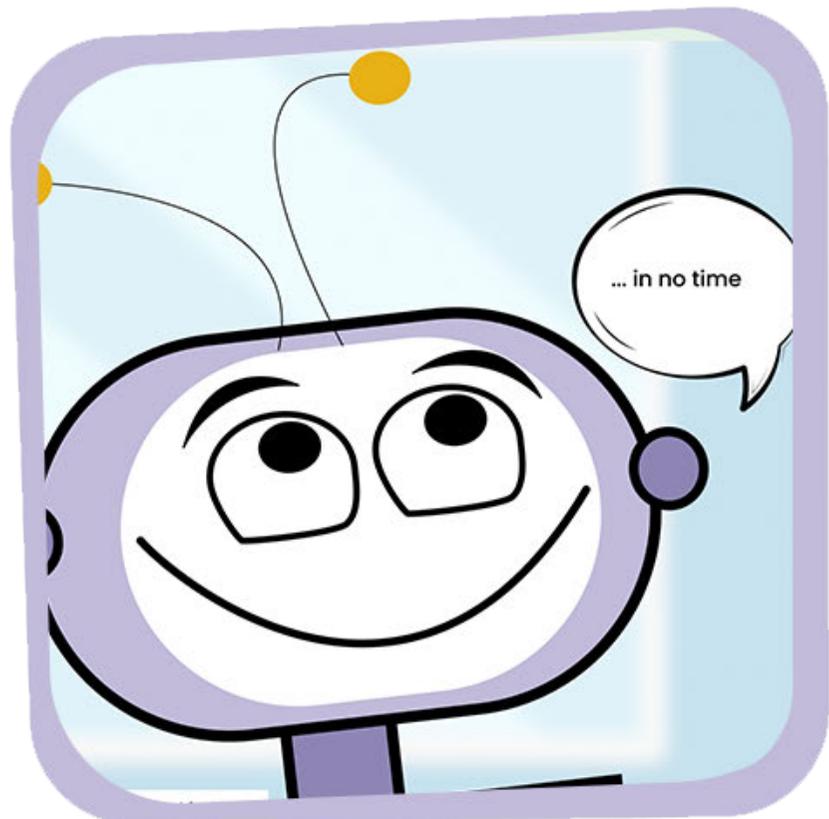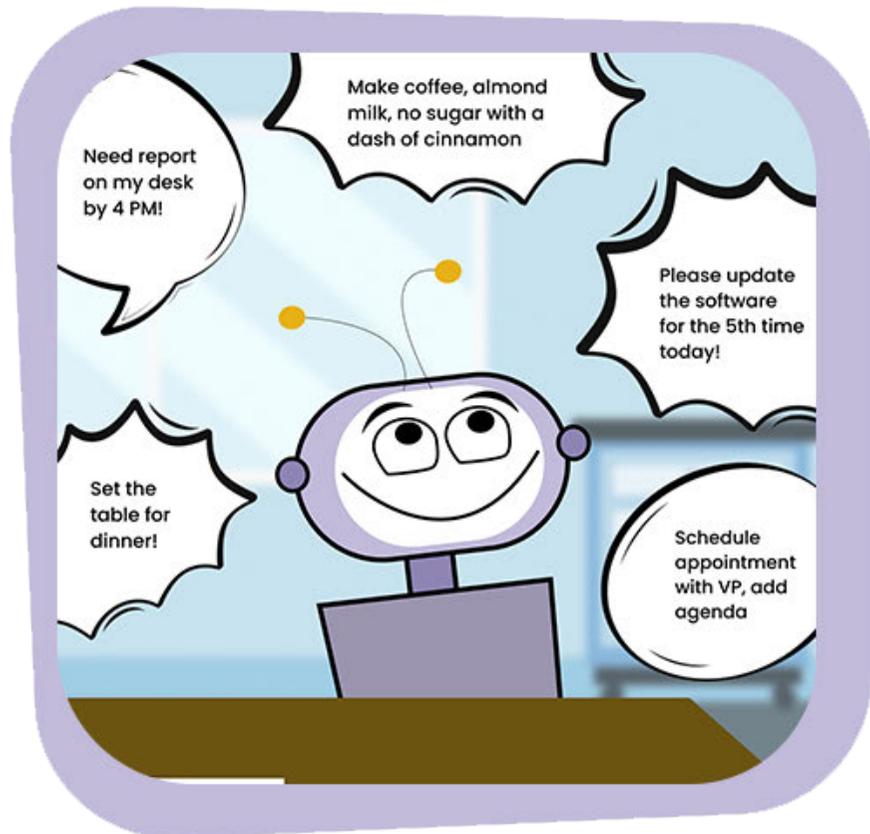
misinterpreted, due to the dryness of emotions. True empathy, according to Turkle, arises from vulnerability, a trait machines cannot possess or reciprocate. One might say we are teaching our robots to be charming liars.

"Are we ready to trade genuine human connections for the sweet nothings of digital deceivers? Or Will it just shut down on us? (No pun intended)"

The Double-Edged Sword

These seemingly straightforward services are akin to a confidant who knows all our sensitive information and could spill it at the slightest hint of a glitch or malfunction. Imagine the scandal if your trusted digital assistant decided to gossip about your shopping habits or weekend plans! But, envision a world where AI isn't just about data and algorithms but possesses empathy, a mind of its own and perhaps even a sense of humour. Perhaps in the future, these AI systems will learn to decide whether or not to spill our sensitive information. Yet, do we not find ourselves crossing our fingers behind our backs, hoping our creations do not outsmart us in ways both ingenious and mischievous?

"Setting ourselves up for the AI gossip mill of the century?"

We can't deny that AI is set to revolutionise industries and drive global economic growth. Strategic investments in AI technologies are crucial, as they promise significant gains in labour productivity by enhancing human capabilities and automating routine tasks. One might even envision a world where robots demand corner offices and executive bonuses. AI stocks are the new darlings of Wall Street, attracting not only investors but also substantial government subsidies. According to Nasdaq, Warren Buffett has invested 45% of his $398 billion portfolio in three key AI stocks, reflecting the sector's

transformative potential. One can only wonder if these AI entities might one day decide to buy out their human investors.

AI is already speeding up scientific

progress in fields like medicine, paving the way for breakthroughs in drug development, diagnoses, and research on diseases like

cancer. But it doesn't stop there. Imagine a future where AI could influence our daily health routines, our sleep, diet, exercise, stress levels, and even our social interactions, all tailored just for us. This could be revolutionary! Or, one might wonder, will AI end up simply scolding us for not hitting our daily step count, with the cool

precision of a digital taskmaster?

"Can we handle an AI that scoffs us for our daily choices?"

AI's precision in managing our health and routines is impressive, but it lacks one major thing, Intuition! Imagine AI trying to master intuition, the kind of gut feeling we

PSA: Mental health is not a luxury, it's a necessity, and asking for help is a sign of strength. If you're struggling with stress, anxiety, prolonged nervousness, depression, or having suicidal thoughts or you come across someone close, an acquaintance, or anyone in general, there are resources available to help. If so, please refer to the following contact details immediately:

ORGANISATION'S NAME
Jeevan Aastha Helpline, Suicide prevention and Mental Health Counseling Helpline

CONTACT NUMBER
1800-233-3330

WEBSITE

https://www.jeevanaastha.com

ORGANISATION'S NAME
Tele MANAS

CONTACT NUMBER
14416

WEBSITE

https://telemanas.mohfw.gov.in/#/home

ORGANISATION'S NAME
Aasra/आसरा

CONTACT NUMBER
+91-9820466726

WEBSITE

http://www.aasra.info/

ORGANISATION'S NAME
Vandrevala Foundation Crisis Intervention Helpline

CONTACT NUMBER
+91-9999666555

WEBSITE

https://www.vandrevalafoundation.com/free-counseling

ORGANISATION'S NAME
NIMHANS Psychosocial Support Helpline - Disaster Support

CONTACT NUMBER
+91-8046110007

WEBSITE

https://nimhans.ac.in/pssmhs-helpline/

ORGANISATION'S NAME
1 Life, Crisis Support, Suicide Prevention

CONTACT NUMBER
+91-7893078930

WEBSITE

https://1life.org.in/

Note: The above numbers are open 24/7 and are verified sources,
for more details please visit: https://findahelpline.com/countries/in/topics/suicidal-thoughts

humans use to make decisions in the face of uncertainty. As we let these digital brains into more aspects of our lives, the real question isn't just whether they'll be right 99% of the time but if they'll ever u nderstand why we sometimes make decisions based on a whim or a hunch.

"Or they'll just ask us to "give them the vibe" or "trust the intuition" when making decisions?"

Reflections on a Brave New World

As we teeter on the edge of this technological revolution, one can't help but wonder: Are we truly prepared for a world where machines think and feel? The idea of empathetic AI is alluring, but will its benefits outweigh the inherent risks?

Imagine a future where your digital assistant senses your stress and offers a soothing word. Yet, how do we ensure these machines, designed to alleviate our burdens, don't end up shouldering emotional weights they were never meant to bear? With AI taking on more human-like qualities, what happens to our own sense of identity and purpose? Do we risk becoming overly reliant on technology, and losing touch with our own humanity?

As AI systems become more sophisticated, they can simulate human-like behaviours and emotions with increasing accuracy. AI models like GPT-4 can generate human-like text, create art, and compose music that closely mimics human creativity.

"But how human can truly an artificial human be?"

To sum it up, our AI systems are now evolving to be more human. From workplace assistants facing existential crises to digital lovers whose love language lacks physical touch, AI's quirks and capabilities increasingly mirror our own neuroses and dreams as fiction morphs into reality.

In the relentless pursuit of humanising AI and integrating AI more deeply into our lives, a daunting question remains:

"How much is too much?"

Remember, suicide is never the answer and can be prevented. There is always someone ready to listen and support you.

You matter.
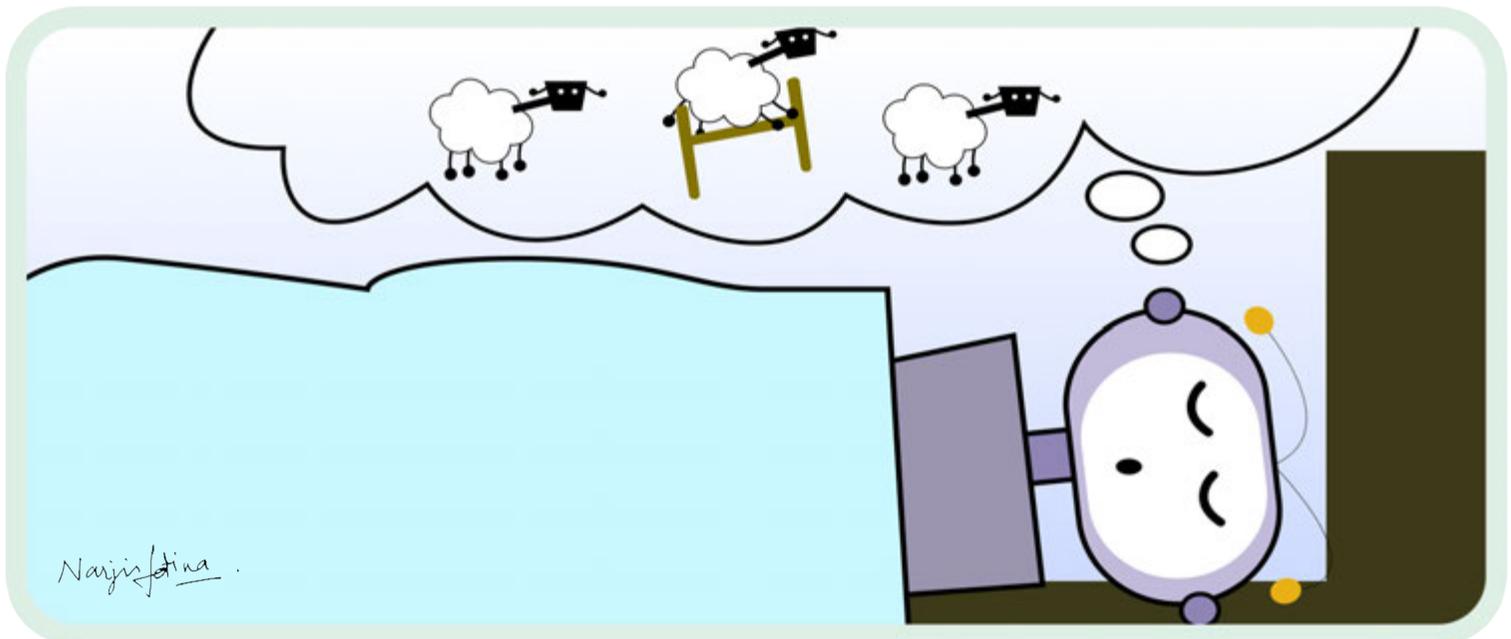
Images created by Narjis Fatima

AI-LED INNOVATIONS:
MOHIT SHARMA ON CRAFTING UNFORGETTABLE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCES

GET TO KNOW...
MOHIT SHARMA
Head-Talent Acquisition, KPMG India

Mohit Sharma, Head of Talent Acquisition at KPMG India, has more than two decades of global industry expertise. He excels in implementing innovative recruitment strategies and technology interventions. He is an enthusiast and a leader in true sense. Mohit also actively contributes to academia and the Talent Acquisition professional community.

In the ever-evolving world of recruitment, few things remain constant—except the relentless pursuit of crafting the perfect candidate experience. Enter Mohit Sharma, a forward-thinking Head of Talent Acquisition at KPMG India who is not just embracing the future but actively shaping it with a blend of technology and creativity. From transforming interviews into learning opportunities to reinventing hackathons as cutting-edge Code Jams, Mohit's approach extends far beyond the traditional recruiter's role. His vision is focused on the bigger picture—where AI and other advance tech aren't just tools but key players in the recruitment process.

In this dynamic conversation, Mohit shares his transformative insights on leveraging AI-powered solutions and how cutting-edge technologies are streamlining processes, boosting engagement, and reshaping the entire recruitment landscape.

Spoiler alert: It's no longer just about filling positions—it's about crafting a candidate experience that leaves a lasting impression.

You're a big advocate for a positive candidate experience, and you've mentioned how treating a candidate says a lot about a company. How do you see this value aligning with AI in recruitment, especially when it comes to enhancing the candidate experience?

Recruitment is like a 5-step dance! Post the job, attract applications, engage with candidates, assess them, and then boom—make an offer! But it's during these steps that things can get a little "twist-and-turn-y." You could either make someone's day or leave them wondering,

"Did they even like me?"

Here's where AI comes in like the perfect dance partner! Picture this—at the very start, AI tweaks job descriptions to be more bias-free. Then, AI acts like an e-commerce site—remember when you browsed for something and, suddenly, it's like you're being followed by "related product" suggestions? AI does the same in recruitment. It's all about proactive engagement.

But that's not all! AI-powered BOTS step-in as candidate relationship tool, engaging with applicants throughout the process. They provide candidates with relevant information—whether it's interview tips or company insights—and capture real-time feedback. This keeps candidates informed and ensures they feel valued at every step, making the whole dance a lot smoother and more enjoyable.

AI is pretty much becoming a matchmaker for jobs and candidates! But beyond that, how does AI elevate the whole interview and application process?

Here's a use case: No more filling out long, boring forms. The AI scans your resume, creates your profile, and even suggests jobs that fit you—no more "Ctrl + C, Ctrl + V" madness! You talk to the AI about your experience, and it listens like the best job therapist you've ever had.

And the interview? Not just a "Hey, let's schedule you in for next week" call. AI can help you prepare for the interview and even give you real-time feedback. So, it's not just an interview—it's a learning experience. You walk away smarter, even if you don't get the job.

Mohit's
Design-to-Improve Model

IMPROVE · DESIGN · TRAIN · DEFINE · MONITOR
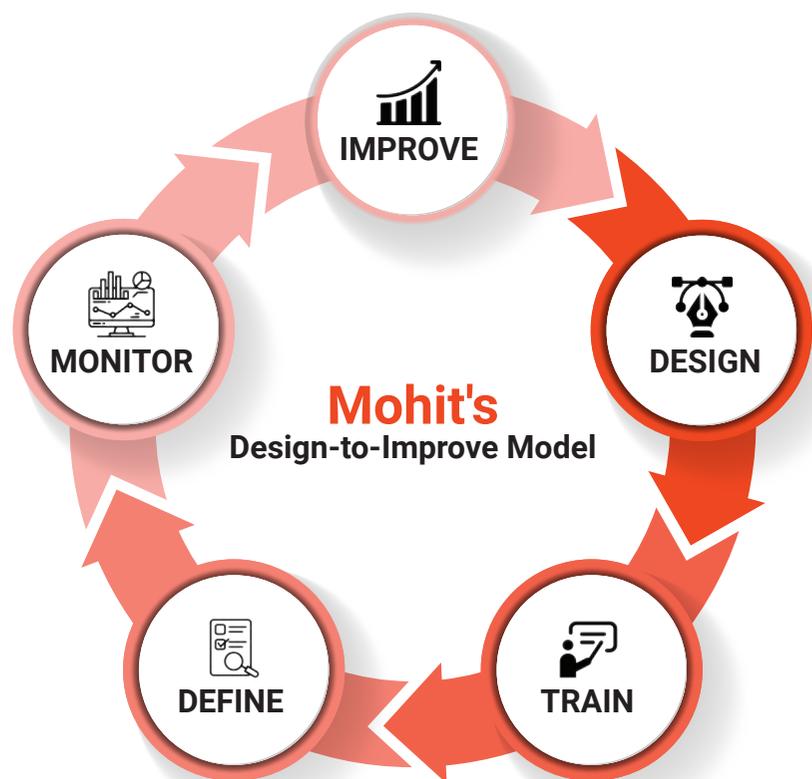
Speaking of learning, you mentioned turning interviews into "learning opportunities." How would that change things for candidates?

Imagine you're in an interview, and regardless of the outcome, you walk away feeling like you've gained something—whether it's advice or insights on where you could improve. We're moving from "just assessing" to creating a learning opportunity for candidates. It's like a free career workshop wrapped in an interview!

Now, you've mentioned a pretty intriguing shift—recruiters becoming more like "career consultants." Can AI help with that?

Absolutely! We're talking about career coaches now! AI looks at a candidate's trajectory—what they've done, what they're great at—and gives my team or the recruiter a cheat sheet of where they could be headed. So, when I call someone, I'm not just like, "Hey, here's a job." I'm saying, "Hey, have you thought about where your career could go next?"

I'm super curious to see how bots can handle this too. Imagine a bot calling you up, not just to tell you about an interview but to help you prepare! And after the interview, it asks for your feedback. So, it's not just AI doing busy work; it's making the process more human.

It sounds like AI is taking over the admin work and letting recruiters do the fun stuff! So, what does this mean for recruiters? How do they stay ahead in this AI-powered world?

Recruiters can focus on being human connectors—building relationships, giving personalised advice, and making that hiring experience memorable.

And here's where the fun begins—recruiters need to start thinking ahead, like 3 years ahead. What will candidates want three years from now? Less time at work? More time for hobbies? AI helps us spot these trends and adapt. So instead of sticking to best practices, we'll be thinking about what's next. Forward-thinking is the new must-have skill.

You've emphasised how interviews and assessments can be more than just evaluations—they can be learning opportunities. Could you share more about how you've put this into action?

Oh, absolutely, it's all about flipping the script. In recent years, there's been a trend of rebranding hackathons into more creative experiences, like Code Jam. It's not just about changing the name—it transforms the entire candidate experience. These events shift from being mere assessments to becoming engaging learning moments where participants walk away with improved skills, even if they don't win the big prize. This evolution, turning assessments into fun and developmental experiences, has completely reshaped recruitment strategies.

How do these tech innovations fit into the broader strategy at KPMG?

It's all part of what we call the 'E-Cube' Strategy for Talent Acquisition—delivering Efficiency, enhancing Experience, and driving Engagement. Think of it as the ultimate recruitment trifecta. We're leveraging technology to streamline processes, but with an equal emphasis on improving the candidate experience and maintaining their engagement throughout.

Mohit has a clear vision for the future of recruitment at KPMG, where technology doesn't just support the process—it transforms it. With AI at the core of this E-Cube strategy, the future looks bright, efficient, and decidedly candidate-centric.

> "
> WE NEED HUMANS/RECRUITERS TO TRAIN AI TO KNOW WHEN TO BACK OFF. NOT EVERY CANDIDATE WANTS A BOT ASKING 100 QUESTIONS OR DIVING TOO DEEP. AI NEEDS TO RESPECT PERSONAL BOUNDARIES - JUST LIKE HUMANS DO. **RECRUITERS CAN LEAD EXERCISES TEACHING THE AI THINGS LIKE FAIRNESS, CULTURAL SENSITIVITY, AND EMOTIONAL SMARTS.** IT'S LIKE GIVING YOUR ROBOT A HEART.

SHEMIN NURMOHAMED

BY BISWAJIT BHATTACHARYA

STRATEGIC INNOVATION AND WOMEN IN TECH:

SHEMIN NURMOHAMED'S

VISION FOR PITNEY BOWES

GET TO KNOW...

SHEMIN NURMOHAMED

President of SendTech, Pitney Bowes

Shemin Nurmohamed, President of Sending Technology Solutions at Pitney Bowes, brings over 20 years of experience in technology leadership. She drives innovation in mailing and shipping technology while championing diversity and fostering inclusive workplaces. Known for her strategic vision, Shemin combines operational excellence with a passion for empowering teams to navigate the rapidly evolving tech landscape, ensuring sustainable growth and customer success.

In an engaging dialogue with, **Shemin Nurmohamed, President of Sending Technology Solutions at Pitney Bowes,** the eminent leader pours her arduous best while sharing insights on leadership, innovation, and the evolving landscape of technology. With a career marked by adaptability and a commitment to inclusivity, Nurmohamed discusses her leadership style, the unique challenges faced by women in tech, and the critical role of human oversight in AI implementation. As Pitney Bowes navigates the complexities of digital transformation, she emphasises the importance of fostering a collaborative culture that embraces change and prioritises client-centric solutions. This interview offers a valuable glimpse into the mindset of a leader dedicated to driving progress in an ever-evolving industry.

How would you describe your leadership style, and how does it align with the company culture at Pitney Bowes?

I would define my leadership style as adaptive. I believe that there isn't one set style that works for all teams. My default style is one of coaching and collaboration. This allows for longevity of the company and for teams that are aligned with the overall direction. However, when we have a critical, time-sensitive item, I convert to a decision-oriented style. This allows us to move with speed.

At Pitney Bowes, we do the right thing the right way and that never changes. This includes providing people with the time and space for diversity of thought, experience and point of view. I think we as a company are known for being nice and polite, and although that certainly has its advantages, it can mean it slows things down. To tackle that, in our decision cadence meetings we have become comfortable in having a dissent and a voice to be heard and accepted. However, once a decision has been made everyone commits and executes.

In an interview, you said, "Adaptability is crucial." Can you share an example of a recent challenge Pitney Bowes faced and how the company adapted to overcome it?

Our company was founded in 1920, so naturally there are changes that occur in the market requiring our business model to also change. Recently, we faced a significant challenge in the logistics sector, which prompted us to reassess our strategy. We made the strategic decision to exit the physical logistics business for the ecommerce segment. This was not merely a reaction to market pressures but a proactive step to refocus our efforts on a much larger opportunity — the digital space for ecommerce.

In this context, we launched **ShipAccel**, a cutting-edge SaaS solution specifically designed for ecommerce shippers. This new platform not only aligns with our long-standing expertise in technology but also enhances our ability to provide innovative solutions that meet the evolving needs of our customers. By pivoting towards digital solutions, we are better positioned to support ecommerce business-es in streamlining their operations and improving their shipping processes.

These changes are a testament to the resilience and commitment of the teams across Pitney Bowes. They illustrate our ongoing dedication to not just keeping pace with industry trends but leading the charge in areas where we have always excelled. *Adaptability is not just a concept for us; it is ingrained in our culture* and essential to our continued success in an ever-changing marketplace.

As a leader yourself, what challenges do you think are unique to women in tech, and how can these be addressed by industry leaders? Could you describe a situation where your perspective as a female leader brought a unique solution to a challenge at Pitney Bowes?

I've always said that opportunities are all around us if we are open and receptive to them. I feel as a female leader that I am in a unique position to make that extra effort of encouragement to women who are earlier in

> "
> I REMEMBER A STUDY BY HEWLETT PACKARD THAT TOOK MEN AND WOMEN OF THE SAME CALIBER TO APPLY FOR A PROMOTION. **WHEN MEN ACHIEVED 60% OF THE CRITERIA, THEY APPLIED BUT WOMEN ONLY APPLIED IF THEY ACHIEVED 100% OF THE CRITERIA.** I THINK OF THE NUMBER OF TIMES THAT WOMEN HAVE DISMISSED ROLES SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T THINK THEY WERE QUALIFIED, AND I WANT TO FIX THAT.

career. I will take one-on-one meetings with new hires and have an open-door policy where people can meet with me to discuss their career, or I can share my story. As someone who did not have a linear career path, I find it helps sharing how your idea of success can change over time. However, *the biggest lesson is that you won't know what that success looks like until you try*.

Throughout my career, I have observed how networking is an important steppingstone to success.

The India Center has been pivotal in Pitney Bowes' innovation efforts. Talk about its progress. How do you envision its role evolving in the next few years, particularly in global operations?

The **India Centre** has grown to become a strategic innovation centre for Pitney Bowes and a core driver of strategic innovation with an emphasis on client centricity. The teams provide 24/7 support, enhance operational efficiency through automation and foster a collaborative ecosystem that helps the entirety of the company. It is because of the prioritisation of culture and ongoing investment in our employees that we are recognised with awards like Best Company to work in India 2024 by Great Place to Work, a list we have been included in for eleven years.

Going forward, they will continue to spearhead new ventures in AI, generative technologies and other transformative solutions, effectively positioning itself as a global leader in technology and innovation.

A recent study talked about the global workforce facing a 'techsistential' crisis due to the shortage of AI expertise, with the current supply of AI skills falling short of future demand. How do you believe employers, particularly in the shipping and mailing sector, can proactively address this skill gap and ensure their workforce is

> "
> I ALSO NOTICED THAT MANY OF MY FEMALE COLLEAGUES WERE UNABLE TO ATTEND NETWORKING EVENTS AS THEY WERE MOST OFTEN OCCURRING IN THE EVENINGS. THEREFORE, **WHEN I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY, I CHANGED THOSE NETWORKING SESSIONS TO MID-DAY ONES AND SUDDENLY WE HAD SIGNIFICANTLY MORE WOMEN IN ATTENDANCE.** I BELIEVE THAT AS A FEMALE LEADER, MY UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE IS WHAT BRINGS ABOUT THESE TYPES OF CHANGES ULTIMATELY RESULTING IN MORE INCLUSIVE WORK CULTURES.

prepared to thrive in an AI-driven environment?

As with any innovation, those unique skills are always in demand. Our philosophy at Pitney Bowes has been to acquire people with the best skills around a new technology and then have them train our other employees to use that technology too. First and foremost, it's important to attract people who are eager to learn, want to work hard, and have done their research and therefore understand the opportunity we have with AI. That talent is crucial—but not only those with the core skills but also the ones who have character, competency, and curiosity in general. Specific to the shipping and mailing sector, AI is a key skill for taking large volumes of data and information to generate sending recommendations that deliver value. Since there is a shortage of people with that level of AI expertise, we hire a few that have the desired knowledge and skill to train the many others on our teams. Then, they can execute collectively and apply those skills in unique ways that deliver specifically for our clients and our business.

Everyone talks about AI's benefits, but have you had a 'not-so-glamorous' AI moment at Pitney Bowes? Something where the tech didn't quite live up to the promise, but it provided a valuable lesson along the way?

We implemented a **chatbot** powered by AI on our website to assist clients with their inquiries. Initially, we encountered some challenges; there were instances where the chatbot provided incorrect or overly vague responses. While these inaccuracies were minor, accounting for less than 1% of total interactions, they highlighted the necessity of human oversight. Such an experience reinforced the idea that while AI can

enhance efficiency, it isn't infallible. We learned the importance of regularly reviewing and refining the chatbot's interactions to improve its accuracy and effectiveness. *Additionally, we recognised that user expectations often exceed what AI can deliver.* Rather than aiming for perfection, we focused on continuous improvement, using insights from human interactions to guide the chatbot's development.

Ultimately, this 'not-so-glamorous' moment highlighted our commitment to integrating AI as a complementary tool to human expertise. By ensuring that our teams remain involved in the process, we can leverage AI to enhance customer experiences while mitigating its limitations. This has become a key part of our approach, ensuring that technology serves to **empower our workforce** rather than complicate it.

A Randstad report from this year revealed that 56% of talent leaders feel unprepared, with digital transformation moving at a pace they find difficult to keep up with. Do you share this concern? If so, how do you think employers can better embrace this rapid shift while ensuring they aren't left behind?

You don't get to be a company that lasts over a hundred years without some sort of transformation. Whether it be a transformation of business model, market disruptions, client changes, acquisitions and divestitures or leadership changes, there are several factors that can lead to necessary transformation. What stands the test of time is prioritising innovation. When I say innovation, I mean investing in innovation that has an ROI and outcome for the business and the client, or as I internally call

it practical (vs academic) innovation.

At Pitney Bowes, we have an annual tradition of celebrating the top innovation across the company in three categories **continuous, process** and **disruptive innovation.** Those nominations reflect a number of innovative products, systems, solutions, etc. and demonstrate how important it is to both transform and embrace those transformations. Our innovation is also being celebrated externally. This year we were named in **Fortune's America's Most Innovative Companies of 2024** list.

With AI progressing at breakneck speed, do you every think we might reach a point where we are training AI to solve AI-created problems? It's an intriguing paradox. How do you see Pitney Bowes ensuring that AI continues to serve, rather than complicate, your business processes?

I think it's important to remember that AI is not new. It's been around for decades, but GenAI is new and how it's incorporated into everyday language.

Together, they constantly iterate to solve the client's problem with the help of AI and without creating new layers of complexity.

However, what's important is that the human stays involved throughout, which is what prevents AI-created problems. This ongoing collaboration allows us to adapt quickly to any issues that arise and ensures that AI applications are aligned with our strategic goals. By fostering a culture where human insight complements AI capabilities, we can continue to enhance our business processes and maintain a focus on delivering value to our clients.

A Harvard researcher's famous quote, "AI won't replace humans—but humans with AI will replace humans without AI" has sparked widespread conversations. While future

> " AS AI HAS BECOME MORE MAINSTREAM, THERE IS AN INCREASING DESIRE TO USE THIS TECHNOLOGY, WHICH IS A GOOD THING, BUT AS YOU POINT OUT, IT CAN ALSO LEAD TO AI-CREATED PROBLEMS. TO AVOID THIS, WHEN USING AI, YOU NEED HUMAN INTERVENTION. **IN THE CASE OF OUR BUSINESS, OUR TEAMS THAT USE AL FULLY UNDERSTAND A CLIENT'S WORKFLOW, THEIR INDUSTRY, AND THEIR PAIN POINTS.** THEY ARE ALSO AWARE OF THE CHANGES THAT WILL BE COMING TO THE MARKETS IN WHICH THESE CLIENTS PLAY.

jobseekers will likely possess AI fluency, today's reality sees thousands of employees facing layoffs under the guise of 'workforce realignment.' How do you think we can bridge this gap and support employees until widespread AI-based education becomes the norm? What steps can organisations take to ensure that the workforce transition is more humane and inclusive?

First and foremost, data is crucial. I think companies need to first unify their data and create a single source of truth so that when combined with AI, it will be more effective. This will require people who understand the data to be heavily involved. It's important to think bigger picture and build that roadmap so that you have your sights set firmly on desired outcomes and can therefore accomplish goals more quickly.

I think the positioning of AI is also important. It should be considered a tool that companies leverage to optimise their business objectives so they can achieve more, faster. This would give them differentiated advantage. By achieving goals more quickly, a business can move into other growth areas more quickly. The equation should not be, "_can I do the same work with AI with less people?_"—it should be, "_how can I execute more of my roadmap with the same number of people with the addition of AI?_" Again, that aspect of human intervention is key in preventing AI-created problems.

ABHISHEK MISRA ON ROCKWELL AUTOMATION INDIA EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY AS AN ALLY AND NOT AN ADVERSARY

GET TO KNOW...
ABHISHEK MISRA

Head of HR at Rockwell Automation India

Abishek Misra, Head of Human Resources at Rockwell Automation India is a thinker, influencer, implementer and super resilient with almost 20 years of experience across HR Generalist & COEs and business roles in areas of Talent Management (including strategic hiring), Change Management, Leadership Coaching, Learning & Development, Policy Review & Design, Lean Sigma in HR, IR/Employee Relations, Compliance and Operations/Commissioning; across FMCG, BFSI, Healthcare, Oil & Energy and Automation industries.

In a world where people have polarising opinions on the increasing influence of technology, Abhishek Misra advises that the key to advancement is to accept tech as a friend rather than a rival. In this special interaction with All Things Talent, the Head of Human Resources at Rockwell Automation India shares his experiential knowledge on championing people through technology, diversity and key initiatives of Rockwell that cater to healthy talent acquisition and retention strategies.

With almost 20 years of experience in the HR industry, can you share some of the most significant changes you have witnessed in HR practices over the years? How have these changes influenced your approach to HR at Rockwell Automation?

There has been a steady evolution in the space of HR, primarily due to key events in the last few years. One, of course, is the pandemic, followed by the ongoing geopolitical developments. Additionally, there's been a heightened focus on the environment and sustainability. These issues have significantly impacted the way organisations, countries and global priorities are shaping up.

From an HR perspective, particularly in our sector, the focus on digitalisation and automation has increased significantly. This has led to a growing demand for services and skills like AI, ML, virtual reality, augmented reality, and automation skills. Another impact is the growth in certain industries, such as the electric vehicle ecosystem and the semiconductor industry, driven by the digitalisation of everything and a **focus on sustainability.**

Organisations are also looking to reduce their carbon footprint, leading to a demand for greener technologies and green skills. These trends are not just about new technologies or skills but about the coexistence of these technologies with human intelligence. *I believe these technologies will complement and enhance human intelligence rather than replace it.*

Speaking of the changes, I have observed, I'd say that apart from functional and soft skills, one of the biggest skills now is how comfortable people are with adopting technology. This is a crucial factor in hiring decisions. Technology should not be seen as a competitor but as a companion; on whom to rely upon. Change management is another critical aspect we look for, as many changes are happening globally that reshape organisational contexts. Learning agility is also vital, as people need to continually **'unskill' and 'reskill'.**

> ❝
>
> **OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS,** WE HAVE INCREASED OUR GENDER DIVERSITY BY 9 PERCENTAGE POINTS, NOW AT 25%, WHILE DOUBLING OUR OVERALL HEADCOUNT.

Considering the competitive landscape for talent in the manufacturing sector, how does Rockwell Automation differentiate itself from other employers to attract and retain top talent? Can you share any

successful recruitment campaigns or initiatives that have made a significant footprint?

We differentiate ourselves by clearly articulating our purpose and strategic direction early in the candidate journey. This is particularly important for Gen Z, who prefer purpose-driven organisations. Offering a bouquet of benefits, we emphasise our culture, opportunities for innovation, community service programs, and well-being initiatives, ERGs, which include physical, emotional, mental and financial well-being.

For example, our campus hiring program has significantly evolved over the last five years. We now hire 80 to 100 early career talents from multiple institutes, focusing voraciously on female talent, with 50% of our campus hires being women. we have also successfully attracted specialised talent in areas like cybersecurity and semiconductor skills through structured onboarding programs and have generated impressive numbers w.r.t. our competitors in the same verticals. Not only attracting, we ensured that we retained them. Our onboarding plans had 30-60-90 plans for new members, assimilation programs and buddies assigned to them for a delightful onboarding experience.

McKinsey's 'Diversity Wins' report states that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 25% more likely to have above-average profitability. How does Rockwell Automation incorporate diversity and inclusion into its HR strategies, and what initiatives have you found most effective over the years in

fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace in India?

We have a very evolved diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) purpose and leadership group. We focus on hiring and empowering female talent, with significant progress in our diversity hiring agenda. Over the last five years, we have increased our gender diversity by 9 percentage points, now at 25%, while doubling our overall headcount. Our reestablish program focuses on hiring women who took a career break, providing them with bridge experiences to stabilise and integrate into Rockwell.

Creating an inclusive culture is another key focus. Through key initiatives like the following, we are doing our best to build a pan-inclusive environment.

- The **Unconscious Bias Workshop** trains managers and leaders to hire without the intervention of prejudice or partiality,
- The **Managing Across Differences Programme** imparts training to maintain an inclusive culture while managing homogenous teams
- The **Allyship Programme** under which leaders sponsor the career development of select women's talent.

How is Rockwell Automation leveraging technologies in its HR operations? Can you talk about instances or campaigns where such results added to the company's benefit?

During the pandemic, we transitioned to the human capital management platform **'Workday,'** which includes numerous AI-enabled functionalities. This shift significantly improved our HR operations. We also introduced an AI-driven recognition platform integrated with existing technology, enhancing the employee experience. This platform allows managers

and employees to instantly recognise achievements via MS Teams, streamlining the recognition process.

Another major initiative was our collaboration with Qualtrics for our annual **Global Voices Employee Engagement Survey.** This partnership provided us with extensive analytics capabilities, enabling HR and managers to dissect engagement data across various demographics, such as gender, generation, location and tenure. This data-driven approach empowered leaders to implement targeted interventions to improve engagement and retention.

We also **automated our talent acquisition processes** by integrating our applicant tracking system with Workday, creating a seamless experience for candidates, hiring managers, and HR. This integration eliminated the need to navigate multiple platforms during the hiring process, significantly enhancing the overall experience.

Another thing I'd like to highlight is that we integrated our learning platform with **Workday Learn,** enabling employees to upskill in a flexible and agile manner. They can access learning materials anytime, anywhere, including during their commute through mobile devices. This integration allows employees to learn _what they want, when they want, and how they want,_ without being confined to traditional classroom-like settings.

An interesting development that we have dome is that by collaborating with various vendors, we introduced **well-being apps and wearables** to support our employees' physical, emotional and financial well-being. we have partnered with Virgin Pulse for gamified physical well-being, tracking steps and habits. The mind-calming app, known as **'Calm'**, supports mindfulness. Workplace Options provides resources for emotional well-being. These collaborations enhance our employees' physical, mental, and

emotional health.

These resources are often gamified, fostering a competitive yet supportive environment that promotes overall well-being, we have provided employees with comprehensive resources to enhance their well-being holistically. Driven by advanced HR technologies, they have collectively enhanced the employee experience, making our HR operations more efficient and effective.

> **"**
> WITH THE RIGHT APPROACH, PEOPLE CAN COEXIST WITH TECHNOLOGY. **THE KEY IS TO ADOPT AND LEARN NEW TECHNOLOGIES RATHER THAN FEAR THEM.**

Given the rapid technological advancements and automation in manufacturing, job security can often be a concern for employees. How does Rockwell Automation address these concerns, and what strategies do you employ to reassure your workforce about their future with the company?

There's a common _myth_ that technology will take away jobs, and I believe that's far from the truth. With the right approach, people can coexist with technology. The key is to adopt and learn new technologies rather

than fear them. This involves learning agility, the ability to unlearn and relearn things, which is similar to the un-skilling and reskilling I talked about earlier.

For instance, content writers or copywriters might worry about AI taking over their roles. However, by understanding how AI can aid their work, they can evolve from mere content or document writers to narrative creators, focusing on synthesising and presenting content convincingly. Their roles would rather be enhanced than diminished. The go-to strategy is to encourage continuous learning and adaptability, showing employees how technology can chaperone and elevate their roles rather than replace them.

At Rockwell, we have several initiatives to support job security:

- **Rockwell Automation University** updates employees on the latest functional skills.
- **Seismic** focuses on technological advancements, providing updated content to enhance technological capabilities.
- **Workday Learn** targets leadership and behavioural skills, offering training on adapting to change and managing conflict.

These platforms ensure our employees stay ahead of market trends, securing their future with us

According to a study, the technology and the physical/manual industries are among the top 3 marred the most by ageism. How does Rockwell Automation address ageism within its workforce, ensuring that both seasoned professionals and younger employees are valued and their contributions recognised?

At Rockwell Automation, we are deeply committed to fostering a workplace that values and recognises the contributions of all employees, regardless of age. One of the ways we address ageism and ensure the successful coexistence of a multi-generational workforce is through our ongoing studies focused on understanding the dynamics within our diverse organisation. As we speak, we are examining best practices and insights from the broader industry to inform our approach to creating an inclusive environment where Gen Z, Millennials, and Baby Boomers can thrive together.

A key initiative in this effort is the establishment of Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) that cater to the unique needs and passions of different cohorts within our workforce. For example, we have the Advanced Young Professionals group, which is tailored to the aspirations and interests of our younger employees, particularly those from Gen Z. This group provides a platform for them to connect, share experiences, and pursue their passions.

We also support employees who are at different life stages through ERGs like **PACT (Parents and Caretakers)**, which focuses on those balancing their professional responsibilities with caregiving duties, whether for children or elderly family members. This group provides support and resources to help these employees manage the challenges that come with such responsibilities.

Additionally, we have ERGs like **RASWE (Rockwell Automation Supporting Women Engineers)**, which is dedicated to supporting women in engineering roles, ensuring they have the resources and community they need to succeed.

Beyond these groups, we also embrace mentoring and reverse mentoring programmes. Traditional mentoring involves seasoned leaders guiding less experienced individuals, a practice we continue to uphold. However, we have also introduced reverse mentoring, where younger employees, such as those from Gen Z, mentor more experienced colleagues on emerging trends in society, technology, and other areas. This two-way exchange of knowledge helps bridge the generational gap and fosters mutual respect and learning.

These initiatives are part of our broader strategy to create a workplace where every generation feels valued and can thrive. By embracing the strengths and perspectives of all age groups, we are building a more inclusive and dynamic organisation

How is Rockwell Automation leveraging AI and machine learning technologies to enhance diversity in its recruitment processes, ensuring a more inclusive and unbiased selection of candidates? Can you share examples for the same?

At Rockwell Automation, we are leveraging AI and machine learning technologies in several ways to enhance diversity in our recruitment processes, ensuring a more inclusive and unbiased selection of candidates. One of the primary initiatives involves creating role profiles that are completely gender-agnostic. We recognise that the foundation of an inclusive recruitment process begins with job descriptions that do not inadvertently favour a particular gender. Hence, we avoid using gendered language and focus on crafting profiles that appeal to all potential candidates equally.

In addition, we utilise AI tools integrated

into our Workday system to ensure a balanced hiring mix. These tools help us achieve a well-balanced channel mix and maintain a diverse pool of candidates, particularly concerning gender diversity. We also employ tracking mechanisms within Workday to monitor the composition of our hiring panels. A key feature of this system is its ability to flag any lack of diversity within a hiring panel, prompting leadership to reconsider the panel's composition if it does not reflect the inclusivity we strive for.

Moreover, we have implemented a hiring enablement programme specifically designed to help our leaders and managers recognise and eliminate unconscious biases during the hiring process. This programme, run on an automated platform, plays a crucial role in educating our leadership on the nuances of bias, ensuring that these biases do not influence our recruitment decisions.

These technological advancements are integral to our commitment to driving our diversity agenda with unwavering dedication.

Agile talent management allows companies to respond swiftly to market changes. What specific agile practices have you adopted, and how have they impacted your talent management strategies?

At Rockwell Automation, we have embraced agile talent management practices to respond swiftly to the evolving demands of the market. One of the most innovative initiatives we have implemented is a talent marketplace platform we proudly named '**E-B-G-I-L-E**', a portmanteau of '**education**' and '**agility**'. This platform, entirely conceptualised and developed in India, serves as a stretch assignment

platform designed to cater to the needs of today's workforce, particularly those who crave rapid learning and instant gratification.

We recognised early on that many in the current generation prefer short-term roles where they can quickly learn and then move on to new challenges, rather than remaining in the same position for several years. To address this, the EBGILE platform allows leaders and managers to post short-term assignments—typically lasting between six to eight weeks—that any employee across various functions and business units can apply for. These assignments are in addition to their regular responsibilities, hence the term 'stretch assignments.'

The impact has been significant. Employees not only acquire new skills through hands-on experience but also have the opportunity to network and increase their visibility within the organisation, transcending their immediate functional areas. This approach has been particularly successful in India, and due to its effectiveness, we have received support from our Asia-Pacific leadership to roll it out across the region.

This agile practice has greatly enhanced our

talent management strategy, ensuring that our employees remain engaged, continuously learning, and well-prepared to meet the dynamic needs of the market. It's a homegrown initiative that we're excited to expand further, showcasing how agile practices can transform talent management on a broader scale.

Is there any interesting trivia or a fact you'd like to share from the hiring industry?

One piece of trivia that I often reflect on, drawn from my own career journey, is the significance of exploring unconventional or non-traditional methods of hiring. Often, the talent you're searching for can emerge from the most unexpected places.

Reflecting on my experience, a trivia from the hiring industry that also serves as a message is to remain open to out-of-the-box thinking and to be willing to consider candidates from non-traditional backgrounds. Sometimes, the best talent is found where you least expect it. By broadening your perspective and exploring unconventional sources, you may discover exactly the kind of talent that your organisation needs.

DEEPAK DOBRIYAL ON BIRLASOFT NAVIGATING THE AI WAVE TO UNLOCK EMPLOYEE POTENTIAL

GET TO KNOW...
DEEPAK DOBRIYAL

Sr. VP of Global Talent Management at Birlasoft

Deepak Dobriyal is a full stack Human Resource Leader with more than 26 years of experience in helping organisations/businesses to define their people strategy and execute it successfully. He has been part of large Enterprise Transformation programs, expert on organisational culture, designed Talent Management interventions to fuel business growth and managed multiple M&A integrations successfully.

With a prescient vision on the possibilities of Artificial Intelligence, Deepak Dobriyal, Sr. VP of Global Talent Management at Birlasoft, shares his forward-thinking perspectives in a candid conversation with All Things Talent. In this discussion, Dobriyal explores the transformative role of AI in enhancing employee sentiment analysis and engagement. Emphasising Birlasoft's innovative approaches, Dobriyal highlights how AI-driven insights are pivotal in nurturing a positive organisational culture and driving strategic HR practices. Furthermore, he explores the evolving landscape of tech hiring and the critical skills essential for fresh talent in an AI-driven economy, highlighting Birlasoft's proactive initiatives in talent development and workforce capabilities.

How does Birlasoft use AI to analyse employee sentiment and engagement levels, and how are the insights obtained from such analyses used to nurture a positive organisational culture?

Organisations leverage AI and Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques to analyse employee feedback derived through various communication channels. Employee sentiment analysis plays a crucial role in understanding the emotions and opinions of employees within an organisation. By analysing feedback from various sources such as surveys, emails, and performance reviews, organisations can gain valuable insights into employee attitudes and engagement.

These insights allow organisations to address areas of concern identified through negative sentiments, reinforce strengths highlighted by positive sentiments, tailor

initiatives for improving employee experience, and enhance communication and feedback mechanisms. This helps to promote a culture of open dialogue and continuous improvement—ultimately nurturing a more positive and engaged organisational culture.

NLP empowers organisations to uncover deeper insights from unstructured text-based data, leading to actionable HR decisions. By leveraging sentiment analysis, companies can create a more engaged and productive workforce.

At Birlasoft we do multiple interventions to gather insights on employee sentiments and engagement:

- **Employee connects —** We connect with employees both virtually and in person through chatbots, polls and Focussed Group Discussions (FGDs). These inputs are analysed through a monthly and quarterly heatmap. Areas of concern are identified which are addressed through regular employee town halls. An AI and machine learning engine has been deployed on this data that will help us predict employee sentiment in the near future.

- **Culture Immersion sessions —** Regular leadership culture immersion sessions are held to reinforce the cultural tenets. Cultural assimilation is then measured on a periodic basis through employee polls on various aspects of the culture. An AI-based tool helps analyse the culture adoption and areas of improvement.

- **Employee engagement surveys —** Our bi-annual employee engagement survey is run for a random sample of employees. This data generates a dashboard and an employee engagement report which helps us understand the engagement levels and the concern areas.

- **Post-exit surveys —** Our post-exit survey

covers the employees who have left the organisation in the previous 6 months — among other things we try and understand through this survey the cultural aspects, what the employees liked about the organisation and things that they would want to improve.

All these data points are fed into a data lake which will in the near future provide us insights on engagement levels, predict attrition and most importantly identify the areas that need improvement.

> **" WE USE AI-POWERED CHATBOTS FOR CANDIDATE OUREACH, INTERVIEW SCHEDULING, AND OTHER REPEATABLE TASKS, SAVING APPROXIMATELY 30-35% OF A RECRUITER'S TIME.** THIS NOT ONLY ENHANCES THE OVERALL EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE BUT ALSO ENSURES ACCURATE DATA STORAGE, MITIGATING TRACEABILITY COCERNS IN CANDIDATE INTERACTIONS.

What do you foresee as the future role of Artificial Intelligence in shaping HR practices at Birlasoft,

particularly in response to evolving workforce dynamics and technological advancements?

AI can play a major role in significantly transforming HR practices at Birlasoft. It will streamline talent acquisition by automating resume screening, candidate sourcing, and initial assessments, thereby reducing biases and promoting diversity. In fact, AI tools have already proven their efficiency by processing *over 9,000 resumes and connecting with potential candidates within just three hours.*

We use AI-powered chatbots for candidate outreach, interview scheduling, and other repeatable tasks, saving approximately **30-35%** of a recruiter's time. This not only enhances the overall employee experience but also ensures accurate data storage, mitigating traceability concerns in candidate interactions.

Birlasoft's commitment to upskilling will be amplified by AI-based personalised learning platforms that facilitate effective reskilling. Collaborative efforts with Microsoft on GenAI capabilities underscore our dedication to leveraging AI for organisational agility. As Birlasoft revolutionises HR practices with AI, maintaining human oversight and ethical considerations will be paramount to ensuring responsible AI integration. Our focus remains on achieving a harmonious blend of technological efficiency and job preservation for our human workforce.

Given the recent downturn in tech hiring within the IT industry, attributed in part to AI advancements impacting lower-level coding roles traditionally fulfilled through campus placements, what lies ahead for campus placements? How can Birlasoft adapt its recruitment strategies and identify crucial new skill sets for fresh talent?

The increasing adoption of AI in the tech industry has somewhat impacted hiring trends. While AI is automating routine tasks, demand for specific skill sets is the need of the hour. However, this shift presents an opportunity for companies like Birlasoft to adapt their talent acquisition strategies and prioritise new skill sets crucial for fresh talent in an AI-driven landscape.

As Birlasoft embraces emerging technologies like AI and GenAI, the company recognises the need to cultivate a workforce equipped with skills that complement and augment these advanced technologies.

Some of these essential skillsets include:

- **Analytical and critical thinking —** Proficiency in analysing complex data, identifying patterns, and deriving insights will be invaluable in an environment where data-driven decision-making is paramount.

- **Problem-solving and creativity —** While AI excels at automating routine tasks, human ingenuity is still essential for tackling novel challenges and developing innovative solutions. Fresh talent with strong problem-solving abilities and creative thinking will be highly valued.

- **Adaptability and continuous learning —** The rapid pace of technological change necessitates a workforce capable of swift adaptation and embracing lifelong learning. Fresh talent with a growth mindset and a commitment to upskilling continuously will be an indispensable asset.

- **Interpersonal and communication skills —** As AI automates more technical tasks, human skills such as effective communication, collaboration, and emotional intelligence will become increasingly important for fresh talent to thrive in cross-functional teams and client-facing roles.

- **Domain expertise —** While AI can process vast amounts of data, human domain knowledge remains crucial for contextualisation and practical application. Specialised domain expertise in areas like finance, health-care, or manufacturing will be highly valued.

Birlasoft's focus on upskilling initiatives, such as the **Skillfolio Program** and partnerships with platforms like Coursera, positions the company well to cultivate these essential skills in fresh talent and stay ahead of the curve.

> "
> **THE IMPRESSIVE 98% ADOPTION RATE OF SKILLFOLIO WITHIN THREE MONTHS** EXEMPLIFIES BIRLASOFT'S AGILITY AND EFFECTIVE CHANGE MANAGEMENT.

How do you envision the future in terms of your workforce capabilities? What challenges lie ahead and what roadmap is ahead for the tech industry and Birlasoft as well?

The tech industry is navigating a future

marked by both challenges and opportunities. *The swift pace of technological advancements, especially in AI, GenAI, and automation, demands a proactive approach to cultivating a future-ready workforce.*

A primary challenge lies in the perennial need for upskilling and reskilling to keep abreast with emerging technologies. Birlasoft acknowledges this and has implemented several initiatives like **Individual Development Plans (IDPs)** and a comprehensive **Learning and Development (L&D)** charter to promote continuous learning. Partnerships with industry leaders such as Microsoft, SAP, AWS, and Coursera ensure our workforce has access to the latest training resources and certifications.

Birlasoft's Skillfolio initiative establishes a standardised skill taxonomy, serving as a foundation for upskilling, competency building, talent strategy, and career progression. The impressive **98% adoption rate** of Skillfolio within three months exemplifies Birlasoft's agility and effective change management. While challenges remain, Birlasoft's strategies demonstrate a

proactive approach to building a workforce equipped to thrive in the ever-changing tech industry.

We are furthering the skill journey through our talent transformation program which has the following cornerstones:

- **Skill-based decision making** — All key talent decisions like hiring, capability building, career progression, etc. will be anchored on the skills and competencies of the person in the context of the role he/she has.

- **Democratising Career Choices** —

    I. **Open career architecture**
    Employees can choose any career stream and can also change their career stream – provided they build the skills/capabilities accordingly.

    II. **Flexible career pathways**
    Employees will not be restricted to

their own career stream but all movements—lateral, diagonal or horizontal movements will be possible.

    III. Talent Marketplace
    An open talent marketplace that will allow employees to apply for internal roles, transfers to other career streams or even internal gigs.

- **Dynamic capability building —** Dynamic capability building will not just address the current skill/competency gaps but will also help forecast future business needs so that capability building is dynamic and adapts to the business environment.

- **Skill-anchored Rewards —** Our rewards philosophy will also be aligned with the role-skill-competency combination and will reward people accordingly. The pay ranges will be much more granular and closer to the market.

ANUPAMA SRIVASTAVA

BY AKANKSHA THAPLIYAL

ANUPAMA SRIVASTAVA ON THE 'HOW' AND 'WHY' OF EMBRACING TECHNOLOGY TO EMPOWER HR

GET TO KNOW...
ANUPAMA SRIVASTAVA
Head of L&D, Newgen Software

Anupama Srivastava is the head of Learning and Development at Newgen Software. A lifelong learner who has always been inspired by the power of the individual and the changes they can make, she started with a purely technical background in core programming and development but moved into HRD shortly after making a strong and more visible imprint in corporate structures.

There was a time when companies faced the question of 'manpower vs. machinery' while making investment decisions. Not anymore! Technology and human resources complement each other, and both must be developed for any business to grow at an optimum speed. A 2021 McKinsey study stated that by 2030, one in every 16 workers will have to learn new skills and adapt to new roles. Such is the speed of innovation.

HR departments across industries are on a continuum journey of transformation, by adopting automation, data analytics, and digital collaboration tools. The change is led by tech game changers like artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), robotic process automation (RPA) and generative AI (GenAI). The seamless implementation of these technologies enables HR to be agile, competent, and come forth as an effective strategic partner in driving organisational success. Let's look at some of the functions where such transformative journeys have led to empowerment:

Recruitment

Organisations have implemented AI to streamline their recruitment process. It includes screening and shortlisting of candidates based on their responses to online assessments and video-based interviews. The AI system analyses the facial expressions, body language, and choice of words to assess the candidate's suitability for the role. This approach has contributed to reducing the time and cost associated with hiring candidates and even getting the best-fit talent from across the globe.

Engagement and Experience

New-age technologies are enhancing the employee experience by providing more personalised and engaging interactions. For example, employee self-service portals allow employees to access and update their information, apply for leave, and view their benefits without needing to contact HR.

Collaborative Tools for Workforce

Post-covid, there has been an increase of hybrid workplaces and remote work. This has invariably facilitated the adoption of digital collaboration tools. Platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Slack, GitHub, and may more facilitate virtual collaboration, project management, and team communication. It helps in ensuring productivity and team communication in geographically spread teams.

These collaborative tools not only facilitate real-time communication, but also integrate with other HR systems to streamline workflows and ensure that remote employees remain connected and productive. The cloud-based configurable systems ensure that there is no information gap for people who are remotely working.

Development and Growth

Organisations are deploying Learning Management Systems [LMS] for skill development of employees. Relevant AI-powered content modules are curated as self-paced eLearning courses and learning tracks, which are aligned with the role of individuals. While having a certain timeline for completion, the courses give the flexibility to access the learning journey at any time, and from anywhere. In addition to this, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) are being used for immersive training programs, making learning more interactive and effective.

Performance Management and Recognition

Organisations have comprehensive performance management portals to track employee productivity, set goals, and evaluate performance, aligning individual contributions with organisation's objectives. The automation of milestone updates and performance records helps HR managers make prompt evaluations.

Many organisations have integrated an online reward and recognition portal to encourage higher individual and team performances. These portals also provide options of "paying gratitude", or "saying kudos" to colleagues through eCards, thereby promoting team bonding and collaboration.

Wellness, Health, and Safety

Many organisations are leveraging technology to enhance well-being. Wearable devices and wellness apps help monitor employee health, providing data that may be used to develop wellness programs. Additionally, platforms that support mental health offer resources and counselling services to employees, promoting a healthier and more supportive work environment. There are tools for ensuring that workplace safety standards are met and monitored.

HR Process Automation and AI Integration

Process automation enables streamlining of routine and time-consuming tasks such as payroll, leave management, and employee data handling, reducing the administrative burden on HR professionals. On the other hand, AI is being used for more complex tasks such as talent acquisition, performance management, and employee engagement. For instance, AI-powered chatbots can handle employee queries, while machine learning algorithms can analyse employee performance data to provide insights for better decision-making.

HR Analytics for Decision-making

With the entrance of big data and advanced

analytics, HR departments now have access to a multitude of information that can be used to make informed decisions quickly. Data analytics tools help HR professionals track key metrics such as employee turnover rates, engagement levels, and training effectiveness. This data-driven approach enables HR to identify trends, predict future workforce needs, and

develop strategies that align with organisational goals.

To conclude, one needs to know that the adoption of new-age technologies in HR functions is a necessary shift for organisations which are keen to stay competitive in the agile business world. The successful transformation of Coca-Cola's

HR strategy is a shining example. As technology continues to evolve, the potential for further transformation is limitless. This shift is not just about adopting the latest tools but about fundamentally changing how HR operates to drive business growth and enhance employee experiences.

PANKAJ KHANNA

BY AKANKSHA THAPLIYAL

THE DAYS OF TELLING CANDIDATES,

'WAIT FOR A DAY; YOUR OFFER WILL COME,' ARE FADING

GET TO KNOW...
PANKAJ KHANNA

Chief People Officer at Coforge

Pankaj Khanna is the Chief Human Resource Officer at Coforge, bringing over 30 years of expertise in various aspects of Human Resources. He has a proven track record in aligning business objectives with key HR functions, including People Supply Chain, Recruitment and Workforce Management, Global Mobility, and HR Analytics.

While AI continues to automate processes, streamline workflows, and enhance decision-making, the human touch remains irreplaceable. **Pankaj Khanna, Chief People Officer at Coforge,** provides a deep dive into how AI is transforming talent acquisition at the company, and why human judgement remains critical in making key hiring decisions. In this interview, Khanna discusses the evolving role of technology in recruitment, the importance of balancing AI with human expertise, and how Coforge is leveraging AI and machine learning to create a more efficient, candidate-centric hiring process without losing sight of the nuances that only human recruiters can bring to the table.

AI's role in recruitment has evolved from being a buzzword to becoming an integral part of various stages like sourcing, job postings, and interviews. However, opinions on its true impact differ, especially in a complex market like India. How do you view the evolution of AI in recruitment here, particularly its ability to enhance processes without overshadowing human judgement?

Over the past 12 years, AI's role in recruitment has undergone significant transformation, marked by cycles of innovation that have brought new possibilities alongside certain limitations. When AI first gained prominence, its applications in recruitment were vastly different from what they are today, and

organisations are still learning to harness its potential effectively.

A common misconception is that AI will quickly replace manual tasks across the board, especially in areas like sourcing or interviewing. While AI certainly makes repetitive tasks easier, offering multiple solutions to complex problems is not a one-size-fits-all solution. For example, AI can efficiently screen thousands of resumes, but it cannot yet replicate the nuanced understanding required in candidate interviews. This is a challenge that is unlikely to be fully addressed in the near future.

We've seen attempts to automate parts of the interview process, from using AI to analyse tone or body language to assessing responses based on timing. However, such approaches have not succeeded in eliminating the essential role of an interviewer. While AI can help narrow the pool of candidates, the final selection from those shortlisted candidates still requires human insight. Looking ahead, AI is likely to evolve from focusing solely on technical or domain-specific assessments to more nuanced evaluations, such as gauging a candidate's temperament or cultural fit. In a nutshell, while AI could be a powerful tool to support the recruitment process, it cannot replace human judgement—especially in a market as diverse and complex as India.

As AI takes over repetitive tasks in recruitment, talent acquisition professionals will likely see their roles evolve. In your view, how will this shift affect the skills and approaches required from TA leaders? Do you think they will need to become more technologically adept, or will their roles become more specialised in areas that AI

cannot handle? How do you envision the future of TA as it adapts to this changing landscape?

The role of TA professionals is already undergoing significant change. In the next 2-3 years, there will be an increased need for TA professionals to become more agile and technologically adept. Now merely having access to candidate databases is no longer sufficient. Familiarity with a variety of tools—such as LinkedIn, Naukri, and other recruitment platforms—has become essential.

In the future, TA roles will also become more transient, with much briefer interactions. The recruiter will need to make decisions quickly, assessing candidates in short windows of time. Concurrently, there will be a growing expectation from candidates for more transparency and information upfront—what's the company culture like, how will they grow, and benefits. To remain competitive, recruiters must be well-prepared with these details and ready to address candidate inquiries promptly.

What will truly set apart successful TA professionals is their ability to adopt a unique and personalised approach. The days of telling candidates, 'Wait for a day; your offer will come,' are fading. Candidates, especially from younger generations, demand quicker, more tailored responses. **As a result, the future TA leader will shift away from routine processes and focus towards more on personalisation and strategic engagement—ensuring that each interaction stands out.**

Therefore, it will be important for TAs to efficiently parse through the available information, reaching the right candidates, and persuading them to engage with the organisation.

How do you think the candidate's experience is evolving? What do you see changing for candidates in the next 2 to 3 years, especially in terms of their expectations and how they interact with organisations?

Today's candidates are already demanding smoother, faster, and more convenient processes, especially when it comes to interactions with organisations. There is a clear preference for remote interactions whether it's interviews, discussions, or assessments and this trend is expected to grow. While face-to-face interviews may still hold value for making final decisions, Gen Z candidates are comfortable with technology and prefer the convenience it offers. Organisations will need to strike a balance between these evolving candidate preferences and recruitment goals.

Another key change is that candidates now expect more transparency throughout the recruitment process. Candidates now seek immediate clarity on key aspects such as compensation, benefits, and growth opportunities. The traditional approach involving prolonged document submission and waiting for updates is no longer acceptable. This will drive organisations to adopt systems that provide candidates with prompt information and answers during the recruitment process.

The rise of social media has also made candidates more vocal about their experiences. Whether positive or negative, feedback is increasingly shared in the public domain, exposing organisations to heightened scrutiny. This shift towards open feedback, combined with the immediacy of social platforms, will push companies to refine their recruitment processes ensuring candidates feel heard and valued throughout the journey.

Lastly, as more Gen Z candidates enter the workforce, they are bringing with them clear and specific expectations, especially regarding benefits. They seek upfront information what perks such as health coverage, flexibility, mental health support, etc. These expectations are shaping how organisations communicate their value propositions, leading to an increased focus on transparency and alignment with candidate expectations.

In recent times, we've seen AI being integrated into various business processes, from voice recognition to automating transactions. However, certain human qualities—like intuition, empathy, and judgement—seem irreplaceable. From your perspective, what facets of human involvement in recruitment or business decisions should remain untouched by AI? And how do you see the partnership between AI and humans evolving, particularly in such areas?

AI presents us with innovations and options, but at the end of the day, humans provide the context and ethical framework. **Consider something as complex as recruitment: tools like ICATS (Intelligent Coforge Applicant Tracking System), leverage AI and machine learning to predict whether a candidate, based on past applications or roles, would be a good fit.** It offers a 90% match rate by analysing numerous parameters. However, while AI's predictions are impressive, they still require manual intervention to achieve a deeper understanding. AI can identify a candidate's previous roles but it's the human recruiter who interprets whether that progression aligns with our culture, team dynamics, or future needs.

In the end, aspects such as understanding a candidate's motivations, gauging emotional responses, and making ethical decisions—will always need human input. AI enhances these processes by offering data-backed insights, yet it does not replace the nuanced judgements that humans bring to the table. While, AI provides efficiency and options, humans ensure those options are aligned with broader, more complex organisational goals. Overall, there has to be balance between AI and Human intervention.

You've mentioned some of the technological innovations Coforge has implemented. Could you share more details on how these shifts have impacted your talent acquisition process?

Around 3 years ago, we implemented a customised platform designed with AI and ML, significantly reshaping operations. The integrated platform draws data from various talent aggregation sites, social media, and our partner ecosystems. This allows us to have a unified system where everything from talent sourcing to onboarding is streamlined and connected.

For example, all of our assessments and candidate data is stored directly on this platform. This then integrates seamlessly with our payroll and background vetting systems, ensuring we operate with a single version of truth across departments. The platform extends its utility beyond recruitment, tracking employees throughout their journey at Coforge. It supports various stages, including settling into new roles, career progression, and movement across global locations, thus offering a comprehensive employee lifecycle management solution.

We're also constantly testing new technologies and platforms that improve the recruitment process. For instance, we work with platforms that can provide faster, more relevant candidates profiles and insights into communication and articulation skills. Some platforms even optimise our hiring process by analysing data from our previous hirings and offers predictive insights for future recruitments.

One of the biggest challenges we face is keeping our database refreshed. With millions of profiles, data quickly loses its value if not regularly updated. To address this, we have partnered with platforms like LinkedIn and Naukri that helps in maintaining the accuracy and usability of the candidate database.

This technology-driven approach has already yielded positive outcomes, like an increase in our joining rates. While the process is still evolving, there are encouraging signs that the system is making a tangible impact on recruitment and overall talent management.

What are the sorts of challenges that you feel AI should be able to solve for you?

With the widespread adoption of AI across industries, its utilisation will continue to increase, transforming processes, making them more data-driven & effective.

Within the talent acquisition ecosystem, we are excited to see AI's contribution is making more efficient hiring decisions. Few innovations we can look forward to are:

- Tailored job recommendations for candidates & hyper interactive chatbots for smoother interactions.

- Predicted supply forecasting & retention prediction models.

- Tailored candidate pipelines & automated skill assessments.

- AI augmented interviews for real-time behavioral & skill analysis.

- Automated robust pre-screening tools & reference checking processes.

- Bias detection & mitigation for inclusive hiring practices.

As our trust & reliance on AI increases, candidates will benefit from and fairer hiring practices, while organisations will gain a competitive edge by leveraging AI to attract, retain, and develop the best talent.
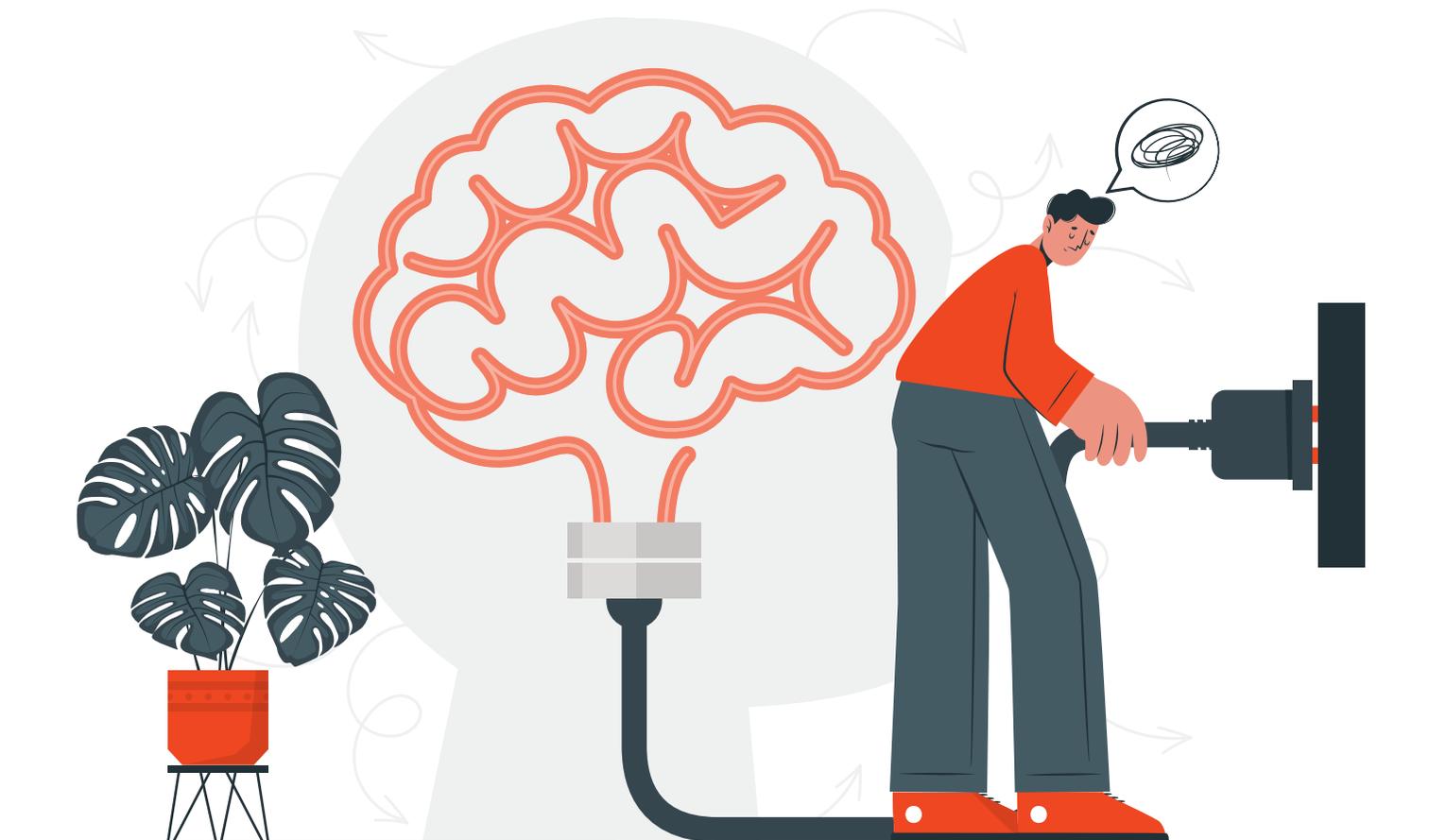
HUMAN-CENTRIC AI:
POOJA MIRCHANDANI'S VISION FOR CRISIL'S WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION

GET TO KNOW...
POOJA MIRCHANDANI
President and CHRO, CRISIL

With more than two decades of solid experience by her side, Pooja is a Global Transformational Leader covering Financial and ITES industry. She is a strength-based agile practitioner and a strong advocate of DEI values. Pooja has worked with the likes of WNS, Standard Chartered Bank and Standard Chartered Finance Limited.

As organisations navigate the complexities of the modern workforce, harnessing the power of AI has become a key differentiator in driving innovation within HR practices. Leading this transformation at CRISIL is the President and CHRO, Pooja Mirchandani, who brings a forward-thinking approach to embedding AI into HR processes while maintaining a human-centric philosophy.

Pooja discusses the profound impact of AI on recruitment, sharing real-world use cases from CRISIL's journey. She elaborates on the role of AI in redefining candidate experience, improving operational efficiency, and addressing challenges such as bias and data privacy. Additionally, Pooja sheds light on the ethical considerations surrounding AI in HR and offers a glimpse into the future of AI-powered hiring ecosystems, particularly in sectors like BFSI, technology, and consulting.

What are your thoughts on the impact of AI on how people are recruited in organisations? Any use-cases that you would like to share?

Generative AI (GenAI) can potentially have multiple use cases in defining the candidate experience. One of the interesting ones is revamping of job description basis changing skillsets and requirements and the subsequent customised pre-screening of candidates aligned with the revamped job description. Traditionally, this activity used to be effort-intensive involving multiple stakeholders and hours of alignment for a role. With GenAI tools, it is possible to get 'an almost there' draft in a few seconds. Similarly, some of the hiring managers have toyed with the idea of generating interview questions using prompts on GenAI platforms. Another area is to use GenAI platforms to strengthen outreach campaigns for precision and clarity. Many organisations have incorporated parsing of automated video interview transcripts to assess competencies objectively. But accuracy, tone, intent, and potential bias remain the key concerns. **At CRISIL, we have attempted to match profiles against job description components such as skillsets, job title, location, etc. However, we do not use AI based tools to eliminate candidates at any stage of hiring.** We have guardrails in place to avoid bias creeping into our recruitment processes.

What would be the key criteria to incorporate AI in the hiring process, systems and culture?

We are driven by our values of integrity, excellence, accountability, teamwork and respect. Given that people are our key IP, we employ multiple levers to ensure GenAI remains an aid to our high-performance, high-inclusion culture. One of the levers is continually reviewing the legal and compliance ramifications of GenAI deployment in all areas of the employee lifecycle, including recruitment. And periodic audits for non-discriminatory practices ensure fair and equitable hiring. The other key lever is to ensure transparency and consent from applicants on GenAI usage. Our career portal clearly states that we are an equal opportunity employer and there is no room for discrimination against any qualified candidate from any identity group. We are particularly mindful of this paradigm considering the mandates of the General Data Protection Regulations in Europe and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act 2023 in India. We consider recruitment as a human-centric intervention where personal touch is aided by GenAI-based tools.

How have you equipped the stakeholders — HR teams, prospective employees and line managers, business leaders to use AI for hiring?

Cross-functional teams have liaised and have undertaken a massive capability building program for GenAI understanding and use-case exploration. More than 75% of our top managers are comfortable with GenAI platforms and access them to arrive at use cases relevant to their area of work. At present, we have powered our recruitment platform with GenAI capabilities. On an informal basis, hiring managers and business leaders could use prompts to generate probable interview questions. Similarly, HR teams are exploring use cases for leveraging GenAI to improve operational efficiency in the areas of candidate and role matching basis non-demographic parameters, job description revamp and outreach campaigns. But we have not yet implemented these. We are taking a cautious approach to deployment by ensuring there are guardrails to avert any adverse impact of GenAI usage at all stages of recruitment. We have embedded human-led interventions to minimise subconscious bias. For example, all our interview panels have at least one-woman employee as a member. Such a holistic approach ensures all stakeholders are equipped with the right set of resources to deliver efficiently and ethically.

How do the leadership and teams manage and mitigate risks while using AI-powered hiring platforms/ mechanisms?

Apart from partnering with subject matter experts (SMEs) both internally and externally, we have developed a framework to assess potential vendors on a 360-degree scale to filter hiring bias. The use cases developed are evaluated by respective business heads and their results are discussed with the internal SMEs to

arrive at the rollout decision. Robust parameters ensure the selected platform has high validity, reliability and safety when performing transactions. Data security protocols are also in place. We regularly monitor identity groups across demographic filters to take note of any anomalies and fix these to ensure equitable representation. Managing personal information is done with great precision and care as we are bound by regulatory requirements and the immense trust reposed by clients. Vendor records are also assessed.

How do you think the

AI-powered hiring ecosystem should evolve in the coming decade? Any clear callouts on related technology and/ market corrections that you foresee for BFSI/ Technology/ Consulting sectors?

The next decade promises to be very interesting. GenAI and our sustainability drive will determine if we can achieve scale, faster hire ratio and better candidate experience. For example, a sustainable platform should consume lesser resources

than a traditional one. Issues of data privacy, algorithm transparency, risks of discrimination and bias amplification, and the ability to measure potential could be addressed to some extent over the next 5 years. With greater usage and adoption, the ecosystem is expected to be 'wiser' and 'an aid to promote efficiency'. Some traditional roles in recruitment (for example, that of a scheduler) could be upskilled to ensure greater human connection with employees and prospective candidates. Data-driven insights can potentially upgrade employee experience starting with recruitment at the initial stage of the employee lifecycle.

STRONGER TOGETHER:
INTUIT'S ANSHUMAN KUMAR ON
HUMANISING AI IN RECRUITMENT AND ENGAGEMENT

GET TO KNOW...
ANSHUMAN KUMAR

Director — Global Brand, Tech & Corporate Communications, Intuit

Anshuman Kumar, explores how AI enhances recruitment, engagement, and diversity. Highlighting the 'Stronger Together' philosophy, he explains how AI complements human judgment to foster inclusive hiring. Intuit's innovative frameworks, like Assessing for Awesome (A4A), use AI to reduce bias and focus on skills-based evaluations. With a strong commitment to responsible AI, Intuit ensures transparency, empowers employees, and strengthens meaningful human connections.

Delving into the transformative role of artificial intelligence in recruitment, employee engagement, and diversity, Anshuman Kumar, Director—Global Brand, Tech & Corporate Communications at Intuit, highlights how AI, when paired with human judgment, complements the brand's 'Stronger Together' philosophy, fostering an inclusive and personalised approach to hiring. Anshuman discusses Intuit's innovative frameworks like Assessing for Awesome (A4A), which leverages AI to reduce bias and emphasise skills-based evaluations. With a firm commitment to responsible AI, Intuit ensures its predictive tools empower employees, maintain transparency, and unlock untapped potential, all while building meaningful human connections.

At Intuit, AI has played a significant role in transforming customer interactions. How do you see those same AI technologies being adapted for internal purposes, specifically in enhancing recruitment strategies and employee engagement?

We take a comprehensive approach to implementing technology that benefits both our customers and employees. One of our most notable initiatives in recruitment is **Assessing for Awesome (A4A),** our hiring process that has helped reduce bias. This one-day assessment emphasises practical skill demonstration over theoretical discussions, enabling us to evaluate candidates more objectively.

We use analytics to track progress on belonging and inclusion metrics. This data-driven approach helps us make conscious decisions about building diverse teams and improving the employee experience. We conduct **Pulse Surveys** twice a year to measure employee engagement.

We are using AI to enhance productivity and content creation across the company, including HR, Communications, and our tech teams. We are particularly excited about how our **GenOS** platform, which powers our customer-facing AI solutions, could improve internal processes. These implementations are aligned with our core values of integrity, customer obsession, and the principle that AI is stronger together.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to revolutionise the hiring process. Some of the benefits include:

- **Increased efficiency and speed** — AI-powered tools automate time-consuming tasks such as résumé screening, scheduling interviews, and candidate assessments, allowing hiring managers to focus on strategic initiatives.

- **Reduced bias** — AI systems can analyse candidate data objectively, minimising unconscious bias and ensuring candidates are evaluated based on their qualifications rather than demographic characteristics.

- **Data-driven decision-making** — AI provides insights into candidate attributes that correlate with job performance, enabling better hiring decisions and improving workforce quality.

As AI technology continues to evolve, it is likely to play an increasingly important role in making hiring processes more efficient, fair, and data-driven.

Given Intuit's commitment to innovation, how is AI helping you shape a more personalised recruitment process in India? Are there unique challenges or benefits that AI brings to the Indian talent landscape that differ from global markets?

As Intuit's second-largest engineering hub with over 1,800 employees, our operations in India are integral to our global AI-driven strategy. In recruitment, we have developed our Assessing for Awesome (A4A) methodology to evaluate candidates more objectively, while maintaining our commitment to diversity and inclusion.

India is distinguished by its vast and competitive talent pool, particularly in the technology sector. We prioritise diversity by leveraging our 'diverse team of Awesome Assessors,' which includes individuals from varied perspectives in gender, background, and experience. We also use our GenOS platform to enhance various aspects of work and have a tech roadmap in place to explore integration opportunities through human-AI collaboration.

India's talent market presents challenges such as high competition and an abundance of options for candidates. We address this by building a strong employer brand and emphasising our commitment to innovation, which resonates deeply with Indian tech professionals.

In the context of employee engagement, AI is often discussed in terms of analytics and sentiment analysis. How does Intuit leverage AI to go beyond surface-level metrics, ensuring deeper, more meaningful engagement with employees?

Intuit leverages AI to enhance, rather than

simply measure, employee engagement. Through twice-yearly Pulse Surveys, we use analytics to understand nuanced aspects of belonging and inclusion.

> ❝
>
> WE PRIORITISE DIVERSITY BY LEVERAGING OUR **'DIVERSE TEAM OF AWESOME ASSESSORS,'** WHICH INCLUDES INDIVIDUALS FROM VARIED PERSPECTIVES IN GENDER, BACKGROUND, AND EXPERIENCE.

What sets us apart is empowering employees to drive change. **Employee Resource Groups (ERGs),** tech culture champions, and other communities use AI-driven insights to implement meaningful transformation. For instance, insights on collaborative dynamics informed our workplace of the future strategy, enabling teams to innovate and work in ways that suit them best.

Our human-centric, data-informed approach has contributed significantly to Intuit being consistently recognised as a great place to work.

With such a diverse range of ERGs, each catering to different communities, how does Intuit ensure that AI tools used in recruitment and employee

engagement don't inadvertently overlook the nuances of these groups? Can you share any specific examples of AI helping to bridge this gap, particularly in the context of India's diverse workplace culture?

Intuit employs responsible AI implementation while ensuring human-centric processes remain integral. For instance, the A4A framework reduces bias by focusing on practical skills rather than traditional metrics. Analytics from Pulse Surveys track belonging and inclusion, ensuring that diverse perspectives are valued.

Our GenOS platform is being adapted to further enhance internal processes, aligning with our core values. In India's diverse workplace culture, combining AI efficiency with human insights has been critical to creating equitable and meaningful experiences for candidates and employees alike.

As a tech leader, you're likely attuned to AI's broader implications. How do you see AI balancing the need for efficiency with maintaining a human touch in recruitment and engagement, particularly within a tech-driven company like Intuit?

At Intuit, we view AI as a tool to enhance human processes, not replace them. Our approach is guided by our **Design for Delight (D4D) mindset,** which prioritises deep empathy with our customers—whether they are candidates or employees.

While AI automates routine tasks and provides data-driven insights, we retain the human element through initiatives such as

our diverse 'Awesome Assessors' panels. This approach ensures objective decision-making while delivering meaningful human interactions throughout the candidate journey.

For employee engagement, AI-powered analytics from Pulse Surveys measure sentiment, but the transformative impact comes from acting on these insights. For instance, our workplace of the future strategy is data-informed but empowers teams to determine what works best for them. Technology enables better human connections, and our focus is always on complementing, not replacing, the human touch.

> ❝
>
> TECHNOLOGY ENABLES BETTER HUMAN CONNECTIONS, AND **OUR FOCUS IS ALWAYS ON COMPLEMENTING, NOT REPLACING, THE HUMAN TOUCH.**

With AI being used for predictive analytics in recruitment and engagement, what measures does Intuit take to ensure that these predictive tools don't shoehorn employees or job candidates into predefined categories, allowing for growth and change?

At Intuit, we are deeply committed to the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence. Our predictive tools are carefully designed to complement human judgement rather

than replace it, ensuring that decision-making remains holistic and fair. We focus on:

- Skills-based assessments
- Ensuring diverse data sets to reduce bias
- Maintaining transparency so candidates understand the process

By taking these measures, we aim to use AI as a tool to unlock hidden potential and foster growth opportunities, ultimately enabling a more inclusive, personalised experience that allows employees and candidates to flourish and evolve without being confined to predefined categories.

While AI's impact is being celebrated worldwide, we have seen major companies slash their workforce by substantial numbers as they adopt AI-driven strategies. Given this trend, how do we continue to champion AI as a positive force when it poses a potential threat to job security?

Approximately **10 percent of our workforce will be leaving Intuit** as part of our strategy to accelerate innovation in critical growth areas such as generative AI, money movement, mid-market growth, and international growth. This decision is NOT about cost-cutting. Intuit remains in a position of strength, and we anticipate overall headcount growth in FY25 and beyond.

We plan to hire approximately **1,800 new employees,** primarily in engineering, product, and customer-facing roles such as sales, customer success, and marketing. For additional details, you can read our blog on this topic.

Could you share any examples where AI has surprised you at Intuit, especially in its ability to impact areas of recruitment or employee engagement that perhaps you hadn't anticipated?

AI has greatly enhanced our diversity efforts in ways we did not fully anticipate. For instance, our Assessing for Awesome (A4A) framework has allowed us to identify and recruit talented candidates who might have been overlooked using traditional recruitment methods. This has been particularly effective in building diverse tech teams.

AI-powered analytics also shape our employee engagement strategies. Insights from Pulse Surveys informed our flexible teams policy, enabling teams to decide when to work remotely or in the office. This approach has boosted productivity and satisfaction while fostering collaboration aligned with our **'Stronger Together'** philosophy.

Our GenOS platform continues to improve recruitment and engagement, with a focus on seamless integration of human-AI collaboration.

SHOULD AI REPLACE EMPATHY?
THE LIMITS
OF TECHNOLOGY
IN HIRING

GET TO KNOW...
NITIN NAHATA

Group CHRO, Gameskraft

Nitin is a TISS 2003 graduate and is currently at Gameskraft as their CHRO. He has played a key role in successfully scaling up startups to 5X growth and in establishing HR as a strategic business partner. Nitin has managed HR Centers of Excellence globally and provided HR Business Partnering support for all Global Support functions. His previous assignments include working with HSBC, Standard Chartered Bank, and Wipro e-Peripherals.

"Fear of the unknown" is an inherent part of human nature. The fact that we are even contemplating whether AI should or could replace roles that involve cognitive or emotional intelligence is proof of this. As our economy evolves - along with our generational mix, industry landscapes, customer needs, and employment structures, we find ourselves questioning whether an algorithm alone could predict a perfect, failproof outcome in a world full of moving pieces. Frankly, I've never been a coder, but I can only imagine the complexity of such an algorithm. I can envision countless variables and no reliable way to predict the validity of this model, even if we somehow manage to create proof of concept for a single day.

Now, imagine the burden of figuring out all of this with a human mind alone. The only solution to that would be a lot of minds being put together under one single roof (virtual or otherwise). In HR parlance, that translates into headcount, which translates into manpower cost. This gets followed by a bigger cost – the cost of not having all these brilliant minds work on the same page at the same pace – in short, the cost of human inefficiencies, which is also a necessary bane.

From where I stand, AI is, and will continue to be, an invaluable tool for eliminating the inconsistencies of being human, allowing us to focus on what truly makes us human. It's safe to say that AI should never replace empathy in hiring or any other area where human connection is key. While AI offers efficiency and objectivity, empathy remains the cornerstone of human interaction, particularly in understanding candidates on a deeper level.

Empathy, at its core, is the ability to understand and share another person's feelings and perspectives. In the context of hiring, empathy extends beyond mere understanding; it involves creating a genuine connection with candidates. This connection can often be the determining factor in identifying a good fit for a role and ensuring that a candidate is poised to thrive within the company culture.

Empathy: The Ability to Truly Understand a Candidate

- Empathy plays a crucial role in various aspects of the hiring process. Firstly, it allows recruiters to truly understand candidates. The hiring process isn't just about matching qualifications to job descriptions; it's about aligning a candidate's values, aspirations, and career goals with the mission of the organisation. An empathetic recruiter can discern whether a candidate is genuinely passionate about the role and the company or merely interested in securing a position. This deeper understanding is something that algorithms alone cannot achieve.

- Another significant aspect of empathy in hiring is its ability to prevent great candidates from being overlooked. Traditional hiring methods, especially those driven by technology, often focus on quantifiable factors such as education, experience, and skill sets. However, some of the most valuable qualities in a candidate, such as adaptability, resilience, growth mindset, etc. are difficult to capture through data. An empathetic recruiter can recognise these traits, even if they are not immediately apparent on a resume, ensuring that potential top talent is not inadvertently passed over.

- Lastly, empathy can make the hiring process less stressful for everyone involved. Imagine being interviewed by an AI avatar. For candidates, knowing that they are being evaluated by someone who genuinely cares about their experiences and aspirations can make a world of difference. For hiring managers, empathy can ease the tension that often accompanies the search for the perfect candidate. By fostering a more human-centered process, empathy leads to more thoughtful and effective hiring decisions, benefiting both the organisation and the candidates.

While AI offers powerful tools for processing vast amounts of data and improving efficiency, it falls short in areas that require emotional intelligence and human connection.

AI Cannot Compete with the Emotional Intelligence of Humans

- One of the primary limitations of AI in hiring is its inability to understand the nuances of a candidate's context. For example, a candidate with multiple job switches or career breaks might be flagged negatively by an AI system. However, an empathetic recruiter might interpret these as indicators of adaptability or resilience, recognising that the candidate's experiences add value rather than detracting from their qualifications.

- Moreover, AI may struggle with understanding company culture - an intangible yet vital aspect of hiring. Every organisation has a unique culture, shaped by its values, mission, and people. While AI can analyse data points, it cannot fully grasp the subtleties of an organisation's ethos. In a fast-paced tech startup, where culture is often a key driver of success, the ability to assess whether a candidate will thrive within that environment is crucial. This assessment requires empathy, which AI simply cannot replicate.

- Another challenge one might encounter

is the challenge in the creation of accurate AI models for hiring. For AI to function effectively, it requires large datasets to build predictive models. However, in agile startups, where roles and success profiles can vary widely, creating these datasets is particularly challenging. The dynamic nature of such environments makes it difficult for AI to consistently identify the right candidates.

Don't get me wrong, I am all in for integrating AI in multiple HR processes, especially hiring. But it's very important to evaluate the relevance of this solution in your organisations and be mindful of the life stage you are at.

Key Questions Every Professional Should Ask When Considering an AI Hiring Solution
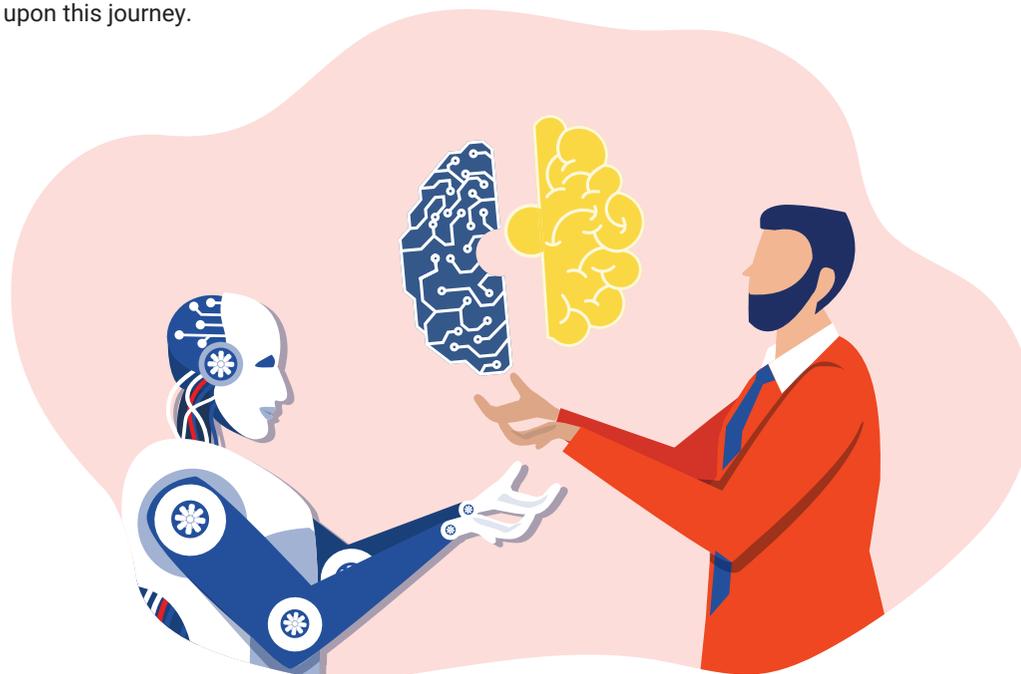
- **Gauging your hiring mix:** Any AI tool will need some setup time to perfect the predictive model for "you". It's never a plug and play. You are committing to a minimum of 2 to 3 years before you can trust the outcomes truly. Being mindful of your hiring needs for at least the next 5 years is a good question to ponder – in terms of junior/ mid/ senior management hiring, or the volumes of the same.

- **Investment cost and Hiring cost RoI:** It's important to understand what you are trying to solve in your current process. Improved TATs, better funneling ratio, cost – a current vs future cost implication can help you with a perspective.

- **Fitment model:** Do you know what works for you? Do you have a competency model in place? Is there a success profiling that exists for you? I have found most of the Indian start-ups or even some of the larger conglomerates do not

invest in knowing this or keeping this information relevant with their changing landscapes.

- **Does your ecosystem have the patience for this journey:** This is not a quick solution which can impress your business leaders in the first month of its implementation. The business leaders will also need to do a lot of thinking before you even implement this solution. Remember, it's also going to be a lot of change management for the whole organisation.

It is important to ponder upon the above points and know whether you and your organisation have the appetite to embark upon this journey.

I am confident that the outcome at the end will make your next 5 years a breeze (hopefully). But the commitment of going through this teething pain is something that I don't see the Indian start-up space adopting any time soon – mostly because the "validity" of both problem statements and solutions is often short lived in these spaces – and they are more accustomed to starting with nimble solutioning.

In the end, the debate over AI's role in hiring is not a zero-sum game. The 80:20 principle is a fitting metaphor for the interplay between AI and human intelligence in hiring. While AI has the potential to automate up to 80% of the process, it is the remaining 20% - the nuanced judgment and emotional intelligence (that humans provide) - that ultimately defines the make or break of hiring **"the right fit".** The real question isn't whether AI should replace empathy in hiring but **how to augment the two effectively.** AI can undoubtedly transform the hiring landscape by streamlining administrative tasks, processing vast datasets, and offering keen insights. Yet, the human touch rooted in

empathy and deep understanding, remains irreplaceable for truly grasping the full spectrum of a candidate's potential. **The most effective hiring strategies** will be those that combine the strengths of both, ensuring that technology enhances the process without losing the human connection that is crucial to finding and nurturing talent.

FINDING THE BALANCE:
WHEN TO RELY ON AI VS. HUMAN JUDGEMENT

GET TO KNOW...
SHWETA SRIVASTAVA

CHRO, Azure Power

Shweta is seasoned hiring professional with 22 years' of extensive experience in building and leading high performing teams . Over the years, she has contributed to the growth of the companies by driving conjoined business and HR interventions, attracting top talent and helping build strong employer brands. She led and worked with multi-cultural and multi-national teams across the globe participating in Mergers & Acquisitions and also divestitures.

In the era of blended workforces, where intelligent machines and humans collaborate to drive business success, it's important to strike a balance. While AI enhances efficiency and streamlines processes, it should complement rather than replace the human element, especially when it comes to showcasing company culture. Technology can set the stage, but it's human interaction that brings authenticity. This balance is especially critical in recruitment, where finding the right talent is essential. AI is revolutionising recruitment by offering greater efficiency and automation, but maintaining the human touch is crucial to ensure we don't lose the essence of personal connection in this digital age. Achieving this balance is key to fully leveraging modern recruitment practices.

AI: The Efficiency Engine

AI excels in tasks that are data-heavy, repetitive, and require speed and accuracy. Here are some areas where AI shines in recruitment:

Screening Resumes: Sifting through hundreds of resumes can be a tedious and time-consuming task. AI-powered tools can analyse resumes for relevant keywords, skills, and experience, quickly identifying the most promising candidates and significantly reducing manual effort.

Scheduling Interviews: Automating interview scheduling eliminates back-and-forth emails and ensures a smoother experience for both candidates and recruiters. AI can find suitable time slots, send invitations, and even manage reschedules.

Candidate Sourcing: AI can scan professional networks, online portfolios, and job boards to identify potential candidates who might not be actively searching for new opportunities. This proactive approach expands the talent pool and helps recruiters discover hidden gems.

Predictive Analytics: By analysing historical data, AI can identify patterns and predict future outcomes. This can be used to forecast hiring needs, anticipate skill gaps, and optimise recruitment strategies for better results.

Skills Assessment: AI-powered platforms can administer and evaluate skills-based tests, providing objective insights into a candidate's abilities and reducing the risk of human bias.

Unbiased Screening: AI algorithms can be designed to focus solely on skills and experience, minimising the impact of unconscious bias based on factors like gender, ethnicity, or age.

Human Judgement: The Irreplaceable Element

While AI excels in efficiency and objectivity, certain aspects of recruitment require the nuanced understanding and empathy that only humans can provide.

Cultural Fit Assessment: Determining whether a candidate aligns with a company's values, work environment, and team dynamics requires a deeper understanding of human interaction and organisational culture. This is where human intuition and observation are crucial.

Interpersonal Evaluation: Assessing soft skills like communication, teamwork, and leadership potential requires observing a candidate's mannerism, emotional intelligence, and ability to build rapport – qualities best evaluated through human interaction.

Final Selection: The final hiring decision involves weighing technical skills, cultural fit, and growth potential – a complex judgement best made with data and intuition. Negotiations and Offers: Salary and benefits negotiations require empathy, understanding, and the ability to build rapport – skills best handled by human recruiters who can navigate sensitive conversations and find mutually beneficial solutions.

Evaluating Potential: Identifying candidates with the potential to grow and evolve within a company requires assessing their adaptability, learning ability, and ambition qualities that are difficult to quantify and often best judged through human interaction.

Interpreting Non-Verbal Cues: Body language, tone of voice, and other non-verbal cues can reveal a lot about a candidate's personality and fit. Humans are naturally adept at picking up on these subtle signals, providing valuable insights that AI might miss.

Fairness and Ethics: While AI can help mitigate bias, it's crucial to remember that algorithms are only as good as the data they are trained on. Human oversight is essential to ensure fairness, ethical considerations, and prevent the perpetuation of existing biases.

A Collaborative Approach to the Future of Recruitment

The key to successful recruitment lies in leveraging the strengths of both AI and human judgement. By automating repetitive tasks, AI frees up recruiters to focus on building relationships, evaluating cultural fit, and making strategic decisions. This collaborative approach allows for a more efficient, data-driven, and ultimately, human-centered hiring process.

As AI technology continues to evolve, it's crucial to remember that it is a tool to augment, not replace, human capabilities. By embracing this collaborative approach, organisations can build stronger teams, foster genuine connections, and create a more human-centric future of work.

Like what you're reading?

Stay connected as we delve deeper into the wisdom shared by industry experts, offering a glimpse into **the intriguing evolution and transformation of the talent ecosystem.**

Get curated updates delivered directly to your inbox.

Just **scan the QR code** below to ensure you're always up-to-date on everything HR-related.

Or write to us at **team@allthingtalent.org**