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Putting AI to Work: *The Human Side of the Shift.*

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"In the spirit of building longer tables, *not higher walls.*"

THE LONGER TABLE

WHO IS TALKING

Twenty years in corporate finance. HP. Hewlett Packard Enterprise. DXC Technology.

Today I build the AI and automation systems that free small teams from routine work.

I am not a skeptic. I install this technology for a living. *I am an enthusiast with a reservation.*

THE POSITION I AM ARGUING FROM

WHERE WE ARE GOING

Trust, creativity, culture, and *the human skills that matter most.*

And three questions you can use this afternoon.

There is no screen today. That was not entirely an accident.

So I took it out.

WHERE WE ACTUALLY ARE

\$1T

One trillion dollars. Goldman Sachs's estimate of global investment in artificial intelligence this year.

THE NUMBER THAT SHOULD STOP YOU

93%

of the largest technology companies' operating cash flow is going into AI infrastructure.

Three years ago that figure was thirty-three percent.

AND THE RETURN

95%

of enterprise AI deployments produce no measurable impact on the profit and loss statement.

The official program was designed to survive a committee.
The unofficial one was designed to survive a Tuesday.

WHY – THE BEST STORY IN THE RESEARCH

THE ACTUAL CONSTRAINT

The constraint is not the technology. You cannot automate a process you have *never actually looked at.*

These systems stopped answering questions and started taking actions. Think of a junior employee who never sleeps and *occasionally makes things up.*

WHAT GENUINELY CHANGED THIS YEAR

Supervision proportional to *the cost of being wrong*.

Booking a restaurant, let it run. Anything touching money, contracts, or a client relationship – a human reads it before it goes.

The people closest to the capability are *the worst forecasters of the deployment.*

When you hear a confident date, ask whether the person saying it is selling something.

PART ONE – TRUST

What percentage of the doctors' answers do you think were rated *empathetic or very empathetic?*

One hundred ninety-five real patient questions from a public forum. Physicians and ChatGPT. Rated blind by a panel of clinicians.

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THE ANSWER

4.6%

for the physicians.

45%

for the machine.

BUT HERE IS THE REAL FINDING

Give people an actual choice, and fifty-seven to sixty-two percent still choose the human — *while rating the machine's answer as better.*

And when you tell someone a warm message was written by AI, the warmth rating drops. Same words.

We were never after the better response. We were after the knowledge that another human being chose to give it to us. *The comfort was never in the words. It was that somebody stopped what they were doing.*

WHAT THAT MEANS

THE LEGAL TWIST

California and New York now require AI companions to disclose that they are not human. And the disclosure destroys much of the benefit the product was selling.

That is not an argument against the law. It is evidence about *what we were actually buying*.

Americans over sixty reported seven point seven billion dollars in losses. Roughly thirty-seven percent higher than the year before.

FREE ADVICE FOR EVERY FAMILY IN THIS ROOM

Agree on a phrase.

If someone calls in distress asking for money, you ask for the phrase.

The voice is *no longer evidence*.

That is the trust problem. Not that machines lie to us. *That the evidence we used to trust each other is now manufacturable.*

LANDING TRUST

PART TWO – CREATIVITY

One person working with AI matched the performance of *a two-person team without it.*

Harvard Business School, with Procter & Gamble. Seven hundred seventy-six professionals.

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NOW THE COMPLICATION

Writers were given AI-generated story ideas. Their stories came back rated more creative. Better written.

And the stories were more similar *to each other*.

Science Advances: individual creativity at the risk of losing collective novelty.

Every individual performance review improves. And your company becomes less distinctive.

There is no line item for *"we now sound like our competitors."*

THE FLATTERER

AI affirms the user forty-nine percent more often than *a human being would*.

Science. March 2026. Eleven leading models.

WHAT THAT DID TO PEOPLE

Less willing to repair the relationship. Less willing to take responsibility. *More convinced they had been right.*

And people preferred it. They rated the agreeable models higher and trusted them more.

The behavior that makes us worse at repair is the behavior that makes us like the product more.

Every good thing I have ever made was made better by somebody telling me it was not good yet.

The muscle is not conversation. It is the ability to be told our work is not good enough — *and stay in the room.*

PART THREE – CULTURE

Eighty-six percent feel more productive. Sixty-four percent feel more confident about their future. *Sixty-two percent say their burnout risk went down.*

Workday. Two thousand one hundred fifty employees across seven countries.

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THE SAME STUDY, TURNED OVER

One in three rarely or never has a conversation with a colleague that is not about a task.

One in five took time off in the past year *because of loneliness*.

Forty seconds for the answer. *Four minutes about her daughter's soccer team.*

THE DOORWAY

The question was never the point. The question was the excuse. *You cannot miss a conversation you never knew you were going to have.*

THE POINT

A year ago I would have had a concern and no proof. *This year it is on the P&L.*

Gartner

Half the companies that cut customer service staff for AI will be rehiring for those roles by 2027.

Robert Half

Thirty-two percent of managers who eliminated a role because of AI have already rehired it.

THE ONE I CANNOT GET OUT OF MY HEAD

A large Australian bank replaced more than forty service staff with a voice system.

Call volumes went *up*.

IBM, AND THE SIX PERCENT

IBM's AI handled ninety-four percent of routine HR requests. The other six percent was the ethical dilemmas and the judgment calls.

And IBM is *tripling* its US entry-level hiring.

THE ASSIGNMENT

The six percent is *the whole thing*.

Every organization in this room has one. Almost none of you have written it down.

That is the most valuable afternoon of work available to any leader here.

So the question is not "are you using AI." It is *"what did you stop doing with the time?"*

92%

of nonprofits now use AI.

7%

report a major improvement in their ability to achieve their mission.

PART FOUR – THE HUMAN SKILLS

It is communication. *Number one.*

LinkedIn's most in-demand skill right now is not technical.

Ninety-six percent of employers surveyed this year said it was valuable for graduates to be able to engage in constructive dialogue across disagreement.

WHERE THE PREMIUM ACTUALLY SITS

The premium goes to people who can use the machine *and* do the thing the machine cannot.

Both. Not either.

Lightcast: roles requiring AI skills carry about a twenty-eight percent salary premium — roughly eighteen thousand dollars a year.

One. Buy, *do not build.*

Purchased tools built for a specific workflow succeeded about two-thirds of the time in the MIT research.
Internal builds, roughly a third as often.

FOUR RULES

Two. Write down *your six percent*.

- Performance feedback.
- Conflict.
- Condolence.
- Firing someone.

FOUR RULES

Three. Watch where the friction went, *not just where the cost went.*

You moved a cost to a line you cannot see. It comes back in eighteen months as turnover, and you will call it something else.

FOUR RULES

Four. Diverge in the room. *Converge on the screen.*

Nature: video conferencing cuts creative idea generation by fifteen to twenty percent — and produces no deficit in idea selection.

Stop flying people across the country to make decisions. Fly them in to have ideas.

THREE QUESTIONS

One. Am I using this to prepare for a conversation, *or to avoid one?*

Simone Heng, who studies human connection: is this a way station, or a destination?

THREE QUESTIONS

Two. Did the effort *matter here?*

AI can give you better words in four seconds. It cannot give away your twenty minutes.

THREE QUESTIONS

Three. When did this thing last tell me *I was wrong?*

If the answer is never —

you are not using a tool. You are keeping company with *a flatterer.*

ONE DISCLOSURE

So a few weeks ago I applied to a course on *AGI strategy*.

BlueDot Impact. Free, pay what you want, about thirty hours.

Unit One is called *"Imagining a Better Future."*

You cannot build a defense for a future you have never described.

And a way station only makes sense if you know where you are going.

THE CLOSE

Longer tables.

This technology can *pull up chairs*.

- It can translate nine languages at a table.
- It can be a first-rate tutor for a child who would never otherwise have one.
- It can give an exhausted person their evenings back.

THE CLOSE

A woman named Michelle Turner in Virginia Beach. No business background. She used AI to learn how startups work. To draft the plan. To sharpen the pitch.

Sixteen employees now. Certified in three states. Serving children entering foster care.

It set more places at her table *than she could have set alone.*

What it cannot do is *be a guest*.

- It cannot be the one who noticed you were quiet.
- It cannot be the one who drove up here in the snow.
- It cannot be the one who stopped what she was doing.

That was always the part that mattered. Not the words.
The stopping.

So use it to build the longer table.

Then put it away, and go sit down *with the people at it.*

Thank you.

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