

AI Can't Replace Leadership (Yet) How to Stop Worrying and Get Busy Leading



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It's hard to go far without hearing about the impacts of Artificial Intelligence. Depending on who or what you listen to, AI is going to range from helping us marginally improve our lives to completely running our lives altogether.

The answer?

AI is going to ruin the world as we know it.

Feel better? You now have a definitive answer. I said it – it's over and we might as well give up. It's time to let the computers run rampant and tell us what to do, how to think, and how to act.

Or....

Just maybe, I'm being a little dramatic. If you've ever seen me speak, you know I have a tendency to be a little sarcastic.

The truth is AI is part of the natural progression of innovation and technology. We didn't know 20 years ago AI would be such a topic of conversation, but we always knew technology would continue to advance and **something** would categorically change the way we operate and how we work. I'm not entirely convinced AI is the next thing. But, it's also increasingly plausible it is. As the saying goes, only time will tell.

The concern I think we should all share related to AI is what appears to be a continuous focus on the non-human aspects of work and leadership. Frankly speaking, we're doing a really good job of it. You don't have to go far to see organizations prioritizing results at all costs over results through engagement. I've worked in places where performance metrics could tell you the entire story of how you were doing compared to goals if you allowed yourself to ignore the story behind those metrics. And the concern with AI is it will be able to replace those aspects of work and do them quicker, better, and with less errors.

But here's the reality I think we need to consider regarding AI: WE are all people.

Last time I checked, we're still human. Our jobs may adjust as we learn how to use AI as a tool, but AI will not replace the purely human components of work and leadership. Why?

Because no one human is alike. We're like fingerprints – or least what we've been told about fingerprints. I personally can't tell the difference between two of them, but I'm told they are all different. And it's the same for us. We will always need to understand each other on a deeper, personal level in order to create the engaged workforce which can utilize AI (as the tool it is) and create the goods and services humans will continue to buy.

So no, I do not believe AI will ruin the world. Yet.

I do believe we can take the opportunity the conversation around AI has created for us to focus more intently on the human-aspects of work and leadership. How?

Focus on building culture and community in the workforce

AI cannot create an engaged workforce. The organizations and leaders who focus intentionally on building an engaged workforce will be positioned to leverage the advantages AI can bring. Unfortunately (or fortunately depending on your position) many continue to act as though company culture builds itself. They continue to act as though people find community at work through a paycheck alone. It's quite the opposite. With a plethora of options to work a variety of different ways today, employees have more options and power than ever before. As a leader, your number one priority should be developing the culture and community where you work. You need to be investing intentional time in your team. Get to know your employees on a more personal level and create intentional opportunities for connection at a team level. Lastly, help energize your employee's growth – whether it be giving stretch assignments or a chance to learn something completely new. They will thank you for the support.

Yes, AI is here and it's likely here to stay. It doesn't have to ruin our entire world, but we need to be ready to amplify the human aspects of work and life which AI can't replace.